

A CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE ETHNIC IDENTITY OF SOJOURNERS:  
SAUDI MOTHERS AND CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the first teachers in my life, my wonderful parents, Mahmoud Qutub and Ebtisam Nahas. Thank you for instilling the love of learning in me from an early age. I also dedicate this dissertation to my great husband, Dr. Nabil Elwani. Thank you for being a wonderful partner in study and in life. Thank you for always being there when I needed your help. Finally, I dedicate this to my incredible children, Tamara Elwani and Mohammed Elwani. Thank for your inspiration, patience, and unconditional love. Thank you my dear family for being in life. I would not have reached this without your love and support.

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study sojourn in the United States from the beginning, and was the real inspiration for the idea of this study.

## ABSTRACT

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### A CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE ETHNIC IDENTITY OF SOJOURNERS: SAUDI MOTHERS AND CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES

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The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to examine the ethnic identities of Saudi sojourner children who accompanied their parents during their study sojourns in the United States. The research questions investigated Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the ethnic identity of their children, and their children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity while living temporarily in the United States. The study explained children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity based on the framework of Social Identity Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Furthermore, the study examined different factors that shape Saudi children's ethnic identities while living in the United States through a lens of the Ecological Systems Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The sample consisted of six mothers and eleven children who lived in the United States between five and eight years. The children ranged in age from six to twelve years. Both the mothers and their children were interviewed, and the children were asked to draw two pictures of themselves, one in Saudi Arabia and one in the United States. All interview sessions were audio-recorded. The analytical process included analytical

memos, transcribing, member checking, and cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis included two cycles of coding.

Three major themes were identified under Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's ethnic identities: privileges, concerns, and factors that shape the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children. Also, three major themes were identified under Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity: sense of belonging, preferences, and friendship. The findings revealed Saudi mothers' worries about jeopardy of their children's ethnic identities during their temporary stay in the United States. Mothers attempted to maintain their children's Saudi ethnicities through practicing Saudi rituals in their daily lives such as cooking Saudi food, speaking Arabic, enforcing religious practices, interacting with the local Saudi community, and maintaining strong connections with their extended families. Furthermore, the majority of Saudi sojourner children formed positive views of the Saudi culture and developed multicultural identities, were attached to both Saudi Arabia and the United States, and have developed multicultural identities.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The United States of America has always attracted immigrants and sojourners from all around the world. While immigrants' objectives are to settle permanently in the USA, sojourners intend to stay temporarily for different purposes such as jobs or pursuing educational degrees. During this temporary residence, the children of sojourners grow up in an environment that is linguistically and socially different from their homeland. Accordingly, children of sojourners have to acculturate to the new environment (Cho & Haslam, 2010; Langager, 2010). The process of acculturation is mandatory for sojourner children; however, it still can jeopardize their original ethnic identities (Langager, 2010). Acculturation might cause confusion to sojourner children upon the return to their country of origin, especially for children who were raised away from their home country at a very young age, or were born in the USA and have never lived in their country of origin.

Due to the diverse nature of the United States' societies and the rapid increase in numbers of different ethnic cultures, several studies have been conducted on ethnic identity and ethnic socialization (Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, & Foust, 2009). Researchers have discussed the importance of parental roles in helping children of minorities in their adjustment and engagement in social relationships in the new environment through ethnic socialization (Costigan, Su, & Hua, 2009; Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, D., & West-Bey, 2009). On the other hand, acculturation

might jeopardize children's original ethnic identity in order to adjust to the new culture (Souto-Manning, 2007).

This qualitative multiple-case study examined the influence of both ethnic socialization and acculturation on Saudi children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity. Moreover, it examined Saudi mothers' attitudes and roles in the ethnical socialization of their children while living in the United States and how these attitudes were reflected on their children's Saudi ethnic identity and adjustment. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with Saudi sojourner mothers who have lived for more than a year in the United States and through interviews with their children. Additionally, more data was gathered through children's drawings of themselves in Saudi Arabia and in the United States.

### **Statement of Problem**

In 2005, an educational scholarship program was initiated by the government of Saudi Arabia under the command of King Abdullah Al-Saud (Bollag, 2006; McCormack, Neelakantan, & Overland, 2007). The scholarship program was initiated to grant thousands of scholarships yearly to Saudi citizens in order to continue their higher education in countries around the world during a ten-year-period. The scholarship covered the students' educational fees, their personal and families' living expenses, and yearly airline tickets to Saudi Arabia, in addition to other compensations.

The United States of America received the highest numbers of Saudi scholars among all other countries. In 2014, there were more than 85,166 Saudi scholars living in the United States; many of these Saudi scholars were accompanied by their families and

children. According to Dr. Mody Alkhalaf - the Assistant Cultural Attaché of Cultural and Social Affairs in Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission in The United States - there were more than 26,162 Saudi children residing the United States accompanying their parents in February 2014 (personal communication, February 14, 2014).

Due to King Abdullah's scholarship and other Saudi scholarship programs, there was a rapid increase in the number of Saudi families in the United States, and there was a need to examine the welfare and adjustment of Saudi children during their temporary stay. This multiple-case study explored Saudi mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the Saudi ethnic identity of their children during their temporary stay in the United States. Also, it explored other factors that influence Saudi sojourner children's ethnic identity. Additionally, it examined Saudi sojourner children's perception of their Saudi ethnic identity. In other words, the researcher examined if young Saudi children were able to identify themselves as Saudis while living in the States, and if they were able to form positive views towards their Saudi ethnicity during their temporary living in the United States.

### **Significance/Need of Study**

After an extensive review of studies on ethnic socialization, it seems that many studies have been conducted on immigrant children, but very few have been conducted on sojourner children. Furthermore, most of the studies that were conducted on immigrants in the United States were done with Latino immigrants or East Asian immigrants since they represent the majority of immigrants in the United States (Wagner



et al., 2008). However, very few studies were conducted on Arabs in the United States, especially Saudis.

With the increase in number of Saudis who were sojourning to the United States for educational purposes, there was a need for studies with this specific ethnic group. Such studies provide valuable information on the situation of Saudi sojourners in the United States. This would also open further opportunities for future follow-up studies for children of Saudi scholars and their social adjustment upon their return to Saudi Arabia. Data collected in this research would be beneficial for policy makers both here in the United States in terms of how to deal with sojourners in schools and the society back in Saudi Arabia in terms of helping children's adjustment upon their return to schools and society.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is a Saudi sojourner and a mother of an eight-year-old daughter and an infant son who lives in the United States for educational purposes. Throughout the six years spent in the United States, the researcher noticed some confusion in Saudi sojourner children's ethnic identity. She then developed a strong passion towards this issue that propelled her to explore and seek solutions to resolve the problem of identity loss of Saudi sojourner children. However, having similar circumstances to her participants, the researcher had to be cautious not to mix her own experiences and thoughts with the findings and conclusions of this study.

One of the precautions that the researcher considered to prevent bias in this study was to refrain from influencing the participants' opinions during the interviews. Seidman

(2006) discussed that specifically in interviews, researchers should try to limit their own interactions and try not share their personal experiences, but listen carefully to what the participants have to say instead (p. 89). In fact, precautions of bias in the study should even be taken before the interviews take place. Carlson (2010) has emphasized the importance of researcher's reflexivity before and during the study in order to prevent biases in the study. Thus, during the preparation process, the researcher tried to be fully aware of her preconceptions and opinions on this topic and choose the wording of the interview questions very carefully. Finally, the researcher tried to be cautious during the analysis stage and avoided including her personal assumptions and tried to build the findings based on the material gathered from the participants only. In conclusion, the researcher had to maintain the researcher perspective and sought answers to the research from the participants.

### **Delimitations**

Due to the specific criteria of the population examined in this study, a few delimitations were chosen and applied in this study. One of the delimitations was to collect data only from Saudi mothers of children in their middle childhood age who have been living in the United States for at least one year. Also, these Saudi mothers had to be living in the researcher's local area where the study took place, since the data were collected through face-to-face interviews and children's drawings.

Another delimitation was to locate participants who were willing to provide time for this study, since most Saudi sojourner mothers living in the United States were

students with very busy schedules. Also, the researcher had to be flexible and worked around the busy schedules of the mothers.

### **Research Questions**

This qualitative multiple-case study examined Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnicity and how these attitudes are reflected upon their parental practices with their children. Also, it explored other factors that influence Saudi sojourner children's ethnic identity. Also, it examined Saudi sojourner children's perception of their Saudi ethnic identity. Two main questions guided this study.

RQ1. What are Saudi mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnic identity during their temporary stay in the United States?

RQ2. What are Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity during their temporary stay in the United States?

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Two theories were used to guide this study: *Ecological Systems Theory* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). By utilizing the Ecological Systems Theory the researcher described the effect of Saudi sojourner mothers' roles as a major player of the children's *microsystem*, in maintaining the Saudi ethnic identity of their children while staying temporarily in the United States. In addition to identifying other factors that shape Saudi children's ethnic identity, Social Identity Theory allowed the researcher to explain the type of image Saudi sojourner children had towards their Saudi identity during their temporary stay in the US.

## **Ecological Systems Theory**

Ecological Systems Theory was introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979 where he discussed the effects of socialization on the developing individuals through the interactions they form with their surroundings. Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified five levels of interrelationships between the child and the different socialization agencies depending on how close these interactions are to the child. Since this study examined different effects on Saudi sojourner children's ethnic identity, the main concentrations were on the effect of the *microsystems* (systems that include the child's direct interactions such as family and friend). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the microsystem is considered one of the most influential factors that shape children's characteristics since they have the most direct interactions with them. However, the researcher also examined effects of other settings that did not have a direct interaction with the Saudi sojourner children during their temporary living in the United States but still had an influence on them, such as children's *mesosystem* (the relations between parents and children's school), and the children's *exosystem* (the outer environment of that child including the relationship with the Saudi community in the States, American community, and relations with extended family back home). The last layer that the researcher discussed was changes in both the American and Saudi *macrosystem* through suggesting new policies that could help sojourner children have better adjustment during their temporary stay in the States and have better adjustment upon their return to Saudi Arabia.

## **Social Identity Theory**

Tajfel and Turner introduced the Social Identity Theory in 1986. They argued that individuals strive to maintain positive social identities and that when they are not satisfied with their social identities they strive either to leave their social identity to more favorable ones or improve the image of their original one. In order to form positive social identity, individuals initially need to identify their own social identity. It was important to examine if Saudi children living in the United States were exposed to Saudi cultural practices and traditions. This study looked into Saudi sojourner children's views on their Saudi ethnicity.

## **Definition of Terms**

In this study, specific terms were commonly used. The following is a list of definitions to each of these terms.

*Sojourners:* Individuals that reside temporarily in another country for the purpose of working or studying and then return to their country of origin after their temporary stay is over (Cho & Haslam, 2010; Haneda & Monobe, 2009).

*Immigrants:* Individuals who move to live permanently in another country (Cho & Haslam, 2010).

*Acculturation:* The psychological and cultural change in the beliefs and values of an individual as a way of an adaptation to the new culture (Farver, Yiyuan, Bhadha, Narang, & Lieber, 2007; Wagner et al., 2008).

*Ethnic socialization:* Family and parents' practices to teach their children about their culture, ethnicity, race, and history (Brown, Tanner-Smith, Lesane-Brown, & Ezell, 2007; Hughes, Hagelskamp et al., 2009)

*Ethnic identity:* Part of one's social identity that consists of individuals' sense of belonging or membership to an ethnic group and their attitudes and feelings towards this membership (Phinney, 1996).

*Multicultural identity:* An identity that is formed from blended cultural identity aspects due to interacting with different cultures (Moore & Barker, 2012).

### **Summary**

Due to the King Abdullah's educational scholarship program and other scholarship programs that allowed many Saudis to continue higher education in countries around the world, thousands of Saudis and their families left Saudi Arabia and became sojourners. With the sudden increase in Saudi students in the United States of America, there was a need to examine the effect of acculturation of their children during the temporary stay abroad. Mothers' attitudes, practices, and children's adjustment were all explored through open-ended questions in face-to-face interviews with Saudi mothers and children. Also, comparisons of children's attitudes towards American and Saudi cultures were explored through their drawings. In conclusion, this multiple-case study provided an overall exploration of the embracing of Saudi ethnicity in young Saudi sojourners in the United States through the collection of different data.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to examine Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the Saudi ethnicity of their children while living temporarily in the United States and how their attitudes are reflected upon their children's perceptions towards their Saudi ethnicity, in addition to other factors that might influence Saudi sojourner children's attitudes towards their Saudi ethnic identity.

Sojourner children often face difficulties when moving to another country due to geographical change and change of culture. While sojourners have to acculturate to a new culture, they still need to maintain their ethnic identity, especially since they eventually return to their country of origin (Langager, 2010; Song, 2010). Several studies have emphasized the role of parents in maintaining the ethnicity of their children while living in another country (Brown et al., 2007; Cho & Haslam, 2010).

This chapter reviews related literature pertaining to sojourner parents' ethnic socialization and amplifies what has been researched prior to this study as well as what was studied on this topic. Specific topics include (a) theoretical framework of the study, (b) ethnic identity, (c) acculturation (d) ethnic socializing that includes parental role and heritage language, and finally, (e) a summary of the literature.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study examined different factors that shape Saudi children's ethnic identity while living in the United States through a lens of the Ecological Systems Theory. It also used the framework of Social Identity Theory to explain the process through which young Saudi children perceive their ethnic identity while living in the United States.

### **Ecological Systems Theory**

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), author of the Ecological Systems Theory, defined human development as:

The process through which the growing person acquires a more extended differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content (p. 27).

He wrote that development should cause change in the characteristics of the growing person's perceptions of the environment that he resides in, in part and in whole, in addition to becoming an active participant in that environment. He claimed that the development of a developing human is highly influenced by his personal characteristics and his interactions with the environment.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) described humans' environment as a nested structure of immediate and indirect settings, which he called "systems", and he arranged these systems within layers. Each of these systems is contained within the next. He initially identified four different systems that influence the child's ecological development. These



layers are: *microsystem*, *mesosystem*, *exosystem*, and *macrosystem*. Later on, Bronfenbrenner (1988) added an important factor that influences human beings' development, which is the dimension of time and he called it *chronosystem* (see Figure 1).

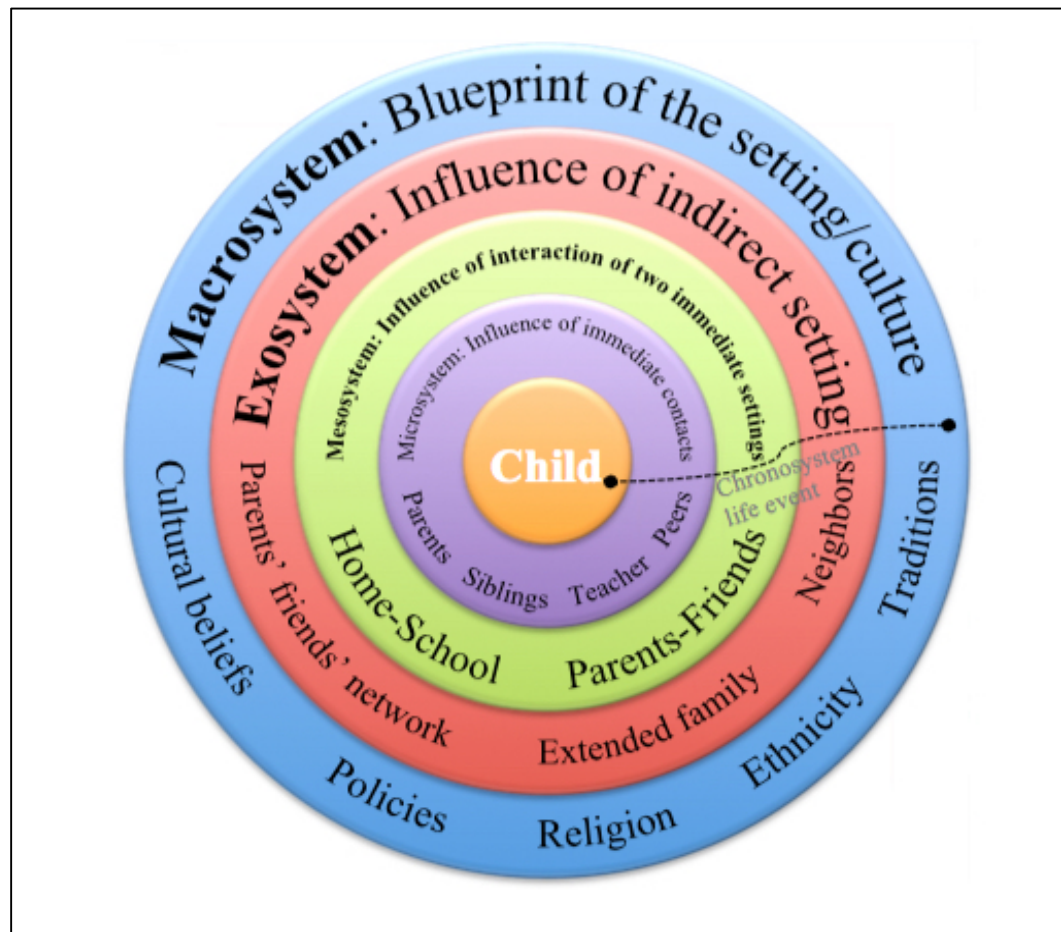


Figure 1. *Different systems in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory*

**The microsystem.** Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified the microsystem as the first layer in the ecological system and defined it as “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with

particular physical and material characteristics” (p. 22). In other words, the microsystem represents the effects of interpersonal relations that the developing person encounters through immediate contact. Home is one major microsystem that influences the development of a child and includes parents and siblings. It is the first environment that the child is in contact with, and the only one for a while. Later on the child enters school, a new setting that also causes a major change in his or her development. He or she spends a great amount of time in the classroom and playground, interacts with teachers, and forms relations with peers who also represent a major player that influences the child’s development.

**The mesosystem.** According to Bronfenbrenner the mesosystem is the second layer in the ecological system, and “comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates” (1979, p. 25). For example, “the relations among home, school, neighbors, and peer group” are all parts of the mesosystem (1979, p. 25). In other words the mesosystem consists of two or more microsystems. This system is only established when the child enters a new environment (microsystem) such as school or when the adult gets a new job. Bronfenbrenner explains that when a developing person is involved in more than one setting, he/she tends to transfer some of his experiences from one setting to another; this process is called “ecological transition” (1979, p. 210). Bronfenbrenner hypothesized that greater learning occurs when the child is part of two culturally diverse environments in terms of ethnicity, religion, social class, age group, etc. However, he assumes that such positive developmental effect could only occur if the developing person is involved widely in

both cultures. He also assumes the importance of supportive links between the two settings (i.e. connections between the home and the school).

**The exosystem.** According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) the exosystem is the third layer in the ecological system and is defined as “one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by what happens in the setting containing the developing person” (p. 25). In other words, the exosystem is comprised of environments that indirectly influence the social development of the child, such as the parents’ working place, older siblings’ school, or parents’ network of friends.

**The macrosystem.** According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the macrosystem is the fourth layer in the ecological system and can be defined as “consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief system or ideology underlying such consistencies” (p. 26). The macrosystem can be considered as the “lifestyle” or “blueprint” of a certain culture or a sub-culture, since it describes the different characteristics of a certain culture including the socioeconomics, ethnicity, religious beliefs, traditions, and even the policies in a certain place. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains that different cultures, or subcultures, have different macrosystems; for example, school systems, streets designs, traditions, etc. are very different between France and the United States. Accordingly, this can have different influence on the development of a person growing in one place versus the other. Furthermore,

Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that ecological transition, which means moving from one ecological space to another, can produce a developmental change.

**The chronosystem model.** Chronosystem was added later in 1988, when Bronfenbrenner noticed that his design was missing one important dimension, which is time. Chronosystem is sometimes confused to be the fifth layer in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System, while in fact it is a methodological construct (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Bronfenbrenner (1988) defined the chronosystem model as a design that "permits one to identify the impact of prior life events and experiences, singly or sequentially, on subsequent development" (p.41). Bronfenbrenner claimed that some developmental changes are triggered by certain life events that the developing person experiences throughout his lifetime. According to Bronfenbrenner, these life events could be "in the external environment (e.g., the birth of a sibling) or within the organism (e.g. the first menstruation)" (p. 41). Also, he mentions that these life events could be "normative experiences" such as entering school or getting married, or "non-normative" such as death, divorce, or moving to a new place or city (Bronfenbrenner, 1988, p.41). Using the chronosystem model the researcher can either study the developmental effect in the developing person before and after a specific life experience or study the cumulative effect of a transition throughout the life course of the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

**Utilizing the Ecological Systems Theory.** The Ecological Systems Theory indicates that a child's own beliefs, personality, motivations, and behaviors are highly affected by what the child is taught or told by others with whom the child has direct

interaction such as parents, siblings, teachers, etc., in addition to other indirect interactions that happen between settings that surround the child. Participants in this study were Saudi children who moved with their families to live temporarily in the United States. As Bronfenbrenner explained under the chronosystem model, this could be a great “life event” that influences the development of these children. Some studies that examined the factors that shape ethnic identity have also applied Bronfenbrenners’ Ecological Systems Theory. Dotterer, McHale, and Crouter (2009) conducted a study on African Americans’ ethnic identity in schools, where they examined the effect of discrimination within the school microsystem through examining the role of teachers in comparison to the role of the families in supporting the ethnic identity of African American students. Also, Umaña-Taylor and Yazedjian (2006) used Bronfenbrenner’s framework to examine the influence of different ecological systems in shaping the ethnic identity of first and second generational Puerto Rican and Mexican youth. Accordingly, the effect of different layers of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system on Saudi sojourner children’s ethnic socialization was examined.

### **Social Identity Theory**

Another lens that was used to examine Saudi children’s ethnic identity while living in the United States is Social Identity Theory. Tajfel and Turner (1986) define social identity as a term that consists of “self aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging” (p.16). They identified social categorization as a tool that organizes and classifies different social

categories within the society. It provides a system for self-reference, which allows the individuals to identify their place within the society.

The Social Identity Theory suggests three main assumptions. First, individuals strive to achieve positive self-concept and enhance their self-esteem through achieving and maintaining positive social identity. Second, positive social identity may be achieved through favorable comparisons made by the individual of his own in-group with other out-groups. Tajfel and Turner (1986) define a group as “a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it” (p. 15). Third, when individuals fail to form a positive image of their original group and become unsatisfied with their own social identity, they would do one of three things. They may disassociate themselves from their current group to another group that seems to have a more positive image in perspective, which is known as *individual mobility*. Also, they may practice *social creativity* by trying to improve the image of their own group through comparing their in-group to the out-group in a different dimension, change the perceived negative attribute that is assigned to the group into positive (e.g. “black is beautiful”), or compare the in-group to another less favorable out-group. Or they may be led to *social competition* through direct competition with the out-group in order to pursue positive group distinctiveness. According to Tajfel and Turner (1986) this kind of social competition could sometimes lead to conflicts between different groups, especially when these comparisons are related to social structure.

Similar studies that examined ethnic/racial identity have also applied the framework of Social Identity Theory. Hughes, Witherspoon et al. (2009) examined the effect of cultural socialization and preparation for bias with the ethnic identity and school performance of African American and White students in their early adolescence. Also, Hoersting and Jenkins (2011) used the framework of Social Identity Theory to examine the cultural identity of individuals who have lived for at least two years away from their home countries before the age of 18. Accordingly, Saudi sojourner children's perception of their ethnic identity was examined, using the framework of Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory (1986).

### **Review of Literature**

This study examined the cultural identity of Saudi sojourner children while accompanying their parents in their temporary stay in United States for their studies. The following is an exploration to the literature on the main elements of the children's sojourning experience that includes ethnic identity, acculturation and re-acculturation, and ethnic socialization including parental role and maintaining the heritage language.

#### **Ethnic Identity**

Ethnic identity, also known as cultural or racial identity, has been connected to social identity. Phinney (1996) defined ethnic identity as "a fundamental aspect of the self that includes the sense of membership in an ethnic group and the attitudes and feelings associated with that membership" (p. 992). However, Phinney discussed that an individual's ethnic identity could still be strong even when there is very little cultural involvement, as long as he or she has a strong sense of belonging or *ethnic loyalty*.

Tajfel and Turner (1986), who proposed Social Identity Theory, have also acknowledged the importance of developing positive social identity for individuals through showing group pride as part of gaining self-concept and self-esteem. It is also thought that developing a strong positive ethnic identity is crucial in having a positive self-perception, especially in minority youth (Hughes, Witherspoon *et al.*, 2009). Hughes, Witherspoon *et al.* (2009) discussed that young children are aware of their own ethnicity and are able to categorize themselves into social groups. Also, Brooker (2006) asserted that ethnic identity is constructed at a very young age even before children begin preschool, due to their interaction with their parents at home. While most children may not be able to form a clearly defined cultural identity yet, Hoersting and Jenkins (2011) discussed that childhood still remains a crucial stage in which both identity and cultural membership are developed. Accordingly, Hughes, Witherspoon *et al.* (2009) have reflected that verbal messages and parental practices that children get through ethnic socialization at their homes are reflected on their own social identity and that is how they place themselves and their ethnic group in the society.

Moreover, positive self-image and positive ethnic identity of young children have been associated with school competence. Dotterer *et al.* (2009) examined the ethnical identity of 148 African American 12<sup>th</sup> graders. They found that while school discrimination was associated with negative ethnic identity, self-image, and self-esteem, ethnical socialization and positive ethnic identity were associated with school adaptation and higher levels of self-esteem. Moreover, a quantitative study that was conducted by Farver *et al.* (2007) on Indian adolescents in the United States showed that achievement



of ethnic identity was positively correlated with higher self-esteem, contributed to positive adolescent self-image, and was negatively correlated with acculturative stress and anxiety rating.

In fact, gaining a positive social identity is important to prevent children of all racial ethnicities from the negative effects of discrimination, especially the ones that are seen as the minorities in a country. Immigrant and sojourner children are often considered minority groups in the new culture and they are prone to identity confusion. According to Chaban, Williams, Holland, Boyce, and Warner (2011), sojourners specifically are one group that experience several identity shifts during their sojourning experience while both staying in the hosting country and even after returning to their home country.

As sojourner children move to a new geographical place, it becomes harder for them to establish a cultural identity (Sussman, 2000) and they might be at risk of what is known as *cultural homelessness*, a sense of not belonging to any culture (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). In an online survey that was conducted by Hoersting and Jenkins (2011), the cultural identity of 475 participants who have lived for at least two years away from their home countries before the age of 18 was examined. It was found that returnees who suffered from cultural homelessness were more prone to having lower self-esteem. Also, individuals who suffer from cultural homelessness might speak more than one language and appreciate diversity and differences; however, they can still suffer from feeling rootless or not being accepted by any cultural groups, which can negatively influence their self-esteem. However, according to Hoersting and Jenkins (2011) when returnees build a community of friends or family members who have been through similar cross-

cultural experiences, the negative effect of cultural homelessness was moderate and sense of belonging was enhanced.

