

SAUDI THIRD CULTURE KIDS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY OF  
SAUDIS' ACCULTURATION IN A NORTHEAST OHIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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SAUDI THIRD CULTURE KIDS: APHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY OF  
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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This research aims to explore the lived experience of Saudi “third culture kids” (TCKs) and how those children, as well as their parents and teachers, describe their experiences as children growing up between different cultures. **Method:** This research applies a phenomenological multiple case studies to a sample of three children aged (7-10) years, three parents, and three homeroom teachers. Data is collected from the participants as follows: questionnaire and open-ended one-on-one interviews with parents, a photo-elicitation along with open-ended interview with children, and written interview with teachers. Having multiple perspectives is intended to manifest the essence of the experience of acculturation of Saudi third culture kids and to illustrate how these children identify themselves and make meaning of their experience and the role of their parents and teachers in cultural adaptation. **Results:** The findings showed that Saudi TCKs have positive cultural adaptation during their lived experience, developing their identities as Saudis Muslims and Arab with developing bicultural perspective. Roles of Saudi parents and American teachers as they enhance cultural adaptation are discussed. Recommendations and implications of the research are provided.

*Keywords:* Third culture kids, TCK, cross-cultural kids, acculturation, Saudis in the U.S, Saudi children, Muslims, Arabs, childhood, cultural identity, adaptation.

## DEDICATION

To third culture kids who identify “the self” from different perspective  
to who dive between two worlds

*I am still panting  
I am still between here and there*

*It is not about a pink ribbon or a doll  
It is about how to be a part of all*

*Memories are silent but breathing  
I cannot find a home in my reading*

*Something invites me to the crowd  
To be brave and proud*

*Something excuses me for being silent  
it pushes me as an anti-magnet*

*I am still between here and there  
Maybe as a flying bird or as a fragment in the air*

*Huda Bajamal (Fall 2014)*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The clash of values and styles places children in an impossible bind. A majority of these families migrated in search of a better life. Consequently, in order for the children to fulfill that dream and show their appreciation to their parents, they need to achieve in the new culture. In order to achieve, they need to let go of some of their native culture and make new friends, improve their English, and become acculturated. To do so, however, is to risk alienation from the family. On the other hand, rejection of the new culture assures that acculturation will not be achieved or at best will be delayed. (Baptiste, 1987, p.339)

Unlike children who socialize and grow in a single culture, children who socialize and grow in more than one culture never have the opportunity to live their childhood in one place. Due to the age of globalization, more and more children are growing up between two cultures. In response, researchers are now examining cross-cultural life and the complexity of having an inconsistent identity. Pollack and Reken (2009) defined a “third culture kid” (TCK) as:

a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationships to others of similar background. (p. 19)

Although the experience and characteristics of TCKs have been investigated in depth, most of the classic studies were biased, as subjects were primarily American TCKs living abroad. There is less focus on the perspectives and the experiences of other

ethnicities, especially those whose ideological background is relatively different from the domain culture, as is the case with un-Western individuals living in a Western culture (Denman & Hilal, 2011). Moreover, the majority of studies have discussed the impact of this phenomenon on adults and youths (e.g., Davis, Suarez, Crawford, & Rehfuess, 2013; Greenholtz & Jean Kim, 2009; Moore, 2012). Indeed, the experience of young TCKs in middle childhood, particularly from certain nationalities, is almost absent. Middle childhood represents school-age children aged 6-12 years old. Children during this age in general experience developmental characteristics that differ from what children in early childhood and adolescence experience. Freud and Piaget (1968) considered middle childhood as a transitional stage between early childhood and adolescence wherein children's growth is enhanced by anything they had gained during early childhood that would support their transition forward into adolescence (as cited in Eccles, 1999). Regarding social development, children in middle childhood develop a wider net of social relationships outside the family and become more influenced by relationships with teachers and peers (Coll & Marks, 2009; Eccles, 1999).

Ittel and Sisler (2012) emphasized that "there is still little systematic knowledge of the consequences of growing up global as a third culture child or adolescent" (p. 488). Thus, in an effort to add some systemic knowledge to the experience of TCKs, this study aims to explore the experience of acculturation of a sub group of TCKs, namely, Saudi TCKs who have come from Islamic conservative collectivistic culture because one or both of their parents are completing higher education in the United States. Importantly, the parents also often are themselves experiencing acculturation-associated stress as they are immersed in the academic life of U.S. institutions (Oppedal, 2006). In many ways,

exploring the challenges and benefits of such experiences might provide us some insight into the consequences of growing up between two cultures not only during sojourn, but also after reentry again into the original culture. Existing research lacks evidence to support the many assumptions which have been made about such experiences. Some studies have shown that adjustment during sojourn might predict the transition and the process of adaptation after reentry (Berry & Sam, 2006). For example, Tamura and Furnham (1993) found no significant difference between returning Japanese children (aged 6-18 years) and their non-sojourner peers regarding their psychological adaptation. However, the researchers noticed that Japanese returnee children, in comparison to non-sojourner peers, to be more critical toward their original culture and less or even not at all interested in their academic achievements and social relationships. In contrast, Wolbert (1991) found that Turkish returnee children from Germany were more concerned about their academic achievements after returning than their settled peers. Berry and Sam (2006) attributed the contradictory results of Tamura and Furnham's (1993) and Wolbert's (1991) studies to the sociocultural background of Japanese and Turkish returnees, the period time of the sojourn, and the process of adaptation that they had examined. The different experiences of acculturation for each group, along with the different lengths of the sojourn and different social contexts, may have affected the process of readaptation after returning to the original culture.

It seems that Saudi children attending U.S. schools as Saudi TCKs in the United States is a relatively new phenomenon. As existing research in this specific context is limited, this study might provide knowledge toward multicultural education. Studying the experience of Saudi TCKs may contribute to understand the cultural needs of those



children, as a response to the demand for enhancing diversity and recognition for all children in U.S. schools regardless their race, ethnicity, and religion (Georgiadis, Koutsouri, & Zisimos, 2011; Nieuwenhuys, 2013). Indeed, diversity issues are becoming a reality. As Berry (2005) emphasized, “Diversity is a fact of contemporary life; whether it is the ‘spice of life’ or the main ‘irritant’ is probably the central question that confronts us all, citizens and social scientists alike” (p. 711). This study might provide social researchers some insights regarding the lived experience of a group of Muslim Arabs living in the United States. In addition, exploring the essence of the lived experience of Saudi children during their journey outside their culture may predict the quality of their transition experiences in the United States and of their reentry to Saudi Arabia. This particularly may help schools in Saudi Arabia to provide support for inclusion programs and/or design curriculum and pedagogy beyond the regular instructional curriculum to cope with children who are experiencing a relatively different childhood during acculturation.

Acculturation according to Taft (1977) is coping process to deal and function in a new culture, while Berry (2005) emphasized that acculturation is a bilateral process between different cultural groups which lead up to cultural and psychological changes. While Taft emphasized on coping as a process of acculturation, berry found it a comprehensive process because it affects different involved cultures rather than one culture. Others as (Berry, 1994; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010) clarify that acculturation is consequences of cultural interaction between different groups that lead to potential changes of culture. These changes function on two levels: the group level and the personal level. Changes at the group level result in modification of the

social structure and cultural practices, while changes at the personal level result in shifts of personal content and behavior, like ways of talking, eating and dressing, and of personal identity. Barn (2014) indicated that as a result of interaction with a new culture, personal experiences of minorities are affected by maintaining the original cultural practices or adapting the new cultural ones. Barn (2014) as same as Toth and Vigver's (2006) asserted that the process of maintaining cultural identity during interaction with a new culture is affected by conditions, orientations, and acculturation outcome.

In general acculturation has been described as both an opportunity and a challenge for individuals and societies (Bauböck, Heller, & Zolberg, 1996; Berry, 2005). For example, on the one hand, the experience of acculturation can be seen as opportunity when cultural groups learn different languages, develop open-mindedness, acquire sympathy toward other cultures (Dewaelea and Oudenhovenb, 2009), and achieve positive achievement and competence (Zibler, 2005). On the other hand, acculturation might be a challenge when individuals feel low emotional stability (Dewaelea and Oudenhovenb, 2009) or sense discrimination (Hurd, Varner, Caldwell, & Zimmerman, 2014; Semaan, 2007), and it can even lead to depression (Akram, 2012).

The outcome of acculturation of individuals living in two cultures differs based on different social, ethnical, cultural, and religious aspects. In addition, acculturation might be more challenging in childhood because young children still are in the process of developing a self-identity. Pollack and Van Reken (2009) explained that in contrast to adult third culture kids (ATCKs), third culture kids (TCKs) “move back and forth from one culture to another before they have completed the critical developmental task of forming a sense of their own personal and cultural identity” (p. 40).

Therefore, the current study aims to explore the lives experience of cultural adaptation of young Saudi children during their middle childhood (7-10) years as Muslim Arabic TCKs living and studying abroad based on two perspectives. The first is a cultural perspective; the second is a developmental perspective. This study specifically explores in what way Saudi children grow and adapt culturally between two cultures represented in home and school that are highly different, and how such environments affect their experience as third culture kids. Moreover, perspectives of parents and teachers are included to expose their roles of cultural adaptation through this experience.

### Background of the Problem

Today, the number of Saudi Muslims studying in the United States is rising dramatically (Alhazmi, 2010; Farrugia & Villarreal, 2015; Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). According to the vision of King Abdullah, the prior ruler of the Saudi Arabia Kingdom, the Saudi government endeavors to educate its citizens and then utilize their achievements to develop the nation. In addition to a focus on development of Saudi Arabia, the vision of King Abdullah also seeks to reinforce the cultural dialogue between Saudi Arabia and other cultures. To pursue the goal of encouraging universal communication among cultures, King Abdullah established a program of scholarship that provides Saudi students with the opportunity to study abroad, aiming to help them to know the world and the world to know them. This cultural invitation is provided to Saudi undergraduate and graduate students of both genders. Via this program, Saudi students spend from 2 to 7 years abroad, first completing an English Language Institute (ELI) program and then working toward their degrees. Choudaha and Kono (2012) presented

the following statistics of Saudi students population on the Institute of International Education (IIE) in the U.S.:

There were 23,000 Saudi students at U.S. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in 2010/11. More recent data from the Student and Visitor Exchange Program suggest that enrollments for 2012 may set new and significant records for Saudi students, with some 52,000 nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) as of March 2012. This compares to 36,500 students in March 2011. (p. 9)

The benefits of the program go beyond the scholarship students to include their families who can be prospective students in the U.S. The students and their families are supported by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education and encouraged to gain cultural knowledge and benefit from acculturation in different cultures. The Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission, the governmental sponsor of the scholarship program, offers many orientation programs to support freshmen students as they adapt to their new lives within a different culture. However, there is an absence of effort toward their children in terms of helping the children to adapt to the cultural differences and acculturate in a Western culture. In addition, any scholars have also argued that Muslim students need more understanding for their cultural background because of their reality in U.S. schools (Britto, 2008; Ibrahim and Dykeman, 2011, Tindongan, 2011). Niyozov and Pluim (2009) discussed this reality by demonstrating that the mainstream practices of Western teachers towards Muslim students often feature racism and Islamophobia, unwillingness or inability to include the contributions of Muslims' voices within the educational curriculum, lack of expectations about Muslim students' performances, neglect of Muslim cultural and religious practices, and general lack of knowledge about Islam and Muslims. Some researchers have claimed that teachers also frequently ignore the historical and recent

contributions of Muslims to knowledge due to the teachers' ethnocentric and Eurocentric backgrounds (Abukhattala, 2004; Douglass & Dunn, 2003), which may affect Muslim students' identities and their self-esteem. According to their distinct historical, ethnical, and cultural backgrounds (Britto, 2008; Ibrahim and Dykeman, 2011, Tindongan, 2011), Muslims belong to a highly different culture than Western cultures. Ibrahim and Dykeman (2011) demonstrated many cultural characteristics of Muslims that require special considerations during counseling, as they may significantly affect Muslims' perceptions of gender roles, male and female interaction, and sexual orientation as well as their worldview. It can be argued then that if understanding Islamic identity is an important component in counseling programs for Muslims, understanding the needs of Muslims in U.S. classrooms is also a necessity.

Arabic Muslims' reality in the United States is framed differently due to various factors. Ahmad and Szapara (2003) referred in their study about Muslim students in a high school in New York City to two factors that make the experience of Arab students different. The first factor is the misconceptions and stigmatization Arab students face. The researchers found that in New York City, this factor led to violence and ignorance that exposed Arab youths to isolation and discrimination. The second factor is related to grouping of Arabic cultures. Arab students' home countries have no color-based categorization. Arab students would have been considered as white according to their Census tract, as skin color is not an Arabic Islamic identity dimension. Ahmed and Szpara claimed (2008) the following:

It could be argued that the groupings of Arab and Muslim are too broad and contain distinct constructs that would need to be revealed for a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of ethnic identity for these children. It is crucially important to recognize this inherent complexity as children and youths navigate

their identity formation, just as it has been important to consider the unique cultural factors that affect other children. This is all the more important in the current American climate, where identity formation for Arab Muslim youths is being influenced at multiple levels by a vibrant but conflict-laden ecological context, which at times is non supportive and discordant with the process of identity development. (p. 856)

Having two different cultures during their childhood also exaggerates the complexity of TCKs' lives and may marginalize their identities, as they can feel disconnected from both the original and new culture (Pollack & Reken, 2009). Some scholars have asserted that TCKs acculturate differently from others like immigrants by integrating in two or more cultures permanently (Moore, 2012; Peterson & Plamondon, 2009). Other studies have shown that TCKs can successfully acculturate, but only after facing some hardship in identifying identity (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009). These hardships may result from examining two different cultural systems, namely the one at home and the one at school. Since the influence of acculturation is not fully determined and not absolute, this study will reveal how young Saudi children acculturate as TCKs by exploring the difficulties and opportunities that they encounter during acculturation.

