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**Language, identity and parenting in acculturation: A case study
of Saudi Arabian mothers sojourning in New Zealand.**

A thesis

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ABSTRACT

The international education sector is rapidly growing in New Zealand, with increasing numbers of students arriving from Saudi Arabia under the scholarship scheme, with the firm intention of returning home at the end of their study. These sojourning students are typically accompanied by their spouses and children, causing a noticeable influx of Saudi families in educational institutions as well as society at large.

Sojourning students have been the focus of research in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia with the primary focus being on the experiences of the student and not on their accompanying family. As Saudi people are relative newcomers to New Zealand, local research about Saudi students is scarce and research on their dependants is non-existent, to the knowledge of the researcher.

The main objective of the present study was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of Saudi wives who have to navigate their way through an unfamiliar society in a foreign language, with a particular focus on how these women parent and educate their children in New Zealand while trying to maintain their own cultural values.

This explorative case study was conducted from August 2016 and March 2018 in Hamilton, a provincial town in New Zealand. Narrative data were collected from nine Saudi women through a series of in-depth interviews, focus groups and informal observation made at social gatherings. The narratives of the participating women, their discussions with one another on parenting values and the personal observations of the researcher helped provide a picture of the everyday sojourning experiences of Saudi mothers.

The findings from the interviews are broadly organised into a retrospective look at life pre-sojourn, challenges and changes they made during their sojourn, and preparation for their future return to Saudi Arabia. Within each of these sections are a number of themes that arose from the analysis. Focus group data are presented by topic and informal observations are incorporated throughout the study.

The findings indicate that these mothers renegotiate and redefine their own identities in relation to their changed circumstances and environment. They show that they are receptive to the influence of some aspects of local culture provided they do not contradict their Islamic identity. Maintaining their children's Islamic identity was of concern to them: they found it challenging to instil desired values when mainstream society operates by a different set of values. They found that their role as mothers changed and they had to adapt their parenting practices.

The mothers were apprehensive about their children's return to Saudi Arabia, particularly their Arabic schooling. Most of their children did not have age-appropriate Arabic literacy and would foreseeably struggle to close the gap between them and their peers. However, mothers prepared possible solutions to ameliorating their challenges. Fitting back into the extended Saudi family was also of concern: the women were aware of the changes they and their children had undergone during their sojourn and that their repatriation would require further changes. As a result of these Saudi mothers' greater sense of self-efficacy, they did not predict being faced with any insurmountable challenges.

A grounded analysis of the findings suggested that Experiential Learning Theory could assist a situated explanation of the process of acculturation (Berry, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2011) that these Saudi mothers underwent, and the most recent model (Kolb, 2015) was refined to develop a construct of cross-cultural experiential learning.

This study contributes a qualitative understanding of cross-cultural experiential learning of sojourning Saudi mothers. Recommendations are made about possible support that could be offered to sojourning families by the home and host societies, to aid in their transition and ensure their sojourn would be a rich and rewarding experience.

I dedicate this thesis to my husband Sami for his unconditional love, support and patience.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an introduction to the study, beginning with a list of the research objectives (1.1). Section 1.2 provides some background information on the researcher and her motivations and interest in the topic. Information on Saudi Arabia's history and the current situation is presented in Section 1.3. Then, a general account of the methodological (1.4) and theoretical frameworks (1.5) employed are presented, along with a justification for the need for research in this area (1.6). Finally, Section 1.7 presents an overview of the subsequent chapters and the organisation of the thesis.

New Zealand is the recipient of a large number of international students each year, with increasing numbers arriving from Saudi Arabia. Such sojourners, and their families, are faced with many challenges due to linguistic, social and cultural distance. Limited research has been conducted to investigate the sojourn of Saudi families, and the few studies that do exist typically focus on the students themselves. This case study will focus on the social, educational, and linguistic acculturation of sojourning Saudi women and their school-aged children. Due to a number of barriers, including being marginalised, Saudi mothers struggle to acculturate, which potentially affects their children's education and acculturation and they have apprehensions about their future repatriation to Saudi Arabia.

1.1 Research objectives

This study aimed to:

1. Investigate the issues which this group of Saudi mothers faced during their sojourn and their coping strategies
2. Explore the extent to which previous experience facilitated or hindered their adjustment to life in New Zealand
3. Investigate the extent to which their sojourn affected their parenting practices and what challenges they faced

4. Investigate the extent to which their sojourn affected how they educated their children and what challenges they faced
5. Explore the women's linguistic and cultural adaptation
6. Explore the mother's identity transformations/negotiations
7. Explore how they envisaged their future return to Saudi Arabia would be and what their concerns were
8. Consider whether the findings of this study are relatable to similar sojourning women in other contexts.

1.2 The researcher and personal motivation

When my parents first emigrated from Jordan in 1987, we were one of a small number of Muslim Arab families in New Zealand. My sister and I were the only Arabs and the only Muslims in our central Auckland primary and intermediate schools. I have fond memories of my time at school despite the infrequent reminders that we were different. Unsure of how to categorise us, we were sometimes referred to as 'curry munchers' by the other children while some teachers referred to us as 'Muhammadans' – a term we had never heard of but my mother made it very clear that we worshipped God and not Muhammad his messenger. On occasion, we were teased because our mother wore a 'tea towel' on her head. We were different.

There was never any confusion in my mind about who we were though: Muslims. Some mornings before school my mother would help us to memorise passages from the Quran, every Friday evening we met up with other Muslims in our community and bonded over prayer and food, at school we sat in the library during Bible studies and we fasted during Ramadan and carried notes excusing us from P.E.

When we moved to Oman at the age of 13 my Arabness was put into question; I had the physical appearance of an Arab but when I spoke I sounded like a Kiwi. I did not feel that I fit in and that was magnified because I was too self-conscious to

speak in my heavily accented Arabic. Eventually, I sought out friendships with other English-speaking third culture kids and realised I belonged in-between.

Many years later, my husband and I decided to make New Zealand our home. We have found a sort of balance in raising our children with a hybrid Arab Kiwi identity, but it is a continuous process of negotiation. We find it challenging to teach them Arabic considering we primarily speak English at home and we do not have extended family living nearby to share the burden. Instead, we try to strengthen their Muslim identity by teaching them about Islam and its practices. We also encourage our children to participate in school and community activities such as sports, drama and art. I try to be involved in their school lives by helping at school events, chaperoning camps and school trips and managing sports teams. It is important to us that our children know and appreciate their differences but that they do not use them as excuses to separate themselves from their local community.

This study was initially inspired by a female Saudi student I met, long before I had thought about pursuing a PhD. Our husbands were friends and so we met from time to time. There were a number of things that struck me about her: her determination and dedication to earning a Masters' degree, despite having two young boys; her courage and her steadfast resolve in continuing to wear the *niqab* (face covering revealing only the eyes) because she believed it was her religious obligation and knowing that her husband consulted her and sought her opinion. The first two points evoked admiration, and the latter surprise; Saudi men value their wives opinions? Saudi men speak openly about their wives with their friends? I realised that I had stereotyped them, despite being an Arab myself.

Reflecting on my observations was the extent of it until years later when I began teaching English to international students. Many of my students were male Saudis but only a few were women. It was during this time I realised that while Saudi men were in the public sphere talking and sharing their experiences with teachers like me, the women probably did not have as many opportunities to be seen or heard, particularly if they were not students themselves.

In 2014, when I was ready to think about research, I learned about a yearlong research programme being run by the University of Waikato about *The everyday lives of women in New Zealand*, which I joined. I chose to research Saudi women considering my interest in them. As a minority group, learning about their experiences tied in well with the mission of the programme. I interviewed three sojourning Saudi women about how they adapted to life in New Zealand, which served as a pilot study for this PhD research. I found interviewing them to be illuminating and so did those who read it. This alerted me to the need for more research on this group of women and to the realisation that I was in a rather unique position to be the one who explores their experiences being an Arab Muslim who grew up in New Zealand. And, like my participants, I am also a mother raising her children between the East and the West and dealing with the challenges of being different and maintaining one's cultural identity.

This research is influenced by my upbringing, experiences and my world perspective. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007):

Researchers are in the world and of the world. They bring their own biographies to the research situation and participants behave in particular ways in their presence. Reflexivity suggests that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in, or influence on, the research (p. 171).

With that in mind, I have attempted to “hold [myself] up to the light” (p. 171) as suggested by Cohen et al. (2007), throughout this research. I am a mother and a wife, and I have spent various times of my life as a sojourner, an immigrant and a visitor in my country of birth. The various elements of my identity have allowed me to relate to the experiences of my participants on many levels, which I believe has resulted in the depth of information that was elicited and is presented in this study. It was important to me that during interviews participants felt at ease and that they perceived low power differentials, which Bishop and Glynn (1999) suggest may be achieved through self-disclosure and personal investment. Nevertheless,

precautions were taken to avoid influencing participants, such as: continuing to talk to them after the interview was over to answer their questions about my own experiences; carefully wording neutral interview questions and focus group topics; sharing narrative summaries for participant verification and taking time to analyse the data from different angles.

1.3 Saudi Arabia background

1.3.1 Culture and religion

Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab was a religious Hanbali teacher who became the leader of the Wahhabi sect. Wahhabism has been the official doctrine of Saudi Arabia since the eighteenth century. It is described by Commins (2006) as a “religious reform movement” (p. 137) that sought to revive the monotheism of Islam. Wahhabism is thought to be a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, and is criticised as being extremist. Wahhabis consider Muslims who do not agree with them to be apostates (Commins, 2006). After an alliance between Abd al-Wahhab and the Al Saud family was forged in the eighteenth century, the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam subsequently became the state religion and was indoctrinated in the people of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Arabian state was constructed in 1932 to homogenise a diverse Arabian society, to purify it and “return it to an authentic Islam” (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 16).

Saudi Arabia before 1979 encouraged openness, co-existence and independent thinking. It was a culture of moderate Islam where women “drove cars [and] music and sports were taught at boys’ and girls’ schools...and men and women worked together” (Akeel, 2017). In 1979, the holy mosque of Mecca was put under siege by a group of approximately 300 men led by Juhayman Al-Otaybi, which lasted for two weeks with hundreds killed and injured (Hegghammer & Lacroix, 2007). The group believed, and accused the Saudi royal family of betraying Islamic principles and adopting western lifestyle and values. It is thought that this incident majorly influenced the end of the moderate era in Saudi Arabia. After 1979, an ideology of

extreme conservatism was imposed in the country. The ideology spread and soon took over the whole culture of the country especially education. Those who adopted this thinking and forced it on society called it *Sahwa* (The Awakening). The Sahwa are described by Hegghammer and Lacroix (2007) as representing “a blend of the traditional Wahhabi outlook (mainly on social issues) and the more contemporary Muslim Brotherhood approach (especially on political issues)” (p. 105). They attacked the moderate culture, were against poets and artists (AlMuhaini, 2017, October 29) and called for tighter and more restricted ideologies that they believed would reflect the Islamic religion more rightfully. Women’s rights and freedoms were impacted as a result as they were excluded from the public sphere (AlMuhaini, 2017, October 29).

After the death of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Salman bin Abdulaziz took over in January 2015 and appointed his son, Mohammed, as Crown Prince who is recognised for leading reform within Saudi Arabia. Mohammed bin Salman wants to return Saudi Arabia to a moderate Islam saying, “We were just normal people developing like any other country in the world until the events of 1979” (O'Donnell, 2018). His plan for Saudi Arabia is detailed in the *Saudi Vision 2030* (Al-Saud, 2019).

1.3.2 Women in Saudi Arabia

The media and Western discourse have the tendency to portray Muslim women as being oppressed, and in need of “saving” from their religion (Abu-Lughod, 2002). Muslim scholars argue that Islam holds women in the highest esteem and that some points are misinterpreted, taken out of context, or used to subjugate women. Saudi Arabia is perceived to be the least progressive of the Arab countries about women’s issues and contributes to the negative portrayal by limiting their public appearance, their contribution and rights.

Wahhabism is often held responsible for the regulations placed on women in Saudi society (Abou El-Fadl, 2001). Muslim reformists argue that the suppression of women “is not due to the teachings of Islam, but rather to misinterpretation of the

Qur'anic verses and the adoption of extra Islamic customs and traditions” (AlMunajjed, 1997, p. 28) that have transformed into cultural norms. Altorki (2000) argues that Wahhabism alone is not responsible for women’s inferior position in society and that it “results from cultural and social constructions by men” (p. 233).

Some hold Wahhabism accountable for the treatment of women in Saudi Arabia, claiming that they use them as symbols to represent the “authenticity of the nation and its compliance with God’s law” (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 17). Barazangi (2009) believes that it is partially due to the absence of Muslim women in shaping Islamic thought. Others believe that patriarchy and tribalism (Al-Rasheed, 2013) are also contributors.

In Islam, women have the right to be educated, to work and earn an income outside their homes, “provided that this work does not result in harm to herself, her husband or her children” (AlMunajjed, 1997, p. 20). They are also given the right to choose if they want to keep their earnings for themselves, or contribute to the household expenses. They are permitted to own their own businesses, buy and sell property, vote, and they are entitled to express their opinions freely. In fact:

There is an abundance of evidence in both the Qur'an and the Hadith to show that women are considered the equal of men with all the legal, political, economic and social rights of men. (AlMunajjed, 1997, p. 32)

However, Islam recognises the innate differences between men and women, and thus treats them with equity. For example, men are required to lead, provide for, and protect their families because their physical constitution is suited to that role (AlMunajjed, 1997) as well as possessing the necessary skills and qualities. Women are responsible for caring for and educating their children because they are nurturing and sensitive and have the anatomy to bear a child and give it sustenance. Both roles are equally important for a family to prosper. This does not mean that a woman cannot work outside the home, or that a man should not look after his children. There are many narrated *hadith* (a collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad) demonstrating that both are permitted. For

example, in the earliest of times women were nurses to those wounded in battle and the Prophet Mohammed was witnessed doing housework and looking after his children (Sahih al-Bukhari, No. 644). The *Qur'an* (The Islamic sacred book) says, “We created you in pairs” (78:8) indicating that spouses are partners in life. The Qur’an uses the analogy of clothing to depict the closeness of the spousal relationship, “They (women) are a garment for you (men) and you are a garment for them” (Qur’an, 2:187). Spouses provide each other with shelter, comfort and participate in all aspects of their lives together.

Amongst the issues that are often misinterpreted or misrepresented are guardianship, segregation and veiling. Adult Saudi women lack autonomy in their daily lives due to their status as legal dependents. A direct male relative, such as a father, brother, son or uncle has guardianship over a woman. Women require their guardian’s consent to work, travel or open a bank account (Coker, June 22, 2018). This government regulation is based on the Wahhabi interpretation of the Qur’an (Al-Rasheed, 2013). One translated verse (Qur’an, 4:34) states that, “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more [strength] than the other, and because they support them from their means.” (Ali, 1983, p. 190). Some interpret male guardianship to mean that men are financially responsible for women (Deif, 2008) and for physically protecting them. Another interpretation is that women are “lacking mental capabilities and religious conviction” (Barazangi, 2009) and need men’s superior moral guardianship in every aspect of their life. Critics of this view argue that they have decontextualised the Qur’anic verse, ignored hadith and examples from the time of the Prophet that demonstrate women’s independence and many freedoms. Alharbi (2015) argues that guardianship laws are meant to protect women, not limit their power.

Segregation is another reality that affects Saudi women’s lives. Abu Dawood, a scholar of hadith narrated that, “We will not wilfully choose or accept mixing and crowding” (Kitab al-Adab min Sunanihi). Abou El-Fadl (2001) justifies segregation of the sexes in the workforce saying that it is “one of the major causes of fornication, which disintegrates society and destroys its moral values and all sense of propriety”

(p. 582). Thus, Saudi culture provides alternate means of access to achieve everyday tasks by designating separate spaces for men and women, taking precautions to avoid the meeting and mixing of men and women as much as possible. Women are thereby excluded from participating in public life, instead relegated to the private domain, which Abou El-Fadl (2001) justifies with the reasoning that their inherent disposition makes them suited for housework.

Arguments against segregation claim that while the Qur'an forbids a man from being secluded with a woman because the devil sits amongst them (Abou El-Fadl, 2001), and men and women are instructed to lower their gaze in each other's presence, complete segregation was not practised at the time of the Prophet. For example, women prayed together with men in mosques. Saudi Arabia is criticised for their hypocritical law that claims to segregate for the maintenance of morality and the protection of women, yet many households hire personal drivers for women's use. Women are entrusted to an unrelated man in the seclusion of a car. Some women do not perceive their segregation to be oppressive, but a matter of pride (Mernissi, 1991) and prestige (AlMunajjed, 1997).

In the last decade or two, with increased access to communication technology, the internet, and satellite television, Saudi women have gained alternative access to the public domain and are contributing to social and national issues (Al-Rasheed, 2013), in spite of segregation laws.

It is believed that Arabs adopted veiling of the face from past civilisations, particularly by the upper class to elevate their status and prestige within society (AlMunajjed, 1997; Hatem, 1985; Lerner, 1986; Levy, 1965). In Saudi Arabia, the *hijab* (head covering) not only functions as "a protective shield from the eyes of males outside the circle of her kinsmen" (AlMunajjed, 1997, p. 53) but also represents a national identity.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has begun to implement changes within Saudi Arabia that have the potential to benefit women. In September 2017, it was announced that the ban on women driving would be lifted. Additionally, women

were permitted to attend public concerts and sporting events for the first time (Maza, 2017), although still segregated, as required by law. Women no longer need the consent of a guardian to start their own business. Prince Salman is also attempting to change cultural dress saying, “The laws are very clear and stipulated in the laws of Sharia: that women wear decent, respectful clothing, like men. This, however, does not particularly specify a black abaya or a black head cover” (O'Donnell, 2018). His moderate view on hijab and the abaya (a long, loose dress, typically black in colour) gives women the freedom to decide how they choose to be modest. Additionally, he aims to have created more jobs for women and to have increased their presence in the workforce from 22 percent to 30 percent by 2030 (Maclean, 2017). Nonetheless, Hawthorne (2018) argues that while they appear to afford women new freedoms, “the state is primarily motivated by economic gains”. The modernisation of Saudi Arabia will attract more foreign investments and aid diversification into tourism and entertainment (Hvidt, 2018) and reduce the economy’s reliance on petroleum (Maclean, 2017). The liberation of Saudi women may just be a pawn for furthering the country’s financial agenda.

1.3.3 Saudis in New Zealand

In 2005, when the scholarship programme was started under the patronage of King Abdullah, it was identified that Saudi Arabia needed to upskill its youth. International education was deemed ideal to ensure students received high-quality degrees. Other objectives were to improve English language skills, and to expose Saudis to other cultures and ways of thinking so that they could return with an open-mindedness that may influence the rest of society. Based on talks between King Abdullah and former President George W. Bush, the programme was also intended to provide the people of the host country and Saudis the opportunity to have face-to-face interactions to combat misconceptions held about the other (Chua, 2006). Once students had gained a qualification, cultural exposure and awareness they were obliged to return to Saudi Arabia and find employment so that they could benefit their country and elevate the work environment.

A six billion dollar budget was dedicated to the scholarship programme. The government covered students' tuition, health insurance, travel expenses and gave them a monthly stipend. Scholarship students were encouraged to make the sojourn with their family. Each family member was given a monthly stipend, health and travel benefits, and tuition costs for English language study and children's schooling costs were covered. Many saw this as an opportunity that could not be passed up.

Requirements for entry into the programme were few, to make it available to the majority; students had to obtain university entry and self-fund their study for the first six months. The government paid for a year of language courses to help students obtain the IELTS/TOEFL score required for their chosen programme.

Countries like the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand saw an increase in Saudi students between 2005 and 2015. In 2013, the scholarship programme was renewed until 2020. However, in 2015, the price of oil plummeted, the lowest it had been in ten years (New York Times, 2016). Additionally, the government had a budget deficit of \$87 billion in 2016 (Abujami, 2016), partly due to the cost of the war between Saudi Arabia and Yemeni insurgents. As a result, the government re-evaluated their spending. The education budget, which was 25% of Saudi Arabia's total spending, was the most affected; the scholarship programme had its budget cut (Kottasova, 2016). Stipulations were added to the scholarship criteria, limiting university destinations to the top universities, allowing enrolment only into specific fields dictated by the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP), and only awarding scholarships to students with the highest grades (Abujami, 2016). To shoulder the responsibility of funding a student's education, the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) encourages potential students to obtain a scholarship from their employer, if upskilling is deemed necessary. In these cases, the cost is shared between SACM and the employer. Having rebranded, the scholarship programme was renamed, *Your Job and Scholarship*.

This coincided with the start of my study, and the impact was clearly visible on the university campus; Saudi students' enrolments had decreased drastically.

1.4 Methodological framework

This is a longitudinal case study based on ethnographic principles that is intended to explore and reveal the inner lives and individual acculturation experiences of a group of sojourning Saudi mothers who reside in Hamilton, New Zealand. A multi-method approach was undertaken, utilising various data-collection procedures for a rich understanding.

Data were collected between August 2016 and March 2018 through three individual, in-depth interviews, a focus group discussion and informal observations from a number of social gatherings. An interview schedule was outlined prior to data collection: however, topics and questions changed depending on what issues participants raised. Once interviews were complete, focus group discussion points were informed by parenting-related topics that arose during interviews and informal conversations, as well as an initial analysis of interview transcripts. Having a general guide for interviews and allowing participants' narratives to lead the inquiry ensured that the study was in fact exploratory. A grounded, thematic analysis of the data was conducted for that same reason. The methodological framework is discussed further in Chapter 3.

1.5 Theoretical framework

This inquiry was not conducted within a predetermined theoretical framework, instead the data were used to lead to a grounded explanation. By thus allowing the data to "speak for themselves", this explanation was found by adapting Berry's acculturation theory (1997, 2005) and Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984, 2015), which are discussed further in Chapter 5.

1.6 Significance of the research

Saudi Arabia's governmental initiative to grant young Saudi men and women scholarships to study internationally is currently on its 11th cycle. The purpose of such an initiative is to build a stronger, self-sufficient Saudi Arabia that is open-minded and culturally aware (Council on Foreign Relations, 2012). New Zealand is one of five countries to receive a significant percentage of these scholarship students. They first began to arrive in New Zealand in the year 2000. They totalled merely 67 in 2002, increasing to 7,000 students by 2012.

The New Zealand economy benefits from accepting Saudis as international students; they reportedly create a revenue of \$32.347 million in fees (Infometrics, 2013). They also have the highest average spending of international students. The generous stipends granted to Saudi scholarship students by the Saudi government directly benefits the New Zealand economy.

It is essential that New Zealand society provides for these sojourners' needs to maintain their satisfaction and ensure that they do not end their scholarships prematurely. A greater understanding of their experiences, challenges and expectations will better inform local agencies about the support they require. It could also assist Saudi authorities to more adequately prepare potential students and their families before and after their arrival in New Zealand.

Sojourners, the families that accompany international scholarship students included, have long been of interest to social scientists and sociolinguists. It is theoretically enlightening to learn about these sojourners' acculturation, hybrid identity development, sociolinguistic behaviour and intercultural communication practices.

The literature on the sojourning experiences of students; families is scarce and particularly with Saudi families as participants. The findings of this study will occupy a gap in the literature and contribute to our understanding of identity

development, language shift and acculturation and its influence on how mothers parent and educate their children.

1.7 Thesis overview

This thesis contains six chapters, the first has introduced the research topic, the objectives, the researcher's personal motivations for conducting this study, background information about Saudi Arabia, Saudis in New Zealand, the theoretical framework used, the significance of the study and an outline of the thesis.

Chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of the relevant literature on sojourners acculturation as well as a consideration of individuals' personal, social and role identities and how these evolve depending on environment. It discusses some of the literature about parenting in general including the parenting styles outlined by Baumrind (1966, 1967, 1991), and parenting in Islam. It also offers an introduction to Berry's acculturation theory (Berry, 2005, 2017; Berry & Sam, 1997) and Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory which were adapted after a grounded analysis of the data was conducted.

Chapter 3 explains and justifies the methodological framework used in this study, including: the use of an ethnographic approach to research, case study, and narrative inquiry; the research design and data collection methods; relevant ethical and validity issues are considered followed by a description of the data analysis procedures and an explanation of how the data were subjected to a grounded analysis.

Chapter 4 reports the findings of the research using participants' narratives, focus group discussions and informal observations to present significant themes that arose regarding participants' lives pre-sojourn, their present experiences including developments and challenges, and their anticipated challenges about their repatriation to Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to key issues and publications considered in the literature review. This study's findings are compared and contrasted to relevant empirical studies on Saudi mothers and children who are sojourning in a Western country. The findings are then looked at through the lens of Berry's (Berry, 2005, 2017; Berry & Sam, 1997) acculturation model and Kolb's experiential learning theory is applied.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by summarising the key findings. It discusses the limitations of the study, identifies the contextual, methodological and theoretical implications, the contributions of the study and suggests areas for further study into the experiences of sojourning Saudi families.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins by defining and explaining terminology that is key to the study of the acculturation experiences of sojourners, with particular reference to Saudi mothers in New Zealand. It considers some significant models and theories in acculturation literature such as Berry's (2005, 2006a) acculturation theory, Ward's (1996; Ward & Kennedy, 1999) construct of psychological and social adjustment and Kim's (2001) integrative theory. Because identity is significantly affected by a sojourn, Section 2.2 discusses the aspects of one's identity that change due to pressure from the host culture. Parenting in acculturation is then reviewed (2.3). Studies about Saudi sojourners are reviewed (2.4), identifying that the majority of research in this area has been conducted in the Australian and American contexts. Section 2.5 offers an account of Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984, 2015) that is later applied to the findings in Chapter 5. The review of the literature revealed a limited number of studies on the experiences of sojourning families in New Zealand, a gap that the current study will occupy.

2.1 Sojourner issues

The term *sojourner* is typically used to refer to people who temporarily reside in a host country for an extended period of time ranging from six months to six years (Sussman, 2002). It includes anyone who is in a host country to fulfil a specific purpose and has the intention to return home. In the past, business people on assignment in a foreign country tended to be the main research interest. However, with the affordability of travel and a metaphorical 'world without borders' more and more people reside in host countries for working holidays, international study, academic posts, or to visit close family members.

Sojourners are often likened to migrants. However, migrants differ in a significant way; they move to a foreign country generally with the intention of making it their new home. This permanence will affect their attitudes and behaviour regarding the host culture and its people. It will also strongly influence their sense of social

identity; decisions need to be made as to the extent they wish to be integrated into or separated from the host society. Sojourners, without this sense of permanent translocation, tend to live in limbo during their sojourn; while they try to acculturate and acclimate to life in the host country, they also need to maintain relationships and links to their home country so that they are able to seamlessly resume life at the end of their sojourn.

Immigrants and sojourners are dissimilar in the permanence of their stay. However, Berry and Sam (1997) claim that the “psychological processes that operate during acculturation are essentially the same for all groups” (p. 296), a matter which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

2.1.1 Acculturation

The steady movement of people from one country to another means that different cultures are constantly in contact. Sojourners, immigrants and refugees alike bring with them their language, cultural behaviours, values, and experiences which may not align with those of the host country. One of the earliest definitions of acculturation says that it, “result[s] when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). A later definition, by Berry (2005) says that it is a “dual process of cultural and psychological change” (p. 698), signifying the internal change a person might experience. Sam (2006) emphasises that acculturation is a reciprocal phenomenon: both the host and the new cultures influence each other. However, the directionality of acculturation can be dependent on the power of one group over the other, and how voluntary the contact is (e.g. sojourning vs. colonisation). Sojourning and migration, for example, are voluntary, while colonisation and the situation faced by refugees is forced, thus the nature and strength of reciprocal influence will vary. Berry’s (2005) framework in Figure 2.1 offers a general understanding of acculturation.

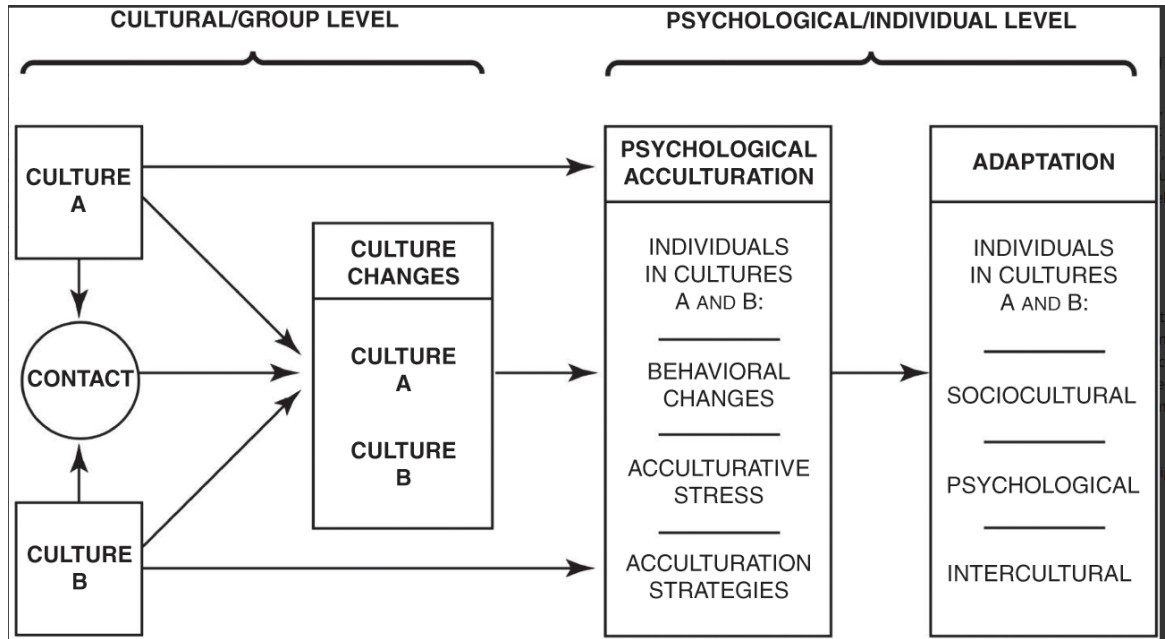


Figure 2.1 Berry's framework of acculturation

(Berry, 2005) Reprinted with permission

Initial contact with another culture can cause challenges for the newcomers as they realise that their existing life tools may not be relevant or appropriate in the new context (Kim, 2001). It is quite common to experience culture shock, which H. D. Brown (2014) defines as an anxiety that can make the individual feel disoriented and afraid because of the unfamiliar signs, symbols and cues of the host society (Sussman, 2002). Some symptoms commonly associated with culture-shock include disturbed sleep, loss of appetite and loss of concentration. A foreign individual feels vulnerable not only because of linguistic barriers, but also because of the different metacommunicative strategies used, such as tone of voice and body language. Culture shock can cause sojourners to isolate themselves in their home to avoid having contact with the unfamiliar language and culture. It may also affect their attitude towards the host language and their motivation to learn it. Eventually, sojourners typically find a way to adapt by making compromises or behavioural adjustments.

While the term *culture shock* may immediately illicit negative connotations in one's mind, Furnham and Bochner (1986) indicated the potential for positive outcomes, "...although it may be strange and possibly difficult, sojourning makes a person more adaptable, flexible, and insightful" (p. 47). Adler (1987) further emphasised the positive aspect and said, "[it is] an experience in self-understanding and change" (p. 29) and is important for self-development and personal growth. As well as a gain in self and cultural awareness, Milstein (2005) added that it may also lead to "an increased sense of empowerment, an enriched sense of belief in their own capabilities." (p. 218).

In line with this growth-oriented perspective, Kim (2001) explained the sojourn experience as a process in which a sojourner feels a tension between the comfort and ease of the familiar and the stress of needing to learn new things. This stress is the impetus for adapting and learning new behaviours and ideas. The more frequently they interact with their new environment and communicate with those in it, the more adaptable they become at managing stress, resulting in the types of growth discussed by Adler (1987) and Furnham and Bochner (1986).

Berry's (2006a) commonly cited model of acculturation categorises four common responses people have towards a new culture: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation (see Figure 2.2).

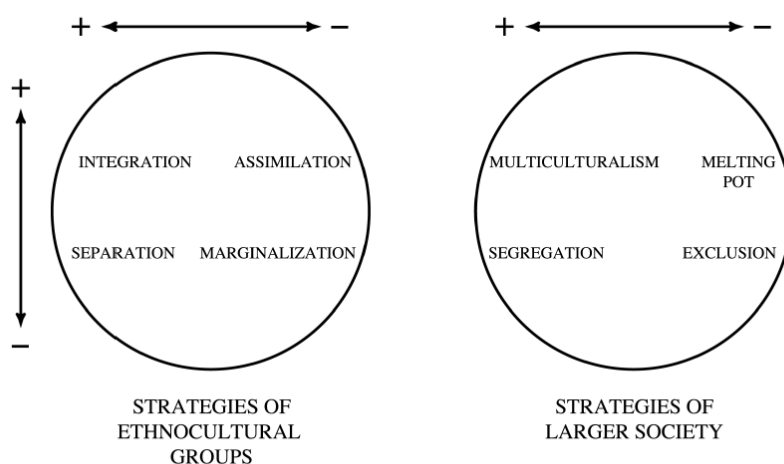


Figure 2.2 Intercultural strategies of ethnocultural groups and the larger society

(Berry, 2005) Reprinted with permission

The amount of contact a sojourner desires to have with the host culture depends on the value placed on the maintenance of their own culture, and how much they participate in that of the host culture. If an individual places little importance on maintaining their own culture, and seeks daily interactions with the host society, they are employing the *assimilation* strategy. Conversely, if an individual places high value on maintaining their own culture, is unwilling to shed it, and avoids interacting with the host culture, they are using the *separation* strategy. The integration strategy is thought to be the ideal: the individual takes part in the host culture, while simultaneously maintaining elements of their own. In some cases, termed *marginalisation*, an individual may experience excessive discrimination or exclusion and as a result may not invest in creating relationships within the host society, but will have little connection to their own culture as well.

Choosing which strategy to employ is contingent on the individual's attitude, their personality, as well as the time and situation they are in. Frequent encounters with the host culture will necessitate that the individual make constant value judgements. Research indicates that different strategies are used throughout the duration of their stay, reflecting their value judgments and the external pressures they face. Sam

(2006) posits that after some exploration of the different strategies, refugees, immigrants and sojourners alike will typically settle on one.

2.1.2 Adaptation

Regardless of the strategy used, and the psychological or cultural changes an individual has made, the outcome is referred to as *adaptation*; the “stable changes that take place in an individual or group in response to external demands” Berry (2005, p. 709). There is constant pressure on a newcomer to conform to the local ways of thinking and behaving. Kim (2001) believes that adaptation to the new environment:

...is not a process in which new cultural elements are simply added to prior internal conditions. As new learning occurs, deculturation (or unlearning) of at least some of the old cultural elements has to occur, in the sense that new responses are adopted in situations that previously would have evoked old ones. The act of acquiring something new is inevitably also the act of “losing” something old...

(p. 51)

The learning that occurs may be in the form of behavioural shifts; for instance, the individual may alter the way they dress or the food they eat. Or they may be cultural, where the individual learns certain aspects of the host culture, or sheds a part of their own culture to adopt the ways of the host. However, the individual may encounter aspects of the host culture that cause internal conflict; this is something the individual does not find favourable and is unwilling to change, but experiences difficulties because of it. Such conflict may result in acculturative stress such as anxiety or depression. Clarke (1976) even likened second culture learning to schizophrenia, believing that social encounters can be traumatic, and therefore negative defence mechanisms may be utilised such as repression, regression, rejection or isolation. Not possessing adequate skills to deal with the demands of the new environment is a further cause for stress (Kim, 2001).

Cross-cultural adaptation can be divided into two domains: psychological and sociocultural. The former deals with *affect*, a sojourner's psychological, physical and emotional well-being, while the latter is related to *behaviour* and the acquisition of, "culturally appropriate skills" (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 660) and the ability to "negotiate interactive aspects of the host environment" (p. 660). When considering the situation of international students, Ward and her colleagues have quantitative evidence suggesting that psychological adaptation problems have a greater incidence during the initial stages of a sojourn, but do fluctuate over time. The factors that influence psychological adjustment include "personality, life changes, coping styles and social support" (p. 661). However, a different set of variables were identified to affect sociocultural adaptation: quantity and quality of contact with the host culture, length of sojourn, and cultural distance (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

The ability to communicate with the host society in their language influences a sojourner's psychological adaptation. Not speaking the language well, or at all, creates stress for the sojourner in every aspect of daily life. For example, grocery shopping, a somewhat automated activity at home, requires full concentration to figure out what food item the unfamiliar words on the packaging correspond to. Requesting assistance from a speaker of the host language may cause more stress than help. The sojourner is often left feeling isolated and lost, which affects their psychological well-being and ultimately the speed at which they adapt. However, disorienting experiences like this are what might drive the individual to enrol in language courses, or other forms of learning and growth.

An individual is considered to have adapted positively if they display a "clear sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health, high self-esteem, and the achievement of efficient cultural and social competencies." (Castro, 2003, p. 9). Conversely, having "depression, feelings of anomie, psychosomatic symptoms and identity confusion" (Castro, 2003, p. 9) are signs of negative adaptation.

Whilst this process can be difficult and may have negative impact, it is a necessary journey in which the individual adopts new perspectives and gains a greater understanding of themselves and their identity. Through introspection, an individual will likely have a heightened consciousness surrounding culturally derived practices, values and perspectives. These changes reshape an individual's identity. With constant value negotiations and judgments occurring internally, a new identity is formed. Depending on the social context they are in, an individual may switch between their home culture identity, and their newly formed identity, referred to by psychologists as 'active cultural frame switching' (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002, p. 493).

2.2 Identity of sojourners

2.2.1 Adults' identity

When adult sojourners arrive in a host country, they typically already have a strong sense of who they are. A person's identity is the unique make-up of their membership of social groups, the roles they play within society, and the personal characteristics that define them. From birth, a person's individual identity begins to form and continues to be shaped and reshaped through the processes of primary, secondary, and tertiary socialisation (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). People belong to social groups based on social structures, such as country of origin, religion, or any group derived out of commonality in situation or interest. They also carry multiple role identities such as mother, teacher, or friend. And their personal identities are the characteristics and traits (Olson, 2016) that they carry with them through their various social and role identities, such as honesty, generosity or chattiness. The combination of an individual's personal, role, and social identities influence their behaviour in the variety of settings in which they exist.

Moving to a new country means that sojourners are forced to reassess and reshape aspects of their identities. Changes to everyday routines require the use of a different set of skills than in their home country. Spouses who were used to having

a lot of independence in their home country, during the initial stages of a sojourn, may be quite dependent on spouses or others, due to the lack of familiarity with the systems, the environment, or even the language of the host country. When there are significant cultural differences, their self-concept, “their ideas about who they are and what they are like” (Koole, 2007) is disturbed, creating disequilibrium. It becomes challenging for the accompanying spouse to maintain a positive self-image (Coelho, Yuan, & Ahmed, 1980).

When there is cultural difference between the home and host countries, a sojourner is highly attuned to those differences, observing and questioning the behaviours of those around them, as well as their own. Previously invisible “preferences, values and thoughts emerge into awareness” (Sussman, 2002, p. 3) and sojourners begin to understand the components of their cultural identity. An individual’s cultural values and behaviours are enculturated in them as children and become automated, which Bourdieu (1991) terms as *habitus*; when they are faced with another culture, they grow conscious of the reasoning behind their beliefs and values.

The continuous tension of living in another society affects a person’s cultural identity. They are confronted with situations that require a decision about how they respond. Some sojourners make a lot of changes to fit in to the host society and others make few changes and interact only with their co-nationals.

Changes in personal, cultural and role identities due to a change in context require a sojourner to go through the process of forming a new identity during their stay. The reality of a sojourner returning home compounds their identity disturbance. They have reshaped their identity and have a new-found understanding of who they are, based on, and in relation to, the host society, only to return home and realise they no longer fit in. One reaction to this situation is referred to by Sussman (2002) as a *subtractive identity response*. They feel less Australian or Japanese, for example, and they are more critical of the once-familiar behaviours, viewing them as “unimportant, irrelevant or negative” (Sussman, 2002, p. 6). The other response, *additive identity response* finds sojourners transferring learned behaviours and

values from the host country to their home country. These newly learnt behaviours may not be well received because they are not practised in the wider community. Either, or both responses can occur in the same person and can cause distress similar to that experienced both at the beginning of their sojourn, and on their return home, which has been termed *repatriation shock* (Sussman, 2002).

A distinction is made between social and cultural identity in Norton (1997): social identity refers to the relationship an individual has to their social world such as schools, families, and other institutions, whereas cultural identity refers to the connection between an individual and a group that shares history, language and values. Before making their sojourn, a person is aware of the social groups they belong to; their behaviours, emotions, and thoughts were influenced by their social environment (Luhmann, 2001). With the change in social context, existing social identities become irrelevant, necessitating a sojourner to form a new social identity.

Social identity formation uses two processes: social comparison and self-categorisation (Stets & Burke, 2000). People are compared to the self; if they are similar, they are classified as in-group members, but if they are dissimilar, they are categorised as out-group members. In the process, categorisers will stop perceiving other's individualities and idiosyncrasies and start seeing them as archetypes. Self-categorisation results in the accentuation of similarities and attenuation of differences within the in-group. It will also lead to exaggeration of differences and minimisation of similarities between the in-group and the out-group (Turner, 1987).

The act of comparison and categorisation transforms how people see and feel about themselves and others, and how they view in-group and out-group members alike. This is stereotyping of the self and others, perceiving both in a prototypical manner. Categorisation of people may simplify complex social phenomena and have a normative effect; they will "prescribe group-appropriate ways to feel and behave, you feel and behave normatively. In this way, self-categorization produces, within a group, conformity and patterns of in-group liking, trust, and solidarity" (Hogg, 2006). Thus, the self-categorisation is a reflexive process, it influences people's

perception of themselves and others, and at the same time sets standards of behaviour for them. It generates uniformity of perception and action and subsequently forges a common social identity for the group.

Whilst the sojourner is comparing and self-categorising, members of the host society are also making assessments and attempting to assign them to a social group. Conflict may arise when an individual perceives themselves as belonging to a certain social group but members of that social group do not deem them as having enough similarities to be accepted as members. Such conflict is more likely to occur with immigrants who identify with the host society but whose name or physical attributes do not resemble the host society. One of the major ways that identity is formed is through language (Alred, 2003; Gee, 1996; Kim, 1988), which is one of the most vigorous means of depicting the self (Pellegrino Aveni, 2005). The identity of sojourners to a new country may shift as a result of navigating through social interactions with little language and communication skills. Their sense of self is frequently affected negatively by the experience.

2.2.2 Children's identity

Children, unlike their parents, are still beginning to learn who they are in themselves, and in relation to their surroundings. A sojourn during their formative years is a disruptive event for their identities.

An important aspect of a child's identity formation is that of ethnic identity. Ethnic identity has been defined by Phinney (2003) as "a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group" (p. 63), where an ethnic group is a subgroup within a larger context that share a common ancestry, culture, religion, language, kinship, or place of origin. Noels, Pon, and Clement (1996) emphasise that an ethnic identity is "a subjective feeling of belongingness to a particular ethnic group" (p. 247). As sojourning children, they do not yet have a clear sense of their ethnicity and do not typically begin to wonder about it until around the age of 11-13 (Phinney, 2003). By

adolescence, they have typically settled any uncertainties about their ethnicity and feel somewhat more secure about their identity.

The process of establishing their cultural identity can be challenging as sojourning children may not have a sense of belonging to either their home or host culture. While *cultural homelessness* (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2001) is a possible outcome, studies (such as Moore & Barker, 2012) have found that they typically form a new identity that combines aspects of each culture, resulting in a cross-cultural identity (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2001) or a multi-cultural identity (Moore & Barker, 2012).

Approaches to acculturation can depend on the age of the child. Barn (2014) found that younger children preferred separation, but over time, would prefer integration like their older peers. This could be due to their developing self-concept and social identity (J. Brown & Brown, 2013). It was also found that younger children experienced more incidence of loneliness while 8-10 year olds faced more social issues with their teachers.

While there are many benefits to experiencing a variety of cultures, there are challenges for children who move in and out of cultures before they have “completed the critical developmental task of forming a sense of their own personal and cultural identity” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 40). This can pose additional challenges to their acculturation process.

A discussion of the acculturation strategies used by participants of the present study, and an assessment of the success of their adaptation is made in Chapter 5, based on the mother’s narratives and my informal observations.

2.3 Parenting

The way in which children are raised influences their identities, just as their identities influence the way they are parented, “Children’s behaviour and development influence parents’ behaviour, too, interacting with it.” (Dwairy & Achoui, 2006, p. 221). However, culture is an overarching influence. In the process

of primary socialisation, prevalent cultural values, opinions and norms are instilled in the child, shaping their personality. Parenting styles vary across cultures, between households, situations, children and ages. They are dynamic and evolving. However, researchers (e.g. Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) claim that the way in which parents raise their children is almost entirely culture-based: prevalent cultural values, opinions and norms are instilled in the child, shaping their personality. Schieffelin and Ochs' (1986) view has more recently been mirrored by Dwairy et al. (2006) who believe that culture "can transmit guidelines about parenting" (p. 231). This process is pertinent to the present study because the socialisation of a Saudi child typically raised with extended family in the same house, or living nearby, can be quite different from the nuclear families typical of a Western-dominated culture such as New Zealand.

Typically, in collectivist societies, extended families are closely distributed and are involved in each other's lives. Children, from a young age, have many interactions with different people on a daily basis. They learn to rely on their parents, or other adults, for certain needs such as feeding, or discipline. But for their socialisation needs, there are older siblings or cousins who fulfil the role of entertainers, and often educators. On the other hand, children raised in an individualistic society, such as New Zealand, interact most frequently with their nuclear families. Typically, the responsibility of primary socialisation lies predominantly on the parents or caregivers. There are benefits to both: children in collectivist societies are exposed to a lot more experiences, people, and emotions, and are able to observe and learn from adults as they perform their daily tasks. It is natural and does not require any conscious effort. However, parents of young children in an individualistic society are likely to be their main connection to the world: experiences need to be planned and the parents have to spend a lot more one-on-one time to teach their children certain things.

Since the 1960s, Diana Baumrind (1966, 1967, 1991) identified three basic child rearing styles that have been expanded upon and continue to be used today in Western culture. They are differentiated based on factors such as: a parent's

demandingness, responsiveness controlling behaviour and sensitivity to a child's emotional and developmental needs. *Authoritarian* parenting is described as having high control, demanding obedience and giving little autonomy. Children are not given affection, comfort or praise. In *permissive* parenting, children are encouraged to be autonomous, make decisions, and self-regulate. Parents are also warm, nurturing, indulgent and lenient. *Authoritative* parenting is a combination of the positive aspects of authoritarian and permissive parenting. Parents are nurturing, they encourage autonomy and independence, but enforce stage-appropriate rules to guide their children to independence. They are communicative and encourage discussion, using reasoning to set clear boundaries. They utilise positive reinforcements to elicit desirable behaviour.