It should be clarified that living away from the home country does not always have a negative effect on one's identity or cause a confused cultural identity. Based on Hoersting and Jenkins's study (2011), not all returnees had cultural homelessness; in fact, some were still able to gain a sense of belonging to either their home or hosting culture or could even gain a cross-cultural identity, which is a combination of aspects from both cultures. Returnees usually end up with a cultural identity that is actually different from both cultures to which they were exposed. In their study, returnees who were able to form a sense of belonging to any culture or formed a cross-cultural identity had lower cultural homelessness and higher self-esteem. Similarly, Moore and Barker (2012) confirmed in their study on the cultural identity of returnees, or as they called them in their study third culture individuals, that sojourners do not always have a confused cultural identity. They claimed that returnees can form what is called "*multicultural identity*", a similar concept to "cross-cultural identity" that was introduced by Hoersting and Jenkins earlier. Moore and Barker defined *multicultural identity* as an identity that is formed from blended cultural identity aspects, which the sojourners have adopted through their different experiences in different cultures. Through their biographical phenomenological study, they were able to provide real lived experiences of 19 adults between the ages 18 and 44 years old who spent at least three years during their middle childhood or early adolescence outside of their home countries. Moore and Barker (2012) discussed that primary identity is formed during middle childhood (6 to 12 years old), and then the

comprehension of social norms peak during early adolescence years (12 to 18 years old). Participants were from six different nationalities and their parents lived abroad for different reasons (i.e. missionary, business, or as diplomats). The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the participants focusing on different areas including the participants' cultural identity, multiculturalism, the sense of belonging, intercultural communication competence, and positive and negative experiences gained from their sojourning journeys. The major finding was the occurrence of *multiculturalism*, which is a returnee's ability to carry two or more cultural identities (Moore & Barker, 2012). The researchers differentiated between the sense of belonging and multicultural identity; while many returnees felt that they do not belong to one culture, they still felt that they could form a *multicultural identity*. Also, they discussed that the returnees had both positive and negative benefits of their sojourning experiences, but their experiences were more beneficial than detrimental and their positive experiences were longer lasting than momentary. Some of the positive experiences returnees in Moore and Barker's study gained were becoming open minded and flexible, being able to adjust to a new culture, and speaking more than one language. Negative experiences that returnees discussed were lacking a sense of belonging, living away from extended family, and having to lose friendships and familiar lifestyles when it was time to leave.

### **Acculturation and Re-acculturation**

When individuals move to a new country and come in contact with a new way of living, they begin an acculturation process as they adapt to their new culture.

Acculturation could be defined as the psychological and cultural changes that occur

within the individual when he/she moves to a new culture (Wagner et al., 2008). Then, when it is time for repatriation, or the return back home, sojourners return to their home countries after spending a decent amount of time in a country with a different culture. They then need to *re-acculturate* to their home country as well, which can be just as hard as first moving to the foreign country (Martin, 1984).

Sussman (2000) explained in her Cultural Identity Model that sojourners go through three stages during their sojourn: identity salience, sociocultural adaptation, and repatriation. She explained that when sojourners first move to a new culture they begin to identify their own culture due to the differences they find between their own culture and the hosting culture. Then, when sojourners realize that some acceptable behaviors in their culture are not appropriate in the hosting culture, they modify their behaviors as a way of adaptation, and consequently their cultural identity changes as well. Finally, the sojourn comes to an end and the sojourners go back to their original cultural to find that their current behaviors might not be acceptable in their home culture anymore, and they have to modify their cultural identity or behaviors once again.

Chaban et al. (2011) claimed that sojourners go through a wide range of experiences during the process of adjustment before and after sojourning, and this experience has its ups and downs like a “roller coaster.” One of the negative experiences mentioned was having a cultural shock. According to Sussman (2000), some sojourners face cultural shock during their initial acculturation and then face a reverse cultural shock during their re-acculturation to their home cultures. Accordingly, acculturation is an imperative process that could greatly affect immigrant/sojourner youths’ adaptation to the

new environment. Problems in adaptation to culture could cause stresses for young immigrants/sojourners. Lee and Koeske (2010) examined the relation between acculturative and developmental conflicts effects on depression in 138 Korean adolescents who migrated to the United States. They found that acculturative conflicts had a greater effect on depression in these adolescents. In other words, adolescents who faced cultural conflicts due to cultural differences were more prone to depression. On the other hand, they found that higher levels of cultural identities moderated the effects of cultural conflicts.

Individuals cope with acculturation differently as some connect more with the new culture, while others affiliate more with their original culture, and some are able to cope with both. Generally, children adjust more quickly to the new culture than adults (Cort, 2010). Sussman (2000) identified four different categories to possible sojourners' identities during the sojourning experience: *additive* (individuals who accept both new values and their own identities and have moderate connection with their home culture), *subtractive* (individuals who adapt easily to the new culture due to their loose connection with their home culture and are unhappy to go back), *affirmative* (individuals who face harder adaptation to the new culture due to their high connection with home culture and inflexibility to change), and *global* (individuals who have cultural flexibility and open to adapt to any culture).

Also, there are different factors that affect the acculturation process. Chaban et al. (2011) compared the experiences of New Zealand sojourners to different countries in Europe. They gathered data through conducting 42 in-depth interviews with returning

sojourners who spent at least a year in another country and then came back to New Zealand. They found that both acculturation and re-acculturation can be influenced by the motives of the sojourners; the purpose of the sojourning trip; and other demographics that are related to the country that they moved to, such as speaking the same language or a different one, how close the culture is to their original home country, and the social network available in that country.

One more thing that can be affected by the acculturation process is parenting style. In a study by Farver et al. (2007) where they compared parenting styles of 180 European American parents of adolescents with 180 Indian parents who had been living between 11 and 43 years in the United States, they found that the parenting style of Indian parents became more similar to Americans' parenting style and that they became more lenient with their children. Both American and Indian parents completed the *Childrearing Beliefs Questionnaire* (Lieber, Fung, & Wing-Leung, 1997) and *Issues Checklist to measure Family Conflicts* (Prinz, Foster, Kent, & O'Leary, 1979). Indian parents completed the *Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican American II* (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995) and adolescents completed *Self-Description Questionnaire* (Marsh, Parker, & Smith, 1983) and *State-Trait Anxiety Inventory* (Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970). All participants completed *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* (Phinney, 1992). The results showed that Indian parents who had higher scores in the acculturation scale displayed more modern values, became less authoritarian, less controlling, and more open to discussions than traditional Indian rearing styles. Farver et al. (2007) also found positive association between both Indian and American adolescents'

ethnic identity achievement and their self-esteem and a decrease in American adolescents' anxiety levels. These results confirmed that achieving ethnic identity in adolescents is associated with positive self-image and decrease in adjustment problems. Also, Farver et al. (2007) concluded that there was an overall clear change in some Indian immigrants' parenting styles from being authoritarian to being more authoritative after moving to the United States due to facing challenging situations while living in the United States that required them to change their ways of thinking. Farver et al. (2007) claimed that the change in Indian parents' child rearing style had a positive effect on their children's psychological adjustment.

Although the process of acculturation is mandatory for sojourners' adjustment and can have many positive effects on their wellbeing and adaptation in the new culture, it might also threaten sojourner children's ethnic identity and result in loss of their home language (Souto-Manning, 2007). Thus, a balance of acculturation and ethnic socialization is needed to ensure both immigrant/sojourner children's adjustment and enrichment to their social identities. The following section will provide further information on the concept of ethnic socialization.

### **Ethnic Socialization**

When young immigrants move to a new country they are exposed to a new culture that is different from the one they came from. While they need acculturation to adjust to the new culture, they also need to be ethnically socialized by their parents in order to maintain their culture, which is part of who they are. Family and parents' practices to teach their children about their culture, ethnicity, and race are called "ethnic

socialization” (Brown et al., 2007; Hughes, Hagelskamp et al., 2009). Several studies have discussed the importance of ethnic socialization not only for immigrant and sojourner children, but also to all other children in order to connect them with their culture and origins and to make them understand the concept of diversity and respect to other cultures (Hughes, Hagelskamp et al., 2009). The following section will discuss parental role in ethnic socialization and maintaining sojourner children’s heritage language as a part of ethnic socialization.

**Parental role.** When it comes to ethnicity socialization, parental role becomes apparent, not only because parents usually are the main influencers in terms of socialization, but also because in many cases they are the only resource available for their children, especially in the case of immigrant/sojourner children. Hughes, Hagelskamp et al. (2009) talked about the importance of parental roles in ethnic socialization and the effect on children’s adjustment. They stated, “ethnic-racial socialization messages that youth receive from their parents are thought to play a critical role in enabling ethnic minority youth to successfully navigate social relationships across the various settings they enter”. It is the duty of the parents to choose which cultural traits they should confer to their children. Also, the type of messages that parents give to their children about their ethnicity can influence the way children perceive their ethnicity.

Hughes, Witherspoon et al., (2009) conducted a study on the influence of parental ethnic socialization messages on 805 African American and White adolescents’ ethnic identity and self-esteem and the effect of that on their behavioral outcomes and academic performance. This was part of a larger longitudinal study that consisted of collecting four



waves of data collected over two academic years. Students were asked to fill different scales to measure their received ethnic socialization, self-esteem, ethnic affirmation, antisocial behaviors scale, and academic performance. The results showed that African American adolescents generally received more ethnic socialization from their parents than White adolescents. Hughes, Witherspoon et al., (2009) explained that this might be due to the nature of African Americans having pride of their ethnic heritage and knowledge of their history. Ethnic socialization was also found to positively influence adolescents' ethnic identity affirmation. The results also showed that ethnic socialization influenced adolescents' academic performance more than their behavioral outcomes. Moreover, the researchers found that African American adolescents received more messages from their parents to prepare them for bias because they feel that they were exposed more to discrimination and stereotypes. However, bias preparation messages were found to have negative outcomes on adolescents' ethnic affirmation, self-esteem, and antisocial behaviors. Hughes, Witherspoon et al., (2009) explained that such results were also found in similar studies and explained that this kind of preparation for bias can influence the way these adolescents perceived their ethnic group, especially when their parents prepare them for discrimination. Accordingly, parental ethnic socialization can have positive outcomes on children's ethnic identity and cultural affirmation, which have a positive influence on their self-esteem and academic performance. However, negative parental messages about their culture and bias preparation could have negative influence on their children's ethnic belonging and self-esteem. Therefore, parents should be

cautious about what and how to teach their children about their culture to support their ethnic identity.

Also, Cort (2010) emphasized the importance of parents' roles in determining the values and norms that they should learn from the host country. It also seems that children's own ethnic identity is a reflection of what they are taught at home. Brooker (2006) conducted two different studies on the effect of parents' beliefs on their preschool children's identity. For the first study, Brooker (2000) conducted extensive observations to compare the ethnic identity of 16 English and Bangladeshi preschoolers in a private preschool in the United Kingdom, in addition to interviews with parents and children in their homes. In another study, Brooker and Ha (2005) also observed 14 Korean preschoolers in a private preschool in Korea and interviewed them and their parents to identify the influence of their parents' beliefs on gender roles in comparison to the anti bias rules implemented in the classroom environment. Both studies yielded similar results; children's beliefs, activities and friends' preferences were reflections of their parents' beliefs and were also affected by their classroom environment.

Also, mothers recognized the importance of their role in familial ethnic socialization. Umaña-Taylor and Yazedjian (2006) examined the effects of different players that strengthen the ethnicity of first and second generational Puerto Rican and Mexican youth at the age of 10 to 20 years old. Through focus groups with 75 Latino mothers, the researchers found that parents played a big role in enriching their children's ethnicity and that mothers did recognize the importance of their role in familial ethnic socialization. Mothers also discussed the effect of school and community in enhancing

their children's ethnic identity and enhancing their Spanish language. Mothers mentioned other factors that helped enhance the ethnic identity of their children such as traveling to their country of origin; teaching cultural differences; providing books, videos, and the Internet; preparing authentic food in their homes and in community events; getting together with family members; attending cultural celebration and festivals; watching Spanish television or listening to Spanish radio stations; comparing childhood memories; and showing pride in being Latino. Mothers discussed the importance of teaching their children their home language, Spanish. Also, they introduced values such as respect not only for the older but also for all people. Moreover, mothers identified the effect of school curriculum in supporting the ethnic identities through discussing Latin cultural events (such as Cinco de Mayo). Additionally, they identified the role of extended families, claiming that children learned more about their country of origin from their extended families. Moreover, Umaña-Taylor and Yazedjian (2006) emphasized the role of religion in the process of familial ethnic socialization.

**Heritage language.** When children move to a new country where a different language is spoken, their heritage language -or mother tongue- which is the language spoken in their home countries becomes jeopardized (Miller, 1983). Obied (2009) discussed that many immigrant children prefer to communicate using the dominant language of the country of their residence rather than their minority language of their home countries. However, language represents a great part of the ethnic identity. Thus, it is important to maintain the heritage language of sojourner children even when they are learning the language of the new country. Cort (2010) discussed that immigrant parents

usually are the ones who decide what language to speak with their children, especially the younger ones; however, older children often choose their parents spoken language.

Oh and Fuligni (2010) also discussed the effects of maintaining the heritage language of adolescents immigrants' to the relationship with their families and their social identities. Strong relations between ethnic identity and heritage language use and proficiency were found from a study of 414 Latin American and Asian adolescents. Oh and Fuligni (2010) found that adolescents who were proficient in their heritage language even if they did not speak the whole time had better relationships with their families, especially their parents and had less stress in general. It was concluded that supporting the ethnic identity of young immigrants helped them cope with stresses during adolescence.

Immigrant parents and sojourner parents might have different reasons for maintaining the home language of their children. Chen (2013) explained that while both immigrant and sojourner parents might intend to teach their children their home language to maintain their ethnical roots, sojourner parents have a stronger urge to teach their children their home language so that they could readjust in their home society and school systems when they go back home. Chen conducted an ethnographic study with three Chinese families who resided temporarily in the United States. She gathered data through observations and in-depth interviews with the parents and had a couple of informal conversations with the children regarding their lives in the United States. Two of the parents were graduate students and one was a visiting professor in the United States. All three parents were not certain about their return back to their home country after finishing

their study/job; however, their original plan was returning back home after finishing. According to Chen (2013), due to the uncertainty of their future residency, the parents faced a dilemma of helping their children with their English proficiency and maintaining their home language at the same time. The parents expressed that it was important that their children learn English to be able to catch up with their peers at American schools and also to learn Chinese so that they can adjust to the Chinese schools when they go back home. Nonetheless, the parents discussed some of the challenges that they faced in order to maintain both languages. First, some of the parents were not competent in English themselves, so they could not have an efficient relationship with their children's school. Second, parents had very busy schedules due to their study/work. However, they still tried speaking Chinese only at home; they also tried specifying some time during the day to teach their children Chinese. They also encouraged their children to read Chinese books daily and write in their journals, and made them attend after school programs. Overall, all sojourner Chinese parents thought that their children are both gaining and losing because of being raised in the United States. Chinese parents expressed that it was a privilege for their children to learn native-like English; they even considered English to be a prestigious language. Also, they thought that their children were more mature than their peers back home. On the other hand, Chinese sojourner parents were concerned about their children's competency in schools when they returned home.

In a similar ethnographic study, Song (2010) examined sojourning Korean mothers' attitudes towards their children's English language while living in the United States through observations and interviews with three Korean children at the ages of five

and six years old that lasted for one whole year. However, the results of Song's study showed that sojourner mothers showed negative attitudes when their children met other Korean children and spoke Korean instead of English, claiming that they spent extra money by putting their children into private schools to make sure they got the best English education they could. Some mothers in her study were very proud when their children spoke English better than Korean within a year and got an American accent. Surprisingly, when Song compared Korean sojourning mothers to Korean immigrant mothers in other studies, she found immigrant mothers cared more about their children's Korean language as a way to preserve their Korean ethnicity. However, in Song's study, sojourner mothers explained that because English is becoming a dominant language they think that their children's English is an investment to get into better English universities back home or get better jobs. The findings of this study indicates that the dominance of English around the world influences sojourning mothers views, who found their stay in the United States and gaining the English language easily a golden chance for their children that will affect their future lives in Korea.

One last multiple-case study that was conducted by Koga (2009) on five Japanese children in 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade in Boston showed that providing school support to multilingualism and multiculturalism could help sojourner children build secure positive identity. Koga discussed that the public schools taught Japanese language since there was a large number of Japanese students in the class. They also supported cultural exchange through arranging Japanese cultural events and allowing children to communicate in Japanese language on their school campus. Koga also discussed that the parents' support

through helping with English homework, translating to their children, and allowing play dates with American children was one major factor that helped that children adjust when they first moved to the United States. One other factor that helped the sojourner Japanese children's early adjustment was their interaction with Japanese peers, who many times helped each other with translations in the classroom. Koga's study demonstrates how the collaboration of different ecological systems can help children's ethnic adjustment.

### **Summary**

This study examined Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the ethnicity of their children while living temporarily in the United States. Additionally, it examined Saudi children perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity and the factors that shape their ethnicity. Two frameworks guided this study: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) was used to examine the factors that shape Saudi children's ethnicity and Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory (1986) that emphasizes the importance of positive perceptions towards one's ethnicity for the development of positive belonging.

The results of an examination of the related literature for this study indicate that sojourner children, just like immigrant children, can face some issues when they move to a new culture that is different than their home culture and their parents' traditions (Langager, 2010; Song, 2010). Therefore, sojourner and immigrant children need to go through acculturation to adjust to the new culture. However, sojourner children are different than immigrant children because their stay in this new culture is temporary (Martin, 1984). Accordingly, they also need to maintain the connections with their home cultures, form positive ethnic identity, and be prepared to go back home and re-

acculturate after their temporary stay comes to an end. Studies have shown that sojourner children might have confused identities due to their interactions with both cultures. Nonetheless, this can still provide these children with flexibility, bilingualism, and becoming more open-minded (Moore & Barker, 2012). Researchers have found that parents of sojourner children play a big role in helping their children cope with the new culture and maintaining their original culture at the same time. Also, mothers' beliefs and socialization practices reflect on children's adaptation and development of their ethnic identity (Hughes, Witherspoon et al., 2009).



## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to explore the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children who were living temporarily in the United States. It examined two main areas. First, it examined Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnicity. It also explored other factors that shape the ethnicity of Saudi sojourner children, based on different categories from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The second area that was explored is Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity while living temporarily in the United States. The study examined if Saudi children were able to identify themselves as Saudis while living in the United States, and if they were able to form positive views towards their Saudi ethnicity during their temporary living in the United States. Two main research questions guided this study and were regarding Saudi mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnic identity during their temporary stay in the United States, and their children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity during their temporary stay in the United States.

This chapter presents a detailed description of the methodology that was used in the study. It first presents an overall explanation to the qualitative method used in this study, which is a multiple-case design. Then, it presents the research questions that guided this study, followed by a description of the participants and sampling techniques. This chapter also includes a description of the techniques that were used to enhance the

trustworthiness of this qualitative study. After that, it discusses the methods that were used to collect the data, followed by a detailed plan of the different qualitative analytical techniques that were used to analyze the data. Moreover, this chapter explains ethical considerations that promoted the validity of the study. The chapter closes with a summary of the design and methodology of this study.

### **Method of the Study**

According to Yin (2009) case study research should provide the researcher with in-depth understanding of a real life phenomenon under contextual conditions. The purpose of this study was to explore Saudi mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnicity and Saudi children's attitudes towards their Saudi ethnicity. Accordingly, the holistic collective case study approach, also known by multiple-case study approach, was chosen for this study. Creswell wrote, "Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (2007, p. 73). Additionally, multiple-case study research is considered "more compelling" and "powerful" than single-case study design according to Yin (2009), since the study is replicated with more than one participant and the conclusion is drawn based on multiple participants rather than one only.

In order to acquire in-depth data collection in case study research, the researcher had to collect multiple sources of information and the report should follow a "case-based theme" (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). In this study, two sets of interviews were conducted; one was with Saudi sojourner mothers and one was with their children. Additionally, children's drawings of themselves in America and Saudi Arabia were collected as

supporting evidence to children's interviews to gain better understanding to their perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity (Soto, 2002; Koga, 2009).

### **Participants and Sampling**

Participants in this study were Saudi sojourner mothers and their children residing in the United States. The researcher specified the children's age range between 6 and 12 years old, middle childhood, the age in which primary identity begins forming (Moore & Barker, 2012). Typically, multiple-case study research requires a small sample size since the report has to provide an in-depth data on each case. However, when it comes to the exact number of participants needed in a study with rigor, most qualitative researchers argue that there is not a certain rule for a sample size; it depends on the richness of information gathered from the participants. Therefore, experts emphasize putting more efforts in the quality of participants chosen and trying to include information-rich participants (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Patton, 2002). The researcher intended to include between 10 to 20 Saudi children and their mothers who lived in the local area since the data was collected through face-to-face interviews and drawings. Also, children who were chosen for the study should not have necessarily been born in Saudi Arabia, but should have lived in the United States for at least a year. They also had to be between 6 and 12 years old. If the mothers had more than one child, they were asked to include all of their children who fell within the specified age range to discuss in the interviews and to be included in the children's interviews and drawings, as well.

Accordingly, the sample consisted of six mothers and eleven children. The adult participants spent between five and eight years in the United States along with their children, and have been temporarily living in the United States for studying purposes. The children who were interviewed were six boys and five girls, some of whom had been born in Saudi Arabia, while others were born in the United States. All of the children were in middle childhood, and their ages ranged between 6 and 12 years. The educational level of the adult participants ranged from undergraduate students to graduate and doctoral candidates. Some of the adult participants, who have accomplished their academic goals, were still in the United States because their spouses were still pursuing their degrees.

Patton (2002) discussed that purposeful sampling serves well to gather in-depth information about certain cases. Also, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) argued that purposive sampling allows the researcher to focus on cases “unique context.” Since the purpose of this study was to get a better understanding of ethnic identity of a very specific group of people, Saudi sojourner children in the United States, purposeful sampling were used. Accordingly, cases that were included were selected carefully based on the conditions discussed above. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) identified different kinds of purposeful sampling one of which is convenience sampling, through which the researcher includes participants who are geographically accessible. Since there were approximately 400 Saudi students attending universities in the researcher’s local area and data were gathered through face-to-face interviews with the participants, the researcher recruited participants through convenience sampling. Additionally, the

researcher, a Saudi student, was able to gain entry easily with this group of participants since she was part of the local Saudi community and had participated in periodical gatherings throughout the years. Also, snowball sampling was used, where the first participants were asked to recommend other participants who qualified for the study (Seidman, 2010).

When applicable participants were chosen, the researcher contacted the mothers by phone to present the idea of the study and asked them if they were interested in participating. The researcher gave the participants an overview of the purpose, process, and their role in this study. Then, mothers were asked to choose the place and time of the interviews that were most comfortable for them and their children. Some of the mothers invited the researcher to their homes and some chose to meet in public places.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

Validity could be achieved in qualitative research in many ways. To strengthen the rigor of this study, the researcher applied the following procedures: triangulation, engaging in reflexivity, member checking, prolonged engagement in the field, and developing an audit trail (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

According to Patton (2002), triangulation, which is the use of multiple procedures to reach valid themes and patterns, does not only strengthen the study findings through examining the consistency of participants' data, but also prevents some errors that are related to particular methods. He discussed that triangulation can be applied in data collection and data analysis. Therefore, multiple methodologies were used in data collection as well as data analysis of this study.

Another risk that sometimes threatens the validity of the results is personal biases of the researcher. Carlson (2010) discussed the importance of reflexivity, which is the researcher's awareness of potential biases that can influence the interpretations of the data in the study. The researcher was a Saudi sojourner with children in the United States, which made the topic of this study very sensitive. The researcher took extra precautions to avoid mixing background knowledge and previous perceptions with the input of the participants when interpreting the data. She stopped and reflected several times to make sure that her personal opinions were not influencing her analysis.

Also, to ensure the accuracy of the information gathered from the participants, the researcher developed an audit trail and applied member checking with the participants. All conversations with Saudi sojourner mothers and children were audio-recorded (Seidman, 2006). Then after transcribing the data, transcripts were sent to the mothers to check for accuracy (Carlson, 2010).

One last procedure that the researcher followed to ensure a rigorous study was prolonged engagement. The researcher read and reread the interviews and transcribed the data herself. Also, she kept analytical memos and notes since the early stages of data collection until the data analysis was done. This helped her to keep track of her thoughts and interpretations during the different stages of the study (Patton, 2002).

By using a combination of strategies that enhance the validity of qualitative research, the results of this study should be trustworthy. Further details on the use of methods that were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study are explained throughout the following sections.

### **Data Collection and Plan of Analysis**

The following sections describe data collection methods that were used in this research and the plan of the analysis procedure. Triangulation of both data collection and analysis were applied to this study. Specific data collection methods used in this study were interviews, children's drawings, and audio recordings. Also, analytic memos, member checking, coding, and synthesizing were used in data analysis.

#### **Data Collection**

Since this study followed a multiple-study case approach, the researcher collected multiple pieces of evidences to provide sufficient data on each case (Cresswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Also, Patton (2002) discussed the importance of triangulation in the data collection to enhance the validity of the study. Yin (2009) discussed different techniques that are commonly used in the design of the case study, including interviews and collecting physical artifacts such as artwork. Accordingly, the researcher used various data collection with each case. She conducted interviews with Saudi sojourner mothers, interviews with their children, and also collected drawings from the children as supportive data of their perceptions. The researcher recorded the entire process with the mothers and children. Further details are discussed below.

**Parental and child interviews.** According to Seidman (2006), in-depth interviewing helps the researcher in “understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of their experience” (p. 9). In this study the researcher arranged two sets of interviews, one with the sojourner mothers and one with the children themselves. The interviews with Saudi mothers allowed them to talk about their personal

thoughts and practices with their children in the United States. The interviews with Saudi children provided the researcher with an insight on the children's perceptions.

Vasquez (2000) stated that it is really important that the child feel comfortable and relaxed during the interview. Also, the children must understand the purpose for talking to the interviewer. Therefore, the researcher began by introducing herself, the reason that she was conducting the interview, and their role in the study (Vasquez, 2000). Also, to ensure that the children understood the question, the researcher asked them to repeat what was asked instead of asking if they understand what was said.

Mothers were asked to be present during their children's meetings, but they were not allowed to intervene or help their children while answering the interview questions. The mothers' interviews did not take more than half an hour. The meeting with each child including the child's interview and drawings did not take more than 30 minutes. Also, the researcher explained that in case of inconvenience or tiredness, she could make more than one visit to the family to gather the data.

In respect to participants' privacy, the mothers were given the chance to look at both their interview questions and their children's questions prior to the interviews to decide if they or their children should skip specific inconvenient questions.

***Designing the interview questions.*** In keeping with a qualitative research study, the researcher chose to use open-ended questions in the interviews with the mothers and children, which allowed the participants to express their own perceptions and experiences freely (Patton, 2002). The researcher prepared two lists of questions, one was for the mothers' interviews and the other was for the children's interviews. Both sets of



interview questions included experience and behaviors questions, opinions and value questions, and feelings questions (Patton, 2002). Additionally, mothers' interview questions included background demographic questions, through which they provide general information about the family members and the time of their arrival to the United States. Patton (2002) suggested gathering demographics through open-ended questions in qualitative studies instead of filling demographic questionnaires to allow participants to categorize themselves the way they view themselves, rather than put themselves within fixed categories (see examples in Table 1). Also, It should be noted though that the researcher asked follow-up "probing" questions while conducting the interviews such as, "Can you tell me more about....?" or "Would you explain why you think so?" with both mothers and children (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006).

Table 1.  
*Examples of Background Questions in Mothers' Interviews*

Examples of Interview Questions	
Background questions	A. Tell me about your family
	B. How old were your children when you first moved to America?

The researcher utilized the information found in similar studies in the literature when choosing the specific questions that were asked. For example, mothers were asked about the change in their rearing style since moving to the states, based on the findings in Farver et al. (2007) that Indian parents have reported change in their rearing styles due to acculturating to the American culture. The researcher asked the Saudi mothers about specific Saudi habits that they tried to maintain while living in the States and this allowed

some comparisons of Mexican and Puerto Rican mothers' practices in the study of Umaña-Taylor and Yazedjian (2006).

It should be noted that mothers' interview questions were used in gathering information to answer the first research question regarding Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's ethnicity while living temporarily in the United States. They also were used to distinguish factors that influence Saudi sojourner children's ethnic identity, as in other factors in the children's ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A full list of mothers' interview questions can be found in Appendix A (see examples in Table 2).