### Purpose and Questions of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the acculturation experiences of Saudi TCKs. Specifically, the study aims to study how they describe their experiences of growing up between different cultures, and to identify the challenges and opportunities of this experience. Based on this purpose, the research questions are as follows:

1. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northeast Ohio elementary school, particularly for cultural adaptation?
2. How Saudi third culture kids develop their cultural identity?

3. What is the parents' role in their Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation?
4. What is the teachers' role in Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation?

### Significance of the Study

A considerable body of literature exists regarding acculturation of Muslim and other religious and ethnical groups living the experience of cross cultures for both youths in college and high school age, but much less attention has been given to this phenomenon among young children in primary grades (Sam, 2006). Thus, I will study the experience of three children during their middle childhood (7-10 years old) who have spent no less than 2 years of their early childhood in the United States. This study focuses specifically on Saudi children for many reasons: (1) my personal interest as a mother of four TCKs who wants to examine acculturation between their Saudi-Islamic-Arabic and U.S. cultures throughout their early and middle childhood; (2) my professional interest as a Saudi educator who might work or make educational and instructional decisions for children who return to Saudi Arabia after acculturation abroad; (3) the shortage of research targeting Saudi adult students in general (Al Murshidi, 2014; Caldwell, 2013; Hakami, 2012; Razek & Coyner, 2011; Shaw, 2009), and school age Muslim children, including Saudi children, in particular with respect to their acculturation experience (Barn, 2014; El-Biza, 2010); (4) the need to understand other ethnic perspectives of TCKs and to understand more fully the uniqueness of each experience individually (Baumgartner, 2011); and (5) the need to extend knowledge regarding the acculturation experience of children as immigrants from a developmental perspective, which has been rarely conceptualized in acculturation studies (Coll & Magnuson, 2014). Coll and Magnuson (2014) argued that most of the traditional studies have shared the same models

and theories used for adults and applied them to the study of the experience of children's acculturation. Thus, many researchers have voiced the need to extend knowledge to explore how children such as TCKs live between two worlds from a developmental conceptualization (Oppedal, 2006; Velliariis, 2015).

In the first place, there is a contradiction between classical and current results regarding the experience of acculturation and the psychological consequences on TCKs. Moving from negative dimensions to positive ones, studies are still in conflict when answering how some cultural groups acculturate according to their social and cultural reality. Evidence of such conflict can be introduced by the different theoretical framework between studies of Japanese TCKs and U.S. TCKs, showing how cultures may differ in understanding such a phenomena (Fry, 2007). In addition, the social context over time may affect how people acculturate with the presence of technology and social communication channels that ease communicating and connecting to different (Fry, 2007). All these factors are interesting to examine through the experience of a cultural group such as Saudi TCKs. This study shares the conversations of U.S. and Japanese TCKs and provides insights for future research to build a special theoretical framework that fits the cultural needs, not only for Saudi TCKs, but also for other cross-cultural Muslim children.

Considering the point of view of different cultural groups is a step toward achieving diversity. This study enhances the concept of knowing the "other" to promote diversity and provide knowledge about Saudi children. Organista, Marin, and Chun (2010) claimed that diversity was a positive outcome, enhanced the learning



environment, decreased stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, and increased communication among diverse people.

Saudi Muslim children as an ethnic group represent a particular subgroup of TCKs, not only because of their different political, social, and cultural background, but also because their personal experience of movement that is relatively different than other Arab Muslims in the United States. The majority of Saudi Muslim children live in the United States for a temporary time, from 2 to 7 years. They are children of highly educated parents who spend many years in the United States to pursue their degrees as undergraduate or graduate students experiencing the stress of completing their studies successfully (Caldwell, 2013). Unlike the majority of Arab Muslims who have moved to America for political or economic reasons, Saudi students as sojourners have moved to the United States as privileged scholars, sponsored and supported by a governmental educational agency (Berry, 2010). More importantly, the experience of acculturation of Saudi children may be different because it is a temporary experience. Although Baptiste (1987) and Comille and Brotherton (1993) asserted how immigrants after arriving to the new culture faced the challenge of urgent and fast adaptation, the stress of adaptation for Saudi children compared to immigrants may be constant. This is because while immigrants may have extended time to examine a new culture, navigate differences, and learn ways of coping with the new culture gradually, Saudi children are, by their temporary residence and permanent mobility as children of sojourners, experiencing the stress of urgent, rapid acculturation with less time to navigate the new culture. Selby and Wood (as cited in Berry & Sam, 2006) mentioned that having the stress of a time limit to finish studying abroad made many international students sojourners who were not

interested in integrating with the new culture or forming friendships with U.S. citizens, because they wanted to obtain their academic degrees and return home. It can be argued that such a perspective toward integration might have affected the children of sojourners as well.

Moreover, Saudi children, as well as other TCKs, may be overwhelmed by reverse culture shock and the stress of returning to their countries of origin, along with the challenge of frequent transitions (Fry, 2007). This perspective about TCKs in relation to other cross-cultural children was emphasized by Pollack and Reken (2009). Berry (2010) claimed that the acculturation process of sojourners as international students and expatriates (in this case TCKs) differs from other acculturated groups because each cross-cultural experience is bordered by the reason of moving or immigration, and the circumstances of transition. Unlike other settled immigrant children, Saudi children in the United States never have the opportunity to grow in a consistent social environment, something they desperately need to establish their identity in the world. Likewise, there is a demand in the literature to investigate the experiences of new ethnicities that have not been studied in order to extend professional and educational knowledge about how others examine acculturation (Berry, 2003). Relative to the original U.S. experience of TCKs, this study considers Saudi TCKs as exceptional with respect to their national and cultural background and their acculturation condition. According to Zayat (2008), few studies have been found on specific sectors of TCKs which focused on TCKs whose experience differed slightly from the experience of original American TCKs in classical research performed on the original TCKs (Hill & Useem, 1999; Hill, Useem & Cottrell, 1993; Van Reken, 1988).

Therefore, this study may contribute to improving the curriculum in American and Saudi schools, offering inclusion programs to find approaches to understand the complexity of acculturation when children live between different cultures during their developmental years. Understanding a new group of TCKs might also help teachers to better develop strategies to teach and cope with each child with respect to his or her cultural perspective. Hearing children's voices not only enhances our ability to see how they examine the world, but also helps us better communicate with them and support their journey to grow and learn well. In addition, exploring the experience of children during their sojourn might predict their psychological and social well-being after reentry into the original culture. Yoshida et al. (2002) found, for example, that many factors affect the level of success upon reentry for Japanese children: parental communication during acculturation and reentry transitions; the lifestyle of children during acculturation and after returning; the children's perspective toward the experience of returning; and the level of difficulty in adjusting to the host culture. Conducting studies to understand the experience of school-age children in (7-10 years old) may predict or provide more knowledge, and enable intervention to deal with possible psychological conflicts of TCKs during adolescence. In this regard, Coll and Magnuson (2014) wondered how some studies found that most of immigrant children were not affected negatively, and could rather cope successfully with difficulties during acculturation. Inspired by Aronowitz (1984), Call and Magnuson (2014) commented, "when disorders appear in immigrant children, they tend to be manifested in two distinct ways: as behavior disorders and as identity disorders in adolescence" (p. 93).

In regards to the contribution to the understanding of the experience of TCKs, this study introduces a sub-group of TCKs: Saudi TCKs. They are children who accompany their educated parents from a conservative, collectivistic, Islamic culture, and who are themselves experiencing acculturation and the stress of pursuing an education in U.S. institutions (Razek & Coyner, 2011; Caldwell, 2013). Likewise, the acculturation process of Saudi children as TCKs might reveal new aspects in relation to the time of living this experience, and linking to the cultural, political, and universal milieu of today's Saudi children. For example, the experience of acculturation of Saudi as Muslims in a Western culture may be different than other times due to an increased misunderstanding toward Islam, which is shown as a religion of terrorism and emphasizes the ideology of some groups like the Islamic States in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This study suggests a perspective to the topic of TCKs by giving a voice to Saudi TCKs, aged 7-10 years, in describing their acculturation experiences while attending U.S. schools in terms of challenges and opportunities.

### Subjectivity Statement

As a child born in an Islamic country where religion is considered the major guide for people's lives, I have experienced the world from a different perspective (Podicunju, 2008). My parents, my teachers, and my society believe in one God, practice the same rituals, and profess the same beliefs. All people pray in the same way, all women wear veils, people celebrate the same holidays, and women become mothers after marriage. However, just as people in other societies differ in their interpretations of faith, people in my home country are conservative, moderate and liberal, and accordingly differ in their practices of Islam as a life pillar. I have grown up in a moderate family that believes

Islam is a religion for life, a path for justice, and a source of peace and happiness. Yet I have learned that being a Muslim is not a privilege unless I can be eager to practice my Islamic values and use them as a way of life in faith. My culture's values have formulated my identity and my perspective toward the world.

Today as a Muslim woman studying in the United States and a mother of young children, acculturating my children is highly challenging. Living in a different culture means more than using a different language, experiencing different weather, or adopting different expressions. It is about culture, beliefs, norms, and doctrines (Pollack & Reken, 2009; Berry, 2005). It is about what I have been raised with, and how I have experienced the world. It is about using my cultural inferences that organize my relationships, my decisions, and my ways of thinking. Gradually, I feel that my role has become more complicated as my children experience a different culture. They share good learning and social experiences in schools, they have U.S. friends, and they speak a new language. However, I believe that as they absorb the language and adjust to a new life, they are confused about the differences between these two very dissimilar cultures. My children experience different levels of being "good" individuals since the meaning of being "a good person" in their original culture is different from that in U.S. culture. Although I have done my best to prepare my children to examine different perspectives, I think performing such examinations in another culture is extremely different.

I often ask myself how I can assist my children as they adjust to these differences. What can I do to keep their Islamic identity? How can I lead them to get the best from U.S. culture without affecting their Islamic roots? How can my children understand that respecting others' perspectives is a value? How can I guide my children to be themselves,

to be independent within this barrage of diversity in U.S. culture? How can I explain that we have a different system of establishing relationships and communicating with the world?

Facing challenging stories and questions that contradict my values and ethics as a Muslim is an embedded part of my life in the U.S. (Abudabbeh, 2005). My daughter, who is 10 years old, told me that when her friend turns 18, her friend plans to have sex, to leave home to live alone and do whatever she wants. My son, who is 8 years old, asked me, “Mama, am I gay?” My youngest son has told me, “My friend says there is no God, and we create ourselves. Do we create ourselves?” Although I believe in diversity and that each culture has its values, I believe that experiencing different cultural values will affect my children’s identities and their involvement in their own culture.

I am confident that my role as a Muslim mother living in a different culture is to connect my children with their traditional background (Catherine, Costigan & Koryzma, 2010). Indeed, I have to build a strong understanding with my children, and teach them that accepting diversity is powerful because respecting others helps others respect us. Looking from other viewpoints should enforce our beliefs about our rituals, and our ways of experiencing the world from an Islamic perspective.

There are more and more Saudi students in America (Taylor & Albasri, 2014) and in other different countries such as Britain, Russia, Japan, and China (Mahboob, 2010; Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). I think that these children face a major conflict when balancing what they know and what they live with. How can we as educators nurture their Islamic identities? Moreover, what happens upon returning home? Are Muslim children ready emotionally and socially to practice their lives inside Islamic

society again? Does being in a different culture during their early years affect their identities? All of these questions need answers: answers that enable us to help Muslim children survive emotionally and socially in a different culture. All of these questions formulate my perspective as a researcher. I believe that transforming children and preparing them to survive the exposure to two moral systems without losing their identities is a cultural commitment that should be considered by educators and scholars who endeavor for all children's wellbeing, regardless of their cultural or religious roots.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework applied in this study is built on different theories relating to the ecological environments that children live in and how these environments affect their lives; particularly during the developmental years.

#### Ecological Systems Theory

This study applies ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as a theoretical framework. Ecology is a term generated from the Greek root *oikos* that means "home" (Velliaris, 2015). In relationship to human development, ecological perspective is relevant to the developmental influence by the interaction between an organism and its surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1975). Ecological systems theory is a psychological development theory summarized as "an evolving systemic process of interaction between the human organism and the environment" (Cooper & Denner, 1998, p. 6). Emphasizing the work of Bronfenbrenner, Velliaris (2015) also defined human ecology as, "the development of children, the environment in which they grow up, and especially the interaction between/among them that collectively comprise a 'developmental ecology'"

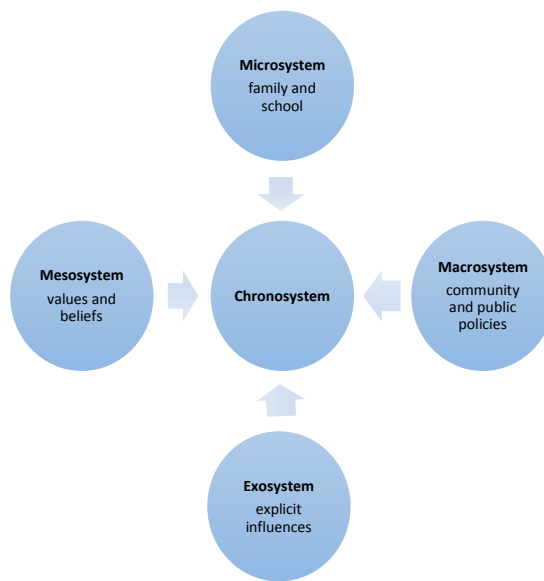
(p. 38). From a different theoretical framework, Steward (1972), discussing multilinear evaluation, emphasized that cultural change is not an isolated transition. Rather, it is a sophisticated integration of lasting process. This can be applied to the cultural transitions that TCKs undergo in relationship to the complicated social systems experienced by them during their childhood, which can be explained by ecological systems theory (Johnson, 2007; Velliaris, 2015). Based on ecological theory, culture is a context that is created based on the meaning that people make by relying on their social and physical contexts (Cooper & Denner, 1998). Therefore, social and physical ecology might critically affect a person's ability to function in both a threatening and a secure milieu. In other words, is functioning in conflicting environments an opportunity or a challenge for the development of children (Copper & Denner, 1998; Velliaris, 2015)? Initially, this theory was applied in the field of violence and the maltreatment of children, without cross-cultural applications from an ecological-systems-theory perspective (Dasen & Mishra, 2000). However, it has recently been recognized as a convenience framework for different interdisciplinary fields like anthropology, education, psychology, and sociology (Velliaris, 2015), and acculturation and multiculturalism research (Cooper & Denner, 1998; Johnson, 2007; Onchwari, Onchwari, & Keengwe, 2008; Velliaris, 2015). In acculturation research, scholars have recognized the effectiveness of using ecological systems theory to understand the complexity of the overlapping of two powerful ecological systems' contexts on children's lived experiences (Johnson, 2007). Velliaris (2015), for example, pursued this theory to explore the issues experienced by transitional children, or TCKs. He ended by creating a contextual framework, basically generated from the ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and the theory of