Studies have found that the typical parenting style of collective cultures is authoritarianism. They place great value on obedience, and “adherence to behavioural patterns that advance the benefit and harmony of the collective” (Dwairy & Achoui, 2006, p. 221). Conversely, in individualistic cultures, children are given freedom and are also encouraged to explore and express their individuality and separateness. Dwairy and Achoui (2006) found that Arab children are brought up with values of loyalty and respect for their families, based on the reports of 2,893 adolescents across eight Arab countries. They also found that punishment, shame and fear are methods practised to maintain compliance with cultural norms, values or behavioural manners. Some older studies report that physical and emotional abuse are characteristic of parenting in Bahrain, Kuwait (Qasem, Mustafa, Kazem, & Shah, 1998), Morocco (Al-Kittani, 2000), and Jordan (Al-Shqerat & Al-Masri, 2001). In a study of Saudi female college students (Achoui, 2003), 67.5% reported having been physically punished and 65.1% of the students justified it indicating the attitude of the larger Saudi Arabian population. Factors that influence the use of these styles are class within society, level of education and functionality of the family unit. Al-Mutalq (1981) and Hussain (1987), have found that the two common parenting styles used in Saudi Arabia are authoritarian and permissive. Kherais's (2017) study of parenting techniques used by sojourning Saudi mothers

in the United States concurs with previous studies regarding the use of an authoritarian style, but only pre-sojourn.

However, due to modernisation, urbanisation, and immigration, Arab countries have been exposed to Western cultures influencing the parenting of Arab families. Saudi Arabia is considered to be one of the least influenced by Western culture, despite its wealth and consumption of Western technologies. Dwairy and Achoui (2006) argued that Western influence was discouraged in people's social and political life. However, in more recent years KASP was established, with the objective of exposing Saudis to Western culture and hopes that some aspects would be adopted. There is an absence of recent studies to illustrate what parenting practices are currently employed. But it would be reasonable to assume that changes in Saudi politics and economy have brought about some changes in the way Saudis parent. According to Global Media Insight (2018) 90% of the total Saudi population access the internet, and 75% are active social media users. Saudis, therefore, have access to large amounts of information and ideas that presumably influence the way they think. They are "becoming more accepting of new ideas and getting more inclusive in [their] outlook" (Global Media Insight, 2018). Alolyan (2015) also believes that the internet is responsible for shifting "some beliefs" (p. 160) in Saudi people.

Parenting practices are also influenced by a change in the surrounding environment. This study's participants were sojourning in a country that is different to their own, which was bound to have some impact on their parenting practices. Therefore, this study will explore the effects a change in environment will have on the participants' parenting styles and practices, the challenges these differences pose, and how the mothers mediate those differences. The findings are presented in Chapter 4.

Parenting in Islam

It is thought that religion has an essential influence on how parents rear their children as it can "supply long term parenting goals" and specify "desirable behaviour, both in childhood and adulthood" (Holden, 2010, p. 278). Islam

prescribes a code of conduct for the relationship between a parent and child, and their child-rearing. Parents, and children alike, have rights and responsibilities. For example, this Qur'anic verse describes how parents should be treated:

Whether one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of annoyance and do not repel them but rather speak to them a noble word. Lower to them the wing of humility for them out of mercy and say: My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up when I was small.
(Qur'an, 17:23-24)

Muslims are commanded to express their gratitude by respecting and honouring their parents in recognition of their sacrifices and contributions to the family unit.

Children have the right to be protected, cared for, and the right to receive proper religious education. Children will reciprocate by honouring and caring for their parents in their old age. There are many hadith and Qur'anic verses that stress the importance of honouring one's parents. Pleasing parents is a catalyst to the worship of God and is rewarded with Paradise, as Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was quoted to have said, "He who wishes to enter Paradise through its best door must please his parents". Again, he advises Muslims to hold their mothers in the highest regard saying that, "Paradise lies at the feet of mothers" because she gave birth to them, cares for them and endures pain and discomfort for them.

Some of the guiding principles for parenting are kindness and mercy, providing guidance, setting boundaries and responsibility (Farate, 2015). A parent must guide and support their child to teach them to be good people who are productive and of benefit to their communities. Showing kindness and mercy to your children includes expressing love and affection, as well as using a gentle manner with them when they have done something wrong. Children need age-appropriate boundaries to shape their behaviour and need to be given responsibilities to train them to be independent and autonomous (Bulandsheri, 2005; Tarazi, 1995). They need to understand that each person is responsible for their own actions and will be judged for them in the hereafter (Qur'an, 3:115–6; 35:18 & 53:38–9)

2.4 Empirical studies on Saudi participants

Much of empirical research on sojourners, like that on immigrants and refugees, has been conducted in Western countries and, among these, rather fewer have been conducted on Arabic speakers. Within this subgroup, a number of studies have looked at Saudi sojourners some of which have been summarised in chronological order in Table 2.1 below. The discussion that follows begins with the studies that focus on the acculturation of Saudi families, as they are most relevant to the present research project.

Table 2.1 Empirical studies about Saudi sojourners

Author	Topic	Context	Part.	Data collection	Theory/Framework	Findings
Al Hazmi, 2010	Intercultural engagement and gender mixing	Australia	2 Saudi students	in-depth interview	Descriptive phenomenology Cultural Identity	Woman afraid of male harassment. Male cautious when addressing women.
Shaw, 2010	Educational experiences and success strategies	United States	25 students	Interviews, photo elicitation, focus groups, reflective notes	Resilience, Intercultural-competence	Participants are disciplined, motivated, goal oriented. Adaptable, cultural self-awareness, open, curious, respectful
*Alandejani, 2013	Repatriation of Saudi female scholars	Repatriates from USA and UK	6 assistant professors	Interviews, email	Transformational learning Theory Culture shock	Reverse culture shock Implementing change takes time. No sense of belonging.
Hall, 2013	Saudi male perceptions of study in the US	United States	12 Saudi male students	Interview, document analysis	U-curve Theory and Shock	USA study is prestigious Reverse acculturation Experiences and changes because of sojourn hidden from family.
*AlShimai, Thompson, & Irmer, 2015	Repatriation of Saudi sojourners	Repatriates from Australia, USA, UK	14 Saudi men	interview	Profile analysis	respect/tolerance for opposing views Duration, contact and personal change affect repatriation

*Groves, 2015	Language learning as participation	Australia	10 Saudi int'l students	In-depth interviews Diary entries Interview about the diary entries	Community of practice theory Systemic functional linguistic concept of register	Preservation of Saudi identity, some adoption of host values. Imagined identities influence investment in language learning.
Al Ghamdi, 2016	Living and learning experiences of Saudi students	Canada	10 Saudi students	interview	Student Involvement Theory Socio-cultural Theory	Struggle to juggle different roles and adapt to a new country. Gained confidence, independence, self-reliance
*Barth, 2016	Ethnic identity	United States	7 Saudi women students	interview Observation Journaling/ Memoing	Ethnic identity Theory, Weinrich's Enculturation Theory Schwartz's Critical and Expansive Considerations Theory, Postcolonial Feminist Theory	Calculated compromises when negotiating cultural differences
*Belchamber, 2016	Identity and adjustment issues	Australia	7 Saudi students	Questionnaire interview	Social Identity Theory Speech Accommodation Theory Culture Shock Theory	personal growth: independence, self-reliance cultural awareness
*Qutub, 2016	Maintenance of sojourning children's ethnic identity	United States	6 Saudi sojourner mothers 11 children	interviews Children's drawings	Ecological systems Theory - children Social Identity Theory	Children loss of Arabic Importance of Islamic identity, co-national social networks. Connection to home is maintained

*Bajamal, 2017	Acculturation of Saudi Third Culture kids	United States	3 children 3 mothers 3 teachers	questionnaire in-depth interviews Photo elicitation	Phenomenological Ecological Systems Theory - children Multiple Worlds Theories - children Acculturation development model	Cultural challenges Importance of Islamic identity Discrimination
*Kherais, 2017	Influence of acculturation on parenting beliefs and children's behaviours	United States	6 Saudi mothers	interview	Berry's Acculturation Theory Baumrind's parenting styles	Change in parenting beliefs and practices Acculturation did not cause behavioural problems in the children
Al Qarni, 2018	Challenges experienced by International students	United States	6 male students 2 female students	Semi-structured interview	Culture Shock	Change in education style Importance of Islamic identity discrimination

* Studies discussed below

Kherais's (2017) investigation into the effects of acculturation on the parenting beliefs and practices of six Saudi mothers who were sojourning in America is of particular relevance to the present study. One semi-structured interview was conducted in Arabic, with each mother for 60-90 minutes. The duration of their sojourn was between five and six years. Data were analysed by coding and theme identification and Kherais used Berry's acculturation theory and Baumrind's parenting styles.

Kherais (2017) found that mothers said that they adapted their parenting style from authoritarian to authoritative to aid in their children's adaptation to the American lifestyle. Children did not pose serious behavioural challenges because of the mother's flexibility in parenting. However, finding a balance between culturally appropriate behaviour in Saudi Arabia and America was a challenge they encountered. An important limitation of this study was that only one interview was held with the mothers, and so it was not possible to see how their attitudes might have changed over time. Moreover, no observations were made to evaluate the truth value of the participants' self-reported behaviour.

Qutub's (2016) multiple-case study utilised in-depth interviews and photo elicitation to gather information about the maintenance of ethnic identities. Eleven Saudi children whose ages ranged from 6-12 years and six mothers, who had sojourned in the United States between five to eight years took part in the study. Children were asked to draw and discuss two pictures; a representation of themselves in Saudi Arabia and another of themselves in the United States, so as to gauge their attitudes and uncover their perceptions about their Saudi identity. During Qutub's half hour meeting with each child, she observed them as they drew and then discussed their drawings. Mothers' interviews lasted no more than 30 minutes and were conducted in English at the participants' homes. Qutub coded her data to identify emerging themes and used Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to guide her analysis.

In Qutub's reported findings, participating mothers found maintaining their children's Islamic and cultural values challenging. Mothers tended to have a more lax attitude when it came to younger children, but exerted more effort to teach their older children about Islam. Mothers identified that their role in teaching their children Arabic was crucial considering their immersion in an English-speaking community. One of the mothers claimed that her eight-year old daughter was ashamed of her mother for wearing niqab and "asked her not to come to school" (Qutub, 2016, p. 104), which suggests the child had a desire to be considered American and wanted to hide aspects that made her seem different.

Bajamal (2017) investigated the experiences of a group of Saudi 'third culture kids' who were growing up in the United States and had been sojourning between two to four years. She attempted to gain a holistic view of their experiences of cultural adaptation by conducting one interview with three children aged 7-10 and their three mothers. Their three homeroom teachers were given interview questions to answer via email. All interviews were conducted in English. Mothers were interviewed for approximately 45 minutes at a public library to maintain formality and children were interviewed for 30 minutes at home as well as engaged in a discussion about photos they took over a two-week period. She analysed her data using coding to identify themes to answer her research questions.

The participating mothers expressed their desire for their children to integrate into American culture, which they did in a variety of ways, including allowing them to celebrate American holidays. At the same time, they talked to their children about Islam and taught them age-appropriate aspects. They also socialised them with other Saudi or Muslim children to reinforce their cultural identity. They wanted their children to be able to fit into the American culture well enough to function successfully, and simultaneously worked to distinguish them from their peers to maintain their cultural identity. Bajamal (2017) reported that children preferred speaking in English because they were less fluent in Arabic, however, their mothers insisted on speaking to them in Arabic.

The sojourning children in Bajamal (2017) identified themselves as being Saudi *and* American. They displayed positive attitudes about both countries, and identified positive aspects for each. Bajamal (2017) reported that one child, saw his life as consisting of two worlds, and he liked to keep them separate. He would not talk about his life, people or events in Saudi Arabia while in America. His mother described him as wanting to fit in wherever he went. People like this are referred to as cultural chameleons (Mok & Morris, 2009); they know how to behave in each culture in order to be accepted.

Barth (2016) conducted a narrative inquiry of seven Saudi women, who are international students in the United States to conceptualise their ethnic identity. She elicited each of their unstructured life-stories in an interview of two to two and a half hours. She uncovered the complexities of the way the women, some of whom were mothers, positioned themselves between and apart from their Saudi culture and how they negotiated their identities. Using Rhizoanalysis (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) approach to data interpretation, Barth presents extended and frequent ‘plug-ins’ to explain and reflect on the information provided by her participants. Important aspects of their identity were the perceptions of others and how they were treated, negotiations they had to make with regard to their hijab, and their relationships with colleagues of the opposite gender. Some of the participants reported keeping distance from the Saudi community in their city of residence to avoid unwanted interferences and judgments, while others found that being a part of that community was useful for the support and socialisation.

Belchamber (2016) conducted a mixed-method inquiry into the identity and adjustment issues of seven Saudi students in Australia. First, 28 participants were surveyed about their social and education adjustment using the Delphi technique to collect “opinions representative of a group, while preserving individual anonymity” (p. 106). Six common responses to each question were presented to a different group of participants to rank in order of *most* to *least* important. Participants were asked how frequently they performed a list of activities that captured behaviours that were relevant to their cultural identity. Paired interviews were then conducted

with six participants. The findings indicated that the majority of both male and female students, were receptive to change and had a willingness to experience the advantageous differences of the Western world, so long as it could be done without compromising their core values. Some of the male students were more lenient than their female counterparts about Islamic prohibitions, such as the consumption of alcohol. Responses varied about the level of interaction with the locals, but was not indicative of greater adjustment.

Groves' (2015) study focused specifically on the active community participation of ten Saudi students in language learning. She found, through interviews and reported interactions in participants' diaries, that their active participation was limited to 'role relations'. These interactions were somewhat formulaic in nature, and occurred frequently. However, because they were not with the same person, they did not establish familiarity, develop any true connections, or improve their language. The perceived cultural distance to Australians prevented some of the men from attempting to make connections. Contrary to the younger, single male participants in Belchamber (2016) who partook in the drinking culture of Australia, Groves' older, married, male participants found it a barrier to relationship building. Retention of cultural identity was a prevalent concern for adult, international students.

Alandejani (2013) offers a view into the re-entry phase that proceeds a sojourn. Six female doctoral graduates who had studied through the scholarship programme, reported they felt misplaced when they returned home, and struggled with their sense of belonging. Similar to the initial stage of a sojourn, two of her participants experienced depression because of repatriation shock, which is a common finding in the literature on re-entry after a sojourn (e.g. Penke, 2016) All six participants reported that they utilised work as a coping strategy to help them readapt.

Finding a balance between the values adopted during a sojourn and the old ways of doing things is challenging. Some of Alandejani's (2013) participants attempted to unlearn the new ways, and follow the conventional Saudi cultural codes, but found

that their values and lifestyles had changed too much for them to easily switch back. This posed additional challenges in the workplace. AlShimai, Thompson and Irmer's (2015) study of repatriating Saudis supports this finding: those who underwent greater personal change during their sojourn experienced the most difficult repatriation. Participants in Alandejani's (2013) were reported to have held onto their religious identity during their sojourn and were disappointed to find that their home community had drifted away from the behaviours and values encouraged by Islam, causing them further distress. A strong cultural identity correlates to significant repatriation distress according to Sussman (2002). AlShimai, Thompson and Irmer's (2015) study also supports Sussman's view.

The three studies by Kherais (2017), Qutub (2016) and Bajamal (2017) conducted inquiries about sojourning Saudi mothers. They all used in-depth interviewing as one form of data collection. However, the interviews conducted by Qutub and Bajamal were considerably short, raising a question about the richness of the data they gathered. Additionally, interviews were a one-time occurrence in all three studies capturing the experiences and values of their participants at a single point in time. None of the reviewed literature engaged their participants over a longer period of time. Similarly, focus group discussions were not utilised for collecting data to triangulate the self-reported data shared in interviews with the researcher to what might be said when in the presence of a group of their peers. Furthermore, the researchers were insiders, as they were Saudi themselves, yet only Kherais (2017) interviewed her participants in Arabic. Use of the native language of the participants in interviewing can be advantageous in that they can express themselves better.

As noted in Table 2.1, the majority of the literature about Saudi sojourning experiences has been conducted in Australia and the United States. As hosts of a large cohort of Saudi students each year, it is pertinent to explore their issues. However, whilst New Zealand received a considerable number, their experiences are not reflected in the sojourning adjustment literature. This is the research space this study will occupy.

2.5 Experiential learning

The interpretation of the findings will require a grounded explanation and, following the analysis of all the data collected, it was felt that adapting the model of Experiential Learning Theory could prove fruitful.

Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory is a holistic concept described as "the central process of human adaptation to the social and physical environment" (p. 43) that integrates the totality of human functioning – thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. Experiential learning theory is concerned with knowing when behaviour is governed by thought or feeling and how the individual integrates these functions.

Experiential learning theory is based upon these six premises:

1. Learning is thought of as a process, rather than a behavioural outcome
2. Knowledge is continuously formed and reformed by experience
3. Learning is a conflict-filled process that requires the learner to synthesise the opposing learning abilities of performing, reflecting, thinking, and problem solving, to develop a higher level of learning: growth.
4. Learning is a holistic concept that includes one's adaptation to their total life situation.
5. Learning involves the reciprocal transaction between person and environment; individual experiences influence the environment, just as the environment shapes behaviour.
6. Learning is the refinement of knowledge acquired through the transaction of previous human cultural experience and a person's subjective life experiences. (Kolb, 2015)

The cycle of experiential learning is based on the assumption that learning is the process whereby "concepts are derived from and [are] continuously modified by experience". Grasping experience by taking in information and transforming experience by interpreting and acting on that information, are both needed to create knowledge. Figure 2.2 of Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory model

shows the dialectical relationship between the two modes of grasping (Concrete Experience and Abstract Conceptualisation) and transforming (Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation) experience.

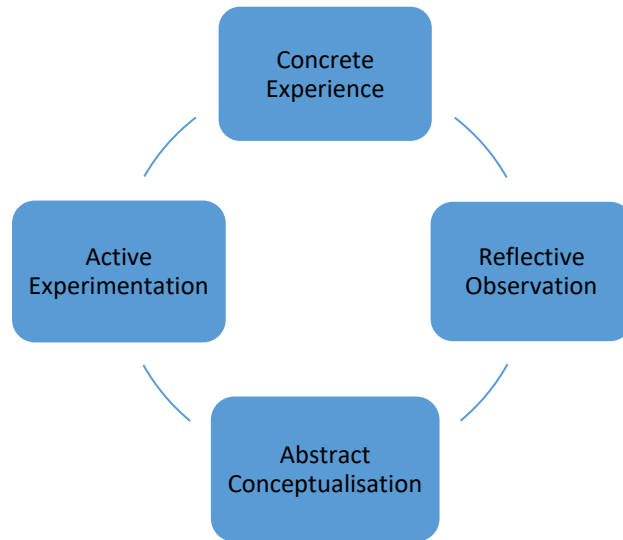


Figure 2.3 Experiential learning theory cycle

(Kolb, 2015) Reprinted with permission

A *concrete experience* occurs in which a learner may have an immediate reaction to the situation. After which they enter the *reflective observation* stage, and think more deeply about how they handled the situation, ask questions, observe others, make comparisons and identify differences as they try to transform their experience. Next, a learner comes to *abstract conceptualisation* where they reconstruct their understanding of the experience, by developing views, opinions or judgments and formulating generalisations. In conclusion of their conceptualisation, at the *active experimentation* stage, the learner applies their ideas to a new context, testing the validity of their conclusion, thereby transforming their understanding into new experiences. The cycle may begin at any stage, but they always occur in sequence (Akella, 2010).

It is believed that a learner cannot progress through the stages of the cycle without an impetus (Fowler, 2008). Learners need to be assisted through the process, but “educator roles are not limited to individuals in formal classroom teaching

situations. The framework can be extended to individuals in all walks of life who “teach” as leaders, coaches, parents, friends, etc.” (Kolb, 2015, pp. 302-303). In formal settings, an educator would ideally engage with the learner at each stage, in different capacities, and adopt one of the *Educator roles* presented in Figure 2.3. A *facilitator* would help the learner connect with their concrete experience and reflect on it. A *subject expert* would help organise their reflection to the subject matter. A *standard setter and evaluator* would aid in the application of knowledge towards performance goals and providing consistent feedback. And, a *coach* would help a learner take action on personally meaningful goals.

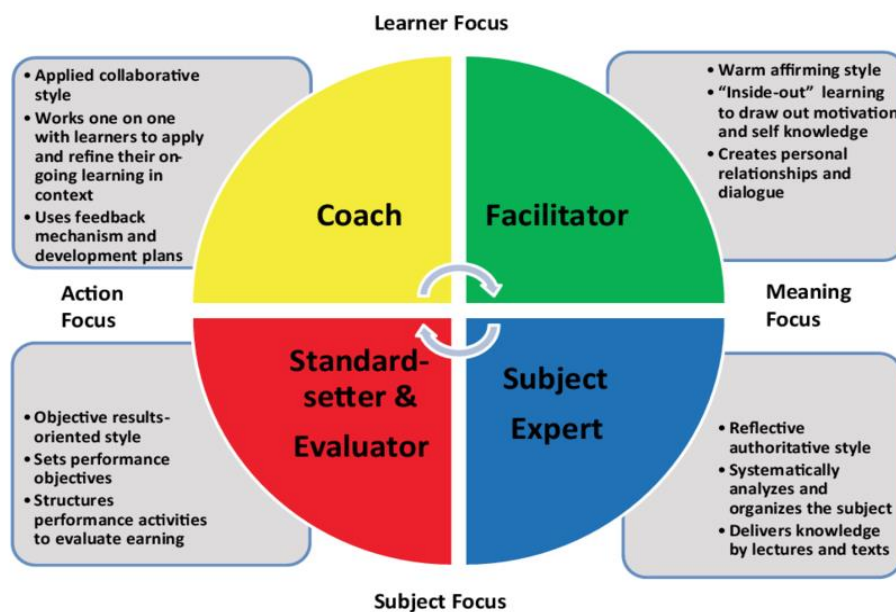


Figure 2.4 Educator roles and the learning cycle

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While Experiential Learning Theory is commonly applied to educational and professional settings, it can be applied to any life situation, considering that learning occurs in any setting throughout one’s life. A sojourn is a significant life situation exposing an individual to an array of new, cross-cultural experiences necessitating them to engage in reflection and active experimentation. Yamazaki and Kayes (2004) hypothesised that particular learning strategies need to be employed in particular cross-cultural learning situations. They explained that there is congruence

between personal competencies acquired by expatriates in their home culture and those required by the host culture. They concluded that interpersonal skills related to Concrete Experience, such as building relationships with others and valuing people of different cultures may be the most important skills for adapting to a new culture.

A number of studies have used Experiential Learning Theory as a guiding framework in study-abroad groups, which are believed to be ideal for improving intercultural sensitivity (e.g. Levine & Garland, 2015; Lindsey, 2005; Young, Natrajan-Tyagi, & Platt, 2015). Levine and Garland (2015) attempted to measure the intercultural communication competency of a group of 110 tertiary-level students who took part in a four-week study-abroad programme to France. They administered an open-ended questionnaire before their departure and again at the end of the programme. They concluded that as a result of participants' observations of the host society and their attempts to engage, they increased their knowledge about the differences and complexities of French culture and communication tendencies.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed relevant literature on acculturation, and the dearth of empirical studies on Saudi women sojourning in Western countries, highlighting a gap in the literature, particularly in the New Zealand context. A closer look at the studies that are most relevant to the present study identified important issues in the acculturation of Saudi mothers and children. A review of experiential learning theory also revealed that it has been used in study abroad research; however, to my knowledge it has not been applied to the acculturation of sojourners whose sojourn lasts for a number of years. Additionally, it is important to note that the studies reviewed used Experiential Learning Theory as a pre-determined framework, which may have lead to the distortion of the findings because of the possibility that data may be distorted, or ignored, if they do not fit neatly into the categories. Hence, the

need for a grounded analysis of the data *before* identifying a potentially useful theoretical perspective.

The research questions this study aimed to answer are:

1. What were the experiences of a group of Saudi women sojourning in New Zealand?
2. How did these experiences impact upon the identities of mothers and their children?
3. In what ways did their adjustment to New Zealand culture affect the mothers' parenting beliefs and practices?
4. How did they anticipate the challenges facing own and their children's return to Saudi Arabia?
5. What strategies did individuals employ to mitigate the effects of acculturative stress?
6. To what extent can Experiential Learning Theory illuminate their intercultural development?
7. How can the findings of this study contribute to a wider understanding of the challenges facing women sojourning in an unfamiliar cultural context?

The following chapter deals with how these research questions were addressed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines and discusses the methodology of the study. Section 3.1 will explain that this investigation is a case study within the socio-constructivist interpretive paradigm that uses a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. This is followed in Section 3.2 with an explanation of why and how a multi-method approach to data collection was chosen for this research. Section 3.3 discusses the ethical considerations and procedures of the study and in Section 3.4 the grounded theory approach adopted in data analysis. This is followed in Section 3.5 by considerations for the study's trustworthiness. Sections 3.6 and 3.7 detail the actual procedures of data collection and analysis, and the chapter concludes with a summary of the key points raised.

Since the focus of the present study is on the sojourning experiences, perceptions and beliefs of a group of Saudi women, it is appropriate to adopt an approach to inquiry that focuses on what they say about these matters, and which puts their stories at the forefront of the findings. This entails a qualitative research approach; such approaches are used in the social sciences to explore the way people make sense of their experiences: what they believe, feel and how they behave. Approaches within the qualitative framework attempt to understand people's social reality. These realities are constructed by personal experiences and perceptions, of which the only expert is the individual themselves.

The highly subjective nature of social inquiry necessitates the researcher to see the way the participant sees. To do that, the researcher should try as much as possible not to impose their own perspectives or judgments on the participant, instead they must listen carefully and ask questions. But also, in order to familiarise themselves with the participant's world, immersion into their setting is useful as it enables the researcher to carefully observe their interactions and witness how they co-construct interpretations of their experiences.

What Saudi women say, how they feel, and how they act in relation to their sojourning experience are the data of this research. The data have primacy and drive the theoretical framework of the analysis.

3.1 Ethnographic research

An ethnographic approach was employed to explore the inner lives of participants and attempt to understand their acculturation and parenting experiences. Unlike in positivist research, which typically begins with a pre-conceived idea or hypothesis, this research is naturalistic and employed an open-ended approach. As noted by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) I did not know in advance what I would find, but I strived to understand the participants' experiences through their own eyes. Hence, data were collected in a relatively unstructured way as prompts for interviews and focus group discussions were generated in situ (Spindler & Spindler, 1992) to shed light on issues as they emerged from the inquiry (Hammersley, & Atkinson, 2007).

The main aim of ethnography is to “investigate a specific culture (‘ethno’) and then present a picture (‘graph’) of that culture, and to do so as accurately and fully as possible” (Barnard, 2000, p. 18). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), the main characteristics of ethnographic research are its nature as explorative, contextual, unobtrusive, longitudinal and interpretative. This research was explorative because it began with tentative areas of interest that developed through the course of the research as data were collected through interviews, focus groups and informal observations, and as preliminary analyses were conducted. Aside from the planned data collection, further unplanned opportunities for observation arose (see Section 3.4.6), which is in line with Hammersley’s (1994) view that data collection should be “unstructured” (p. 2).

The contextual nature of ethnographic research is also fundamental to the study. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out, since “behaviour and attitudes are often not stable across contexts” (p. 17) and the presence and behaviour of the

researcher is an essential feature of the context, these become “central to the analysis”. Thus particularly relevant to the present study is my own identity as a New Zealand-born Arab Muslim mother who was not initially acquainted with the participants, and thus while I was likely to be made privy to some feelings and experiences that would not be shared with other ‘outsider’ researchers, it is also possible – even likely – that other experiences or feelings would be withheld from me from being ‘not insider enough’ or even potentially even from being ‘too close’. Also particularly important to recognise is the contextual nature of the data collection sessions. As outlined in Section 3.4.5, a particularly important source of data were the focus group sessions, which partially doubled as social events. This facilitated a great deal of valuable talk, but it is important to recognise that such events also have their own social organisation, with a certain shape and particular constraints (Psathas, 1995). Most relevant for present purposes in recognising that some topics may lend themselves to deeper discussion in such an environment while others may be treated as more or less taboo. There may, for example, be times when participants exercise self-restraint in disclosing information for fear of social sanctions, or when they express agreement towards ideas in order to promote group harmony. Similarly, as discussed by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007):

We need to remember that what people say in an interview will indeed be shaped, to some degree, by the questions they are asked; by conventions about what can be spoken about, by whom and to whom, and so on; by what they think the interviewer wants; by what they believe he or she would approve or disapprove of; by the setting in which the interview is carried out; by the timing of the interview; by how it has developed over time (p. 100)

As Psathas (1995) notes “[a]ll interaction is thus considered to be affected, and therefore to some extent explained, by the context in which it occurs” (Psathas, 1995). For the present study, this meant that due caution was exercised in the interpretation of data. One practice, for instance, was returning to key themes multiple times, checking transcripts for the verification of ideas in other places.

The physical context of the study was Hamilton, New Zealand where the participants and I were residents. Sharing this common physical space proved helpful: as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note participants' behaviours cannot be understood independently of the environment in which they live. Typically, in fieldwork, the researcher is expected to have prolonged face-to-face contact with the participants; however, as the participants are sojourners who do not live close together, it was not practical (and probably not possible) to have that type of contact. I was invited to numerous participants' social gatherings, which allowed me to observe their patterns of behaviour and social practices and to have first-hand experience with the group (Wolcott, 1999). Participants chose the parts of their lives and experiences to give me access to, enabling the study to be conducted in a largely unobtrusive manner.

Conventionally, ethnography is associated with field research conducted over an extended period of time of a year or more (Wolcott, 2005). The present study involved collecting data for approximately a year and a half, although due to participant circumstances, they were not engaged in the process for the duration of an entire year. However, in most cases data were collected at intervals throughout that period.

Data were analysed interpretively, by member checking and allowing participants to interpret the cultural significance of events and actions, a matter that is discussed further in Section 3.7.

Additionally, "developing and maintaining relations in the field" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 171), as well as respecting and appreciating the social world (Hammersley, & Atkinson, 2007) which were achieved by ensuring that I at all times presented myself in culturally appropriate ways and worked to maintain positive, polite interactions with participants, both during and outside data collection. This was greatly facilitated by own cultural heritage and therefore shared knowledge of relevant customs and behaviours.

3.2 Case study

Case studies are commonly considered suitable for understanding complex social phenomena because they provide a detailed account of the perspectives of the participants involved in the phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) and allow holistic investigation about real people in their real life settings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). According to Yin's (2015) definition of case study, the present research is classified as a case study because it is an empirical enquiry that comprehensively examines the acculturation experiences of sojourning Saudi Arabian mothers within their particular real-life setting: New Zealand.

Stake (1995) classifies case studies into three main types, according to their respective purpose: multiple, instrumental and intrinsic. Since this study investigated and closely examined the participants' experiences about the given phenomenon in its natural setting, it is considered an *instrumental* case study. This helped to establish a broad, yet rich and in-depth picture of the general phenomenon: the challenges and developments that six Saudi mothers experience while parenting their children during their temporary residence in Hamilton, New Zealand. Hence, this case study cannot be considered an *intrinsic* case study as it does not undertake to understand a particular case, nor can it be considered a *collective* case study as it does not look at a sufficient number of cases (Stake, 1995).

Case studies have been largely criticised because of their lack of generalisability to broader contexts. However, the narrow focus they provide on a specific context facilitates the construction of a detailed, in depth understanding of what is studied (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). As argued by Stake (1995) case studies can offer a greater understanding and provide general explanations for the phenomenon because "few human behaviours are unique, idiosyncratic, and spontaneous" (Berg, 2009, p. 259). This suggests that the shared nature of human experience means that information gathered about a small group of people may be indicative of the larger group.

3.3 Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is widely used in qualitative research (Kim, 2010). Pavlenko (2006) states that narrative inquiry is “transformative,” as it shifts the power relationship between the researcher and the participant solely to the participant in terms of voice and inquiry. It provides valuable information as it provides the participant with the space for reflection and recollection of their experiences (Pavlenko, 2006). According to Chase (2008) narrative inquiry could be “oral or written” (p. 59) and is “elicited or heard” (p. 59) during field research. In the present research, narratives were elicited through interviews and focus group discussions. Barkhuizen (2011) highlights that narratives can be, and perhaps usually are, co-constructed by the participant and the researcher “over multiple turns of talk” (p. 392). Interviews with the participants of the present study were of a similar nature to that described by Barkhuizen (2011) in that interviews “resemble more closely an everyday conversation” (p. 392). As discussed above (Section 3.1), interviewers and (in the case of focus groups) other interactants play a fundamental role in shaping narratives. However, as argued by (Rabbidge, 2017), academic publications often tend to obscure this role by presenting decontextualized utterances and brief summaries of what was said. Effectively, this presents only the researcher’s take on the data and discourages readers from checking for alternative explanations. Thus, in the present study, extended extracts are presented to provide a greater sense of what was said, thereby providing for the possibility of alternative analyses.

Narrative inquiry benefited the current research in the following three ways: it facilitated a personal relationship between myself and the participants and developed intimate engagements; it helped to reveal social, cultural and environmental factors that shape the participants’ experiences; and, it enabled the creation of a clearer narrative by both the participants and myself adding pieces to the puzzle (Haydon, Browne, & van der Riet, 2018). Therefore, narrative inquiry was effective in helping participants deepen their understandings of the

complexities of their experiences and thoughts (Fontana & Frey, 2008) and their roles as mothers in a cross-cultural context.

The narratives are analysed and reported in Chapter 4 using the approach described by Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2013) as the ‘analysis of narratives’ where narratives are used as data: similarities are identified across all the collected narratives and then grouped together to form themes.

3.4 Data collection procedures

3.4.1 Recruitment of participants

The sampling method used here is that of snowballing, a network sampling technique. As Lee (1993) asserts, snowballing “has been recognized as having considerable potential for the sampling of rare populations” (p. 65). He further asserts that “snowball sampling does have advantages in cases where those being studied are members of a vulnerable or highly stigmatized group” (p. 67). Similarly, Berg (2009) characterises it as being “sometimes the best way to locate subjects with certain attributes or characteristics necessary in a study” and often used to study “various classes of deviance, sensitive topics, or difficult to reach populations” (p. 33). Saudi women sojourners fit the description of vulnerable, stigmatised and inaccessible group of people. The sampling strategy involved identify some sojourners with the relevant characteristics and asking them to nominate others with the same characteristics.

Criteria were initially set for participation based on the overall aim of the research: exploring the everyday lives of mothers and parenting/educating their children in New Zealand. Participants were identified through a number of criteria: Saudi Arabian mothers who were between the ages of 25 and 35, had children under the age of 12, were residents in Hamilton and had lived in New Zealand for less than six years, who intended to return home.

The criteria were broad, taking into consideration the small pool of potential participants available for recruitment. In the initial stages, preference was for stay-at-home mothers, but I quickly discovered that that would not have yielded enough participating mothers, as it proved to be against the norm.

My goal was to recruit ten mothers, as a sample of the estimated 100 Saudis currently residing in Hamilton. I then spoke to friends about my research in the hopes of them spreading the word to their acquaintances. I used formal approaches to recruit participants; I left letters of invitation, written in Arabic, at the prayer room on campus, a place they are likely to frequent, with the knowledge that they abide by Islamic teachings; I also gave copies of the letters to teachers at the language centre, to target language students. When these methods proved unsuccessful, I tried a more direct approach: a friend reached out to a Saudi they had met and asked if they knew of any women who fit the criteria and would be willing to participate. He said his wife would be willing and she could enlist her friends. This method yielded three participants, including one woman with no children. Then, through snowball sampling, two more women volunteered who also did not have children.

With only two mothers participating, I approached the university International Centre to distribute the invitation directly to enrolled Saudi women. It became clear how small the target group actually was. However, this resulted in one mother who became a participant, and another who agreed to participate but stopped replying to communications.

Using opportunistic sampling (Willig, 2013), I began interviewing all the women who were willing to participate, even though they were not mothers, so as to gather as much information as I could about their acculturation experiences.

After a number of months, having resigned myself to the likelihood that I would be unable to enlist more mothers, a participant who knew of my target number of participants being unmet, recruited more participants on my behalf. This was done

through a *Whatsapp* group that all sojourning Saudi women in Hamilton belong to. This resulted in an additional four participants, three of whom were mothers.

A total of six mothers, and three wives were interviewed. The mothers are the main participants of this study; however, data collected from the wives were used to support the information shared by the mothers, and to give depth and variety to the data on life pre-sojourn and current acculturation matters.

3.4.2 Setting and participants

The participants of this study all lived in Hamilton, a growing city in New Zealand, with a population of approximately 70% European and less than 2% from the Middle East (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Hamilton is considered culturally and linguistically diverse with 80 ethnic groups and 24% of the population born outside of New Zealand. Islam makes up 1.9% of the declared religious affiliations (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). The number of Saudis living in Hamilton is undetermined, however estimates would suggest approximately 100.

The participants of this study were all Saudi women aged between 22 and 33 years. They were all married and had joined or moved with their husbands to support them. Six of them were mothers, and two became mothers during data-collection. The majority of participants were from Riyadh. They were all high school graduates, with six also holding a Bachelor's degree and four pursuing a Master's degree. Most of the participants had lived in New Zealand for more than two years and less than four. Table 3.1 provides demographic information about the participants.

Table 3.1 Participant demographics

*Name	Age	City	Children ages	Highest Degree	English Level	Further Study	Duration	Interviews
Ayesha	33	Riyadh	10yr-F, 9yr-F, 5yr-M, 3m-M	B.A	Level 7	Pathway to M.A	3 years	3
Maram	26	Riyadh	pregnant	B.A	completed	PGDip To M.A	3 years	2
Ruba	27	Riyadh	9yr-M, 5yr-M	B.A	Level 7	Pathway to M.A	3 years	3
Bayan	22	Riyadh	None	B.A	Level 2	n/a	8 months	2
Doha	27	Mecca	3yr-M, 2yr-F	B.A	completed	Pathway to M.A	2 years	2
Jawhara	25	Riyadh	4yr-M, 1.5yr-M	High school	completed	Pathway To B.A	4 years	3
Abrar	22	Riyadh	None	B.A.	Level 2	n/a	5 months	2
Najat	32	Taif	8yr-M, 6yr-M, 3yr-M	High school	Intermediate	n/a	3 years	3
Hajar	30	Riyadh	8yr-F, 6yr-F pregnant	High school	Level 3	n/a	4 years	3

*All names are pseudonyms

3.4.3 Preparation and piloting

Preparation for conducting fieldwork is necessary to refine plans and establish that procedures will produce the data content required for the study. It is also an effective way of increasing the reliability of case studies (Yin, 2009). I prepared for this case study by planning, designing and translating the data instruments, information sheets and consent forms well in advance. This gave me a plan to follow.

I also needed to have some familiarity with the target group, which happened a year before this study began. I conducted a scoping study about the everyday lives of Saudi women in New Zealand. Three Saudi women participated in two in-depth interviews, which gave me sufficient exposure to the nature of Saudi women, and their general willingness to help. That was the first time I took on the role of researcher in a case study and experienced the process of being an interviewer, including asking open-ended questions, mentally translating and transcribing interviews and writing up interview summaries.

Before data collection began for the current study, I tested my open-ended interview questions on two PhD students; one was a Middle Eastern sojourning mother, and the other was an Asian sojourning mother. I was able to ascertain that my questions could evoke relevant information, and that the number of questions were suitable for an hour-long interview. As they were PhD students, they gave me feedback on the questions, how they felt during the interview and suggestions for future interviews, which I made use of in the field.

I also participated in a research group, with a cohort of PhD students who were also about to embark on the data-collection stage, where our supervisor organised presentations about the theoretical components of conducting interviews, focus groups and observations. We were given the opportunity to conduct mock interviews as well as facilitate and participate in mock focus groups and received feedback from the other members in the group.

Pilot interviews and focus groups were recorded to test the voice recorder I intended to use for data collection. I was able to ascertain that it had sufficient storage and battery life to record an entire interview and focus group. I experimented with where to place the recorder to ensure optimal sound quality and voice clarity. The microphone was strong and could be placed on a table, between myself and the interviewee while we sat comfortably on couches, across from one another. It could also pick up the voices of four focus group participants and cancel-out the other focus group discussions occurring in the same lecture theatre.

I tested iTunes, Quick Time player and VLC (VideoLAN Client) but found that VLC media player was the most suitable. It supports mp3 files and has functions that are useful for transcription such as different playback speeds that capture every utterance spoken, whether mumbled or spoken quickly.

3.4.4 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are a “long-standing tool of sociolinguistic research” (Hoffman, 2014), involving “verbal interchanges where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person” (Dunn, 2005, p. 79).

Following Labov (1984), the interviews in the present study were semi-structured, in the sense that an interview schedule was prepared to cover general themes I wanted to inquire about. They served as prompts to evoke experiences and feelings in the participants. By asking open-ended questions and allowing the interviewees the freedom to speak, without interruption and redirection, I hoped to discover important information that I had not considered. Where I needed further information, the semi-structured format allowed me to probe beneath the surface of what the interviewee said. Following standard interviewing procedures, all three interviews were audio recorded, with the participants’ consent, and summaries were sent to them for their validation and/or amendment.

Participants were first given a letter of invitation that was written in Arabic that provided a brief description of the research and its goal. Next, I made contact via

text message, and arranged to give them an *Information Sheet* (Appendix 1), a *Bio Questionnaire* (Appendix 2), and a *Participant Consent Form* that were all translated into Arabic to ensure participants understood what participation entailed, and what their rights were during the process (Appendix 3). They were reassured that their identities would be protected and a pseudonym would be assigned. Then, I requested they select a date in the following week for the first interview to take place.

Time and location were set by the participants, although I did offer options. Some interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, others at a café, and a couple were at my own home. Interviews were scheduled, and sometimes rescheduled to accommodate participants' unplanned obligations. They were reminded before each interview that they could ask to stop the audio recording at any time. There were occasions when I used my own discretion and stopped the recording, for example, when a participant received a phone call or was interrupted by a child or husband. I felt that while I was witness to these events, they were private and that continuing to record would pose an ethical challenge.

The duration of the interviews varied, and was dictated by the participants themselves. Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2013) support this approach believing that interview duration should be "viewed in light of the constraints and opportunities provided by the interviewees" (p. 24). The duration of the interviews varied slightly, but generally followed Richards (2003) recommendation to not exceed an hour as "tiredness can begin to creep in after an hour or so" (p. 67). Some participants had a lot to say and exceeded the hour by about ten minutes, while others gave shorter answers and their interviews lasted 45 minutes. On a couple of occasions, interviews were cut short because of children and so the interviews were rescheduled.

Over the course of one year, mothers (the main participants) were engaged in three semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 4 for an *Interview schedule*) whereas the wives were only interviewed twice. The first interview was conducted soon after

participants were recruited with the purpose of learning about the circumstances that brought them to New Zealand, their preparation, expectations, hopes and fears and challenges faced in the early days. It was also to identify acculturative stressors and form a view of their social and linguistic identity at the start of this project. This retrospective inquiry was beneficial in giving the research a benchmark to compare the women's adaptation against and in providing them with perspective; they were reminded of why they made the move to New Zealand. The topics covered in this interview were the same for mothers and wives alike.

The second interview aimed to elicit responses about the participants' children: their behaviour, language use, schooling, socialisation and the mother's current parenting experiences in dealing with these areas. Participating wives did not participate in the second interview. The third and final, interview, required participants to think about their future lives and their return to Saudi Arabia: imagine what life would be like, anticipate challenges they and their children would face upon reintegration into their native society, their re-acculturation, their new social identities and their language issues. Participating wives were not asked the child-related questions.

The total number of interviews with each participant can be found in Table 3.2. As suggested by the table, deeper inquiry was made into the lives of mothers because of the additional elements that identity involves. Doha, although a mother, was only interviewed twice because she travelled to Saudi Arabia and did not return.

Interviews were conducted in the language of the participants' choice: Arabic or English. Most participants preferred to use their mother tongue to better express themselves; however, Ruba and Jawhara saw these interviews as an opportunity to practice their English. There were some instances where the participants, code-switched between English and Arabic to express themselves effectively and to ensure that I understood what they intended to say.

At the end of each interview, participants were invited to add anything they wanted and ask any questions. They were thanked for their time and informed that I would

be in touch soon to schedule a second interview. Some were curious about what my next steps were with the data I had collected and if what they had given me would actually be beneficial to my study. Two weeks later, they were given an *Interview Summary* (see Appendix 5 for a sample) to validate, to comment on and approve for use.

Table 3.2 Data collection table

Name	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Focus Group
Ayesha	15.08.16	03.09.16	31.01.17	08.07.17
Maram	01.09.16	12.03.17	n/a	08.07.17
Ruba	24.09.16	24.11.16	25.04.17	08.07.17
Bayan	29.10.16	15.04.17	n/a	n/a
Doha	15.11.16	18.11.16	Repatriated	n/a
Jawhara	18.06.17	18.09.17	26.03.18	n/a
Abrar	24.06.17	09.10.17	n/a	09.09.17
Najat	24.07.17	26.07.17	18.10.17	09.09.17
Hajar	18.10.17	26.07.17	11.12.17	09.09.17

3.4.5 Focus groups

A focus group is an informal discussion between people who “come from similar social and cultural backgrounds or who have similar experiences or concerns” (Liamputtong, 2011, p. 3) and are used to encourage people to engage with each other and contribute their ideas (Kitzinger, 1994).

Focus groups are an ideal accompaniment to individual interviews because changing the dynamic from a researcher-dominant environment to a group of their peers can make participants “feel safe to share information” (Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991, p. 2; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009) that they may not have shared otherwise. Additionally, focus groups can provide more realistic accounts of what people think because participants can challenge one another (Neuman, 2014)

and probe deeper (Bryman, 2012) than an interviewer might, forcing each other to “think about and possibly revise their views” (p. 503).

I debated with myself over whether or not I should facilitate the focus groups. At the time, I had a hyper-awareness to the role I played during interviews and how I unwittingly influenced what participants shared about themselves and their lives and so I feared that my presence would bias the views they shared, and that my comments or questions would be leading. Eventually, I decided that I would be present during focus group discussions because I felt that it would be beneficial to observe the participants’ body language and their interactions with one another, which I could not do from an audio recording. I was also concerned that introducing a stranger to facilitate would influence their responses in ways I could not predict.