Table 2  
*Examples of Mothers' Interview Questions*

Examples of Interview Questions	
RQ1. What are Saudi mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnic identity during their temporary stay in the United States?	A. What specific Saudi habits do you practice in your family in your daily life?
	B. How do you incorporate Arabic language in your family's communication?
	C. What are the main concerns, worries, and difficulties you face while raising your child here?
	D. Talk to me about your relationship with your child's school? Your neighbors? Saudi and American friends? Which do think has the most influence on your child's ethnic identity?

Children's interview questions were designed to gather data to answer the second research question regarding children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity. Children were asked specific questions to examine if they had positive or negative perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity based on information gathered from Tajfel and Turners' Social Identity

Theory (1986). The researcher tried to make the interview questions appropriate for their age by choosing simple words (Vasquez, 2000). Also, the clarity of the wording of the children's interview questions was revised with the assistance of the researcher's eight-year-old daughter (see examples in Table 3). A full list of children's interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Table 3.  
*Examples of Children's Interview Questions*

Examples of Interview Questions	
RQ2. What are Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity during their temporary stay in the United States?	A. Tell me about your life in United States.
	B. What do you know about Saudi Arabia?
	C. How do you think your life would be if had not lived in the United States?
	D. How do you imagine your life when you go back to Saudi Arabia?

**Children's drawings.** According to Klepsch and Logie (1982), "Drawing speaks louder than words" (p. 8). Additionally, Dennis (1966) discussed that children's drawings can be a reflection of their culture and cultural values, such as traditions, modern or traditional clothing, and religious symbols. Also, Klepsch and Logie (1982) claimed that drawing can be a great additional tool to undercover a child's inner-self and perceived group values, because children love to draw, drawings are easy to obtain, and it can be a great expressive tool for children with limited expressive language. Klepsch and Logie (1982) added that drawings should be inspected for clues for children's attitudes such as

facial expressions (such as smiling vs. non-smiling), enlarged body parts (such as, certain figures and specific body parts), and writings on drawings.

In a similar study by Koga (2009) on Japanese sojourner children's identities, children's drawings related to school lives to assess their attitudes towards their experiences in American classrooms were used. Children's drawings were also used as supportive evidence to children's interviews. Koga (2009) discussed that using drawings in addition to interviews allowed children to express themselves in additional ways. Also, drawings in Koga's study were accessible for the children during the interview, so they could add more details if they wanted to. For the current study, the researcher gathered children's drawings as part of the data to reflect Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity. Each child was given two sheets of paper, a pencil, and a box of crayons and was asked to draw two pictures. The first drawing should be a representational picture of them in Saudi Arabia, which allowed the researcher to examine their image about Saudi Arabia and their overall knowledge of the culture through the details they included in the drawings (such as characters that were included in the drawings, their clothing, other religious symbols, and famous cities, etc.). In the other picture, children were asked to draw themselves in the United States. This allowed the researcher to compare details such as facial expressions, clothing, and the details in the environments of the two pictures.

Each sheet was labeled at the top with a space for the child's name and the place of the drawing to remind the child which drawing he/she was working on. The researcher asked the children to describe and talk about their two drawings while the children's

conversations were recorded. Children had access to the drawings during the interviews. The exact instructions of children's drawing can be found in (Appendices C, D, & E).

**Audio recording.** Seidman (2006) suggests audio recording interviews to keep a record of original interviews and the possibility to return to them if any of the transcripts were not clear to the researcher at the time of the data analysis. Also, Boeije (2010) discussed other benefits of audio recording the interviews such as allowing the researcher to concentrate on the interview with the participants without worrying about taking notes of every single word the participants say. It also ensures the accuracy of the data since the exact words will be kept in record, and the exact quotes are available for the researcher to use in the report (Boeije, 2010).

In order to capture the essence of the mothers and children's insights, the researcher recorded both mothers and children's interviews, and children's description of their drawings using *Voice Memo* application in the *iPhone*®. Afterwards, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings twice to ensure accuracy of the transcription and to be able to identify common themes that appeared in mothers and children's inputs. It should be noted that some of the participants' non-verbal behaviors and impressions were not captured through the audio recordings; therefore the researcher also jotted some field notes during the interviews and drawings.

### **Data Analysis**

After gathering data through mothers' interviews, children's interviews, children's drawings, and audio recordings, the first step of data analysis was organizing the data, preparing it for the analysis, and then transcribing the data. Patton (2002)

discussed that transcribing the data through listening to the interviews and typing the participants' words, reading and revising allows the researcher to be immersed in the data and get more insights. The researcher transcribed the data immediately after the interview visits, in order to avoid loss of information and to preserve its integrity through capturing her own ideas and thoughts on the spot rather than depending on the memory (Seidman, 2006). Mothers' and children's discourses were transcribed into more than 200 pages. Also, children's drawings were scanned into the researcher's computer to make an extra copy for safekeeping.

In multiple-case studies, extensive data should be gathered for each case. For example in this study mothers' interviews, children's interviews, and two drawings were obtained for each case. Patton (2002) emphasized the importance of organizing the data and making sure that all types of data for each case are gathered together. Accordingly, the researcher created both a digital and a hard folder for each case that included everything related to that case.

Moreover, multiple analysis techniques were used to analyze the data gathered in this study. This triangulation in data analysis should have strengthened the study (Patton, 2002). The data analysis plan included analytic memos, member checking, coding, and synthesizing the data.

**Analytic memos.** The analysis process can begin earlier during the data collection stage when applying analytical memos. These included the researcher's own thoughts and interpretations of the mothers and children's views in addition to possible emerging patterns, themes, and categories that come to mind anytime during the visits (Boeije,

2010). Saldana (2013) discussed that memos can be helpful to make sense of the data as it tracks the researcher's insights. Analytic memos are considered part of the fieldwork and part of the analysis process as well (Patton, 2002). Also, analytic memos should be treated as part of the data and should be analyzed with the rest of the data that is gathered for the study (Miles et al., 2014). Accordingly, the researcher composed analytical memos at different times during the study. After each interview the researcher jotted down the analytical memos for that session. Then, the researcher added more memos after transcribing each participant's input including the discussions with the children about the drawings. Analytical memos were used to build up the reports on each case. After finishing a few interviews, clear patterns started to emerge through the participants' views; the researcher began typing general memos on common patterns that were appearing. A sample of the researcher's analytic memos can be seen in Appendix H.

Koga (2009) has applied analytic memos to children's drawings in his study as a way of describing and analyzing children's drawings. Therefore, analytical memos were applied to Saudi sojourner children's drawings as well.

**Member checking.** Also known by respondent validation or informant feedback. Member checking is one of the strong methods used to enhance the trustworthiness of interviews, where the accuracy of the data would be checked with the participants (Marshall & Russman, 2011; Shenton, 2004). Since Saudi mothers' first language was not English, it was predicted that some of the participants might use Arabic words when they could not find the exact English words during the interview. Accordingly, it seemed

necessary to check with the participants regarding the accuracy of the translation of some words, to ensure that the researcher understood what they exactly meant.

Member checking can be done in many different ways; for example, some researchers might choose to send the whole transcript for review or parts of it. Some might send an electronic copy, a hard copy, or the researcher might choose to read it to the participants over the phone (Carlson, 2010). Also, member checking can be problematic sometimes and may affect the relationship between the researcher and the participants if their roles were not clear enough; accordingly, there should be a clear plan into how exactly member checking will be done. Carlson (2010) suggested informing the participants with their exact role and the reasons for it before proceeding with the study. The researcher sent mothers' and children's interviews transcriptions to the mothers via email. She asked the mothers to check if she got the gist of their ideas correctly especially that parts that included some Arabic words. The researcher also asked the mothers for permission to include parts of their children's words or their own in the report and published version of the study (Carlson, 2010). All participants approved the transcripts and did not delete or change any of the answers. Also, they approved publishing their discourses under pseudonyms.

**Synthesizing.** The final step in analyzing the data after determining patterns and emerging themes in participants' conversation and children's drawings was synthesizing the findings. The researcher followed *cross-case analysis* and *relied on theoretical propositions* in synthesizing the data.



***Cross-case analysis.*** For cross-case analysis each case was analyzed, and then finding of each case was used as data for cross-case analysis, and themes emerged and developed throughout the analysis process (Pickard, 2007). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) claim that cross-case analysis technique helps deepen the researcher's understanding and explains the findings, because it allows comparing similarities and difference between the cases. It also allows better chances of generalizability and transferability of the study. However, it should be noted that case studies are not usually generalizable, but can be transferable (Pickard, 2007). Therefore the results of this study cannot be generalized but the techniques can be used with other populations.

The analysis process was performed as follows. First, the researcher identified first cycle codes were from transcriptions of each participant's discourse. Then, the researcher prepared narrative reports on each case (displayed in chapter IV). After that, the researcher applied second cycle coding and clustered related codes together to identify emerging themes and subthemes.

***Coding.*** As part of the analysis process, the researcher coded the data. The codes were applied to chunks of the conversation between the researcher and mothers and the researcher and children, in addition to the drawings from children. Koga (2010) also applied codes in his study to Japanese sojourners children's drawings of themselves in American classrooms and to their descriptions of the drawings. Codes on children's drawings were added and compared to the children's conversations during the interviews.

According to Seidman (2006) coding data could be processed electronically; however, he claimed that nothing is as good as doing it manually and capturing the words

with real human eyes. Therefore, the data in this study was manually coded using Microsoft Word® reviewer by highlighting the parts of the transcript and adding the code in the right margin of the document as a comment. Saldana (2013) recommends keeping track of all codes as they can accumulate when working on the transcripts. Accordingly, emerging codes were written in lists as they appeared in the transcripts. The researcher kept a list of children's codes separated from mothers' codes list since the interviews with adults and children aimed to answer two different questions, one regarding Saudi mothers attitudes and the other regarding children's perceptions.

**First cycle coding.** The first cycle coding includes examining the raw data and assigning codes that represent different chunks of the written data. According to Saldana (2013), the researcher can use different kinds of coding. Accordingly, the researcher used a combination of coding techniques in the first cycle of coding. The researcher identified a list of *a priori* codes before starting the coding process based on information gathered through the literature and theory (Saldana, 2013). Some of these codes are *troubles in early adjustments, jeopardy of ethnic identity, jeopardy of heritage language, changes in parenting styles, ethnic socialization practices, and maintenance of Saudi identity*. Additionally, four other types of coding were applied: *descriptive coding, In vivo coding, value coding, and emotion coding* (Saldana, 2013). The following is an explanation of how these types of coding were applied. Table 4 shows examples of some of the codes that were derived from the mothers' interviews, and Table 5 shows examples of some of the codes that were derived from children's interviews.

Table 4.

*Examples of Codes derived from Mothers' Interviews.*

<i>A priori</i> codes	Descriptive codes	<i>In Vivo</i> codes	Value codes	Emotion codes
Troubles in early adjustments	Religious emphasis	"Better education"	Caring to maintain heritage language	Worried about future adjustment
Jeopardy of ethnic identity	Saudi rituals	"Americanized"	Change in concerns throughout the period	Fear of negative influence
Jeopardy of heritage language	Support of extended family	"Homesick"	Protecting the children's religious views	Missing family
Change in parenting styles				
Ethnic socialization practices				
Maintenance of Saudi identity				

Table 5.

*Examples of Codes derived from Children's Interviews.*

<i>A priori</i> codes	Descriptive codes	<i>In Vivo</i> codes	Value codes	Emotion codes
Jeopardy of heritage language	The need to learn more about home	"America is bigger"	Desire to fit back home	Missing family
	Friendship with other Saudi sojourners	"I feel different"	USA is fun	Missing friends
	Leave but return	"I am proud"	Strong family ties	Love Saudi

Descriptive coding was applied in first cycle coding to assist the researcher identify mothers' and children's views and details that they discussed regarding their sojourn experience in the United States. Descriptive codes were applied to chunks of

participants' statements through assigning codes that summarize what participants' mentioned. Descriptive coding revealed mothers' practices, views, concerns, and other factors that they believed shape the ethnic identity of their children. Some of the codes assigned to Saudi mothers' statements were religious emphasis, Saudi rituals, and support of extended family. Also, descriptive coding helped in revealing children's views, needs, and interests, in addition to future plans. Some of the codes assigned to children's statements were the need to learn about home, friendship with other Saudi sojourners, and Leave but return.

Additionally, *In Vivo* coding was used in first cycle coding, and it reflected both Saudi mothers' and children's ideas through abstracting some of their exact words as codes. Some of the *In Vivo* codes that were derived from the mothers' conversations were "better education," "Americanized," and "homesick." Also, some *In Vivo* codes derived from children's conversations were "America is bigger," "I feel different," and "I am proud."

Also, value coding was used in first cycle coding to explore Saudi mothers' values, attitudes, and beliefs regarding maintaining the ethnic identity of their children and their overall views on their sojourn experiences in the United States. Some value codes identified in mothers' conversations were caring to maintain heritage language, change in concerns throughout the period, and protecting the children's religious views. Also, value coding reflected Saudi children's values and perceptions of their Saudi ethnic identity and their overall views on their sojourn experiences in the United States; some

codes derived from children's conversation were desire to fit back home, USA is fun, strong family ties.

Moreover, emotion coding was used in first cycle coding to explore Saudi mothers' and children's emotions towards different aspects related to their sojourn experiences through labeling these emotions. Some of the emotion codes that were derived from mothers' conversations are worried about future adjustment, fear of negative influence, and missing family. Also, other codes that were derived from children's conversation are missing friends, missing family, and love Saudi Arabia.

**Second cycle coding.** The second cycle coding consisted of identifying categories and patterns that lead to final themes through reorganizing first cycle coded data (Saldana, 2013). Saldana (2013), discussed that *axial* coding is one form of second cycle coding that can be used in studies that include a variety of data collections forms. In this study, different types of data were collected, including interviews with mothers, interviews with children, children's drawings, and children's discussions on drawings, in addition to the researcher's analytical memos. Accordingly, *axial* coding was utilized in second cycle coding, through which synonym codes and repetitive codes were removed and dominant codes were identified, leading into finding common categories (Saldana, 2013). For example, the codes religious emphasis and protecting religious views were both replaced with religious concerns. Afterwards, *pattern* coding was applied through grouping related codes in order to identify common patterns in both mothers and children's views (Saldana, 2013). For example, the researcher noticed that mothers expressed two patterns of views: positive and negative attitudes. Accordingly, the

researcher clustered all codes that indicated positive views together and identified the theme “privileges”, and clustered the codes that identified negative views together and identified the theme “concerns.” These two processes led to identifying common themes and subthemes.

***Relying on theoretical propositions.*** In finalizing the results the researcher compared findings with similar literature and relying on theoretical propositions that were chosen to guide the study, which are principles from the Ecological Systems Theory and Social Identity Theory. Yin (2009) explained that this strategy can be especially effective in analyzing case study designs when the researcher gathers an excessive collection of literature from similar studies in the field and has a clear purpose and research questions to guide the study.

Using the framework of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979), this study explained the effect of different ecological systems on Saudi children’s ethnic identity during their temporary living in the United States. The main concentration was the influence of Saudi children’s *microsystem* that consisted of the role of individuals within immediate contact with the child. This included an examination of the role of Saudi sojourner mothers in enhancing the ethnic identity of their children during their temporary stay in the United States. Other individuals who have immediate contact with Saudi sojourner children are friends. The influences of both Saudi and American friends were examined. Also, an examination of the effect of *mesosystem* was applied through examining the type of relationship between Saudi families and their children’s American schools. Additionally, the effect of the *exosystem* was examined through investigating the

role of the parents' social network including neighbors and the Saudi community within the local area, in addition to the role of extended family back home. Finally, an examination of the effect of children's outer *macrosystem* was applied through examining the larger cultural practices and religious beliefs within the ethnic socialization of the children. Additionally, the final chapter of this study included suggestions of changes in policies that could help sojourner children have a better adjustment here in the United States and other policies that need to be changed in the Saudi *exosystem* to help sojourner children have a better adjustment upon their return to Saudi Arabia. In terms of the use of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1968), this study looked into the social identity of Saudi sojourner children who were raised away from their home countries. It examined if Saudi sojourner children were able to form a positive image about their original group and identify themselves as Saudis or if they felt stronger connections to the American culture.

Finally, the conclusion of the synthesis included an overall explanation to Saudi children's ethnical identity during their temporary stay in the United States. Yin (2009) discussed multiple-case studies should allow the researcher to "build a general explanation that fits each individual case, even though the cases will vary in details" (p. 142). He conferred that we should devise an overall explanation from the findings gathered from all cases. Accordingly, the researcher provided expanded explanations on each case, identified main themes that emerge throughout the cases and finally prepared an overall explanation.

### **Ethical Considerations of the Study**

According to NIH's Belmont report, research studies should be built on three basic principles: respect for participants, beneficence, and justice (Halai, 2006). These principles were fulfilled through the following considerations.

The participants were informed about their role in the study and the purpose of the study prior to their participation. Additionally, it was clear for all participants, both adults and children, that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time they wished during the study (Seidman, 2006). Also, the participants were promised not to be harmed due to their participation in the study and to be provided with the maximum possible benefits and minimum possible risks, including emotional distress and discomfort due to the information shared with the researcher (Miles et al., 2014). As an additional precaution of avoiding emotional distress, member checking was applied and the participants were offered to omit any embarrassing statements mentioned during their interviews or their children's interviews.

Additionally, the researcher avoided coercion and none of the participants were given any type of monetary compensation. Also in terms of protecting participants' confidentiality, both written and audio recordings remained confidential and were accessed by the researcher only.

The researcher distributed a consent form including all of the previous information in addition to her contacts and the contacts of the office of Institutional Review Board at Texas Woman's University in case of any questions (Appendix F). Cultural considerations were fulfilled through writing the consent form in a simple



language, and it was explained orally to mothers, and even translated to Arabic when needed, to make sure that the participants understood what were they participating in (Seidman, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Moreover, since children were taking part in the study, children signed an assent (Seidman, 2006). Children's assent was stated in simple language in order for children to read and understand what they were participating in. Also, the researcher explained the objective of the study and their role orally, and stated clearly that their participation was optional and that they could withdraw at any time if they chose to. Then children were asked to write their names signifying their acceptance to participate (Appendix G).

### **Summary**

This chapter presents a detailed plan of the methodology that was followed in this multiple-case study that aims to explore Saudi sojourners mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnicity, in addition to Saudi children's perception of their ethnic identity during their temporary stay in the United States. Participants in this study were Saudi mothers and middle childhood-age children that have lived in the United States for more than a year. The researcher gathered data through interviews with mothers and children. Therefore the participants should have been living in the researchers' local area (Miles et al., 2014). Convenience sampling technique was used.

The researcher applied different strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of the study such as triangulation of data collection and data analysis, prolonged engagement in the data, keeping audio trails of the interview sessions with the participants, and practicing reflexivity throughout the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In this chapter, the researcher also discussed the plan for data collection and data analysis. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with the Saudi sojourner mothers and their children, and two drawings from each child that represent them in Saudi Arabia and the United States. The researcher has discussed how the interview questions were formulated. All interviews and discussions on drawings were audio taped for extra references and better documentation (Seidman, 2006).

The data were then transcribed and analyzed. The researcher applied member checking with the participants to ensure better accuracy (Carlson, 2010) and also applied analytical memos throughout the data collection and analysis process. Also cross-case analysis was used to finalize the common themes, a methodology that is mostly applicable in multiple-case studies (Pickard, 2007). Cross-case analysis included two cycles of coding. Finally, this chapter also included a description of ethical considerations that was followed to raise the research credibility including confidentiality, and beneficence to all participants.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to examine Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the Saudi ethnicity of their children, and to explore their children's perceptions on their Saudi ethnicity while living temporarily in the United States. Furthermore, the study explored factors that shaped the identity of Saudi sojourner children.

This chapter includes detailed reports on the participants based on the interviews that were conducted with them. Afterwards, the chapter includes a detailed discussion of the data analysis, followed by the themes and subthemes identified in this study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings of this study.

#### **Participant Reports**

For this study, the researcher interviewed six Saudi mothers and eleven children. The following are reports of each participant based on the interviews that were conducted with them. The reports will follow a family-based order, meaning each report includes a description of family circumstances as a part of the mother's report, followed by the older sibling and finally the younger sibling. Also, each of the children's reports include their opinions based on the information gathered through the interviews, followed by a discussion of their drawings. It should be noted that the names used in the reports are not the real name of the participants to protect their anonymity. The researcher assigned

pseudonyms to the mothers while children were permitted to choose their pseudonyms because the researcher wanted to see if they would choose Arabic or American names.

### **Norah's Family**

Norah is a stay-at-home mom who recently received a master's degree while her husband is still pursuing his master's degree. She has three children: Joud who is a 12-year-old girl, Omar who is an 11-year-old boy, and Sawsan who is a newborn girl. The family has been living in the United States for five years.

Norah's elder children had some difficulties when they first moved to the United States, because they missed their extended family in Saudi Arabia, and they have had some difficulties adjusting to the new culture in the United States. However, the children adjusted over time. She believes that school has helped her and the children to get over some problems, and some teachers have also helped her learn new child rearing techniques.

Currently, Norah's two older children are in their late middle childhood. In her opinion, it has been difficult to raise children away from home and the extended family, especially at her children's ages. Nevertheless, Norah has kept her mother involved in the children's life and consistently asks for her advice; she stated:

She is supposed to be in my family, because she is old and she knows a lot, more than me and I need her to help me in raising my kids, I can't do it by myself, it is very hard when they get older.

Moreover, she has expressed concerns about her children being more "Americanized," where she stated:

Because now they are getting older and I saw them losing it! They are actually losing it. I do not how to explain it, but they became more Americans than Saudis even their thoughts, the way they dress and even the attitudes, and how they speak.

Norah believes that American children lack respect for older people, which is a major principle that Saudi parents teach their children. Moreover, the children spend most of their time at school, where English is spoken. Therefore, Norah is concerned that her children are losing their mother tongue. She tries to speak only Arabic at home, and she hires an Arabic tutor to improve their language, which she thought is costly. Furthermore, she has been teaching her children some Islamic practices such as praying and reading Quran. Norah argued that Islam and the Saudi culture cannot be separated “Our culture belongs to our religion. Every single thing that we do belongs to our religion.”

Norah cooks mainly Saudi food to maintain Saudi rituals at home. Also, she mingles with Saudi families in the local area on a weekly basis, because as she states:

It helps!! Sometimes we miss our family back home. We even miss the food and the celebrations. But when we do these things with each other, we feel kind of being relieved that we have a little bit of Saudi Arabia in here.

Also, she believes that the yearly visits to Saudi Arabia boost the children’s sense of belonging to Saudi Arabia. Additionally, strong connections with their relatives back home reinforce their Saudi ethnic identities.

Nevertheless, Norah claimed that her children lack small Saudi ethnic details; she states, “Now, my daughter doesn’t know how to dance the Arabic way. Even the smallest

cultural things they are not learning them, because they [are] not living them.” Therefore, she has worries about her children’s adjustment within the Saudi culture when they return to Saudi Arabia. Norah thinks it would be difficult especially for her daughter to become accustomed to wearing “abaya and hijab” and to accept the fact that women do not drive in Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, Norah believes that her children are getting a better education in America than in Saudi Arabia. Also, they get to attend different afterschool activities. Moreover, she is pleased that they are proficient in English. She claims that this will guarantee better jobs for them in Saudi Arabia after they grow up. She expresses a desire to return to Saudi Arabia for her children’s sake. She ends the interview by saying, “I want to go back to Saudi Arabia so that they can have their culture back.”

**Joud.** Joud is a 12-year-old girl. She is at a critical age as she has become aware of the cultural differences between the United States and Saudi Arabia. In the United States, she enjoys activities such as playing the clarinet and practicing karate. Actually, she prefers living in the United States because she will not be able to drive her own car as an adult woman in Saudi Arabia.

Joud has reached the age where her relationship with her friends represents an important factor. Therefore, the fact of leaving her current friends worries her. She believes that it would be difficult for her to establish new friendships, because she believes that people are different in Saudi Arabia. Actually, she thinks that Americans are accepting to others and that “they do not care about what race you are.” Therefore, she is never shy of telling others that she is from Saudi Arabia. However, Joud misses her extended family

and wants to learn Arabic to communicate with all of her family members in Saudi Arabia. Joud indicates that she would chose living in the United States permanently if she is given the choice, but would still make regular visits to her family in Saudi Arabia.



Figure 2. Joud's self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.



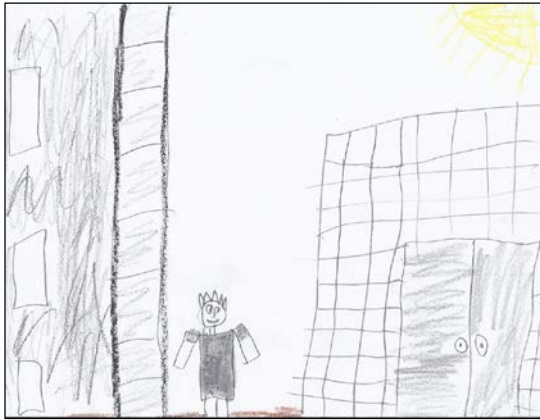
Figure 3. Joud's self-portrait in the USA.

In the Joud's drawing of herself in Saudi Arabia (Figure 2), she drew herself with her extended family in her grandfather's house in Riyadh. She included herself, her brother, her parents, and both of her grandparents. Although her grandfather has passed away, she wanted him to be present in this memory of her family's house in Saudi Arabia. However, Joud did not include her infant sister because she has not been to Saudi Arabia, as she stated. Joud explained that the gardens, details in Figure 2, actually exist in her grandparents' house including the plants she mentioned, "They grow their own plant food." According to Joud, "usually when we are in Saudi Arabia in my grandparents' house my mom wants me to dress up", therefore, her drawing showed her in a skirt and her mother and grandmother wearing the traditional headscarves.

In the other drawing of herself in the United States (Figure 3), Joud has divided the page into two sections. Joud portrayed herself dressed in casual clothing in both sections. The first section was of herself with her mother and their Saudi friends in a shopping mall. Joud drew her mother pushing her infant sister in a stroller. The second section of the drawing showed Joud with her friends at school in the United States. She discussed that attending coeducational schools is one of the differences between her current school in the United States and schools in Saudi Arabia where they are single-sex schools. As can be seen in Joud's drawing in USA, she is dressed in casual clothing. Both pictures show that she is attached to in both countries, because both of them represent a happy moment for her with people that she loves.

**Omar.** Omar was well aware of the cultural differences between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Actually, Omar believes that one of the privileges of living in the United States is becoming bilingual, since he know speaks both Arabic and English. Omar expressed that he sometimes misses his family and friends in Saudi Arabia. He stated that he currently has a few friends in United States, but has not formed very strong relationships with them. As a Saudi, Omar felt that he should learn more about Islam and improve his Arabic language. However, he was not certain if he prefers life in Saudi Arabia or America. Additionally, he plans to spend some time in Saudi Arabia when he grows up, but he definitely wants to attend college in the United States. He thinks he can get better education there which can secure a better job for him in the future.





*Figure 4. Omar's self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.*



*Figure 5. Omar's self-portrait in the USA.*

Like Joud, Omar drew his grandparents' home in Riyadh in his drawing of himself in Saudi Arabia (Figure 4). He drew himself wearing a "thobe", which is a traditional male garment. Figure 4 shows Omar's insight of the climate in Saudi Arabia where he drew the sun and the sand. On the other hand, Figure 5 shows Omar wearing jeans and a t-shirt while standing in a park next to a building in the United States. Omar discussed his love of the foliage in the United States during the interview and discussion on his drawings. Clearly, Omar has an understanding of cultural and natural differences between the two countries.

### **Malak's Family**

Malak is a Ph. D. student in Special Education majoring in Emotional Behavioral Disturbance. Malak's husband has a master's degree. He resides in Saudi Arabia because of his job. He visits the family one or two times a year. Also, Malak and her children travel to Saudi Arabia yearly to spend summer vacation in Saudi Arabia. They have two children, Laura (10 years old) and Ross (7 years old). In 2005, the couple arrived in the

USA to pursue master's degrees. In 2008, the family returned back to Saudi Arabia for three years. In 2011, Malak got a job in a Saudi University and decided to come back to the United States with the children to her Ph.D. They have been living here for four years now.