“overlapping spheres of influence” by Epstein (1986-2006) that explain the influence of family, school, and community as integrated systems that form children’s lives. Willis (2002) emphasized that ecological systems theory is a cogent framework that “seeks to maintain a holistic perspective and recognizes the potential complexity of interactions and overlap among spheres of transnational children’s lived experience” (p. 53) that is “less bounded, more fluid, and more of a daily challenge” (p. 27).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) children develop under the impact of the integration of current and coming multiple systems: microsystem, mesosystem, distal exosystem, and macrosystem; all of them are processed under the impact of chronosystem. In a microsystem, family, school, and religious institutions interact to play a fundamental role during childhood development. If school and family systems contradict or operate differently, as may happen in the case of cross-cultural children, those children experience a mesosystem. Children in a mesosystem may experience confusion and contradiction as a result of having two inhomogeneous social environments, for instance at home and at school, the stress of understanding how each system works, and the challenge of absorbing both social expectations. Moreover, children may examine another social surrounding through exosystems by having an explicit impact that indirectly affects their development (Arditti, 2005): For example, being affected by social and familial circumstances, such as having stressed working parents or being exposed to the difficulties that parents experience as immigrant employees or international students (Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2003). A macrosystem is when all the ecological systems overlap and reflect the impact of predominant values, beliefs, and traditions of a social group (Kostelnik, Whiren, Soderman, & Gregory,

2006). Within this system, policies and traditions of schools play a role in cross-cultural children’s development by considering or neglecting the cultural needs of such children. All the aforementioned systems are also integrated with and affected by a chronosystem, which refers to the events happening during a lifespan which affect the child, such as having a sick grandparent in the original culture or experiencing the challenge of transition and mobility across cultures. Ecological systems theory can also be applied to understand how individuals as children make meaning of their multiple lives (Cooper & Denner, 1998) and how these multiple systems affect their identity (Velliaris & Willis, 2013).



*Figure 1.* Ecological Systems that Influence Children Development by Bronfenbrenner (1979)

Velliaris (2015) discussed two important terms in relation to the essence of TCKs’ experiences:

Competence and dysfunction. She referred to competence as “the demonstrated acquisition and further development of knowledge, skills, or ability to conduct

and direct one's own behavior across situations, while dysfunction refers to the manifestation of difficulties in maintaining control across situations and domains of development" (p. 41). This particularly can be applied in the recent study in terms of exploring the challenge and opportunities resulting from the cultural adaptation of the children among the impact of ecological systems that in turn reflects a process of a *competence* or *dysfunction* (Velliaris, 2015, p.41).

A phenomenology case study is pursued in this study to explore the life experiences of cultural adaptation of Saudi children aged 7-10 years, and how these children develop their cultural identities. Ecological theory would be a rational framework, because it can help the researcher, by identifying the challenges and opportunities, to understand the essence of the lived experience and explore the impact of such systems in children's lives. Being between two powerful systems, it is interesting to know how such systems affect those children's lives and how this experience influences how they develop their cultural identities.

### Multiple Worlds Theories

According to the multiple worlds theory by Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1991), all children who have cross-cultural experience encounter challenges in order to make meaning of their multiple worlds. These children cross many cultural boundaries presented by family, school, and peers. Each world presents its values and social expectations, and operates differently within children's lives, offering a new challenge that children must deal with and negotiate about.

According to Phelan et al. (1991), youths may show one of four patterns when making a transition between their different worlds (e.g. family, school, peers). The first pattern is when individuals can make a smooth and safe transition by constructing a meaning of their multiple worlds. They are comfortable with their parents, peers, and

teachers and they can smoothly fit their needs with others' expectations. However, they are still not really connected to peers who are not of their world (the world that includes all their different worlds).

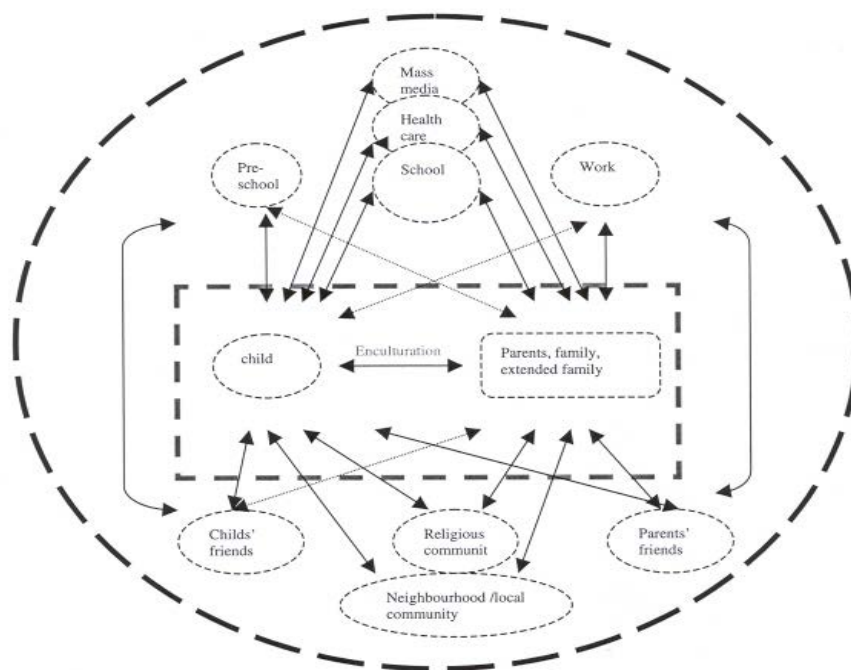
A second pattern is when the children experience different worlds between them and their peers in the school, such as the exposure to different ethnicities or religions. Although they have two different systems in their lives, they are still able to find a meaning to their lives and negotiate their identities within the multiple systems. Even with having no complete recognition and affiliation from people in each culture, they adjust such that they are able to communicate and integrate with both cultures successfully. A third pattern is shown when children experience more challenges to acculturate. Although these children operate adequately in schools by having caring teachers, they are not fully engaged with any world. The fourth pattern is seen in the group of children who find living among their multiple worlds too challenging, so they remain separated from and unrelated to any world, despite their hope for belonging to the school world. Phelan et al. (1991) believed that the attitude of children toward mobility from world to world impacted their school experience, and their future opportunities of having other successful experiences.

#### Acculturation Development Model

Emerging from ecological development theories and cultural psychology, the acculturation development model presents a new perspective toward understanding the development of children in different cultural contexts. Oppedal (2006) argued that ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1997) and the developmental contextualism model by Lerner (1986, 2002) assumed that children develop within a homogenous culture

characterized by the same traditional heritage of values, beliefs, and norms. However, from a developmental and cultural psychological perspective, children's acculturation is inevitably a part of their development: It is a fundamental part within it. As Oppedal (2006) explained, "The various sociocultural settings of the development contexts are thus a complex organization of interacting individuals and sociocultural contexts that may affect the child either directly or indirectly" (p. 99). The sociocultural and the individual are in a dualistic relationship in which each affects the other. Researchers believe that acculturation is a natural process of development, and should not be considered as a separate process in children's lives. Oppedal (2006) discussed this notion, mentioning how the experience of acculturation during developmental years may result in successful adaptation, resulting in opportunities rather than in a crisis of transitions and the risk of marginalizing their identity and adversely affecting their wellbeing.

Acculturation development thus is relevant to the continuous integration of ethnic and host society to achieve cultural competence. Therefore, children of minorities all are affected by their experience of transition, their experience of racism, and their bicultural lives. All these realities of these children's lives are considered fundamental in the acculturation development model and should be considered when studying children across cultures. It is necessarily according to a developmental acculturation perspective to integrate the psychological theories with theories of acculturation to understand better the acculturation of children and adolescents. Integration of influences of development acculturation is illustrated in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Dynamic contextual model of acculturation development adapted from Sam & Oppedal (2003)

Based on this model, all the agents and social contexts (e.g. family, friends) and institutional contexts (e.g. schools, mosques), are integrated systems to represent a culture of the children, so it is important to not separate acculturation from development because both of them involve the same process and represent a culture for children who examine the experience of living in multiple cultures.

### Personal Epistemology

Within this complicated world and among the many intellectual perspectives available, I can define myself as a Muslim scholar who sees the world through Islamic lenses. My religion invites me to seek knowledge everywhere, thoughtfully using objective and subjective approaches. It invites me to look at the world deeply, think, and

construct a meaning. The Quran, the holy book of Muslims, invites people to think and contemplate about themselves and their universe. The universe is enriched by human experiences and stories that should inspire us to find truth by being thoughtful, using multiple tools, and by playing different roles to understand ourselves as realities of the world. From this perspective, I believe that truth may be simultaneously singular and multiple, unique or universal. However, I strongly believe that truth is not objective, and a report of physical experience is not the only valid and exclusive way to gain knowledge. Although a quantitative approach is a good way to investigate knowledge in many natural sciences, I believe that our lives as social humans are too deep and uniquely complicated to be merely measured in statistics and figures, or to be graphed by charts and curves.

My epistemology emerges from social constructivism. According to my thoughts about what counts as knowledge, I seek the truth based on the social reality of people's lives. I believe that people can construct the meaning of life through their experiences and their social context. Meanings are always expected to be different because people are different, so meanings depend on the reality of human experiences. According to social constructivism perspective, I focus on people's stories and their perspectives. I count on the social and historical context of individuals and connect their cultural reality to the meaning that they construct. I believe that interviewing individuals with open-ended questions will provide them with the opportunity to explain their thoughts and feelings (Creswell, 2013). I also identify my position as a researcher and my assumptions as a Muslim mother. The consciousness of my ego supports separating my perspective from the experience of participants by relying on their perspectives. However, Lincoln,

Lynham, and Guba (2011) believed that in social constructivism perspective, reality is co-constructed between the participants and the inquirer, and that values should be appreciated and respected within the research. In social constructivism, using a phenomenological approach is powerful because it reflects the lived experience of individuals and the meaning they make and conveys their ways of communicating with the world (Creswell, 2013).

I identify myself as an early-childhood Muslim scholar. Social constructivism is presented my epistemology rather than positivism perspective (which adopts a scientific approach to find a truth). Reality is socially constructed via human experiences and when individuals construct their meanings about with the world. I try to find the truth from the mouths of children: Their crying, their excitement, and their words. I believe that humans are different despite similarity. Among these differences and similarities, uniqueness emerges, and stories can be told. Every experience, story, relationship, or struggle holds a distinct meaning. This meaning contributes to our knowledge and helps us to understand our actions as human beings. It is not necessarily to find the truth, or the ideal approach for all. It is not critical to find a universal perspective that fits each place and time. It is not merely about finding the missing island, but about all the struggling, fears, and enthusiasm throughout the journey and the constructed meaning behind it. My journey as a researcher is really not just about finding the missing island. Rather, it is about discovering what is inside and beyond.

Expressing the meaning of being a mother for a child with autism, hearing the voices of poverty aggression, and finding why children love electronics are all scenarios that can be difficult to interpret in one specific reality or solid interpretation. Smiles and



tears, giving up and resistance, victory or loss, are all meanings inside people's minds and hearts that uniquely reflect their realities. A basic premise of social constructionism is that "reality is in the perception of the perceiver" (Farrell & Weitman, 2007). This epistemological perspective reflects my way to know what I know, and to know what I feel it is critical to know. Indeed, social constructivism looks at the reality from the point view of the other, interested in understanding the values and positions of people and construct the meaning. Merriam (2009) claims, "Researchers do not find knowledge, they construct it". Thus, I understand the world from this angle, and I am convinced that knowing another's perspective is a way of constructing knowledge.

### Summary

This study explores the acculturation experience of Saudi children who live between different cultures, with high mobility during childhood, as TCKs. In particular, the study explores the lived experience of Saudi TCKs by focusing on the potential opportunities and difficulties that they encounter during acculturation.

This first chapter introduced the study, discussed the background of the problem, and addressed the purpose, questions, and significance of the study. It also included a subjectivity statement in which I explained my perspective as a Muslim Arabic scholar. The chapter ended with an outline of the theoretical framework. In Chapter Two, I shift to a review of the literature of children in middle childhood, both cross-culture children and TCKs, and of acculturation. The literature pertaining to the experience of Saudis as international students in the United States is also reviewed.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, multiple studies have been reviewed in an effort to articulate relevant literature on five topics: (1) middle childhood, (2) acculturation of groups and third culture kids (TCKs), (3) acculturation in general, (4) acculturation of Muslim and Arabic groups living in Western cultures in general and the US in particular, and (5) the experience of Saudi Arabian students in the United States. This literature review aims to identify possible gaps in the literature on the acculturation of TCKs. Identifying these gaps helps to justify this study, which aims to explore:

1. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northeast Ohio elementary school, particularly for cultural adaptation?
2. How do Saudi third culture kids develop their cultural identity?
3. What is the parent's role in their Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation?
4. What is the teacher's role in Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation?