In order to minimise my influence, I prepared a set of topics in the form of statements to be discussed. For consistency, I phrased each statement in the positive form. For example, “Children should be involved in making decisions that concern them” and “Boys and girls should be parented in the same way”. As a facilitator of the discussion, my role was limited to asking if anyone had anything to add, stating the next topic, and directly addressing quieter participants. I did not influence the discussion with my personal views or opinions.

Participants were asked to participate in one focus group to discuss opinions on a range of topics about parenting, language and culture, and education that arose during the individual interviews. Participants were split into groups of three. The makeup of each group was two mothers and one wife because I believed that the contrast between mothers and future mothers would elicit an interesting discussion.

As shown in Figure 3.1, Focus Group 1 consisted of three women who were close friends; Ayesha and Ruba are both mothers, while Maram was expecting her first child at the time. I decided to keep their friendship group intact, believing that it would result in richer discussion and a more relaxed atmosphere. I also thought it would be easier to arrange a mutually convenient time.

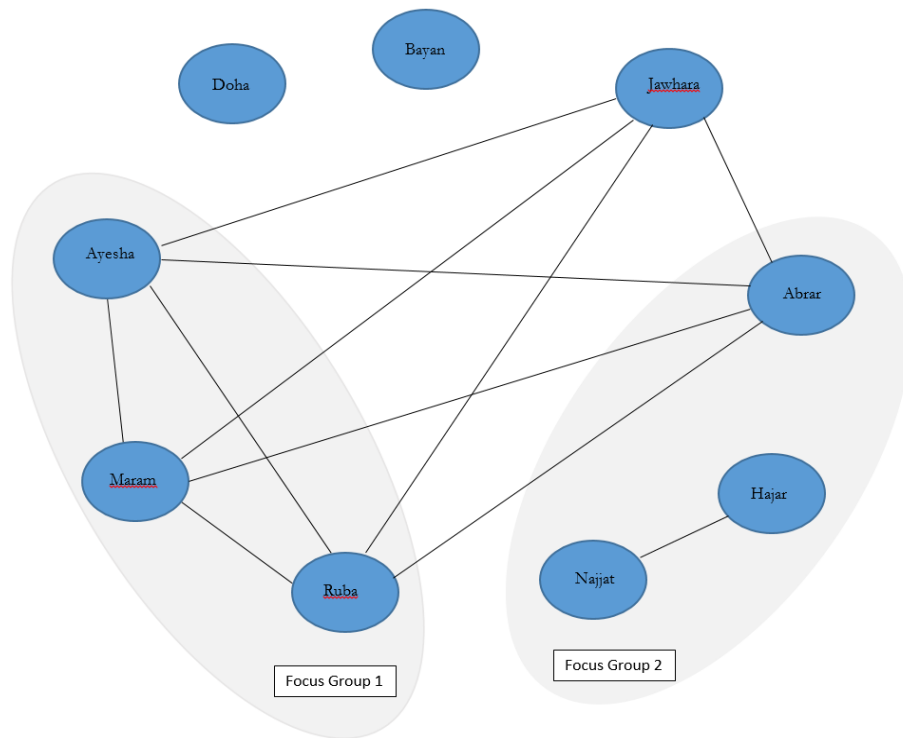


Figure 3.1 Friendships between participants

They were approached in May to find a time to meet, but Ramadan was just around the corner and meant that the participants were on a more rigid schedule than usual, with responsibilities needing to be fulfilled on time. Following the end of Ramadan were school holidays. Attempting to make matters more convenient, I suggested that the children could come along and play together in an adjacent room. A time was finally set in July. A participant offered to hold it at her house, two hours before a dinner party she was hosting that we were all invited to, as well as many other Saudi women. One of the participants arrived an hour and a half late. We could not begin the discussion until she had arrived, but this meant that we had less time in which to have it. We found a quiet room and began our discussion. Half way through, with the arrival of more guests, we decided to end the focus group and complete it another day. The following day, one of the participants rang and offered to hold the focus group at her house that day where we managed to complete the

remainder of the topics. During both these sessions, children came in from time to time to speak to their mothers, which was somewhat disruptive and distracted the participants. However, the discussion still flowed and each participant made substantial contributions.

According to Stewart and Shamdasani (2015), “seating arrangements can influence group members’ perception of status, the degree of participation, patterns of interaction, and leadership behaviors” (p. 31). I was conscious of where I sat, wanting to avoid being seen as a leader or as a member of the discussion. Once participants selected their seats, I chose where I would sit. While we were all sitting beside each other in a square, I was careful to maintain some distance between myself and the participants. Our seating during each of the focus groups is illustrated in Figure 3.2. In Part 1 (left) and Part 2 (right) of the first focus group, participants were seated on a floor lounge suite and I sat on the floor so I could have a good view of them all, but also a little outside of the square to physically set myself outside of their discussion.

My presence did not appear to have inhibited their discussion: I was silent most of the time because the participants were comfortable with each other and carried the discussion themselves.

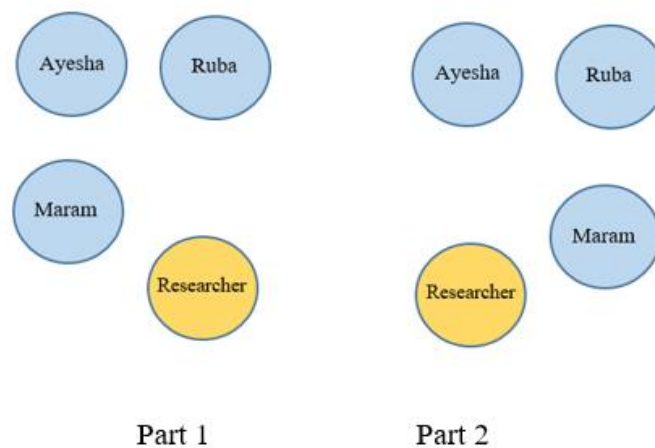


Figure 3.2 Group 1 seating - part 1 and 2

They freely questioned each other, invited each other's opinions, debated, clarified and steered back to the topic presented when needed.

The second focus group consisted of Najat, Hajar and Abrar. Najat identified that she was on good terms with Hajar and that they live quite close to each other. So I grouped them together, with Abrar, a non-mother, whom I had seen present at the same social gatherings. I thought that familiarity would be beneficial.

This focus group took place at my home because none of the participants volunteered to host it. During the evening was the most suitable time for them, which meant that public places were not an option. Two participants arrived later than the agreed time, so the discussion could not proceed until they had arrived. Again, I invited them to bring their children in an attempt to make it more convenient for them; however, the mothers did not bring their children. Their tardiness had no bearing on the quality of the discussion. Before beginning, participants were offered food and drink, which remained on the coffee table during the focus group. Figure 3.3 illustrates our seating during the focus group:

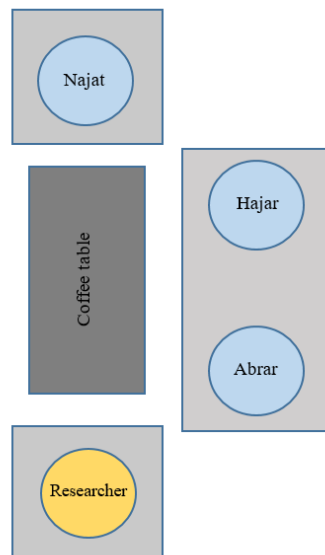


Figure 3.3 Group 2 seating

We were all seated on couches; Najat and I were on single couches, while Hajar and Abrar shared a three-seater couch, with a space between them. Hajar arrived

second and placed herself next to her friend Najat. Abrar arrived last and because she did not know the other two very well, sat at the end of the long couch, closest to me.

I found that my role as facilitator was needed a lot more during this focus group. Researchers are warned against one group member dominating the discussion (Reed & Payton, 1997). This was an issue I faced in this focus group; Najat and Hajar had a lot to contribute and worked off each other due to their close relationship and comfort levels; however, Abrar was silent most of the time. This may have been due to the dominance of the other two members, an absence of a rapport between herself and them, or because she recognised she was not an expert on the subject being discussed. I had to keep inviting her to share her opinion to make sure she was given the chance to speak.

The intention was for there to be a third focus group that consisted of the remaining three participants. However, Doha returned to Saudi Arabia after her second interview and it was difficult to communicate with her. I planned to conduct a paired interview with Bayan and Jawhara, and send Doha a summary for her comments and contribution. However, with Jawhara busy completing assignments and studying for exams, and the impending delivery of Bayan's baby, it was challenging to find a mutually agreeable time. It is for this reason that the third focus group did not materialise.

3.4.6 Informal participant observation

Participants often invited me into their homes, allowing me a view into their private lives. During our interviews, there were occasions when I observed interactions between a participant and her child, or between a participant and her husband. I also observed the design and layout of their homes, and the alterations they made to suit their lifestyle and traditions. I made mental notes of my observations and wrote them down in my reflective journal as soon as I could.

Some of my participants frequently extended invitations for me to join their social gatherings. These were not research-related events; however, I saw them as rapport building opportunities. When I attended, I was privy to the dynamics between them, the topics they discussed, and the children's interactions and behaviour. I was also better able to understand some of their culture and traditions because I was able to experience it. These informal observations do not make up a large part of my data, and could not stand alone. Instead, they provided me with context and supported my understanding of what participants shared in their interviews. Once I had returned home from such gatherings, I made notes in my reflective journal. These notes were then included in the data analysis to support other data collected.

3.4.7 Reflective journal

A research journal is defined by Borg (2001) as a “form of writing which researchers engage in during a project and through which they document their personal experience of the research process” (p. 157). The benefits to keeping a journal are that it allows the researcher to “evaluate [their] experience, improve and clarify [their] thinking” (Janesick, 1999, p. 24). It also has therapeutic benefits in that it is a platform for researchers to acknowledge and express their emotions, then analyse and react to them (Borg, 2001).

A journal was kept from the beginning of the data collection period and was a place for me to write about the logistics of scheduling interviews, cancellations, and express my annoyance at people's relaxed attitudes towards times. I made notes of my observations immediately after an interview or attending a social gathering while they were still fresh in my mind. I wrote about things that happened or were said that I found interesting or strange, along with my interpretation. I also asked questions that cropped up after a social gathering that would help clarify motivations for what was said and so on. These questions were brought into following interviews or focus groups. I was also observant of patterns and I made assumptions based on them that I later had to adjust based on further observations.

During the data analysis stage, I also wrote in my journal the themes I had identified and inserted photos of mind maps as I tried to work out how to present my data.

The writing style was free-flowing; not a lot of thought given to sentence structure and organisation. Often it leaned towards narrative writing. Entries were chronological and event-focused; an interesting conversation I had with a friend, connections I made to my participants after watching a movie, or a motivating supervisory meeting, are examples of events that resulted in a journal entry. Examples of reflective journal entries are provided in Chapter 4.

The journal was kept electronically, in a Word document, and the majority of it was text. However, it was interspersed with photos, of participants' children who took a liking to me and of a participant's garage converted into a second lounge. Photos were taken with the participants' consent, for the purpose of capturing details I feared I might forget. Photos of hand-drawn diagrams were also included in the journal.

3.5 Data analysis procedures

3.5.1 Grounded theory approach to data analysis

Grounded theory is “theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). In this approach, data collection and analysis occur in tandem, informing each other. It is a frequently cited approach to the analysis of qualitative data (Bryman, 2012) and is particularly useful in explorative studies because data are not forced to fit with a predetermined theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, a grounded approach to data analysis was deemed appropriate for the present study.

The coding of data is a fundamental process in grounded theory, in which data is disassembled and reassembled (Ezzy, 2002) into lines and paragraphs to “produce a new understanding that explores similarities, differences, across a number of

different cases” (p. 94). Coding is done at the initial level by identifying and labelling descriptive categories, and then a higher level of coding produces analytic categories (Willig, 2013). Grounded analysis is often conducted through applying a process of three types of coding: open, axial and selective (Cohen et al., 2011, 2018). However, a more practical approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and informed in the present study is for the researcher to first familiarise herself with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, and finally define and name themes.

3.5.2 Data management, transcription, summaries and translation

Audio-recordings from interviews and focus groups were listened to and a consecutive interpretation of them was written. As a bilingual speaker of English and Arabic, I have the cultural knowledge of both languages and I am able to express the desired message in either language. A free translation style was employed for readability and to help the reader’s understanding (Birbili, 2000), while trying to maintain the integrity of the interview. For example, pauses, disfluencies, laughs and other physical behaviours were included.

There were cultural expressions used and so I sometimes translated them literally; an example is ‘sisters of the foreign land’, which I was fairly certain would be understood to mean ‘friends who are like sisters in the absence of family’. At other times, I explained the expressions instead. The participants’ speech was interspersed with religious language, which is typical of Muslim Arabs. Words like *inshaAllah* (God willing), *mashaAllah* (God has willed it; used to express admiration or appreciation for whatever was just mentioned) were repeated frequently and so I used transliteration, with the intention of glossing them if they appeared in extracts used in the findings. When the participants said short prayers such as ‘Allah yih-fatho’ I found it more suitable to translate the meaning instead: ‘May God preserve him’.

There were a few instances where the participants used words in Arabic in a context that was different to how I understood it. I wrote them down and consulted with a

Saudi friend, as I suspected it was an issue of dialect. Discussions about the use of words is a technique used in translation to achieve a better translation (Whyte & Braun, 1968).

This consecutive translation transcription was done while *VLC* media player, played the audio-recording on my desktop computer, and a Word document was open on a split screen. *VLC* player is fitted with the function of slowing down the speed of the audio. This feature was utilised greatly, as was the ‘rewind’ button.

With approximately 26 hours of audio, the translation/transcription process was long and arduous. However, because the interviews were collected at different times during the data collection period, it allowed me time to familiarise myself with each interview individually.

3.5.3 Coding

Familiarisation is the first phase in analysing the data when the grounded theory approach is adopted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I made hard copies of the interview transcripts and referred to my reflective journal, and then I read and reread them and made casual observations, notations and questions in the margins. By inspecting the data closely, I was able to notice patterns.

The next phase of the analysis was conducted within the Word document of each interview transcript where I highlighted parts of the text and assigned it a descriptive code, as shown in Figure 3.4. This initial analysis of the first interview



Figure 3.4 Coding key for first interviews

directed further investigation and suggested questions to ask in subsequent interviews.

Once I had gathered a number of first interview data, I compared the initial codes and was able to determine that there were commonalities. I did not do anything more with the categories that were identified until all the data were gathered.

Then, categories were created by grouping together codes with similar features (Saldana, 2009). The first interview was focused on asking participants about their life in Saudi Arabia, and their early days in New Zealand. Thus, the codes of *isolation*, *vulnerability*, *negative impacts* and *responsibility* were grouped together under a category called *adaptation*.

I followed a similar process of analysis for the second and third interview data. Some of the code labels for the second interview were: *parenting*, *language*, *culture* and *school*. Next, I wrote down each code on a separate piece of paper and read through the highlighted text for that category, for instance *parenting*, to identify subcategories. I jotted them down on the piece of paper with examples from the different participants to create a sort of mind map (see Figure 3.5). This process led to the identification of new sub-categories such as roles, strategies and beliefs.

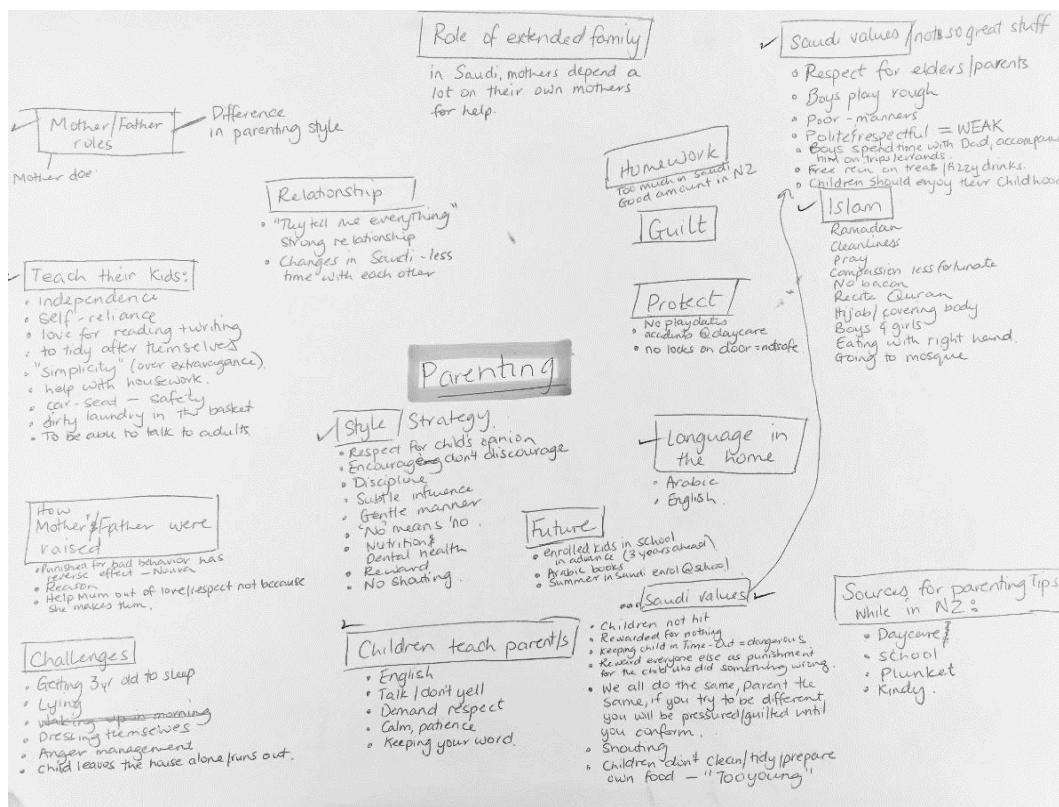


Figure 3.5 Mind map of the parenting code

Focus group data were analysed a little differently to the interview data. Because this is an explorative study and a grounded analysis was used, the topics of discussion for the focus groups arose from interview data, my informal observations and interactions with the participants. Therefore, I summarised the discussion transcript of each of the topics and presented them in that way in Chapter 4. However, the transcripts were also coded and emergent categories were compared to the categories identified in the interview data; similarities were found and therefore added to the existing categories and this informed the thematic organisation of Chapters 4 and 5.

3.6 Ethical considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with the Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations (2008) of the University of Waikato. Approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and

Social Sciences was granted for this research. As per university requirements, ethical consideration was given to obtaining informed consent from participants and mitigating any harm to them. Conducting research within a minority group who are geographically isolated from home, such as the participant sojourners, increases the potential for emotional well-being issues and vulnerability, particularly when talking about challenging experiences. Therefore, caution was given to assigning pseudonyms, maintaining confidentiality, preventing deception (Denscombe, 2007; Fontana & Frey, 2000), and having a contingency plan in place should there have been a need to make a mental-health referral.

Researchers are encouraged to give thought to how participating in research will improve participants' lives and ensure that they derive some benefit (Smith, 1999). Cohen et al. (2007) posit "Researchers should never lose sight of the obligations they owe to those who are helping" (p. 59). Thus, at the outset of this study consideration was given to how the participating group of women could benefit. I hoped that having a platform to articulate their values, beliefs, hopes and fears would help them feel heard and their experiences seen. I hoped that they would reflect on, and become more conscious and mindful of their actions, motivations and decisions in life, and that they would have a greater understanding of themselves. During data collection, a number of opportunities arose in which I was able to reciprocate towards them for their participation by performing favours, providing advice when requested, maintaining a relationship during data collection and continuing that relationship even after the completion of the study. A more detailed account of this ethical journey can be found in the publication by Yaghi (forthcoming) in Appendix 6 that reflects on the ethical challenges anticipated prior to data collection and those actually faced in the field. Some of the topics covered in the appendaged book chapter include researcher positioning, cultural differences, inter-cultural sensitivities, reciprocity and relationship with participants.

In addition to the ethics application that was completed, reflections were made in the researcher's journal about anticipated ethical issues before the commencement

of data collection, reflections were made during the process, and finally at their conclusion.

3.7 Trustworthiness

This study was concerned with “giving a candid portrayal of social life that is true to the lived experiences” (Neuman, 2014, p. 218) of the participants under study. Ascertaining validity in qualitative research can be challenging, in fact quantitative standards of objectivity and neutrality “are impossible to achieve” (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002, p. 8) because of the unpredictability of human subjects and because of the subjectivity of the means of inquiry. In this section, the quality and trustworthiness of the present study is discussed in terms of confirmability, dependability and credibility (Guba, 1981). Some matters of relevance to these issues, such as the co-construction of meaning in interviews, have been discussed in the previous section.

Confirmability relates to the efforts of the researcher to “corroborate data and to challenge and/or affirm interpretation or theory” (Drisko, 1997, p. 192). Relevant to this is the recommendation by Holloway and Wheeler (2002) that, as researchers are the main research tool, they should “take into account their own position in the setting and situation” (p. 8). Their characteristics, race, religion, upbringing, attitudes and opinions (Cohen et al., 2007; Lee, 1993; Scheurich, 1995) can bias what participants say in an interview. In recognition of these concerns, I have provided background information about myself and my motivations for this study in Section 1.3. However, I acknowledge that a researcher’s influence cannot be expunged from interview data, particularly in ethnography where a researcher applies “personal inference, derived from prior knowledge, experience and skills” (Barnard, 2000, p. 18) to the description of the setting and analysis of the data. Therefore, I have embraced the perspective that interview data are a co-construction (Bishop & Glynn, 1999) of the participants and myself. However, precautions were taken to avoid influencing participants’ perspectives. For example, I built a strong rapport with many of my participants, such that the interviews seemed more like

everyday conversations and participants sometimes asked me to share my own experiences. My intention in doing so was to build trust and to limit the possibility of undue wariness and promote appropriate candidness in responses. Where discussion veered towards non-topical, social chat, I was careful in these situations to say that we could chat about that after the interview was complete. Additionally, the fact that I was somewhat an insider who shared the same religion and language as the participants and a similar Arab culture helped to set foundations for rapport and trust to grow which were necessary elements in closing the social distance between myself and the participants and encouraging them to share details of their inner lives (Mercer, 2007).

As discussed above, interviews and focus group discussions are shaped and constrained by their social nature, with the identities of the interviewer and interviewees, their relationships and other contextual factors influencing what is said (Psathas, 1995; Rabbidge, 2017). Considering the interpersonal nature of an interview, “the values of researchers and participants can become an integral part of the research” (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002, p. 8), and thus, their influence on the data is inevitable (Cohen et al., 2007). It is therefore appropriate to present key statements in as much contextual detail as feasible, although this must also be balanced against space constraints. For this reason, an effort has been made to present some key findings through longer transcription extracts, thereby providing for the possibility of alternative interpretations.

Hammersley (2008) further suggests that some validity can be achieved by monitoring signs of how the researcher and other factors have shaped the data, by comparing what a person says in one interview, with what is said in another and by comparing the data to information from other sources as “relying on interviews alone is rarely advisable” (p. 100). Taking this into consideration, confirmability, dependability and credibility in this study were promoted through methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978) or “overlapping methods” (Shenton, 2014, p. 71): three interviews were conducted over a year, and a focus group with their peers, which were further complemented by my attending their social gatherings and

informally observing participants' interactions with one another and listening to views expressed outside of the research setting to account for different contextual settings (Hammersley, 2008). On a few occasions, I spotted discrepancies between what the participants expressed in an interview and what they said to their friends. For example, one participant reported in an interview that although marriages were arranged, women had the freedom to accept or reject a proposal, but then she mentioned amongst her friends that her sister was pressured into marrying her husband. Given that interviewing can elicit tendencies (Hammersley, 2008), rather than interpret this disparity as an intentional misrepresentation, I interpreted it as highlighting a more complex reality in which a general tendency was initially described but then augmented with additional case-specific details. Other instances of disparity were similarly seen as rounding out a more complex and nuanced reality.

Confirmability of the interview data was also promoted through informal observation. For example, I perceived during the interviews that many of the participants portrayed themselves as strong women, with a clear sense of knowing what they want, asking for it or making it happen, and that – contrary to widely-held stereotypes – they were not subservient to their husbands. This was confirmed through observation. I heard the manner in which they spoke to their husbands on the phone; in fact, on one occasion I heard both sides of a participant's conversation with her husband, which confirmed my impressions to be true: she maintained her power in the relationship. I heard the participants talk amongst their friends about problems they had with their teachers, their displeasure at the racist comments made and how they were followed up with complaints to the language school; such actions demonstrated that they would not accept such treatment.

Perhaps the most crucial issue in the trustworthiness of qualitative research is that of credibility. This was promoted in the present study in several key ways. Firstly, a study's credibility can be enhanced through prolonged engagement (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) between the participants and the researcher. This works in multiple ways, including opportunities for

confirmability of data (e.g. triangulation and identifying discrepancies) and for the richer data elicited. In the case of the present study, there was approximately a year and a half of sustained engagement with most of the participants. I remained in contact with the participants between data collection procedures through text messaging and asked about life events they had mentioned, which also allowed me to gain a sufficient understanding of the participants and establish a relationship of trust (Shenton, 2014).

A further matter of credibility is the use of member validation to ensure “a fair, honest, and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of the people who live it every day” (Neuman, 2014, p. 218), This is a method used to ensure that participants have been represented with authenticity by having “the people who were studied read and confirm as being true what the researchers have reported” (Neuman, 2014, p. 469). Bishop and Glynn (1999) explain that “returning the script to the co-participant is a necessary part of the ongoing dialogue...This is to maximise opportunities for reciprocal negotiation and a collaborative construction of meaning by the participants” (pp. 113-114). Participants in the present study were presented with an interview summary about two weeks after each interview to confirm and validate the content and transcription. They were encouraged to reject, alter, add or negotiate anything in the summary to validate my interpretation of what was said during the interviews. This was supplemented with a verbal translation of the summary for the participants who had a lower-level of English proficiency. Additionally, in the follow-up interviews I used probes to elicit detailed information and asked iterative questions (Shenton, 2014) that rephrased some of the things previously raised by participants as an indirect method of gaining participant confirmation of what they said and my interpretation of it.

Another important strategy for promoting credibility that was used in this study was peer scrutiny. At various times throughout the composition of this thesis, I discussed my intended methodology and data collection instruments with fellow researchers, and sought critique. I also presented at numerous conferences and shared different aspects of the study’s findings, where people’s alternative

perspectives and inquisitions enabled me to identify instances where I may have been too close to the data, or where my shared culture with the participants may have limited my interpretation.

Finally, to further promote credibility, I enlisted the support of a cultural informant to gain the perspective of someone from outside the circle. The informant was recruited on the basis of being from a similar demographic as the participants; from the same city as the majority of participants, same age bracket, gender, and a sojourner. Considering the small number of Saudis living in the city where the case study was conducted, caution was given to recruiting someone whom I had never seen present at the same social gatherings as the participants, to ensure that the cultural informant was in fact from outside the circle. In the interest of maintaining participants' privacy, no identifying information was shared with the cultural informant during the interview.

Despite my perceived position as a cultural insider with a shared broad Arab culture and religion, the cultural informant was helpful in clarifying some of the more intricate social, political and cultural issues that were touched on or otherwise alluded to during interviews that could best be explained by someone who lived that reality. For example, some participants were interviewed immediately after returning from their annual holiday to Saudi Arabia and one commented about how some women did not abide by the black attire policy in Riyadh and were wearing loosely fitted hijabs that revealed their hair. I was informed that the Religious Police no longer had any authority in Saudi Arabia, thereby allowing women more freedom in their dress. Another participant mentioned that her sisters travelled alone to another city to attend a friend's wedding. It was my understanding that traveling without a male companion was forbidden. However, the cultural informant told me that women were now permitted to travel alone, provided they had a written letter of approval from their guardian. Additionally, I noticed that four out of the nine women interviewed had university degrees at the time of marriage and their husbands did not. In Jordanian culture, families often consider a prospective husband's education and try to match it to their own daughter's level of education.

I wondered what criteria Saudi parents held prospective husbands to. The cultural informant offered an explanation: parents were not as concerned with the man's education as they were with his tribal membership, his reputation, his ability to provide for his family and whether he was a practicing Muslim. The insights she shared were useful in clarifying and helping me to understand some of the social, political and cultural issues that were touched on or otherwise alluded to during discussions when they spoke of Saudi Arabia. These details are not necessarily referred to throughout the thesis as the topics discussed were not directly relevant to the identified themes in the study.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the study's methodology. It is a case study that uses ethnographic principles to explore the acculturation experiences of sojourning Saudi mothers in New Zealand. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, informal observations recorded in a reflective journal. This chapter explained the setting and participants of the study and how they were recruited. Data were then analysed using a grounded approach. Ethical considerations of the study were identified and issues of validity, trustworthiness and reliability were addressed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter offers an interpretation of the data gathered from the participating women sojourners through interviews and focus group discussions. Data were subjected to grounded analysis. Themes emerged through the identification of patterns in the issues faced by the sojourners and are presented through the lens of time. This chapter addresses some of the research questions outlined in Chapter 2. The experiences of Saudi sojourning women are described throughout this chapter addressing RQ1. Participants reflected on their lives *pre-sojourn*, which serves to illustrate aspects of their home context (4.2); their *sojourn*, in which they identified challenges they faced during the initial phase of their sojourn (4.3), such as isolation, language and cultural differences and the coping strategies they utilised to overcome them. The second section covers issues pertaining to their cultural and social identity as Muslims, their role identity as mothers, and their personal identity as women, which provides an answer to RQ2. It presents the challenges they faced, as well as value negotiations and adaptations they have made due to acculturative stress. Focus group discussions invited participants to specifically reflect on their current parenting values in relation to raising their children and educating them in New Zealand, addressing RQ3. In the final section, *post-sojourn*, participants considered challenges they anticipate facing on reintegrating into Saudi society, and how they envision their lives to be, which addresses RQ4 (4.4). The main findings of this study are that participating Saudi women generally experienced high adaptation to life in New Zealand and they underwent identity development. They had a strong identity awareness and thus were unwilling to compromise on their identity as Muslims. However, they negotiated and embraced changes or shifts in their identities as mothers, women, and Saudis. They remained aware of their eventual return to Saudi Arabia, but were more focused on the present, and fulfilling the goals they came to achieve.

The majority of the interview data were collected in Arabic, and all focus group data were collected in Arabic. The excerpts presented in this chapter are transcripts

translated by myself. Two participants, Ruba and Jawhara, chose to be interviewed in English and thus their quotations are verbatim.

4.1 Participant profiles

The following participant profiles were constructed based on notes from my reflective journal made at various times through the data collection period as I got to know the participants.

Ayesha was a 33-year-old from Riyadh and mother of two girls and two boys. She was a full-time employee in Saudi Arabia in the education sector. She was an Arabic teacher for several years before taking up her post in the education management area. The main purpose of her sojourn was to support her husband who was a scholarship student. She spent time studying English when she arrived until she achieved her goal IELTS score and became a scholarship student herself. She eventually enrolled to do a Master's in Business. She was recruited through a personal friend and was my very first recruit. She was instrumental in the recruitment of other women because of her social nature. She often hosted dinners and gatherings, and was mindful of including women who were new to New Zealand to connect them with the existing Saudi community.

Maram was a 26-year-old from Riyadh. She did not have any children at the start of data collection, but became a mother by the end of it. During that time, she was studying towards a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics. Maram was close friends with Ayesha, and was recruited by her. She had an outgoing personality, bubbly, confident and was the type of person who got things done. Maram was helpful in recruiting a second batch of participants.

Ruba was a 27-year-old from Riyadh and the mother of two boys. Her husband was the scholarship recipient. She could not speak English when she first arrived but attained her desired IELTS score and by the end of the data collection period had a scholarship to complete a Master's in Business. She requested to be interviewed in

English. She was a close friend of Ayesha who recruited her. Ruba had a strong personality, liked to joke and spoke her mind.

Bayan was a newly married 22-year-old from Riyadh. She was recruited at Ayesha's dinner gathering. She was open about feeling depressed and being inexperienced at life. She never had to do anything on her own before moving to New Zealand. She had a baby by the end of data collection.

Doha was a 27-year-old from Mecca and mother to a boy and a girl. She had just completed a pathway to an MA and was leaving to Saudi Arabia for summer holiday when I met her. We managed to complete two interviews before she travelled. Her situation was unique and different from that of the other women because she was the scholarship student and her husband the dependent. She was very open about the weight she had to carry as student, wife and mother and showed signs of depression. She was recruited through the university's International Centre. I stayed in contact with her while she was in Saudi Arabia until May when she stopped responding.

Jawhara was a 25-year-old from Riyadh and mother to two boys. She spent a few years in Hamilton as a dependent to her husband, returned to Saudi Arabia for a year and came back to New Zealand. She is now a scholarship student, doing a BA in e-business. Her husband completed his studies and continued to support Jawhara through her degree. She chose to be interviewed in English. She was talkative, animated and had a strong personality. She was recruited through Maram.

Abrar was a 22-year-old half Saudi, half Kuwaiti from Riyadh. She got married and immediately moved to New Zealand. When she arrived in February 2017, she knew she would only be staying for a year, until her husband graduated. Her husband (Kuwaiti) lived in New Zealand for six years before her. She seemed quite ambitious and studious. She had one goal when she arrived: to learn English. Abrar was recruited through Maram.

Najat was a 32-year-old from Taif and mother to two boys and a girl. She lived in New Zealand for three years and planned to stay for another three. She was a dependent and did not have an interest in pursuing a university education. She planned to take more English courses in the future, visa permitting. However, this has not stifled her desire to have relationships with her neighbours, walk her kids to school, or use the bus to get around Hamilton city. She was recruited through Maram.

Hajar was a 30-year-old, from Riyadh and mother to two girls. She had her third child by the end of the data collection period. She had lived in New Zealand for four years and planned to live here for a few more years. She had a strong personality, was very talkative and opinionated. She mentioned that she hated English class ever since her days at school. She was recruited through Maram.

The data in this chapter provide a thick description and are presented with the aim of allowing participants' voices to be fully represented. Their beliefs and perspectives are explained with supplementary background and cultural information to help the reader understand the participants' positions. However, I have largely refrained from commenting on or making evaluations of their perspectives or cultural practices, as I do not feel it is my place to pass judgment. Chapter 5 adopts a more critical and analytical stance to the data.

4.2 Past: Life in Saudi Arabia

The excerpts in this chapter are coded (Name, I.2 or I.3), and direct English quotations are followed with an 'e' (Name, I.1e) for Ruba and Jawhara who chose to be interviewed in English.

4.2.1 Family relationships

Family was of great importance to the participants. The stories of their lives in Saudi Arabia illustrated the close relationships they had with, not only their parents and siblings, but also their extended families. This closeness was physically manifest in

their living arrangements; participants either lived in the same house, compound or a short distance away. The physical closeness meant that they had frequent interactions with their families.

Maram, who was unmarried prior to her sojourn and lived with parents and siblings in Saudi Arabia said, “I come from a large community, friends, sisters, family so I was never alone. I am one of seven girls in my family.” Her relationship with her sisters was important to her as she frequently spoke of them during our interviews and other interactions.

Doha described her relationship with her mother as being very close. They would see each other every day.

I’m the youngest in the family, so my mother is especially attached to me. When I got married, she cried and cried, even though I was in Mecca with her! We lived ten minutes apart [laugh]. It was difficult for me to leave my mother. (Doha, I.1)

Doha’s mother and sisters gave her a sense of security; she could rely on them and trust them. Her mother played an integral role in caring for her son ever since he was born. Doha even contemplated sojourning in New Zealand with her husband and leaving her son with her mother, to ensure her son would get the best care and attention. She explained that making the decision to sojourn to New Zealand took a long time because it was not a decision they could make on their own. Both she and her husband, valued their families’ approval and were unwilling to move without it.

... my husband’s family are very attached to him, especially his mum. Me too, I spent a long time explaining to my family that we are going to move away. We discussed it with them at length...his mother said ‘no’ but we kept trying and trying and she finally said, ‘Ok’...One minute his mum would say, ‘OK’, then his sister would say ‘no’, then his sister would – like that, you understand? (Doha, I.1)

Moving out of a close-knit family had ramifications on all its members and therefore the move to New Zealand required time and persuasion for them to accept the idea.

Other participants also spoke about the role family plays in raising children. Ayesha for example, believed that her mother-in-law had a greater influence on the children than herself. Being a full-time employee in Saudi Arabia meant that Ayesha's children spent a lot of time with their grandmother; they had developed a strong relationship with her. Unlike the other participants, Najat lived in a different city to her parents, and although she lived in the same city as her in-laws, they lived two hours away. She frequently socialised with her in-laws, but did not have the same experience of them being involved in raising her children.

4.2.2 Marital relationship

Each individual in the Saudi society has responsibilities towards their extended families. They are not free agents. This was evident in the speech of the participants about their husbands visiting their mothers every day. Or, as Maram described: her husband willingly chauffeured his sisters to meet up with their friends, "if he's around he takes them to wherever they agreed to meet their friends" (I.2).

The priority that supporting family takes over the marital relationship is culturally understood and accepted, which was demonstrated in Maram's account of a time in Saudi Arabia when her mother fell ill. Maram's grandmother passed away and Maram wanted to be of moral support to her mother. She spoke to her husband and said, "Please excuse me, but during this time, I'm going to be busy with my mother because she needs me." (I.2) I was a little puzzled that her husband would agree for Maram to stay with her mother for two weeks. I was cautious not to ask questions that were too personal, but she told me it was OK. I then ventured by asking her if her husband did not mind for her to spend the majority of her time with her mother. He supported her because he "realised that she was going through a difficult time" (I.2). It was also an opportunity for him to dedicate time to his own mother. In the

excerpt below, Maram talked about an incident that occurred while she was at her mother's house:

On the weekend, his mother went to spend the day with her family. He couldn't go with her and sleep over because the house was full of his female cousins, so he couldn't be there. And I was with my mother, which meant he was all alone. At home. It was a weekend so I called him and we chatted. Then I said, "Ok, I'm going to come home." And he said, "No, no, I'll come to you guys so you don't leave your mother on her own. It's better that I come over and we can both sit with her" So he came over and spent the day, then when bedtime came around, he left. (I.2)

Maram's husband was unable to join his mother to visit her relatives because in Saudi culture, men and women do not socialise, even with their cousins and in-laws. Parents-in-law are excluded from this rule because they are considered to be like one's own parents. Knowing that her husband would feel lonely without company on a weekend, Maram felt that it was her duty to return home to be with him. However, valuing Maram's relationship with her mother, he was able to come to a compromise that did not take her away from her mother. As Maram has six sisters living at home, culturally it is inappropriate for him to spend the night in the same house as them, which is why he returned home at bedtime.

Between employment, family obligations and the maintenance of friendships, spouses spent little time alone together. Husbands felt they had less responsibility towards their wives in Saudi Arabia because they had their family to socialise with and rely on for support. Husbands hired drivers to take them where they wanted to go and if there was no driver available, a brother or uncle helped out, as Hajar indicated when she talked about her sister, "my brother drives my sister to her classes at the hair salon" (I.2).

Family decisions could not be taken independently by the wife and husband. Sometimes the husband would make decisions without consulting his wife and would consult his parents or siblings instead. The wife at times was not happy with

the decision made and felt stifled because she was not just going up against her husband, but his family too. Disobeying the elderly is considered disrespectful and may affect the *ridha* (the approval and satisfaction) of their parents, which is something they value as Muslims.

Living in New Zealand meant that the extended family were not involved in every aspect of their lives and the wives found that dynamic between their spouses had changed. Now, they only consulted each other when making decisions.

While in New Zealand, spouses relied on each other because they knew they had no one else. This brought them closer together, and they knew each other better as a result. For example, Maram said, “and we’ve grown to understand each other. You should see whenever something happens with him and I’m at my parent’s house, “Hello Maram, I’m upset, I’m coming to talk to you.” (I.2). While Doha commented, “I feel like our relationship...I don’t know how to explain it – we’re closer, maybe because we are all alone here, but we also have more disagreements. We never used to argue like this” (I.1). The increased contact and communication with her husband put them in situations that revealed their different points of view.

Husbands also contributed more to the household. Being present with their wives and families made them *see* all the work their wives do, appreciate it and want to ease their load by doing a few chores. The husbands now had to do what is seen as women’s work because they were away from family. For example, Maram mentioned, “during my pregnancy I’m very comfortable because even though I don’t have my mother with me, my husband helps me. He says, ‘Don’t do anything’ then he cleans and tidies the house for me” (I.2). At one of the social gatherings I attended, Ruba told some of the women present how her husband was entertaining the men at her house and he had tidied the house himself in preparation. He warned her though, “Don’t mention this to my family in Saudi Arabia” and the women discussed how it is culturally shameful for a man to do a woman’s work. The wives exchanged stories about their husbands doing this chore or that chore and expressed

their appreciation. It seemed that the women did not see it the way their husbands did. Bayan also spoke about her husband helping her:

...he washes his own clothes. It's the same with breakfast – maybe I haven't woken up yet, or I have an exam, so he makes breakfast for himself. It's the best thing. I ask him, "Can you stay like that when we go back to Saudi?" I don't want him to change. But he just laughs. I doubt he will. [laugh] he's going to start acting spoiled, his mum will be there to spoil him. (I.1)

It is apparent that while husbands had the desire to help their wives, they also did not want their image or reputation tarnished, and for their manhood to be put into question. As sojourning women who share similar circumstances, they felt safe to discuss this sensitive topic because they realised they were amongst people who understood the situation. The participants commented, at the social gathering, about how they would never dare talk about this in their social circles in Saudi Arabia for fear of judgement.

4.2.3 Domestic help

Relying on the assistance of live-in domestic helpers such as maids and drivers is a common and normal part of life in Saudi Arabia. Maids are perceived to be a necessity because large houses require more maintenance, particularly with the many occupants and frequent gatherings. The amount of time and effort required is more than the capacity of the woman of the house could do on her own. Drivers were needed because women were not permitted to drive, until recently, and menfolk were not always available to chauffeur them around. Doha was the only participant who did not have a maid in Saudi Arabia, she explained that it was because they could not afford one. The role a maid played in each of the other participants' households differed. Most were required to clean and babysit, but were not expected to cook or perform child-related tasks:

In my country... [the housekeeper] wash the clothes and do the dishes. So I cook the meal for them, help them take a shower, and I read story for them

before they sleep. After they sleep, I'm free. But sometimes you know I have to go outside, they watch the TV, my housekeeper will look after them. (Ruba, I.1e)

Ayesha, relied on her maid and driver a lot more heavily.

Before, the maid did everything, even my husband, we didn't rely on him for anything. If we needed anything we'd call the driver and he'd take us to the hospital, to the mall or to buy us things from the market [laugh]. (Ayesha, I.3)

As both she and her husband were employees, having domestic help made for a smoothly run household. In addition to cleaning, Ayesha's maid was responsible for meal preparation as Ayesha did not know how to cook. However, her role extended beyond household chores and minding the children, she also cared for the children's wellbeing and participated in their parenting:

Truly, I felt like she gave me guidance. [My husband] was in New Zealand, so I had to take on the role of mother and father - I would have to shop for pharmacy products and our groceries. For example, I used to buy the kids flavoured yoghurt because they liked it and she would tell me to get them plain yoghurt instead. I'd say to her, but they don't like it and won't eat it. She'd say no, you buy it and I'll get them used to it. She'd give me advice and I appreciated her input. (Ayesha, I.3)

The relationship Ayesha had with her maid was one of mutual respect and trust. Ayesha valued what her elderly maid said because she had a lot of childrearing experience.

With the exception of Doha, participants needed to adjust to managing household duties alone, and sometimes used the help of husbands and children to cope with the responsibility.

4.3 Present: Adaptation

According to Kim (2001) stress is an inevitable component of the sojourning experience, which the findings of this study support. This section presents data that demonstrate the challenges the women experienced, and how they coped with them and came towards adaptation.

Most of the participants had been on holidays outside of Saudi Arabia for up to three weeks, however, none of them had previously lived in another country and therefore did not have the experience of being an ethnic or cultural minority, living away from family, who needed to relearn everything they previously knew. They prepared for their sojourn by speaking to other women who had experienced it and were thus mentally prepared for some of the practical aspects, such as public hostility because of their appearance and the difference in weather. However, experiencing it for themselves required psychological adjustment that was mentally and emotionally challenging. They felt isolated, lonely, lost, and afraid.

4.3.1 Isolation and loneliness

The loss of family and social connection was sorely felt by the participants during their early days in New Zealand. The women all experienced varying degrees of isolation and loneliness, the worst of it was experienced by the newly wed women. For example, Maram, whose husband spent all day at university said, “I was always crying, I was always alone...I sat in a dark room, all alone with the TV. I was depressed” (Maram, I.1). She realised the impact the move had on her personality; she was no longer “fun and bubbly”. Instead, she was a weeping mess who felt listless. Bayan and Abrar’s depression affected their appetite causing them to lose a lot of weight. Bayan craved connection with people she could relate to, but did not meet any other Arabs or Saudis for six months. Abrar also suffered from the lack of social connection, as she was accustomed to frequently going out with her maternal and paternal aunts, “I am always at home, I don’t have a lot of relationships. I feel like when I came here I lost a lot of weight” (I.1).

Jawhara found it less challenging to adapt and employed various distractions to suppress thoughts and feelings about the loss of family connection. However, the intensity of emotions she did not verbalise to her husband were released when she spoke to them on the telephone:

- RESEARCHER: So, it was hard to contact them. How often were you speaking to them?
- JAWHARA: aah like two weeks, every two weeks. Yeah, because it's really expensive to call them. Even just, you spend \$20 and you spend just two minutes. It's really expensive to call them.
- RESEARCHER: How were you feeling during that time?
- JAWHARA: Aah, homesick. Yeah.
- RESEARCHER: What did that look like for you?
- JAWHARA: I think...I want to call them. Just like this. And, because I spend aah during the day outside and at night with my aah with my friend, so I'm ok. But, when I call them, I just cry!
(Jawhara, I.1e)

Most of the mothers, on the other hand, did not have a lot to say about their emotional or mental state during the early days. Ruba did not speak of it at all, and although Ayesha mentioned feeling lonely, when she spoke of it, there was emphasis on how she coped:

I have gotten to know some women who have become like sisters: they support each other in times of illness, loneliness, they share similar interests and can rely on one another. Having each other makes life in New Zealand easier. I didn't know anyone in New Zealand, until I had been here four months and so I got really bored and lonely – God created humans as social creatures – when you can exchange ideas with other people, chat about nothing sometimes. (Ayesha, I.1)

Boredom was a common feeling among the participants, although it did not progress into depression in Ayesha's case. As a full-time employee, this was the first time since graduating university, over ten years ago, that Ayesha was not working. She said this required some getting used to:

I felt so settled in Saudi Arabia. I had a job and a house, a maid to help me and family who lived close by and friends. It was a challenge to leave all

that behind and suddenly have to do things for myself like housekeeping and raising the children. (I.1)

Similarly, although they missed their families and spoke to them on a daily basis, Najat and Hajar did not experience depression. Their attention was focused on caring for their children. Hajar had a toddler at the time and was kept busy caring for her. Najat was concerned for her sons. The move to an unfamiliar place caused them psychological stress that they expressed through anger, aggression and tears. It also triggered bedwetting in both her sons. She noticed both her sons' behaviour had changed: they were frustrated at not being able to communicate. Additionally, the eldest was being bullied:

They were afraid. They became angrier. Everything would make the older one cry. He would cry if anyone spoke to him...He said that when he started school, these boys who were year 4 or 5, used to trap him in the bushes and tell him to stay there – he didn't know what they were saying because he didn't understand – they would tell him to stay there and not to play. Then one of them would guard him while the rest went off to play. My son would sit there crying and afraid. (Najat, I.1)

Mothers had a more stable foundation as they had come to some form of understanding with their spouses and had built a family together. As mothers, their children's welfare was of a higher priority than their own, thus they devoted much time and energy to ensuring their children felt settled.