Malak discussed the huge responsibility of raising two children away from their father. However, her husband tries his best to maintain his role as a father and contacts them on a daily basis. However, she believes that their temporary stay in the United States is worth it because it has provided her children with good education and has made them critical thinkers. Malak thinks that her youngest son is more adjusted to the United States because he was younger when he came and he also spent most of his life in the United States. On the other hand, her eldest daughter was aware of the differences between the two places in which she resided. The family has strong ties to the Saudi community here and considers them family. Moreover, they have strong connection with extended family back home. Malak says, "I think it is the way that we were raised; we have to have strong relationships with our relatives.... as Saudi Arabians it is really important to have strong relationships with your family, and I am trying to maintain those relationships because when we go back, it's going to be probably stronger."

Malak believes that their experience here has made them stronger and has had a positive influence on them overall. However, she worries that her children might be what Saudi culture deems disrespectful in the future. She believes that American children do not respect their families as much as children in the Saudi culture are expected to. Malak discussed that her concerns have changed since they moved to the United States. At the

beginning, she was concerned more about her children's adjustment to America since it was a new place for her children. However, now that their journey is coming to an end soon, she became more concerned about her children's understanding of the Saudi environment. In her practices with her children, she aims to balance between maintaining Saudi and Islamic traditions and making sure that they are proud of where they come from, in addition to being well adjusted to the living in the United States. She worries about the Arabic language of her children, especially that her children are not very fluent in Arabic. She claims that the children spend most of the time at school, and she has to assist them with their homework in English at home, as well. However, she speaks to them in Arabic sometimes at home, and she has also has hired an Arabic tutor for them for a while. Moreover, Malak worries about social commitments and others imposing their opinions on their lifestyle when their return to Saudi Arabia, after they got used to living alone in the United States. Moreover, she fears that her children might have cultural shock when they return home. She concludes that she likes the lifestyle in America, but she would not live here forever. She ends her conversation by saying, "The way of living, yes I like it here more than Saudi Arabia, but I still want to go back because I think I am very attached to my family than to the place probably."

**Laura.** Laura is a 10-year-old girl, who resided in the United States from six months old to three years old, and then came back to the United States when she was six years old. She is strongly connected to Saudi Arabia and her extended family there. While she enjoys life in America and has some misconceptions about Saudi Arabia, she still loves being Saudi and wants to learn more about her home country. She is certain

about returning to live in Saudi Arabia forever. She feels like an outsider sometimes and prefers spending time with other Saudi sojourners in addition to sojourners from other countries. She believes that they understand her better.



Figure 6. Laura's self-portrait in Saudi Arabia



Figure 7. Laura's self-portrait in USA.

Laura's drawings of herself in Saudi Arabia (Figure 6) and the United States can be seen above (Figure 7). In Laura's picture of Saudi Arabia, she drew herself wearing "abaya," the traditional outfit for women in Saudi Arabia. She also drew a banner of colorful lamps because her family always celebrates her when she returns home. Also, she drew some of her favorite Saudi dishes including two types of fish, rice, and her favorite soup that her grandmother prepares. In her picture of the United States, she drew herself with her favorite friends. As can be seen, she is the one between her two friends. She has written captions above each person in the drawing: "Dabbany from Mexico", "Me from Saudi Arabia", and "Jolin from Australia." Comparing the two pictures, Laura has an understanding of cultural differences. This is especially seen in the variety of clothing she chose in each picture. It also shows how she has become multi-cultured through her friendships with friends from around the globe.

**Ross.** Ross is a 7-year-old boy, who was born in the United States of America. He only lived the first two and half years of his life in Saudi Arabia. Ross has both American and the Saudi citizenship, and he likes both countries. Actually, Ross does not feel the cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and America. Moreover, he does not have negative views about either of them. He also does not care about the nationalities of his friends. He is a multicultural boy. However, he has strong family ties and prefers living in Saudi Arabia because his family lives there. He desires to learn Arabic to be able to communicate better with people in Saudi Arabia. He prefers to reside in Saudi Arabia when he grows up, but he would like to vacation in the United States sometimes.

It should be noted that the researcher interviewed Ross twice because they had a tornado warning in the area two days before the first interview. Ross was very scared of the tornado during the first interview and has had some negative views about the United States because of that experience.

In the first drawing of himself in Saudi Arabia, Ross drew himself with his mother, sister, aunt, and grandmother shopping in a mall in Saudi Arabia (Figure 8). He seems excited in the picture, and he has written the word “yay!” on top of his figure. In the second picture of himself in Saudi Arabia, he drew his immediate family: himself, mom, dad, and sister. All have smiles and appear happy (Figure 10). However, in his first drawing in the United States Ross has drawn a very dark picture of the unpleasant event that occurred a couple of days prior to the interview (Figure 9). The negative views were very clear on the scared faces of his friends and sister while they were riding the car during the tornado.



*Figure 8. Ross's 1st self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.*



*Figure 9. Ross's 1st self-portrait in USA.*



*Figure 10. Ross's 2nd self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.*



*Figure 11. Ross's 2nd self-portrait in USA.*

He explained in detail how they were terrified in the car. He stated, “And these are really hard rain... I mean there was lots of rain... And it was creepy like a heart attack... and then the hail... baseball hail... can you imagine the hail as big as baseballs... I heard it on the radio.” Nonetheless, Ross’s drawing of himself in the United States was different in the second time. When you look at his drawing of himself in the USA couple of weeks later, you can feel that it is much calmer and happier (Figure 11). He drew

himself at home doing his favorite thing during the cold weather, playing with his PlayStation. A smile can be seen on his face too. Although both second drawings are happy drawings, he reiterates that he prefers living in Saudi Arabia, but he might visit the United States sometimes.

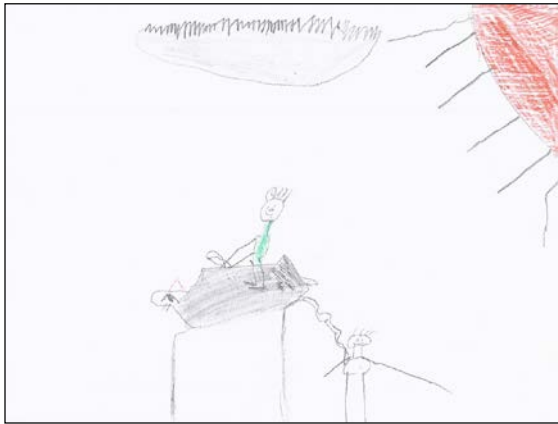
### **Raghad's Family**

Raghad is an undergraduate student, who is specializing in Development and Family Studies. Her husband is a Ph. D. student in Information Science. They have two sons: the older is seven years old and the younger is four years old. The couple has resided in the United States since getting married eight years ago. They only resided in Saudi Arabia for eight months after the husband got his master's degree, but they returned back to the United States so the husband could pursue a doctoral degree and Raghad could complete her bachelor degree.

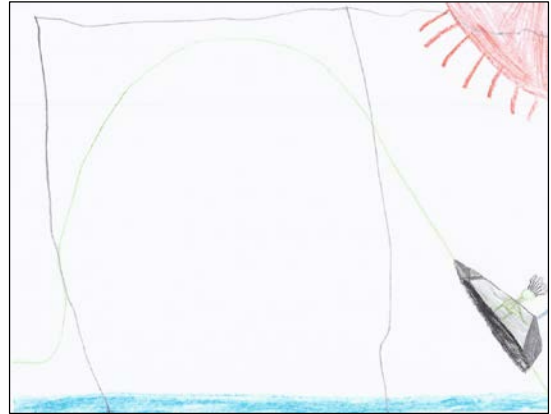
Raghad and her family love living in the United States. She believes that her children are getting a better education in the United States and becoming bilingual. She and her husband are both students, so they are very busy. She has a strong relationship with her extended family back home and believes that having them around is a great support in raising her children. She believes that her family is the most important reason for going back home. In that instance, she discussed that they would never think of living in USA forever. Raghad is a proud Saudi and has raised her children to accept being different. She considers America as an accepting community, overall. However, her main concern is her sons' religious beliefs. She discusses religious differences with them and explains Islamic beliefs constantly. She also teaches them Arabic and talks to them about

home. Her main objective is to raise good Muslim children wherever they grow up. The family plans to move to Saudi Arabia soon, and they worry about the change in the educational system for their children back home.

**Ali.** Ali is a 7-year-old boy. Although he has spent most of his life in the USA, he is a very proud Saudi boy with a high sense of belonging. He is strongly attached to Saudi Arabia and his extended family there. He even speaks to his grandfather on daily basis. He thinks America has nice places to visit and lots of fun of activities. However, he still expressed a desire to return to Saudi Arabia, and might vacation in America in the future because America has many places that he likes. In terms of friendships, Ali is a popular child at school and has a lot of friends. He expressed that likes to spend time with friends from all nationalities, although he finds it easier to communicate with Saudi sojourners because sometimes he struggles with English words.

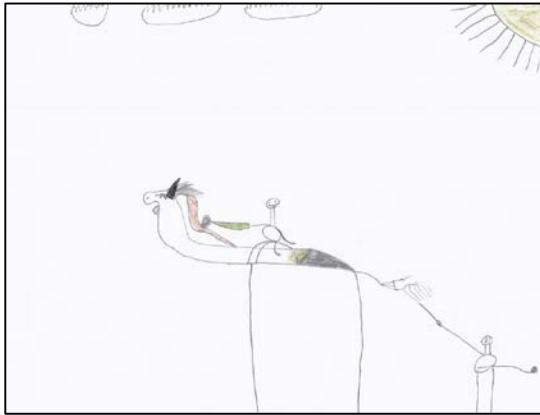


*Figure 12.* Ali's 1st self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.



*Figure 13.* Ali's 1st self-portrait in USA.





*Figure 14.* Ali's 2nd self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.



*Figure 15.* Ali's 2nd self-portrait in USA.

Similar to Ross, Ali was also one of the participants that had to be interviewed twice because of the tornado. He was still terrified from the tornado and some of his answers were influenced by his fear of the tornado. Interestingly, his some of his negative views on weather in the USA changed in the second interview. However, his overall views in both interviews were very similar on the two countries. Surprisingly, he drew almost typical drawings of himself in both countries in the first and second interview.

As can be seen, he seems happy in both pictures in Saudi Arabia and the United States. Also, in both countries he drew happy memories of experiences that he has actually had. In his pictures in Saudi Arabia, Ali drew himself riding the horse that his uncle bought him in Saudi Arabia, and his uncle walking next to the horse (Figures 12 & 14). In his drawing in the United States, he drew his first experience on a roller coaster at a local amusement park (Figures 13 & 15).

### **Sarah's Family**

Sarah is a doctoral student of chemistry. Her husband is managing a business in Saudi Arabia while living in the United States. They have three children: David is 11 years old, Emma is 8 years old, and Yahya is 5 years old. The family has been living in the United States for five years. Only Sarah and her two older children participated in the study because the youngest does not fit within the age criteria of the study.

Sarah is a very proud Saudi mother, who tries hard to support her children's Saudi identities while living the United States. She believes that their family's temporary sojourn in America is a good opportunity for her children. Sarah is pleased that her children attend gifted and talented classes in American public school, which she thinks would not be provided through Saudi school. Also, Sarah is glad that her children became fluent in the English language during their temporary stay in the United States, because she believes that English is the language of science. She discussed that this might also have a positive influence on her children's futures and careers, especially when the Saudi market now requires English proficiency. She claims that their temporary living in the United States has had a positive influence on her children's personalities. Also, she mentioned that her children love reading, and their interests and ways of thinking are more sophisticated than children raised in Saudi Arabia.

Sarah has discussed that she and her children miss their family back home. She believes that extended family is a great support in raising children. However, she believes that her nuclear family has become more independent. Being away from the family also created changes in their family roles and responsibilities in her house and has made them

closer to each other. She discussed that even her children have chores at home, while in Saudi Arabia most children do not because of having housemaids. She fears for her children to be shocked by the culture when they go back home. In her daily practices, she maintains Saudi rituals such as cooking Arabic food, listening to Saudi music, and eating on the floor sometimes. She even has the Saudi flag hung in her living room. She only speaks Arabic at home and sends her children to learn Arabic with a tutor. She believes that parents are role models for their children; if the parents show their pride about their ethnicity, then the children will be proud, too. Sarah proudly discusses her older children's sense of belonging and how they have become teachers to their little brother about Saudi Arabia and the Arabic language. She also believes that the Saudi community in the United States has supported their adjustment during their sojourn.

**David.** David is an 11-year-old boy. He came to the United States when he was six years old. He is a gifted student, who attends Expo classes (gifted and talented) in his school. He is the eldest son in his family. David loves both countries that he resided in equally. He stated, "It's really a hard choice because I love both of them." Also, the advantages of each country are clear to him; America has a better educational system, many fun places to visit, and of course his friends whom he really likes. Saudi Arabia has his beloved family and the many places that he admires when he visits home during vacations. Nonetheless, David understands very well that Saudi Arabia is where he belongs. His plan is to go back to Saudi Arabia but visit the United States frequently. Furthermore, he intends to attend college in the United States when he grows up.

In terms of friendship, David has both Saudi and American friends. However, he has mentioned that he prefers spending time with his Saudi sojourner friends a little bit more because they speak in Arabic sometimes, and they would understand Islamic practices that he does. In other words, he does not have to explain himself to them. Not that he is shy or embarrassed to tell others that he is from Saudi Arabia; he states clearly, “I am proud” and that Americans have been accepting. He thinks that he speaks good Arabic, but he is not as fluent as he is in English. He is proud that he recently has learned how to read in Arabic but wishes to be able to read chapter books in Arabic because he enjoys reading English chapter books.



Figure 16. David's drawing of self in Saudi Arabia.

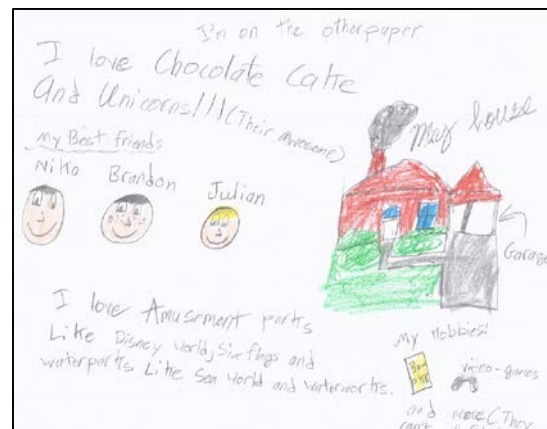


Figure 17. David's self-portrait in USA.

David included things and people that he likes in both drawings in Saudi Arabia (Figure 16) and the United States (Figure 17). He claims that he is not very good artist so he included many writings. In his drawing in Saudi Arabia, he depicted himself in the middle of the page smiling and wearing a yellow t-shirt that says, “I love Saudi Arabia.”

He also drew his grandparents from both his mother's and father's sides. He included the beach and wrote that he also likes the ship-shaped mall in Dhahran.

On the drawing of the USA, he included both drawings and written descriptions of the things he likes in the US, including his house, his friends, play stations, reading, chocolate cake, and unicorns. He did not include himself though; he explained that he could not fit in the page and that he could be found in the drawing in Saudi Arabia. When comparing the two drawings, it seems that David has a clear understanding of differences in things that can be found in both countries and that he loves things and people in both countries.

**Emma.** Emma is an 8-year-old girl. She came to the United States when she was four years old. She is a gifted student, who attends Expo classes (gifted and talented) in her school. She is the middle child in her family. Emma enjoys living in the United States and has many friends. Some of her friends are Saudis and some are Americans; she loves spending time with both of them. However, she has stronger relationships with her Saudi sojourner friends because she sees them out of school more often.

She likes the road trips that she goes on with her family. Also, she loves that America has a lot of libraries because she loves reading. She wishes Saudi Arabia had as many libraries as America because she wants to live there to be closer to her extended family. Emma wonders what schools and other after school activities are like in Saudi Arabia; she is not sure if they are equitable to the ones in America. She believes that education in the USA is much better than Saudi Arabia. Therefore, she might pursue her

higher education in the United States if she decides to become a professor like her mother.

In her interview, Emma made many comparisons between Saudi Arabia and America. She seems to see many positives in the life in the USA, such as libraries, activities, and schools. However, she claimed that she knows America better because she has lived there much longer than in Saudi Arabia. That being said, she is willing to try to live in Saudi Arabia and learn more about the life style in there. After all, she knows that she belongs to Saudi Arabia.



*Figure 18.* Emma's drawing of self in Saudi Arabia.



*Figure 19.* Emma's self-portrait in USA.

Emma drew two drawings of herself; one of which is in Saudi Arabia (Figure 18) and the other is in America (Figure 19). In the one in Saudi Arabia, she drew herself in her favorite place there, which is her grandfather's farm. In the interview, she mentioned her love for that farm many times. Also, she mentioned, "I always go to the farm and sometimes go up the hill and if I could find a stick I could pretend it is a hiking stick." She also mentioned that there are a few dogs living on the farm. A dog and a stick with a

flag on top of the hill can be seen in figure 18. Emma's other drawing is of herself in her backyard in their house in the United States. She is smiling in both pictures because she usually spends happy times in these two places.

### **Manal's Family**

Manal is a doctoral student in the United States. She is employed at a Saudi University but living temporarily in America. Her husband lives between America and Saudi Arabia, so he spends several months in Saudi Arabia and several months in the United States. They have two children: Jasmine, an 11-year-old girl, and Azoozi, an 8-year-old boy. The family had lived in the United States for five years from the onset of their marriage while earning their masters' degrees. During this time, both of their children were born. Then they returned to Saudi Arabia for three and a half years, but came again so the mother could pursue her doctoral studies in the United States. Accordingly, Manal is fully aware of the differences between living in both countries and difficulties in readjusting that they will face when they return to Saudi Arabia. She discussed in the interview how her previous stay in the United States has already changed them; they have become a "very close family."

Manal was still able to keep her extended family close to her through involving her sisters and parents in her children's lives. The children speak to their extended family more than once daily. She believes that she really needs her family's support, especially when her husband is away for long times during the year, and due to her very busy study schedule. She discussed how having very close relationships with extended family is a norm in Saudi families. She states, "we are [a] very close family so problems, happiness.

We have to share everything. I think this is the Saudi culture; sharing happiness, sadness, everything. I think this is Saudi culture.”

Manal is proud of being Saudi and tries to maintain many Saudi traditions in her house, such as cooking Saudi food, teaching her children Saudi dances, valuing family meal time, and attending all Saudi events like “Eid” dressed in their traditional outfits while living in the United States. Also, she speaks only Arabic at home and teaches her children some Islamic rituals. She discussed how modeling pride of being Saudi instills pride in her children as well. However, she maintained that it does not prevent her from enjoying life in the United States and mingling with the American people. She states, “I am trying to take advantage of everything here.” She believes that she could have both cultures in her and so do her children. She encourages them to get involved in many activities in and out of school. She believes that this is one strategy that she had followed to help her daughter adjust when she first arrived to the United States. She also attends school activities. However, she is concerned now that her daughter is in middle school, she feels that she cannot be as involved as she was in elementary school due to established parental boundaries in the middle school system.

Also, Manal discussed that mingling with the Saudi community has helped her son adjust at the beginning; when he found that there are other Saudi children at school he felt that things have not changed and became close friends with them. She believes that the community of Saudi sojourners in the United States plays an important role in supporting the children’s adjustment “because they [have] the same educational level and the same background, [and] they are Muslims [too]... [Also how] their parents came from



the same culture.” Manal argues that the acceptance of the Americans is another factor that could assist in sojourner children’s adjustment during their temporary stay. She discussed how many American friends complement her relationship with her children and their pride of being Saudi. They also ask about the lifestyle in their home country.

Her overall evaluation of their sojourn experience in the United States is positive. The most positive aspect of residing in the United States is the quality of education afforded to her children. She believes that the teaching styles are much better in the United States than Saudi Arabia. She states, “I think that here [the main objective is] how much you understand the subject, there [in Saudi Arabia] is how much you memorize and you have in your [exam] paper.” Also, she likes the variety in activities that children could do in the United States. She discussed that her children have tried different activities because of spending their childhood in United States. She states that her daughter currently plays the cello and her son plays the drums.

Nonetheless, Manal is concerned that her children do not have Saudi traits such as sweet-talking to others and respect to elders. She worries that this might prove problematic upon their return to Saudi Arabia.

Manal believes that her children have become multicultural and they have incorporated both the Saudi and the American cultures. She recognizes that they will always have the dream of returning to the United States. Currently, their plan is to go back home when she earns her degree, but she knows that her children will miss the United States. She mentioned that both of her children have expressed their intention of returning to the USA in the future for college.

**Jasmine.** Jasmine is an 11-year-old girl. She was born in the United States and lived there for seven years. She has both Saudi and American citizenship. Jasmine is highly self-confident. She loves the American culture and the friendliness of the American people. Jasmine is fond of life in the USA, and she enjoys the variety of places to visit and things to do. Moreover, she believes that Americans are accepting and more open to people from different cultures. Jasmine maintains friendships with people from around the world through school; she eagerly learns about her friends' cultures. Likewise, she enjoys relating her Saudi traditions to her friends, especially since Americans are unfamiliar with her culture. Therefore, she considers herself to be an ambassador for her country and to teach people about Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, Jasmine maintains her Saudi pride. Nevertheless, she regrets losing her mother tongue and desires to improve her Arabic before returning to Saudi Arabia to acclimate to Saudi culture better.

Considering her Saudi lineage, Jasmine is very attached to her extended family, and she misses them while in the United States. She enjoys spending time with them during vacations. She loves the atmosphere of homes with big families and the other traditions in Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, she has some concerns about living there. She realizes that she will not be entirely free to live as she pleases. Moreover, she fears inequitable treatment with her brother back home

Overall, she believes that her sojourn in the United States has been a great experience and has made her life more exiting compared to other Saudi children who have not had the opportunity to live abroad. In fact, her current plan is to return to Saudi Arabia when her mother obtains her degree. She expressed excitement about learning

Saudi history and lifestyle. She believes that Internet searches and her mother's stories are inadequate preparation; she needs to mingle with the Saudi people. However, her future plan includes returning to the United States for a college degree. She has already discussed this with her mother because they agree that education is better in the United States.

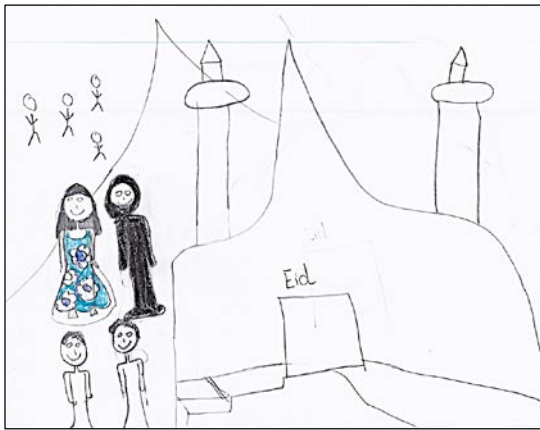


Figure 20. Jasmine's self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.

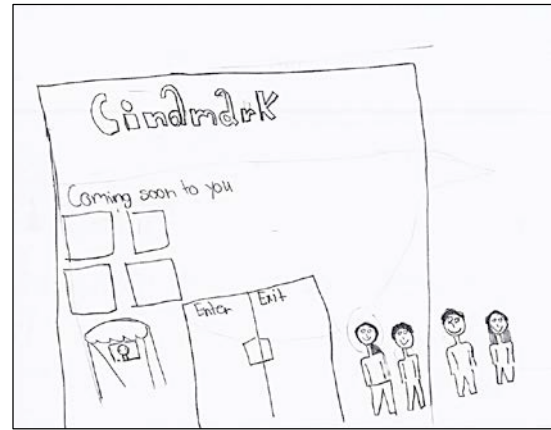


Figure 21. Jasmine's self-portrait in USA.

In Jasmine's drawing of herself in Saudi Arabia, she drew herself with her mother, father, and brother next to a mosque during "Eid" celebrations, which is publically commemorated in Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries (Figure 20). During Eid, people usually dress well. As seen, Jasmine wears a nice flowery dress in her drawing. Her mother wears an "abaya," and both her brother and father wear "thobes", the traditional male outfits in Saudi Arabia. All family members are smiling and appear happy in the drawing. In her drawing of the USA, Jasmine also depicted herself with her family going to "Cinemark" to watch a movie (Figure 21). The family is dressed in casual clothing, and they have smiles on their faces. Jasmine's drawings show her understanding

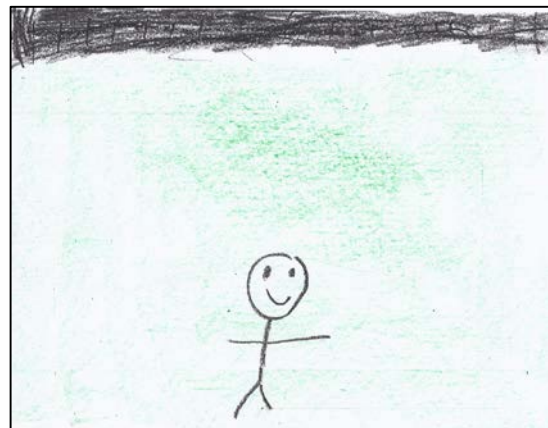
of cultural differences; specifically this is apparent in the clothing and buildings that she has drawn in both countries. Jasmine illustrated cherished moments and had smiley faces in both places. She provides positive views about both countries and understands their varied cultures.

**Azoozi.** Azoozi is an 8-year-old boy who was born in the United States of America and has lived there for five years. He has both Saudi and American citizenship and literally belongs to both countries. In his interview, he discussed that his life in the United States is fun. He loves his school and other fun places in the United States. However, his best friends are Saudi sojourners. On the other hand, he seems very attached to his extended family in Saudi Arabia, especially his cousins. Even though he believes that the best benefit of residing in the United States is bilingualism, he regrets that his Arabic is not as strong as his English. He feels that he needs to learn Arabic, but he is not sure why.

When asked where he prefers to live, he states that he misses his family and wishes to live with them, but he likes life in the United States, too. He has decided that it depends on where his family is at that time, but he definitely will visit the United States and maybe reside there for a while. He has many fond memories of the United States.



*Figure 22. Azoozi's self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.*



*Figure 23. Azoozi's self-portrait in USA.*

In Azoozi's drawing in Saudi Arabia, he drew himself walking on the beach (Figure 22). Azoozi's extended family lives in Jeddah, a city located on the Red Sea. In his other drawing in the USA, he drew himself in front of a green background (Figure 23). He said that the picture shows him in his backyard. He also depicted himself as an unclothed stick figure. As can be seen in Azoozi's two pictures, he has chosen two places he likes in both countries, and he appears smiling in both places.

### **Amal's Family**

Amal is a Saudi student in the United States. Her husband is a doctoral candidate. They have three children: Nada, an 8-year-old girl; Faris, a 6-year-old boy; and Salma, an 18-month-old girl. Only Amal and her two older children, Nada and Faris, participated in the study because the youngest does not fit within the age criteria of the study. The family has resided in the United States for studying purposes and plans to return when

they complete their degrees. Currently, they have been living in the United States for six years.

Amal is a traditional Saudi woman who wears a colored “abaya” and “niqab” (face cover). She is a proud Saudi, who possesses a strong sense of tradition. She reflects that when they arrived to the United States, she was unhappy and worried about adjusting to the new culture. However, she and her children have adjusted to life in the United States as the time passed. She shares that she never had to work on her children’s adjustment to the new culture because they were very young, and the adjustment occurred naturally through interactions with other children at school. Moreover, she has noticed that living in the United States has had some positive influences on their family’s lifestyle. One of the positives effects is the change in family roles in their home; she is pleased that her husband has become more involved with the children. Moreover, the family has formed stronger familial bonds, and has become more organized. Additionally, she discusses that she has learned some new child rearing techniques through her children’s school, which she claims to be much more effective compared with the common techniques among her family in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, Amal discusses how her children have learned good manners through their schoolteachers, such as using polite words when talking to others (e.g. thank you, please, etc.).