Although there is a significant body of work on the experiences of acculturation and religious and/or a community identity related to specific Christian ethnic and religious groups, little is mentioned about other minorities living in the United States like Islamic and Arabic groups. For instance, many researchers have discussed the acculturation experiences for Latino immigrants, particularly the acculturation and educational achievements of Mexican Americans (Kim & Newhill, 2013; Perez, Dawson,

& Orozco, 2011), for Chinese immigrants, for African immigrants (Tadesse, Hoot, & Watson-Thompson, 2009), and for American missionary kids (Choi, 2004; Wiemer, 2011). Many researchers have also examined schools' adjustment and identity formation into a different cultural context for some cultural groups like African and Chinese (Lu, Marks, & Apavaloiae, 2012; Rosenthal, Doreen, Feldman, & Shirley, 1992; Yeh et al., 2008; Zhou, Peeverly, Xin, Huang, and Wang, 2003). Shaw (2010) also argued that in comparison to the number of studies about Saudis as international students, many more studies exist on the experiences of other international students, like Asian students in the United States. Indeed, studies focusing on Middle Eastern students are still limited in general (Altbach & Wang, 1989), and few studies have discussed the experience of Saudis as international students in particular (Heyn, 2013).

A few studies have considered Muslim Arabic youths and adults living in the United States, but overall, as Britto (2008) asserted, "Interest in Arab Muslims in general, and children in particular, is a relatively new phenomena" (p. 854). Research about the experience of Saudi Muslim students is limited (Hewitt and Algahtani, 2003; Razek, 2012; Razek and Coyner, 2011; Razek and Coyner, 2013; Shaw, 2009), and only two studies, which are now outdated, have targeted the experience of Saudi children in the United States. One of these two outdated studies was conducted by Alosaimi (1995) to investigate Saudi parents' mediation of children's television viewing in the United States. He found that Saudi children were affected by American television in terms of violent advertisement and educational programming just as were American children at the same age. Alosaimi also found that Saudi parents adapted the same strategies of mediation that U.S. parents did to guide their children's television viewing. The second study was

conducted by Al-Hassan (1986), who studied the viewing habits of preschooler Saudi children who were living in the United States and were viewers of the Sesame Street program. Al-Hassan aimed to explore the influence of such programming on children's skills, such as their cognitive and linguistic skills. Although both studies explored aspects that affect Saudi children in the United States, neither was relevant to the experience of Saudi children's acculturation in U.S. schools in terms of challenges and opportunities. My search of the psychology and social science databases resulted in limited data regarding recent studies about the lived experience of TCKs in early or middle childhood whose religion is Islam. In 2014, Barn asserted that during his own literature review, "no studies specifically exploring acculturation in children of one religious faith but from different ethnicities were found" (p. 3). It seems this gap is still present in the literature today.

### Middle Childhood

Since the current study is interested in the lived experience of the acculturation of Saudi children as TCKs in the U.S. schools, it is useful to discuss some of the relevant concepts that in many ways support the need for exploring the experience of children's acculturation before adolescence. First concept is consistent with the experience of cross-cultural children, second concept is about the cognitive development of children in middle childhood, and third concept is generated from acculturation literature in general and acculturation from developmental perspective in particular.

Initially, considering the comprehensive wellbeing of children is a commitment that nations make to all of their children. Caregivers and professionals of children are responsible for meeting young children's needs, for providing comprehensive

development, and for enhancing their wellbeing. The Code of Ethical Conduct in the position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) emphasizes a commitment to consider fundamental ethical aspects when educating young children. The NAEYC has accordingly made commitments to:

2. appreciating childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle [and valuing the quality of children's lives in the present, not just as preparation for the future] (2) basing our work with children on knowledge of child development [and learning] (3) appreciating and supporting the close ties between the child and family (4) recognizing that children are best understood in the context of family, culture, and society (5) respecting the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague) and (6) helping children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust, respect, and positive regard (Feeney & Kipnis 1992, p. 3).
- Understanding the sociocultural context reflects an overlap of the social elements of family, school, community, and a wider society. Therefore, when a conflict occurs within one element, the other elements are engaged and affected. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989, 1993) addressed the issue that acculturating under the biases of a larger society affects children negatively even when they have positive familial relationships (Bronfenbrenner as cited by NAYECE, 1997, p. 4). Thus, children of minorities and international parents cannot be treated as an exception in the commitment of educators to enhancing the well-being of all young

children. That commitment must encompass all students, regardless of their ethnical, religious, or cultural backgrounds. In particular, it must include all cross-cultural children the same way that it includes native children.

Middle childhood is identified as a period of time when children develop self-confidence and become more independent, connecting to the world beyond their own sphere of parents and family. Children between the ages of 6 and 14 are in the process of embedding a sense of identity and developing competent social relationships, identifying themselves and the differences between themselves and others. In schools, these children also establish a sense of success and failure that affects their ways of coping with challenges in the future (Eccles, 1999). Practicing autonomy, children connect to the world outside their families, communicating in schools as social individuals. During this process, children encounter issues such as coping with others' expectations, comparing themselves with peers, building relationships, and developing ways of coping with challenges and opportunities.

During middle childhood in particular, children continue developing the cognitive skills from early childhood and achieve a shift of cognitive skills. This development enhances children's social skills and prepares them to identify themselves and others around them. During this time, children experience a transition from early childhood toward the significant changes of adolescence. Thus, children move from the rapid growth of early childhood, to the building of a more rational and cognitive understanding of the world. Avoiding what Erikson calls a "sense of inferiority" during this transition may affect children's self-esteem and emotional and social well-being (as cited by

Eccles, 1999). Outside their comfortable familial environment, during this cognitive growth, children become more conscious about themselves and other individuals around them, such as peers and adults that are not family members. During this interaction, children examine religious and cultural differences relative to their family. Children tend to want to fit into peer groups, make their friends happy, and feel a sense of belonging and interest in others' perspectives. They need to be accepted among peers and able to meet social expectations and cope with resulting conflicts. Social experiences with peers are a major source of stress, as well as a positive developmental tool, for children of ethnic backgrounds (Chen & Tse, 2008). Therefore, having good social interactions with peers can be stressful or supportive for the development of cross-cultural children during acculturation (Chen & Tse, 2008). On the other hand, involvement in the school environment develops their social roles, shifting them from a mere member of the family to a more advanced role, namely one that reflects their personality and performance as a member of a larger group in the school. In schools, children pursue challenges and experience frustration, especially when they are less skilled than others. Therefore, when children feel pressure, they try to share personal information with friends whom they trust (Singer & Doonenbal, 2006). An indication as to the effect of peers in giving support and affiliation was found by Barron (2007), who reported that young children aged 3 and 4 years old preferred joining a group of peers of their own ethnicity.

Research regarding the developmental perspective of acculturation is theoretical, debated, and lacking in a comprehensive approach to integrating the natural developmental issues into the acculturation process (Berry, 2011). It is not really clear if the issues that cross-cultural children encounter during their acculturation are

developmentally based changes or acculturation-based changes, or merely an outcome of adaptation. Both processes of change (developmental changes and acculturation changes) are integrated and thereby are puzzling (Oppedal, 2006; Phinney, 2006). On the other hand, there is little evidence of a problem, as Fredricks (1996) suggested that elementary children who were TCKs acculturated with their peers regardless of their cultural differences. This attitude of acculturation was found in Tanu's (2015) study, in which participants declared that although they had experienced different acculturation and interaction patterns in elementary, middle school, and high school, high school was when things had gotten worst. Thus, studies targeting a group of children as Saudi TCKs are needed to conceptualize clearly how young children grow and acculturate by identifying such distinctions if found. Yet, some researchers (e.g. Huntsinger and Jose, 2006) have investigated the link between development and acculturation changes such by applying many tests to explore personality variables of two groups of children during different periods of time. Data were collected from 60 Americans of European descent and 60 second-generation Chinese children during middle childhood (12 years old) and adolescence (17 years old). They found some changes between the first point of time and the second point of time, with insignificant changes in personality variables that are assumed to be predictors of depression, self-esteem, and academic performance. Berry (2010) discussed a study by Phalet and Schonpflug (2001), using it as an example to discuss some possible theoretical and methodological frameworks to separate acculturation from developmental changes: for example, investigating the cultural transmission process along with acculturation in different contexts and among different cross-cultural groups. Therefore, studies of TCKs, from a specific nationality or ethnic



group can be informative, and can provide possible characteristics that enable researchers to distinguish between regular developmental changes and acculturation ones.

Similarities or differences between acculturation groups in different places can provide a basic line, helping us to understand the possible integrated aspects of development and acculturation.

From infancy to adolescence, children are learning their identity based on their personal characteristics and individual capacities, or “personal self”, along with their social links with parents and social groups, their “social self” (Ruble, Alvarez, Bachman, Cameron, Fuligni, & Coll, 2004). Some researchers believe that social identification during childhood is not fully discussed in the literature, especially when compared to studies on social identification in adolescence. This absence in the literature is unjustified for two reasons: First, from a developmental perspective, social characteristics such as gender and race are remarkable aspects during childhood (Aboud, 1988; Ruble & Martin, 1998). Second, self-identification from others and with connects to others is a fundamental aspect within social development (Ruble & Goodnow, 1998).

Between early childhood and middle childhood, children develop their personal self by identifying themselves with external characteristics and social relationships. Specifically, before the age of seven or eight, children may introduce themselves by introducing their names, their gender, and people living with them. However, by 8 years old, children introduce themselves with more evaluation and in relation to others. Experimental research also addressed the observation that children can adopt psychological terms to refer to themselves and to others (Wellman, 1990) and to demonstrate awareness about general characteristics among individuals, such as good or

mean (Ruble & Dweck,1995). By middle childhood, children not only evaluate others merely by categorizing them as good or mean, but they also develop the ability to distinguish personal characteristics (Alvarez, Ruble, & Bolger, 2001). In respect to how children recognize and distinguish social categories, Coll et al. (1996) stated that “Children, even at the preschool level, make judgments about people based on ethnic, racial, and social categories and also identify themselves as members of particular groups, compete for resources, and segregate themselves based on social and physical characteristics” (p. 1879).

Therefore, Ruble et al. (2004) claimed that social identity must be studied in young children during early and middle childhood. They emphasized that developmental changes affect their understanding of identity, that this happens from early through middle childhood, and that this should be considered when studying children’s understanding of social classifications and their self-identification among these categories. Between personal and social identity, collective identity is expected to be a compelling influence in middle childhood, particularly with children whose identity can be clearly distinguished by others (e.g., only black child in the class). Connolly (1998) conducted an ethnographic study over the course of a year, observing and interviewing children 5 and 6 years old who studied in an English multi-ethnic, inner-city primary school. The researcher found that many children at this early age could play roles and negotiate identities, and attached social aspects related to race, class, gender, and age. Ruble et al. (2004) argued that a collective identity that reflects the self- and social-identification of an individual should not be ignored during middle childhood because children 7-10 years old seem to have the ability to evaluate social categorizations within

their identification of themselves. It is during this time that those children experience a significant transition from the simpler familial environment to the more complicated social environment, which entails more complicated social expectations and relationships with peers and teachers in the school.

### Development of Social Knowledge and Identification

Many researchers have discussed the development of social identity (Killen & Rutland, 2011; Ruble et al., 2004; Rutland, Killen, & Abrams, 2010). According to Ruble et al. (2004), children develop their social identification about social categorization based on three levels of awareness, identification, and constancy. Researchers found that awareness toward ethnic and race develop significantly after age four (Aboud & Amato, 2001). Moreover, studies showed that children can identify themselves accurately relative to social categorization. For ethnic and racial identification, researchers found that children even prior to middle childhood, between 4 and 5 years old, can identify themselves by using racial terms (Ramsey, 1991; Rhee & Ruble, 1997). Kohlberg (1966) discussed constancy as a level of social identification, arguing that when children understand the stability of their social category as a reality which cannot be changed, they develop an advanced level of understanding toward social identification. However, studies found that children differ in understanding consistency in terms of racial and ethnical identification based on their ethnicity. White children, for example, develop the sense of constancy between 7 and 9 years old (Aboud & Ruble, 1987). Furthermore, a study was conducted on racially diverse groups that found similar patterns for constancy development in children of that same age range (Rhee & Ruble, 1997).

It is relevant to discuss some prior research on racial-ethnic identity development to understand the potential dynamic of identity formation in children of immigrants.

There is some evidence that identity formation is a phenomenon that occurs late in youths' and adolescents' lives. This common perspective may explain why research that investigates the racial-identity of young children in middle childhood is limited.

Corenblum (2014) studied the impact of racial-ethnic identity on the psychological well-being of native children 6-12 years old. The researcher found that elements of racial-ethnic identity are not absent during middle childhood and preadolescence. However, the researcher found some evidence regarding the affective commitment and exploration of racial-ethnic identity in minority children in middle childhood, but this was much less salient than in older children. Corenblum deduced that youths and adolescents explore their original identities, practice their cultural behavior, and use their heritage language more frequently than younger children.

However, the variation between the racial-ethnic identity formation for preadolescence, "middle childhood", and adolescence is not clear. Corenblum (2014) questioned that "older children did display exploration of their identity by participating in more culturally-relevant behaviors and using their ancestral language than did younger children, but it is unclear whether such participation reflects growing commitment to their identity or the effects expectations of this age" (p. 372). The extent of the development of an ethnic-identity in the pre-adolescence period is not sufficiently clear, and it seems that the existence of some elements of racial-ethnic identity gradually develops over time until children develop their sense of self-identity.

On the other hand, Schwartz and Billie (2015) assumed that the development of a racial-ethnic identity affects school age-children, and affects the psychological well-being of children during middle childhood, in terms of self-concept, self-esteem, hope, and academic self-efficacy. In Schwartz and Billie's (2015) study, 138 children between the ages of 8 and 12 participated. The researchers tested three variables: ethnic awareness, perceived discrimination, ethnic identity development, and psychological well-being. The researchers reported that younger children (8 years old) experienced discrimination related to their ethnicity, and they were conscious of racial and ethnic differences. It was concluded that school-age children identified early stages of racial-ethnic identity during middle childhood, such as identification, affirmation, and commitment. The results varied according to nativity, school level, and ethnicity. Since there is insufficient data regarding the understanding of young children for the concept of racial-ethnic identity, studies such as this study about Saudi TCKs may provide some insights as to how these children determine their identity during the experience of acculturation.