The difference in the emotional and mental toll that moving out of the native culture had on the newlyweds Maram, Bayan and Abrar, in comparison to the mothers, is better understood by considering the adjustments one would need to make when transitioning from being single to being married; the responsibilities of a house and husband were new to them as was moving away from family. There was an added cultural challenge due to the arranged nature of their marriages.

In addition to the expected challenges, in Saudi culture, marriages are arranged. The cultural informant I used explained how marriages typically occur in Saudi Arabia and I summarised her explanation in my reflective journal:

When a man is ready to get married, the women (mother, sister, aunts) in his family tell him about a friend, or a woman in their community who might be a suitable match based on her personality, social interactions, and family reputation. Then he approaches her family expressing his interest in their daughter. The family discusses his suitability with their daughter, who ultimately makes the decision whether she is willing to enter into the next phase; getting to know him. Parents give initial acceptance to the proposal and consent for the man to communicate with their daughter via telephone conversations. During this time they are considered to be *engaged*. As they get to know one another, the woman has discussions with her sisters and parents about the man, voicing the aspects of his personality she likes or finds concerning. The amount of time between their first introduction and making it official varies between families. On average, the newlyweds were engaged for a year before getting married. There was no mention of meeting face to face prior to that day. (Reflective Journal, 30/04/17)

Despite participants reporting they were content with their husbands, they each still felt he was essentially a stranger. For example, Abrar said, “I got married and left right away, with someone...who are you? I still didn’t know him! It was hard to adjust to.” The other newlyweds made the move to New Zealand within a couple of weeks of marriage. Thus, they were adjusting to far more than a change in location of residence.

Coping

Most participants reported finding it particularly challenging to adjust the first few months of their sojourn. They identified turning points at which life felt easier and more enjoyable and were able to overcome their feelings of loneliness, isolation

and depression. A factor that the participants mentioned was social connection. For Maram, it was a special friend:

...and then *subhanAllah* (Glory to God), after Ramadan - I was here six months before I met a woman who had just arrived. She was really nice and pulled me out of my depression. She introduced me to some other good women, and everything changed. I really liked that woman and became attached to her. (Maram, I.1)

Connecting with other sojourning Saudi women was essential to their emotional wellbeing. Once they made that connection, they would socialise on weekends, share experiences, support and encourage one another.

Doha and Jawhara were fortunate to find friends soon after their move. Doha communicated with a woman before her sojourn through a *Whatsapp* group, to learn more about the city. She was an instant friend when Doha arrived and a source of help in settling. Jawhara also spoke about how she gained a friend:

JAWHARA: I got one friend. Yeah. Because...my husband and her husband they were very close. And, they get married just aah like aah they get married before us like one week [switches to Arabic] “before us by a week”.

RESEARCHER: Wow, that’s perfect.

JAWHARA: Yeah, we have same situation, same experience. Yeah.

RESEARCHER: How much time did you spend together?

JAWHARA: Every day, yeah because her husband and my husband study with each other. So, they study, like in the room and we, we chatting [laugh] we enjoy [more laughing].
(Jawhara, I.1e)

Having a friend who was in a similar situation to herself made adjusting easier, and far more enjoyable.

Another coping strategy the participants used to ease their loneliness was to fill their time. Before Jawhara enrolled in language classes, she got a gym membership and “every day when he (her husband) go to uni, he drop me in the [mall]. I go shopping, and I go gym and eating [laughs]” (I.1e). Najat also found being outside of the house to be beneficial:

I go and have coffee, I go for a walk, I go on the bus by myself, anyplace I want to go, I go by myself. I go in the morning, that's the best time for me because the kids are at school and I stay out until it's time to pick up my kids at 3 pm and we go home together. (Najat, I.1)

Najat connected to her environment by exercising outdoors to experience the different landscape, and by using public transportation. Being in the public sphere helped her feel connected to her new society as it allowed her to interact with the locals. She enjoyed feeling seen, "When I'm out walking, people smile at me and greet me" as she did things that made her happy. All the participants occupied their time by learning English and at some stage during the early stages of their sojourn enrolled at one of the local language schools where they created more social connections. Najat, Hajar and Bayan dropped out for various reasons including pregnancy and visa issues, while Ayesha, Maram, Ruba, Doha and Jawhara continued and sat the IELTS test.

4.3.2 Linguistic adaptation

One of the most immediate challenges participants faced was due to the language barrier, which also contributed to their isolation and loneliness. All the participants, except Doha, arrived in New Zealand after their husbands. This initially mitigated the language challenges they faced because they could rely on their husbands to take care of anything that required interacting in English. Yet, they still experienced some communication obstacles.

For example, Jawhara became pregnant soon after arriving in New Zealand and had to take a break from her General English course because of fatigue and morning sickness. She had prenatal checks at the hospital with her midwife and because she was not proficient in English, her husband would accompany her to translate, which sometimes got awkward:

JAWHARA: Yeah, but my husband with me. I said I want this this. With my youngest son, I go by myself to the hospital. But even like, there are some questions, personal question between

me and the midwife? I must told my husband to – yeah.
[laugh] How can I say it to her? I must told him!
RESEARCHER: [laugh] and he has to translate it!
JAWHARA: [laughing] His face is like red
(Jawhara, I.1e)

Communicating details relating to her body and pregnancy through her husband was embarrassing for her in part because they were newlyweds and also because culturally, women are not accustomed to sharing private details about their bodies with men. By the time she had her second child, her English competency had increased and she was able to communicate with medical staff without an intermediary, “With my youngest son, I go by myself to the hospital” (I.1e).

Maram, an English language graduate, did not feel that she had encountered any language related challenges, she explained why:

I used to go out alone...when I first came here I wasn't afraid to go out. I wasn't afraid because we used to travel and I'd go to the *suq* on my own and come back on my own. We always used to travel to Dubai and I would always come and go on my own. Even when we'd go to Mecca, I went alone, I didn't have a problem with it. So I wasn't afraid of getting lost, like a lot of other women. Especially that I can speak English, I don't have any problems. Yes, my speaking isn't great, but I can understand them a bit and they understand me a bit. Very soon after I arrived I would go out to the mall on my own, walk around, drink coffee etc.” (Maram, I.1)

Maram's previous intercultural experiences and English proficiency gave her the confidence to find her way around and communicate satisfactorily with members of the host society.

Doha, on the other hand, as the main scholarship recipient, arrived in New Zealand at the same time as her husband. The challenges she experienced were very different from the other participants as neither she nor her husband could speak English. She explained how fearful that made her and related an incident that took place upon arrival at the New Zealand airport:

...when we came, at the airport, the man asked me, “What do you have?” meaning food and things like that. I just said to him “milk” I didn’t know how to say it was “formula” for my son, so I said, “Milk and biscuits” biscuits meaning cerelac. He didn’t understand when I said “biscuit” [she pronounces biscuit like: bis-kwee]...I told him I don’t speak English. The sentence that I tried to memorise before coming to New Zealand was “I don’t speak English very well, do you have anyone can speak Arabic?” I memorised it. I used it SO much! (Doha, I.1)

Memorising those phrases proved an effective strategy for Doha as the customs officer found an Arabic speaking employee to provide assistance. Doha enrolled in English classes and soon became proficient at speaking English. Her husband was not a student and did not learn English, which placed the responsibility on Doha to communicate with rental agencies, banks and flight centres and was a source of ongoing stress. She sometimes experienced communication failure because she was not competent in local procedures and systems. During our second interview, she took a phone call and when she returned she said, “This is the problem with not knowing the language!” and explained, “Imagine, the owner of the house wants us to pay an extra three weeks of rent because we didn’t give him notice”. She continued and said:

I called my friend Helen, a Kiwi to help. She spoke to the owner and explained that we don’t understand English, and asked him to be lenient with us. He said, ‘No, no’, even though at the beginning he said that we could leave when we wanted. You see?! (Doha, I.2)

Doha thought he was being deceitful as he originally claimed that they could move out whenever they wanted. However, his statement was true, with the assumption of shared knowledge; you are free to move out when you want *with* the standard three weeks’ notice as required by New Zealand tenancy laws. Being a sojourner, she did not have this knowledge and because of her limited English proficiency, she

did not read the long technical contract that likely would have stipulated the conditions.

Within six months of their arrival, the majority of the participants enrolled in English language courses. Their motivations were varied, for example: Abrar knew she would only spend a year in New Zealand and so she was determined to make the most of her stay, “I want to learn English and have the opportunity to practice speaking it because in Saudi Arabia we learn English in the classroom and our knowledge stays there” (I.1); Ayesha wanted to be able to perform her job better when she returned to Saudi Arabia, “In my line of work I often have to deal with people who do not speak English and I would have to ask a colleague to translate for me. I want to be able to do my job without an intermediary” (I.1); Bayan on the other hand took English classes to occupy her time “I wanted something to do so I wouldn’t spend all my time at home thinking about my family” (I.1). Maram wanted to pursue a Master’s degree and needed to attain a certain IELTS score to be accepted into the programme.

All the participants took some English courses, and despite their different motivations for it, engaging in learning helped the majority to cope and adapt. It gave them confidence, for example Bayan said, “I feel confident taking the bus to places that are far away because at least I can understand some of what people say” (I.2). Many of the participants went on to pursue tertiary education after attaining an acceptable IELTS score, such as Ayesha, Maram, Ruba, Doha and Jawhara.

4.3.3 Fear of harassment

Aware of the hostility and prevalent negative opinion directed at Muslims globally, the women were fearful of the negative response their physical appearance might elicit in public. They knew from family and friends who had sojourned that their dress might make them targets for harassment. Many took precautionary measures before their arrival, in the way of dress modifications hoping to attract less attention. Fear of harassment, whether real or perceived, was the cause of much stress. Below are some examples of incidents the participants experienced.

4.3.3.1 Verbal harassment

The participants shared a number of occasions when they had hurtful language directed at them on the street. Bayan and I chatted in a coffee shop where she was the only person dressed in black from head to toe, with only her eyes revealed. We were surrounded by the noise of a coffee machine grinding, glasses clinking and music blaring. We often had to repeat what we said to each other to be heard. Her voice suddenly grew lower and more cautious as she shared an incident about when she was harassed by a stranger:

- BAYAN: One time they said a really powerful word to me...someone said to me – [hesitates] I can't say it here.
RESEARCHER: I don't think anyone will hear us over the music.
BAYAN: I feel like it's dangerous for me to say it... 'I' ...first 'I' ... 'S'
RESEARCHER: Oh yes, I understand.
BAYAN: I went home and I cried. Why? Why would they say that to me? After that I decided that I'm going to change the way I dress.
(Bayan, I.1)

Her reluctance to repeat what was said to her stemmed from her consciousness of how she might be perceived by others. She believes that saying *ISIS* in public is confirmation of that perception and can put her in danger. At the time of this incident, Bayan was quite new to New Zealand and still had not learned much English. However, the word she did understand, *ISIS*, had a powerful impact on her; she felt she had been cast as a dangerous enemy. Unable to reconcile the difference between her perception of herself and the perception others held of her, she did not leave the house for two days following that incident.

While Bayan was actually subjected to verbal harassment, for Najat, the fear alone of experiencing it was enough to prevent her from setting foot outside her house for the first two months of her sojourn:

I was too afraid to go out...afraid because I wear hijab and people might say things to me. I heard from others that it's not ok for a woman wearing hijab to go out on her own. I didn't take my kids to school...For two months I

didn't leave the house, until my husband would take me and the kids out.
(Najat, I.3)

She eventually felt safe enough to walk to the local café and use public transportation to go into Hamilton City to meet friends and watch a movie. Jawhara felt that there was an increase in hostility towards Muslim women compared to the first time she sojourned to New Zealand:

JAWHARA: when I come back I found it very difficult. They look at me different way, they talk – like they say something bad to me
RESEARCHER: Really? What do they say?
JAWHARA: Ah, I can't say it [laugh] it's really bad
RESEARCHER: Like swearing?
JAWHARA: Nnn- It's like mm [switches to Arabic] *dirty words*
(Jawhara, I.1e)

It is possible that Jawhara's increased English proficiency and participation in more domains within the host society have increased her awareness and subjected her to more occurrences.

4.3.3.2 Discrimination

Discrimination can be more subtle than verbal harassment because it is felt rather than heard. The participants who spent most of their days at university, interacting with people were able to detect when they were being discriminated against. Maram felt that one of the convenors discriminated against her by marking her more harshly than she did other students. Maram was offended by the convenor's reaction when she contributed and answered a question correctly:

She said, 'OOOOH Maram, you're answering?!' I'm not sensitive, but I know what she's like. I'm not stupid. So I just sat there and gave her a look. Does she think that just because we wear this [headscarf] that we are stupid underneath? And then she laughed. (Maram, I.2)

The convenor's comment was consistent with the stereotype that Saudi women are repressed and voiceless. As this was not an isolated incident, Maram felt

disadvantaged and was worried that her assignments were being marked unfairly which was an ongoing cause of stress.

Jawhara had not experienced any discrimination at university until she reached a more advanced English course, “At the beginning she [the teacher] said to me, ‘You will fail’” (I.1e). She felt discouraged and believed she would indeed fail because her teacher said so. Jawhara’s husband encouraged her to sit the IELTS test before completing the level, as a means of boosting her confidence and preventing the teacher’s words from having a negative effect:

So my IELTS test with me, I didn’t say anything to her. At the end of the aah level, I said to her, ‘I got 5.5 and I will study foundation.’ And she’s really surprised. Yeah. ‘How can you do it? You didn’t know anything?’ (Jawhara, I.1e)

Jawhara felt vindicated to have scored 5.5 on the IELTS test on her first try, and to have proven the teacher wrong. In this situation, discrimination fuelled her to do well.

Bayan experienced a series of discriminatory events that made her feel angry and upset. She had not compromised on her traditional dress and lived in an apartment building in the city centre. She told me she walked past homeless people every day on her way to and from the institute where she studied. On this particular day, a homeless man said things to her that she could not understand. But, she knew he was not being kind when he laughed at her. She ignored him, as she was accustomed to doing, and hurried to unlock the door of her apartment building. She was about to get on the elevator, when another resident declined to get onto the elevator with her. She believed he did not want to share it with her, “...I was getting onto the elevator and there was an old man with white hair who said he didn’t want to get on because I’m in it. I just stayed quiet and smiled” (I.1). The following day, Bayan attempted to enter her apartment building door with her key:

...this woman, on the inside of the building, got scared when she saw me and slammed the door in my face! But why? I have the right to be here, this is my apartment building! I even showed her my key so she would know I wasn't an intruder. She slammed the door again. I opened it again. I was SO angry. Anyway, I went up to my apartment and I didn't leave the house for the next two days. I was shattered. But it's ok, every time I get stronger. And, I have to change the way I dress. (Bayan, I.1)

Bayan was made to feel like a villain because of the way she dressed. She was so shattered she excluded herself from society, to avoid it from happening again. Even though she felt she was the victim of discrimination, she blamed herself for holding on to her cultural dress.

4.3.3.3 *Modifications to dress*

The harassment and discrimination that participants were subjected to made them feel threatened. The stress of living their daily lives on the edge, wondering if and when they are going to be targeted, was unsustainable in the long-term without severe adverse effects. They devised and adopted coping strategies for their survival and for their emotional, mental and psychological well-being. When faced with the decision of safety and maintaining cultural values, participants felt they could compromise on culture by making modifications to their dress. Some participants made changes before their arrival and others after their arrival.

Doha was warned by relatives of the trouble black clothing could cause. She explained what she wore when she arrived to New Zealand:

I thought it would be hard for me to wear an abaya. At first I used to dress like this (was wearing a t-shirt and jeans), but with *baalto* (something like a long shirt that reaches past the knees). But when we came, my husband saw the other Saudi women wearing abayas, and niqaab too! So, he told me to do the same as them I told him that I can't wear niqaab. I don't feel comfortable. I didn't wear the niqaab even in Saudi because I didn't like it,

I used to wear *lithma* (where just the mouth is covered, using the end of the head scarf). (Doha, I.1)

Jawhara, and Bayan arrived in traditional black clothing from head to toe, but when I had the second interview with Bayan she was dressed in a beige abaya and did not cover her face. Similarly, Jawhara came to the third interview with an abaya and no niqab. To avoid any harassment, Maram, Ruba and Abrar chose to wear colourful scarves and Western clothing (still abiding by the Islamic ruling for their bodies to be covered) and stopped covering their faces. They believed that it helped them attract less attention even though sometimes they were stared at. Hajar continued to wear a black niqab but wore colourful abayas. Ayesha maintained her black clothing and lithma but chose in which situations to uncover her face. For example, a road trip through small towns across the country was the type of situation when she wanted to draw less attention to herself. Najat, Doha and Maram also chose when to uncover their faces. Maram explained when she covers her face:

Here, when I'm walking down the street, I don't cover my face, even if a Saudi man passes by, I don't care. But, at university, I have to cover my face because that man might go and say, "this woman wasn't covering her face in this particular place". There are some mentalities like that – no no mentalities – their culture is like that. Their culture is unaccepting of a woman uncovering her face, so I respect his culture and I cover my face from him and continue walking.

In this excerpt, Maram made a distinction between her culture, and the culture of people from tribes. She initially stated that she covered her face to be respectful of Saudi men from traditional tribes; however, it soon became evident that her husband requested she cover her face when she walks by Saudi men because, "he doesn't want to look bad in front of his friends. He doesn't want to be embarrassed that his wife doesn't cover her face" (I.1). In addition to worrying about being harassed, she also had to uphold Saudi traditions to protect her and her husband's reputation from the Saudi men in the Hamilton community.

Bayan spoke about the difference removing the niqab made to her life:

I feel like the thing that was causing me the most stress was that I covered my face. When I go out now I feel so comfortable just wearing a hijab. This in itself gave me a lot more self-confidence. Now I like going out and mixing with people. Before, I'd get a lot of questions if I went out to eat with friends. They would ask, "How do you eat with that on?" Now I can go out with them and not get asked lots of questions. It's so much better now. What a relief! (Bayan, I.2)

Subsequently, she attracted less negative attention and no longer had to respond to her friends' incredulous questions, her confidence had grown, resulting in a greater sense of belonging. Similar sentiments were echoed by some of the other participants.

4.3.3.4 Reliance on social support

Another strategy that helped the participants cope with the fear of harassment was being reassured of the safety in New Zealand, by women who had lived here longer than themselves. Slowly, their fears went away, "I thought: if she's been here that long and nothing's happened to her, then it must be ok" (Hajar, I.1). For Najat, she found reassurance in seeing women, like herself, walking around the neighbourhood alone. She also found support, "I got to know a Saudi woman and we'd go out together" before she felt safe enough to go out alone. She reported that she felt confident and enjoyed going anywhere and everywhere she wanted by herself and had not encountered any problems.

All the other participants, except Hajar, felt safe enough to go out alone. In spite of her husband's attempt to ease her into it, Hajar was unable to overcome her fear:

My husband told me to go pick up my daughter from day-care. I said there was no way I would do that. He told me he would meet me at the end of our street. So, I did it. When I got there I rung him up, terrified, 'Where are you?

I'm here.' I wouldn't go out unless someone went with me – until now, I refuse to go out alone. (Hajar, I.1)

While the majority had found a happy medium that did not sacrifice their self-concept, they still took precautions. Doha said she used to attend lectures and go home directly afterwards, to avoid harassment. Jawhara used a similar strategy:

I spend like - when I go to uni I spend all the time at, in the lab. Yeah. Because if I go out maybe, I will face some problem. And, even if I if I walk I'm afraid like, if someone hit me or something. (Jawhara, I.1e)

Even after a year, Bayan still had fears for her safety, only going to places with lots of people and, “once the sun sets I don't go out alone at all, no matter how close. Even in the winter when it would get dark early. I get scared, I feel like it's dangerous for me to be out alone” (Bayan, I.1). Similarly, Maram, Ayesha and Abrar opted to take taxis to move about, instead of buses, they felt that the exposure could increase their chances of harassment. For example, Abrar arrived at the focus group in a taxi because it had gotten dark, “it's safer and easier to call a taxi,” she mentioned.

In summary, the fear of harassment was strong and all the participants felt it. Initially, it was crippling for some and they felt ill equipped to handle it. Most overcame their initial fear by asking longer-stayers about their experiences, by finding strength in a companion and by taking precautions to maintain their safety. Their fears continued to exist, in the background, but generally did not impede their ability to function and carry on with their lives.

4.3.4 Identity

4.3.4.1 Family's Islamic identity

Maintaining their Muslim identity was of utmost importance to the participants. They were faced with opposing forces that put pressure on the mothers and required that they address religious differences. With younger children, mothers were lenient

and made allowances for them when taking part in non-Islamic school/day-care activities. Doha said, “They are too young” (I.2), a sentiment echoed by Ayesha and Jawhara. They implicitly taught them about Islam and being Muslims. The strategies they used were modelling, and allowing the children to observe; they prayed in front of them and encouraged them to occasionally participate following the actions of prayer. To the children, it was like a fun game. They also played while a recording of the Qur’an was recited in the background. Older children were given more explanations and were taught more directly than the younger children because they were more inquisitive and had the cognitive maturity to understand the reasoning behind practices.

Language in the home

The participants were in agreement about the importance of using Arabic in the home to preserve their culture and identity. Najat ensured her children spoke Arabic, “so that they won’t have trouble when they return to Saudi Arabia.” (I.1). Ayesha recounted the conversation she had with her husband where they discussed the benefits of speaking English or Arabic at home:

My husband said, ‘No! They’ll forget Arabic completely, at least they’re holding on to Arabic because of us.’ So it’s true that it would be good practice for us, but it would ruin their ability to communicate in Arabic. So we speak to them in Arabic. (Ayesha, I.2)

Ayesha’s family made it a rule to only speak Arabic at home. However, her daughters loved to read thus they spent a lot of time reading in English at home. They were also permitted to watch English TV programmes and movies and Ayesha often overheard them conversing with each other in English especially, “if they get excited or angry” (I.2).

Ayesha expressed her concern for her daughters’ Arabic proficiency deteriorating and gave examples of how they incorrectly formed plurals. Ayesha’s daughters had attended schools in Saudi Arabia before their move and had therefore learnt to read

and write in Arabic. However, Ayesha said, “their reading is *so slow*, they aren’t at the level of their peers in Saudi Arabia” (Ayesha, I.2).

The mothers of younger children, who arrived in New Zealand before they could speak, found greater difficulty communicating with them. The children spent the majority of the day at day care centres where they learnt English and quickly forgot Arabic. Jawhara explained that sometimes when she spoke to her son in Arabic, he would say, “What is this mean? What does that mean Mommy?” (I.2e) and Jawhara had to translate the instruction to English.

Doha explained the difficulty they experienced in trying to speak to their three-year old son in Arabic:

Well his father doesn’t have good English, it’s worse than mine, but when we say to my son “Put this away” in Arabic, he doesn’t understand. We have to say it three more times and he still doesn’t understand. So we resort to English and he does it right away. It’s easier. Even his father has learnt a lot of words from him to communicate with him. (Doha, I.2)

They found that communicating with their son in English was more efficient than Arabic. Their son would ask Doha a question she could not answer in English she would resort to, “translating on my phone” to answer him. As Doha’s English proficiency increased she relied less on translation dictionaries.

Hajar also experienced something similar. At the beginning of their sojourn, her husband used to teach their daughter English to aid in her adjustment at school. She quickly learned English, “When she wanted something she’d ask me for it in English. Sometimes I would understand her, other times I wouldn’t. I’d ask my husband, ‘What does your daughter want?’ and he would tell me.” Hajar grew concerned that her daughter was forgetting Arabic and that they would be faced with greater challenges in the future because of it. They changed course and began to teach her Arabic, “We’d point to objects and say the name in Arabic. Slowly, she picked it up.” Ever since, they insist that English is not spoken in the home.

Ramadan

Ramadan is one of the pillars of Islam and is a requirement of everyone after puberty, who is healthy and able. Muslims do not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset for a month. Learning about Ramadan and participating in it is an important part of a family's Muslim identity. The participants found that they needed to explicitly teach the importance of it. Ayesha explained it to her daughters in this way, "in Ramadan we don't eat so that we can experience what it feels like for the poor and learn to be compassionate towards the less fortunate" (Ayesha, I.2).

Mothers of school-aged children agreed that fasting should be their choice:

The eldest tried...one time I was preparing her breakfast and she said, 'No, mama I want to fast.' So I said 'Okay'. A few hours later, she told me she was hungry and I told her, "That's great, you fasted a few hours, that's a big deal! (Ayesha, I.2)

Ayesha was careful not to force her daughters to fast, she believed that that would repel them. Instead, she provided encouragement and praise to make them love Ramadan.

Ruba did not expect her son to fast during the day because she understood the difficulty of fasting at school when everyone around him was eating. Instead, when he returned from school, "before the [sunset] about 1 hours, 2 hours I said, 'It's ok, fast now' and he said, 'Ok, I will start fasting' and he stay with us. He start fasting" (I.2e). Ruba said it would be easier for her son in Saudi Arabia because his cousins and classmates would be fasting too, but by her son's age (ten) they still would not be fasting full days either.

Fasting was not something the mothers were too concerned about because they believed they had plenty of time before their children hit puberty and so were relaxed about their children practicing to fast. They were also comforted in the knowledge that they will return to Saudi Arabia and their children will learn by watching others.

Prayer and Qur'an recitation

Muslims' everyday lives are filled with Islamic practices. Their speech is interspersed with phrases that acknowledge the greatness of their creator and His will and are in essence acts of worship. This is the initial step that mothers took to instil Islam in their children who were under the age of five. Ayesha explained what she teaches her son:

I do teach him some prayers – what to say before you eat: *bismillah*, when you sneeze, you say *Alhamdulillah*. He says, 'excuse me' and I say, 'No, mama 'excuse me'. I try to gradually guide him. (Ayesha, I.2)

Using these phrases are an important part of their identity and Ayesha fought the opposing force of English and local culture. The goal was for these utterances to, "become part of the routine" (Doha, I.2). Another age appropriate Islamic practice that Doha insisted her three-year-old son follow was eating with his right hand.

Recitation of the holy book, the Qur'an was also of importance. Younger children were exposed to it from a young age:

I turn on the Qur'an. I try. I can't teach him, but I want it to be in his mind. If he hears song, song, song, all the time, then he'll reject Qur'an. (Doha, I.2)

Doha tried to neutralise the influence day care had on her son by exposing his subconscious to the sound of Qur'an recitation.

As children grew older, they were taught to memorise verses from the Qur'an. Ayesha for example made a concerted effort to help her daughters memorise Qur'an:

I do teach them to recite Qur'an. I've taught them *Al Fatiha*, *Al Ikhlas*, *Al Mu awithat* and *Al Teen*. [My eldest] memorised one section at school in Saudi Arabia, but unfortunately, she's forgotten. I try to remind her, by

teaching her all over again. This is what I am able to do. Qur'an. (Ayesha, I.2)

She lamented that her daughter had forgotten one of the 30 sections in the Qur'an because of their move outside of Saudi. Najat also taught her sons, "A lot of times when we are home I teach them Qur'an. Alhamdulillah they have memorised some" (Najat, I.1).

Muslims are required to pray five times a day. However, it is not compulsory until the age of puberty. Therefore, mothers of younger children tended to adopt the same strategy as Doha:

My kids are still very young, but at prayer time, I get them to come and sit with me or I will say, 'Go pray with your father'. (Doha, I.2)

The children joined in and imitated the hand placement and the up and down movements of their parents, learning the actions of prayer. Primary school-aged children were expected to begin learning the words that accompany the actions and incorporating verses from the Qur'an:

During Ramadan, I started teaching my daughters how to pray. I call them to come pray with me, and I say the words meant to be said quietly, aloud, so that they can hear and learn what needs to be said. Parenting is a struggle. (Ayesha, I.2)

Muslim prayer consists of actions and utterances. All utterances are said inaudibly except for reading the Qur'an when they are in the standing position. Glorification of the name of God is usually said quietly when they are bowing and when prostrating. Najat said the name glorification aloud for the children to learn. Najat also mentioned that her sons pray, "They pray with their dad. There are a lot of times when he takes them with him to the mosque" (Najat, I.1). Visiting the mosque is another act of worship. Men are expected to perform their prayers at the mosque occasionally, when they are able, as it creates camaraderie with other Muslims and

a community spirit. Therefore, when Najat's sons accompanied their father to the mosque it was in preparation for this.

Diet

All the participants were familiar with the names *bacon* and *pork* and were confident that they could ask if their food contained any. However, they were concerned about pork being a hidden ingredient, "I know they use the fat from a pig in cooking. That is more difficult to ask about" (Ayesha, I.1). Some of the mothers asked a *sheikh* (a religious leader) about the best course of action. He reassured them that consuming it unintentionally was not forbidden. Nonetheless, they taught their older children not to eat it and to always ask. With the younger children, the mothers were impressed and relieved that the day-cares were already aware of their dietary restrictions and ensured they catered to them with an alternative. This put their minds at ease.

Older children found themselves in situations where they had to inquire. For example, Najat's sons often attended friends' birthday parties alone:

I told them to ask the mother which foods have pork. Now they are older they know that sausages have pork, it is used in pizza and they know what bacon looks like. They stay away from those foods. (Najat, I.2)

With age and experience, the children were able to discern which foods were prohibited and which were not. Ayesha's pride was evident as she related a story about her daughters placing a school lunch order:

Some days I don't feel like making their lunches and ask them if they want to buy something from school. They chose pizza and the pizza has bacon. So they – I was so impressed, May Allah preserve them – they said they unwrapped their pizza and they saw pink meat and thought, "That's not chicken." They went and asked – they place the order and pay in the morning and at lunchtime they get their order, so they can't change it – they were told it is bacon. They told the woman that they don't eat it and she

could keep it. She told them, ‘You’ve already paid; I can’t give your money back’. They just ate the cookies and fruit that came with their order. I gave them lots of praise. So Alhamdulillah that they have this instinct; they didn’t eat the pizza even though it meant they had nothing to eat. (Ayesha, I.2)

Ayesha’s daughters had the value instilled in them so deeply that even when they were faced with the possibility of having no lunch, they still opted to follow the Islamic restriction. However, some children were more inclined to accept what they were taught, while others questioned and challenged their parents to be convinced. Ruba’s older son asked her, “Why do those people eat the ham and I can’t eat it? Why?” (I.2e). He required an explanation that would satisfy his growing mind. Ruba told him that ham is not healthy. He was unconvinced and challenged her with the reality he observed, “But *they* eat it”. Ruba was confronted with a dilemma: she wanted her son to identify as a Muslim, as well as a New Zealander. She believed his identity might be negatively affected if she told him he is different and would contradict the message she tried to reinforce all along, “you’re the same with other people, I’m the same with other people. I wear hijab, that’s something special for me and you have [something] special for you and they have special thing...” (I.2e). However, *not* telling him he is different, and overly emphasising his sameness, could hinder his perception of himself in relation to other Saudis upon their return.

Sojourners are often faced with issues that conflict with their values, requiring them to evaluate and prioritise. Ruba valued the Muslim identity, for herself and her children, over social acceptance, and thus resigned herself to the fact that “sometimes you have to tell them” (I.2e).

Modesty in dress

Dressing modestly is another requirement for men and women in Islam. There are different prohibitions on the skin exposed for each gender. Children are not held to the same standards as adults, until the age of puberty. However, mothers felt that it was best to have limits to instil the value of modesty, in preparation for when they are older.

In Islam, women are required to cover their hair, and their bodies, with the exception of their face, hands and feet. Modesty in dress was a consideration for the mothers of primary school aged girls because they were potentially approaching the age of puberty. They did not believe in forcing their daughters to cover the way a woman is expected to because as Ayesha said, “They’re still young” (I.2) and should be able to enjoy their childhood fully. While they allowed their daughters the freedom to choose their own clothes, they did have certain standards. Ayesha described those standards:

...a t-shirt and pants, but not the tops with no sleeves. A t-shirt is ok and even ¾ pants. They can wear short skirts and shorts, with leggings underneath. (Ayesha, I.2)

It was important to them for their daughters to enjoy their childhood, and so they found solutions to ensure they were not restricted by their clothing standards. Swimming can be a problematic area for some Muslims because bathing suits are typically quite revealing which Ayesha resolved, “Their swimsuit reaches to the knee and has short sleeves, and it’s one piece. I bought it in Malaysia, when we were coming back from Saudi Arabia” (I.2).

Men in Islam are required to cover their body from their navel down to their knees. Traditionally, in Saudi culture, men wear a long dress-like *thawb* to preserve their modesty. The Islamic standard does not contradict the dressing norm of modern-day Western society. In everyday circumstances, men dress more modestly than the requirement. Modesty for their sons was still something mothers gave consideration. In the excerpt below, Ruba retold an exchange between herself and her son:

Umm sometimes...when he wearing short shorts I said, ‘that’s not nice’. He said, ‘No, all the people here is wearing like that’. I said, ‘But, because you’re Muslim we don’t have to wear like this clothes’. (I.2e)

Ruba discouraged her son from wearing shorts to teach him about Islam's ruling on modesty. Similarly, Najat was concerned about her sons exposing their bare bodies:

When I take them to the swimming pool here, everybody gets undressed in front of you and your kids. I don't like that. So, I started to send them with their father and I don't allow them to get undressed in the pool changing rooms. I give them robes to take with them and I say, 'When you are done, put your robes on and get in the car. You can shower and change at home.'

(Najat, FG.2)

Najat found a way to avoid the awkwardness of undressing in a shared changing room. Mothers were equally concerned about their children being exposed to other people's bare bodies as they were about them exposing their own. At a social gathering, some of the participants discussed how problematic it was to go to the beach because there were many people and too many uncontrollable factors: women in bikinis and behaviours that were not child-friendly. As Hajar said, "Instead of a trip to the beach being fun it becomes stressful" (I.2). Before going, mothers had to prepare their children for what they might see, then try to minimise the degree of undress that their children might see, and then answer the barrage of questions that followed: "Why do they do that? How come we aren't allowed?" (Najat, FG.2). Therefore, they found secluded ones or stayed away from the beach entirely.

Non-Islamic celebrations

Mothers had different views on whether to allow their children to participate in Christmas celebrations. This was not a consideration they had to make before their sojourn. All the mothers with children in day-care agreed that the children were too young to understand that Christmas was not theirs to celebrate and allowed them to "enjoy" the festivities. Hajar was the exception, she recounted a time when her daughter's day-care asked them to buy a present for Santa Claus to present to her daughter at the Christmas party:

We told her that we don't have Christmas and she was convinced. We told her that as Muslims we only have two Eids. But we told her that we would get her a present, from us. Then on the day, they gave it to her. (Hajar, I.2)

For Hajar, it was important her daughter understood that Christmas is not a Muslim celebration. However, because she did not want her daughter to feel left out, she complied with the day care's request but ensured her daughter knew the present was from them, not Santa.

Like Hajar, mothers with school-aged children, believed their children were old enough to know. However, this was not without challenges: Ruba had one child at day-care and another at school and because she had adopted the lenient approach with her youngest and educated her oldest it resulted in her children having disagreements:

My youngest said, 'I like the Christmas... [Santa] come to my house and give me gifts'. His brother told him, 'NO! No, that's not for us! This is Eid for them, not for us'. The youngest start crying. (Ruba, I.2e)

Ruba did not want to dampen her youngest son's spirits and realised she had to teach her eldest that Islam requires Muslims to be tolerant of other religions and the importance of building and maintaining ties with your community. She explained to him:

...you can happy with them because when you... have Eid they give you gift... so when it's their Eid, you have to give them gift. It's not a big problem. (Ruba, I.2e)

Although Ruba did not specifically tell her son that it is permissible in Islam to give friends' gifts for their celebrations, she attempted to give him a logical explanation instead.

During his first year of school, Najat's son brought home a letter explaining that parents had to buy a present for their child for Santa to deliver to their door. She

and her husband were transparent with their son and read the letter out to him, “We explained that Santa isn’t real, it’s just a man dressed in a costume.” He understood that it was a tradition and was not real. The issue Najat was then faced with was that, “He went and told his friends at school that Santa isn’t real’. When she learned of this, she had to teach her son to be respectful of other people’s beliefs, even if he did not agree with them.

For Ayesha’s daughters, although they understood Christmas was not theirs to celebrate, but being surrounded by children at school who talked about it and were excited about it, they could not help but be excited too. Ayesha wanted them to have that level of excitement about Eid and tried to show them it was fun too:

I tried to get them excited about it. I want them to see that we celebrate; just like they see their classmates do for Christmas. They get excited when it’s Christmas. (Ayesha, I.2)

Her attempts were successful as her daughters talked about Eid in advance, decorated the house, bought presents and new clothes and made Eid treats.

4.3.4.2 Establishing social identities

Relationships with Saudis

Social gatherings were a great place for participants to find support and talk about life in New Zealand. Social gatherings were also a means of maintaining their religious and cultural identity. This was beneficial for the mothers and their children. Being amongst people from Saudi Arabia made them feel like they belonged, because it reminded them who they were and where they had come from.

Participants got together for religious occasions like Ramadan. During Ramadan 2017, the Saudi women took turns hosting an *iftar* (dinner at sunset to break fast), which I was invited to by Ayesha, Ruba and Maram. I attended Ayesha’s iftar because my schedule permitted it. I wrote in my reflective journal:

There was a religious aspect to this gathering, different to other gatherings I've been to. The women sat around the food mat and as they ate, Ayesha said that she had planned to give a short Islamic lesson, but had run out of time and wasn't able to prepare anything. Instead, we would go around the circle and each woman (only if she was willing) would reflect on and share about the power of Allah and how she has experienced it in her daily life. (Reflective Journal, 03.06.17)

Ayesha intended for the women to connect with each other to reinforce a significant part of their identity that they shared. It was easy for them to be together in this way because of the safety of their shared values and beliefs that required no explanation.

They practiced being Muslims on other occasions too, for example, at the end of Ramadan they celebrated Eid together. This was a large event where they invited all the sojourning Saudi women, as well as their friends who were Muslim or non-Muslim. They typically hired out a hall, or an indoor playground at night the weekend after Eid. My children and I were invited to a number of their Eid parties. I wrote about the first Eid party we attended:

The kids had a great time; they played on the bouncy castles, they ate far too much chocolate and candy. After the kids were given time to play, they had a little competition for them; they were given simple Islam related questions to answer (e.g. how many times do we pray a day? What is the name of the month we fast? Can you recite Al Fatiha and Al Ikhlas?), as well as musical statues. The winners got prizes, but in the end all the kids were gifted something...I noticed that after they asked the question in Arabic, they asked it in English. I overheard the MC say, "Some of them don't understand Arabic"...There was a competition for the adults too, riddles and spot prizes. Then the dancing began. The music went up loud and some of the women belly danced while others did a traditional Saudi dance. (Reflective Journal, 17.09.16)

Holding Eid parties was a way for them to celebrate together but specifically to strengthen their children's Muslim identity by being with other Muslims, and to show their children that Eid was as much fun as Christmas. As Ayesha put it, "My kids think that the Christmas celebrations are 'top' so I want them to get them excited about Eid" (I.2).

From what I observed and what participants told me, participants socialised with their friends every weekend. However, relationships with their in-group were also for support. For example, Ayesha gave birth during the data collection period and when I went to congratulate her at her house, I observed that Maram and Ruba were there serving the guests and attending to any of Ayesha's needs. From the conversations that occurred, I was able to surmise that Maram and Ruba had looked after Ayesha's children while she was at the hospital delivering her fourth child, and that they had been cooking meals for her family ever since. After the third interview with Ruba, I wrote in my reflective journal:

After our interview, I offered Ruba a ride because her husband had taken the kids to a friend's farm and wouldn't be back till later in the evening. She asked if I could drop her off at Ayesha's house because she hadn't seen her in a few days and she liked to have people around her since she still can't leave the house. (Reflective Journal, 25.04.17)

Ruba was worried about her friend Ayesha being lonely at home alone, considering she was still unable to leave the house after her Caesarean. This demonstrates the close bond they had and reinforced Ayesha's earlier statement about friends "who have become like sisters" (I.1).

Najat and Hajar had a similar bond: they reported that they spent a lot of time together, and because they lived in my neighbourhood I frequently observed them walking together after dropping their kids off at school. They said they often went to a local café, where they both chose to be interviewed. Najat told me, in informal conversation, that she and Hajar took turns looking after each other's children on the weekend, to give each other a break.

While the aforementioned friendship sets took the place of family, the participants also supported newly arrived sojourning women. Ayesha was rather active and intentional about including new women to the group, she often invited them to her house (for further details, see Appendix 6). One time, the participants, a new group of sojourning women and myself met up for a picnic at a local park and I heard Ruba and Maram offer advice to the newcomers. I wrote about one incident in my journal:

A new cohort of Saudi women recently arrived to New Zealand and I met some of them today. Two of the women mentioned they had arrived a month earlier and were still living in a motel. They told Maram that they had been applying for rental houses and weren't being chosen. Maram said that the best way was to take someone who could speak English to the viewings who could speak to the landlord or realtor. Then she offered to get her husband to contact the other women's husbands. (Reflective Journal, 05.02.18)

Ruba and Maram, the more experienced sojourners were willing to provide assistance to help the newcomers settle in to life in New Zealand. On a number of occasions, I also overheard the women suggest the best shops to buy items used in Saudi cooking.

Relationships with non-Saudis

Ayesha, Jawhara, Doha and Najat spoke about having relationships with people who were not Arab or Muslim. The day I interviewed Doha for the second time she mentioned that one of the day care teachers had taken her children out that morning. She talked about their relationship:

I like Helen, I feel that she's close to me and she helps me a lot but I don't talk to her a lot. When she comes over and I serve her coffee she refuses to drink it and some of the food is strange to her and she won't eat it or doesn't like it. Last year, she would talk to me about – she's Christian – so one time

she took me and showed me their church and talked to me about it. (Doha, I.2)

Doha indicated that she did not socialise with Helen often, but that she sometimes visited her and helped her out. They maintained contact, “Even when I was in Saudi Arabia we remained in contact and I’d send her photos of the kids”.

Najat’s family developed a relationship with her neighbour who was a retired English teacher. She tutored Najat English for three months and therefore spent a lot of time at Najat’s house.

I make food and send it to her – she loves Saudi food – and sometimes she makes us date scones and other sweet food. And she loves my children a lot, soo much to the extent that if they are outside playing in front of the house I look out and find her watching them. (I.1)

Additionally, they were able to rely on her to watch their house while they were travelling. Unlike many of the other participants, Najat lived in the same house throughout her sojourn, which she believed was the reason for her getting to know her neighbours, “I’ve been living in my house for three years. I haven’t moved since I came to New Zealand so I know them all” (I.1). Her children had befriended the neighbourhood children and would often play on their cul-de-sac, which increased her interactions with them. Hajar on the other hand, also had two social girls who played with the neighbours’ children; however, she was not interested in forging a relationship despite the neighbour’s efforts:

I don’t have a relationship with her because I don’t speak English so it’s not possible to have a relationship. They come over to our house and they are friendly and try to have a conversation but we weren’t interested in building a relationship because I don’t speak English and my husband is hardly home. But they tried to get to know us. (Hajar, I.2)

Because of the language barrier Hajar did not engage or attempt to converse with the neighbours and was content for the children's relationship to remain between them.

4.3.4.3 Personal identity development

As women, they identified ways they had benefitted from living in New Zealand. The majority had pursued further study, had learnt independence and organisational skills.

Interdependence was a normal part of the collectivist society of Saudi Arabia. When the women arrived in New Zealand without any of their support systems, they were compelled to put into practice new skills to adapt to their new life. This adaptation was a challenge. Upon self-reflection, the participants identified areas in which they grew towards self-reliance.

Bayan, a newly wed, had never experienced going to a social gathering unaccompanied by family members. Typically, at such gatherings, people would socialise with their own age group, but being in New Zealand changed the rules due to the smaller network of people and the absence of family. Bayan found herself in situations that necessitated her to converse with strangers and with her elders. In the extract below, she talked about the cultural implications of speaking to your elders, referring to her first visit to Saudi Arabia since her sojourn:

Now, I sit with older women – I used to be too shy to speak to them, women my grandmother's age, and I would be cautious that I speak respectfully – and now I talk to them at length, without reservation. (Bayan, I.1)

Outside of the cultural norms, Bayan found confidence and ease in speaking to older women that she may not have acquired otherwise.

In Saudi Arabia participants were accustomed to moving in groups and it gave them a sense of security and strength; they would go to new places with their aunts or sisters, driven by their driver and felt no fear or apprehension. However, once in

New Zealand they needed to adapt to their current situation. They started going out to places with their husband, and then a friend. Gradually, building the confidence to go out alone to familiar places as well as places nearby. Najat in particular found great joy and satisfaction in moving around freely and doing as she pleased:

Then I started going out on my own and I didn't leave a place I didn't go to! Now I don't need to wait for anyone. I drop my kids off at school, I go and have coffee, I go for a walk, and I go on the bus by myself. Anywhere I want to go, I go by myself. (Najat, I.1)

Another aspect of self-reliance raised by participants was in regards to their housekeeping duties. Najat expressed a thought that was representative of what all the participants felt:

I am more self-reliant. Over there, family helps me out a lot. And if you aren't able to work around the house, you get a maid to do it. But here, if I don't do it, it won't get done. (Najat, I.1)

Learning to perform their household chores without assistance made them feel accomplished and proud, as Ayesha felt when she began cooking for her family:

Here, things are so much more natural. Doing things for yourself gives you an appreciation for the result. Now when I cook and my husband says he doesn't like the taste of something I'll say to him, "Why not? I put so much effort into making it for you" [laugh]. (Ayesha, I.1)

As a result of the additional roles and duties participants took on, they learnt new skills to cope with them. Most of the participants were enrolled in some form of study, and had to juggle their usual parenting role, domestic duties as well as their student commitments. In the extracts below, they talk about the challenges they experienced trying to manage all the demands on their time:

At the beginning, even when I got up really early, I couldn't organise myself in time, SubhanAllah because I wasn't used to it. I couldn't manage my

time, I would ALWAYS go to university late. I would always apologise for going to class late, “I’m sorry, my children.” [laugh]. (Doha, I.1)

I get things organised early, because when I first came here I couldn’t cope. I didn’t know how to control my affairs, I didn’t know how to go out and I didn’t know how to enjoy my time. Everything was on me. I felt so much pressure was on me. Then I learnt to manage my time: I’d clean at night and sometimes I’d cook for a few days so I can rest for a few days. I feel like I can rely on myself. I learnt time-management. (Najat, I.1)

Before an interview with Bayan, she expressed her frustration at her friends’ unpunctuality. The night before, she had invited them over at 8 pm. By the time they arrived at 10 pm, she was too tired to be social. She claimed that back in Saudi Arabia, she would not have expected punctuality, but now she had a greater value for time.