On the other hand, Amal expressed a myriad of worries about the possible negative influences on her children due to their sojourn in the United States. For example, she fears that her children are assimilating some behaviors that are unacceptable in the Saudi culture, such as maintaining close relationships with members of the opposite sex.

She believes that America is the land of freedom, and that what is acceptable in the United States is not acceptable in Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, Amal considers their vocational travels to Saudi Arabia and the support of other Saudi sojourners to be an asset. She mentions “I feel that having other children from the same country makes them more confident.”

Amal tries to enrich her children’s ethnic identities through maintaining Saudi rituals such as Saudi cuisine and “Eid” celebration. She highly esteems Islamic religious frameworks and reinforces the Arabic language. She sends her children to an Arabic tutor and tries to speak Arabic at home most of the time. She worries about her children’s adjustments to Saudi schools, and she plans on enrolling them in an international school, where they will learn Arabic. Also, she maintains close contact with their extended family in Saudi Arabia.

She plans on returning to Saudi Arabia as soon as her husband finishes his doctoral studies, and says that they would never consider living in the United States permanently. She wants to reside in Saudi Arabia, so her children will interact with other Saudis and be reared like other Saudi children. Although her daughter has internalized both Saudi and American cultures and her son is actually more Americanized, they still learn Saudi traditions and language easily during annual visits to Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, she remains optimistic about their return, and hopes that her children adjust easily.

**Nada.** When Nada entered the United States, she was only 2 years old, and now she is 8 years old. She has spent most of her life in the United States. Although she likes

living in the United States and has many friends, she has established a sense of belonging to Saudi Arabia. She discussed that she has many friends from both Saudi Arabia and the United States. She and her Saudi friends converse about Saudi Arabia with their American friends. They even try to teach some of their friends Arabic. She stated, “Salma [Saudi friend] actually helps me teach her [American friend] the alphabets. She [their American friend] learned the Arabic alphabet faster than me. I learned it in like four weeks and she learned it in three days.” She also says that she talks with her friends about Islam. She stated, “Juliana, she was Christian and once she found out that some of her friends like Tamara and Nada and the other Nada and me were Muslims, she now wants to be a Muslim too.” Then she disclaims “But her aunt doesn’t like Muslims, so she keeps it a secret.” She continues, “She knows like everything... What to do. She knows how to... She says ‘bismillah’ before she eats and say ‘alhamdulillah.’” Even though Nada has many American friends, she states that she does not always find the exact English words in her conversations with her friends. Therefore, she prefers hanging out with her Saudi friends. Also, she mentions that she trusts them. She states, “I trust them because they are Saudi. I trust them more because they’re Muslims, and they won’t lie because Muslims don’t lie.”

Although she considers America exciting and “cool”, she aspires to reside in Saudi Arabia with her family. Also, she anticipates learning more about the desert in Saudi Arabia. She is contemplating reading a book about Saudi deserts soon. She anticipates that she will miss her friends in the United States when she returns to Saudi Arabia. She plans to visit New York one day when she grows up and get married.





*Figure 24. Nada's self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.*



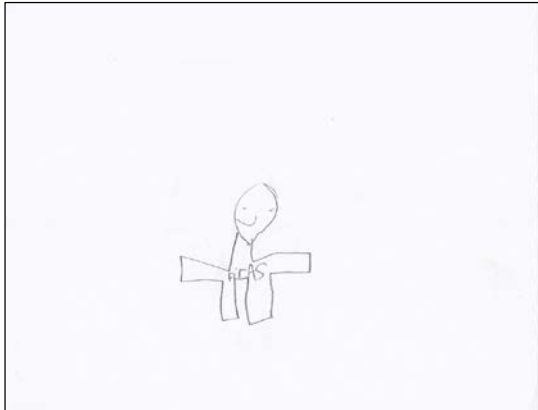
*Figure 25. Nada's self-portrait in USA.*

In Nada's drawing in Saudi Arabia, she drew herself, her mother, and her father standing under a huge Saudi Arabian flag (Figure 24). She depicted the green Saudi flag with some scripts and a sword. When asked about the writing on the flag, she was uncertain of the exact words inscribed upon it. Her mother is dressed in her "abaya" with her faced covered, and her father is dressed in a "thobe", the traditional Saudi Arabian male outfit. In Nada's drawing in the USA, she drew herself at Six Flags, an amusement park in the United States, which is one of her favorite places, as she mentioned during the interview (Figure 25).

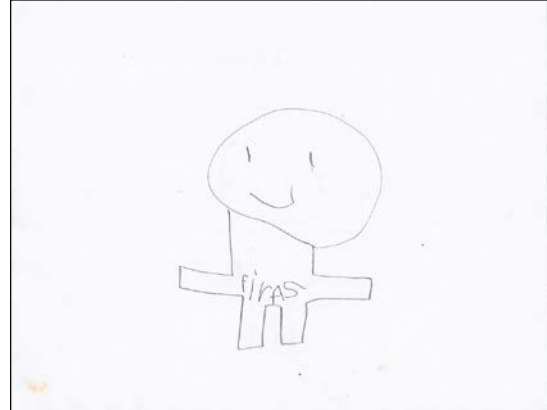
**Faris.** Two months prior to the interview, Faris turned six years old. He is the youngest participant in this study. Faris's answers during to the interview questions sounded immature and lacking of cultural differences awareness between the two countries. Despite being born and residing in the United States most of his life, Faris demonstrated a passion for Saudi Arabia. He discussed that he misses his family in Saudi Arabia, his grandmother's cooking, and his family's home in there. Faris has a few Saudi

friends, who go to school with him in the United States. Faris maintains that Saudi sojourner friends are the closest to him, especially since they speak Arabic like him. It is not that Faris does not speak English well; on the contrary, he speaks English fluently. He likes to use Arabic like a secret language with his Saudi friends in front of others, when he does not want them to understand what they are saying.

Like other Saudi children living in America, Faris mentioned that he enjoys reading and participating in fun activities in the US. Although he enjoys his American lifestyle, he plans to return to Saudi Arabia to be closer to his extended family. He likes that there are a lot of Muslims residing in Saudi Arabia, because as he states, “I like Muslims, because they’re good and they pray and they do stuff for God.”



*Figure 26.* Faris's self-portrait in Saudi Arabia.



*Figure 27.* Faris's self-portrait in USA.

Faris's two drawings of himself are very similar in both countries. He illustrated himself alone and smiling in both drawings. He appears almost identically in both drawings, aside for the size difference. He is smaller in the one in Saudi Arabia (Figure 26) than the one in America (Figure 27). The researcher explained the absence of cultural

details in Faris's drawings as an indication of his lack of awareness of cultural differences between the two cultures.

### **Presentation of Themes and Subthemes**

This multiple-case study analyzed the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children residing temporarily in the United States. Two main areas were explored. The first area that the researcher investigated was Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnicities, and analyzed how their attitudes have influenced their parental practices. It also explored other factors that shape the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children. The second area that the researcher explored was Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity while living temporarily in the United States. Transcriptions of mothers and children's interviews were coded, and then related codes were clustered together leading into emerging themes. Table 6 presents all emerging themes and subthemes under each research question. Actual quotes from the participants were included as supportive evidence to explanations of themes and subthemes. In some situations where grammatical errors distracted from the meaning of the responses, editing was made and indicated within brackets.

Table 6.  
*Themes and Subthemes*

	Themes	Subthemes
RQ1: What are Saudi mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnic identity during their temporary stay in the United States?	Privileges	Better Education
		English Proficiency
		Personality Development
	Concerns	Cultural Discontinuity
		Jeopardizing the Ethnic Identity
		Change of Concerns Throughout the Sojourn
	Factors that Shape the Ethnic Identity of Saudi Sojourner Children	Age and Personality
		Parental Role
		Community within the Community
		Extended Families
		Travels Back Home
RQ2: What are Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity during their temporary stay in the United States?	Sense of belonging	The Host Culture
		I know I am Saudi
		Little Teachers (Ambassadors)
		The Need to Learn More about Home
	Preferences	Learning Arabic
		America
		Saudi Arabia
		Future plans
	Friendship	Multicultural Identity
		Friendship with Other Sojourners
		Friends from Around the Globe

**RQ1: What are Saudi mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnic identity during their temporary stay in the United States?**

Saudi sojourners mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the ethnic identity of their children while living temporarily in the United States was the focus of this study. Three major themes were identified in this area. The first theme that emerged is mothers'

positive attitudes regarding the privileges of their children's American experience. The second theme that emerged is Saudi mothers' concerns regarding raising their children in the United States. The last theme that was identified is factors that Saudi mothers believe shape their children's perception of their ethnic identity. Each of the three major themes included several subthemes. The following section presents themes and subthemes as previously identified.

**RQ1 theme one: Privileges.** Saudi sojourner mothers contended that their children have received many privileges from being raised in the United States. They discussed various advantages offered to their children, yet three specific subthemes emerged during their interviews, which are: better education, English proficiency, and personality development.

***Better education.*** Saudi mothers expressed their pleasure with the education their children are getting in the American public schools during their sojourn. They unanimously affirmed the quality education that their children are privy to in the United States. Malak contended that the American educational system encourages critical thinking and she stated, "I think their personalities is shaped better here with the education system, because they [teachers] embrace the critic side of them [children][and] analytic thinking. They gain different skills; I do not think that public Saudi schools will do the same for them". Furthermore, Malak claimed that her children's education prompted her to move her family to the United States during her doctoral studies despite her spouse's residence in Saudi Arabia. She said, "We chose that because we thought that

this will benefit me and benefit the kids because they are going to get maybe better education here in the U.S.” *[Sic]*.

By the same token, Sarah expressed her satisfaction of her children’s participation in gifted and talented classes offered at their local public school. She maintained:

They have in their school these EXPO classes, which is for talented students and my kids, actually both of them, go to the talented classes. I think this is actually very good for them. I know that in the Saudi schools they do not have it like this, so in this class they learn more science and more things that. These are all positives for them.

In like manner, Manal tacitly acknowledged the benefits of an American education; however, she expressed concerns regarding her children’s abilities to acclimate to the Saudi educational system. She said:

They will not have an easy way to learn. The philosophy of education in Saudi Arabia is totally different than here [America]. You know, I think that here is [the concentration is on] how much you understand the subject. There [it] is [on] how much you memorize and you have in your [exam] paper.

In a similar fashion to Manal’s perceptions, Raghad implied the value of an American education; simultaneously, she conveyed her anxiety regarding the differences between the Saudi and the American educational philosophies. She stated, “adjusting to the educational systems there [will be] a big challenge. We have a different school system and different teaching styles, so I am just worried about [my children’s] adjusting to the educational system.”

As evidenced by Saudi mothers' enrollment in American universities, they have demonstrated a belief in the superior nature of an education in the United States. Moreover, they indicated that their children might attend American universities, as well. Manal mentioned, "From now they are saying, they want to continue their [college] education here [in America]. They don't want to study in Saudi Arabia" *[sic]*. She also mentioned that her older daughter dreams of attending Harvard.

*Relationship with school.* When the researcher asked the mother about their relationship with their children's schools, they demonstrated some hesitation. All of the mothers indicated that they had busy studying schedules, yet they attended parent conference meetings and major events. A few mothers mentioned that they volunteer at their children's schools when their schedule permits. For example, Raghad stated, "I visit my son's [school] I would say once a month to have lunch there, I meet his teacher, [and] I volunteer in many activities like Field day or Halloween parties." Mothers believed that such interactions between school and home assisted in their children's adjustments. For instance, Malak stated, "That might help them adjust better, maybe [during] the first year." With the same sentiment, Raghad said, "It helps. He [my son] is willing to show that he is different; even sometimes I wear a scarf, and he is just proud 'This is mom, even though she looks different, but she is here'" *[sic]*.

A few mothers claimed that they have acquired new parenting techniques through their interactions with their children's schools. For example, Amal asserted that her child rearing practices had changed since she moved to the United States. When she compared her practices with her Saudi familial practices, she recognized the distinctions. Amal

claimed, “I think we are different. We just use timeout or I would not buy something for you, but in Saudi Arabia they sometimes use hitting or use some bad words or like this” *[sic]*. When the researcher asked her where she learned those techniques, she replied, “I just learned from them [my children]. When they came back from school, they told me the teachers [applied this technique].” Similarly, Norah shared that her children’s teachers had provided her with some parenting ideas dealing with certain problems her children are faced. The researcher transcribed the following conversation:

Researcher: Would you say that your way with the kids has changed since you moved here?

Norah: Yeah. I think because their school helped us in how to raise our kids.

Researcher: Did you get any parenting [advices or ideas]?

Norah: Yeah ideas and if we have a problem I could ask the teachers and she would give me some advice of what I can do at home, so I can fix the problem.

In addition to educators’ input, Manal affirmed that interaction with American people encouraged her children to maintain open lines of communications with their parents. She stated, “Because they are in school, and the school is a different culture than the Saudi culture, so they are seeing more stuff. So, they come [home] and [say] ‘We heard this today, so what does mean?’” She admitted that she was unaccustomed to such practices; however, she changed and kept the lines of communication open to her children. In her opinion, it had strengthened the bonds with her children because they felt free to talk to her and desired to learn from her. She mentioned that her son once asked her about “sex.” Initially, she was shocked because sex is a tabooed topic in Saudi



Arabia, but she placed her discomfort aside and engaged in a mature discussion with her son.

*Reading.* Saudi mothers identified reading as one of the attributes that children gained through American schools. They expressed their pride of their children's love of reading and of their reading habits. For example, Sarah stated, "My kids now love reading very much. This is very nice. I don't think that reading is that popular in Saudi Arabia; they don't enforce it [in there]." In fact, reading was a topic that all children mentioned during their interviews. All of the children identified reading as either as a favorite hobby or as a self-education tool. The researcher then added reading to the code list.

Those were some of advantages that Saudi mothers believed their children were gaining through the American educational system. Another advantage that Saudi mothers' thought that their children have gained because of being raised in the United States is learning English.

*English proficiency.* Most of the Saudi mothers expressed their satisfaction with their children's fluency in English. Saudi children raised in the United States spoke mainly in English, and they had a native-like accent. For example, Raghad described the language acquisition of her youngest child, "He went daycare early and I would consider his mother language to be English" [*sic*]. Also, Manal described her son, "He speaks English very well; he has the [American] accent."

Since English is taught as a second language in Saudi schools, all mothers are glad that their children have strong English language acquisition. Moreover, the ability to

utilize English well will promote their children's future ambitions. For example, Norah stated, "I think their English can also have a positive effect on their jobs, because you know, in Saudi Arabia they need employees that speak very good English" [sic]. Sarah confirmed that English proficiency would allow her children to attain better knowledge. She stated:

They learn English so that means they will know more; they will have more knowledge from other resources not just the Arabic resources and of course the English resources... It is larger and much better, especially science. I have this problem [laughs], so I think my children will not. I think it will affect them positively, because career in Saudi Arabia [requires] English mostly, so this is a positive thing.

***Personality development.*** Mothers expressed their pleasure with the positive influences they have noticed in their children's personalities. Saudi children have gained some attributes because of growing up in the United States such as acceptance, responsibility, and confidence.

***Acceptance.*** Saudi sojourner mothers noticed that their children became respectful and accepting to people with different cultures, since they also were sojourners and had a different culture themselves. For example Raghada stated:

They can be open minded and accepting to others, since they were in another culture. So, I think when they grow up, they will be accepting others. [They will think that] it's ok to be different [and] it's ok to move to another culture.

*Responsibility.* Some mothers mentioned that the Saudi Arabian lifestyle differs from the American lifestyle. The mothers discussed the prevalence of service professionals, such as maids and chauffeurs, within homes in Saudi Arabia. Since American families did not develop a necessity for such service providers within the home, their traditional Saudi familial roles changed while living in the United States. Both fathers and children now take more responsibilities and help the mothers with house chores. Sarah explained, “They also now learned how to take responsibility [and] how to help at home. I actually give them responsibilities, many responsibilities; I mean if they were in Saudi Arabia I don’t think they will actually do.”

*Confidence.* Some mothers have noticed that their children became more confident since they moved to the United States. Norah thought that activities at school have helped her children build a better confidence. She explained:

I saw something with my daughter, at the beginning she was so shy, she couldn’t get with friends easily. In Saudi Arabia, all of her friends are only the kids of my friends, but now I saw her became more confident, especially when she went to choir and band at school. I think she broke the fear that she used to have.

Malak also thought that the experiences that gained while living in the United States have helped her daughter to have a stronger personality and become more confident. She said:

I hope and I think it will affect them positively, because we’ve been through a lot and it was very challenging and it was different. I can see that in their personality, especially Laura she is maybe more stronger and more confident. Everyone thinks

she is nice. She is sociable and I hope it will affect them as grownups and they will have strong personalities.

**RQ1 theme two: Concerns.** While all Saudi sojourner mothers delineated the privileges their children were gaining because of being reared in the United States, many of them expressed strong concerns. Most of these concerns related to cultural discontinuity and jeopardy of their children's ethnic identities. Mother also reported change in their concerns throughout the sojourn period.

***Cultural discontinuity.*** Some mothers expressed their worry about the potential negative impact American culture might have on their children. For example, Amal stated, "We have [a] different culture and we live in [a] different society. They just get [a trait] that is different from us, and that maybe something that we will not accept in our religion or culture."

Saudi mothers cite specific examples to certain traits that they do not admire in the American culture. For example, Saudi mothers thought that the United States grants unconditioned freedom. Amal stated, "You know here in the United States there is freedom and this is I think some[thing] negative. They [might] get something that's not acceptable at all in our culture."

Another complaint that Saudi mothers expressed was children's disrespect towards elders. Malak stated, "Kids here [in the United State do] not having enough respect to their families. I do not think American people embrace this as much as we do.

It didn't affect them now, but this is my own fear." Norah discussed her concerns about the way her children treat older people. She stated:

You know in our country, when we speak with our teachers or older people, we respect them; we can't talk back. But I saw my daughter now; she is more confident, and when she is talking with her teacher, I would not say disrespecting her, but [she] talks back sometimes.

It seems that Saudi mothers might view children's reactions or attitudes as disrespectful, while they are considered acceptable attitudes in the American culture. Accordingly, it appears that Saudi mothers' concerns were due mainly to cultural differences between the Saudi and American culture.

***Jeopardizing the ethnic identity.*** Saudi sojourner mothers were troubled that their sojourn in the United States might affect their children's sense of belonging to Saudi Arabia and could result in the loss of their ethnic identities.

Amal expressed that her daughter had been ashamed of the way her mother dressed and had asked her not come to school. She stated, "She sometimes just feels shy with her friends when I just come to her school because I am covering my face and she just feels shy and she doesn't want people to look at me" [*sic*]. However, Amal claimed that she had talked to her daughter about it all the time and that her daughter understands that some Muslims cover their faces. But Amal decided to respect her daughter's desire, and she asked her husband to attend all events and meetings at their daughter's school.

Additionally, some mothers explained how her children do not know some small details of the Saudi culture, because they have not lived within an actual Saudi culture in Saudi Arabia. For example, Norah expressed:

I also worry about their identity. Like I said, we have rules there they got used to, but they do not know them, because they didn't see them or they didn't live them. One more thing, I know it is silly, but for me it is important, like in our country you know when we go to parties, we dance [to] Arabic [music]. But now I see my daughter... she doesn't know how to dance the Arabic way. Even the smallest cultural things they are not learning them, because they not living them.

She believed that returning to Saudi Arabia and living within the culture would be the best way for her children to attain real Saudi identities. She stated, "I think both of them are Americanized because now both of them are going through teenage [years] and their community in school is all American. They got that from them. I want to go back to Saudi Arabia, so that they can have their culture back." Mothers showed some concerns regarding the ethnic identity of their children, which could be noticed in their jeopardy of religious beliefs and jeopardy of their mother tongue.

*Religious concerns.* While some mothers expressed their desire to protect the ethnic identities of their children, the majority outlined their main concern as protecting the religion of their children. Norah explained, "Our culture belongs to our religion, every single thing that we do belongs to our religion even when we smile at other people, this is part of our religion; we get some good deeds" [*sic*]. Almost all the mothers mentioned one or more Islamic practices when they were asked about the ways that they had

attempted to maintain the ethnic identities of their children. For example, the researcher and Malak discussed specific Saudi habits and rituals at home. The conversation was transcribed as following:

Researcher: What specific Saudi habits or rituals do you practice in your family in your daily life?

Malak: For our religion Islam, we do our daily praying and oral praying, we talk about some religious stories that we have, that's on daily or weekly basis. And on yearly basis, we attend Islamic events and attend Eid prayers and other stuff in the Islamic community and we try as much as we can to attend.

Researcher: Are there any specific Saudi things or are they are mainly Islamic?

Malak: Well, it is combined.

Malak's responses demonstrated a lack of clear distinction between cultural expressions and religious precepts. For some mothers, compromising specific cultural expressions equated to compromised religious precepts. The Saudi mothers expressed their commitment to working on protecting their children's religious beliefs as a way of protecting their ethnic identities. Norah expressed:

Of course me and their dad have to work on teaching them all the traditions and cultural practices. As I said these are connected 100% with our Islamic religion that we get from Quraan and Sunna. So, I should be mentoring everything that they do and try to connect that with the religion [*sic*].

In addition to the preservation of religious virtue, the Saudi mothers fretted over their children's confusion between Islam and Christianity. Amal mentioned, "I talk with

my daughter ‘we are Muslims and there is a prophet Mohammed’. Sometimes she say[s] ‘Oh Jesus’. I don’t want her to take this. I think that will affect her [understanding of Islam]” *[sic]*.

However, some mothers indicated their children’s abilities to distinguish between the religious philosophies as they grew up. Raghad explained:

Sometimes he asks me ‘why don’t go to church?’ for example [or] ‘Why we do not celebrate Christmas?’ He would ask me [about] something that we do not practice, but as he grows up he has become more aware that it is okay to be different and [that] we’re Muslims and some [people] are not and [that] it is ok.

Similarly, Malak explained:

The religion is main conflict that we have in here, I need to remind them a lot about our religion, and talk to them about our religion and try to practice our religion, because you know, in school and community it is totally different. So, I think the religion is the most that concerns me.

On the other hand, some mothers thought that helping their children maintain Islamic practices become harder as they grew up, since they become obliged to practice certain Islamic acts of worships when they reach a certain age. For example, Sarah explained:

They are kids, and there aren’t any religious challenges, but now I care about David. If like you know... it is good that [when] we fast[ed] Ramadan [in the past years] it wasn’t [during] school time [meaning it was summer break and children were out of school]. So he actually [was able to] fast the whole month here.



Most of the Saudi mothers in this study prioritized the Islamic beliefs over all other aspects of the Saudi identity. Raghad said:

The most important thing is not [maintaining] the Saudi identity [but maintaining] the Muslim identity. So a Muslim can be a part of any culture in my opinion. The most important thing for me is just to be a good person and maintain any [cultural] identity as long as he is a good person.

Overall, Islamic emphasis was evident in all Saudi mothers' opinions, and was one of their major concerns regarding their children's sojourn in the United States.

*Jeopardizing mother tongue.* Most of the children in this study were either very young when they moved to the United States or were native born Americans. Because the children had resided most of their lives in the USA, their Arabic language had been supplanted by their exposure to English. Norah maintained the primary reason for this language shift had been school attendance. She stated, "This [is] the hardest part with my kids. They usually use English more than Arabic because it is easier for them, because they actually use it a lot at school and they do spend a lot of time at school." Similarly, Sarah expressed some concern regarding the Arabic language of her children. She stated, "So that's why I am trying to speak Arabic with them all the time, even though they answer me in English, but they understand me."

Perhaps, some of the major reasons that Saudi mothers insisted that their children learn Arabic was to be able to read and understand the Quran, and to maintain their Arabic heritage. Sarah stated, "They still need to read Quran, and it is my language. I always tell my kids 'Your mom's language is Arabic. Your mom doesn't speak English,

you have to know your mom's language.'” She consistently maintained, “‘This is your first language.’ I know they speak English more, but I just want them to learn.”

Saudi mothers noticed their children's lack of native language proficiency as problematic. Although Saudi sojourner children understood conversational Arabic, but they lacked mastery of formal Arabic, known as “Fus-ha.” Also, most of their children did not learn written Arabic. Norah stated, “You know if we didn't work on the Arabic; they are going to be in trouble.” In order to rectify this situation, some Saudi mothers had employed private language tutors for their children. Norah stated, “I got them an Arabic tutor to teach them Arabic so they learn how to write and read in Arabic, but it is expensive.” Although the tutoring had been helpful, the children had learned only basic Arabic. Mothers still worry about their performance at an Arabic school in Saudi Arabia, because they are not as advanced as their peers at the same grades who attend Saudi schools; Sarah expressed, “I think the only concern for me is the Arabic language when they go to school and study, because I am thinking maybe I will enroll them in [an] international school, especially [during] the first year, and then they will be fine in a regular school.” In general, all Saudi mothers have expressed concerns about their children's loss of heritage language, and the difficulties their children might face in Saudi schools.

***Change of concerns throughout the sojourn.*** When Saudi families first arrived in the United States, they made many adjustments, both as adults and as children. Many mothers shared stories on how their children had a difficult time adjusting to the American culture. For example, Sarah described how her eldest son was ashamed to tell

his friends at school that he was not from the United States or tell them anything about his culture. She stated:

I think it was Eid and I told him tell your friends it's Eid. Let me give you some candy and some stuff and you should tell them... celebrate with them... talk about that... anything, and he said 'No, I will not say anything... anything.' I forgot what was the incident, but I told him that you can tell your friends that you can speak two languages... that you know Arabic. And he said 'No... no... no, I will not tell them anything... anything.'

Nonetheless, as the time passed and the families' journeys came closer to an end, their concerns began to shift. They became more concerned about the future adjustment upon returning to in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, they placed more effort in embracing their children's ethnic identities. Malak explained,

I did not think about that too much, because I was focusing on making them adapt to the American culture. But now I need them to get that back, because we are going back and they will need to adjust to Saudi environment again.

Similarly, Sarah stated:

At this time, I am trying to embrace their Saudi identity more now, especially that the American culture I think... it happens automatically, because they were exposed to the American culture all of their life, so and there [is] no [exposure to] Saudi culture you know unless from me.

Many mothers have begun to worry that their children might have difficult adjustment when they return home and try to fit within the Saudi culture. Norah discussed with the researcher:

Norah: I think for now, the other one... embrace their Saudi identity.

Researcher: Why?

Norah: Because they do not see a lot of Saudi people here, so probably they are going to lose it by being here!

Researcher: And why is that important?

Norah: Because when we go back, they are going to be in trouble [with] the society in there.

Researcher: You mentioned you just started this now? So at the beginning you didn't care about embracing their Saudi ethnicity?

Norah: At the beginning no!

Researcher: Why is that?

Norah: Because now they are getting older and I saw them losing it! They are actually losing it... I do not how to explain it but mmm, they became more Americans than Saudis, even their thoughts, the way they dress and even the attitudes, [and] how they speak.

**RQ1 theme three: Factors that shape the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children.** Saudi mothers identified different factors that influence the ethnic identities of their children while being raised in the USA.

***Age and personality.*** Some children had easier transitions than others. Most mothers explained that this was mainly related to children's age or their personalities. It seems that in general younger children had easier adjustments compared with their older siblings. Malak explained the difference between the adjustment of her daughter and younger son. She stated, "When we came here he [meaning Ross] was younger, and she [meaning Laura] was aware that there were two different places that she lived in. I think for him no." Likewise, Manal explained to the researcher the difference in the adjustment of her children because of their different personalities:

Manal: I think Jasmine is more adjusted.