Some researchers have investigated acculturation of children between 6 and 12 years old (Tatiana, 2012). Barn (2014), for example, studied the preferred acculturation approach among four ethnic groups of Muslim Arabic children: Saudi children were included. However, in this quantitative study the number of participants among other groups was not sufficient to understand the acculturation perspective of each group of children (aged 5-11) as a distinct ethnic group. (This study was comprised of 6 Saudi children, 17 Yemeni, 13 Libyan, and 9 Somalian.) Moreover, this study was conducted on Muslim ethnic groups of children in Britain, which may lead to a slightly different perspective about acculturation relative to acculturation in the US. Brown et al. (2013)

also studied the acculturation attitude and the adaptation outcome of children aged 5-11, of minority groups from a South Asian background who studied in the South of England. The study showed differences in their preferences regarding integration based on their age. Older children (8-11 years old) preferred integration to acculturate, while younger children (5-7 years old) preferred separation as an approach to acculturation. Children who preferred integration were more accepted by their peers and developed social competence more than those who preferred to remain separate. However, children who were willing to integrate (henceforth referred to as having an integration attitude) still demonstrated some emotional conflicts. This perspective was emphasized by Barn (2014), who noted that an acculturation approach is significant and positive, and lets children practice negotiation skills in schools.

Regarding preferred acculturation strategies during childhood, Brown et al. (2012) believed that preferring to remain separate from those who are different (separation attitude) during acculturation is a common strategy for children younger than 8 years old, because children during this age are still in the process of developing a self-concept relative to the process of understanding the dynamic of friendship, group and intergroup interactions. Emphasizing this perspective, Coll and Magnuson (2014) also indicated that young children might see a friend as a peer for playing, and not as a source of an emotional link.

However, separation is not the only strategy affecting relationships during childhood. Biculturalism can also be practiced, and it affects peer relationships and levels of integration during childhood. Rutland et al. (2012) studied the impact that group identity played on peer relationships of British South Asian children (5-11 years old). The

researchers concluded from this longitudinal study that children with bicultural identification were the most preferred, and were highly accepted children among their white British peers; however, they were less preferred by their the same-ethnic peers. Bicultural identity had more impact on peer attitude and friendships for older children relative to younger children.

Biculturalism as a relevant concept for acculturation has been discussed (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). It refers to the adjustment and competence of cultural practices within both cultures. Practices not only including speaking the languages of both cultures, but also having friends, forming media preferences, and feeling comfort with practicing both cultures) Cabassa, 2003(. Biculturalism refers to many ethnic components, like feeling proud toward the original culture and willing to practice its heritage (Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004).

Biculturalism is indeed affected by the surroundings. Flannery, Reise, and Yu (2001) discussed how growing up in a welcoming bicultural environment will enhance and promote practices toward biculturalism. Biculturalism with respect to children, for example, is relevant to family socialization and a family's attitude toward biculturalism. Moreover, changes resulted from being in a welcoming, open environment that accepted multiple cultures; this lead to changes in both cultures that ended as a bicultural culture, and people from both cultures were bicultural. However, sometimes even when in a bicultural environment, not all people practice biculturalism. Studies by Baker Giles, Noels, Duck, and Hecht (2001) and by Huntington (2004) confirmed that some Americans (mostly white Americans who have had little communication with other

ethnicities) feel a threat to their national identity when interacting with other ethnicities that are not Americans. Thus, two factors affect the level of biculturalism: Cultural context (practices enhanced between two cultures) and family socialization (encouraging and enhancing or ignoring and resisting). In this case, two cultures affecting the biculturalism of Saudi children are the family context and the school context, between which Saudi TCKs live and acculturate.

Concerning TCKs, biculturalism always involves bilingualism because language is an embedded component in culture, so linking language with culture to understand human cultural behaviors is a commonplace concept in sociology and ethnography. Thus, discussing biculturalism apart from bilingualism is not a comprehensive approach to understanding both concepts. Cultural beliefs and norms are mostly transformed from one generation to another by language. Individuals who live cross-cultural lives, for example, usually speak different languages to experience multiple cultures. To understand the cultural context, one must be able to speak its language. Language also is a significant stigma to cultural awareness (Padilla and Perez, 2003). Hamilton (2013) explored the experience of Eastern European children entering European primary schools that were described as culturally and linguistically homogenous environments. The researcher found that, despite the children's acceptance from peers and teachers, teachers showed their concern that the inability to speak the English language would affect the children's academic achievement in school, while they had less concern for the socio-emotional needs of immigrant children. How such needs may have affected the acculturation experience of those children was not clearly addressed.



From the limited research about acculturation of Islamic groups, Barn (2014) argued that integration was not always the preferred approach to acculturation. The researcher clarified that for a young Muslim growing up in an unreligious culture, the integration approach holds no psychological benefits for those children. Haboush (2007) also emphasized that integration is not the best approach to achieve a positive outcome of acculturation for some groups, such as Muslims. Therefore, psychologists should consider the cultural distance of some cultural groups and move beyond the holistic perspective that addresses integration as a preferred strategy during acculturation, which is not always the valid choice for some cultural groups. Baysu, Phalet, and Brown (2013), for example, found that when receiving a very unwelcoming attitude from the host culture, adolescents who chose to separate had higher school engagement than those immigrant adolescents who preferred to integrate. Baysu et al., (2013) accordingly suggested that unintegrated children preferred resilience toward facing threat from the original culture and the host culture and emphasized what Barn (2014) and Haboush (2007) asserted about integration of young Muslim children.

It can be concluded from this review of the literature that research regarding acculturation of children in terms of identity formation, social identification, and preference of acculturation is not fully determined. Investigations regarding how children from particular groups develop between two cultures are still debatable and relevant to cultural and ethnical differentiations that should be addressed clearly in further research (Barn, 2014; Brown, 2013).

## Acculturation Groups

Acculturation is becoming a universal phenomenon that affects the life of a significant number of individuals today. However, each acculturation experience is unique due to its circumstances. Therefore, researchers identify some groups whose experience of acculturation function differently, for different reasons, and by different dimensions. Berry et al. (2010) mentioned seven acculturated groups: refugees, asylum-seekers, sojourners, immigrants, expatriates, indigenous peoples, and ethnocultural groups. According to Berry et al. (2010), *voluntariness, immigration, and permanence* are three fundamental factors which make these groups face different challenges at different levels (p. 310). Thus, the acculturation experience has different aspects, and depends on whether the decision to move was voluntarily chosen, or coerced under political or social forces. The state of immigration is not always the same because some groups experience acculturation while they grow in their original home but with bicultural parents while other groups physically move far away from their original culture to live and grow in a new culture. Acculturated groups also might stay outside their original cultures permanently, while others stay temporarily.

To understand the essence or the meaning of each acculturation experience for each aforementioned group, it is useful to look at factors described by Berry (2010), such as “*pull*” and “*push factors*”. Some acculturated groups move from place to place influenced by pull factors, such as to find better opportunities (e.g., movement for pursuing an educational degree, or getting a good career opportunity), while other groups are affected by push factors, such as being forced to move due to threats, and are therefore refugees or asylum-seekers. Sojourners in particular refers to these groups

whose experience of acculturation is temporary not permanent. The temporary acculturation of sojourners is described by Berry (2010):

The process of becoming involved in the plural society is complicated by their knowledge that they will eventually leave, and return home or be posted to yet another country. Thus, there may be a hesitation to become fully involved, to establishing close relationships, or to beginning to identify with the new society. Despite their uncertain position, in some societies sojourners constitute a substantial element in the resident population and may hold either substantial power, or be relatively powerless. In relation to “forced immigrants”, the experience of sojourners is less difficult than the hardship of those who had no choice or time to make arrangements to leave their homes and establish a kind of life in the new culture (p. 311).

Emerging of multiple acculturated groups according to voluntariness, immigration, and permanence is interpretable by two reasons: as groups and as attitudes and values. The experience of acculturation of a group varies by the size of the group, and its power, rights, and resources. On the other hand, individual factors such as attitude, values, and behavior are different from one person to another. All of these factors reflect how each group might vary in its experience of acculturation and adaptation. Distinguishing between cross-acculturated groups, therefore, should introduce multifaceted experiences and interesting insights about each group. Berry, Kim, Minde and Mok (1987) found differences of stress level in 1,000 participants, which included immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, indigenous people, and ethnic groups in Canada. The different levels of stress were related to the reason for relocation, the length of stay, and the immigration status.

In the same vein, other researchers created other subgroups under the wide umbrella of cross-cultural children who represented acculturated groups, such as

traditional TCKs (Useems, 1950) or current TCKs (Pollack and Reken, 2009). It could be insufficient to discuss TCKs without understanding the term *cross-cultural children*.

### Cross-Cultural Kids

Although distinguishing features were identified among acculturated groups in traditional research, classification was slightly complicated because some groups might have changed their status from temporary immigrant to permanent immigrant. Yet, Taft (1977) asserted that examining psychological changes during interactions was a reality of life for all immigrants, regardless of their cultural backgrounds or their reasons for moving. However, Pollack and Van Reken (2009) claimed that each cross-cultural experience was still unique and different. They developed a concept which helped to clarify the difference seen in cross-cultural children, and in TCKs in particular. *Cross-cultural children* is a term that includes several categories of children and individuals who experience living in more than one culture. TCKs represent one category among the categories of cross-cultural children. Hence, although there is overlap between the experience of TCKs and other cross-cultural children's experiences, Pollack emphasized that the experience of each group of cross-cultural children remained different. Pollack and Reken (2009) have found that the lives of TCKs are guided by two realities: Cross-cultural living and high mobility. Therefore, TCKs are not children of immigrants who lived away from their cultures, and settled into one culture for an undetermined period of time. Rather, TCKs are children who have moved back and forth between or among different cultures. Those children never had the opportunity to grow up in one culture during their developmental years due to the mobility in their lives, unlike most immigrants' children. Moreover, since TCKs are expected to return back to their own

cultures, they must have knowledge of both cultures, and they might experience the stress of meeting different social expectations. Pollack and Van Reken (2009) and Cottrell (2006) explained that the term TCKs is not esoteric, but is not well known. Currently, however, the number of TCKs has been growing, their knowledge about themselves has been increasing, and the voices of TCKs have been heard.

### Third Culture Kids

When considering the traditional and current concepts of cultural studies, it is intended to discuss the concept of “third culture kids” and the concept of “cross culture kids” and understand how to distinguish between such terms.

#### The Concept of Third Culture Kids

Within a terminology of multiculturalism, third culture kids (TCKs) have been addressed as an independent term describing a specific experience of children growing up in different worlds and thereby having a different approach to developing an identity. Although the TCKs concept is not a novel phenomenon, it has not been well recognized (Pollack & Van Reken, 2010), and may be joined conceptually with other immigrants and general ethnical groups. The concept of TCKs is still vague for some people, even to TCKs themselves, but gradually this is improving (Cottrell, 2006; Pollack & Van Reken, 2010).

The traditional term, third culture, was created earlier in the 1950s. The concept of TCKs was generated by Useem (1958) when he was conducting an ethnographic study in India about Indians who had pursued their higher education in the United States. After 5 years, Useems returned to India to study the experience of some U.S. expatriates who left their country to serve in different nations. They had to live inside clustered

communities with specific and shared styles of lives. Useems noticed that, despite the cultural differences between those groups, their children shared the same characteristics. Unconsciously, they shared a culture between two cultures. The hue of the new culture was neither related to their original culture, nor was it connected to the new culture.

The term itself has been a subject of debate. Some people mistakenly make a connection between the term of *third culture kids* and the term *third world*. Although both terms developed as a result of World War II, the *third world* term had nothing in common with the concept of TCKs. Other people argued that people from different cultural backgrounds could not make up a “culture”, because this categorization did not fit the classical definition of a culture, which was defined as *people who have something in common* (Pollack & Reken, 2009, p. 13). However, others like Barnett and Meihua (2002) redefined culture in a sense that made having a third shared culture possible. Barnett and Meihua synthesized works by Greetz, Durkheim, Kluckhohn and Kelly, and by Goodenough to define culture as follows:

A property of a group. It is a group’s shared collective meaning system through which the group’s collective values, attitudes, beliefs, customs, and thoughts are understood. It is an emergent property of the member’s social interaction and a determinant of how group members communicate. . . . Culture may be taken to be a consensus about the meanings of symbols, verbal and nonverbal, held by members of a community. (as cited in Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht, & Lindsley, 2008, p. 13)

This definition can be applied to understand the concept of third culture for TCKs. Pollack and Reken (2009) clarified that what makes TCKs have a third culture is the similarity of their cross-cultural experience despite the diversity of their cultural backgrounds. They live between the host culture and their home cultures, which may be distinctly different. The third culture for them is the culture between two cultures, where

most of these children share similar challenges and encounter corresponding experiences.

Since global movement dramatically increased as a result of marketing movement and spread of technology around the world, Useem's (1958) definition of TCK has not been comprehensive enough to define the experience of many other sectors of children, who for relevant reasons also live between two worlds. In this sense, many researchers have generated other labels beside TCK such as: Global Nomads (McCaig, 1992; Schaetti, 2000); and transculturals and transnationals (Willis et al., 1994). In fact, researchers used multiple synonyms to describe the characteristics of cross-culture children (Velliaris, 2013a). Thus, it appears that all of the variations describe the experience of living between two cultures. Velliaris and Willis (2013) have generated a list of English metaphors for children living between different cultures that reflects the essence of each experience.