For Maram, an important skill she learnt as a result of her sojourn was managing their finances:

In Saudi Arabia I wasn’t responsible for money so I had no idea about how to manage it. When I came here, I found it challenging because I realised that now I have a house, I have money in my hand...how do I deal with it? I started worrying about making our income last the whole month, and saving for the months when we had no income. It was a lot of pressure. I was so stressed about money because I was comfortable in Saudi Arabia, and here I’m not. (I.1)

There were some complications with her husband’s scholarship, and his monthly stipend was sometimes stopped without notice leaving them without an income until he could get matters sorted with the Saudi Arabian Cultural Office. This lack of security was stressful for Maram, but taught her a new skill.

The majority of the women talked about driving. Some expressed a desire to learn and discussed the benefits of it. Others, such as Ruba, talked about how they were

too afraid to learn. After one of our interviews, I offered to give her a ride to her friend's house. I wrote about the incident in my journal:

Ruba commented about how confident I am at driving. She said she wants to learn to drive, but she's too scared. I told her that I remember being scared too and that it's a natural part of the process, but that she should give it a try anyway. I told her how I overcame my fear by first driving in parking lots, then empty streets and slowly progressed to driving to the local supermarket until I built up confidence. (Reflective Journal, 25/04/17)

Approximately three months later at a social gathering, I came to learn that Ruba had learnt to drive when she pointedly mentioned to me, "I almost hit your car while parking." I congratulated her on overcoming her fear as she continued to tell me how much easier it was to drop her children off at school in the morning compared to using a taxi. Several months after this incident, Ayesha also informed me that after a few attempts, she managed to pass the theoretical portion of the driving test.

New circumstances caused the participants a lot of stress initially, and necessitated that they learn new skills and devise new strategies to adapt and ease that tension.

4.3.5 Parenting beliefs

Findings from the focus group discussions will be presented and discussed here. The topics discussed relate directly to the parenting and education of the participants' children. I posed these topics to them in the focus group to potentially capture their perspectives in the presence of their peers and how they might change if challenged.

Careful consideration was given to how the two focus group members were chosen, which was discussed in Section 3.4.5. The contributing participants in each of the focus groups are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Focus group participation

Group	Name	Mother	Children's ages
FG 1	Ayesha	Yes	10yr-F, 9yr-F, 5yr-M, 3m-M
	Ruba	Yes	9yr-M, 5yr-M
	Maram	Expecting mother	n/a
FG 2	Najat	Yes	8yr-M, 6yr-M, 3yr-M
	Hajar	Yes	8yr-F, 6yr-F pregnant
	Abrar	No	n/a

The focus group transcripts used in Section 4.3.5 and 4.3.6 follow the transcription conventions listed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Transcription conventions

Symbol	Use
<1>	beginning of the first instance of overlapping speech
</1>	end of the first instance of overlapping speech
–	interrupted speech
[...]	truncated speech
[text]	actions
<i>italics</i>	contextual explanations

Topic 1: Boys and girls should be parented in the same way

During an informal social gathering, where some of the participants were present, a mother began to talk about how different boys and girls are and that they need to be parented differently. The discussion that followed fascinated me because it seemed that the mothers consciously parented each gender differently. I wanted to hear what all the participants had to say, and used it as a discussion point in the focus groups.

Focus Group 1

In the extract below, Focus Group 1 arrived at a consensus, that boys and girls should be parented differently. Maram disagreed initially, but it later became clear that she in fact did agree. They acknowledged that males and females were created by God with different natures and, therefore, need to be treated differently. They also identified that each has a different role within the Saudi society and thus their behaviour is dictated by culture.

- 1 RUBA: But for a girl, it's nice for her to be quiet and soft.
- 2 MARAM: No, I'm the opposite of you two, completely. I'm completely, completely the opposite of you.
- 3 AYESHA: In what?
- 4 MARAM: To me, girls and boy are the same. They should both have strong personalities, be self-reliant, be able to make deci-
- 5 AYESHA: Have a strong personality yes, but –
- 6 MARAM: Why, why do I say that Ayesha? Let her –
- 7 AYESHA: not <7>to the extent</7>
- 8 MARAM: <8>Let her</8>
- 9 AYESHA: that she becomes hard and inflexible. It's not nice.
- MARAM: No. Let her. You know why? I'll tell you. When I was at university, I was shy and it got me -

Discussion interrupted for a few minutes as guests arrived and greeted the FG participants

- 10 MARAM: into some trouble and I couldn't stand up for myself. Then I learnt from this incident that I have to stand up for myself. Why didn't I respond? Why didn't I-? So it's good for a girl to have a strong personality. <10>There are some</10> -
- 11 RUBA: <11>No, Maram </11> her strength is different. There are different types of strength. For example –
- 12 MARAM: Ruba, it's strength <12> while maintaining manners</12>
- 13 RUBA: <13>Hold on</13> <13>Hear me out </13>
- 14 MARAM: <14>Ruba </14>
- 15 RUBA: Listen to me, they should all be able to make <15>decisions</15> and be confident –
- 16 MARAM: <16> yes </16> Ruba, Ruba
- 17 RUBA: and no one should treat me badly or insult me
- 18 MARAM: Right.
- 19 RUBA: But what's the difference between the strength of a boy and a girl?
- 20 MARAM: I'll tell you, I'll tell you. She has to be daring and be able to talk <20>back</20> but politely
- 21 AYESHA: <21>No, no, no</21>, some of them have total strength where one glance can make the other girls fear and respect her. That is how a girl should be raised. For example,<21>sometimes</21>
- 22 RUBA: <22> but not a boy Maram </22>

- 23 AYESHA: even if a girl is quiet, but her mere presence, a glance, that's it the other girls respect her. <23> But </23>
- 24 RUBA: <24> And from God - </24>
- 25 AYESHA: <25>But a boy</25>
- 26 RUBA: <26> a girl</26> has something inside her that's weak.
- 27 MARAM: No.
- 28 RUBA: Hold on. She needs to be sensitive, for example she gets hurt from a word, you understand?
- 29 MARAM: That's why she needs to become strong.
- 30 RUBA: I know. But she's that way from God. Ah a boy, <30>it's not nice for him to be</30> -
- 31 AYESHA: <31> A boy, there's no chance for him </31>, <31>at all </31>
- 32 RUBA: <32> It's not good to break his word.</32> <32> You understand?</32>
- 33 AYESHA: <33>Yes, you can't break him <33>. <33> But it's ok for a girl</33>. It's ok for a girl.
- 34 RUBA: You can't do that to a boy.

Group 1 discussed the desired attributes that should be nurtured in each gender. They agreed that boys should be raised to be strong. However, when Ruba and Ayesha said that there is prestige in a woman being soft and having someone to protect her, Maram disagreed. In the extract, they argued about the meaning of strength and how it applied to each gender.

Maram argued that girls should not be raised to be soft and quiet, based on her personal experience growing up. To her, being soft and quiet indicated weakness and gave others permission to overstep and diminish her sense of power. She said it was necessary for girls to be vocal and have a sharp tongue to defend themselves. However, Maram's childhood was somewhat atypical to the norm. She was a strong-willed child who paid little attention to cultural norms as she played with the neighbourhood boys and responded to their 'big-talk' with physical aggression.

Ruba and Ayesha instead thought about the desired strength of a woman in their society; to be able to demonstrate restraint and maintain decorum increases her standing within her community. Therefore, girls were raised with strictness and rules. For boys, external strength was encouraged so that they would be able to survive amongst other men in their society, and perform their role as leaders for their family. They needed to be given the space to grow and discover whom they

were, to exert their power within their family unit, impose their ideas and preferences to build confidence and create a strong leader. To raise girls in the same way would disrupt the order in which their society operates affecting marital relationships and how they parent their children.

Focus Group 2

In Group 2's discussion, they agreed that girls and boys in Saudi Arabia are treated differently, but the concept of strength did not feature in their discussion. However, they discussed the idea that culturally girls are princesses, whereas boys are treated like men. Hajar and Najat focused on different aspects of what that actually meant but agreed that girls are soft and pampered while boys are given responsibility.

For Hajar, a mother of two girls, protection was of importance to her, which was also mentioned in FG1. She said that in order to protect daughters, parents should ask a lot of questions about who their friends are, where they are going, and accompany them to a friend's house. You do not need to do that with boys because, "they are men and they know what's good for them". She explained her belief saying that, "A boy carries his own shame and therefore he's free to do what he pleases, whereas a girl's shame is carried by her family." This stems from a Saudi value: mistakes made by girls affect the reputation of the whole family but boys are responsible for their own mistakes. Protection is the reason that when the neighbourhood children in New Zealand wanted to play with Hajar's daughters, she allowed them to play near the house. She welcomed them into her home, but her daughters were not permitted to play at anyone's house. Najat and Abrar made no comment about this.

Najat on the other hand was most concerned with the impact that raising boys as men would have on their well-being. As a mother of two boys and a little girl, she spoke from her own experience raising them. While she understood this was a cultural practice, she believed it was unfair to make boys grow up before their time, which she expressed in the extract below:

- 1 NAJAT: I don't know, I see that there are different ways for dealing with boys and girls. I always feel that in our society boys get the short end of the stick. A girl gets her rights and more and she is spoiled and coddled more but, for us, a boy is treated unfairly. They are told, "Don't cry, you're a man. Sit with the men, don't sit with the women. Don't talk." But these are things that the boy needs. He needs to be able to express himself, talk – This always happens. My husband and I argue about this all the time. He accuses me of mollycoddling my sons. But if I don't coddle them, who will? So aaah, my eldest son likes for me to sit and talk to him. They came from a social gathering yesterday and he sat next to me. My husband doesn't like this, he says it's like I'm interrogating him. He says I shouldn't be asking about men's talk but I ask him about what he did etc. I do it so that tomorrow when he grows up he'll be in the habit of talking to me and confiding in me. He'll have a safe place to unload his burdens, instead of bottling it up or trusting outsiders.
- 2 HAJAR: Not to interrupt you, but no matter what you train your sons to do as children, when they grow up they change completely.
- 3 NAJAT: Yes, they change, but if he's been trained from when he was a child to always confide in his mother, to accompany her to places and serve her – even though he's still young, I tell him to get things for me. When we go to the supermarket I say [eldest son] you are responsible for this, [youngest son] you're responsible for that, they do it on their own. So if they've been trained to bear responsibility and to sit with me and talk to me they will continue to do that into adulthood. If there's a party I ask about it, and then I let them go. I don't prevent them, I ask questions and then I permit them to go. A girl is similar but she isn't like a boy, she has the freedom to talk a lot, and to complain. She knows how to control the family, better than a boy. A boy if he talks –

Hajar and Najat speak simultaneously and inaudibly

he's told, "Don't act like a baby, don't do this, you're a boy, you're a man, sit like a man not like girls." He spends his whole life being treated like a man, he's only six years old but he's told, "Don't cry, you're a man".

- 4 HAJAR: Yes, that's true.
- 5 NAJAT: Even as a child, he's seen as being a man.
- 6 HAJAR: yes –
- 7 NAJAT: Be a man! He's 6 or 7 years old but told he's a man. 'Don't cry, you're a man!' this is the problem for us. My husband and I disagree about this all the time.
- [They snigger]
- 8 ABRAR: I see that there should be equality in how boys and girls are parented. But in terms of how each is treated, in Saudi Arabia, it's part of our culture and tradition a boy has to have a "strong heart" not like a girl who is soft and emotional by nature. But crying and not crying, yes, this is an issue. We can't let a boy bottle up his emotions. Let him express himself like girls are allowed to. But there are things that we do like, "You have to sit with the men, not with the women. Why?"

Because you're a boy like them. She's a girl, like us." Like that. Give them reasons to explain why. But in terms of parenting, I see that there should be equality [...]

Najat identified the injustice of robbing boys of their childhood. While she agreed that they ought to be groomed for their role as leaders of their family, by assigning them responsibilities, she was against the practice of hardening them. Boys were taught that sensitivity and emotions were a sign of weakness, and are shamed as having the attributes of a girl. Najat expressed that there was benefit in allowing her sons to express themselves, in letting them know that while they have to act tough in society, their sensitivity had a place with their mother. Hajar and Abrar were convinced with her position, although they had no personal experiences from which they might relate.

Unlike Najat, Ruba and Ayesha saw sensitivity as an undesirable trait in a boy. A boy who was not loud, energetic or rough was a source of worry for his parents because other boys would bully, ridicule and take advantage of him. In addition, a weak boy like that would not be able to protect his family or make sound decisions for them.

In conclusion, the two focus groups agreed that boys and girls should be parented differently.

Topic 2: Children should be involved in making decisions that concern them

It is quite common among Western parents to encourage autonomy in children. I wondered what the participants' opinions would be about it coming from a Middle Eastern upbringing. Had life in New Zealand influenced their opinion? Therefore, I posed the statement above to them during the focus group.

Focus Group 1

The women began by agreeing with the statement. They believed that it was necessary to give children freedom to make age-appropriate choices about things

like toys, clothing and outings. In the extract below, they discussed the advantages of allowing children some autonomy:

- 1 AYESHA: I am in favour, I give them the opportunity, even if I disagree with them. I give them the chance to – of course I'm referring to my daughters because they are older. I think that after the age of about nine you should give them opportunities to make decisions because it will help them when they are amongst their peers, to be leaders. [...] Or what do you think dear ones?
- 2 MARAM: I see that it's better for them to make their own decisions, I would help them, support them. I would give them guidance, this is good, and that isn't. Allow them to participate in the decision and praise their ideas, their decisions. Ayesha is right, so that she will learn for when she's older and she's put in a situation where aaah she can become the leader, to have the confidence needed to make quick decisions on her own and get herself out of tricky situations.
- 3 RUBA: It's true, it's good for him to make decisions but sometimes he makes the wrong decision and he's stubborn. So sometimes, if I see that it's a decision he shouldn't be making to begin with, a decision that is bigger than him, I won't include him in the decision. I make the decision for him. If the decision is easy for his level of thinking, and it's easy for him to make the right choice, aaah I might allow him to make the decision. But if it's a big decision and I know he won't listen to logic, I make it for him.

Ayesha and Maram did not disagree with Ruba's position about making decisions for her children. Instead, they thought about their own children and what their current autonomy-related struggles were. Ayesha talked about how her youngest daughter would choose an outfit and would regret her decision once they got home and would prefer whatever her sister had chosen. Now, she waits for her sister to choose and then takes the same thing. Ayesha was worried that her daughter did not have her own opinion and could not make decisions for herself, "She always removes herself, she's afraid to choose something and so we choose for her – and – uh she's just not content with what she chooses. What someone else has chosen is always better".

They quickly began to identify the types of decisions they would allow their children to make. Decisions related to preference and that were low-risk, were deemed acceptable. However, the mother made decisions that were considered highly consequential.

The women spoke about how there was a difference between boys and girls, that boys were more stubborn and girls were more willing to listen to reason. They gave examples of each. Amongst the examples given, Ruba the mother of a strong-willed boy, said, "...he refuses our decisions. He forces us to do it his way. He makes a decision and...if we don't do it, he reacts". While this had its challenges, the other women perceived this to mean he had a strong character, which would benefit him in life. Ruba said her son was at the extreme where he was unwilling to follow any rules (including at school). Ayesha, is the mother of a daughter who cannot make decisions for herself. They both saw this as an issue. They came to the conclusion that it is personality related and not about gender.

Focus Group 2

The participants also agreed that it was important to allow children to make decisions for themselves because it built confidence for decision making in adulthood. They believed it would build character and teach them to deal with the consequences of their decisions. However, they all agreed that there were limits to what children should decide, and that they should always be given guidance. Age-appropriate choices were considered acceptable and included clothing, food, family outings and toys.

In the extract below, mothers Najat and Hajar shared examples of times they allowed their children to make decisions they did not agree with.

- 1 HAJAR: I allow my daughters to do things I know are wrong, like once my daughter was being stubborn and insisted on wearing shorts and a T-shirt to school. I told her it was too cold. Then I said, “Ok, you wear what you want, but if you come home and tell me you’re sick or something, I’m going to punish you for the decision you made.” She agreed but packed spare clothes in her bag. When she came home she said to me, “I’m sorry mama, it got really cold.”
- 2 NAJAT: I do that too because it’s important for them to learn from experience. My son wanted to order something at a restaurant, that I knew he wouldn’t like, but I let him order it anyway. I was right, he didn’t like it but sometimes you have to allow them to see what’s right and wrong for themselves. It isn’t enough for us to tell them.
- 3 ABRAR: You can let them make mistakes like that because the consequences aren’t high. But if they went around breaking plates, you obviously can’t allow them to do that, you have to convince them why it’s wrong.

For Hajar, allowing her daughter to make an autonomous decision was with the intention of showing her the consequence of not listening to her mother. She tried to condition her daughter with “punishment” for making the wrong decision. However, for Najat, it was important that her son learnt from his experience, not learnt that she was right. Because ordering a food item is low-risk, she allowed him the freedom to decide for himself. Abrar agreed with allowing children to make low-risk decisions but highlighted the need for setting boundaries and not permitting children to do whatever they wanted.

While all the women perceived decision making to be necessary and a positive trait to instil in their children, it contended with their desire for their children to listen to them, trust them, and value their judgement. They wanted their children to be obedient to a degree, which Hajar demonstrated in the extract above. Similarly, Ayesha said, “sometimes, they take decisions that I am not at all convinced of and I let it happen. But if Allah guided them towards the right decision, I reward them for it” indicating her belief that she knows best. This is linked to the collectivist nature of Arab culture where parents should be respected and honoured. They tried to strike a balance between the two. And so, they offered their children guidance, they afforded them small, age-appropriate freedoms to maintain their individuality, while also making them aware that they had the ultimate say. This is because they knew their children well, had more experience, had long-term vision and had their

children's best interest at heart. Additionally, their eventual return to Saudi Arabia factored into their parenting.

Topic 3: Parenting is a mother's job

Focus Group 1

There was consensus between the participants that parenting is the job of both mother *and* father. Typically, in Saudi culture, caring for children is considered a mother's job. The participants steered the discussion towards defining the roles of each parent.

In the lengthy extract below, the participants disagreed but eventually came to an agreement that the bulk of parenting is a mother's job because she is involved in the day-to-day caring for and parenting of children.

- 1 RUBA: I'm talking about this generation, I feel that the mother is closer to the children. I feel that half, if not three quarters of the child's time is spent with her.
- 2 AYESHA: It's true that it's spent with the mother, I agree with you, but –
- 3 RUBA: The time he spends with his children isn't necessarily 'parenting' he sits and talks to them –
- 4 AYESHA: Ruba, presence doesn't necessarily constitute parenting. Just because a mother is present at home doesn't mean that she is the one who raises the kids –
- 5 MARAM: Who gives them guidance?
- 6 AYESHA: No. Sometimes, when a father comes, just his presence, and all he does is dot the I's has a huge influence on the children and they listen and implement it more than –
- 7 MARAM: Who is it that they fear?
- 8 RUBA: No, they aren't afraid.
- 9 MARAM: They would be afraid if you said, 'I'm going to tell your dad'
- 10 RUBA: No.
- 11 AYESHA: No, they are more fearful of me.
- 12 RUBA: But they see that he is –
- 13 AYESHA: Even my husband says, 'We used to be more afraid of our mother than our father. On the contrary, when our father came home we would relax. Fear isn't necessarily what raises them.
- 14 MARAM: On the contrary, I respect this person because I'm afraid of what he will say.
- 15 RUBA: No, they aren't afraid of him. But you feel that they respect him more. They listen to him more –
- 16 AYESHA: Yes.

- 17 MARAM: Yes.
- 18 RUBA: Why? Why am I saying this? Because I'm always with them. Some of the time, I make a decision and then a while later, I feel sorry for them and go back on my decision. The father doesn't do that. He said this, that's the end of it. So it makes a difference, a mother's parenting to a father's parenting. In this day and age –
- 19 AYESHA: But is parenting solely a mother's job?
- 20 RUBA: No.
- 21 AYESHA: Is it sufficient?
- 22 RUBA: Hold on, no it's not enough. I'm saying that I feel that a mother, in this age, her influence on her children is stronger. They gain more from her than the father.
- 23 AYESHA: Oh, gaining from her, yes.
- 24 RUBA: Yes, this is what I've been trying to say.
- 25 AYESHA: Yes, they gain/benefit from her three quarters – but a father has a part. He guides them.
They talk over each other inaudibly
- 26 MARAM: But who has a bigger part? Ruba?
- 27 RUBA: The mother. The mother.
- 28 AYESHA: The mother does more parenting.
- 29 MARAM: I know that a mother does most of the parenting, but –
- 30 RUBA: What have I been trying to tell you?
- 31 AYESHA: The most. Most of it. Most of a child's personality is shaped by the mother. But the father parents too.
- 32 RUBA: But I didn't write off his role. He participates –

Maram continued to challenge Ayesha and Ruba throughout and her opinion changed frequently. Ayesha and Ruba maintained their view that a mother's continuous interactions with her children gives her a greater understanding of her children, and their personalities. Ruba and Ayesha seemed to agree that although a father is largely absent, fulfilling his responsibility to provide for his children, he is still a necessary and influential figure in their lives who guides and disciplines.

Focus Group 2

Hajar immediately disagreed with the statement of this topic and spoke about her own parenting belief. She then contrasted it by describing the norm in Saudi society, which she was passionately against:

- 1 HAJAR: No. Where did the mother get them? Wasn't it from the father? The responsibility is that of the father, as much as it is of the mother. This is the rule I follow. People in Saudi Arabia tell me that I have my husband under my control, but it's not like that, they're his girls as much as they are mine. If God were to take my life, who is going to parent them? Isn't he responsible for them? [...] He has duties towards his daughters, and I have duties towards my daughters. It's not all on the mother, like it used to be. Until now, some men they have children and they tell their wives to parent them, the baby cries at night, 'Get out of the room, you and your child! I want to sleep!' Doesn't a mother need to sleep as well? Everything is on the mother, and he wants everything to be ready for him, his meals. That's wrong. They don't just need you to provide them with food, they need your love and care, and for you to play with them. When a child sees their father doing these things, he's their role model. [...] Some of the fathers say, 'No. I'm the man of the house, I won't get up to do anything. You're the mother you do everything.' And I wish that she was appreciated, he then blames her and tells her she's failing at this and this and this. That's wrong. Parenting is shared because your daughter's reputation is a reflection of both parents.
- 2 NAJAT: I think that parenting is 100% a mother's role. A father's role is maybe 5-10%. The kids might see their father for one hour a day, maybe even less. They see him during a meal, they might play with him for 20 minutes and if they ask him for anything, he says, 'Ask your mother'. The father rarely gets involved. So I think that it's 100% a mother's job. Not the responsibilities, to provide for them, buy them things, no. Just the parenting, at home. Having order, a schedule, doing things the way they like, that's the mother's job. A father rarely gets involved.
- 3 ABRAR: I feel that the role of parenting falls mainly on the mother. It's true that there should be cooperation between the mother and father, even for the children, to see that their father is always out, they ask, 'Why did dad go out?' So it does need to be shared. But like Najat said, the majority of the time we see that it's on the mother.

Najat and Abrar were of the opinion that the majority of parenting falls primarily to the mother because she spent the most time with the children and fathers tended to be more hands-off about day-to-day responsibilities. Hajar raised an interesting point about society's perception of shared parenting. Instead of accepting that fathers partaking in raising their children was a fulfilment of his responsibility, mothers were labelled 'domineering' for forcing their husbands to perform *their* duties. Mothers are culturally shamed and criticised. The other participants did not comment to directly show whether they agreed or disagreed with Hajar's

perspective. However, in the extract below, Najat discussed that fathers lack the ability and the patience needed for dealing with children:

- 1 NAJAT: [...] He provides for them, but he can't tolerate the children at home, in his face all day long like you can. But he thinks that you're relaxing, he says, 'You're relaxing, you're on your phone' but really one kid is kicking a ball at me, another is climbing me [laugh]. They play around me and I tolerate it. If he sits in the family area with us, and one kid is playing over there and another – he can't handle it!
- 2 HAJAR: Shh, ok then why do you want me to bear your children if you can't tolerate them?
- 3 NAJAT: He says, 'It's so noisy, how can you handle this?!' When he sits with us in the family room he tells them, 'Sit. Sit. What's wrong with you? Don't keep moving! What's all this hyper activity?! WHY ARE YOU MOVING SO MUCH?' I tell him, 'Just let them expend their energy,' and he says, 'Energy is another story!' He can't tolerate for them to be active. Even when we're in the car on a road trip, he tells them, 'Be quiet!' But why should they be quiet? We're going on a trip! They don't have any patience for noise or shouting or anything the way a mother does. A mother allows for the children to play and raise their voices and jump around, and she sits amongst it and can still do her own thing in the middle of it all. What are you going to do, prevent them from making noise? Mothers just have more patience.
- 4 ABRAR: SubhanAllah, it's a mother's nature to have energy. She carries a child for nine months, she endures so much, and she has the patience and energy for some noise. A man doesn't, he isn't used to it; everything is quiet and then suddenly he's surrounded by noise, he can't handle it [...]

It can be surmised that it is Najat's belief that fathers cannot reasonably be expected to share the responsibility when they are not equipped with the necessary tools. Like the participants in Focus Group 1, she highlighted, that fathers do not have an understanding of children, their needs, or their personalities, which means they have unrealistic expectations of how their children should behave. Thus, it is to the children's benefit that mothers carry the responsibility as they allow them the space to be children and grow at an age-appropriate pace.

The participants discussed the way parenting is done in their own homes as well as in the homes of friends or relatives in Saudi Arabia. While most agreed that a father's role is smaller, it is also their conviction that this is how it should be. They believe that it is in a woman's innate nature to be nurturing, tolerant and patient,

qualities fathers tend to lack. Furthermore, it is a cultural standard for mothers to parent and fathers to provide for their children (Achoui, 2006).

Topic 4: Parenting is easier in New Zealand than in Saudi Arabia

Focus Group 1

The two mothers in this group had differing opinions on the ease of parenting. Maram, who is not yet a mother, did not (and could not) have a set opinion. In the extract below, Ayesha and Ruba elaborated and justified their position using personal experience. Ayesha believed parenting in New Zealand to be easier because there is no interference from extended family. Ruba, on the other hand, thought that parenting in Saudi Arabia, where everyone shares similar values, is easier.

- 1 AYESHA: For me, it's easier here because I'm face to face with my children. In Saudi Arabia, my parents would interfere with their opinions, and my husband's family would interfere with their opinions on parenting. So I find really stark contradictions. Here I can stick to one system for parenting. Parenting here has its positives and negatives, the positive is that I can stick to my way of doing things. BUT, of course here there are restrictions, on the child aaah - [got distracted by a child talking] – and sometimes aaah for me, I think that parenting here is better and easier than in Saudi Arabia.
- 2 RUBA: For me it's easier in Saudi Arabia. Here ah –
- 3 AYESHA: You always say the opposite of what I do [laugh]
- 4 MARAM: I noticed that yesterday
- 5 RUBA: (Ruba doesn't react and continues speaking)
Here is different, the house is different, the society outside is different. I struggle to find balance between the ideas that they get from outside and the ones they get from home. Our way of life differs to their way of life. I always face the problem of the kids asking me, "Why are they doing that and we can't? Why is it ok for them and it's forbidden for us?" These justifications exhaust me. But there, no. the whole society has the same practices and traditions and that makes it easier for me. They know that this is wrong and they don't see anyone else doing it. I feel like it's easier in Saudi Arabia in this regard. Because I feel that I direct them towards what's right, and school directs them towards it too, so this must be right. The society they live in directs them towards what's right so I don't have to exert so much effort telling them and they don't feel like strangers where they are.
- 6 MARAM: The principles are unified
- 7 AYESHA: It's the opposite for me. The way I convince my children of things is by saying, "We're Muslim". Yes, at school they see things – it's very

open, but I say, “We’re Muslim, we’re different. They have their own religion so of course they’ll be different to us.” They become convinced. And then they see girls from other nationalities who adhere to Islam closely, and they’re younger than my girls. For example, mashaAllah, there’s a seven year old girl who fasted all of Ramadan, mashaAllah and she’s Indian.

- 8 RUBA: I find it difficult because sometimes I’m not able to convey to them certain religious ideas that they see here because they are above their mental ability and maturity level.
- 9 AYESHA: If you’re talking about the difference in age, my girls are older. But – of course my son is a different story because he still doesn’t know Qur’an, until now he needs more practice at Islam. But my girls, I feel that for my girls, parenting is better here because they have one guidance source, me.

Ayesha and Ruba discussed the source of guidance. Ruba believed that in New Zealand her children had two sources of guidance; herself and New Zealand society. This posed a challenge for her because the influence of the other source was much greater than herself and there was a misalignment in the values. This created conflict and required she engaged with her children in long, frequent discussions to counteract the influence introduced by New Zealand society. Ayesha did not find that to be an issue with her daughters, because they were able to accept that they are different and did not challenge it. She found that in Saudi Arabia there were multiple parenting sources that interfered and contradicted her parenting beliefs and style. She found it easier to parent while isolated from Saudi society, because she had greater control and influence over which values she instilled in her children.

Focus Group 2

Similar to the first group, each of the two mothers in Group 2 had opposing views on this topic. Hajar believed that parenting in New Zealand was easier, while Najat believed it to be easier in Saudi Arabia. The discussion followed a similar theme to that in Focus Group 1, referring to interference and difference in values between the home and public spheres. Hajar and Najat agreed on their dislike for interference from relatives. However, Saudi traditions dictate exhibiting respect for your mother and mother in law by not disagreeing with them. This posed a significant problem for Hajar who lived near her in-laws. Najat, who lived away from relatives, argued

that it is still possible to get your children to listen to you in a way that is also face saving to your mother-in-law:

- 1 HAJAR: Nobody interferes in the parenting of your children in New Zealand. Unlike in Saudi Arabia, the grandfather and grandmother interfere, aunts, uncles and you have to please them. They tell you to let the kids do what they want. What do you mean, let them do what they want? That is my child. For example, if I tell my daughter not to go outside, they say “Why won’t you allow her to go out? Just let her go”. That is my daughter, and if I do not want her to go out, then she shouldn’t. Here in New Zealand, no one interferes because I am here alone with my husband and kids. This is one of the advantages of living here. No one interferes. In Saudi Arabia, I feel like the children take advantage of the interference. Why wouldn’t they when there are people letting them do as they please.
- 2 NAJAT: It depends on the family –
- 3 HAJAR: They have people to take their side. When I go for visits to Saudi Arabia, I feel my daughters get treated like princesses –
- 4 NAJAT: Yeah, but the child follows the family’s system. For example, so what if the grandmother says something different to what the mother says or wants, I don’t see that is a big deal because it is not nice to contradict her. If I don’t want my child to do what his grandmother says then I just tell him later not to do it.
- 5 HAJAR: It’s not about being nice to the grandparents and relatives, it’s more about not allowing your child to contradict your instructions.
- 6 NAJAT: Yes, that’s true.
- 7 HAJAR: I already gave instructions to my daughter not to go out, then for example your brother comes and gives your daughter money to buy herself something from the dairy. This makes my daughters hung up on going to the dairy several times a day. I don’t like that because there are cars on the road and they could get hurt [...] Even my husband becomes more flexible there and buys them a lot of sweets. I tell him that is wrong. He says we can go back to our system in New Zealand. I think that is wrong [...]
- 8 NAJAT: Parenting in Saudi Arabia is better –
- 9 HAJAR: Maybe you think it’s easier there because there are no rules?
- 10 NAJAT: Maybe I say it’s easier because I do not live near my family or my in-laws, so it’s easier in my case. I would visit my family about a month every year. Even though we lived about two hours away from my in-laws, we only saw them on the weekends. In my case, it is impossible for me to say no to my children’s grandparents, because they are old, we need to respect them. But if you get your children used to a certain system, then it’s fine. What I usually tell my children if they want to go to the dairy in Saudi Arabia, “that’s fine, just don’t buy sweets that have colouring in them”. The kids listen. End of story. What happens here is that I don’t like my kids to celebrate birthdays, I tried at the beginning to be strict, then I felt I couldn’t keep them from attending birthday parties, because they get invited and want to go, so I allow them. Also, when I take them to the

swimming pool here, everybody gets undressed in front of you and your kids, I don't like that, so I started to send them with their father and I don't allow them to get undressed in the pool area, so I send them with robes and I tell them when they are done to put their robes on and get in the car and then they can change at home. Even at school, kids get undressed in front of each other. I feel that it was difficult for me here and I always have to answer my kids' questions, "Why are others allowed to do so and so?" In Saudi Arabia, it's true that others interfere, but as I said before, if you have your children used to a certain system then you won't face many issues.

- 11 ABRAR: There is no difference living in New Zealand, Saudi Arabia or Kuwait in terms of parenting. If you get your children used to a certain behaviour and system to follow, then they will follow it no matter where they live. It's true that in New Zealand there are some advantages and disadvantages –
- 12 NAJAT: There are so many more negatives here. You have to prepare your children for everything. For example, if they want to go to the public pool, I tell them what they might see, and if we go to the beach, then everyone is undressed, but that makes it difficult because the kids want to have fun and go to the beach. In Saudi Arabia, they deal with grandparents, uncles and aunts who share the same values and are conservative.
- 13 ABRAR: There are difficulties everywhere, here and there –
HAJAR: You are able to parent your children here the way you want, but in Saudi Arabia everybody interferes. This makes the children wonder why their mother is preventing them from doing things when their uncle or other relatives say it is ok for them to do so [...] At the end of the day, these relatives are not their parents. Why do they interfere? Here I can parent my kids the way I want.
- 14 ABRAR: I don't agree, I've had good memories with my uncles. My siblings and I used to love playing with our uncles. It was unfortunate though that they lived so far away from our family from both sides. Now that I'm married, my husband and I also live far away from our families. We don't see them often, so I don't have a problem with them interfering in parenting my children.
- 15 HAJAR: I don't agree. I think that only the parents should be responsible for parenting the kids. For example, my grandmother used to interfere in parenting us and that put pressure on my mother and made her job more difficult.

Hajar and Najat agreed that their issue with interference is that it undermines their authority as mothers and teaches their children to manipulate a situation to their advantage, ultimately making the mother's job harder. Hajar and Najat discussed grandmothers interfering in their parenting, which posed a challenge for Hajar because traditionally in Saudi culture grandparents are "highly respected and play a great role in deciding about many family issues" (Achoui, 2006, p. 439). Abrar tried to take a neutral stance on the topic, but eventually decided that parenting

children in New Zealand would be more challenging, using her own childhood as a reference point. She did not perceive relatives allowing children to have fun and eat sweets in excess to be an issue because it creates bonds and lasting memories between them.

4.3.6 Education beliefs

Topic 5: Academic learning is the most important aspect of a child's learning at school

Focus Group 1

Ayesha and Ruba were in agreement with the statement, while Maram was not. Schools in Saudi Arabia are particularly concerned with children's academic learning. The two mothers used their experience with raising children to construct their argument in support of the statement. They believed that a child's primary years are the formative years of their education and, therefore, it is essential to teach them reading and writing skills while their brains are still malleable and able to learn new information with ease. They did not send their children to school to play or socialise. Maram argued that children should be taught to read first and writing could come later. She advocated for more child-lead learning and nurturing of special talents and skills. The mothers acknowledged the importance of these aspects, but saw them as complementary and secondary as children's interests changed frequently and thus were an unreliable basis for education.

The discussion extended far, Maram frequently suggested different aspects for consideration. However, the participants found common ground:

- 1 RUBA: But these are secondary things, drawing, maybe he'll like it for two years and then say he doesn't like it anymore and wants to do something else.
- 2 MARAM: This isn't what I mean, let him write, I'll teach him, but first of all he needs to learn to read –
[RUBA and AYESHA interject inaudibly]
– because the child will become confused
[RUBA and AYESHA interject inaudibly]

- Let me tell you, there is something more important than reading and writing. It's how to problem solve –
- 3 RUBA: This is secondary
- 4 AYESHA: And is the child –
- 5 MARAM: This isn't secondary! This is essential.
- 6 RUBA: It's secondary Maram because it's something he can learn –
- 7 AYESHA: There are things that are essential for the rest of his life, and then there are additional things he can have, like problem solving, leadership, inventing things, giving speeches. These are things he can hold in one hand, but in his other he has the essentials; reading, writing, if someone asks him a question he'll be able to answer it, being able to answer quickly. Academics are so important.
- 8 MARAM: As a mother, I send my child to school to learn academics, but when he comes home I'm going to focus on other things –
- 9 AYESHA: School isn't enough. Home complements school.
- 10 MARAM: Hold on –
- 11 RUBA: The question says, "at school".
- 12 MARAM: Oooh, ok. Well I don't like the school system in Saudi Arabia, it's all academic, academic. I didn't improve until I came here, and I had to learn in a different way
- 13 RUBA: Yes, it's true that in primary it's all academic and that isn't ideal. I think that the focus should be on academics, after the age of 11.
- 14 MARAM: Yes, after the age of 10 they can start learning to read and write, but before that they need to learn how to problem solve, how to share, social skills.
- 15 AYESHA: I agree, I think that needs to change in Saudi Arabia, I think they should still be taught to read and write from the moment they start school at six, but they need a rehaul of the education system to include making and creating things.
- 16 MARAM: I think that reading and writing from age 7 should be additional and not essential. After age 10, it becomes essential [...]

They came to a somewhat shared understanding that literacy skills should be taught to new entrants, but that it needed to be done differently to current Saudi school practices. They agreed that primary school education should strike a balance between academic learning, fun-based activities and social skills, focusing more on academics towards the end of primary school. They agreed that overloading young children with a lot of academic work was not ideal.

Focus Group 2

Hajar and Abrar started the discussion agreeing that academics are the most important part of their learning at school, while Najat argued that it is not. This topic sparked a comparison of New Zealand and Saudi schools. In the extract below,

Najat seemed to have convinced Hajar of her position who joined Najat in criticising the Saudi education system for putting too much pressure on young children to learn from books. They both agreed that the amount of learning, which is in effect memorisation, overloaded children and robbed them of their childhood. They preferred the learning through play approach adopted by New Zealand primary schools as it allowed them to be more carefree and enjoy learning. Abrar had very little to contribute to this topic as she lacked experience with schools from a parent's perspective.

- 1 HAJAR: Yes, I agree academics are the most important thing a child learns at school, because it is the basics and foundations the child should have. This prevents the child from facing issues when they grow up.
- 2 NAJAT: When comparing the New Zealand system with the Saudi system, I feel that academics do not play a vital role in the education of the children. In New Zealand, the school teaches them things about life more than reading, writing and maths do for example. Here, when I look at what my eight year old has learnt, I do not see that he has a lot of studying. Most of the things they study at school are pretty easy. I feel they discuss things about life more than anything else. Such as, the solar system, how life started, things that happen in the society, the system they follow. They concentrate here on how to make a person useful and engaged in the society rather than how much knowledge they can retain. In Saudi Arabia, Grade 3 students know how to write much better, but here the concentration is on reading. In Saudi Arabia they study 14 different subjects, here they just learn how to read and write, and they take the students to the library to borrow books. They teach them how to get books and return them to the library at the end of the week. I feel that here the learning process is very long in comparison with Saudi Arabia and the Arab world in general. They teach children how to use a laptop, how to use programmes on the computer, how to write stories using a computer, and so on. In my opinion, New Zealand follows a more advanced way of teaching and they do not make students stressed. So I like it more here.
- 3 ABRAR: I don't know what the teaching system is like here, but I believe that children must have a good academic background and a good foundation.
- 4 NAJAT: But here it is very easy, children do not even come home with any homework. They just need to read a story before they go to bed, and note it down on a log.
- 5 HAJAR: Here they do not depend on memorising what they learn, unlike in Saudi Arabia they have to memorise everything. Here it is practical not theoretical. Here learning is fun not strict. In Saudi Arabia it is more stressful for kids, but here they make the kids like school.

- 6 NAJAT: My kids hate the weekend, they love going to school here and wish every day was a school day. Schools are for fun and play here.
- 7 HAJAR: In Saudi Arabia for example, poetry is something boring for kids because they have to memorise it. But here, even if they learn a poem or song, you find that the teacher participates with the students and sings and plays along with them to make it more fun. It is not stressful here. In Saudi Arabia we need to memorise without understanding what the reason or the meaning of the poem is. What's the use when we forget it all once we grow up?
- 8 NAJAT: They have everything here for the kids, playgrounds, gymnastic halls, and they play all day while learning.
- 9 ABRAR: That's why the kids like to go to school here.
- 10 NAJAT: Yes exactly, there's no stress. Education here is simple. I believe it should be easy and fun for kids the first 10 years of their lives.

Opinions in both focus groups were divided. It is evident that their opinions have been influenced by their sojourn and experience with New Zealand schools as they could appreciate the value of a child's school education being about more than academics. Those who prioritised academics were thinking ahead to when their children returned to the Saudi school system and the struggles they would face because of not learning in the same way or at the same pace as their peers. They did not believe that the type of learning they had done in New Zealand would be conducive in their Saudi context. Their opinions reflected the temporariness of their stay in New Zealand.

Topic 6: Mothers should be involved in their child's school

In New Zealand, it is common to find parent helpers within the classroom doing jobs for the teacher or helping with a learning activity, particularly in primary school. Parents also volunteer to be crossing guards, supervise on field trips, help at the school carnival, or coach a sports team. I posed this topic to them to see what contributions they make and what they believe.

Focus Group 1

Mothers in Focus Group 1 interpreted the statement differently to the way I had intended, but their discussion ultimately revealed that mothers should not be involved in their children's school. They saw their children's time at school as the

teacher's realm, independent of the mother unless there were issues that need to be resolved:

- 1 AYESHA No, I don't think she should have a lot of involvement. I like to go once or twice to visit the class but the child should be able to manage on their own. When I was young I liked to take the lead aah, if my mother were to come along then I would sit under her wing so if she came all the time then I'd feel like my character wouldn't develop well. So I think that two visits at the most are enough, and an extra activity, but the child should be able to do it on their own; talk about themselves, take something to show and share with the class. That's my position.
- 2 MARAM I'm with Ayesha, I feel that a child should know that this place is far away from their parent.
- 3 AYESHA [looking at Maram] When your mother visited you at school, didn't you feel that you became smaller? That you stood under her wing?
- 4 MARAM No, I become braver [laugh] I'm braver knowing my mother is there!
- 5 AYESHA It's the opposite for me, when she comes I change. If she were to come often it just wouldn't work.
- 6 RUBA For me, if there's a problem or there's a situation that happens at school, I like to be present so that even the school knows that this mother cares and she will be right there if something were to happen. I feel like if they see the mother cares, then they will take extra care of that child. I like to remain in contact with the teacher.

Maram and Ayesha agreed that mothers being in their children's space would hinder their confidence and their character from developing. Additionally, further discussion revealed that the participants believed that while the children are at school is time for the mother to spend on herself whether at work or university. Just because they are mothers does not mean they need to devote all their time and energy to that role. Self-improvement was valued and seen as the woman's 'right'. During their sojourn, the mothers who had an academic goal, who had earned a scholarship, dedicated their time to attaining their goal. This meant that they focused less on their children's learning, knowing that it was temporary. They were able to do so because teachers in New Zealand taught children while they were at school and did not assign a lot of homework nor did they expect mothers to prepare their children for the following day's lesson like in Saudi Arabia.

In support of the beliefs expressed in the focus groups, interview data also revealed that mothers became involved and contacted school or day-care when there was an issue. For example, Ruba was told that her new entrant son was having trouble

transitioning from kindergarten to the structure of school and she communicated with the school to find ways to help him. She was again ready to advocate for her older son when the school informed her that he could not read.

Focus Group 2

The discussion on this topic was rather short. Najat was of the opinion that mothers should be involved in their children's school by helping out and Hajar thought that New Zealand parents volunteering was commendable, while Abrar was silent on the subject. In the extract below, Najat and Hajar talk about whether they had helped out at school:

- 1 NAJAT I was asked by my son's school to help out, but I don't because I don't speak English well enough to help, I would otherwise. I see that parents here are very engaged in their kids' lives. I see that some mothers volunteer to train the soccer team, they don't get paid for it. I think that's so impressive because they are involved in their children's lives and they set an example for their children to volunteer too.
- 2 HAJAR I haven't ever helped at school either. My daughters ask me to, but I don't. So then they ask their father to help at school. He told them that if he has free time then he will volunteer.
- 3 NAJAT Our society in Saudi Arabia is not used to doing volunteer work unlike here. I once went to volunteer to chaperone a school trip, three weeks before the trip, but they told me they had a lot of parents offer and didn't need any more helpers. I was impressed that so many parents wanted to help.

The interview data indicated that Najat often went into her children's school: she participated in class activities, and attended the "reflection session" at the end of the day where children shared some of their learning with the class and parents. Jawhara said she was too busy studying to be involved, but her husband chaperoned class trips. Najat also became involved when there was an issue at school. For example, she shared an incident where she was unhappy with the teacher's behaviour and reported it to the principal straight away:

Once, the class was lined up and a boy pushed my son, so he pushed him back. The teacher happened to turn around and saw my son push. She pulled him by the arm and put him at the back of the line. I was really bothered by

this and I went and spoke to the principal right away. He was very understanding and spoke to the teacher. (I.1)

She was displeased with the teacher for singling out her son and for being aggressive towards him. Based on a number of other incidents, Najat believed that the teacher was racist and was especially being hard on him because of it.

While Doha also worked with day care teachers to help her children, Hajar and Ayesha were not involved with the teachers or school delegating parent-teacher meetings to their husbands.