Researcher: Why?

Manal: You know I haven't thought about it before mmm...[maybe because she is] more open minded, more open to experience new things. I think it depends on her personality. Azoozi mmm... I do not know... he speaks English very well, he has the accent, but the style of life, he like more the Saudi style.

Moreover, as discussed earlier under mothers' change of concerns throughout the sojourn in the United States, it seems that the older the children got, the more efforts the mothers had to do to help maintain their ethnic identity.

***Parental role.*** Saudi mothers understood that they played a major role in enriching their children's ethnic identities. Amal stated, "Our role, mine and their dad's for sure is the most influential." Like Amal, Norah thinks that the parental role is crucial in maintaining children's ethnic identities. She stated, "Of course, me and their dad have to work on teaching them all the traditions and cultural practices."

One of the most influential effects of parents is acting like role models. Sarah explained, “Kids tend to do what their parents do and [what] the parents say and if the parents are proud of that, they will be proud of that. They will mimic everything that parents say or do.” Also, Manal stated, “I’m proud. I think Jasmine and Azoozi are seeing that on me.” Accordingly, Saudi mothers believed that modeling being proud Saudis to their children is one way to help their children be proud of their Saudi ethnicity.

In addition to acting like role models, parents’ practices of Saudi rituals at home help children learn and live the Saudi culture. Sarah expressed:

I usually cook Saudi food, like rice and meat... something traditional, and sometimes we eat lunch on [the] floor like in Saudi Arabia [laughs] and mmm what else? Mmm... We try sometimes to pray like ‘jama’a’ [Arabic: Friday prayer] sometimes. Well if my husband has time they go to (masjid) the mosque to pray there. I usually put Saudi songs and Arabic songs and they love it. So now when we go anywhere they ask for Arabic songs [laughs] every time. And that’s because I want them to listen to Arabic. I want them actually to have the Saudi culture or the Arabic culture more than the American culture. Like I do not mind them to listen to the American music, I know that they listen [to American music] everywhere; I don’t want to have all the American culture [only]. And I also watch with them some Saudi cartoons or some [of] my childhood [shows] that I watched [when I was a child]... Yeah we saw Conan, we saw Georgie, [and] we saw Heidi. And I saw all [of] that with them... I saw it with them because I just

want them to [know] that I like these... and these are important for your mom, maybe they [will] think the same and they love it.

Additionally, Saudi mothers involved their children in traditional celebrations from their home culture. Manal mentioned, “We make sure that we go to the celebration, the holy celebration ‘Eid’... I encouraged them last few years to wear the Saudi ‘thobe.’”

Parental role also included maintaining their children’s religious beliefs and mother tongue. Some mothers discussed how sometimes they educate their children about their Islamic practices and history through different activities. Malak said:

For our religion Islam, we do our daily praying and oral praying, we talk about some religious stories that we have, that’s on daily or weekly basis. And on yearly basis, we attend Islamic events and attend Eid prayers and other stuff in the Islamic community.

Also, Raghad explained:

I teach them some Arabic and some parts of the holy book. Sometimes we watch YouTube videos about like famous Muslim role models or our prophet. And sometimes we feel just homesick and we open the TV and watch ... even in Google maps and see our house back home... We do it sometimes.

As Raghad mentioned, mothers can help maintain the Arabic language of their children since they are the only source of Arabic for their children. Sarah explained how it is important that she as a mother speak only Arabic at home to help their children maintain their mother tongue. She mentioned, “I speak in Arabic all the time. They don’t listen to someone speak Arabic, only me.”

***Community within the community.*** The common pattern that appeared in all Saudi mothers' discussions was their tendency to form very strong relationships with other Saudi families in the local area during their hiatus in the United States. In other words, they formed a strong Saudi community within the American community; it was their mechanism to combat homesickness. Malak described:

We have a very strong Saudi community in here. When I lived about a year in California, I did have Saudi friends, but they did not have any children. And then when we came here there was a whole group of kids at the same age of my kids and they were very very happy to have them and they are really attached to each other. They see some of them on daily basis in school and every weekend. So, I can tell they have a really strong relationship with them.

The Saudi community supported the cultivation of their ethnic identity through communal celebrations and gatherings. Malak stated, "I think it improves their sense of belonging to Saudi Arabia, they feel proud when they are among them and they feel more comfortable and happy when they are with their Arab friends more than Americans." Likewise, Norah explained how mingling with other Saudi friends in the United States covered up for missing families back home. She stated:

It helps. Sometimes we miss our family back home; we even miss the food and the celebrations. But when we do these things with each other, we feel kind of relieved that we have a little bit of Saudi Arabia in here.

In addition to providing cultural support, their Saudi friends also helped some children adjust in school. Manal explained how having Saudi children at the same school



had helped her younger son adjust to the new life in the United States. She stated, “He didn’t have a problem. You know why? Because when he came, he found Saudi friends, so he was like ‘ok, it’s the same but in [a] different environment.’” Similarly, Sarah explained how her eldest son struggled when they arrived to the United States because he was the only Saudi at school. Having Saudi friends helped him later on. She stated:

Because he had to go to school and so I think he found that students are a little bit different from where he came from. So, he was shy to say that he speaks Arabic or that he’s Saudi or he’s Muslim or anything. Especially that there weren’t any other Saudis or maybe also that the Saudi student that actually he knew at that time they were little.... He [began to] adjust when he had Saudi friends at school... You know these friends actually who helped him the most. And now he confidently identifies himself ‘I am Saudi’ and you know ‘A Muslim’ and ‘I speak Arabic.’

As seen in the discussion above, the Saudi community served as a support group and helped boost children’s confidence, because they found that there were others like them in this new and very different place. Amal stated, “I feel that having other children from the same country makes them more confident.” Perhaps the fact that the children had very similar circumstances plays a role in such strong connections. Manal stated, “the Saudi friends, they are also [from] Saudi [Arabia] but they are adapted to the American culture too.”

Similarly, Sarah explained:

I mean, they (Saudi friends) play a role in supporting them because they are the same, so they talk about Saudi [Arabia]. Actually most of them want to go back to Saudi [Arabia]. They talk about their cousins, like who have most cousins and you know like these stuff, [and] where do they live [there]. So, they talk about their houses there and what they have in Saudi.

***Extended families.*** All conversations with Saudi mothers and children included their strong connections to their extended families back home. Mothers and children explained how much they missed their families while living in the USA. For example, Raghad explained, “I cannot think of something negative, rather than being away from family.” Likewise, the families back home missed their children and grandchildren during their stay in the United States. Raghad said, “my mom and his grandparent they would always give him gifts and take care of him, especially that he [lives] away from them.” Accordingly, all mothers maintained connections to their extended families during their sojourn in the United States. For example, Norah expressed, “I also talk to them about their family from both their father’s side and my side. Also, sometimes we go through pictures so they do not forget the people.” Distance never had been an obstacle keeping them away from their Saudi relatives. Through daily and weekly phone calls, the mothers had preserved familial bonds. Norah described her relationship with family back home as follows:

Norah: It is good, but since we came here it became very difficult, because they do not see them a lot they, just you know talk to them once a week, or once every

two weeks, my in-laws I mean. But we speak with my mom almost every day or every two days.

Researcher: Why is it important for you to keep these connections?

Norah: Yeah sometimes I need my mom to give my daughters some advices, especially now when she got older. I think she needs to hear the things I want her to do not only from me but from several people.

Researcher: How would you explain your mom's role in your family? Is that something common in Saudi Arabia, can you talk to me about this? Why are you including your mother within your family?

Norah: She is supposed to be in my family because she is old and she knows a lot, more than me and I need her to help me in raising my kids; I can't do it by myself, it is very hard when they get older.

Similarly, Manal described how she included her family in their lives, even when they lived thousands of miles away:

I'm too busy and I cannot monitor 100% my kids, you know and especially when my husband is not here. So, I try to be in certain time a day, but also like if I cannot do it, 'Please call Sarah, I think she need something' and 'please talk to her', you know? For example, she started to go with the bus and a little bit I started to be worried. So I asked my sister and my mom and my dad, they have you know turns; so from the school to the house they call her on the phone *[sic]*.

Like Manal, Malak explained how maintaining strong connections with their relatives in Saudi Arabia was very important. Below is a discussion between Malak and the researcher regarding maintaining connections with the extended family.

Researcher: And why do you care about maintaining connections with extended family?

Malak: I think it is the way that we were raised; we have to have strong relationships with our relatives.

Researcher: Do you think it is that important for your children?

Malak: Yes of course, because as Saudi Arabians it is really important to have strong relationships with your family and I am trying to maintain those relationships because when we go back, it is going to be probably stronger.

These phone calls did not only keep the children connected to their families, but also boosted their sense of belonging. Amal explained how the calls to their family in Saudi Arabia allowed her daughter to practice Arabic and to feel proud:

Amal: Yeah through the phone and when I call them she always comes running to call them and she starts talking to them in Arabic and asks them in Arabic... yeah like this!

Researcher: How is that supportive to her you think?

Amal: I think that also help her to be proud and trustful.

Strong connection with their relatives was a primary motivation for Saudi sojourners to return to Saudi Arabia after finishing their studies. Unlike other sojourners, most Saudis do not consider migrating to the United States forever, and they intend to

live where their families are. For example, Malak stated, “The way of living, yes I like it here more than Saudi Arabia, but I still want to go back because I think I am very attached to my family than to the place.” Also, Raghad thought that Saudis will rarely think of migrating to the United States:

Researcher: So, you wouldn’t think of any Saudis migrating here and never going back to Saudi Arabia?

Raghad: I think that would be a minority... not a lot! People would follow their families wherever that is.

***Travels back home.*** One of the benefits that Saudi students obtained through their educational scholarship was a free round trip to Saudi Arabia annually. The mothers discussed that these visits acclimated their children to Saudi culture and supported their sense of belonging. For example, Norah was asked about things that she do to help maintain the ethnic identity of her children. She replied “going to Saudi Arabia during the summer every year.” Also, Amal was asked if she thought that her children will have a hard time when they go back home. She replied “Not that [much]... because we used to go every year to Saudi Arabia and stay about three months there.”

Travelling to Saudi Arabia provided opportunities for the children to communicate in Arabic. Sarah discussed how travelling back home during vacation helped improve the Arabic language of her youngest son when he struggled with both languages. She stated, “We went back to Saudi Arabia and he spoke Arabic all the time. He was actually better than his sister and brother in Arabic. Then we come back here, he speaks English.”

Moreover, through the visits to Saudi Arabia, children interacted with other Saudis, and learned more about Saudi Arabia and the Saudi culture. They also allowed the children to stay connected with their extended families back home. Norah stated, “We usually go to their grandmother on Friday and every Thursday we go to my mother when we are in Saudi Arabia.” Also, Raghad explained:

He is always happy when we visit our family. You know when we go there for just the summer, we just have the funnest [times], I would say double fun with family and friends. Every day we would go to parties, visit each other, [or] just do something together. We are never bored there. So, it is extra fun always there, especially when we go over summer... it’s a short time.

Visits to Saudi Arabia allowed the children to spend quality time with the families in Saudi Arabia. Amal stated:

I want my kids to grow up there, in Saudi Arabia, and I want them to just [Arabic: interact more] with other kids, and I think sometimes when I just visit my family in summer... I think they become [Arabic: happy and more comfortable].

***The host culture.*** Some mothers discussed how Americans being an accepting culture helped Saudi mothers and children adjust to life in the United States. This allowed the Saudi families to feel accepted and proud of where they come from. Raghad discussed:

I think the American culture is very accepting to a very big extent... I do not talk about... We can’t like generalize everything, but they are very accepting and I think like since his school have ESL program which is for Hispanic and Arabic

students... for everyone, he felt like he's ok to be bilingual... it's ok not to know sometimes how to speak in English. So, I think this helped me a lot in adjusting to the language.

Similarly, Manal also thought that American friends have given support and confidence to her daughter. She said:

Actually I have one American friend, she is a professor at UNT and she has a daughter... like her daughter is friends with Jasmine and she always gives a complement. Like... 'Oh my Gosh you have such a [good] relationship with your daughter'... 'Your daughter is like...' she always give a compliment you know.

And also Jasmine is proud because she also gives her Saudi perspective.

**RQ2: What are Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity during their temporary stay in the United States?**

The second concentration of this study was Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity during their temporary stay in the United States. Three major themes were identified in this area. The first theme was sense of belonging. The second theme was children's preferences between the two countries. The third theme was children's friendship. Each major theme included a number of subthemes. The following section presents themes and subthemes identified regarding Saudi sojourner children's perception of their Saudi ethnicity.

**RQ2 theme one: Sense of belonging.** Although some children actually carry both Saudi and American citizenship, all of them expressed their allegiance to Saudi Arabia in

one way or another. Below are some ways through which the Saudi sojourner children demonstrated their Saudi patriotism.

***I know I am Saudi.*** Children stated that their belonging to Saudi Arabia in different ways. Some children stated that they were born in Saudi Arabia, so they belong there. For example, Ali said, “I’m used to Saudi Arabia more than Texas because I was born in Saudi Arabia until I was three.” It should be noted that Ali has spent more than five years now in the United States, but he still claimed that he is used to Saudi Arabia more because he was born there. Moreover, some Saudi children stated that they are proud to tell people that they come from Saudi Arabia. For example, Jasmine said:

Actually I kind of feel confident, because people don’t actually see people coming from Saudi Arabia... and even if they do, they don’t point that out. But I especially like to tell them where I am from and what culture is to me. So I feel not embarrassed.

Similarly, Emma expressed telling people proudly that she was from Saudi Arabia and that “sometimes they ask me more about like how it is like and what they do?” Also, Joud liked telling people that she was born in Saudi Arabia “because it is different.” In general, all Saudi children discussed not having any problems telling others that they were Saudis.

***Little teachers (ambassadors).*** Some Saudi children were not only proud of being Saudi, but they taught others about their culture. For example, Nada discussed:

Juliana she was Christian and once she found out that some of her friends like Arwa and Salma and me were Muslims, she now wants to be a Muslim too. But her aunt doesn’t like Muslims, so she keeps it a secret.



Nada did not only teach her friends about Islam, she also taught them Arabic. She explained how she and her other Arabic friend are teaching one of their American friends at school Arabic. She stated, “she helps me with the like the alphabet and like how to teach her the... and she learned the Arabic alphabet faster than me. I learned it in like 4 weeks and she learned it in 3 days.” On the other hand, her brother Faris mentioned that he did not like to teach his American friends Arabic because he liked keeping it as a secret language. He explained that he liked using Arabic with his Arabic speaking friends only, especially when they did not want anyone to understand what they were talking about.

Also, Sarah mentioned that her older children teach their youngest brother about the religion. She stated:

They care about Yahya so much [laughs] they just teach Yahya, “Don’t eat pork” they go to the cafeteria and say ‘Yahya doesn’t eat pork. Yahya doesn’t eat the sub! Don’t give Yahya the sub. He has to know.’ Yeah they care about it, especially David he cares about this.

***The need to learn more about home.*** Many children expressed their need to learn more about their home country. Almost half of the children expressed their desire to learn about the history of Saudi Arabia. For example, David expressed, “I want to learn about the history. Maybe to learn, I will read some books or go to school.” Also, Jasmine expressed that she wanted to learn more about the Saudi culture and thought that the best way was to actually go back and live there. She expressed, “There are a lot of questions I want to ask. Mostly like the history. Because when we talk about the history we don’t

talk about what Saudi Arabia is like. We usually talk about the environment and what's happening now." Children's need to learn about Saudi Arabia was an indicator of their Saudi patriotism.

***Learning Arabic.*** Almost all Saudi sojourner children said that they preferred speaking English more than Arabic because their Arabic was not as proficient as their English. Nonetheless, all children expressed a desire to improve their Arabic language skills. For example, Ross explained, "I want to learn how to speak Arabic a lot and learn my ABCs in Arabic." Also, Laura expressed that not knowing Arabic was problematic. She stated:

I think it is going to be a problem, because it took me like a long time to learn how to speak American. So, now I really know how to speak a lot in English, but I don't know how to speak in Arabic.

Saudi sojourner children had their different reasons explaining the need to learn Arabic, but the common reason was communication with people in Saudi Arabia. The researcher transcribed the following conversation:

Jasmine: It's going to be hard

Researcher: Why?

Jasmine: Because first of all the language. I don't speak fluently and writing is kind of hard for me.

Researcher: Ok! So, these are things that you want to learn?

Jasmine: I want to learn before I go.

Researcher: Arabic just for the sake of school or are there any reasons that you want to learn Arabic?

Jasmine: Basically for the sake of making new friends and having... yeah school tasks.

Besides communicating with people in Saudi Arabia, some children felt that they had to learn Arabic just because they were Saudis and they should know Arabic. Omar Said, "I guess I was born there. It is important because I will go there and I need to know how to speak." Similarly, his sister Joud stated, "Because I was born in Saudi Arabia. I'd like to speak Arabic." However, Joud was concerned that Arabic "takes away times of the weekend." In general, most Saudi children felt a need to learn Arabic because they belonged to Saudi Arabia.

While all Saudi children believed that they had to improve their Arabic, they still showed appreciation to their bilingualism, since they all could speak both English and Arabic. For example, David stated, "Now I know two languages." Also, Omar explained, "This would probably be something nice. I would be a little smarter than normal people who know one language." Children's appreciation bilingualism was interesting. Nonetheless, children's desire to maintain their mother tongue was one of the indicators to their Saudi patriotism.

**RQ2 theme two: Preferences.** Saudi sojourner children explained in their interviews that they appreciated different privileges of Saudi Arabia and the United States. Nonetheless, some of the children felt that they prefer one of the two countries

over the other, and they provided different reasons. A description of children's views on both countries follows.

*America.* There are a few children who expressed that they preferred the life in the United States over Saudi Arabian living. They had different reasons for their preferences. Since the children had resided primarily in the United States, they expressed a preference towards the American lifestyle. For example, Joud stated, "because I lived here for a long time and it will be hard to move back." Also, Emma stated, "I lived here more than Saudi Arabia." Children's familiarity with the American lifestyle was one reason for these children to feel attached to the United States.

Some children explained how they felt that living in the United States was a good opportunity. For example, Omar stated, "I wouldn't know English. Probably I wouldn't dress like this. I would dress different. Probably I wouldn't wear as much PE clothes." Similarly, Jasmine expressed that living in the United States had made her life more exciting, "Since I lived in the United States I kind of miss Saudi Arabia. But imagine if I lived in Saudi Arabia and never come to the United States I would kind of be bored there; I would want to go out." It seems that many children appreciated the benefits of their sojourn in the United States. Two major reasons for preferring the United States that were discussed by Saudi children are the fun factor of the United States and the respect for human rights. Further details follow.

*USA is fun.* Many children loved living in the United States because they had perceived it as being fun, containing access to a myriad of pleasurable activities. For example, Azoozi stated, "I'm going to miss like the stuff that I do here." Similarly, Ali

mentioned, “I get to play. I got to go to Six Flags three times with my friends and once with my family and have so much fun and I went to two vacations like the Disney Cruise and Disneyland and like that.” Likewise, David mentioned, “amusement parks like Disney World, Six Flags, and water parks like Sea World and Water Works.”

Additionally, Jasmine said:

In Saudi Arabia there aren't as much activities. So, here you can go to Disney World, Disney Land, even this not outside in the United States, but like in Denton you can go to Jump Street and you could do so many different things. But in Saudi Arabia, basically there is not as much activity there, you see?

A number of pleasurable places appeared in children's drawings of themselves in the United States. For example, Ali and Nada drew themselves in Six Flags (a well-known amusement park in the United States). Similarly, David wrote on his drawing of himself in the United States “I love amusement parks like Disney World, Six Flags and waterparks like Sea World and Water Works” (Figure 17). Additionally, Jasmine's drew herself with her family in front of her favorite movie theater “Cinemark” in the United States (Figure 21).

In addition to pleasurable places in the United States, some children expressed that they enjoyed the activities available through school or out of school. For example, Jasmine stated, “I also like how there is more activities to do at school. In Saudi Arabia we'll have the school part more.” Similarly, Joud expressed that she enjoyed being part of the school's band, where she played the clarinet. In addition, Joud enjoyed other activities

out of school, such as Karate. Joud proudly announced that she had a purple belt in Karate.

Similar to Saudi children's appreciation to different activities in the United States, some of their mothers also appreciated such activities. Many mothers believed that there was a good variety of activities that their children could do in the United States. For example, Norah explained how different activities were available and were affordable for her children to participate in. She stated, "Horseback riding, karate, swimming, these are easier to find and go to in America." Similarly, Sarah was glad that her children were able to try many different activities during their residence in the United States. She stated, "They actually tried many sports. Their dad tried with them different sports to see what they like [the most]." Some mothers believed that such activities could have positive influences on their children's self-esteem. Norah stated:

My daughter at the beginning she was so shy, she couldn't get with friends easily.

In Saudi Arabia, all of her friends are only the kids of my friends, but now I saw her became more confident, especially when she went to choir and band at school.

I think she broke the fear that she used to have.

*Land of freedom and rights.* Two of the older participants discussed how Americans embrace values such as women rights and equality more than Saudi Arabians. For example, Joud said that she likes living in the United States because women were not banned from driving like in Saudi Arabia. She stated, "I get to drive when I grow older."

Likewise, Jasmine expressed that the United States grants equality and more freedom than Saudi Arabia. She stated:

Sometimes like you don't just feel free to do stuff in Saudi Arabia... I mean like there it just feels like... if I want to go outside and play it wouldn't be like regular like Azoozi (brother) does, cause parents [in Saudi Arabia] are more protective of their daughters than their sons, so that's why I feel that I don't have much freedom there as I do here.

She also thought that life in Saudi Arabia would not be easy. She stated "Because it's really hard to be who you want to be. Instead somebody tell you don't do that and don't do this." When Jasmine was asked if she preferred living in Saudi Arabia or the United States she stated, "I do prefer living in Saudi Arabia, but [only] if all the family moves here, everyone that I miss in Saudi Arabia comes here." It seems that her family was the only reason behind choosing residing permanently in Saudi Arabia. When she was asked if she could bring her whole family to live here with her, she stated, "That would be an awesome thing, yeah! It would be wonderful." She revealed that she loved the lifestyle in the United States and would love her cousins to come and see how it is in the United States. She stated, "I always wonder what my cousins would think of United States and if they came what would they say." She also revealed that sometimes she asked her mom if they could stay in the United States forever. She stated, "Well sometimes I am like 'mom can we not go back to Saudi Arabia?'" It should be noted that such views were only apparent in the responses of the older children who participated in this study.

***Saudi Arabia.*** The majority of Saudi children expressed their intention to reside permanently in Saudi Arabia. For example, Faris stated, “Saudi Arabia for the rest of my life.” Children provided different reasons behind their choice. Some of the major reasons they discussed were: strong family ties and love for Saudi Arabia. There were very few negative views discussed on Saudi Arabia. Further details on children’s views follow.

***Strong family ties.*** Like their parents, Saudi sojourner children had formed strong family connections with their extended families in Saudi Arabia. All children expressed that they miss their family while living in the United States. When the researcher asked them about what they missed about Saudi Arabia while living in America, most of said that they missed their families back home. For example, Ross replied, “I miss my family and mmm... mostly my family yeah.” Also, when children were asked how they would imagine their lives to be when they go back, many of them thought they would enjoy being closer to their family members. For example, Laura stated, “I am going to like it there more... because all those time that I’ve been crying and asking my mom to go back to Saudi Arabia so I can see my family, and there I get to see them.”

Similar to mothers’ views, the interviews with the children also revealed that family ties were the major reason behind choosing residence in Saudi Arabia over living in the United States. For example, Laura stated, “I prefer living in Saudi Arabia, because that’s where my family is, and like most of my whole family lives in there, and sometimes I miss them, and I do not really have any family members in here except for my friends that are from Saudi Arabia” *[sic]*. Similarly, Omar stated, “Because over there is my grandma and my cousins.” Likewise, Emma stated, “Our cousins live next to us



and we can always go there because my dad put a little door.” Also, Nada thought that her life would be “Happy because I get to spend time with cousins” when she goes back to Saudi Arabia. Many of the children explained how they were content with their lives in the United States, but they still preferred living in Saudi Arabia with their relatives. For example, Laura stated, “I like living in here. They have great food and everything, but I want to go where my family is.”

Compatible with children’s discussions, their strong connection with their extended families was apparent in their drawings. Many children included members of their extended families in their drawing of themselves in Saudi Arabia. For example, Joud and David included their grandparents who live in Saudi Arabia in their drawings (Figures 2 & 16). Also, Ross included his aunt and grandmother with him in the mall in Saudi Arabia (Figure 8). Additionally, Ali included his uncle training him how to ride the horse that he got for him as a gift back home (Figures 12 & 14).

*Love for Saudi Arabia.* Another possible reason that children chose Saudi Arabia over the United States was their love for Saudi Arabia. Just by looking at David’s drawing of himself in Saudi Arabia (Figure 16), one could imagine that he likes Saudi Arabia because his t-shirt states “I love Saudi Arabia”. Also, many other children expressed their love for Saudi Arabia verbally. For example, Ali explained that he enjoyed their annual visits to Saudi Arabia, and he expressed excitement about their permanent return to Saudi Arabia. He stated, “I like to go to Saudi Arabia for each and every summer.” Similarly, Ross explained, “Because usually when I go there my life is good.” Such statements were clear evidence on the children’s love for Saudi Arabia.

In addition to children's general expressions of their love of Saudi Arabia, some children described small details they loved about Saudi Arabia. An example of children's descriptions of what they love about Saudi Arabia follows. Jasmine stated:

I like the daily routine that they (Saudi Arabia) have. You wake up in the morning and you just like... yeah when I walk downstairs I can just smell and feel being in Saudi Arabia and have... waking up early in the morning, eating breakfast you know, pray with them, [and] eat dinner... I like the house being filled up with them (family).

*Few negative views on Saudi Arabia.* Very few children had negative views or misconceptions about Saudi Arabia. For example, Laura stated, "I kind of feel safer here because, there aren't that many kidnappers in here because in Saudi Arabia there are a lot of bad people." It should be noted that Laura was one of the children who stated many times during the interview that she preferred living in Saudi Arabia. But such a negative idea might be something that she heard from others around her. Also, some children compared the two countries. For example, Emma was unsure about the Saudi Arabian schools or how much Saudis appreciate reading. Since she enjoyed reading and had planned on residing in Saudi Arabia, she had been disappointed by less access to public libraries there. She stated, "There are not as many libraries as Saudi Arabia.. I mean as America."

On the other hand, two of the older children who seem to enjoy the American lifestyle more than the Saudi expressed consternation at reduction in personal freedom. For example, Jasmine felt that she does not feel that girls and boys are treated equally in

Saudi Arabia. She stated, “I feel that I don’t have much freedom there as I do here.”

Likewise, Joud mentioned that she likes that she could drive in the United States when she grows up, while she will not be able to do so if she returns to Saudi Arabia.

During the interviews, the reduction of activities and personal freedom were cited as the only negative consequences of returning to Saudi Arabia. In addition to the previously cited objections, some children maintained a notion of better educational opportunities in the United States. Despite the articulated objections to Saudi life, all of the children valued their Saudi culture and could relate to Saudi Arabia. The negative views were much fewer than the positive ones.

***Future plans.*** In the interview, children were asked about the place they would choose to reside in the future if they had the choice. Surprisingly, most children had already contemplated their future plans. The majority maintained their preference for residing near their families in Saudi Arabia. Very few said that they prefer the USA but would still return to Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, almost all children discussed their intention of frequenting the USA. They had different reasons for revisiting the United States; most importantly they would return to get a better education when they reach college age. For example, Omar stated that he will be going to Saudi Arabia then come back to the United States for college. He stated, “because in Saudi Arabia I can like actually learn stuff in there and I go back to America because... well it’s better college.” Of course, their parents modeled their preference of studying in the USA. For example, Jasmine stated, “When my mom finishes her college we’ll go back to Saudi Arabia. My mom said I’m going to be able to come to college here because I think the education here

is better than education everywhere else.” Also, David stated, “Maybe I’ll spend time in Saudi Arabia and if maybe like I have to study in America I’ll go to America... because my mom says it’s kind of better than the ones in Saudi Arabia.” It seems that many children wish to follow their parents’ footsteps and study in the USA.