Table 1

*Collection of English Metaphors for Cross-Cultural Kids*

advanced tourist	boundary layer person	cross-cultural kid
alien citizen	citizen of the world	cultural bridge
airport hopper	composite self	cultural chameleon
alien abroad	cosmopolitan intellectual	cultural entrepreneur
astronaut child	crazy quilt childhood	cultural nomad
boomerang kid	cross-cultural fusion	cultural translator
culturally calibrated	impermanent resident	privileged homeless
culturally marginal	interactive cosmopolitan	professional correspondent
culturally mixed	intercontinental wanderer	prototype citizen
diplomatically immune	intercultural entrepreneur	resident alien
don't-fit student	intercultural kid	rolling stone
expat alien	multicultural composite	rubber-band nationality
global chameleon	multi-faceted life	satellite kid
global citizen	multinational soul	sociocultural interpreter
global educational	new diaspora	third culture child
mediator	new elite	third culture kid
global nomad	new world fusion	transcultural
global patriot	nomadic child	transit lounge
global soul	parachute child	translational cosmopolitan
hidden immigrant	perpetual outsider	transitional youth
homeless VIB	perpetual 51 behavior	uncompounded
hybrid child	portable identity	world fusion
hibernated	preacher kid	world wanderer

*Note.* Retrieved from Velliaris and Willis (2013, p. 194).



Useem (1993) primarily started to use the term third culture as a “generic term to cover the styles of life created, shared, and learned by persons who are in the process of relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other” (p. 29), and TCKs were defined as “children who accompany their parents into another society” (p. 2). Useem has focused on the experience of U.S. TCKs, but Langford (1998) declared that the experience of TCKs should include other nationalities, since many studies have shown that others have the same characteristics as U.S. TCKs. In this sense, Pollack and Reken (2001) have also suggested extending the definition of TCK to understand in-depth the experience of different people in the cross-cultural world. They asserted that extending the definition of TCKs should include children of parents from two cultures and international adoptees. The aforementioned Pollock and Reken (1999) defined a TCK as follows:

A person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents ‘culture’. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background. (p. 19)

Useem (1999) asserted that changing the definition of TCKs could be a response to the changing life experiences, and it can be seen as a natural phenomenon across time. The classical definition of TCKs given by Useem identified only the U.S. experience of children of expatriates, such as children of missionary, military, ambassadors, or soldiers who have lived in clustered compounds. According to Pollack’s (2009) recent definition, TCKs are not merely “little ambassadors, little missionaries, or little soldiers” (p.15) as Useem defined them earlier. They are not just children who live in compounds of enclaves (Pollack & Reken, 2009), but they may be children to parents who study abroad,

work in international companies, or children of multi-cultural parents. Rather, the experience of TCKs is different than the U.S. experience; the experience belongs to the child living across multiple cultures accompanying their parents, regardless of their ethnicity. Many subgroups have been generated, for example, Zayat (2008) added a relevant term to describe a subgroup of TCK-like children of multicultural parents, half Arab-half Finnish, and she defined them as “exceptional third culture kids [ETCKs]” (p. 5). According to the aforementioned definition of TCKs, Zayat (2008) argued that ETCKs are different than TCKs in the following ways: (1) They do not spend a significant part of their childhood outside their parent’s country. Rather, they live between two places as locals, in one of their parent’s country. (2) High mobility is not a reality in their lives in terms of moving constantly from one place to another. (3) Since ETCKs live in one of their parent’s homes, they do not really experience culture shock because they are not fully foreigners. In contrast, TCKs’ parents may be from a different country. Finally, (4) ETCKs are not fully foreigners, so one or both parents may not necessarily be sponsored by a certain organization or a specific community, and may have a relevant identity in the community. It can be argued that TCKs from other nations, such as Saudi children, might have a different experience and perceive themselves as Muslims coming from an Arabic country.

#### Characteristics of Third Culture Kids

Unlike other settled children, TCKs experience life changing between worlds, examining consistent mobility and a lack of connecting to any one culture. Although there is an advantage to the lives that TCKs experience, they have no “constants” about places, people, or values. This basically affects identity formation. Many researchers

have defined identity as a combination of the personal perception of the self and the interactions with the society. Social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1970-1980), for example, explained intergroup behavior and how connecting to the homogeneous group affected feelings of belonging. TCKs find it difficult to answer questions like “Who are you?” and “Where are you from?” High mobility and moving from place to place and existing between two cultures is hard to explain. TCKs in general have feelings of confusion and stress regarding social expectations, and uncertainty about what is wrong and what is right. The moral system and values of TCKs are not constant because they practice their traditional morals at home, which in many ways are different or contradictory with the ones in school. They may attend their religious school on Sundays while they attend their American school during the weekdays. They may face significant differences between their culture and the host culture. In this regard, they absorb their morals from two different, often contradicting pools. Furthermore, since these children leave places frequently, they must often leave behind people, toys, pets, and their favorite things and places. Pollack and Reken (2009) clarified that TCKs feel rootless, and a feeling of un-belonging is ever-present due to the experience of living between two worlds. But as McCaig (1992) explained previously, “We aren’t really rootless. We’re rooted differently. Our root system is defined more by people, less by places” (p. 1). Rigamer (1994) has clarified that because of their unsatisfied need to be surrounded by extended family, TCKs seek cordial connections with the adults in their current community. The researcher added that teachers are usually the closest ones with whom TCKs communicate in their international schools. Due to their cycle of loss, TCKs feel unresolved grief (Gilbert, 2008; Schaetti, 2002; Pollack & Reken, 2009) that many

narrative stories address, like grandparents' funerals and separations from caregivers (Dehner & Dehner, 2001; Schaetti, 2002). This feeling is connected to the reality of their lives in terms of losing their friends, places they have loved, privileged life that they had have, and feelings of excitement, challenge, being different and special (Cottrell, 2006).

Reentry is a complicated process in TCKs' lives. When they return back to their original home, these children recognize their identities, experience reverse culture shock, and feel as if they do not fit (Cottrell, 1999; Downie, 1976; Pearce, 1998; Smith, 1991). Since TCKs have a unique identity, they experience lack of recognition by society (Cottrell, 1999). Pollack and Reken (2009) addressed four possible ways for TCKs to be recognized by people in both cultures. TCKs might be seen as a foreigner who looks and thinks differently in the dominant culture; an adopted resident who looks different but thinks in line with the dominant culture; a hidden immigrant who looks like the dominant culture but thinks differently; or a "mirror" who looks and thinks like the dominant culture (see Figure 2).

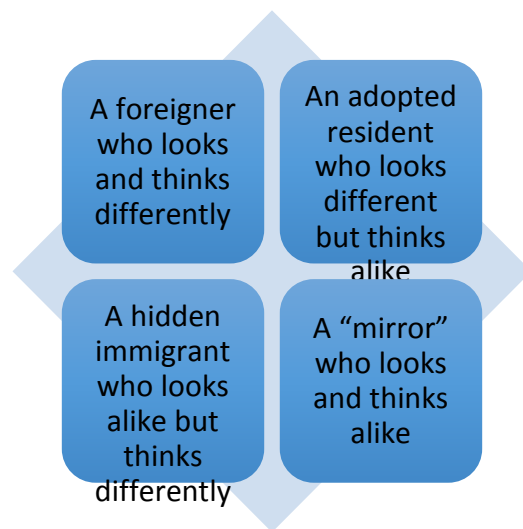


Figure 3. Model of third culture kids' identities adapted from Pollack (2001)

TCKs define their identities based on this model. Therefore, when those children return to their home country, they can keenly sense the complexity of their identity (Giardini, 1993; Jordan, 1981). The challenges of this transition include (a) making new friends; (b) distance from loved ones; (c) belonging; (d) being lonely; (e) being understood; and (f) inner conflicts (Jordan, 1981; Salmon, 1987). TCKs adjust partly to their new university setting (Jordan, 1981). They have difficulty belonging to their own ethnic group (Cottrell, 1993), a sense of grandiosity due to their internationally mobile life experiences, and a belief that no one can understand them (Bloomfield, 1983).

Studies of Japanese returnees offered a significant body of work that resulted in a serious movement in effort to enable TCKs to fit as insiders, not outsiders, in their original culture. Yoshida et al. (2002), as reported by Kaigaishijo, Kyouikushi, and Hensan Iinkai (1991), stated this goal was particularly accomplished by responding to parent's demands and children's special needs both overseas, where children spent their childhood away, and in Japan after the children returned. The public awareness of these demands and needs led to establishing Japanese schools overseas, offering supplementary schools, providing parents with needed information for adjustment and safe transition for their children, and applying several arrangements to satisfy the needs and abilities of returnees in Japanese universities (as cited in Yoshida et al., 2002).

Familial relationships and conflicts can be one of the challenges that TCKs and parents face during their lives. Some TCKs feel angry because of their parents' decisions to move. The lifestyle of TCKs results in feelings of rootlessness, restlessness, and alienation, a confusion of identity, arrogance, and a lack of cultural balance (Bloomfield, 1983; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Useem & Cottrell, 1992; Willis et al., 1994). All these

feelings create clashes and conflicts with parents. This issue is significant, as TCKs' emotional well-being and adjustment are significantly correlated to the parents' adjustment (Bell, 1996; Hormuth, 1988), time spent with fathers, and family outings; specifically, TCKs' attitude toward the relocation and the host country has been correlated with their mother's attitude (Nathanson & Marcenko, 1995). In turn, studies of returnee Japanese TCKs (known as *kikokushijo* in Japanese) showed that the social support of family and positive communication during the experience of acculturation predicted successful reentry; these studies found fewer adjustment problems and more acceptance after reentry to Japan again and (Yoshida et al., 2002).

Friendships and social relationships in TCKs' lives sometimes are shallow and unstable. Werkman, Farley, Butler, and Quayhagen (1981) state that TCKS are secluded, build limited friendships, have less self-confident, and yet they are autonomous and individualistic. Settled peers may be offended by TCKs, as these peers may find TCKs to be ostentatious about their unique experiences (Eakin, 1998). Friendships in TCKs lives often are urgent, passing, and instant. However, TCKs do develop amiable compatible relationships with people like themselves (Bloomfield, 1983; Cottrell, 1993; Fail, 1996; Langford, 1999; Secola, 1993; Useem & Downie, 1976). Despite having less experience with long-term relationships, internationally mobile adolescents have higher intimacy with a best friend than their non-mobile counterparts; they have intimate best friend relationships which tend to be formed according to grade level, nationality, age and gender (Secola, 1993). Japanese TCKs, for example, reported many psychological difficulties after returning such as feeling physically marked because of their Western style of clothing, talking, and walking, as this appearance made them different from their

settled peers. Associated pressures made some of these Japanese TCKs switch their strategies according to the social situations as a way to better fit in (Kidder, 1992, p. 390). Recognizing these differences between returnee Japanese children and their peers, Ebuchi (1988) pointed out that returnee elementary school children are exposed to bullying. However, Fujiwara et al. (1985) classified returnee Japanese children into three groups: the first group, which could adjust despite some difficulties by acknowledging the cultural differences between the two cultures; the second group, which made the cultural transition with no effort; and the third group, which focused on the stress of adjustment and found it very difficult to acclimate.

Life in a different culture exposes children to different patterns of behavior that may differ from the behaviors accepted in their home culture. The challenges of facing other cultures are not exclusive to TCKs. Sung (1985), for instance, found that young Chinese immigrants in New York were affected by sexuality and aggression along with insistence on autonomy and individuality. Being exposed to culturally distinct behaviors creates changes in an individual. Consequently, these behavioral changes may affect the perspective of people in the original culture when that individual returns home.

Schools and teachers affect TCKs' lives. Confirming the significance of schools in the lives of children of immigrants, Coll and Magnuson (2014) indicated that, "Schools are the single most powerful agent that threatens the home land" (p. 107).

Misunderstandings or lack of knowledge about TCKs can be a barrier to their acculturation and a challenge to their experience. Many adults third culture kids, or ATCKs, think that their experience could be better if they had received support and understanding from their teachers in childhood. Espinetti (2011) has addressed many

questions about what teachers can do to promote TCKs' skills. What do teachers need to know about the children in their classes, specifically TCKs? What do teachers need to know about the TCK phenomenon? Espinetti concluded that U.S. schools need to improve and to consider the complexities of TCKs' identities beyond instructional strategies. The lack of a homogeneous value system between the families of immigrants' children and teachers can lead to misunderstandings about children's attitude and behavior and ability, and can affect teachers' judgment on children and their parents (Delpit, 2006; L. Sirin, Ryce, & R. Sirin, 2009). Lausa (1989) found the factors that affect the adaptation of Hispanic children in the United States were having ESL resources, the ethnical distribution of students relative to cultural minorities, the school surrounding, the level of ethnical and linguistic diversity of students and teachers, teacher-parent relationship, parental involvement, and peer relationships (as cited in Coll & Magnuson, 2014). Lausa (1989) highlighted that the following school-related factors affect children like TCKs during adaptation: (1) the availability of ESL facilities, (2) the presence students of minorities, (3) the school climate, (4) the ethnic and linguistic composition of students and school staff, (5) the qualitative and quantitative interaction between teachers and parents, (6) parental engagement, and (7) peer helping.

Interestingly, the experience of TCKs is not fully determined. While examining multiple cultures may be challenging for some individuals, it might be beneficial for others. Fail, Thompson, & Walker (2004) have indicated that most TCKs feel multiple belonging, or they feel as though they do not belong at all, or in some cases, they can hold both positive and negative views when they become culturally hybridized, which is considered now an indication of cultural intelligence and of an ability to live and



negotiate cultural differences wisely (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009). Thus, having a successful experience of living between multiple cultures may be affected by different factors like age and gender, social support, familial factors (Berry, 2010).

Many studies have demonstrated the light side of cross-cultural experience as a positive dimension in TCKs' lives. Moore (2011) has discussed the concepts of multiculturalism, biculturalism, and shifting identities, demonstrating the potential benefits of cross-cultural experience of TCKs. She added that Sorrow (2000) also discussed the idea of shifting identities in response to the need of current moments, an action that allows multicultural individuals to switch between identities to fit in different cultures. Baker (2001) also found that multiculturalism can lead to individuals successfully holding two or more identities. Biculturalism is defined as a benefit in cross-cultural experience. LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993), indicated that acquiring a second culture may enable individuals to respect differences and to adapt positive perspective toward other cultural groups. When individuals accept differences, they develop their knowledge about values and beliefs of both cultures and promote communication.