4.4 Future: Repatriation to Saudi Arabia

4.4.1 Women

Living away from their own society, participants were less restricted by cultural norms and expectations. Life in New Zealand allowed them to explore their individuality without the judgment they would otherwise have received from their social groups in Saudi Arabia. However, they were unable to transfer their learned behaviours to Saudi Arabia, where conformity is not only expected, but also rewarded. When they return, they intend to follow the rules of their homeland; their social identity depends on it. For example, Ruba had come to enjoy socialising in smaller groups with people she had chosen to spend her time with. However, when she returns, she said there is no room for personal preference when you are part of a big family. She believed she would “have to change, straight away” (I.3e) in order to fulfil social obligations.

Ayesha’s view of the future also involved foregoing some of the values she gained in New Zealand and reverting to the status quo. She learnt that living simply, within your means is more important than partaking in the frivolous activity of keeping up appearances. However, holidaying in Saudi Arabia had shown her that it is not a possibility when the others in her society do not share the same value. She refused to buy herself or her children branded clothing and found her mother-in-law ready

to carry the responsibility, on her behalf, saying that, “you can’t do this, these are *our* girls” (I.2). Refusing to participate had great societal implications that extended beyond her; the reputation of her entire family was at stake.

These were the adjustments they knew they would need to make to be a part of their home society. They did not appear to be too concerned about adjustments, nor were they dreading them. They did not believe it would have an adverse mental or emotional effect, because they had lived that way before, they could easily switch back. The majority of the participants planned on finding employment when they returned. Ayesha who was already employed planned to return to work hoping that speaking English, and having an education from New Zealand would entitle her to a promotion. In Ruba’s case, living in New Zealand had made her realise that she was capable of doing more:

...in the past I didn’t have any goals about to get a job, never. But when I came here and I see a lot of peoples they have to study, they have to work, I start to think again. When I go back to my country, I have to get a job, I have to change my life. For me, I don’t like to stay in the house I like to study and work. (Ruba, I.3e)

Unlike people in New Zealand, she would have the support of her family. Therefore, she thought she would make use of this advantage to improve her life. When Maram spoke of the future, she imagined she would be raising children, while being employed. When Jawhara was asked about the future, she seemed overwhelmed by the thought, “I have many things to think about I don’t have time to think about the future” (I.3e). With another four years in New Zealand, she placed her focus on overcoming her present challenges as a student and mother, “I didn’t think about the future, only think about the present and the past” (I.3e). However, for Najat and Hajar, employment was not a consideration or an aspiration. They saw that their main role was to be mothers. While in New Zealand, they had not pursued any form of professional development to add to their resume for when they returned to Saudi Arabia.

4.4.2 Children

Mothers were concerned about their children returning to Saudi Arabia. They recognised that they would be faced with some adjustment challenges related to communication and schooling, which they considered would affect their sense of self. Their children were fluent speakers of English and had lost some fluency in their mother tongue. Communication was a greater concern for mothers of children who arrived in New Zealand as toddlers. They foresaw schooling as a greater challenge for older children who would enter the Saudi school system at the intermediate level.

4.4.2.1 Anticipated challenges:

Communication

Jawhara, who returned to Saudi Arabia for a year, experienced the adjustment struggles her three-year-old son went through. Her parents attempted to speak to him in the only language they spoke, Arabic, but because her son could not understand them he only listened to the tone and expression of their voice. Saudi Arabic tends to be spoken at a louder volume than English, and can sound gruffer. Her son, who was unaccustomed to hearing Saudi Arabic spoken, thought he was being told off and cried. This hurt the grandparents' feelings and hindered the development of a relationship. When Jawhara needed to go out, she left her one year old son with his grandparents, but had to take the older son with her. It took Jawhara's son approximately five months to adjust, and she anticipated it would be the same when they returned to Saudi Arabia permanently. She dreaded this period saying, "I spend mayybeee five months, suffering. I didn't enjoy at all" (I.3e).

Ayesha and Ruba recounted similar holiday experiences. In Ruba's case, her youngest son, struggled to play with the other children. He had a talkative, friendly nature and enjoyed being around other children. He understood Arabic and attempted to speak it, but the other children did not understand his broken Arabic, "Huh? What? We don't understand" (I.3e). He realised that they did not understand

English and followed them around in silence. The other children did not accept him as one of them, thus hindering any relationships from being fostered.

Mothers of older children did not envisage any communication issues because Arabic was their first language and continued to be spoken in their homes. There would be some adjustment in learning the meanings of certain expressions used in Saudi Arabia. Otherwise, they were content with their children's' communication abilities, Najat said of her youngest son, "he has a heavy tongue but he speaks well" (I.3).

Schooling

In the focus group discussions, the mothers spent quite a lot of time talking about their children's schooling, making comparisons between the Saudi and New Zealand school systems and culture. They identified workload, teaching and learning styles, peer acceptance, and teacher-student relationships as some of the issues their children would find challenging.

Mothers said that the amount of work children were expected to do in primary schools in Saudi Arabia was enormous. Najat mentioned that her nephew went to school carrying 14 books, in contrast to her children who, "barely carry anything in their bags, other than their lunch box" (FG.2). They criticised the fact that focus was put on completing the curriculum in the allotted time as opposed to the children actually learning anything. In addition, because the curriculum aimed to cover so much, they said that there was reliance on the mother to help teach the material to her child at home.

They believed that their children learned so much more at their schools in New Zealand in a much more relaxed manner, and by doing activities, rather than reading and writing in books. The mothers believed that their children would find the absence of activities to be challenging when they return to Saudi Arabia. They enjoyed being active; playing sports, creating art and participating in community-based activities. Their children would "struggle to sit at a desk all day and will miss

having playgrounds and sporting equipment” (Ayesha, I.3) at their disposal during break times.

Najat, Ayesha and Hajar recognised that their children were strong readers and writers, despite their children only bringing home one storybook to read each night. The absence of pressure had instilled in them a love of reading. Ayesha’s daughters asked that they be rewarded with books so that they could build their home library collection. Ayesha found it amusing when she allowed her daughters to pack their own suitcase for a summer holiday to Saudi Arabia and she saw that, “They packed books in their suitcase!” She could not allow them to do that because of weight restrictions and instead, had to keep buying them books in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, they could continue to read English books when they repatriate.

Some of the mothers expressed concern about social aspects of school. Ayesha worried that the skills her daughters learned in New Zealand would not be valued and that their low Arabic proficiency would make them targets for ridicule. She feared the other girls would ‘break’ them:

I’m emotionally distraught that my daughters are grown and they are weak at Arabic. I keep thinking how will they manage when they go back to Saudi Arabia? *How? How?* The other girls will mock them relentlessly.
(FG1)

The mothers realised that the relationship between teachers and students in New Zealand is different to that in Saudi Arabia, and that their children would find this challenging. Teachers in New Zealand are open with their students, and “share with them parts of their personal lives” (Najat, I.3). At first, Ayesha and Najat reported that they found this strange and were a little sceptical as they had never encountered a teacher like that in Saudi Arabia. They questioned the professionalism of treating the children like friends. However, they recognised that having an equal relationship and an open space for discussion, was not only respectful of the children, but also encouraged them to speak up and have a voice. Ayesha was concerned that when they return to Saudi Arabia, her daughters would be shocked

by how strict the teachers are, “You go to class, you have to be quiet, no one can express themselves...The teacher speaks and the student listens.” (Ayesha, I.2) A non-threatening teacher positively influences a student’s attitude to learning. The mothers believed that teachers in New Zealand cared for their students and were still able to maintain respect and discipline using a gentle manner. In Saudi Arabia, the teachers are strict, they would expect obedience and use techniques that elicit fear.

4.4.2.2 Preparation for return:

All the mothers were preparing for their children’s return to Saudi Arabia. They made future plans, taught their children Arabic literacy or made arrangements, to make their reintegration into Saudi society as seamless as possible.

Ayesha realised that her daughters had missed too much of the Saudi school curriculum to be able to catch up, particularly that they did not read or write in Arabic at the same level as their peers. She and Jawhara felt that the only realistic option was to send them to an international school where they could continue their education in English, and learn Arabic at their level. However, as Jawhara mentioned that “international school is very expensive” (1.3e) but “it’ll be ok, we both got jobs...inshallah [laugh]” (1.3e) she said, believing that things would work out and that she and her husband could afford it when they both found employment. Ayesha, on the other hand, “we are planning for that and have begun to save” for their return to Saudi Arabia in three years’ time. She also said, “My husband is also trying to start a business so we can afford life when we return to Saudi Arabia” (I.3). She did not want her daughters to be disadvantaged because of their sojourn. Ruba also felt that international schooling was the ideal option for her eldest son who would be at the intermediate level when they return. Because it is so expensive, she planned to send him to an international school for a few years, until he had caught up. She said, “They can study in international school but it’s too expensive. So maybe just one years, two years after that they go to normal school” (I.3e). Najat and Hajar, however, intended on sending their children to public school. Hajar said,

“I know they will struggle at first but they are children they learn quickly” (I.3). Both Najat and Hajar planned to hire a private tutor to give them extra help at home.

The mothers tried to teach their children to read and write in Arabic so that they were at least familiar with the alphabet and could sound out words in Arabic. They found it difficult to fit this into their day, Najat said her children were, “not motivated to learn” (I.3). Hajar and Najat both sent their children to the local mosque on weekends to learn from an Arab woman who volunteered her time to teach Arabic to children. This is an ideal solution because being part of a group encouraged the children to learn.

Ruba believed her children needed more than what she taught them and planned to enrol her children in a public school in Saudi Arabia during their summer holiday. Immersing them in an Arabic school would prepare them for the change in system and, she hoped, would improve their Arabic dramatically.

4.5 Chapter summary

The findings in this chapter presented themes from participants’ lives pre-sojourn, issues that arose in the pursuit of acculturation pertaining to the personal identities of the participants, their identities as mothers, and the social identity of the family. It also presented mothers’ parenting beliefs and practices. Finally, their concerns and expectations regarding their future return to Saudi Arabia were presented.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the key findings and discusses them with reference to the previous empirical studies conducted in the area of sojourner acculturation that were reviewed in Chapter 2. This chapter begins with an overview of the findings (5.1) and is then organised into seven parts. Section (5.2) addresses RQ2 by looking at how the Saudi women's identities have changed and adapted as a result of cultural contact during their sojourn in terms of behaviour, attitude and values, their personal characteristics and their social identities. Section 5.3 considers what the mothers in the group reported about their children's education at home and at school, the shaping of their identities in answer to the second part of RQ2. Section 5.4 provides a discussion about the participants' role as mothers, how they have changed and the influence of host culture and Islam on their parenting practices. This section provides answers for RQ3. Section 5.5 presents repatriation issues such as preparation for their return and anticipated challenges. Links are drawn throughout connecting the findings of this study with the studies reviewed in Chapter 2, drawing out aspects of similarity or difference. In the next section, Berry's acculturation framework is applied to the Saudi mothers' sojourning experience and their overall adaptation is discussed, to address RQ5 (5.6). The grounded analysis of the data suggests that the findings concur with the principles of Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015). ELT has been applied and adapted for the theoretical development of this study, which provides a response to RQ6 (5.7).

5.1 An overview of the findings

The five main findings presented so far, in relation to this study's research questions, are:

Women underwent identity development as a result of their sojourning experiences. They reported changes in their behaviour in response to fear of harassment resulting from the cultural distance between New Zealand and Saudi cultures; adapting their

attitudes and values because of their exposure to additional perspectives and cultures; a change in the structure of their social groups to help cope with feelings of isolation and loneliness, to offer and receive support from their co-nationals and expanding their social groups to include other Muslim women.

Children's greater exposure to the host society through school affected children's identities by affecting their proficiency in their mother tongue and having less implicit knowledge of their Saudi cultural and Muslim identity. They gained confidence, independence and developed cognitively due to their New Zealand schooling and intercultural experiences.

Mother's parenting beliefs and practices changed as a result of host society influence. Mothers gained intentionality in their parenting and placed particular value on developing their children's Muslim identities. Their parenting style became more warm and nurturing, they learnt parenting practices from their children and their teachers but maintained some cultural values.

Participants maintained strong cultural ties to other Saudis in New Zealand, and primarily spoke Arabic in their homes but also learnt English and allowed their children to participate in New Zealand cultural activities as strategies to mitigate the effects of acculturative stress.

Finally, they anticipated their children facing challenges reintegrating into Saudi culture when they returned home such as fitting in because of their loss of proficiency in Arabic, and the difference in the style of teaching and school curriculum. They took some measures to prepare for their return.

In the following section, I expand upon the main findings and compare them to other empirical studies about identity, acculturation and parenting.

5.2 Saudi women's identity

Personal identity includes the characteristics that are used to define a person (Olson, 2016), which is influenced by a person's social world and their interaction with it

(Luhmann, 2001). The participants' sojourn to New Zealand altered their social world and thus influenced the women's identities in various ways including, as discussed in the following subsections, their behaviour and attitudes, as well as their personal characteristics and their social identity.

5.2.1 Change in behaviour

Berry (2005) predicts that changes in behaviour and thinking will occur during the acculturation process. Amongst the psychological adaptations a sojourner undergoes, dress is considered a surface-level behavioural change because it is "easily detectable" (Van Vianen, De Pater, Kristof-Brown, & Johnson, 2004, p. 698) and an "easily accomplished behavioral shift" (Berry, 2005, p. 702). Change in dress was indeed the most easily visible change made by the Saudi participants; however, it was far from being an easy one, being a change of greater significance to Muslim women, such as the participants of this study. Aware of people's perceptions, many participants arrived mentally prepared to adapt their dress in some way. Maram, Ruba and Abrar dressed in Western clothing that still met the Islamic requirements of modesty, while Ayesha, Hajar, Najat, Bayan and Jawhara continued to cover their face. Bayan and Jawhara later made the decision to remove their niqab.

The present study found that the participating Saudi women made changes to avoid negative attention and suspicion, and this resonates particularly with similar findings in Alkharusi's (2013) study of the intercultural communication experiences of 13 Arab Muslim women who are studying in New Zealand. Bahiss (2008) similarly reported that her participants, who were also students in New Zealand, made alterations "to fit in the culture" (p. 67), believing it was their responsibility to be flexible. Elsewhere, Belchamber's (2016) inquiry into the identity and adjustments of Saudi students in Australia also revealed similar choices. Conversely, in a study from Orlando where there were few Muslim residents, Barth (2016) reported one of her participants sometimes wrapped her scarf in a turban as a compromise to wearing hijab, while Bajamal (2017) reported

two participants removing their hijab entirely. One, who was a mother, had to handle the repercussions of her duplicity: she taught her son the virtues of Islam yet acted in contradiction to them, causing him confusion.

It is Berry's contention that changing one's dress is "rather easily accomplished" (Berry, 2005, p. 702) and does not produce acculturative stress. This may be true of movement between countries that have adopted Western-based dress, and where differences are essentially relative subtle stylistic matters related to fashion. However, in certain parts of the world, traditional dress predominates and is seen as resistance towards colonialism (e.g. Brodman, 1994). For such populations, Berry's claim neglects to consider that identity can be firmly rooted in an individual's clothing and is a representation of their values. For example Dona and Ackermann (2006) reported that upon crossing into Mexico, Guatemalan refugees had to change the way they dressed to avoid being targeted yet this change had a substantial impact on them. They found that, "cloth has a psychological and cultural symbolic meaning. It is a form of self-identification with one's ethnic group...an important element of self, collective and political identity" (p. 222). The connection between a Muslim woman and her religiously identifying clothing carries a comparable meaning. Bayan contemplated the decision to remove her niqab and abaya for approximately a year, which indicates that it was not easily accomplished. Additionally, during that year she experienced acculturative stress in the form of anxiety over leaving her house and depression because the perceptions of individual members of the host society did not match her self-concept. This indicates that for some populations changing dress is a far more challenging proposition than Berry (2006c) credits, and more resonant of other areas of culture shedding that "may involve psychological conflict" (p. 43).

Alkharusi (2013) observed that, in his judgment, Muslim women were less observant of Islamic dress over time. The participants of the present study were admittedly less observant of Saudi cultural dress; however, based on their interpretation of the Islamic dress code, they did not feel they were in breach of them. They did not feel the need to remove their hijab in New Zealand, nor did the

participants in the other two New Zealand based studies by Alkharusi (2013) and Bahiss (2008). The participants shared instances of verbal harassment occasioned by their dress that left them feeling belittled and marginalised, but it would seem that they did not feel their safety was so threatened as to warrant removing their hijabs.

Documented narratives reveal that verbal harassment is the most common form of racism experienced by Muslim women in Australia and New Zealand (e.g. Mansouri, 2004; Marginson, 2013; Veelenturf, 2006), in contrast to some reports of physical harm in the United States. Thus, it would appear that Saudi women have a sense of relative safety during their stay in New Zealand. Doha indicated that she felt safe seeing other Saudi women dressed traditionally and it gave her the courage to wear a black abaya. Participants reported that they also employed strategies to maintain their safety such as choosing in which contexts it is safe to cover their face, avoiding potential discrimination zones, moving in groups, and ignoring the verbal abuse hurled at them.

The inability to communicate with members of the host society was perceived by participants as a significant factor that hindered their adjustment. They were motivated to learn English for the ease and independence it would afford them.

Previous studies have provided little relevant detail with which to compare the present findings. The studies of Kherais (2017), Qutub (2016) and Bajamal (2017) focused on the children of sojourning Saudis, thereby providing limited information about the mothers learning English or their individual language-related experiences, while other studies reviewed in Chapter Two were focused specifically on women as international students. Thus, the most relevant studies for comparison were those of Mitrushi (2009) and Elfeel and Bailey (2018). Mitrushi's (2009) study reported on 89 international students' wives from 20 different countries who are sojourning in the United States, while Elfeel and Bailey's (2018) study focused on the 10 spouses of graduate, international students at a university in the United States.

With the exception of Doha, participants in the present study relied heavily on their husbands during the initial phase of their sojourn to perform everyday tasks and for communication, as discussed in Section 4.3.2. It was reported in Elfeel and Bailey (2018) that wives felt inferior and uncertain because they lacked proficiency in English and depended on their international student husbands. Such findings have little resonance with those of the present study, since it is a cultural norm for women in Saudi Arabia to depend on their husbands or hired help to perform everyday tasks outside of the home.

Five out of the ten participants in Elfeel and Bailey's (2018) study were professional people who had made a sacrifice to accompany their spouse on their sojourn and reported feeling sad and had a sense that they were just "treading water and biding time" (p. 9). This also contrasts with the findings of the present study, as participants did not report sadness beyond the initial phase of their sojourn, after which they had a generally positive attitude about their sojourn. A key factor in this difference may be that only Ayesha had been a working woman, while the remainder were stay at home mothers. However, it may also be partially attributed to the Saudi women's cultural understanding and acceptance of their marital role of supporting their husbands and making sacrifices for the benefit of the family unit. They seem to have accepted the conditions of sojourning life and tried to make the most of their situation.

Some mothers in this study reported taking English classes for socialisation purposes. Similarly, Mitrushi (2009) reported this was a motivation for some participants who became involved with churches for the English classes they offered, as well as the activities that brought together women with similar circumstances. Additionally, some of the wives in Mitrushi's (2009) study changed their visa status after a year of their sojourn to allow them to enrol in study at the university level, which many of the participants in the present study also did after completing English courses.

5.2.2 Change in attitude and thinking

According to Berry (2005) and Masgoret (2006), sojourners experience significant attitudinal changes as a result of adapting to the host culture. Experiencing new ways of existing and being exposed to new ideas, prompted participants to evaluate their own cultural ways. They adopted aspects of New Zealand culture in which they saw merit. Ayesha and Maram had gained insight from budgeting their finances, which gave them a greater appreciation for the value of money. They noticed that Kiwis dressed casually and were not concerned with wearing high-end fashion. They stopped worrying about buying clothing with a high price tag to maintain social appearances and opted for clothing that was appropriately modest and fashionable, yet affordable. The Qur'an teaches its followers "do not be excessive" (Qur'an, 7:31).

Additionally, during social gatherings, I observed that they were conscious not to waste food. They noticed they did not feel any less welcome at a New Zealander's house when only being offered tea and biscuits. Coming from a cultural background that uses the abundance of food to express hospitality, they reassessed their beliefs and realised that hospitality and mindful portioning were not mutually exclusive. Islamic teachings encourage hospitality (Sahih al-Bukhari, No. 5673), but discourage wasting food (Qur'an, 6:141). Considering this did not contradict their religious beliefs, they changed their practices within their Saudi cohort. None of the studies reviewed reported such changes in values relating to simplicity over extravagance.

Six of the nine participants altered their belief that men should not do housework. While culturally it is still considered a threat to masculinity in Saudi Arabia, women were willing to accept their husbands' offers of assistance to ease their burden. Their cultural practices in Saudi Arabia contradicted the example set by Prophet Muhammed who was often witnessed doing housework (Sahih al-Bukhari, No. 644). Living in a Western country also seemed to influence the husbands of women in Qutub (2016) and Winters (2015) who also reported their husbands helping with

housework although one of them said that she still believed “it’s the woman job” (Winters, 2015).

Being open-minded and accepting of differences was a significant attitude shift the women experienced. Initially, they found the cultural practices of Kiwis, and other nationalities, to be strange. They were fearful of people who consumed alcohol as they had never been exposed to it in Saudi Arabia and saw how it affected people’s behaviour. Over time, they adopted the attitude that there are different ways of doing things and they had to be respectful, even if it contradicted their beliefs. As a minority group, they knew what it was like to be misunderstood and disrespected for their culture and religion and were cautious to be respectful and tolerant of others. This was a common development experienced by the Saudi participants in Belchamber (2016) and Lefdahl-Davis (2014) as a result of living in multicultural societies. For example, in Lefdahl-Davis’s (2014) exploration of the adjustment experiences of 25 Saudi students in the United States, she reported that five participants expressed being more open-minded and tolerant. One participant said she learnt to “treat a person based on the way they treat [her] not based on an assumption” (p. 38). Similarly, when a participant in Belchamber (2016) was asked about taboo topics being discussed in her English class, she responded that she would not have a problem with it because it is “their culture and I must respect it” (p. 136).

Furnham and Bochner (1986) and Adler (1987) initially proposed that a sojourn has the potential for positive outcomes, which the participants of this study had recognised for themselves (see Section 4.3.4.3). Their ability to identify how they have changed for the better is indicative that their sojourn has also made them introspective and reflective. Milstein (2005) furthered this perspective with the idea of improved self-efficacy saying that, “Self-efficacy does not refer to one’s actual capabilities, but to one’s *belief* in one’s capabilities” (p. 222). The most commonly noted aspects of personal growth that participants mentioned was their growing independence and belief in their abilities. Other characteristics included being more organised, self-reliant, being able to talk to anyone, and preferring smaller, more

intimate gatherings. Similarly, participants in Lefdahl-Davis (2014) increased their “independence, confidence, freedom, mobility” (p. 37), became more self-reflective (Alandejani, 2013), discovered their introversion was previously masked by the busyness of family life in Saudi Arabia (Biwa, 2016), and began to value punctuality and respect for privacy (Alandejani, 2013). These are all changes that the participants of the present study also identified in themselves.

5.2.3 Change to social group

Social identity embodies a person’s awareness of what they share with others and where they stand in relation to them, which Stets and Burke (2000) refer to as social comparison and self-categorisation. Norton (1995) highlights that social identity changes depending on the context. Additionally, she posits that language power relations play a crucial role in shaping one’s social identity. The change in these sojourners’ social group composition is an indicator of their changed social identities.

The participants reported that the majority of their interactions pre-sojourn were with family members. They befriended their cousins and aunts and relied on their familial connections for socialisation, as well as for emotional support and assistance with child rearing. Post-sojourn, connecting with other Saudi women was not only essential to their emotional well-being, but also for the affordance of practical support and the reinforcement of their social and cultural identities. Their friends became family substitutes. These sentiments were echoed by the mothers in Qutub’s (2016) study who felt their Saudi friends made them feel closer to home.

It is common for sojourners to seek out interactions with those with whom they identify. For example, sojourning Japanese mothers to America (Izumi, 2015) tended to isolate themselves from the host community in a Japanese “bubble” (p. 128). Similarly, a touring American soldier in Saudi Arabia (McNair, 2014) also reported having “little meaningful interaction with people who were not from the United States” (p. 101). Personality and lack of language proficiency may be

influencing factors for this phenomenon; however, belonging and feeling validated are also key factors.

Maintaining social ties to their origin group, with whom they share language and culture, allows sojourners the ease of existing without the need for radical changes to the self. Sojourners may break away as they acquire more host culture skills and widen their social network (Adler, 1975) which is partially attributable to lengthy sojourns (Lysgaard, 1955) and can be indicative of a move toward assimilation. However, this was not evident amongst the participants of this study. Most of the women in the present study built and maintained acquaintances with non-Saudis, indicating their willingness to widen their social circle and their acceptance of diversity. Present at their weekly social gatherings were friends from other Arab countries, and Muslims from Africa and South Asia. The process of self-categorisation (Stets & Burke, 2000) which these sojourners undertook involved a change: 'Muslim' became the determining factor for a shared social identity. Therefore, their social group included women of various ethnicities and languages who shared Islam as a religion.

Although participants also had relationships with non-Muslims who they considered friends, such as Najat with her neighbour, Doha with the day care teachers, Ayesha with her English teacher and university administrators and Ruba with her classmates, they did not meet up frequently. The participants compared themselves to these people and identified some shared characteristics. However, the fact that these relationships remained at the level of acquaintanceship suggests that the participants did not deem there to be sufficient shared characteristics for building a closer relationship. Limited language proficiency and cultural distance were contributing factors to the lack of close relationships with out-group members. Some participants in Lefdahl-Davis (2014) expressed a similar sentiment about their relationships with Americans saying, they were "friendly, but not friendships" (p. 33), while other participants reported going to restaurants and attending parties with their non-Muslims neighbours.

According to Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) international students prefer relationships with host nationals for “tangible, instrumental assistance” (p. 166) and co-nationals are “more heavily relied upon for socio-emotional support” (p. 166). The present findings partially challenge this conclusion. Certainly, it was evident that the participants’ strongest ties were indeed with other Saudis and Muslims and that they did provide each other with socio-emotional support. However, although the host national individuals with whom they built relationships were in a position to provide key, practical support (e.g. teachers and childcare workers), care is warranted in assuming that the relationship was motivated by the possibility of assistance. Within the interview and focus group data, there is no clear evidence to suggest that the participants were motivated by the possibility of tangible assistance. Rather, what came through in the interviews was the desire for additional social contact with people within their wider experience. Thus, an alternative interpretation to that posed by Ward et al. (2001) is that the opportunity for support was largely incidental to the establishment of such relationships. There are grounds to support such a view, in particular the observation that the sojourners simply had sustained contact with teachers, childcare workers, classmates and neighbours; such opportunities for sustained contact typically do not arise without some form of shared activity. Without such shared activity, a host national would merely be a stranger with no bases on which to establish a relationship. This perspective challenges the apparent instrumentalist depiction of relationships with host nationals inherent in Ward et al. (2001).

5.3 Saudi children’s identity

5.3.1 Education at school

Mothers agreed that schools are more relaxed in New Zealand and educate their children by engaging them in fun activities inside and outside the classroom as opposed to the bookwork that is typical in Saudi schools. Kherais (2017) concurs with this finding, as the mothers in that study also appreciated their kids were learning in a “fun way” (p. 46) and did not bring home any work.

Participants in the present study agreed that their children had grown in confidence, independence and maturity of thought. This is a theme echoed in a range of findings from a number of related studies. Kherais (2017) reported that one girl was very shy when she first started school in the United States but became popular, confident and took part in school activities like choir. Similarly, enhanced confidence was cited in Qutub (2016) as a result of the availability of extracurricular activities for the children to take part in, such as karate and music. Qutub's (2016) mothers also mentioned that schools encouraged their children to think critically and extended them in the areas they performed well at (Qutub, 2016). Mothers in the present study reported their children engaging them in discussions, demonstrating their critical thinking and inquisitiveness. Kherais (2017) also reported that children thought about the positives and negatives of a situation before making an independent decision. Additionally, mothers in that study believed that their children's school education had widened their horizons. These findings lend support to the idea that sojourning offers children a breadth of experiences that promote their cognitive development.

Parental involvement in their children's school is thought to be effective in ensuring academic achievement (Walker, Ramsey, & Greshman, 2004). However, the extent to which such involvement occurs varies between cultures, being encouraged in New Zealand schools, but not in Saudi schools. Many of the mothers in the present study expressed beliefs, which were in keeping with typical Saudi practice, and justified by referring to their lack of English proficiency, and lack of time due to their studies. Najat was the only participant who participated in a few school activities and attempted to volunteer as a chaperone on field trips, despite having only completed the beginner level of English classes. This finding contrasts with the findings reported by Qutub (2016), whose participants demonstrated substantially more involvement in their children's school; despite having busy schedules as students, they attended major events, field trips and parties with the belief that it would aid their children's adjustment. It is unclear which factors facilitated such involvement in that context and which discouraged such

participation by the mothers in the present study. Given the value of parental involvement, this question would be worthy of further exploration in future studies.

5.3.2 Education at home

While mothers helped their children with their homework as best they could, they felt that the best way to contribute to their children's education was to teach them how to be Muslim. Mothers of school-aged children reported educating their children about aspects of Islam that related to their current experiences such as why pork is forbidden and the importance of modesty. Ayesha, Ruba, Najat and Hajar engaged in explicit teaching of their children, whereas Doha and Jawhara relied more on implicit teaching through modelling of desirable behaviours. Participants in Qutub (2016) echoed the sentiments of the present study in their desire to "raise good Muslim children wherever they grow up" (p. 75) and so, like the mothers in the present study, taught their children to pray and recite Qur'an. Bajamal's (2017) participants sent their children to Islamic Sunday school at the mosque to learn about Islam with other Muslim children, which is an option not available to the participants of this study who live in a small city with a relatively small Muslim population.

Participating mothers reported that their children were inquisitive and wanted to understand what their mothers taught them about Islam. Ruba's son wondered why he could not eat pork or wear shorts and challenged his mother's answers until he was satisfied. Najat's sons also engaged her in discussions about beliefs they learnt about from their friends and compared them to Islam. Similarly, a boy in Bajamal (2017) was curious about hijab and kept asking his mother questions to understand the intricacies of it, "Why she is a Muslim and she does not cover her hair Why?" (p. 179) and wanting to know if a male doctor can see parts of a Muslim woman's body while treating her. Participating mothers knew that they were their children's main source of information about Islam and continued to engage in conversations with their children, patiently helping them understand.

Unlike the participant in Qutub's study (see Section 2.2.2) who was embarrassed by her mother's appearance, feelings of shame were not identified by the mothers in the present study. This is likely because their sojourns were three years long at the time of the first interview, whereas Qutub's participants lived in the United States between five to eight years, suggesting there may be some identity confusion the longer the sojourn.

5.4 Cultural parenting

Some studies (e.g. Al-Mutalq, 1981; Hussain, 1987) claim that Saudi parenting styles lean towards authoritarianism and permissiveness. Furthermore, some researchers (Achoui, 2003, 2006; Dwairy, 2006; Long, 2005) have claimed that shouting at children and beating them are socially acceptable forms of discipline that are utilised in Saudi homes. However, none of these were reported by participating mothers whether before, or during their sojourn. They did discuss having little control over their children prior to their sojourn because of interference from extended family members. This was a theme also identified in Kherais (2017) who reported that extended families imposed their opinions on mothers about how their children should be parented and criticised the strategies mothers used.

Relocating to a country far away from the influence of family and society, mothers came to realise the magnitude of their parental role and the responsibility that fell almost completely on them. Narrative data from the interviews suggest that participating mothers did indeed make a shift towards authoritative parenting, as did Kherais (2017) who investigated the parenting style of Saudi mothers in the United States, which is discussed further in Section 5.4.2.

5.4.1 Parenting roles

Mothers' roles changed as a result of living in nuclear families during their sojourn and this may have influenced their attitudes. Whilst in Saudi Arabia a number of participants had maids or extended family to help out with caring for children, and other children or adults to play and entertain them. In New Zealand, mothers had to

do it all, with some help from their husbands. This is characteristic of a transition between collectivist and individualistic societies. As a result, mothers reported spending more time with their children, and building a stronger bond. Saudi mothers in Qutub (2016) claimed that being away from extended family made them closer to their husbands and children. Nathanson and Marcenko's (1995) study of the adjustment of children sojourning with their parents to Japan found that the most significant predictor of a child's emotional well-being was seeing enough of their mother and father and frequency of family outings. Mothers in the present study reported they developed a strong bond with their children in New Zealand because they talked and spent more time together, which suggests that their close relationship aided their children's successful transition to home life and schooling in New Zealand. Consistent with these findings, a Saudi mother in Qutub (2016) believed the increase in communication stemmed from her children's curiosity and desire to understand their unfamiliar environment. Some mothers in Kherais (2017) reported that they were having more fun with their children because they had a less strict relationship with them.

Mothers in the present study reported that fathers' roles also changed and that they had a substantial parenting role. They spent more time talking and playing with their children than they used to in Saudi Arabia, helping with English homework, disciplining them and babysitting them to give the mother time for herself or to study. Mothers in Qutub (2016) and Kherais (2017) also reported that fathers were more involved with their children, dedicating time for family outings and helping to discipline the children when required. These fathers' increased involvement contrasts with the Japanese fathers in Izumi (2015) who reported that they had less time to spend with their children because they worked more hours than they did in Japan. This difference may be attributed to Saudi fathers in the present study having fewer demands on their time, since as students, and as scholarship recipients, they were free of the financial stress of working to support their family. Additionally, the participants became aware of the different family structure in New Zealand that places greater responsibility on the father towards his family, which may have

influenced them to perform duties that ordinarily would have been delegated to other family or staff in Saudi Arabia.

5.4.2 Parenting practices

A shift in parenting was a relatively common aspect of acculturation in the studies conducted by Qutub (2016), Bajamal (2017) and Kherais (2017). Similarly, the mothers in the present study recognised a shift in their parenting. Doha, for example, felt that she had become calmer with her son, making requests and explaining things to him rather than just saying “no”. She attributed this change to her son because he emulated his treatment by his teachers at school and expected the same of his parents, “Don’t yell” the small child would tell them. Qutub (2016) also found that mothers learned new techniques from their children. Jawhara reported that she was influenced by the day care teachers who she would often consult when faced with a parenting challenge. Similarly, Doha received support from the day care teachers in potty training her son, which she admitted she could not have done alone.

The mothers sought advice from the day care teachers because they were qualified child educators and cared for their children most of the day. It was clear that the strategies teachers used were effective and so mothers tried to adopt them for continuity and harmony between the home and school environment. Aside from learning the culturally appropriate New Zealand rearing style, mothers also needed parenting role models to take the place of their own mothers, whom they would have turned to in Saudi Arabia. Despite most of the mothers having little to no contact with their child’s school they were still influenced by the teacher’s methods. They would learn by observing and talking to their children. Similarly, Bajamal (2017) reported that one child told his mother “this is how we do that in the school, the teacher tells us” (p. 215) and so, the mother did the same. Similarly, a mother in Kherais (2017) reported that her son “waits for me to encourage him like the teacher does” (p. 47).

The mothers observed that schools and day care centres encouraged independence in their children by asking them to tidy up for themselves, and expecting them to self-manage their belongings and learning while at school. Encouraged in the knowledge that their children were more capable than they previously gave them credit for, the mothers built on this, and gave them responsibilities such as preparing their own breakfast and keeping their rooms clean. Similarly, the families in Qutub (2016) and Bajamal (2017) also identified increased participation from their children in household chores, and an overall increase in their children's independence.

The differences in their parenting practices became abundantly clear during these sojourners' summer vacations in Saudi Arabia. Najat reported that she was chastised by her mother for allowing her children to prepare their own sandwiches. Requiring young children to do things for themselves is not just deemed inappropriate, but a shortcoming on the mother's part. People noticed Ayesha's daughters were the only children who helped set and clear the table and thought it was bizarre to see as this was the maid's duty. Ayesha explained, "My kids feel ashamed to see someone older than them working and not help out". Qutub (2016) commented that most children in Saudi Arabia do not have chores at home because they have housemaids. A participant in Kherais (2017) echoed the dissonance between Saudi and Western cultural values towards children contributing to the household, "Here when they finish they take their plates and put it in the dishwasher. In Saudi they get up and they leave everything" (p. 48).

It is apparent that mothers adopted the values of giving children responsibility and treating them with respect out of conviction not merely out of necessity of circumstance. They transferred their practices to the Saudi context, and continued them despite criticism from family members.

5.4.3 Islamic parenting

Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 considered the parenting style of mothers using Baumrind's (1966, 1967, 1991) parenting styles, which are a Western construct. Considering

the importance of religion to Saudis, it was unsurprising that Islam informed the parenting style of Saudi mothers sojourning in New Zealand. However, it was interesting that the post-sojourn parenting approaches described by participants, many of which were adopted from New Zealand culture, were more closely aligned to the principles of Islamic parenting than their parenting pre-sojourn. Their narratives would suggest that living in a non-Islamic environment brought their practice closer to their belief and made their intention clear: to raise good Muslim children. This concurs with the finding in Qutub (2016) where it was the mothers' objective to "raise good Muslim children wherever they grow up." (p. 75).

Jawhara was critical of her family members in Saudi Arabia who allowed their children to do whatever they pleased. She considered this to be spoiling them, and instead set expectations of behaviour and boundaries for her preschool son. Islam has set boundaries for behaviour; therefore, when raising children, they must be taught the limits of what is acceptable so that they grow up to be good citizens and good Muslims. Jawhara explained the consequences of her son's actions and exhibited patience and mercy by not reacting with an abrupt "No!" and a slap on the wrist. Islam teaches that forgiveness and patience are desirable in the parenting of children. And that diminishing their self-worth will, "...fuel the fire of stubbornness" (Tuhaf al Uqul).

Ayesha emphasised using a calm, gentle manner with her children and respecting them as individuals. These are strategies adopted from her children's New Zealand teachers, and align with Islamic parenting, "Respect your children and talk to them with (good) manners and a likeable method" (Merali & Merali, 2019).

Mothers in this study did not permit their children to have playdates at their friends' houses because it was their duty to protect them. As a compromise, Hajar for example, allowed her daughters to play with their friends out by the front of the house, where she could watch to keep them safe. When Ayesha and Najat's children were invited to birthday parties, they accompanied them as a compromise between their Islamic obligation toward their children and helping them fit in. Making

compromises for the protection of children was not reported in Bajamal (2017), Qutub (2016) or Kherais (2017).

Islam stresses the importance of appreciation and honouring of one's parents. Participating mothers found that this might be accomplished by encouraging autonomy, a New Zealand cultural value, from a young age. This is in contrast with predominant Saudi beliefs, expressed by the participants, that children are too young to be burdened with chores. Assigning their children responsibilities not only prepares them to be useful members of society in adulthood (Amini, 2019) but also teaches them appreciation for their parents.

Mothers also adopted the strategy of having open communication with their children. Ayesha, Ruba and Najat, mothers of primary school children, all stressed giving their children the space to express themselves. They learnt this from the teachers who engaged their children in conversations, like equals. This approach is conducive to Islamic parenting, as it promotes mutual respect. Mothers needed to adapt their definition of respect from the Saudi cultural expectation of blind obedience, to negotiating and trying to understand their child's perspective. Ayesha pointed out that she liked her daughters to argue and discuss things with her, because she believed it would promote trust and prevent them from hiding things from her, though participants in Qutub (2016) still seemed to be concerned with respect issues such as children talking back to their elders. The mothers' changing beliefs about parenting meant they were more understanding of a child's developmental stages and made them aware of the need to find balance between expressing oneself and being aware of the people around them, which, according to the mothers, cannot be achieved through punishment, instead they employed reminders. The concept of respect featured in the study of Kherais (2017) who reported that some mothers were prepared to lower their cultural expectation of respect to build a strong rapport with their children and be able to "reach" (p. 53) them, while other mothers still believed that adults needed to be revered and spoken to with respect.

Having tolerance and respect for people's differing beliefs is another Islamic teaching that mothers did not have many opportunities to teach their children in Saudi Arabia being the majority group in an Islamic country. Children often asked their mothers about differing beliefs and other New Zealand cultural aspects. They educated their children and made the distinction clear: they were not the same as the other children, but that did not mean they should tell others they were wrong. Mothers in Bajamal (2017) and Qutub (2016) spoke to their children about what made them different, and similarly to the mothers in this study, allowed their children to participate in their friends' celebrations, and prioritised kinship and respect. Ayesha gave clear instructions to her daughters to never criticise others' beliefs or argue about them, "They have their religion, and we have ours" (Qur'an, 109:6) she told them, directly quoting a verse from the Qur'an.

5.5 Repatriation

Returning home after a sojourn has been established in the literature as requiring re-adjustment. The sojourning individual makes changes to their behaviour and thinking, changes that Sussman (2002) believes, "helped them be more effective in the host country" (p. 6) and when they return home those changes do not fit their home environment. Repatriation distress can be exacerbated if sojourners have inaccurate expectations about their return, if they have no previous intercultural experience and if they did not return home for visits during their sojourn. These three aspects will be discussed within the following subsections.

5.5.1 Concerns for self

Some of the repatriation issues that participants mentioned arose indirectly from their experiences whilst on annual holiday in Saudi Arabia. Ruba recognised that her lack of willingness to abide by social obligations would be a challenge. During holidays, she reported that she felt at liberty to excuse herself from social invitations armed with the knowledge she would soon return to New Zealand and could thereby avoid dealing with the repercussions. However, when she thought about returning

permanently, she said she would have to revert to the old way to meet the obligations of her large family and set aside her preference for smaller social gatherings. Similarly, socialising was a source of stress for the repatriating Saudi academics in Alandejani (2013). They were overwhelmed with trying to keep up with social commitments in addition to work and family responsibilities. To preserve their physical and emotional well-being, they made the decision on their return home to prioritise immediate family and reduce social engagements with everyone else.

Ayesha, who was a full-time employee pre-sojourn, planned to return to her position to be able to pay for her children's education. However, this would entail abandoning her changed beliefs about a mother performing household duties creating warmth and a sense of family connectedness, because she would be expected to hire domestic help. Additionally, she believed it would not be possible to have a job without a driver, considering the distance between her home and workplace. In addition, she would have less time to perform domestic duties. While Ayesha was concerned about the practicalities of returning to work, Storti (2001) identified that there are greater adjustments involved, such as adjusting to re-joining the workforce, and the impact this will have on the children who will have less time with their parents. Repatriates in Alandejani (2013) reported a loss of control of their children because they had less time for them. As academics, when the women returned to the workforce they struggled to adapt due to a disparity between their ideas on how work tasks ought to be performed and how they were carried out in Saudi Arabia.

The inevitable return to Saudi Arabia is a part of the sojourn process that loomed in the minds of the mothers in the present study. They were all eager to be closer to their immediate family and have a sense of belonging. Some of the participants were hopeful about the future and imagined their lives and situations would be greatly improved upon returning to Saudi Arabia. Those who learnt English and completed additional tertiary-level degrees believed that their enhanced professional development would afford them better opportunities: Ayesha hoped to

be promoted and Jawhara and Maram planned to lecture at university. Jawhara's first preference was to start up her own e-business so that she could be present for her children. Ruba, who previously thought having a career and a family simultaneously was not possible, became motivated to find employment. Gresham (2013) found her participants had similar aspirations; they hoped to start their own kindergarten, home photography studio, and make improvements to their current workplace.

However, inaccurate expectations about repatriation are not uncommon (e.g. Bossard & Petterson, 2005) as Penke's (2016) participants found when they returned to New Zealand. Storti (2001) argues that re-entry shock is not only unexpected, but returnees tend to believe that their experience will be wonderful. Furthermore, unrealistic expectations are indicative of a lack of mental preparedness, which means they have not rehearsed their reactions or thought through the course of adjustment. Rogers and Ward (1993) assert that a wider gap between expectation and reality is linked to greater psychological distress. Having unrealistic expectations may be due to a lack of previous re-entry experience. For example, Rohrlie and Martin (1991) hypothesised that sojourners with prior transition experience would report easier re-entry adjustment. Of their 284 student respondents, those with no previous experience reported greater difficulty in managing logistics and making friends. Further repatriation studies provide evidence for experience being a predicting factor in ease of readjustment. Penke (2016) reported that a participant who had previous repatriation experience proactively prepared herself for her return home. She organised tangible things for her return, such as a job and a house, which made her transition easier and lessened her repatriation distress.

Conversely, based on the "numerous previous intercultural experiences" (p. 189) of two of her participants, Gresham (2013) claimed that there were no significant differences between their readjustment and that of the four other participants who had no intercultural experience. However, the numerous previous intercultural experiences the two participants engaged in were short trips for "pleasure or

religious duties” (p. 189) and cannot be compared to the participants’ re-entry after a three year sojourn in Australia.

Ayesha, Ruba, and other participants, experienced significant personal growth, and change to their personalities, which might hamper a smooth re-integration into society when they would realise that those around them would not have had the same intercultural experiences and therefore have not developed in the same ways as them. This resonates with the findings of Penke (2016), who reported that upon re-entry to New Zealand a participant felt distressed because she had learnt to be considerate and tolerant of cultural difference, but those around her continued to be “closed-minded” and “ignorant” (p. 126).

An important variable that bears some influence on the ease of repatriation is the frequency of a sojourner’s visits to their home country during their sojourn (Black, Gregersen, & Medenhall, 1992). The participants in the present study all reported that they spent their summer break in Saudi Arabia, approximately two to three months of each year. This could contribute to managing their expectations, as well as provide insight into how Saudi Arabia and their families are changing and prepare them for their return.

5.5.2 Children’s schooling

Children reportedly have more stressful repatriation experiences compared to adults, as they do not have an established sense of belonging, cultural identity and social position (Cox, 2004; Hyder & Lovblad, 2007; Rohrlie & Martin, 1991). Additionally, they develop considerably during their sojourn, having had a wide range of experiences and struggle to relate to their peers (Arnaez, Arizkuren, Muñiz, & Sánchez, 2014). Interestingly, Gresham (2013) noted that mothers’ concern for their children can be an impediment to their own progress towards repatriation because they felt guilt and responsibility for the challenges their children faced, and received blame from family members for having ever sojourned to Australia.