Similar to the mothers’ opinions on the results of getting good education, children believed that it would guarantee better jobs for them when they grow up. For example, Omar stated, “Mostly because if I get a good college and I went to Saudi Arabia I’ll know how to speak because I went there, then I will get a better job, because I got the college from America.” Also, Emma stated, “I could like learn more there because my mom is doing the same thing. Like I would be a professor I would just come here... because it is like much better place to get education.” Interestingly, children at this young age had already thought about their future career.

Besides returning to the United States for studying, some children expressed their desire to vacation in the United States. For example, Nada stated, “I told my mom when I get married I want to go to New York because New York is a very cool place and it has all the stores that I like. I like The American Girl doll’s store.” After all, these children had spent most of their childhood in the United States and had made memories. Some stated that they would love one day to visit the places that held many of these children’s memories. For example, Azoozi said he wanted to go back to Saudi Arabia but intended to visit the United States sometimes to “remember the stuff that I have fun at the house.” Overall, most of the Saudi sojourner children had created strong connections with the United States and had included visitations to the United States in their future plans.

***Multicultural identities.*** While some children demonstrated a strong sense of belonging to Saudi Arabia only, others identified themselves as multicultural. When the researcher posed the question of their children's cultural identities, some mothers affirmed their Saudi identities, and others confessed to the Americanization of their children. However, few mothers identified their children as multicultural. For example, Malak felt that her daughter is a product of both cultures. She stated, "She does have an awareness that both cultures are different, but I cannot tell to which culture she belongs more, she is probably in the half" [*sic*]. Also, Sarah stated, "They (her children) know our culture and now they actually understand the American culture, but they will understand our culture very well and they know that they belong to our culture." Nonetheless, such responses might reveal the mothers' own desire for their children to be more associated with Saudi culture.

In fact, some children's answers showed that they do not prefer one culture over another. Some children felt that they belonged to both countries at the same time. Below is a transcription of conversation with Joud, who discussed her desire to live in the United States. However, she mentioned that her plans included visitations to Saudi Arabia and learning Arabic.

Joud: I'd live here and go to visit [Saudi Arabia] sometimes.

Researcher: Why would you want to visit if you like the life in here?

Joud: So I could go see my family, and like... still know how to speak Arabic.

Researcher: Why is that important to you?

Joud: Because I was born in Saudi Arabia. I'd like to speak Arabic.

Therefore, asking the children to specify one culture over the other was a difficult decision for some of them. For example, when David was asked about where he would live if he had the choice, he replied, “Well, I can’t choose because they’re both great places... It’s really a hard choice because I love both of them.” Also, Ali stated, “You know it is hard because my family there and leaving them is kind of hard to do.” Similarly, Azoozi stated, “But I don’t know which one to pick because my mom and where are they going to stay or something.” Also, Jasmine expressed that she loved the lifestyle in the United States, but she was not sure if she could handle living away from the family if she decided to stay in the United States. She stated:

When my mom says ‘Oh my Gosh’ and she starts to cry and sees how much she misses Saudi Arabia and her family, so I kind of think like am I going to feel the same way or am I going to feel like happy to be here.

These were some of the examples that confirmed Saudi children’s formation of multicultural identities during their temporary residence in the United States.

**RQ2 theme three: Friendship.** During the interviews, the children brought up the topic of friendship. According to some children, friendships contributed to their admiration of their sojourn in the United States. For example, Laura stated, “I have a lot of Arabic friends in here and some American friends. Basically I think I wouldn’t have met my friends or anything.” Also, most children expressed that they would miss their friends the most when they return to Saudi Arabia. For example, David expressed, “I’ll miss my friends and those places I went. I think that’s all.” Similarly, Faris stated, “I’ll miss my friends and my teachers because my teacher is a little bit too nice.” When asked

about their friends and who they preferred spending most of their time with, children identified two different preferences. Some of the children stated that they preferred spending more time with other sojourner children, and some stated that they have friends from around the globe.

***Friendship with other sojourners.*** Many of the Saudi sojourner children formed a special bond or strong relationships with other sojourner children around them in the United States. Many sojourner children identified with children who have similar experiences of living in a bridge between the two cultures and countries.

*Saudi sojourners.* Many children expressed that they preferred spending more time with their other Saudi friends either in or out of school. They cited varied reasons of course. Mainly because they felt that they understood them better because they came from the same place. For example, the researcher transcribed the following discussion with about Saudi friends in Joud's drawing in the United States:

Researcher: Do you think having Saudi friends during your stay in here make any difference?

Joud: Yes, because they were in Saudi Arabia before and they understand, like if I went to summer camp with somebody like what we did in summer camp, when we come back we can talk about it; and the Saudi friends were in Saudi Arabia and they came here, they understand what is Saudi Arabia like.

Besides understanding their cultures, some Saudi sojourner children felt that speaking another language with their Saudi friends was a privilege. While a few Saudi children felt as outsiders in school, they had the power to form their own in-group with

other Saudi sojourner children like them. Thus, having friends who spoke Arabic was convenient for them since they could use either language when playing or talking with them. For example, Ali stated, “Because when my American friends talk to me I get mixed up and then I talk Arabic and English.” Similarly, Nada stated, “There are some words that I don’t know how to pronounce in English, so I could just tell them in Arabic.” Also, Laura said, “Sometimes I do not know how to say the words [in English] and I only know how to say them in Arabic. So they (Saudi friends) know what I mean; and with Americans, I have to think about it really hard.” Additionally, David thought that they would not only understand Arabic, but also they would understand certain Islamic practices, such as praying or fasting. He stated, “Saudi Arabian friends, because I can talk Arabic and they know like... I have to ‘salli’ or ‘soom’ [Arabic: pray or fast].”

Besides understating them, some children felt that other Saudi children are trustworthy since they came from the same place and had similar beliefs. For example, Nada Stated, “I trust them because they’re Saudi. I trust them more because they’re Muslims and they won’t lie because Muslims don’t lie.” Similarly, Faris stated, “I like Muslims because they are good and they pray and they do stuff for God” [*sic*]. Perhaps having the same belief was an additional aspect that these children had in common.

Another reason that made children befriend other Saudi was the fact that their families had kept strong connections with other Saudi sojourner families, which allowed the children to meet each other out of school and form stronger friendships. For example, Emma stated, “They mostly... like always come to my house and they know where I live and they have more in common [with me]” and Joud stated, “we see them more often.”



Also, Joud has included her Saudi sojourner friends in her drawing of herself in the USA (Figure 3).

Some children thought that they might befriend returnee children who went through the same experiences when they return to Saudi Arabia. For example, Laura stated, “I think like there are a lot of people that are Saudis who have been in America, because they have schoolwork and then their schoolwork makes them go to America and then go back.” It seems that the children had created a special bond with other sojourners because of having similar experiences.

*Other nationalities.* Beside national and religious identity, some sojourner children connected with expatriates from other countries who share common experiences of living between two worlds. For example, Laura included both of her friends in her drawing of herself in the USA (Figure 7). When asked who she preferred spending more time with, she replied:

My best friend Jolin understands me because she is from another place [too], and her family is there and she only has her mom, dad, and her sister [in here]; and Dabbany who also understands me because she is from Mexico.

*Friends from around the globe.* Some children expressed that they were not concerned with their friends’ nationalities. For example, Ross mentioned about his friends “American and Saudi both of them [are] the same.” During their sojourns in the United States, the children met friends from around the globe. Jasmine mentioned, “I have some friends from Jordan and Saudi Arabia, but also I have friends from China and Korea, [and] some are from German and Russia.”

While living in the United States, children learned not to discriminate with whom they became friends. Jasmine stated, “I think when they come to America, they kind of understand that it’s kind of being more open to people and having more friends.” She also stated, “It does not matter [their nationalities] if I feel comfortable with them... It’ll be cool to have different nationalities.” Similarly, Joud discussed, “They don’t care about what race you are.” In fact, meeting people from different places was an opportunity to learn more about different countries. Jasmine stated, “Yeah that’s like really exciting for me, cause I get to learn and ask them questions.” Again, some children’s responses reflected their connection and fascination with others who come from “other places” and had similar stories to share about the world.

### **Additional Findings**

In addition to themes identified through cross-case analysis, there were other findings related to children’s drawings and name choices.

#### **Children’s Drawings**

Obtaining children’s drawings was one of the tools used to collect data on Saudi sojourner children’s perception of their ethnic identities. As Dennis (1966) mentioned, children’s drawings reflect their cultural values through clothing, traditions, and religious symbols. The researcher looked specifically at the clothing, food, places, events, and people that were included in the drawings. Afterwards, children’s drawings, writings on the drawings, and discussions on their drawings were all coded and analyzed. The data was used as supportive evidence to the identified themes. The children’s drawings complemented and confirmed children’s views that they expressed during the interviews.

Many of the children included events or places that they mentioned in the interview. For example, Emma's drawing in Saudi Arabia was of herself on her grandfather's farm that she said she likes to visit in Saudi Arabia during her interview discussion.

As much as the children's responses to the interview questions were informative, their drawings provided additional information about their perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity. Children's awareness of cultural differences between the United States and Saudi Arabia was reflected through the details that they included in the drawings. Evidently, many drawings reflected children's knowledge of different Saudi cultural traits such as food, celebrations, and traditional clothing. For example, in Laura's self-portrait in Saudi Arabia, she drew herself wearing an "abaya" (Figure 6). Additionally, she depicted Saudi dishes including two types of fish, rice, and her grandmother's soup. Similarly, Jasmine's self-portrait in Saudi Arabia included her family and her attending "Eid" prayer (Figure 20). Jasmine drew herself wearing a fancy dress for "Eid," her mother wearing an "abaya," and her father and brother wearing "thobes." Also, some drawings reflected the children's sense of belonging to Saudi Arabia. For example, Nada drew the Saudi flag in a self-portrait in Saudi Arabia (Figure 24). In addition, David drew himself wearing a t-shirt saying "I love Saudi Arabia" (Figure 16).

On the other hand, not all children included as many cultural details in their drawings; however they all drew happy memories with their loved ones or specific places that they love in both countries. For example, Ali drew himself with his uncle, training to ride the horse (Figures 12 & 14). Ali mentioned in his discussion that his uncle brought him a horse and took him for a ride in Saudi Arabia. He discussed that this was a pleasant

memory of his vacation in Saudi Arabia. Also, Omar drew himself in front of a building in Saudi Arabia (Figure 4). He identified it as his grandparents' house in Riyadh, and he mentioned he tried to include all the details of the house as he remembered them.

Similarly, his sister Joud also drew her grandparents' house in Saudi Arabia. She did not only include actual details in her grandparents' backyard, but also she included her family members in her drawing including her beloved grandfather who recently passed away (Figure 2).

Only one of all children's drawings showed negativity which was depicted in Figure 8. Ross drew himself on the day a tornado came to the city. That interview with Ross took place in the same week that a tornado came very close to his house. The researcher noticed that Ross's discussion was affected by his fear of the tornado. Consequently, the interview was repeated two weeks later. In his second interview, Ross's drawing of himself in America showed him inside his house playing with his favorite video game with a smile on his face. Furthermore, Faris's drawings of himself in both countries did not include any identifying details (Figures 26 & 27). The drawings looked very similar; they both included only a drawing of him without anything in the background. Faris was the youngest participant in this study, and many of his answers did not show solid understanding to cultural differences.

### **Children's Name Choices**

When children signed the assent forms (Appendix G), they were told that their real names would remain confidential to protect their privacy. Also, they were asked to pick pseudonyms to check if they would choose an Arabic or a Western name. Five out

of eleven children chose Western names: Laura, Ross, David, Emma, and Jasmine. Jasmine's choice was interesting because Jasmine is a Westernized name of the Arabic name (Yasmeen). Children's choice of Western names was also an indication to the effect that the American culture has on their personal identities. As many mothers have explained how their children have adopted both cultures and became multicultural.

### **Summary**

This chapter presents a detailed description of the findings of the multiple-case study that explored Saudi sojourners mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi ethnicity, in addition to Saudi children's perceptions of their own ethnic identities during their sojourn in the United States. The researcher collected data through face-to-face interviews with the mothers and children. She also gathered children's drawings of themselves in Saudi Arabia and the United States. All interviews and discussions on children's drawings were audio-recoded and transcribed.

The researcher applied member checking with the participants to ensure accuracy (Carlson, 2010) through sending the transcriptions of the interviews to the mothers via email. The researcher inscribed analytical memos throughout the data collection and analysis process. Five types of coding were used in first cycle coding of the data: *a priori* coding, In vivo coding, descriptive coding, value coding, and emotion coding (Saldana, 2013). Then, axial and pattern coding were used in second cycle coding of the data.

In addition, cross-case analysis was used to finalize the common patterns and themes. This chapter included reports on each participant based on the data gathered through interviews, followed by a detailed presentation of themes. Three major themes

and twelve subthemes were identified under Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the ethnic identities of their children; the major themes are privileges, concerns, and factors that shape the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children. Also, three major themes and ten subthemes were identified under Saudi sojourner children's perceptions on their Saudi ethnicity; the major themes are sense of belonging, preferences, and friendship. The chapter included presentation of additional findings related to children's drawings and chosen names. The next and final chapter presents a discussion of the findings and an overall conclusion of this study.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to examine Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the Saudi ethnicity of their children and to explore their children's perceptions on their Saudi ethnicity while temporary residing in the United States. Furthermore, the study explored factors that shaped the identities of Saudi sojourner children.

This chapter presents an overview of the study, proof of authenticity of the study, discussion of the findings, discussion of theoretical framework, limitations, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

#### **Overview of the Study**

In the past few years, the number of Saudi sojourners in the United States has increased. Many Saudis were granted governmental scholarships to continue their higher education in the United States (McCormack et al., 2007). Many of the Saudi students in the United States were accompanied with their children. As all sojourners usually return to their home countries, it was important that they maintain their Saudi ethnicity. As indicated by the Ethnic Identity Theory, individuals strive to maintain positive views on their ethnic identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Accordingly, this study examined if Saudi children were able to form positive views on the Saudi ethnicity. Parents' views are usually reflected on their practices with their children. Accordingly, it was important to examine Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the ethnic identity of

their children. Since mothers are not the only factor that shape the ethnic identities of children, this study also examined other factors that shape the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children, based on different layers of interactions in the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

This study followed a multiple-case design, in order to obtain in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the Saudi sojourner families (Yin, 2009). The sample consisted of six adult participants and eleven children. The adult participants lived temporarily in the United States between five and eight years along with their children to study at a university or another educational institution. The children's sample included six boys and five girls. Some of the children were born in Saudi Arabia and others were born in the United States. All of the children were in middle childhood, and their ages ranged from 6 to 12 years. Both the mothers and their children were interviewed, and the children were asked to draw two pictures of themselves, one in Saudi Arabia and one in the United States.

### **Authenticity of the Study**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the quality of the qualitative research depends on the researcher's ability to establish trustworthiness of the findings. They discussed that trustworthiness requires credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure all four measurements of rigor, they recommended the use of reflexive journals. Accordingly, the researcher utilized reflexive analytical memos throughout the processes of data collections and analysis of this study.



Moreover, the researcher applied triangulation to enhance credibility of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Data triangulation was achieved in this study through the triad of interviews with Saudi mothers, interviews with Saudi children, and children's drawings. Patton (2002) discussed that the findings generated by different data collection methods should be consistent. After transcribing the interviews with mothers and their children, the researcher found that many of the children's views were similar to their mothers' opinions. For example, many of the Saudi mothers discussed that their children might consider continuing their education in the United States. Consistently, their children discussed that their future plans include attending American universities. Likewise, children's drawings confirmed the opinions that they have expressed in the interviews. For example, many of the children depicted incidents, places, or people that they have mentioned in their interviews. Additionally, findings from children's answers during the interviews were consistent with the findings from their drawings. When children's answers in the interview revealed their understanding of cultural differences, their drawings also reflected that understanding through adding different details in clothing, food, places, and events in their Saudi and American drawings.

Besides triangulation, prolonged engagement was applied to enhance the credibility of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The codes and themes used in this study emerged through prolonged engagement with the data, which the researcher conducted two iterations of transcription until saturation was achieved.

In order to enhance transferability of this study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend providing thick and rich descriptions. Accordingly, the researcher provided

detailed descriptions of the participants' views through the personal reports in chapter IV. Also, to enhance dependability and conformability, the researcher kept audio trails of the interviews and drawings' discussions through audiotaping the whole interview sessions with all participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seidman, 2006).

Another way to enhance confirmability was to check for bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To protect the data from bias, the researcher interviewed the mothers first without their children to ensure that the children's views were not influenced by their mothers' opinions. Also, each one of the siblings was interviewed separately. Although the mothers were allowed to be present during their children's interviews, they were instructed not to assist their children in responding to any of the questions. Additionally, since the researcher was a Saudi sojourner with children, she had to protect data from being biased by her personal opinions. Accordingly, the researcher assured reflexivity through stopping and reflecting several times to ensure that her personal opinions were not influencing her analysis. Additionally, after transcribing the data, the researcher sent all transcriptions to the mothers through emails for member checking (Carlson, 2010). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified member checking as one of techniques that enhances credibility of qualitative studies.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study explored the ethnic identities of Saudi sojourner children during their temporary stay in the United States from the perspectives of Saudi mothers and their children. The following is a discussion of the identified themes related to the mothers'

attitudes, followed by the themes related to the children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity.

### **Saudi Sojourner Mothers' Attitudes Towards Maintaining the Ethnic Identity of Their Children**

The researcher identified three major themes and twelve subthemes related to Saudi mothers' attitudes toward maintaining the ethnic identities of their children during their temporary stay in the United States. The major themes identified were: 1) privileges, 2) concerns, and 3) factors that shape the ethnic identities of their children.

**Privileges.** Saudi sojourner mothers believed that their children were privileged for being reared in the United States for many reasons. Some of the privileges that Saudi mothers identified were better education, English proficiency, and personality development. In general, all mothers thought that the American educational system is different than the Saudi system.

Saudi mothers especially liked that schools encouraged critical thinking, enforced reading, provided extracurricular activities, and offered classes for gifted and talented students. However, similar to Chinese mothers in Chen's study (2013), Saudi mothers expressed their worry about their children's adjustments to schools when they return to Saudi Arabia; especially since the children have not received official teaching of formal Arabic (fus-ha). Only some of the children had private basic Arabic lessons. However, Saudi mothers suspected that those basic lessons were inadequate to prepare their children to be as competent as their peers in Saudi schools because subjects are taught in Arabic in public and regular private Saudi schools (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Therefore,

some mothers considered enrolling their children in international private schools, where subjects are taught mostly in English.

Moreover, Saudi mothers were pleased that their children became fluent in English, which is similar to the views of Korean sojourner mothers (Song, 2010) and Chinese sojourner mothers (Chen, 2013). Saudi mothers expressed that their children now speak a native-like English, or as they call it “English with an American accent.” This was a privilege in Saudi mothers’ opinions since English is taught as a second language in Saudi Arabia and many Saudi individuals struggle learning English (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). In Saudi Arabia, many job opportunities require proficiency in both Arabic and English languages, which explained some mothers’ expectations that their children might be able to achieve desirable employment because they speak fluent English.

In addition to educational opportunities and English language fluency, Saudi mothers expressed that living in the United States had a few positive effects on their children’s personalities. Saudi children raised in the United States became more accepting of others coming from different cultures. Additionally, some mothers thought that their children’s participation in different school activities had encouraged their children to become more confident. Furthermore, the school system in the United States had encouraged the Saudi children to adopt the habit of reading, which was an attribute they would not have gained in Saudi regular schools.

Besides becoming more confident, Saudi mothers thought that their children became more responsible. It is common in Saudi Arabia to hire live-in house helpers.

However, Saudi fathers and children had assumed new roles that include assisting the mothers with house duties after moving to the United States. In fact, some mothers said they had assigned more responsibilities to their children at home. Noticeably, some mothers believed that the overall experience of living in the United States had cultivated stronger personalities in their children.

**Concerns.** Saudi mothers expressed some concerns about raising their children in the United States due to cultural discontinuity and loss of ethnic identity. Also, they reported change in their concerns throughout their sojourn period. Below is further discussion on issues related to Saudi mothers concerns.

First, Saudi mothers expressed some concerns regarding the negative influences of living in the United States due to cultural discontinuity. One of the concerns that the mothers had was children's lack of respect towards older people. Mothers thought that American children do not respect their parents, teachers, or older people in general as much as expected in the Saudi culture. This might be due to cultural differences between Eastern and Western cultures since children in Arabic cultures are expected to obey their parents and to show respect to older adults including teachers, grandparents, uncles, aunties, and even older strangers (Ahmad, 2011).

Second, Saudi mothers expressed some concerns regarding their children's loss of ethnic identity, which was consistent with previous research indications regarding immigrants' loss of some aspects of their ethnic identities due to the acculturation process (Souto-Manning, 2007). According to the Saudi mothers, some of the risks to the Saudi children's ethnic identities were due to their lack of knowledge of Saudi cultural

attributes, loss of their mother tongue, and threats to their religious beliefs. Some mothers expressed that their children were “losing” their Saudi ethnicity since they were not exposed to the actual Saudi culture on a daily basis. Saudi mothers were concerned about their children’s loss of the Arabic language and preferences to communicate in English. However, Saudi sojourners had been determined to teach their children their home language to help them readjust into Saudi society and educational systems as they return to Saudi Arabia, which is consistent with the attitudes of Chinese mothers (Chen, 2013).

Remarkably, Saudi mothers strongly emphasized the religious beliefs of their children; they stressed the importance of the religious aspect of children’s ethnic identity more than any other aspect of being Saudi. Also, mothers discussed different Islamic practices that they teach their children while raising them in the United States such as: praying and reading the Quran. Since Islam is the dominant religion in Saudi Arabia, the culture is widely affected by Islamic traditions, which explains Saudi mothers’ emphasis on their children’s religious beliefs (Pharaon, 2004).

Finally, Saudi mothers reported change in their concerns over time. Some mothers were more concerned about helping their children adjust to the American culture when they first arrived in the United States. However, as time passed and their sojourn in the United States had come closer to the end, they focused more on enhancing their children’s ethnic identities, as the mothers began to worry about their later adjustment when they return home. Furthermore, some Saudi mothers reported a few changes in their rearing styles of their children as part of the acculturation process, which is similar to previous research on Indian immigrant mothers (Farver et al., 2007). Saudi mothers

discussed that they have adopted some new parenting techniques from their children's teachers. Also, teachers had worked with some mothers to help the children overcome some educational problems. The findings of this study were similar to the findings of Farver et al. (2007), where some Saudi mothers became more open to discussions with their children.

**Factors that shape the ethnic identities of Saudi sojourner children.** The last theme identified in Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes was the different factors that they thought helped enhance the ethnic identities of their children during their temporary stay in the United States. A detailed discussion of different factors identified by mothers follows.

First, mothers discussed that both the ages of their children and their personalities played a significant role in their acclimation to the United States and their attachment to Saudi Arabia. In general, younger children adjusted more readily than their older siblings. Also, mothers discussed that throughout their sojourn in the United States they found that as children grew older, they knew less about Saudi Arabia, which made the mothers make more efforts to help maintain their ethnic identities.

Second, a major factor that shaped the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children that the mothers identified was the parental role. Hughes, Witherspoon et al. (2009) posit that verbal messages and parental practices that children get through ethnic socialization at home are reflected on their own social identity; that is how they place themselves and their ethnic group in society. In this study, Saudi mothers believed that their parental role is the most influential factor that shapes children's ethnic identity.

Third, Saudi mothers recognized the importance of their role in familial ethnic socialization, as suggested in a study about Latino mothers (Umaña-Taylor & Yazedjian, 2006). Also, almost all other factors that Latino mothers discussed in Umaña-Taylor and Yazedjian's study (2006) to help maintain the ethnic identity of their children, were discussed by Saudi mothers in this study, such as enhancing children's home language through speaking Arabic at home, teaching them formal Arabic, emphasizing religious beliefs, traveling to their home country, talking to their children about cultural differences, preparing authentic food in their homes, attending cultural celebrations such as "Eid", listening to Arabic music, and showing pride in being Saudi Arabian. Furthermore, Latino mothers (Umaña-Taylor & Yazedjian, 2006), as well as Saudi mothers emphasized the importance of maintaining strong connections with their extended family in their home country and interacting with Saudi community in the local area.

Fourth, Saudi mothers highlighted the importance of the support that they got through interacting with the local Saudi community in the United States in shaping the ethnic identities of their children. This finding was similar to Latino mothers' opinion of the importance of interactions with local communities to enhance ethnic identities of their children (Umaña-Taylor & Yazedjian, 2006). Furthermore, Chaban et al. (2011) identified social networks within the host cultures as one of the factors that influence sojourners' acculturation processes. Since members of the Saudi community had similar circumstances, they all tried to maintain some cultural habits through different celebrations and gatherings. Participating in those activities helped the Saudi families feel



closer to home, as stated by Saudi mothers. Many mothers in this study felt that other Saudi families in the community had been like family to them.

Fifth, another factor that influenced Saudi sojourner children's ethnic identities was maintaining contact with extended families. Since the Saudi culture is family oriented (Long, 2003), many mothers discussed the importance of maintaining strong connections with the extended family in Saudi Arabia. This finding was similar to Latino mothers who emphasized the importance of maintaining contacts with extended families in the home countries (Umaña-Taylor & Yazedjian, 2006). Saudi sojourners usually contacted their families on a weekly or daily basis. They discussed that would not consider permanently residing in the United States to be closer to their families in Saudi Arabia.

Finally, Saudi mothers indicated that the accepting attitude of the host culture was among the factors that influenced their children's ethnic identities and adjustment in the United States. The mothers argued that one of the advantages that many of the U.S. citizens provided their acceptance of people from different cultures. Regardless of political and social differences, some Saudi mothers expressed that they were sometimes complemented on the nature of their family relationships and were accepted in schools and others public places, which supported and boosted their children's confidence and self-esteem.

### **Saudi Sojourner Children's Perception of Their Saudi Ethnicity**

The researcher identified three major themes and ten subthemes related to Saudi sojourner children's perceptions about their Saudi ethnicity. The major themes identified were: sense of belonging, preferences, and friendship.

**Sense of belonging.** Similar to Moore and Barker's study (2012) on returnees of different nationalities who spent at least three years during their middle childhood away from their home countries, Saudi sojourner children also formed multicultural identities. Moore and Barker defined multicultural identity as the returnee's ability to maintain two or more cultural identities. Saudi children felt that they loved both Saudi Arabia and the United States and they belonged to both countries.

Moore and Barker (2012) differentiated between the sense of belonging and multicultural identity. In their study, when returnees grew up, they felt that they did not belong to one culture, but they were still able to form multicultural identities. Currently, Saudi sojourner children in this study showed different signs of sense of belonging and love for Saudi Arabia through their discussions and drawings. These were apparent in their statements that indicated they knew that they were from Saudi Arabia. Also, some Saudi children taught American children about their home country. Moreover, many children expressed their desires to learn more about the Saudi Arabian history and culture. Moreover, all children stated that they wanted to improve their Arabic language. However, as in Moore and Barker's study, these children might change their views when they return to Saudi Arabia. After all, most children at this age might not be able to form

a clearly defined cultural identity, but childhood still remains a crucial stage in which both identity and cultural membership are developed (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011).