TCKs are exposed to the world through a big window; they look outside the box and appreciate diversity since they know the experience of living with different peoples, languages, and different ways of life. Cross-cultural experience makes them look for opportunities of studying and working abroad. Useem and Cottrell (2001) indicated that most adult TCKs are willing to travel again, to learn a foreign language, and to connect to the international world by inviting international visitors or working for international organizations (as cited in Bonebright, 2009).

TCKs' lives are uniquely different. Despite the challenges these children face, living among differences provides them with opportunities of learning and communication. Cross-cultural experience enriches TCKs with knowledge, expands their perspectives, and promotes their aspirations. Zilber (2005) addressed that TCKs earn high educational degrees in the future, and cited many studies showing that 80% to 97% earned Bachelor's degrees; between 40% to 53% earned a graduate degree (Fail, 1995; Useem & Cottrell, 1993, 2002; Willis et al., 1994), and 11% earned doctorates (Cottrell, 2002). TCKs have an advantaged life and more opportunities for learning and knowing the world.

The current study aims to investigate the lived experience of Saudi TCKs by exploring the challenges and opportunities that they encounter from a developmental perspective. Literature regarding TCKs has shown that living between different worlds is complicated (Pollack and Reken, 2001; Sirin and Fine, 2007). However, other studies have found that the experience of acculturation in a different culture presents a range of opportunities for learning and communication (Crowne, 2008; Fluckiger, 2010; Peterson and Plamondon, 2009). Classical acculturation paradigms and TCK literature have failed to demonstrate the experience of acculturation of some specific ethnic groups of young children. For some ethnic groups of TCKs, the experience entails multiple complexities, such as the complexity of dealing with the psychological outcome of being TCKs, and of being a minority as an ethnic and religious group in a Western culture. Some groups of children particularly experience more difficulties than other cross-cultural kids because they grow between cultures that are extremely different. They hold an identity that impacts their lives due to discrimination or misunderstandings, and they hold multiple

identities and return back home with possible exposure to further criticism and lack of recognition. TCKs have to cope with many transitions during their early age. They should examine several systems of morals and values, different ways of learning and communicating, and they should examine unsettled relationships with peers and adults (Fry, 2007; Pearce, 2015; Pollack & Reken, 2009; Ward, Furnham & Bochner, 2001).

### Overview of Acculturation

Acculturation is becoming a reality and a universal concept due to the increase of globalization, political circumstances, technology, and marketing growth (Berry, 1989; Pollack & Van Reken, 2001; Useem, 2002). These variables make acculturation an inevitable process for numerous individuals around the world. Thus, interaction and changes among cultures occur under different statuses such as colonization, migration, and sojourning (Berry, 2005).

Acculturation as a classical concept has been investigated since the 1970's. Gradually, the recent interest in acculturation has involved three trends: the impact of European domination of indigenous people, adaptation variables after entry into a new culture, and changes that occur between groups when they have to share the same society (Berry, 2006). The trends of acculturation are not absolute, so there are two different outcomes: an easy acculturation by adapting and learning the new culture, or a conflicting and difficult acculturation (Berry, 1992) depending on many different dimensions such as ethnic differences. Berry (2006) asserted the following about acculturation:

Cross-cultural psychologists take seriously the view that findings from research in one culture area of the world (or even in a few societies) cannot be generalized to others. Thus, as our knowledge of international acculturation experiences, ideologies, and sensitivities increases, we will need to alter the conceptions and

extend the empirical findings. . . . Nevertheless, some evidence exists to show that the very concept of acculturation, the various strategies adopted by immigrants and members of the national society, and the nature of the problems that may occur are rather similar to those identified in the research in other countries. It is, of course, up to all societies, and their diverse residents to assess the relevance and validity of this existing work for their societies. (p. 700)

It is no surprise that acculturation has been identified as a complicated process in people's lives since it can cause so-called acculturation stress due to challenges of adaptation and living between multiple cultures (Berry, 2006). There are two types of acculturative strategies that individuals choose to adapt: The first one is maintenance of the original culture and identity. The second is a positive attitude of interaction toward the groups from the new culture. Both dimensions regarding maintained culture and identity along with interaction with people from the new culture may be viewed as positive or negative (Berry, 2010).

Individuals might examine acculturation stress in different levels regardless of their cultural backgrounds and based on many factors, such as low social status (Yeh, et al., 2008; Williams & Berry, 1991), language difficulties (Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, Wallisch, McGrath, & Spence, 2008; Khan & Watson, 2005; Osmun & Allen, 2001; Sandhu, 1997), employment difficulties (Bratter & Eschbach, 2005; Khan & Watson, 2005), racism (Cornelius, 2002; Fozdar & Torezani, 2008), and loss of social support (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010; Schwartz et al., 2010). Furthermore, other factors such as disparity between the host culture and original culture, difficulties with immigration status, and lack of social support (Liebkind, 1996; Schwartz et al., 2010; Uba, 1994) multiply these hardships. Acculturation is a long-term process affects multiple generations. Cetrez (2010) cited that generations of immigrants and their children can be

affected by acculturation stress on psychological, social, and physical levels (Driscoll, Russell, and Crockett, 2007; Negy et al., 2009), and that such stress might affect familial relationships (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Berry (1997), Jibeen and Khalid (2010) asserted that the level of acculturation stress depends on personal factors, like lower sense of coherence, and on cultural factors such as a lack of social support (as cited in Akram, 2012, p.4) or significant differences in the cultural values (Rudmin, 2003).

Acculturation also refers to the adjustment practiced by different ethnic groups during a long-term contact with another culture (Berry, 1989; Dana, 1996). When different groups acculturate, some long-term adjustments and habituations must take place among groups who are in contact, including adjustments to aspects like language, food, behavior, and ways of communication (Berry, 2006). Therefore, the contemporary trend of acculturation confirms the necessity of understanding both groups (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002; Chirkov, 2009). Researchers should first understand how each culture works in order to understand individuals from each culture. Knowing the differences between such cultures will enhance our understanding of the different ways acculturation affects each cultural group. Strategies of acculturation adopted by the individuals from the dominant culture such as pluralism, multiculturalism, segregation, and exclusion affect significantly the extent to which the minority acculturates (Dinh & Bond 2008; Toth & Vigver, 2003; Oudenhoven & Ward, 2013; Piontkowski, Rohmann, & Florack, 2002; Zagefca, Tip, Gonzalez, Brown, & Cinnirella, 2012).

However, it is important to distinguish between psychological acculturation (Graves, 1967) and cultural acculturation (Berry, 2005). The first one represents the changes of an individual who lives and interacts with the external culture and the

changing culture to which the individual originally belonged. While cultural acculturation might be a comprehensive process for both groups in contact, it represents also the changes that happen between in-group individuals of one culture. In the same line, acculturation affects individuals in two ways: via external changes (e.g., in ways of speaking, dressing, eating, and in one's cultural identity) and via internal changes (i.e., relatively hidden and more complicated changes of religious values and cultural beliefs resulting acculturative stress as manifested by uncertainty, anxiety, and depression) (Berry, 1976). The resulting conflict can be explained by the Weaver Iceberg concept. Pollack and Van Reken (2001) demonstrated this concept by Gary Weaver, which sees culture as an iceberg with a small visible portion and a vast hidden portion under the surface of the water. The visible portion represents what can be clearly seen by others such as food, costumes, and language, while the hidden portion represents values, beliefs, and attitudes. The contradiction of the obvious aspects and the more profound but subtle aspects particularly results in ethnic stereotypes, discrimination and misunderstandings when two groups interact (Pollack & Van Reken, 2001).

Adaptation is an embedded process of acculturation that differs from acculturation despite its relevance (Berry, 2010). The process of adaptation is a hardship in people lives, as during this process they experience different levels of difficulties such as discrimination, ethnic stereotyping, difficulty practicing religion (Mukminin, Yanto, & Yanto, 2013), and feelings of inadequacy due to language difficulty (Heyn, 2013). These difficulties influence people based on two dimensions: psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation refers to the emotional wellbeing of an individual, i.e., to *feeling well*, while sociocultural adaptation refers to strategies that an

individual choose and to behaviors that an individual changes in order to acquire the convenient cultural tools to live successfully in the new sociocultural environment, i.e., to *doing well* (Berry, 2010, p. 324). Coping with potential difficulties along with interaction with people from the host culture are overlapped process including psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Regarding how immigrant youths acculturate and adapt, Berry et al. (2010) found that levels of psychological adaptation are relative to sociocultural adaptation for immigrant's youths of religious backgrounds, with the exception of the adaptation of youths whose religion is Christianity. The researchers concluded that Muslims had a higher level of psychological adaptation than the three other religious minority groups, and religious groups had the lowest level. Muslims, however, had a lower sociocultural adaptation level among other religious groups. The researchers also found that integration into the ethnic identity and international identity is still the best approach of successful adaptation. Particularly, they found that ethnic identity had stronger influence on the sociocultural adaptation of Muslims youths than international identity.

Moreover, ethnic orientation had a significant impact on both forms of adaptation (Berry et al., 2010). However, Berry et al. (2010) concluded that youth orientation toward their cultural group is more significant in respect to their psychological adaptation than sociocultural adaptation. It was also found that discrimination affects psychological and sociocultural adaptation alike, and also strongly affects ethnic contact, indicating that examining discrimination enhances the intergroup contact among youth immigrants. Moreover, the researchers noticed no correlation between age and level of psychological and sociocultural adaptation. The study emphasized the importance of encouraging

immigrants to integrate with the new culture since it has been shown that is the best approach of adaptation on psychological and sociocultural levels.

Ethnic identity highly affects the process of acculturation. Organista (2010) referred to ethnic identity as “subjective sense of membership and belonging to an ethnic group, which includes your attitude, beliefs, knowledge, feelings, and behaviors associated with particular ethnic group” (p.139).

Phinney and Ong (2007) identified many aspects of ethnic identity, including:

Self-categorization and labeling, commitment and attachment, exploration-seeking information and experiences, ethnic behaviors, - evaluation and in-group attitudes, values and beliefs, importance and salience, and ethnic identity in relation to national identity. National identity referred to the relationship between one’s identification with a particular ethnic group and with a particular nation or country. (p.272)

Thus, studies have shown that ethnic groups negotiate their identity and interact with the dominant culture differently. Some ethnicities in particular find acculturation more challenging than other ethnicities, especially when the difference between cultures is highly significant (Berry, 2001; Costigan, Koryzma, Hua, & Chance, 2010; Rumbaut, 2008; Schwartz, Pantin, Sullivan, Prado; Szapocznik, 2006). In biodimensional acculturation, for example, some ethnic identities are identified as threatening to the new culture, which affects how individuals from both cultures interact during acculturation (Funk & Said, 2004); groups may also be unwelcome as racial and religious groups perceived as threatening (Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2004). Sirin and Fine (2007) have mentioned specifically that Muslim adolescents experienced feelings of conflict, overt and covered discrimination, and rejection from peers after September 11.



However, Muslim adolescents, when faced with cultural conflicts, may negotiate their Islamic identities by different approaches such as silence, evasion, flexibility, and explanation (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006). Isik-Ercan (2014) addressed the following five strategies that Turkish children adopted to negotiate their identity, culture, and schooling in the Midwestern United States: (1) Drawing from multiple discourses, (2) Navigating geo-cultural spaces, (3) Becoming agents of negotiation, (4) Mediating conflicts, and (5) Regenerating traditions. Turkish children adopted such strategies to survive living between their original Turkish culture and U.S. culture. L. Sirin, Ryce, and R. Sirin (2014) also emphasized the role that the second- generation plays as a cultural mediator between school and home. This strategy of medication can be seen as a negotiating approach for those children since they are more acculturated than their parents due to their English proficiency.

Identity formation of each culture is unique, so it is critical to understand the ethnic identity of the group to understand their strategies of acculturation (Berry, 2005). Britto (2008) has argued that Arabic Islamic identity cannot be understood based on the ethnic and racial conceptualization of other ethnic groups. Arabic Islamic identity is based on three dimensions: religion, language, and gender relationship. Modood (2005) also critiqued the British perspective, which he called “Black-White dualism”, and the neglect of the experience of other groups that are complicated by “cultural racism, Islamophobia, and the challenge of secular modernity” (p. 98). Britto (2008) added that understanding Arabic Muslims is complicated not only because of their identity, but also because of their political and social milieu after September 11. According to Pecorino (2000), religion is the most powerful and thorough approach of valuing for humanity.

Pecorino considered religion an actual phenomenon asserting that in comparative to language and other identity components, religion is seen as strongest aspect to form identity. Cetrez (2010) argued that since religion is a meaning system for some ethnic groups, studies of acculturation should consider this aspect as a vital dimension affecting religious cultures.

For some ethnic groups in particular, religion is considered a fundamental approach to daily life. To illustrate, for most Muslims, Islam is a guide of life affecting every aspect of their actions and relationships (Khan, 2000). Therefore, culture and religion are integrated systems of meaning in a Muslim's life and difficult to detach from the Muslim individual (Roald, 2001). Islam impacts their decisions, actions, wellbeing and relationships, and affects their acculturation (Abdel-Khalek, 2009; Halstead, 2007; McCreery & Holmes, 2007). However, there are many factors affecting Islamic identity, and not all Muslims are influenced by religion at the same level. Britto and Amer (2007) conducted a study of 150 Arabic American Muslims on the relationship between their cultural identity and the family cultural context. Participants were divided into three groups based on their family's cultural identity. Their study showed that the high cultural identity families were the group most connected to their Arabic Islamic culture, more comfortable practicing their Islamic beliefs, and less involved in American culture. This study clarified that parents who have strong cultural identity can transmit these values and cultural beliefs to their children, helping the children to connect to their original cultural identity, but at the same time, this connection may affect the children's acculturation into the new culture. A number of studies have shown that the influence of religion as a meaning system for some cultural groups may change with age. In

childhood, religion forms a positive aspect, but the system of meaning may change due to the integration of other meaning systems similar to religion during adulthood (Badal, 2001; Cetrez, 2010; Jarvis et al., 2005; Oshana, 2004). For Muslims, integration (described as a positive aspect of acculturation) may be threatened by religious identity (McCreery, Jones & Holmes, 2007). The level of acculturation within the same ethnic generations is also variable. Oshana (2004) found that despite the prevalent practice of religious values of a religious group of Assyrians in Sweden, these religion practices decreased by generations. For most Muslims, losing or being unwilling to practice religion is a dilemma affects the fundamental structure of their children's Islamic identity (Halstead, 2007).