Mothers were primarily concerned with the readjustment of their children, as they had observed significant changes in their children during their sojourn. Their concerns were for their school education, and fitting into Saudi society. With limited Arabic proficiency, mothers of school-aged children tried to prepare them for their return by maintaining their communicative Arabic. Participants in Chen's (2013) study emphasised the importance of maintaining their children's proficiency in Chinese but took a much more structured approach to maintaining proficiency compared to the participants of this study. They gave their children weekly Chinese lessons, paid for private tutoring and encouraged their children to read books in Chinese. In contrast, Saudi mothers of school-aged children in the present study only insisted that Arabic was spoken in the home. Ruba attempted to teach her children Arabic literacy, but found that it detracted from their self-confidence and affected their motivation to learn. Mothers resigned themselves to the fact that they could not possibly teach their children enough to keep up with their peers in Saudi Arabia. It would require time and commitment the mothers did not have, as the majority were students themselves. It would also put too much pressure on their children. A number of the participants mentioned it would have been helpful if Arabic classes were available to sojourning children, so they could learn together at a similar pace. Qutub (2016) reported that some participants had hired Arabic tutors for their children, while she does not explicitly say that it is in preparation for their repatriation, it can be inferred that it would ease their reintegration into Saudi Arabia.

Mothers of the present study seemed to adopt the attitude that they would live in the present and enjoy what the New Zealand education system had to offer, and deal with their readjustment once they returned to Saudi Arabia.

Their children's experiences of teaching style and school structure in New Zealand would be additional challenges that they feared would be insurmountable on their return to Saudi Arabia. A mother in Qutub (2016) shared this concern about her children adjusting to the different system and teaching styles. For some mothers in the present study, the solution was to send their children to international schools.

With considerations to cost, Ayesha reported she was already saving for her daughter's school fees, and Jawhara would need to find employment to cover those costs. A participant in Gresham's (2013) study enrolled her son in an international school that still taught Arabic and Islamic studies, and found he was adjusting reasonably well, although she still had to work hard teaching him to read and write, since the pre-school he attended in Australia did not have a literacy focus. In Alandejani's (2013) study, one of the repatriated academics reported that she insisted her child not be put in an international school, despite struggling with the Arabic language, because it was important he learn Arabic and about Islam. Mothers in Qutub (2016) shared the concerns of their children adjusting to school in Saudi Arabia, like some of the participants in the present study; they were inclined to send their children to international school. This indicates that regardless of the plan, mothers of the present study were likely to experience a challenging readjustment period. Mothers in this study had planned ways in which to help their children upon re-entry. Najat and Hajar spoke of paying for private tutoring to give their children extra support until they caught up. Ruba wanted to arrange for her sons to attend Saudi school during the New Zealand summer break to prepare them. However, Jawhara, Ayesha and Ruba ultimately realised that there are other factors to adjust to, besides the academic aspect of school.

5.5.3 Children fitting in

Mothers' concerns over their children fitting in were shared by the Japanese mothers in Izumi (2015) and Saudi mothers in Qutub (2016). Mothers devised several strategies to maintain ties to Saudi Arabia such as affording their children opportunities to socialise with other Saudi children while in New Zealand. Their aim was to maintain their cultural identity and their sense of belonging, in preparation for their reintegration into Saudi society. Interestingly, primary-school aged children in Qutub (2016) reported that they would seek out other repatriated children to socialise with in Saudi Arabia, which is indicative of their anticipated incongruence with the home population, and their intention to construct a social subcategory to match their new hybrid identities.

All the participants spent up to three months of the year in Saudi Arabia to give their children time to see grandparents and play with their cousins. They believed that repeated exposure to their home context would be beneficial for building connections. They also frequently spoke to, or video called family members while they were in New Zealand. Storti (2001) stresses the importance of frequent contact with home so they will not be strangers upon entry and keeping “current on developments back home” (p. 170) to ease the repatriation process. Black et al. (1992) further this with the suggestion that home visits mitigate eventual anxiety and stress over the repatriation process, as well as aid the maintenance of cultural identity.

Nonetheless, the children in the present study experienced loneliness and frustration during summer holidays in Saudi Arabia because they did not fit in. Section 4.4.2 reported the distance some of them felt because their peers could not understand them. Being excluded from games, missing out on having a bond with their grandparents, and standing out as being different because of the cultural behaviours they acquired in New Zealand were precursory to the challenges they may face at a greater intensity when they return permanently. Not knowing how to sweet talk (Qutub, 2016) or “dance the Arabic way” (p. 105) were further identified as potentially challenging. Repatriated Saudi children in Alandejani (2013) confirmed the findings of this study; mothers found their children were “laughed at when [they] tried to talk in Arabic” (p. 76) and limited the number of people they spoke to so they would not be laughed at. One boy in her study did not want friends or a relationship with his extended family members because he said that they had teased him.

In summary, the participants raised issues and concerns for their repatriation and their children. Most took some measures for preparation to help ease their transition when they return.

5.6 Berry's acculturation theory

Berry's acculturation theory (Berry, 2005, 2017; Berry & Sam, 1997) explains the process and effects of cultures coming into contact. Groups and individuals undergo changes to their psychological behaviours and employ acculturation strategies depending on the value placed on the home and host cultures. As a result, individuals make adaptations to their beliefs and behaviours. Figure 5.1, is an adapted model of Berry's acculturation theory (see Figure 2.1 for the complete model) that isolates individual level processes to focus on the aspects relevant to the Saudi mothers. The 'group level' was excluded as it involves changes in social structures and institutions (Berry, 2005), which this study did not investigate.

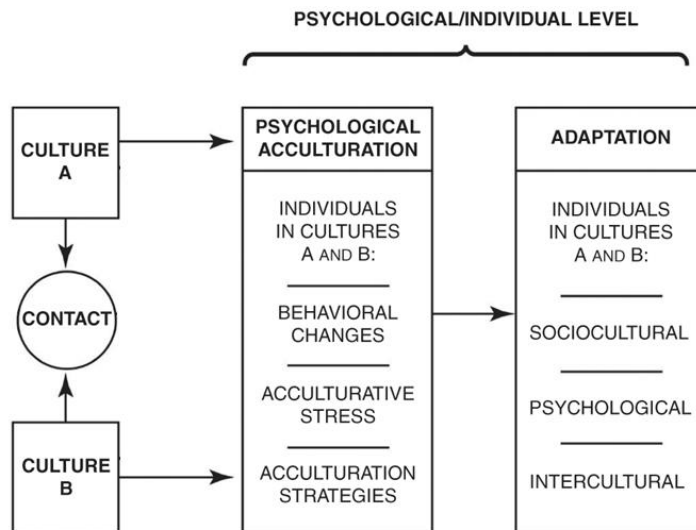


Figure 5.1 Berry's framework of acculturation

(Berry, 2005) Reprinted with permission

The narratives of the participating women revealed acculturation experiences that can partially be explained by Berry's theory. Upon initial contact, all the women reported some form of acculturative stress ranging from loneliness to depression (see Section 4.3.1). Such feelings are common amongst sojourners as they undergo so many simultaneous changes that could cause acculturative stress (e.g. Ward et al., 2001). Loneliness was a negative consequence of cross-cultural relocation for the Chinese students and visiting Chinese scholars in Canada in Zheng and Berry (1991). Participants of the present study reported a period of six to twelve months

of feeling unsettled, which according to Ward et al. (2001) is the period that “sojourners and immigrants suffer the most severe adjustment problems...[because] the number of life changes is the highest and coping resources are likely to be at the lowest” (p. 81).

Acculturation strategies

The participants of the present study utilised different coping strategies to aid them in reaching a state of effective functionality and emotional and mental stability. Part of what helped them move past that turbulent period was the forming of new routines, creating new social networks, learning English and making adjustments to their behaviour, such as their dress, to help minimise the negative effects of cultural difference (see Section 5.2). Coping strategies reported by participants were consistent with those reported in Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, and Forbes-Mewett’s (2010) study of 200 international students in Australia, in which the two most common strategies used were the support of friends in Australia and contacting people back home. Some of the internal changes participants of the present study made to help them acculturate were in relation to their attitudes towards cultural diversity and tolerance, as well as parenting beliefs, and life values (see Section 5.2).

During interviews, the participants elaborated on critical situations and how these were resolved (to some extent), revealed their use of Berry’s acculturation strategies and which ones they employed (see Figure 2.2). For example, a common topic discussed amongst the mothers was Christmas. The women utilised different strategies: Ruba displayed an assimilative attitude when she allowed her son to celebrate with his classmates at day care and gift them presents; and Hajar demonstrated an integrative attitude when she allowed her daughter to receive a gift from Santa at day care, after making it clear that she bought the present herself and gave it to Santa. It was equally important for her to fit into New Zealand society, and to maintain their Islamic beliefs, which allowed her to find a compromise between the two.

Conversely, Hajar separated herself from New Zealand society in her avoidance of interacting with host individuals. When she went out, always with a companion, she waited for others to converse with the barista, shopkeeper or teacher. While her low English proficiency prevented her from interacting, her avoidance strategy led her to stop attending English classes despite having lived in New Zealand for four years. This reflected her attitude and lack of desire to interact with her environment. Bayan, on the other hand, was interested in being a member of the host society, but used a separation strategy in response to being excluded by the dominant host group. The participants used separation as a strategic, protective response to the experience of feeling threatened and marginalised by members of the host society. Separation allowed Bayan to minimise potentially unsafe encounters. Evidence from this study suggests that it was not a strategy that the sojourners intended to adopt prior to arrival, but that it was used in reaction to experiencing uncertainty, discomfort or fear.

However, there was no evidence to suggest that participants used the marginalisation strategy, in fact, they exhibited a strong desire to maintain their cultural identity and most did not avoid interacting with members of the host society. The conditions of their scholarship agreement obliged them to return to Saudi Arabia, which potentially conditioned them to reject marginalisation as an acculturation strategy. Furthermore, they recognised that retaining strong cultural and familial ties was important for their reintegration. Use of the marginalisation strategy amongst this group of sojourners was non-existent. The validity of the marginalisation strategy has been questioned by Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, and Szapocznik's (2010). They claim that "the likelihood that a person will develop a cultural sense of self without drawing on either the heritage or receiving cultural contexts is likely low" (p. 4). This raises the question whether there is validity to Rudmin's (2003) criticism that Berry's acculturation strategies are not a "one size fits all" approach. His criticism found support in Schwartz and Zamboanga's (2008) study who tested Berry's model of acculturation using a latent class analysis of continuous acculturation indices and found that "marginalization did not emerge as a cluster" (p. 281).

Assuming that sojourners do in fact have the freedom to choose how they want to acculturate, which is the assumption that Berry's strategies are based upon, then his use of the term *marginalisation* is confusing because it is generally defined and widely understood as being an action taken *against* someone. Perhaps introducing *self-marginalisation* as a modification of the term could provide more clarity and create a clearer distinction between marginalisation and the dominant-group strategy *exclusion*.

After the initial phase of their sojourn had passed, most participants generally pursued some form of integration. They strongly valued maintaining their own culture and therefore had no desire to assimilate completely and adopt the New Zealand way of life. Equally, they had no wish to isolate themselves either. Integration strategies are typically favoured amongst most newcomers (Berry, 2005; Ward, 2001). Qualitative studies about Saudi women in the USA also indicate this preference (Bajamal, 2017; Barth, 2016; Belchamber, 2016; Kherais, 2017; Qutub, 2016). Berry and Sam (1997) found that better psychological adaptation was linked to those who utilised an integration strategy.

New Zealand has policies in place to be accommodating and inclusive of cultural diversity. The Human Rights Act 1993 stipulates the fair and equal treatment of everyone living in New Zealand, regardless of religion, race, or nationality. Government funding is available to emerging ethnic group activities that will benefit and improve New Zealand's social cohesion (Office of Ethnic Communities, 2018). Although the behaviours and attitudes of individuals do not always reflect these policies, they are indicative of New Zealand's positive direction towards multiculturalism. Berry theorises that the more culturally diverse the population, the more receptive they will be to more cultural diversity (Emamzadeh, 2018).

Most participants expressed interest in having more interactions with New Zealand society, a desire commonly expressed by other sojourners such as international students (e.g. Trice, 2004; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Marginson, Nyland, Sawir,

and Forbes-Mewett (2010) reported that although international students wanted more engagement with English and Australians, it was “not always theirs to choose” (p. 394). This is in line with the findings of this study that although participants used integration strategies, they did not feel they had actually integrated because of their limited meaningful interactions with locals. The mutuality of acculturation is an issue addressed by Berry (2017). He believes that “a mutual accommodation is required for integration to be attained, involving the acceptance by both dominant and non-dominant groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different people within the same society” (Berry, 2017, p. 23). As a country with a relatively young history of diversity, New Zealanders may retain unreceptive attitudes and exhibit unaccommodating behaviours. The ethno-cultural background of the population in 1996 was predominantly European (71.7%) and according to census data (Statistics New Zealand, 1996), had just three other ethnic groups: Maori, the native people (14.5%), Pacific Islanders (4.8%) and Asians (4.4%). This compares with 35.3% of the population in 2013 representing a more expansive group of ethnicities, some of the additional ethnicities were Arab, Latin and African (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). As the dominant group, the majority of European New Zealanders have the power to “avoid unwanted interactions” (Berry, 2017, p. 25) with sojourners when they find living interculturally challenging. In the present study, some of the participants’ New Zealand acquaintances sought to help them to adjust, however some other uncooperative attitudes of individuals within the host society limited their interaction opportunities and affected their integration. Participants’ experiences indicated that some host individuals struggled to accept them and used segregation and exclusion strategies. Individual host members’ use of opposing strategies to sojourning Saudi mothers limited their interaction opportunities and affected mothers’ desired integration into New Zealand society.

In the small body of literature available about the experiences of sojourning Saudi women in New Zealand, Alkharusi’s (2013) study contradicts the findings of this study. He found that his Arab, female participants attended parties and went on trips organised by a Christian group while in New Zealand. An important distinction to note here is that Alkharusi’s (2013) female participants were all unmarried, and

living with homestay families. Living together allows for a type of intimacy to develop between the student and the host family, and for a reciprocity of cultural learning to occur, that would have been difficult for the married participants of this study to experience. Additionally, the role of a host family is to be inclusive and provide opportunities to interact. By contrast, the participants of the present study would have had to initiate contact and actively seek out opportunities. Thus, there is variance in the quality and frequency of the intercultural experiences of a sojourner living with a homestay family compared to living separately with one's own family.

Based on what the women reported and my own observations, they appeared to have successfully adapted to life in New Zealand. From a psychological adaptation perspective, participants who were in the third year of their sojourn did not report or display signs of depression after the initial phase. Subsequently, they had high levels of self-esteem exemplified in the goals they set for themselves and worked to achieve, increased self-efficacy, as well as a clear sense of their own identity. Even Hajar, who was an outlier to the group, was content with her life and did not report acculturative stress. In terms of their sociocultural adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1999), it is apparent the women displayed competence at performing daily intercultural activities, such as shopping and being able to return unwanted items, using public transport and enrolling at university. Jawhara, Doha, Ruba and Najat were all able to communicate with their children's school or day care teachers to discuss concerns. They were successful in their academic learning, and had some on-campus relationships with their classmates. Berry (2017) explains that indicators of negative sociocultural adaptation include deviant behaviours such as gang membership, addiction and unemployment, none of which categorise the participants. The final form of adaptation, intercultural adaptation, encompasses their "acceptance of a multicultural ideology" (Berry, 2017, p. 20). The participants displayed an attitude of acceptance of differing values and ideas and encouraged their children to focus on the similarities of being human. Most had relationships with people of various ethnicities, mostly other Muslim women, and often invited them to social gatherings and Eid celebrations.

Sojourners require assistance in adjusting, which may be afforded by fellow nationals who permanently reside in the host country. However, unlike other ethnic groups, this is not a viable option for Saudis as almost all of them have sojourner status. The more experienced sojourners leave New Zealand taking their knowledge with them. While a lot can be learned from personal experience, sojourners still need someone to help facilitate their adjustment, which, I believe, was the role I played. Through the intervention of my research, the participating women were given a voice and a platform to discuss their sojourning experiences. Additionally, as a Muslim Arab woman, who is a mother and grew up in New Zealand, I was more than just a sympathetic ear: I was able to empathise with their struggles. The similarities we shared, the interviews, focus groups and various social gatherings I was present at, all aided in their overall well-being as they had a space to voice their concerns, engage in discussions, share (un)pleasant experiences and reflect on a course of action.

This section has demonstrated that the participants went through a process of intercultural contact, to cultural and psychological change towards various adaptive outcomes. As Berry (2017) stresses, it is a multilinear process with highly variable outcomes. After approximately a year of studying the participants, most of the six mothers were well adapted; they overcame their anxiety and fears, learned to cope with aspects that caused acculturative stress and attained a state of well-being, the implications of which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.7 Experiential learning

Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory proposes a learner centred model of learning derived from learners' experience within their social environment. This section addresses which of Kolb's educator roles I took on through my interaction with the participants of this study. Then it applies the six principles of Experiential Learning Theory to the context of the group of sojourning Saudi women who participated in this study, and finally it provides a specific learning situation to

demonstrate how one mother moved through the experiential learning cycle to resolve a parenting challenge she was faced with.

5.7.1 The role of facilitator

The participants' reasonably successful adaptation can be attributed to their learning from experience. Developing his earlier (1984) model to include the importance of social learning, Kolb (2015) recognises that learning requires impetus from an educator to provide higher-level learning. He acknowledges that any individual can be an educator and describes the various roles of an educator – coach, facilitator, subject expert, standard setter and evaluator – in terms that are indeed centred around “formal classroom teaching situations” (p. 303). A teacher typically structures and plans activities to lead learners through the learning cycle. Similarly, applications of Experiential Learning Theory in management studies largely investigated learning that took place as part of professional development within the workplace (e.g. Babnik, Širca, & Dermol, 2014; Dane, 2018; Tews & Noe, 2017). The hierarchical relationship between a trainer and trainee is analogous to that of a teacher and student. Zyngier (2017) and Gross and Kelman (2017) applied experiential learning theory to some form of informal learning; however, the informal elements were part of a larger educational curriculum, so the informal aspect was designed and planned with specific goals. Thus, the teacher was still the educator in informal learning. This highlights the need for some elaboration on how a non-educator may assist learning in informal, unstructured learning scenarios such as that faced by the participants in the present study.

Retrospectively, it seems that the role I played, was that of facilitator. By Kolb's (2015) definition, a facilitator helps:

...learners get in touch with their personal experience and reflect on it. They adopt a warm affirming style to draw out learners' interests, intrinsic motivation, and self-knowledge. They often do this by facilitating conversation in small groups. They create personal relationships with learners. (p. 304)

Interviewing participants as part of the research process elicited their individual experiences related to acculturation and parenting. However, this alone would not have been sufficient. Some of the characteristics of a facilitator identified include offering suggestions (Allsop, 1990) offering a helping hand (Fullard, 1994), empowering learners (Morrell, Harvey, & Kitson, 1997), allowing people to learn by their own processes (Harvey, 1993), being patient and empathetic (Titchen, 2000), showing interest and being genuine (Reed & Koliba, 2003). I believe that reciprocity also played a role in establishing trust and further promoting my position as facilitator. See Yaghi (forthcoming) for a more detailed discussion of reciprocity during data collection (Appendix 6). I inquired about a particular struggle they were experiencing, or other pieces of personal information they shared during an interview, demonstrating my genuine interest in them, and that I was listening attentively during our conversations. Rapport was strengthened further by the conversational nature of the interviews, and the mutual sharing of experiences.

Participants frequently asked me questions where they sought my experience or suggestions. Doha wanted to know how to potty train her son, Ayesha wanted to know what strategies I use to keep my children's rooms tidy. Ruba and I discussed driving and her fears surrounding it. When I answered their questions, I was careful to preface my answer with phrases like, "From my own experience" or "I'm not an expert" to maintain and emphasise our equal status. It is likely that they wanted the benefit of my experience as an Arab Muslim woman who was brought up in New Zealand, and has overcome many of the obstacles they continue to face living and raising their children here. In that vein, they may have viewed me as a role model. The journal entry in Section 4.3.4.3 reflects my realisation that Ruba, and indeed the other participants, probably did not know many Muslim, Arab women who could drive considering the restriction on women drivers in Saudi Arabia. In sharing my learning process, I hoped to show her that her goal is attainable when broken up into smaller tasks. The impact of our conversation later became apparent when I learned that Ruba had started driving. Evidently, I had contributed to her sense of empowerment.

Additionally, interviews and focus groups prompted participants to reflect on their experiences of parenting and acculturating. According to Kolb (2015) reflection is equally important as action in the experiential learning process, and if it is “sacrificed – even in part – [action] immediately suffers” (p. 41). Similarly, Fowler (2008) believes that, “If the person’s experience is of ‘good quality’, but the reflection is limited, then the learning will also be limited” (p. 430). Some of the limitations to experiential learning identified by Fowler that prevent the union of experience and reflection are time constraints, lack of energy and active resistance. Thus, having dedicated interview and focus group sessions geared towards reflecting on their experiences helped set up the Saudi mothers for the possibility of deep reflection and potentially facilitated in enhancing their learning.

Learning is a social process that occurs in any aspect of everyday life. Therefore, learning may be facilitated in an informal setting, by an “educator” who is a peer, who is not an expert and does not have a structured plan or vision of where the learner needs to be. It was not my plan to aid in participants’ learning; it was only through grounded analysis that I discovered how I had facilitated their acculturation.

5.7.2 Six principles of Experiential Learning Theory

The grounded analysis of the present study showed that Kolb’s six principles of ELT were evident in the experiences of the participating Saudi mothers. In the table below, the findings are applied to each of the six principles and identify my role as facilitator:

Learning is a process	Participants continued to learn about adapting to life in New Zealand, new knowledge acquired through experience informed their current experiences, which they would apply to their future experiences. I facilitated this process by structuring the sequence of reflection sessions.
Knowledge is formed and reformed by experience	Participants arrived with pre-existing assumptions about New Zealand culture that they had to reconstruct based on their new experiences that did not match what they had understood. By reflecting critically on their concrete experiences during

	interviews, focus groups or social gatherings, with their peer sojourners, and myself they formed and reformed their knowledge to enhance their learning.
Learning involves performing, reflecting, feeling and thinking.	While performing everyday tasks, like shopping or parenting, participants were compelled to take instantaneous actions. Afterwards, they engaged in the experiential learning process by reflecting and talking about their experience with me, conceptualised their learning and tested out their modified knowledge in future experiences. The learning process helped them learn first, how to cope, and then to thrive while living in New Zealand.
Learning is a holistic process of adaptation	Participants' sojourning experience involved recognising their feelings throughout their journey, reassessing their values and beliefs, reflecting on their thoughts and feelings with myself and their peers and modifying their behaviours. Participants adapted to life in New Zealand and demonstrated personal growth in their ability to find solutions for their problems, being independent, flexible, accepting of diversity and tolerant of ambiguity.
Learning is the transaction between person and environment	Participants have learnt a lot as a result of their transactions in the form of concrete experiences with their children, their teachers, the New Zealand public, and through reflecting on, and making sense of, experiences with fellow sojourning Saudis. Their transactions with myself, as facilitator, also enhanced their overall sense of well-being. Learning was possible because of the social transactions between the participants and their environment.
Learning is the refinement of knowledge	Through the continuous process of refining their knowledge by reflecting on their experiences and experimenting, participants gained knowledge about how to balance acculturating to New Zealand culture and maintaining their own identities.

5.7.3 The Experiential Learning cycle

Chapters 4 and 5 have provided insight into some of the learning areas Saudi mothers and children were exposed to during their sojourn, including: learning about the host culture, learning to operate within a new system, learning to deal with a new education system, as well as the more personal process of learning to be

independent. Kolb's experiential learning cycle (see Figure 5.2) is traceable in many aspects of their larger sojourning experience. As a researcher who met with the participants at various points throughout the data collection period, I was not witness to an entire round of their learning cycle. On some occasions, participants narrated an experience and their thought process, during and after the experience, making clear their transition through part of the cycle.

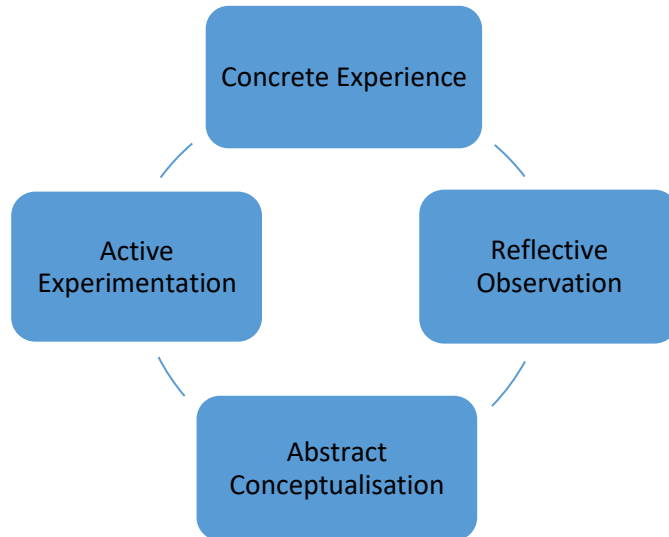


Figure 5.2 Kolb's experiential learning cycle

(Kolb, 2015) Reprinted with permission

This section will discuss the case of Ruba's nine-year old son who had reading challenges, to exemplify the applicability of Kolb's (2015) experiential learning cycle and to illustrate the acculturation process undergone by the participants in the present study (see Figure 5.3 for a visual representation). Ruba was interviewed in English, thus the interview quotations used below are verbatim.

During her second interview, Ruba raised a concern about her son not being able to read. She listened to him read a book assigned by the teacher and discovered, "He don't look at the word, he don't know what's in the book, he just said it". Her son had memorised the story but was unable to decipher the individual words. Her concrete experience lead her to the realisation that her son "has some difficult to

read the English”. I listened empathetically, but did not comment, as I am not an expert in child education.

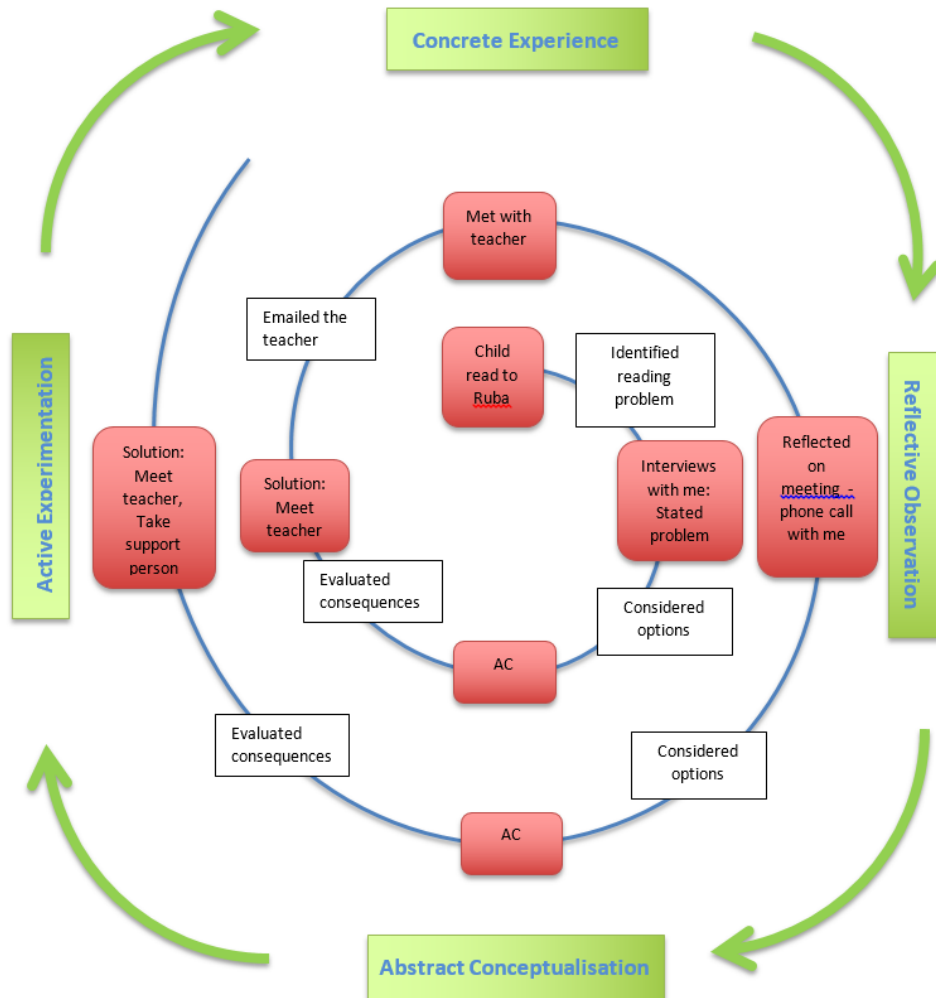


Figure 5.3 ELT applied to Ruba problem solving

The topic came up again during the third interview when I inquired about her children’s education once they return to Saudi Arabia. She said, “Right now he find the English language is difficult, he can’t read it.” This time I asked, “He can’t read?” She confirmed that after living in New Zealand for three years he still could not read. The conversation with me encouraged her to reflect aloud. First, she stated the problem then she identified possible solutions. She said she wanted to enrol him in a local learning centre for reading tuition. Then, she considered that he might

benefit from seeing a doctor, “I will go to the hospital to see what’s the problem exactly”. I suggested talking to his teacher as another solution. I provided encouragement for her decision to take action towards helping her son.

The next stage of abstract conceptualisation was an internal process that I did not see; however, she may have evaluated the possible outcomes of each solution. A week later, I received a phone call from Ruba telling me that she had executed her decision and emailed the teacher to arrange a meeting. They met and discussed his reading issue. During our phone conversation, she recalled the specifics of that meeting and described her reaction to what the teacher said, “They tried to help him for the last two years but there is something wrong in his head and there is nothing more they can do.” I empathised and validated her feelings as she reflected on what they said and expressed how it made her feel. I praised her for advocating for her son. She spoke to me about her options: return to Saudi Arabia immediately to get him the help he needs, change schools because she felt they were negligent and uncooperative, or meet with the teacher again for clarification. As she talked through it, she decided it would be best to meet with the teacher again and take her social-worker friend for support. By her estimation, having a native speaking friend accompany her would ensure they would not dismiss her, and that there would be no misunderstandings.

The next time I saw Ruba at a social function and asked how her son was doing, she informed me that she had enrolled him at a different school with a dedicated reading recovery unit.

In summary, I have demonstrated how Ruba used the experiential learning spiral for problem solving her son’s reading difficulty. I facilitated her movement through the cycle, not by filling the role of educational expert as suggested by Kolb (2015), but by prompting her with questions, making suggestions, listening attentively, giving her space to brainstorm, empathising, validating her feelings, and encouraging her efforts. From the example, it may be determined that Ruba could

have taken certain steps by herself; however, with my facilitation, the process was most probably accelerated.

5.8 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the key findings of the present study to enhance understanding of the acculturation experiences of sojourning Saudi mothers. The chapter then presented a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions the behavioural changes they underwent because of culture contact and the adaptations to their identities as women and mothers. Most of them experienced growth after the initial stress of their changed environment and adapted reasonably successfully. The chapter also discussed RQ5, and found Berry's (2005) acculturation strategies were relevant to the coping strategies they employed, except a marginalisation strategy was not used by any of the participants because of their intentions to return to Saudi Arabia. Addressing RQ4, Participants' anticipated challenges for repatriation were discussed in relation to the reviewed literature. Finally, RQ6 was addressed and it was found that Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory illuminated the participants' intercultural development, although it has not previously been applied to informal settings such as sojourner acculturation. Participation in this research project aided the participants in their experiential acculturation learning, due to my adoption of a facilitative role. This led to a refinement of Kolb's definition of educator and the roles an educator should adopt throughout the learning cycle. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, a summary of the key findings is presented (6.1), followed by a discussion of the study limitations (6.2). A discussion is presented of the key findings in relation to the New Zealand context, methodology in sojourner research, and theoretical implications (6.3). The contributions of this research are highlighted, with recommendations for future areas of research. Finally, I share some of the things I have learnt from conducting this research (6.4).

6.1 Summary of key findings

The present findings revealed that while Saudi mothers are heavily engaged with the immediate task of adapting to and coping with the new culture, they orient strongly to the future challenge of re-integrating on their return to Saudi. This is evidenced in a range of behaviours that are prominent in the narratives of these sojourners.

Recognition of their eventual return to Saudi Arabia influenced the behaviours and attitudes of the participating mothers. They maintained a strong connection to their family in Saudi Arabia with frequent phone calls and annual trips home. They primarily socialised with other Saudi women, further strengthening their own ethnic identities and their children. They sought to maximise the benefit of their sojourn; the majority learnt English and pursued tertiary education. While they had concerns about their children retaining their Muslim identity and mother tongue and took steps towards helping them, they also allowed their children to enjoy the New Zealand schooling experience. Mothers thought ahead to their return to Saudi Arabia and made mental provisions for future action. Ultimately, mothers found a balance between being successful in the present and preparing for their future return. The temporariness of their sojourn affected their decisions, attitudes and their degree of integration.

The findings of this study align with part of Berry's acculturation model (2005), which describes the changes that occur at an individual level as a result of two

cultures coming into contact. Participants experienced acculturative stress, they underwent behavioural changes and utilised the various integration, assimilation and separation acculturation strategies when faced with personal and parenting decisions. There was no evidence indicating the use of Berry's hypothesised 'self' marginalisation strategy, which attests to the participants' generally receptive attitude to New Zealand culture and society and their attachment to their Saudi ethnic identity and homeward bound orientation.

Participating mothers' concerns about the current and future education of their children were highlighted. Their primary concerns were about their children espousing Islamic values of tolerance, respect and modesty in a culturally different environment. They found New Zealand cultural values were sometimes in harmony with their mission and sometimes incongruous. Mothers valued the education system and style of teaching in New Zealand because it did not unduly pressurise their children, gave them confidence, and inculcated respect for others. They allowed their children to enjoy and reap the benefits of New Zealand schooling, fully aware of the adjustment required upon their return to the Saudi schooling system. Mothers prepared solutions and strategies for how they would assist their children's future transition.

Looking at the findings through the lens of Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory has revealed that it can be applied to acculturation, with some modification. Acculturation is a series of experiences that sojourners engage in through reflection, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation, resulting in the acquisition of new knowledge. By applying Kolb's (2015) learning cycle, typically used in formalised learning contexts, to an informal setting, it was found that learning was accelerated when I adopted a facilitating role. It is Kolb's recommendation that an educator take on different roles (i.e. subject expert, coach, evaluator and standard setter) at each stage of the learning cycle to enhance learning. This study found that this was not necessary in informal learning situations such as acculturation. I played the role of facilitator at each stage of the cycle and was successful in assisting

participants' movement to the next stage. In fact, the informal context was essential to the openness with which participants shared their thoughts and concerns.

6.2 Limitations of the study

This case study has provided some much needed insight into the lives of sojourning Saudi mothers and illuminated their successes and struggles in parenting their children between the contrasting cultures of their home and New Zealand. However, a number of limitations were identified, and are outlined below.

As a case study that delved into the personal experiences of six Saudi mothers, the findings cannot be used to generalise about sojourning Saudi women. Nevertheless, their in-depth narratives contribute to the overall understanding of Saudi mothers' experiences and may be used to drive further inquiry.

Additionally, whilst participants recruiting each other was immensely useful in ensuring data collection occurred during the allotted time, such recruitment within friendship circles potentially limited the variety of values and perspectives reported, as people tend to befriend those with whom they share some similarities.

Although I attempted to distribute data collection procedures over an entire year, with the intention of providing snapshots of the participants' lives at different points in time, in a couple of cases this was not feasible. I needed to be accommodating of the participants' schedules and so it was necessary for me to give precedence to collecting their narratives rather than being concerned with the distribution of interviews over longer intervals. Tracking them from the beginning of their sojourn through to the end would have allowed greater insight and showed more significant changes than these findings suggest.

Participants were given the opportunity to articulate their experiences and reflect on the initial phase of their sojourn, which is important in solidifying their learning. The limitation to this, however, was that reported experiences were heavily reliant on their memory, which can be unreliable in its minimisation or exaggeration of

significant experiences. Perhaps if an additional data collection tool was included, such as an audio diary, it could have captured rawer emotions, and been more informative about their usage of Berry's acculturation strategies during the beginning of their sojourn.

Ideally, participants would have all taken part in more than one focus group; however, due to the unpredictability of human research, this proved a challenge to organise with some participants returning to Saudi Arabia or not being available for personal reasons. This would have captured any changes in their beliefs over time as they discussed things with their peers.

Mothers were selected as the focus of this study based on my belief that they are primarily involved in the day-to-day parenting of their children. The findings suggest this to be true; however, the importance of a father's role in parenting during a sojourn was revealed to be crucial to the acculturation experiences of their children. This is a limitation of the study and the inclusion of a father's perspective would add a more holistic view of parenting in acculturation. Bearing Arab culture in mind, it would be more suitable for a male to interview fathers.

6.3 Implications of the study

Despite these limitations, the study has raised important and interesting implications discussed in the sections below.

6.3.1 Contextual implications

Previous New Zealand based studies that specifically explore the experiences of Saudi sojourners are non-existent. The existing New Zealand based studies reviewed looked at intercultural experiences and adjustments of Muslim women (Bahiss, 2008) and Arab Muslim (Alkharusi, 2013) students, of whom a few were Saudi. Bahiss (2008) used a single, one-hour long, in-depth interview to collect data, which only captures a snapshot of a single point in time. This lacks confirmability because information gathered has not been subjected to

triangulation, nor was there opportunity for the development of rapport between the participants and the researcher. Alkharusi (2013) on the other hand conducted two in-depth interviews to capture differences in his participants' impressions upon arrival and 10 months later. However, as a man interviewing women who were Arab Muslims, it is unlikely that his female participants were candid and uninhibited in discussing their experiences, considering the cultural norms of mixed-gender interactions.

Alternatively, the present study was longitudinal, explored the inner lives of Saudi mothers using various data collection procedures based on ethnographic principles, and were conducted by a female, Arab Muslim researcher, which produced a detailed account of their individual acculturation experiences. It is hoped that based on the richness of data, they will be seen as distinct individuals, rather than being represented by prevalent perceptions about their group as Muslims or Saudis.

Furthermore, the interpretation of the findings revealed that the sojourners were able to learn from their experiences by reflecting, conceptualising and testing them which resonates with Kolb's learning cycle (2015). It is evident from the findings that they learned enough to adapt successfully; they modified their future behaviours based on their reconceptualised understanding of their concrete experiences. Their learning was an on-going process, which helped their sojourn be a relatively successful sojourn. This confirms the effectiveness of Kolb's ELT cycle in cross-cultural experiences.

I think there could be merit in the creation of a type of community of social practice for the sojourners, in which they could share experiences and ideas about balancing between their adaptation to the host society and their goals for reintegration to their home society. The benefits of such a group could be enhanced by having a facilitator, who is bicultural, not in a position of power, can relate to the sojourning group and who is aware of the types of issues raised in the current study, and who would therefore be able to prompt timely discussion.

Nevertheless, dispatching and receiving institutions could help ease some of the burden associated with transition and ensure they have richer intercultural experiences. Before their arrival, participants had some knowledge of New Zealand, the majority of which was self-instigated. They asked their husbands, who typically arrived ahead of their families, and people who had returned from a sojourn to a Western country. The Saudi government reportedly holds briefing sessions before students are dispatched to the receiving country. The accompanying family members are not included in these briefings. Pre-sojourning individuals could be better served through more structured, in-depth sessions. A number of scheduled briefing sessions spaced out over a number of weeks, would be needed to ensure they have time to absorb and reflect on any new information. It would be beneficial to have sojourners who have returned from New Zealand discuss differences and expectations. It would also be beneficial to have, at the sessions, a man, woman and children of each gender, to address their counterparts and share their experiences. Admittedly, there is great variety in experience; however, there are also commonalities between the genders.

Disseminating information about life in New Zealand through different media, such as print, video, could enhance their learning experience. A variety of media is needed to reach a wider audience and appeal to people's learning preferences. Additionally, social media is evidently a popular means of communication and platform for the exchange of information in Saudi Arabia, and should be utilised. Participants reported using Whatsapp to communicate with Saudi sojourners, who were strangers to them, to get information and advice. This could be arranged in a more systematic way whereby people who intend on departing Saudi Arabia are provided with the contact details of current sojourners in their destination city, as well as returned sojourners. Preparing sojourners, managing their expectations, and providing them with contacts they can reach out to for help, can ease some of the challenges and acculturative stress they might face initially, as a result of intercultural contact.

The host institution, equally, has a responsibility towards providing ongoing support to sojourning Saudi students, with more assistance required at the beginning. Some institutions in New Zealand have an orientation for international students. Saudi students may be better served if they arrived as a cohort at the beginning of each semester. I recommend that the accompanying family members also receive an orientation, with the view that their adjustment and well-being will have a direct impact on the well-being of the student and ultimately their academic performance.

The findings of this study indicate that the participants encountered a certain level of racism and prejudice that appears to be higher than that reported by other sojourning international students in Hamilton (Ryan, Rabbidge, Wang, & Field, in press) although it still appears to be substantially less than that reported by Marginson et al. (2010) in the New Zealand and Australia contexts. The detail in which critical incidents of microaggression were reported reveal that they had a significant emotional impact, which was also observed by Ryan et al. (in press) in the reports of other New Zealand based sojourners. However, Marginson et al. (2010) reported that Muslim students in general had the most problems, and that the visibility of Muslim women's dress made them targets of victimisation. This may be because of the common stereotype of Muslims as terrorists, or because of New Zealand's largely secularist views of hijab and niqab as subjugating women. Targeted initiatives such as connecting domestic students with international students could both counteract unaccepting attitudes, and assist in sojourners' adjustment. Buddy projects, peer pairing or peer networking have had positive outcomes in other institutions in New Zealand and Australia (e.g., Campbell, 2012; Gresham & Clayton, 2011; Kashima & Loh, 2006) such as intercultural understanding, appreciation for cultural diversity and greater self-awareness. I propose an informal 'adopt a family' programme where a sojourning family is partnered up with a local family. This would not only afford sojourning families the benefit of a local's experience in practical matters but would aid in host families developing empathy towards sojourners and their struggles. It would help dispel stereotypes, misconceptions, promote acceptance and accelerate the acculturation

of both host and sojourning families making strides towards a more multicultural society.

The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission office in New Zealand establishes a Saudi Student Association in each city and provides funding for cultural activities. A more active Saudi student body is needed to organise events, spread awareness, increase visibility and improve existing negative perceptions. However, they also need the support of the institution and the local community. There are local organisations aimed at integrating ethnic communities into society; working in alliance with them is in congruence with New Zealand's vision.

The New Zealand government has a multicultural policy indicating the direction the country is headed. New Zealand and Saudi Arabia have good political relations that could be built upon to further promote understanding and a multicultural attitude on the individual level. In light of some Saudi institutions offering free tuition to students from Western countries, it would be a good idea for Education New Zealand to take advantage of this offer and promote it by sending a group of New Zealand students each year to study, enrol in a course or carry out research in Saudi Arabia. Affording them the opportunity to experience the struggles of living in another culture would foster appreciation and compassion towards Saudi sojourners in New Zealand.

6.3.2 Methodological implications

The present study was longitudinal, with data-collection taking place over a year. Collecting data at four different intervals during the year allowed participants the opportunity to reflect more deeply on their past, current and future experiences and to be more fully engaged in the process. The duration and frequency of the interviews along with the informal data collection procedure of attending social gatherings were all contributing factors in the strong bond that was forged between the participants and myself, and the richness of the data. Similar studies by Qutub (2016), Bajamal (2017) and Kherais (2017), which also explore the experiences of mothers and acculturation, conducted one-off interviews that did not exceed half an

hour. However, these studies collected data in English, which was not the first language of the participants or the researchers, despite both parties being Saudis. This may have hampered the elicitation of details and fully expressed thoughts about their sojourning experiences, whereas the current study was conducted by a bilingual speaker of Arabic and English, and collected data in the language of the participants' choice. Code switching was practiced and encouraged, which promoted understanding and accuracy in reporting their experiences. Additionally, I possessed cultural knowledge of both New Zealand and Arab cultures, giving me awareness of the issues and sensitivity attached to Arabs living and adapting to New Zealand. Furthermore, the use of narrative inquiry complemented the ethnographic approach to promote trust by building rapport and sustaining a good relationship throughout the data collection phase.

However, without the time constraints on completing this study, recruiting participants at the beginning of their sojourn and tracking them to the completion of their sojourn would indeed have been enlightening. In addition, the use of data collection procedures such as narrative frames, reflective journals and diaries could elicit more report data from the participants and capture raw emotions, immediately after a critical incident. It would be important for these tools to be conducted in the participants' first language, which would require bilingual competence on the part of the researcher.

Through data collection it was apparent that the participants relied heavily on social media to connect with their family back home, and with other locally sojourning women. I was included in one of their Whatsapp groups, and based upon their interactions with one another, a linguistic or content analysis could be rather revelatory of their changing ideas, interests, ways of expression and language use.

In addition, my informal observations were a unique, key feature of this study as I noticed seemingly unobtrusive and spontaneous behaviours that were able to provide relevant insights into their, everyday life. However, these behaviours were not elicited by the researcher, instead they were completely natural and in their

natural settings. This contributed to the richness of the information as it helped me to relate and coordinate between formally collected data and their informal verbal interactions with their social group.

Mothers were the subject of this research based on the assumption that they are the primary carers for their children. While the data has confirmed this to be true, involving other stakeholders could provide a more holistic view of the phenomenon. It would be particularly enlightening to gain the perspectives of fathers and teachers, as this study has highlighted the significant role they play in the parenting of a child and in transferring cultural knowledge.

This study sought to reveal the inner lives of a minority group, and employing a grounded theory approach helped to do this (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) by allowing the narratives to speak and suggest directions for future collection of data, a theory can emerge as opposed to having a prescribed theory imposed on the data. More grounded, longitudinal studies are needed to fill the research gap.

The findings of this study could be used to inform future research and provide a basis from which to formulate research objectives, plan an effective design, identify potentially relevant participants and select appropriate data collection tools.

6.3.3 Theoretical implications

The findings of this study contribute to Kolb's experiential learning model in a number of ways. It does so firstly, in the application of the experiential learning cycle to the phenomenon of acculturation (Berry, 2001, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2017), which provides an additional lens through which to view the experiences of people in acculturation. Figure, 6.1 represents how the two concepts fit together well.