**Preferences.** Saudi children gave examples of different things that they love in Saudi Arabia and the United States. For example, they loved that their extended families lived in Saudi Arabia. Also, they loved that they had visited fun places in the United States and that they had become bilingual. Nonetheless, some children showed more attachment to Saudi Arabia than others. A few of the older children identified many advantages to life in the United States, such as freedom and women's rights. However, all children expressed their desire to be closer to their extended families in Saudi Arabia and many actually discussed their desires to return to Saudi Arabia for that reason, specifically. Also, the children who were more attached to Saudi Arabia discussed that their future plans included coming to the United States to earn their college degrees or to vacation as adults.

**Friendship.** Another topic that Saudi sojourner children discussed was friendship. Saudi children expressed the significance of their friendship with other sojourners. Some children conveyed their preference for spending more time with other sojourners due to common circumstances. Also, Saudi sojourner friends specifically understood certain practices related to their culture and religion. Moreover, Saudi children were able to alternate between Arabic and English when they spoke with other Saudi sojourners.

In addition to friendship with other sojourners, Saudi children discussed their friendship with people from around the world. Some Saudi sojourner children felt that

this made them special because they did not only learn about other cultures from their friends, but also they got to teach others about their own culture.

Finally, Saudi children discussed lost friendships in their interviews. Almost all Saudi sojourner children expressed sadness because they would not be able to maintain their friendships made during their sojourn in the United States upon returning to Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Moore and Barker (2012) found that returnees identified losing friendships as one of disadvantages of their sojourns.

Besides loss of friendships, there were other disadvantages that Moore and Barker's sample had in common with Saudi sojourners in this study such as living away from extended family and familiarity with the host culture when it was time to leave. Moreover, there were some positive experiences that returnees in Moore and Barker (2012) shared with Saudi sojourners in this study such as open mindedness, flexibility, ability to adjust to new cultures, and bilingualism.

### **Discussion of Theoretical Framework**

As part of the analysis process, the data gathered in this study were synthesized through relying on theoretical proposition. The following is a comparison of the findings in this study with the theories that were used as a framework. The findings will be first compared with concepts from the Ecological Systems Theory, followed by the Ethnic Identity Theory.

#### **Ecological Systems Theory**

The participants in this study were Saudi sojourner families who moved temporarily from Saudi Arabia to the United States, which can be considered a major

“life event” that influences their lives as Bronfenbrenner (1988) explained under the *chronosystem* model. Bronfenbrenner (1979) claimed that the development of a growing human is highly influenced by his or her personal characteristics and interactions with the environment. Similarly, Saudi mothers explained that their children had different experiences during their adjustment to the United States and different strengths of attachment to Saudi Arabia based on their personalities and interactions with others around them. Bronfenbrenner identified four different layers of interactions, in addition to the time dimension. Accordingly, the effect of different factors that influenced Saudi sojourner children’s perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity were examined based on different systems in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System. Figure 28 show the influential factors that the researcher identified in this study based on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems, and further explanation follows.

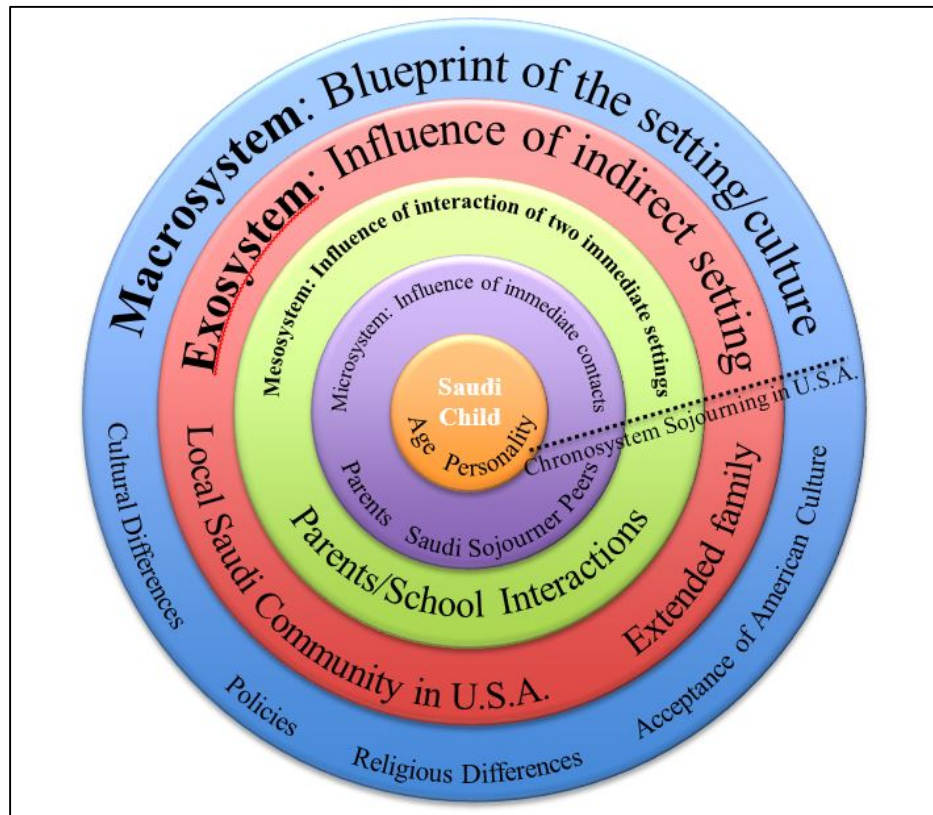


Figure 28. Factors that shape Saudi sojourner children's ethnicity based on different layers in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System.

First, in terms of the *microsystem* (interpersonal relations that the developing person encounters through immediate contact), mothers identified parental role as a crucial factor that shapes their children's ethnic identities during their temporary residence in the United States. Parental role included incorporating Saudi rituals and traditional practices into their daily lives. Moreover, parental role included speaking to sojourner children about their home country, trying to maintain their home language, and most importantly modeling the pride of being Saudi. In general, parental role was identified as the number one influence on Saudi sojourner children's ethnic identities and their perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity.

Another immediate relation that had an influence on Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity is their friendship with other Saudi sojourner children in the United States. Not only mothers identified how important Saudi friends were in the adjustment of their children, but also many children discussed their comfort in spending time with Saudi friends. Children explained that other Saudi children in the United States understood them better and spoke both languages that they knew.

Second, in terms of the *mesosystem* (which consists of the interaction of two or more microsystems such as the relations between parents and children's schools), all Saudi mothers discussed that they had very busy schedules due to their studies, but still either the mothers or the fathers stayed in contact with the children's schools and attended parental conferences and other major events at school. Also, one of the mothers discussed how she volunteered in her child's school events. She claimed that this enhanced her child's adjustment through making him proud of showing his cultural heritage because of the way his mother dressed. Moreover, mothers' relationships with the schoolteachers had resulted in a few changes in their rearing styles with their children. Also, such connections between the home and school assisted some children to overcome educational problems.

Third, the influence of the *exosystem* (the outer environment of that child) includes the relationship with parents' network of friends and relatives. For Saudi sojourner children, this system included the influence of the local Saudi community in the United States and their extended family in Saudi Arabia. Various interactions with the local Saudi community in the United States, including different gatherings and

celebrations made Saudi sojourners feel less homesick. All of these interactions helped Saudi sojourner mothers and their children survive in the new culture. Also, the Saudi community enhanced the Saudi ethnicity of the young children who found other sojourners from their own home countries in the new environment.

Furthermore, Saudi sojourner mothers and children showed strong family ties to their extended families in Saudi Arabia. Many children discussed how they missed their extended families, and many of them expressed a desire to return to Saudi Arabia in order to reside closer to their extended families.

Next, the influence of *macrosystem* (the different characteristics of a certain culture) includes the culture, ethnicity, traditions, religious beliefs, and even the policies in that country. In terms of the American culture, some of the mothers discussed that Americans' acceptance of the Saudi families made them feel welcomed in the society. Also, Saudi sojourner children never felt awkward because they were from a different country. In fact, sometimes Americans ask them about their culture, which enhanced the children's sense of belonging to Saudi Arabia.

However, all Saudi mothers were concerned about the differences in religious beliefs in the United States. They discussed their concerns about their children's confusion between Islamic and various religious beliefs. Accordingly, mothers had striven to maintain their children's Islamic identity through teaching Islamic practices, such as praying and reading the Quran at home.

Finally, in terms of the *chronosystem*, as stated earlier moving from one country to another was a major life event that influenced the ethnic identities of Saudi sojourner



children. Saudi sojourner children arrived to the United States at different ages, and some of them were born in the United States. Mothers explained that their younger children generally more readily adjusted to the United States as compared to their older children. Additionally, Saudi mothers made a greater effort to preserve their children's ethnic identities as they grew older.

### **Social Identity Theory**

Another lens that is used to examine Saudi children's ethnic identity while living temporarily in the United States is Social Identity Theory. This study examined Saudi sojourner children's perceptions towards their Saudi ethnicity. As Tajfel and Turner (1986) discussed, individuals must identify their own social identity in order to form positive social identity. Therefore, it was important to examine if Saudi sojourner children were exposed to Saudi cultural practices and traditions during their temporary residence in the United States. When Saudi mothers were asked about Saudi traditions or rituals applied within their homes, they all explained different practices with their children at home, including preparing Saudi cuisine, attending the annual Islamic celebration of "Eid" in the United States, and speaking Arabic at home. Moreover, Saudi children were exposed to the Saudi culture through mingling with other Saudis in their local areas and annual visits to Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, Saudi parents were not the only source of the Saudi culture available to Saudi sojourner children during their sojourn in the United States. Moreover, the children's discussions and drawings reflected their awareness of cultural differences between the country in which they resided and their country of origin.

A major concept that was discussed by Tajfel and Turner (1986) in the Ethnic Identity Theory is individuals striving to maintain positive social identities. They claimed that individuals who are not satisfied with their social identities choose to replace their social identities with more favorable identities or improve the image of their original ones. It was important to examine if Saudi sojourner children had formed positive images about their original ethnicities. While many of these children in this study held both American and Saudi citizenships since some of them were born here, most of their discussions reflected positive views towards Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, many of them had also conveyed a sense of attachment to the United States as well, as some children discussed the privileges of living in the United States. Even still, the majority of the children expressed their desires to reside in Saudi Arabia with their extended families.

A few children preferred the American lifestyle, but they wanted to visit their home country and to learn about the culture. Also, all children expressed their desire to learn Arabic because this was the language that their extended family spoke. Moreover, none of the children indicated shame of their country of origin; on the contrary, they all expressed pride in the Saudi people and the culture. Accordingly, it could be said that all children were able to form positive images of their original culture, but many of them formed multicultural identities; they felt that they belonged to both the Saudi and the American cultures.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses in a study that are out of the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). The first limitation identified was the timing of the data

collection. The interviews took place days after a tornado passed through the city where the participants in this study lived. Two children expressed negative views in their answers during interviews and in one of the boys' drawings. In the drawing of himself in the United States, he drew a very dark picture of the tornado passing by their car (Figure 9). The researcher arranged additional interviews with the two boys.

Another limitation in this study was language. Since all Saudi mothers spoke English as a second language, the researcher translated some interview questions to some of the participants from English to Arabic in order to obtain the most accurate information possible during the interview. Occasionally, some of the mothers used Arabic words in the interview. The researcher sent the transcripts to the mothers after translating Arabic words to check the accuracy. Moreover, the researcher edited some of participants' quotes that were used in this paper when grammatical errors distracted from the meaning of the response. Edits were indicated within brackets.

### **Conclusions**

This qualitative multiple-case study provides information on the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children. It amplifies the importance of maintaining the ethnic identity of minority groups. Many studies have been conducted on immigrant children; however, only a few studies were conducted on sojourner children. While immigrant and sojourner children might have many circumstances in common, sojourners' situations differ since they intend to return to their home countries as soon as the purpose of their sojourning ends (Chen, 2013). Therefore, the findings of this study can add to the literature of sojourner children. Additionally, it can add to the literature on the Arab culture in

general, and Saudi culture in specific, as that these are under-researched populations. Likewise, the findings of this study can be beneficial for policy makers in the United States in dealing with sojourner families in societies and sojourner children in schools. Also, it can be beneficial for policy makers in Saudi Arabia to help returning sojourner children adjust to schools. Finally, this study can help sojourner parents in enhancing their children's identities during their sojourn and supporting their adjustment upon their return to their home countries.

This study aimed to answer two main questions. The first research question explored Saudi sojourner mothers' attitudes towards maintaining the ethnic identity of their children. It seems that Saudi sojourner mothers' were concerned about the jeopardy to their children's ethnic identity. While some mothers felt that they were not doing enough to help maintain the ethnic identities of their children due to their busy schedules, they were still practicing many rituals in their daily lives such as cooking Saudi food, speaking Arabic, enforcing religious practices, interacting with the local Saudi community, and maintaining strong connections with their extended families in Saudi Arabia. It appears that such practices have helped the children learn about their culture and have enhanced their sense of belonging to Saudi Arabia.

The second research question explored Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity. While the majority of the children seemed to have positive views towards their Saudi ethnicity, many of children have developed multicultural identities. They felt that they were attached to America and Saudi Arabia, and they expressed their love for both countries. Perhaps when these children's sojourn ends and they return to

Saudi Arabia, they would develop a clearer image of their home culture and form different perceptions. After all, these children's exposure to the Saudi culture is limited due to the amount of time spent there.

Generally, Saudi sojourner mothers and their children seem to appreciate their sojourn experience because of the privileges that the children gained. Both the mothers and the children appreciated bilingualism and the education that the children have received in the United States. On the other hand, Saudi mothers and their children conveyed missing their extended families in Saudi Arabia. Also, they both expressed their worries about the children's future adjustment at schools and within the Saudi community upon returning to Saudi Arabia, due to their incompetency of Arabic language. Further details on the implications of this study for policy makers and the researcher's recommendations for sojourner parents follow.

### **Implications**

This study presented both perspectives and thoughts of both Saudi mothers and their children of their temporary stay in the United States, in addition to their concerns about their return to Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, there are a few implications for policy makers in Saudi Arabia and the United States, in addition to suggestions for Saudi sojourner mothers that could help their children adjustment easier upon their return to Saudi Arabia.

#### **Implications for Policy Makers in Saudi Arabia**

One of the main concerns that Saudi mothers expressed is their children's adjustment to the school system in Saudi Arabia especially that their children's formal Arabic is weak compared to their peers in Saudi Arabia. Some mothers discussed that they plan to

enroll their children in private international schools in Saudi Arabia that follow American or British systems. However, some mothers expressed their concerns that their children would lose their mother tongue forever. It should be noted that there are a limited number of private international schools in Saudi Arabia. Only some of the schools teach Arabic and religion classes. In some schools, these classes are optional. Also, very few schools offer Arabic remedial classes for additional fees. Nonetheless, private schools and especially international schools require high tuition and not all returning Saudi families can afford them. Recently, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia issued an endorsement that returning Saudi children who attend public American schools should be accepted in the same grade in Saudi schools (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, n.d.). However, many Saudi children are behind their Saudi peers in Arabic. Many of them will face difficulties in learning all subjects in Arabic. Therefore, there is an implication for all Saudi schools to offer Arabic remediation classes with no extra fees to help these children acquire language fluency.

### **Implications for Policy Makers in United States**

The number of Saudi students in the United States has increased rapidly in the past few years due to governmental scholarship programs. Statistics indicated that Saudi students were the fourth largest group of international students in the United States during the academic year on 2014/15 (Ruiz, 2014). Many of these Saudi students have children who attend American public schools. As the United States has been a destination for many immigrants and sojourners, there are a few American schools that teach other languages besides English, such as Spanish. Therefore, American schools should offer

others language classes such as teaching Arabic as a second language, especially in districts that include many Arabic-speaking students. As a start, such classes should be offered in school districts within the cities that have universities with a high percentage of international schools from Saudi Arabia or other Arab countries. Also, various language classes could be offered through local public libraries, as some currently offer free languages classes.

Furthermore, gaining positive social identities is important for individuals from all racial groups (Chaban et al., 2011). Additionally, positive self-images and ethnic identities of young children have been associated with school competence (Dotterer et al., 2009). Accordingly, schools should participate in enhancing children's pride of their ethnicities. They should celebrate diversity among their students, and embrace different cultures through various activities and events. Some of these activities could be at the classroom or at the school level. For example, teachers can offer class activities that allow the students to write about certain practices and traditions in their cultures, and then ask the students to present what they wrote to other students. Also, schools can offer international events to celebrate and teach the children about different countries' traditions. Such practices enhance children's awareness and acceptance of cultural differences, and they boost children's pride of their cultures.

### **Suggestions for Saudi Sojourning Parents**

One of the main concerns that Saudi sojourner mothers who participated in this study discussed was jeopardy to the ethnic identities of their children during their temporary stay in the United States. Since many children expressed their desire to learn

more about Saudi Arabian history and culture, parents should teach their children more about their home country. They could teach them about different traditions, names of cities, and the history of Saudi Arabia.

Both mothers and children expressed their concerns about not being able to study with their Saudi peers in Saudi schools. Mothers should consider preparing their children to attend Saudi schools, through hiring Arabic tutors if they could afford them during their stay in America or teaching them formal Arabic at home if their time permits. Currently, there are a few private international schools in Saudi Arabia that offer remedial Arabic classes; these could be a good option for children when they return to Saudi Arabia if parents could afford them. Parents should consider enrolling their children in these schools when they return to Saudi Arabia for at least one year to assist their acculturation. Another option is to enroll the children in regular Saudi schools and hire private Arabic tutors at home.

Many Saudi families who sojourned in the United States for studying purposes are returning or have returned to Saudi Arabia after finishing their studies. Returning mothers could form support groups for returning families with children to help them re-acculturate, at least during the transitional periods. Since these mothers have gone through similar experiences with their children, they might provide advice to help ease the process of adaptation of returnee children.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study examined the ethnic identity of Saudi sojourner children who lived for a few years in the United States. As soon as Saudi parents' studies are complete or their



scholarships end, they will return to Saudi Arabia. When their sojourn in the United States comes to an end, both the parents and their children who became accustomed to the lifestyle in the United States would need to re-acculturate to the Saudi Arabian environment. As Martin (1984) discussed, the re-acculturation process can be as hard as first moving to a foreign country. Therefore, one of the recommendations is to conduct follow-up studies on the adjustment of returnees. These studies should reexamine Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their ethnicity to examine if they maintain positive views on their Saudi ethnicity after living in Saudi Arabia. A second recommendation is examination of Saudi sojourners' adjustment within different types of Saudi schools, especially since many of these children are not as competent in formal Arabic as their Saudi peers. A third topic that is worthy of investigation is the difficulties that sojourner children face when they return to their home countries. These could be longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of sojourn experiences on sojourners' future ethnicities and careers. Finally, comparison studies with sojourning children from other countries could be conducted to examine cultural differences in the sojourn experience, and how both the first adjustment and the return adjustment differ between different cultures. Previous studies showed that acculturation and re-acculturation are influenced by sojourners' motives, purposes of sojourns, and how close are host countries demographics to sojourners' original demographics.

### **Summary**

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings of the multiple-case study that explored Saudi sojourners mothers' attitudes towards maintaining their children's Saudi

ethnicity, in addition to Saudi children's perceptions of their own ethnic identities during their sojourn in the United States. This chapter includes an overview of the study, proof of authenticity of the study, discussion of the findings, discussion of theoretical framework, limitations, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

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APPENDIX A  
MOTHERS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you identify yourself?
2. What do you currently do?
3. What does your husband currently do?
4. Tell me about your family.
5. How long have you been living in the United States?
6. How old were your children when you first moved to America?
7. Which of your children is the most adjust to living in the United States and which is the least? Why do you think so?
8. How would you describe your family life since you moved here?
9. What are some of the challenging experiences that your children have faced since you moved here?
10. What specific Saudi habits or rituals do you practice in your family in your daily life?
11. What do you do to maintain your children's identity as Saudis?
12. How do you incorporate Arabic language in your family's communication?
13. In this particular time of your life, which do you think is more important: (a) helping your child adapt to the American culture (b) to embrace his/her Saudi identity? Would you explain why?
14. What are the positives and negatives your children are gaining while living here in the United States away from Saudi Arabia?

15. In 10 to 20 years from now, how do you believe your temporary living in the States will affect your child's life?
16. What are the main concerns, worries, and difficulties you face due to cultural differences while raising your child here?
17. What are your concerns upon your return to Saudi Arabia?
18. Talk to me about your relationship with your child's school? Your neighbors? Saudi and American friends? Which do think has the most influence on your child's ethnic identity?
19. Talk to me about your child's relationship with your extended family back home.
20. How is your child fitting within the family at home? Friends at school? Peers in the Saudi community?
21. In your opinion what are the factors that influence Saudi sojourner children's perceptions of their Saudi ethnicity the most during their temporary living in the United States?
22. To which culture do you think your child belongs more? Would you explain more?

APPENDIX B  
CHILDREN'S INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- A. Tell me about you.
- B. Tell me about your life in United States.
- C. What do you know about Saudi Arabia?
- D. What do you want to learn about Saudi Arabia? And how do you think you can learn them?
- E. Do you prefer living in the United States or Saudi Arabia? Why?
- F. What do you like about living in the United States?
- G. What do you like about living in Saudi Arabia?
- H. How do you think your life would be if you had not lived in the United States?
- I. What do you miss about Saudi Arabia while living here in America?
- J. What do you think you will miss about America when you move back to Saudi Arabia?
- K. Talk to me about your friends in school.
- L. Talk to me about your friends outside of school.
- M. Which friends do you feel more comfortable with? Why?
- N. How do you imagine your life when you go back to Saudi Arabia?
- O. If you get to choose to live in the United States or Saudi Arabia in the future, which one would you choose? Why?
- P. Do you think you might change your mind? Why?



APPENDIX C

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHILDREN'S DRAWING

I want you draw two pictures; the first one is a picture of you in Saudi Arabia and the other one is about you in America. You can include other people, specific sites, or special events in your picture. You have two sheets and colored pencils that you can use for drawing. Write your name on both sheets. This one should be about you in Saudi Arabia and the other one should be about you in America. You can choose to start drawing in either you wish first.

APPENDIX D  
DRAWING FORM 1

\_\_\_\_\_ in Saudi Arabia

APPENDIX E  
DRAWING FORM 2

\_\_\_\_\_ in America

APPENDIX F  
CONSENT FORM

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: The Ethnic Identity of Saudi Sojourner Children

Investigator: Shahd Qutub.....squtub@twu.edu 614/xxx-xxxx

Advisor: Karen Petty, Ph. D.....kpetty@twu.edu 940/898-2698

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Ms. Qutub's dissertation at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this research is to explore the ethnicity of Saudi children while living temporarily in the United States. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are Saudi mother who is living temporarily in the United States.

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you and your child will be asked to spend a maximum period of an hour and a half of your time for two face-to-face interviews, one with you and the other is with your child. The researcher will ask you questions about your family practices with your children at home and relationship with others. She will ask your child about their perception on their Saudi ethnicity and their relationship with friends. The researcher will also ask your child to draw two pictures about themselves in Saudi Arabia and in America. The researcher will use these drawings as extra evidence of the child's perception and might include some of them in the final report.

You and the researcher will decide together on a private location where and when the interview will happen. The interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed so that the researcher can be accurate when studying the data. The research might send you parts of the interview for member checking (checking for accuracy of translation if needed). The researcher might include some quotes of the interview with you or your child in the final report on the study or in published articles. In order to be a participant in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age or older and be a Saudi mother of a child in middle childhood (6 to 12 years old) and have lived for at least a year in the United States.

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Initials

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### Potential Risks

The researcher will ask you questions about your childrearing and other family practices with your children at home. The researcher will also ask your child some personal questions about their beliefs and preferences. A possible risk in this study is embarrassment or discomfort with some of these questions you are asked or answers that you or your child provide. You can skip answering any of the questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. Also, you will be offered to review your conversation and your child's conversation before they are reported, you can ask the researcher to omit any statements that you do not feel comfortable with.

Other risks might be fatigue, boredom, and loss of time. If you or your child becomes tired or bored you may take breaks as needed. Also, you may ask to have the interviews done in two different visits. You may also stop answering questions at any time and end the interview at any time.

Another risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The interview will be held at a private location that you and the researcher have agreed upon. A different name will be assigned to your child and you when reporting the results please discuss this with the researcher. The recordings and the written interview will be stored securely in the researcher's home. Only the researcher, and her advisor will hear the recordings or read the written interview. The results of the study will be reported in scientific magazines or journals but your name or any other identifying information will not be included.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

### Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you and your child may withdraw from the study at any time. There will NOT be any monetary compensation for participating in this study.

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Initials

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Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at [IRB@twu.edu](mailto:IRB@twu.edu).

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Signature of Participant

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Date

---

Signature of Child 1

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Date

APPENDIX G  
ASSENT FORM

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY  
CHILDREN'S ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: The Ethnic Identity of Saudi Sojourner Children

What is this about?

Ms. Shahd is a Ph.D. student in the Texas Woman's University. She wants to learn more about the lives of Saudi children in the United States. You can help Ms. Shahd in her study if you want by participating in this study.

What will I do?

1. You will have an **interview** with Ms. Shahd. She will ask you some questions about your life in the United States and other questions about Saudi Arabia.
2. Ms. Shahd will ask you to **draw 2 pictures**: One is about yourself in America and another one is about you in Saudi Arabia.

How long do I have to stay for the interview?

The interview and the drawing will take less than an hour of your time.

Where will the interview be?

Ms. Shahd will interview you in your home. Your mom will be with us during the interview.

Thing that might happen during the interviews:

1. You might feel uncomfortable answering all of the interview questions → you can ask Ms. Shahd to **skip the question** that you do not like.

Initials -----

Date -----

2. You might feel tired or bored → you can ask Ms. Shahd to **take a break** or **come again later** to finish the interview.
3. You might not be in the mood of drawing right now → you can ask Ms. Shahd to **finish it later** and she will come to pick it up.

Things you need to know about the interviews and drawing.

1. Ms. Shahd might include some of your words in her report about the study. So, other people might read what you told me.
2. Ms. Shahd might include your drawings in her report about the study. So, other people might see your drawings.
3. Ms. Shahd would be the **only one** that knows you are the one who said these words and drew these pictures, because she will choose another name for you in her report.

What will I benefit from participating in this study?

You will not be receiving anything directly for participating in this study. But, you will have the chance to talk about your life in the United States and things that you miss in Saudi Arabia. Also, you will help Ms. Shahd in her study. Ms. Shahd will learn more about Saudi children in the United States and she will try to find ways that makes their return easier to Saudi Arabia.

Initials -----

Date -----

Do I have to participate in this research?

Participating in this research is optional. You have 3 options:

1. You can say YES I want to participate and sign your name down
2. Or you can say NO I do not want to participate, and this is totally OK ☺
3. You can say Yes now and stop participating at any time during the study if you decided that you do not like participating in the study.

-----YES I want to participate.

-----No I do not want to participate.

Sign your name here: -----

Date -----

Initials -----

Date -----

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APPENDIX H

A SAMPLE OF THE RESEARCHER'S ANALYTIC MEMOS

### Researcher's Analytic Memos (Sample)

- Yearly visits to Saudi Arabia help keep connection to the Saudi culture and strengthen the relationship with the extended family. And it helps support their Arabic language.
- Maintaining the Arabic language is one of the biggest challenges to living in the States. Especially the formal Arabic language (school language).
- Saudi children's receptive language is much stronger than their spoken Arabic language.
- Support of Saudi community is very important and powerful in both adjustment in the American culture and embracing their Saudi ethnic identity.
- The age factor is mandatory in the early adjustment of the Saudi children in the American culture; the younger they are the easiest it is.
- Mothers' priorities of adjustment or embracing their children's Saudi ethnicity shift during the sojourning journey...
- Saudis have very strong relations with their extended families that they would never think of not returning back to Saudi Arabia and living in here forever
- Children are more responsible because of change in the life style in here than there (e.g. no maids)
- Children became more multicultural and accepting to other due to their temporarily living in America
- There are a few influences on the rearing styles.