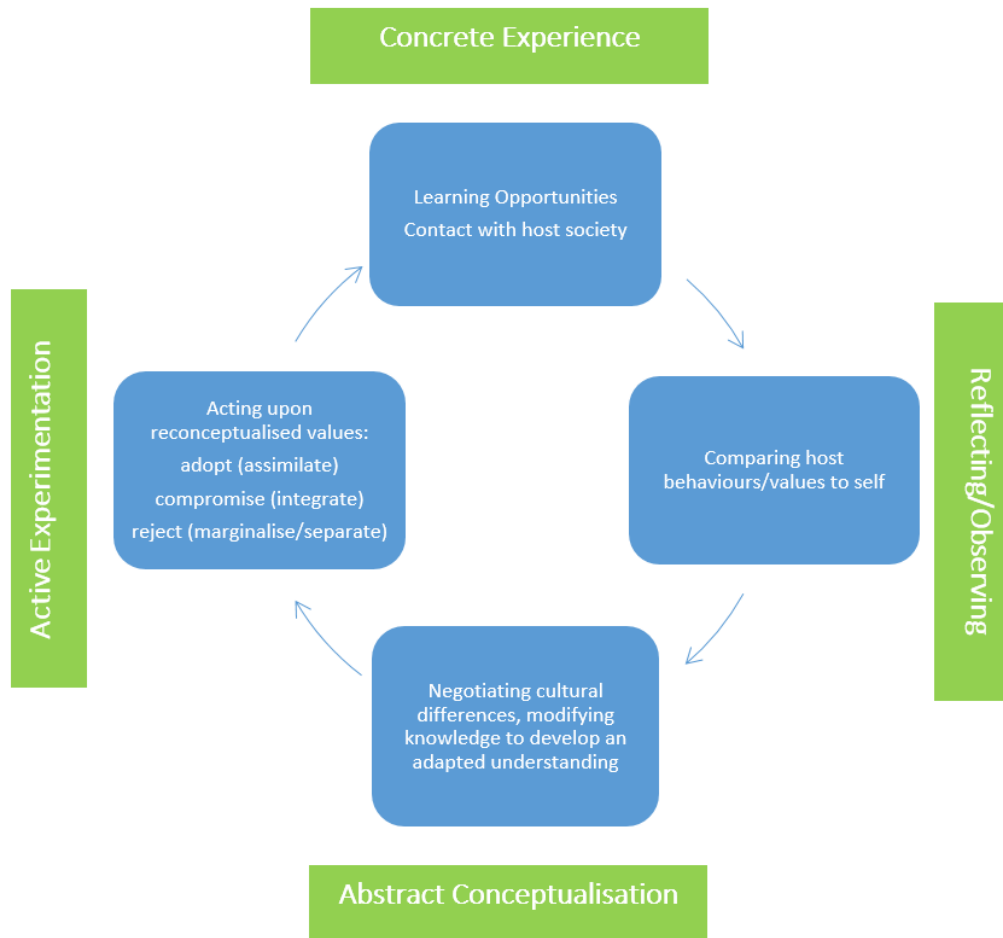


Figure 6.1 Model of experiential acculturation

The second contribution was made in the application of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) to an informal learning setting. Kolb (2015) acknowledges that this is possible, as everyday experiences can lead to learning; however, he does not explain, or demonstrate how it may occur. A review of the ELT literature, particularly in relation to sojourners, revealed no examples of informal experiential learning. Possible explanations for this may be that informal experiences are undervalued by researchers, or there is concern for how learning can be tracked and evinced. This study shows that it may be done through personal communication and reflection through conversation with an educator. Self-reports and journal entries may also prove beneficial.

The final contribution made, is in the role of the educator. Applying this theory to informal learning highlighted the need for the role of facilitator. However, the other proposed roles of standard setter and evaluator, subject expert and coach were not deemed appropriate for the context, nor were they necessary, as participants were able to successfully move through the learning cycle with just the assistance of a facilitator at each stage of the learning cycle. Further applications of experiential learning theory to informal learning contexts could be useful to support the findings of this study.

6.4 My own journey

Collecting data from the participants over a long period not only meant that I developed a genuine connection with them, but also that their lives became entangled in my own. Our interactions continued past the interpersonal contact as I listened to interview data, and read and reflected on their words.

Subjecting the data to grounded analysis often felt like I was doing a jigsaw puzzle without the picture on the box. Many times I was lost, unable to find the piece that fit, which taught me to have patience with the process and to take my time and put the pieces together one at a time, instead of being overwhelmed with being unable to see the full picture.

Conducting this research has been one of the most rewarding, enlightening endeavours I have embarked upon. I learned about myself as a researcher, woman and mother through the exploration of the participants' lives, particularly as an Arab Muslim mother living in New Zealand. I also have a deeper understanding of the magnitude of my responsibility as a researcher towards my participants in terms of honouring their stories and representing them honestly.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Information sheet

Project Title: Language, identity and parenting in acculturation: A case study of Saudi Arabian mothers sojourning in New Zealand

Are you a Saudi Arabian mother, between the ages of 25-35? Have you accompanied your husband to support him while he studies in New Zealand? Do you have school-aged children? Do you find it challenging to communicate with your child's school? Have you found it challenging to parent and educate your children since moving to New Zealand? If this sounds like you, then I would like to invite you to participate in my study.

Purpose

My name is Isra Yaghi, and I am doing a PhD in Applied Linguistics at the University of Waikato. In fulfilment of this degree, I would like to conduct individual and group interviews with a group of sojourning Saudi mothers.

What is required of you?

1. Individual, semi-structured interviews: There will be three individual interviews spread out over the course of a year.

First interview: You will be asked questions about life, parenting practices and your children's education in Saudi Arabia. What you expected to happen once you moved to New Zealand and what your hopes and fears were.

Second interview: Challenges/issues that arose once you started living in New Zealand, compromises you have had to make, the importance of culture and first language maintenance, your children's performance at school, changes in their behaviour or attitude.

Third interview: Life when you return to Saudi Arabia, your expectations and fears. Future plans for your children, issues they may face.

Each interview will last up to one hour, and will be scheduled at a time and place that are convenient to you. All individual interviews will be audio recorded. You will be asked to give your consent to participate in the interviews and have them audio recorded. You may also have a support person present at these interviews.

2. Focus group: Towards the end of the year, all participants will be asked to take part in a group interview. There will be approximately 3-4 mothers per group to discuss membership to our community of practice, if you have benefitted from your membership and to evaluate the success of our community of practice.

What will happen to the information collected?

The interviews and focus group will be audio recorded, and I may take notes too. After each interview, I will prepare an interview summary of the things we discussed and present it to you to ensure that I have captured the true essence of your story. Audio recordings and notes taken during interviews, focus groups, and community of practice meetings will be analysed by myself for themes and speech will be analysed for language features.

Information about yourself and your family (children) that you share during interviews, focus groups or community meetings, will be used and analysed for my doctoral thesis, and may also be used in future academic publications, as well as for presentations at conferences or other similar platforms. However, your identity as well as your children's, and any other significant characters in your lives, will be concealed. Pseudonyms will be assigned, and any identifying information will be altered to protect their identities. Data collected during the course of this study, July 2016 - December 2018, will be stored on a password-protected computer, or storage device that will only be accessible by me.

What are your rights as a participant?

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation
- Decline to answer any question

- Withdraw from the research up to three weeks, after the first interview. However, information collected up until that point may still be included in the research analysis
- Review your interview summaries and make amendments
- Have your personal information protected and kept confidential as well as your name and circumstances anonymised
- Access a summary of findings from the study when it is concluded
- Contact me or my supervisor if you require more information at any time

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz, postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240.

Appendix 2: Bio Questionnaire

Name of Participant:

1. Are you currently residing in Hamilton to support your husband while he pursues his studies? YES NO

2. How old are you? _____

3. Do you have any children? YES NO

4. What are their ages:

Child 1: _____ Child 2:

_____ Child 3: _____ Child

4: _____ Child 5: _____

5. Have any of your children between the ages of six and eleven attended primary school in Saudi Arabia? How long?

6. How long have you been living in New Zealand?

7. How long do you plan to live in New Zealand?

8. What is your English language proficiency?

9. How many times have you returned to Saudi Arabia since moving to New Zealand?

10. When you do return, how long do you stay in Saudi Arabia?

Appendix 3: Participant consent form

[A completed copy of this form should be retained by both the researcher and the participant]

Name of person participating in a focus group:

I have received a copy of the Information Sheet describing the research activity. Any questions that I have, relating to participating in a focus group sessions, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time during my participation.

During the focus group, I understand that I do not have to answer questions unless I am happy to talk about the topic.

When I sign this consent form, I will retain ownership of my interview, but I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet.

I understand that my identity will remain confidential in the presentation of the research findings.

Please complete the following checklist. Tick [✓] the appropriate box for each point.	YES	NO
I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in a focus group		
I understand that my participation in this focus group is confidential and that no materials, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports on this study.		
I understand that all information collected will be securely stored and will only be accessed by the researcher herself and reviewed by her supervisory team.		

I understand that the focus group session will be audio recorded and that these audio recordings will be available for me to access, if I wish.		
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Participant :

Researcher :

Signature :

Signature :

Date :

Date :

Contact
Details :

Contact
Details :

Appendix 4: Interview schedule

First interview

- Motivating factors for coming to New Zealand
- Life in Saudi Arabia
- Before making the move to New Zealand: expectations, anticipated challenges
- After arriving: initial impressions of children's school

Second interview

- Changes in your child's behaviour, attitude. How have you dealt with those changes?
- Schooling: language, school values, differences in education, positives/negatives, concerns, social aspect (friendships etc)
- Current parenting experiences

Third interview

- How do you envisage life to be when you return to Saudi Arabia?
- Anticipated challenges children will face. How might you overcome those challenges?
- In what ways do you think you have benefitted personally from living in New Zealand?
- In what ways do you think your children have benefitted from living in New Zealand?

Appendix 5: Interview summary sample

On the 25th of April, 2017 Ruba and I met for an hour-long interview. We talked about the changes Ruba has noticed in herself since living in New Zealand. Ruba said that she prefers smaller social gatherings with people she knows well to large gatherings she was accustomed to in Saudi Arabia. However, she realises that refusing invitations will not be an option when they return permanently and she will have to readjust. Ruba's thinking has also changed. Now she wants to work and will be less picky about the type of job she gets. She compared the family support she received in Saudi Arabia to the apparent lack of support women in New Zealand receive. That has made her appreciate her family, and how much easier it would be for her to work, having their support.

When asked about her parenting practices in comparison to her family and friends in Saudi Arabia, Ruba identified that those around her in Saudi Arabia tend to spoil children and reward them for nothing. Whereas, she believes rewards are earned with good behaviour. Ruba uses 'time-out' with her youngest child but questions the effect it has; her youngest son hates his room because that's where he spends his time-out. She also doesn't like for children to be left alone. Although Ruba doesn't believe in punishing children, she sees some benefit to the way children are punished in Saudi Arabia where everyone receives a reward, except the punished child. Ruba thinks that punishing children increases the occurrence of undesirable behaviour and that simply telling a child not to do something, should be sufficient. She also believes that children are sensitive beings, whose feelings are easily hurt and should not be yelled at because they are defenceless. When a mother yells at her child in Ruba's presence, she tells them to stop.

Ruba noticed that while they were on holiday in Saudi Arabia, her youngest child, was less talkative than usual. He doesn't speak Arabic and none of his cousins could understand him when he spoke in English. He would participate silently in play, and only speak to Ruba and his grandfather in English.

Ruba found that the connection between herself and her children wasn't as strong while they were on holiday in Saudi Arabia because there were a lot of other people around, children and commitments. This also made it difficult for Ruba to uphold her expectations of her children to tidy up after they play; she wasn't always around to tell them to tidy up, and her children felt it was unfair they had to do it when the other children didn't have to. Ruba didn't feel like it was her place to make the other children tidy up too because their mothers have a different perspective on the expectations of children. While Ruba feels that her children should tidy up instinctively without being told (she'll settle for them doing it when they are told though), the other mothers believe that children should enjoy their childhood and not have responsibilities. Ruba's brothers grew up helping around the house (and continue to do so as adults) out of love and respect for their mother, not because they were expected to.

Ruba felt like she belonged in Saudi Arabia, because no one looks at her like she "come from sky" like they do in New Zealand. Ruba and her friends feel that since their return from holiday in Saudi Arabia, they get more 'looks' when they wear just a hijab compared to when they wore a niqab as well. They are unsure why this change has occurred.

Ruba worries most about her eldest son and his schooling when they permanently return to Saudi Arabia in about two years. As a secondary school student, it will be especially difficult for him if he can't read and write in Arabic. Although she tries to teach him Arabic, she knows it won't be enough. There are international schools in Saudi Arabia that Ruba has considered as an option, however, they are very expensive. She thinks it will be sufficient for him to attend an international school for one or two years and then return to public school.

Ruba is concerned about her eldest son because he struggles with reading in English. He is especially good at Maths and enjoys solving problems that require a lot of thinking. He doesn't enjoy reading though. Ruba has identified that when the

teacher reads a book before him he memorises the words and “reads” them, making the teacher think that he can read.

Making big decisions often falls on Ruba because she has the ability to see the bigger picture. For this reason, Ruba’s husband often asks for her opinion on matters. With Ruba’s encouragement they made the decision for Ruba’s husband to study for a degree in New Zealand. The benefits were that he would be able to gain better employment in Saudi Arabia and their children would learn another language.

However, when a decision affects the children, she involves the children in the decision making. Ruba disciplines the children most of the time, but if a child behaves poorly in just the father’s presence, he asks Ruba to give them time out. Other times the father talks to the child and explains what they’ve done wrong. Ruba mentioned a specific incident when the father was hosting a male gathering and the eldest interrupted a conversation to say something. The father believes it to be disrespectful and worthy of discipline as it is a recurring issue. Ruba disagrees that it is rude, and believes that the men need to be understanding of the fact that he is a child who is still learning. She is also wary that he will lose his confidence and stop speaking to adults if he keeps getting told off. Ruba and her husband disagree about this in private, but ultimately, since Ruba wasn’t present when the incident occurred, so she left it for the father to handle. There are other times that Ruba and her husband disagree about their parenting. Sometimes they do it her way, and other times his way.

Appendix 6: Ethics book chapter

Language, identity, culture and ethics: A case study of Saudi Arabian mothers in New Zealand

ESRA YAGHI

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the ethical challenges that arose throughout a PhD project exploring the acculturation experiences of sojourning Saudi mothers' in parenting and educating their children in New Zealand, an environment with considerable linguistic and cultural distance. Consideration for research ethics were of pertinence given the informal nature of the topic and context. Thus, following background information on the research topic, the chapter offers insight into the journey of the author's growing consciousness of the practice of ethics in the field through extracts from the reflective research journal maintained throughout the author's research. The chapter is divided into three parts consistent with Farrell's (2007) reflective cycle: the first section reports thoughts and plans preceding the collection of data; the second records the ethical challenges confronted and the decisions made during data collection; and the third are subsequent reflections on some of the ethical dilemmas faced.

Background of the study

The Saudi Arabian government implemented the King Abdullah Scholarship Scheme in 2005 granting Saudis the opportunity to study abroad and obtain university qualifications with the objective of upskilling their youth, reducing the need for the expertise of non-Saudi employees with a secondary objective of providing their citizens with cultural exposure and awareness to promote open-mindedness within Saudi society (Abujami, 2016). As a result, New Zealand was the recipient of large numbers of Saudi students. The Saudi government offered

financial assistance to the dependents of the scholarship student to encourage their sojourn as a family unit.

International students and their families are considered sojourners in that, and unlike immigrants, they fully intend to return to their home country (Berry & Sam, 1997) after completion of a specific purpose and in a period of less than six years (Sussman, 2002). Research on Saudis predominantly focuses on the academic and social experiences of the international student. Their accompanying family members are somewhat under-researched likely because of their ‘dependent’ status, but also because Saudi Arabia does not constitute one of the top three largest international student markets in New Zealand. However, the increasing numbers and visibility of Saudi Arabian women in the public arena, and of Saudi Arabian children at public schools, means that thought needs to be given to their acculturation processes and adaptation strategies.

While I was teaching English to international students in New Zealand, I noticed that my classes included Saudi males, but only rarely were female Saudis enrolled at that particular institute. I wondered why this might be the case, and thought it worth exploring in some depth. Because of my identity as a Jordanian, Muslim woman, I might be able to access to their private lives and interact with them in ways that perhaps individuals from the host community could not. The purpose of the study I subsequently undertook was to illuminate their lives, their linguistic and cultural experiences, and the changes they underwent as sojourners.

The following table presents relevant details about the participants. (All names are pseudonyms).

	Name	Age	Children’s ages	Highest Degree	English Level	Length of stay so far
1	Ayesha	33	10yr-F, 9yr-F, 5yr-M, 3m-M	B.A	Advanced	3 years

2	Ruba	27	9yr-M, 5yr-M	B.A	Advanced	3 years
3	Doha	27	3yr-M, 2yr-F	B.A	Advanced	2 years
4	Jawhara	25	4yr-M 1.5yr-M	High school	Advanced	4 years
5	Najat	32	8yr-M, 6yr-M, 3yr-M	High school	Beginner	3 years
6	Hajar	30	8yr-F, 6yr-F pregnant	High school	Beginner	4 years

Table 1: Participant demographics

Each of the six participants took part in three, one-hour long, semi-structured interviews over the course of a year. In addition, the participants often met together during the year in their homes for social purposes, to some of which I was invited. At the end of the year, I held focus groups to enable them to share their thoughts on parenting issues and values that arose during the interviews and social gatherings.

Prior to collecting data, as part of university regulations, completion of a human ethics application was required to consider potential risks to participation in the study. In order to do this, relevant background literature were consulted and form the basis of understanding expanded upon in the *Reflection for action* section below.

Upon the recommendation of my PhD supervisors, a research journal was maintained from the time of receiving approval from the university ethics committee. Thoughts, challenges and interpretations were recorded as they occurred. Borg (2001) suggests that research journals play an important role in the understanding and development of a researcher and, as Ortlipp (2009: 704) suggests, allow for “critical self-reflection”.

Reflection for action

Although I realised that I had to plan my research according to the regulations set out by the university’s ethics committee, I also knew I would have to improvise

when I was actually collecting my data. The following reflections are based on points I noted in my journal, and are presented here in the present tense to reflect my ‘in the moment’ thinking.

Intimate relationships

Building an intimate and disclosing relationship with participants is to be expected in long, in-depth interviews (Cohen et al., 2007) and when the researcher and participant are both women, this type of trust and inquiry into personal experiences can develop into personal involvement (Oakley, 1981). I imagine that an intimate relationship will develop between the participants and myself over the course of a year. Our discussions of motherhood and regular meetings may blur the line between researcher and friend. I think it is important that I position myself as a researcher, while remaining friendly. From my experience, I appreciate that Saudi women can be warm and inviting with people they like, which creates the possibility of being invited to celebrations, dinners, excursions or playdates. In such situations, I would politely decline and explain that it goes against my understanding of the neutrality and distance expected of a researcher.

Reciprocity

Cohen et al. (2007: 59) affirm, “Researchers should never lose sight of the obligations they owe to those who are helping” and should give something back to them in return for their participation. Similarly, Mauthner (2000: 288) advocates for “a degree of reciprocity between researcher and participants.” Ethical issues may arise if participants have the expectation for reciprocation. It is possible that participants know that my husband has a senior position at a local education institute and use their participation as a means to benefit from that in some way. The course of action will depend on whether their requests breach any institutional policies.

Another challenge I anticipate pertains to the match in characteristics between the participants and myself; I am a woman, a mother, and as a Muslim Jordanian, I

share some cultural values with them. While these similarities would help establish rapport and trust (Cohen et al., 2007), it is possible that given the fact I speak English and I was raised in New Zealand, I will be viewed as a leader. This may invoke them to come to me to resolve issues related to parenting or communicating with their child's school. As I am a researcher trying to learn from them, I do not hold all the answers. I will need to be wary of them developing a dependency on me. Should a situation arise where they request my help or advice, I may provide guidance and interpretation. I will give them support and encouragement to build their confidence and belief in their own ability to resolve their issues, with a view of empowering participants.

Confidentiality

Rallis and Rossman (2009: 275) assert that "if she promises confidentiality to the participants (that is, that she will not reveal who they are or who said what), she must be sure that she can deliver it." Protection of the participants and their children's identities using pseudonyms is a feasible solution, and one I will adopt. However, considering that discussions will revolve around parenting, there is potential for the disclosure of sensitive information pertaining to a child's safety or well-being. In Saudi Arabia, it is not uncommon for children to be physically reprimanded by their parents. In New Zealand, however, there are legal sanctions against such conduct. If a mother reports the use of corporal punishment to me, depending on the severity, I plan to maintain her confidentiality. However, should I witness it first-hand, I have an ethical responsibility to take action. Therefore, I will first need to assess the situation, and then confer with my supervisors about an appropriate way to handle the situation. The course of action will be dependent on the individual case.

In a pilot study, which I conducted a year prior to the current research, I spent several months interviewing three Saudi wives about their everyday lives in New Zealand. No harmful emotional outcomes were reported to me as a result of our conversations. However, one aspect did have slightly negative repercussions for

one participant; participants were presented with an interview summary, in English, to read over for verification. They were encouraged to consult with a friend or spouse if they needed to. One participant shared her narrative summary with her husband, and he took offence at something she had said about his mother. She also related an incident that occurred involving a fellow male student who was unaware of the cultural inappropriateness of physical contact between men and women. Her husband did not know of the incident, until he read the summary. While these may seem rather trivial, they carry important cultural connotations and may have caused more tension than was admitted to me. As Christians (2011: 66) has pointed out, “watertight confidentiality has proved to be impossible”. To avoid anything similar from happening again, I will be sure to keep interview summaries brief, and cover general topics discussed as opposed to specific things said. This should help to ensure that our interviews do in fact remain private.

Ethical issues that are unproblematic

There are a number of points I need to be aware of: it is possible that I will be viewed as more of an outsider, one who is judged for her less conservative dress, lifestyle or views. In comparison to the long, loose, black *abayas*, and face veils worn by the majority of Saudi women, including the participants in my preliminary study, my more liberal jeans and long-sleeved tops with a colourful scarf, may be a dividing factor. I will need to be conscious of the way I dress to minimise the difference. However, I have decided not to change the way I dress. I do not find it necessary to wear a black *abaya* like my participants. I feel it will be a threat to my own identity as a woman, and would be a misrepresentation of myself as a person. I hope that the relationship I build with the participants obviates this surface factor.

Other issues pertaining to power, concern inter-regional stereotypes and prejudices. Tensions exist between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, who are the minority, in Saudi Arabia. This may affect participants’ interactions during focus group discussions, if these comprise a mixture of the two religious sects. If they were to continue their participation in spite of the diversity, it still may have an impact on

the dynamic of the FG, and their relationship to me if I am of a different sect to them. This may prove to be unproblematic in light of the fact that the two groups do not tend to socialise with one another, and I hope to recruit participants who are of the same social circle, and hence belonging to the same religious sect.

Having conducted a pilot study on Saudi women, and sharing many personal social experiences with them have given me familiarity with the Saudi culture and what to expect when interviewing them. Based on that, I do not foresee any language challenges as the participants and I speak Arabic. Admittedly, mine is a different dialect from theirs; however, we could negotiate meaning when, or if, misunderstandings occur. I have translated all the information about the research, and consent forms into Arabic, to ensure transparency about the aim of the study, what participation entails, and what will happen to the information they share. Additionally, interviews will be conducted in Arabic so that participants are fully able to express themselves. Considering that Jordan and Saudi Arabia are both Arab countries, where Islam is the dominant religion, I feel relatively confident that there will be many shared values between the participants and myself.

Gaining access to my desired group of participants will unlikely pose a challenge, as I have a few contacts within the Saudi Arabian community, who may aid in spreading the word about my research.

Having thus prepared my research project, thought through the possible ethical implications, and had my ethical application formally approved, I set out to recruit suitable volunteer participants and then collect useful data.

Reflection in action

I encountered a number of ethical issues throughout the data collection period, some that I had anticipated and others that I had not. This section will cover some of those issues relating to cultural intricacies, reciprocity and researcher-participant relationship.

Contrary to what I initially believed, I experienced difficulty in recruiting participants: due to a change in the scholarship funding, implemented by the newly crowned King, the number of Saudi students had significantly dropped. After a few months of trying various recruitment methods unsuccessfully, a friend asked a Saudi woman she knew, Ayesha, to participate and she became crucial to the recruitment of others. While I initially sought out stay-at-home mothers, this recruitment challenge compelled me to loosen my participation criteria to include any Saudi mother aged between 25 and 35 with children under the age of 12. Thus, of the six participating mothers four were full-time students.

Cultural intricacies

Ayesha generously invited many of the Saudi and non-Saudi women she knew, to her house for dinner, to give me the opportunity to meet and recruit them. This was not the first time I had been to a Saudi gathering and so I was not surprised when we were offered coffee and sweets first, or when dinner was served at 11.30 pm. While different to both the New Zealand and Jordanian cultures, it did not pose any ethical challenges. In the following journal extract, I relate one part of the gathering that illustrates my perspective of an event that carried more significance than I was aware, regarding Sunni and Shiite Muslims:

I look around me and see some women sitting by the food mat covered with a variety of food, chatting in small groups over their plastic plates. Others, having had their fill, are relaxing on the Saudi-style floor seating. I notice a few women mingle between groups. Ayesha, our hostess, suddenly calls for our attention. A new guest has arrived and Ayesha introduces her to us as Bayan. Must be an important guest? I notice Ayesha's demeanour is a little off. Is she nervous laughing? I take in Bayan, our latecomer, and notice that she takes a seat by the door, and that she continues to wear her black abaya and hijab. Odd. It's an all-female gathering, and she's the only one who hasn't taken them off. I listen as she engages in conversation. She's a newlywed and has been in New Zealand for less than a month. Her Arabic

dialect is thick and heavy. She is...rough. And loud. Eager to socialise.
(20/08/16)

As far as I was concerned, this was just another young, Saudi woman. Although I thought it strange that she continued to wear her *hijab* and *abaya*, I did not attach any meaning to it. Ayesha, on the other hand, saw it differently. She later filled me in on the subtleties that an outsider such as myself had missed. Ayesha found Bayan to be disrespectful: she entered her home and demanded that Ayesha announce her arrival. Ayesha felt disrespected further when Bayan did not take off her hijab in our presence and refused to eat or drink from anything offered to her. She brought her own coffee thermos and food, and only ate or drank from them. Ayesha informed me that Bayan was a Shiite and was distrusting of the other, apparently Sunni, women. Ayesha was deeply offended by her behaviour and said that she only invited Bayan as a favour to a friend, knowing she was new to New Zealand. She openly said that Bayan would not be welcome in her home again. Regardless of the accuracy of Ayesha's interpretation of Bayan's behaviour, her interpretation highlights the existence of sensitivities between Shiite and Sunni Muslims. Ayesha must have felt quite certain that I was not a Shiite Muslim to discuss the matter with me freely. Perhaps she is aware that Jordan is a majority Sunni country because I am acutely aware that I did not offer up the information, nor was I asked. I wonder however, would I have been invited to so many of their gatherings had I been a Shiite Muslim?

As an outsider, it is easy to assume that all Saudis are culturally the same. The discussion with Ayesha alerted me that there are aspects of Saudi culture, of which I am unaware. Each interview and interaction with my participants reveals interesting opinions, biases or observations about their country and about people from different areas. I do not have sufficient knowledge to make sense of it all. (03/09/16)

There were occasions where I asked participants to explain patterns or other observations I had made about Saudi society. Their responses were enlightening; however, they were also subjective, so I needed some form of validation. Therefore, I made the decision to recruit a Saudi woman from outside the participant pool to

act as a *cultural informant*. She was of a similar demographic to my participants but had no connection to them. She explained the current political, economic and social situation in Saudi Arabia, which was the connection I needed to explain what the participants said. I wrote about the new knowledge I had acquired in my journal:

I just came back from interviewing my cultural informant. I am fascinated with what I have learnt! She said that Saudis can be divided into two groups: Bedouins and Hadaris. The Bedouins are considered the original dwellers of Saudi, people whose lineage can be traced back to a certain tribe. The Hadaris are immigrants who came to Saudi for trade, or to perform Hajj and settled in the Western cities of Saudi: Mecca, Medina and Jeddah. They typically originate from Egypt, Turkey, The Levant and the –stan countries. The Bedouins feel that they are superior and more Saudi than the Hadaris while the Hadaris believe themselves to be superior as they are more open-minded, modern and have greater cultural exposure than the Bedouins. (30/04/17)

The distinction she made between the Bedouins and the Hadaris increased my consciousness about which group my participants belonged to.

I catch myself trying to figure it out based on the region they are from and listening out for any references to tribes. I've also noticed that whenever there were introductions being made, they always said the woman's first and last name. Lineage seems to be important to them, whatever their motivation. I do not believe it caused prejudice within me because ultimately, I am unaffected either way. I am pleased with my decision to recruit a cultural informant and I believe it was necessary, considering I am not a Saudi. (11/08/17)

Reciprocity

I experienced a few situations in which participants felt entitled to a form of reciprocation for their participation. For example, one woman gave initial agreement to participate, then when I sent her a text message to arrange a time for the first interview, she responded with a request. She wanted me to obtain an offer letter for her husband, using my husband's senior position at a tertiary institution. It felt like I was being asked to do something unethical, because she would not be asking unless her husband did not meet the criteria. This was an easy decision to make, because it happened before any sort of relationship had been forged. I ignored her message and have not pursued her any further.

Other requests led to complications. Maram, a student in Applied Linguistics, contacted me soon after I met her for the first time (but before the first interview) asking for my help “understanding” an assignment. I was in a bit of a bind; on the one hand, I did not want to say ‘no’, cause hard feelings, and risk her communicating resentment to her circle of friends, thereby influencing them into *not* participating. On the other hand, I was afraid to open a door I could not close. I consulted with friends and peers about what to do.

I rationalised that I could agree, but to also set a few personal boundaries beforehand; that I would *not* write any assignments, that I would only help face-to-face and I would not spend more than half an hour reading for her when I was at home. When I met with Maram she said she was having difficulty understanding what the convener expected of them. I clearly told her that while I studied these subjects, it was a long time ago and I did not remember much. During the hour and a half I spent with her, I read the requirements and explained the purpose of the assignment, pointing her in the direction of where she could find the answers to each question, in the supplementary materials provided by the lecturer. I was quite surprised by the quality of the writing she sent me a few days later by email. I read over it and pointed out parts where she had not covered the question fully. She asked for help three more times. Below are some of my journal extracts about Maram that illustrate my grappling with this ethical dilemma.

Maram messaged me asking for help again. Ugh! I have so much work of my own to do that I'm barely coping with. I ignored her message and an hour later she called. I ignored her call, and she followed it up with a message. So unabashedly persistent! What have I gotten myself into? (09/09/16)

I relented today and answered Maram's call. I told her that I'm not sure I'll be of much help, but "I'll have a look tomorrow, I'm busy with the kids today." I feel trapped! I still need her for a couple more interviews and a focus group, if I don't help her she might not help me. I can't wait for this semester to be over. A temporary fix I'm sure. (10/09/16)

Maram has been trying to reach me for the last two days and I haven't been responding. She just sent me a message asking for help saying that she is, "more than happy to pay me". I don't know how to respond. I'm just going to leave it for now. Clearly, she feels my reluctance to help. I'm insulted that

she thinks my reluctance is because of a desire for monetary compensation. (13/03/17)

*I replied to Maram's message today. I said, 'It's not about money. I've genuinely been busy. I can spare an hour to meet with you on Monday'... *Cries* I have so much work of my own to do that I'm not caught up on. When will this end? (18/03/17)*

I spoke to a friend about my problem over coffee one day. She saw how trapped and overwhelmed I felt and offered to help Maram, to relieve the pressure off me. It seemed like an ethically sound solution, one that would absolve me, while maintaining good will and rapport.

During an interview, another participant, Ruba, expressed concern for her son's inability to read. After the interview, I told her that if she was truly concerned, it might be a good idea to meet with his teacher and see if she shared her concerns, then work together to find a solution to help him. When I said this, I took off my researcher's hat and put on my mother's hat. What I said must have stayed with her because less than a week later I received a call from her. She had met with her son's teacher and sounded distressed. She wanted my help. She was dissatisfied with the way the school handled the situation, wanting to wash their hands of it by referring him on, to an organisation that deals with mental health. I felt ill equipped to help her, but I also felt responsible. I wrote in my journal:

I am feeling rather conflicted: ethically speaking, I shouldn't make her problems mine, seeing as I am just a researcher. I do feel somewhat invested in my participants and I care what happens to them. I feel for Ruba having to deal with this situation. I really want to help her. Do I think that I have the answers? Of course not. But, I advised her and positioned myself as being more experienced. I took the path of helper with Maram and that path was long. I don't want to repeat that same mistake. I also don't want to let Ruba down. I don't know what I'm going to do... (04/05/17)

The following day, I was unable to ease my conscience. I found myself on the school website looking at the staff profiles and scrolling through the organisation Ruba's son was referred to, trying to understand what services they provide and how they might help. It occurred to me that the participant may not have understood

because of her limited knowledge of English. But, I too could barely make head or tail of it!

She reached out again by phone. She summarised her meeting with her son's teacher, and I listened empathetically. I applauded her ability to speak so frankly to the teacher, and for being her son's advocate. I informed her that every school has a teacher responsible for special education. I encouraged her when she told me she planned on meeting with the school again to clarify things and that she would take her friend along, a social worker. I felt good about my interactions with her; I wasn't trying to solve her problem. Instead I offered moral support that did not feel heavy or unethical.

Intimate relationships

As time went on, I found my relationships with my participants blossomed:

I wonder if it's normal to grow an attachment to your participants? Every time I speak to one of them, I feel like I genuinely like them. They're all different, to each other, to me, to what I imagined they would be. Husband says I'm too quick to like people. Perhaps he's right. Or, maybe I'm drawn to their light. Maybe I sympathise, or see a part of myself in them. I don't know what it is. (18/11/16)

From the day I met my first participant, Ayesha, she was warm, friendly and inviting. She invited me over, before the introductory dinner, to meet her and her two closest friends: Maram and Jawhara. It was an opportunity for me to inform them of my research and what participating entails. She said she would "take care" of me and was willing to help in any way she could. As well as the dinner she held in my honour, she also started up a *Whatsapp* [online] group for her close friends, Saudi and non-Saudi, and myself to make communication easier. While I never participated in that group, the other members were very active on it, communicating with one another, exclusively in Arabic, and using it as a place to arrange social gatherings. I was included in religious celebrations, invited on excursions and invited to her house for other social gatherings.

Maram and Jawhara also made sure to include me in their group activities; when an invitation was sent out on the *Whatsapp* group, one of them followed it up with an individual message in English asking me to join them. I feel that refusing their invitations would be rude, and so I accepted whenever I could. I receive messages from them, for example, when yet another IVF treatment failed a would-be parent, or when a family member has passed.

On these occasions, I feel that my presence is not in the capacity of a researcher, but rather as a member of their community. They treat me the way they ~~do~~ treat each other. When I'm at a social gathering, I do not behave like a researcher. I do not talk about my research, unless I am asked about it. I too contribute to this relationship with blurred boundaries by keeping regular contact with all my participants; I know when each of them is going to leave for summer holidays to Saudi and when they return. I message them about it. I congratulate or commiserate accordingly to the events in their lives and follow up on things they have said to me during interviews; things they anticipate, or are anxious about regarding their children, or studies. (15/11/17)

I did this intentionally because the data collection period was long, and I felt that it was important to maintain contact with my participants to ensure I did not lose them. However, I also did it out of genuine interest and care. Most of my participants were so open about sharing their lives with me during interviews, it felt right to follow up. On a number of occasions, during an interview, the participants would ask me questions, wanting to know more about me. Where I am from, about my children, about my own experiences. The first time this happened, I wrote in my journal about what I was thinking in the moment and how I resolved it:

She kept asking me questions and I hesitated before politely, briefly, answering her. I coughed nervously, and awkwardly steered the conversation back to her. I didn't know what I was meant to do! I thought it would be rude not to answer but also, the interview is about her." (23/03/17)

I answered their questions less awkwardly as time progressed. If asked, I related genuinely to whatever feeling, experience, or challenge they were facing. When I was asked for advice I said that I honestly had no idea, or that I would be happy to give them my opinion after the interview was over. I believe they felt at ease with

me. On a number of occasions they confided in me about very personal family issues that were unrelated to their roles as mothers or sojourners. In the extract below is an example of a time a participant confided in me:

Doha told me she feels a real connection to me. I think she really appreciates the opportunity to talk to someone about her experiences. Today she said she wanted to share something she hadn't shared with her friends in NZ. I had to think fast. I could see that the interview was taking a turn and quickly said, "Let me turn off the audio recorder." Should I have made that decision for her? She grew very emotional as she spoke. I sympathised, asked questions, comforted and offered hugs. Hugging is so unlike me! But, she trusted me...it felt like the right thing to do. Obviously, I won't use what she said in my thesis because it's confidential, and it isn't relevant. (18/11/16)

In these moments of emotional unburdening, I allowed the interview to be diverted and to connect with my participants on a deeper level. Should I have permitted that to happen or should I have steered the conversation back to my interview topics? While collecting data, I had little time to think deeply about questions such as these: it was necessary to maintain the momentum of my research.

Reflection on action

Once the series of interviews and focus groups had been completed, and I reviewed and analysed the information I had collected, I began to reflect on some of the dilemmas I had faced in the field.

Positioning myself as a researcher

Giving thought to one's appearance and self-presentation when conducting interviews is encouraged by O'Connell Davidson and Layder (1994) to build rapport and trust. Conscious of how my participants dress, I initially feared I would be judged for dressing less conservatively than them. I was cautious about how I presented myself at interviews. I wanted to be seen as professional and respectful, without "expunging" (Davidson & Layder, 1994: 122-3) my own personality.

My fears aside, I also wanted to present myself with authenticity, something I expected of them during interviews. The majority of the interviews took place at their homes where they were dressed casually in leggings/skirt and t-shirt, in contrast to their public appearance. I opted for long skirts, or long shirts over jeans (things that I already owned) and continued to wear my hijab in their homes. While Saudi women cover up in public, they exercise their freedom at their women-only gatherings. They get dolled-up (some more than others): styled hair, heavy makeup and dress in clothing you might see worn by young women out on the town. In these situations, I did not consider my image as a researcher and how I projected myself. I did not feel comfortable getting dolled up like them, and so I did not try to fit in. How this might have been perceived did not have any bearing in my mind.

It was later reported to me by a participant that she and some of the other participants talked about and admired my dress sense, saying it was stylish yet conservative. It would seem then, that my appearance was well within the realms of what was acceptable to them and, therefore, they were able to position me in close alliance to their own values and beliefs, which allowed them to speak freely about their lives.

I gave thought to my perceived power and status at the start of my research, based on a stereotypical assumption that Saudis act with superiority in their dealings with other Arabs, inside of Saudi Arabia. This was not the case at all. My participants were friendly and generous and very down-to-earth. I could tell from their social groups that they were close to women from countries like Jordan, Morocco and Djibouti, to name a few. They were always respectful and hospitable when I was interviewing them in their homes; we would sit side-by-side on a couch, they would pour me Saudi coffee and offer me a selection of sweets. I do not believe that my anticipated lower-status was factored into the way they responded to me or my questions. Many years ago, Oakley (1981) pointed out that when women interview women, their common experience as women reduces social distance, and, based on my own experience, I have found that this is true.

When my participants spoke about their lives I continuously compared and contrasted them to my own life, using myself as a gauge. This was advantageous in helping me to better understand my data; however, it also limited my perspective: being an insider made me somewhat blind to certain aspects I accepted as givens. In acknowledgment of a cultural insider having “a definite advantage of 'shared cultural experience', which facilitates understanding and interpretation of what research participants share” (Shah, 2004: 569), I made the decision to recruit a cultural advisor. But, what was equally useful was talking about my observations and findings with a friend, an American woman, who was interested in my research. Having her as a sounding-board alerted me to cultural elements I had missed, elements she could see as an outsider, with a different set of values and experiences. I had a better understanding of my data because I could see it from different perspectives.

Participant validation

Bishop and Glynn (1999: 113-4) said, “returning the script to the co-participant is a necessary part of the ongoing dialogue...This is to maximise opportunities for reciprocal negotiation and a collaborative construction of meaning by the participants.”

To obtain participant verification, I sent out interview summaries to my participants, in English, to make alterations they wished. They said they were happy with the summaries and gave me permission to proceed. Upon reflection, I question whether they did not contribute to the summaries because they were in English, and may have thought that I expected them to respond in English. A few of the participants chose to be interviewed in English, and so I assumed they had the required level of competency to read and amend the interview summaries. However, the ones who interviewed in Arabic, also received summaries in English. This was not fair to them, but was necessary because, although I speak Arabic fluently, I am not a particularly competent writer in Arabic. It would have been too time consuming and costly to hire a translator, aside from additional ethical

considerations. Rallis and Rossman (2009) emphasise sharing our research findings in accessible ways, and I wonder if I could have handled this better, and briefly met with each participant to orally translate the summary to them? However, in addition to post-interview validation, during subsequent interviews I made specific reference to things the participant had said, “Last time you told me that”, which helped to ensure that my understanding matched their intended meaning.

Rapport

Attitudes towards the relationship between researcher and participants have changed over the years: many years ago, Goode and Hatt (1952: 198) suggested that in situations when participants are curious about the researcher, “the rule remains that he [the researcher] is there to obtain information and to focus on the respondent, not himself. Usually, a few simple phrases will shift the emphasis back to the respondent”. Later, however, opinions changed and such distancing was considered un conducive to rapport building; as Oakley (1981: 49) said, that there is “no intimacy without reciprocity”. Bishop and Glynn (1999: 109) also promote interviewing that offers “the opportunity to develop a reciprocal, dialogic relationship based on mutual trust, openness and engagement. In this relationship, self-disclosure, personal investment and equality are promoted.” In addition, Mitchell and Irvin, (2008: 41) commented that while there is danger to moving beyond being professional, putting it “in practice is not always easy”.

Upholding boundaries appears even more challenging when women are interviewing women because of their shared gendered experiences and their innateness to listen and nurture. Oakley (2016: 197) commented that she “did not have to labour at establishing rapport, since in the main women were enthusiastic about taking part in the research and did not apparently find it difficult to talk extensively to me.” Similar to Oakley, I found it easy to build rapport with my participants, partially because I am a woman. It is inconceivable that a man could

have achieved the same level of trust and intimacy evident in the in-action section above.

Our shared Islamic upbringing and Arab culture also influenced the closeness of our relationship; when participants made genuine efforts to be inclusive of me, refusing them would have been rude and offensive. In fact, accepting an invitation in Islam is seen as the right of one Muslim upon another (Sahih Al-Bukhari, 1164). Accepting invitations may not be appropriate in all contexts; however, it was beneficial to my research.

Reciprocity

Kariippanon and Senior (2017: 6) said that, “Once accepted into the community...the researcher is expected to fulfil certain responsibilities...share their resources”. Reciprocity in a research setting can be quite delicate and can be a challenging area to navigate when in the field. Throughout data collection, I was plagued with guilt because I felt that my participants were giving me so much of themselves and their time, and I was giving nothing back. I often sought reassurance from my supervisors on this matter. I thought that it needed to be an equal exchange.

In spite of my heavy conscience at the imbalance in exchange, I still felt burdened when a few participants requested help. Specifically in Maram’s case, I felt as though I was being forced. Only upon reflection, am I able to see that because I was conscious of my position as researcher, I had overlooked that based on our shared Islamic identity we are ‘Sisters in Islam’. Helping family is not only encouraged, but also rewarded, “When we help our brothers and sisters in Islam, in reality we are helping ourselves...Fulfilling the rights of brotherhood in Islam is a means for Allah to support us and reward us in the Hereafter.” (Elias, 2014). Thus, it was Maram’s right to ask for help, and my obligation to help, so long as it did not contradict the teachings of Islam, “Co-operate in righteousness and piety, but do not co-operate in sin and aggression.” (Quran, 5:2).

Additionally, my participants, particularly Ayesha, Maram and Ruba, had accepted me into their fold, as an Arab woman living in New Zealand. In the community they had created, members helped each other out, whether that help was in the form of socialising opportunities, learning how to get things done in New Zealand, or support after having a baby. They relied on each other a great deal and their learning occurred through one another's experiences. The notion of reciprocity is one that already existed amongst them. However, it was not necessarily focused around returning favours; instead, it was a matter of paying it forward. This explains how the majority of the participants took part in my study without any expectation or request for assistance. I learnt that Maram assisted others within her circle with *their* assignments. In addition, when she saw an opportunity to assist me with recruitment, she acted immediately. Had I set a very clear boundary and refused to help her I would not have been pulling my weight as a member of their community.

Collecting data from participants has been likened to seduction (Siskin, 1994), in which we, as researchers, have a "faked friendship" (Duncombe & Jessop, 2012: 117) with participants, until we get the data we need and then abandon them. However, I have maintained contact with my participants even after completion of data collection. Researchers in Rallis and Rossman's (2009) study also found that their engagement with participants continued after the research ended.

Consequences of the study on the participants

A consequentialist view on ethical behaviour "uses the results of actions to determine their rightness or wrongness" (Rallis & Rossman, 2009: 270). In my case, participants were asked about their lives in Saudi, their current experiences and their anticipations for their future. A few participants commented, during or after an interview that the questions made them reflect upon their experiences and think about things they had not previously considered. Some were grateful for the opportunity to talk about their positive and negative experiences. Another participant also told me that she and a few other participants found themselves discussing their parenting when I was not present. This was an interesting change

because during the first few gatherings I had attended, I observed that the women barely even mentioned their children. Their participation had perhaps planted the seeds of a community of social practice. There are no indications that participating in my study had any negative effects on them.

My Ethical journey

At the start of my research, my understanding of ethics was related to the potentially negative effects participating in research would have on the participants. To me, privacy, confidentiality and do-no-harm encompassed the realm of ethics, and it seemed fairly simple to apply these principles. Now, I know that ethics requires constant consideration and reflection and that it is complex. In the reflection for action section of this chapter, I wrote, “I would politely decline and explain that it goes against my understanding of the neutrality and distance expected of a researcher”, I cannot help but think how naïve I was to think that things would be so simple.

An element that was missing from my understanding of ethics was my role, and the impact research has on me. I was put in situations where I needed to make decisions on the spot and could not always think through the ethical ramifications of my actions. Later, I would reflect on how I handled the situation. There was a lot of self-blame. I stressed and felt ashamed. It was mentally and emotionally taxing to realise that I was the cause of all my ethical issues.

It is only now, as I near the end of my PhD journey, that I realise that microethical issues are inescapable and that no amount of planning will prevent them from arising. While I have questioned my decisions and solutions, I acknowledge that some positive aspects occurred because of them. The outcomes may have differed had I handled things differently, but they would not necessarily have turned out better. Rallis and Rossman (2009: 274) have said that, “ethical dilemmas are not solvable, but are reasoned out through moral principles. You must be able to explain your reasoning, although it may not agree with the prevailing

dominant principle.” Keeping a journal and talking about the issues I faced with others were instrumental in helping me to reflect on and reason through my actions.

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