#### Developmental Perspective of Acculturation

Sam and Oppedal (2006) argued that some theoretical perspectives, specifically those that are dominantly based on studies of the acculturation of adult immigrants, might not be valid to study the acculturation experience of children and adolescents. Focusing on acculturation from a developmental perspective, Ramirez (1983) defined it as “continued growth and development in the person’s culture as well as in the lifestyles and values of other sociocultural systems in which he or she participates” (as cited in Oppedal, 2006, p. 101). Sam and Oppedal (2002) also defined acculturation development as “a process towards gaining competence within two distinct cultural domains in order to have a sense of belonging and be able to participate successfully within both” (as cited in Oppedal, 2006, p. 97). Inspired by Ramirez’s (1983) definition, Sam and Oppedal (2002) addressed affiliation in their definition as a critical part of development process during acculturation.

Thus, scholars such as Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Epstein (2006) have continued to discuss many models to understand and explain the psychosocial trajectory of children during their childhood when affected by their ecological environments. Epstein for example asserted the importance of the cooperation among family, school, and community to support children's learning and development. Adding to the similar theoretical perspective, researchers of acculturation from a developmental perspective (e.g., Oppedal, 2006; Velliaris, 2015) argued that to understand the experience of acculturation for children, researchers should discuss comprehensively the sociocultural contexts and groups surrounding the children. Such sociocultural contexts have presented the milieu for what is called "competence", which children as TCKs should experience during acculturation (Oppedal, 2006; Velliaris, 2015). Competence for Velliaris (2015) refers to "the demonstrated acquisition and further development of knowledge, skills or ability to conduct and direct one's own behavior across situations" (p. 41). During acculturation children may compete successfully or fail to acquire needed skills to survive and adapt psychologically (Oppedal, 2006).

Acculturation from a developmental perspective combines ecological developmental theories along with cultural psychology theories to better understand the complexity of cultural competence during developmental years for cross-cultural children (Sam & Oppedal, 2003). Hence, culture is embedded within the life span of the child, and the child is embedded in the culture. Therefore, both individual and culture influence each other. Thus, acculturation of a child is an interaction of different and complicated sociocultural contexts that influence the child during developmental years explicitly or inexplicitly. These sociocultural contexts function on two levels: the public level (e.g.

schools and workplaces) or the individual level (e.g. teachers, friends) (Sam & Oppedal, 2006). Thus, the sociocultural contexts may belong to the original culture or to the new culture. Of course, personal and individual characteristics always affect how individuals deal with acculturation outcome and affect the level of cultural competence toward both cultures.

Many factors affect how children acculturate and adapt. Kallarackal, Herbert, and Support (1976) found a correlation between better adjustment and having positive relationships from parents and caregivers in childhood. With reference to Garnezy (1983), Compas (1987) commented that invulnerable children are characterized by having a social support system (e.g. family, school, individual, or agency) along with personal traits including high self-esteem, mood, internal status of control, and autonomy. Rutter (1979) also indicated that the factors that protect children during acculturation include school (in terms of learning opportunities, high-self esteem, and academic achievement) and family (in terms of having stable relationships with parents and adults). Rumbaut and Portes (2001) also asserted that attitude toward acculturation of new generations of immigrants may function between both cultures by a chosen pattern of acculturation based on parent's selective level of acculturation, accessibility of a supportive network of children's ethnic group, and availability of advantages of community resources along with strong familial relationships.

Affected by their social contexts, children also respond differently to acculturation experience in terms of stress and coping mechanisms. In respect to language for example, Weisskirc and Alva (2002) and Paterson and Larson (2011) found that children can function positively as mediators of values and cultural orientation for

their parents due to their proficiency in English, but Coll and Magnuson (2014) found that children examine the stress of being “a cultural bridge” to speak or translate for their parents. The researcher discussed this particularly as a stressful experience for some children and parents since those children may be exposed to topics that they should be excluded from, like some health or family issues.

When children examine acculturation, they should address the stress of acculturation whether this stress functions positively as a competence or negatively as a dysfunction (Coll & Magnuson, 2014; Velliari, 2015). Coping with acculturation stress at both personal and cultural levels. At the personal level, the attitude of individuals toward coping with the stress of acculturation is affected by different factors such as the structure of family, proficiency of English, length of stay outside the original culture, and reason of acculturation. It is also determined by individual characteristics such as sex, age, and child temperament that affect how children respond to such stress (Rutter, 1983). Some families of immigrants acculturate more successfully than others. Individuals who left their homes for work or study abroad have a different experience relative to those who left for war or crisis.

Some researchers have asserted that responding to acculturation stress relates to the cultural context. Laosa (1989) indicated the relationship between self-assessment and self-perspective that results from children’s social environment. Oppedal (2006) suggested a sociological model to understand development and acculturation, emphasizing the significance of the social context rather than the individual context. According to this model, children of immigrants as the second generation are affected by their social milieu rather than by their individual characteristics. The second generation

of immigrants, for example, is affected by their parent's cultural heritage, experiences of prejudice, and the existence of other subgroups of the same ethnicity when those immigrants are socialized (Rumbaut and Portes, 2001). From a cultural influence perspective, parents occupy a key role in the acculturation process as a way to mediate cultural differences (Costigan & Koryzm, 2010), encourage interaction (Alkinde, 2013), balance acculturation (Nestemk & Marks, 2011), and maintain religious identity (McCreery, Jones, & Holmes, 2007).

Individuals in the acculturation process have different approaches of integration based on their choices of the approach and level of interaction with people in a different culture. Differences of acculturation also appear within different contexts such as a social context of family, school, or a neighborhood. Acculturation differences also appear with different attitudes, and different cultural trends. For example, individuals might acculturate successfully with another cultural group, but of the same gender in a certain situation. Individuals acculturate differently based on internal and external variables such as life span, age, religion, long- or short-term immigration, marital status, and social support (Golding & Burnam, 1995; Hovey & Magana, 2000; Khan & Watson, 2005; Ma, Quinn Griffin, Capitulo, & Fitzpatrick, 2010; Osmun & Allen, 2001).

It can be discerned from Hervey's (2009) study that understanding the relationship between adaptation and acculturation during developmental years is critical for children's wellbeing because presence of such an understanding predicts the quality of the adjustment process in the future. The researcher explored the correlation between the earlier negative transitions during childhood and adjustment during college. The researcher found that missionary children (one group of cross-cultural kids) who had a

negative experience of adjustment during their experience of acculturation faced more adjustment difficulties in college. This study emphasized the importance of having a successful transition during the adaptation process and how such earlier experiences during childhood affect the adjustment process in future.

According to the ethnogenesis model of acculturation generated by sociologists and anthropologists, people tend to not only change their attitude and behavior after experiencing a new culture, but also to generate an integrated set of values and beliefs resulting from living between two cultures (Organista, Marin, & Chun, 2010). The process of ethnogenesis can generate a new set of values which are somewhat unrelated to the original culture of the individuals or to the new culture. Such changes may affect not only patterns of speech and clothing, but also religious beliefs and cultural norms. This pattern of acculturation can be related to the concept of TCKs. Useems (1999) found that children who have developed between two cultures have distinct sets of values and beliefs that differ from both cultures. Children may also be affected by the change of parenting styles that parents practice in order to manage their own developmental needs in different cultures (Coll & Magnuson, 2014).

Rumbaut and Portes (2001) identified two potential outcomes of social contest-based acculturation. The first outcome is assimilation, which is the outcome of different levels of acculturation between children and parents. Assimilation is affected by parent's negative experiences of prejudice and adjustment. The second is biculturalism, which is the process of adaptation and becoming successfully involved in both cultures. Berry (2005) referred to the bicultural process as being represented in the acculturation attitude of people of the host culture toward cultural groups. It takes place when the host culture



accepts the concept of diversity and interacts with the minorities (Berry, 2001). Biculturalism, on the other hand, is also a positive outcome of acculturation because it allows children's own culture to be practiced and connects children to a booster that they can rely on as a guide for their future identity and sense of belonging (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001, p. 309). For some researchers, this approach has been seen as a promising indication toward psychological adjustment (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Schwartz, Zamboaga, & Jarvis, 2007). Thus, individuals who acculturate positively by integration have a lower risk for depression and anxiety (Unlu Ince et al., 2014).

LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) and Szapocznik and Kurtines (1980) have emphasized that the phenomenon of integrating successfully in multiple cultures requires more investigating since some individuals can practice two cultures without neglecting or separating to one of the two cultures, thereby achieving successful interactions with people from both cultures (as cited in Rumbaut and Portes, 2001).

Berry (2003) created a model of acculturation that depends on individual preference of level of acculturation. When individuals coexist between two cultures, they tend to adapt different behaviors on the personal level, making changes on their physical appearance or way of life. On the other hand, acculturative stress takes place when those individuals fail to adapt such changes or to cope with the challenge of acculturation, leading to anxiety and depression (Berry, 2006). Thus, Berry suggested that individuals practice a different attitude when living between two different cultures and use individual strategies of acculturation.

## Acculturation Strategies

Since the acculturation experience is not universal, cross-cultural individuals interact in different levels. Differences of acculturation are conceptualized by so-called “acculturation strategies” (Berry, 2005). Berry introduced four strategies to describe how immigrants and foreigners acculturate. In a study conducted of Muslim European Belgians to examine their multiple identities due to their local and international experience, it was found that the group with high Islamic identity was more connected to their culture and less involved in the host culture, and their high cultural identity was a barrier to acculturate (Saroglue & Mathijsen, 2007). The behavior of this group can be understood by demonstrating the four trends of acculturation: assimilation, separation, marginalization, and integration. Willingness to meld with the new culture with no effort or desire to maintain the original culture is assimilation, while separation is the opposite. Separation occurs when immigrants avoid the new culture and maintain their original culture. Marginalization is when immigrants involve themselves to some degree in the new culture and question aspects of their original culture. Integration, which is described as the best trend of acculturation (Unlu Ince et al., 2014), occurs when immigrants interact positively with the new culture without losing their original culture. The model of acculturation can explain the study of Muslim Belgians. Although the model of acculturation has been used to interpret the attitude of immigrants regarding adjustment in general, Cottrell (1998) has argued that the acculturation model cannot explain the complex experience of a particular group among cross-cultural groups like TCKs.

## Perspectives about Berry's Acculturation Model

Berry's (1980) approach of acculturation offers valuable elements toward understanding to what extent individuals acculturate in different cultures. However, some researchers have criticized the classic approach of acculturation that has been widely used. Triandis (1997) first suggested the following alternative terminology: biculturalism instead of integration to better reflect the two cultures in contact, and negative multiculturalism instead of assimilation to reflect the theoretical perspective of losing a culture. The researcher also employed double negative multiculturalism instead of marginalization to indicate the losing of both cultures, and ethnic affirmation instead of separation to convey the ethnocentrism of the ethnic group. Triandis argued that evidence already shows experiencing different cultures, different religions, or different styles of living as factors of acculturative stress. However, other aspects should be considered as well, such as the cultural differentiation found in prior studies. For example, the cultural views on touching, punishment, behaving, and bullying differ between cultures, and these differences should be addressed as a cultural dimension beyond language and other known factors of acculturation. Researchers also questioned the absence of the concept of culture, which should be addressed not only regarding the original culture of the ethnical group, but also regarding the dominant culture (Chirkov, 2009; Triandis, 1997). The absence of the concept of "culture" specifically does not reflect the presumed meaning of acculturation, which refers to multiple cultures in contact (Chirkov, 2009; Triandis, 1997). Nguyen (2006) criticized the lack of a powerful theoretical conceptual framework and the failure to consider the social and structural contexts of individuals that most acculturation measurements of the research in the United States have.

Based on the classical approach, integration is considered the best method of acculturation (Berry, 1980). However, some believe that integration is not always the optimum outcome for some cultural ideologies, such as religion (Halstead, 2007). The theology of some religions like Christianity and Islam requires high coherence to the religious values and practices that might be disturbed by integration (Rudmen & Ahmadzadeh, 2001). As Rudmen and Ahmadzadeh (2001) argued, “Full bicultural integration is not possible. The concept of cultural integration mistakenly presumes allowing freedom to switch between cultures codes, as we do with cuisine, music, or languages” (p. 43). This trend toward integration has been shown among three African groups of immigrants from the same ethnic group. Akinde (2013) conducted a quantitative study to explore the level of acculturation of Nigerian adolescents (12-17 years old) and youths (18-24 years old) by comparing between them based on age and gender. The researcher showed a fair difference between youths and adolescences and between men and women. Relatively, the adolescences (12-17) were higher in assimilation while the youths (18-24) were higher in integration. The study showed that the women tended to be more separated than the men. The researcher also compared the results of this study with a study by Nyang (2010). Nyang (2010) compared two African groups (Ethiopian and Somali) to explore the difference of acculturation level among African groups from the same ethnicity. In both studies, the researchers found statically differences on the level of acculturation between adolescence and youths. The researcher noticed a fair difference between the level of assimilation between adolescent (12-17) and youth (18-24) Nigerians; younger participants tended to show more assimilation attitudes. Nyang (2010) found that Ethiopians and Somalis were significantly different. The results

showed that 24% of Ethiopians versus 18.5% of Somalis were assimilated. At the integration level, 74% of Ethiopians and 51% of Somalis were integrated. At the separation level, 2% of Ethiopians and 28.5% of Somalis were separated. Nyang (2010) explained that the difference of integration levels between Ethiopians and Somalis was because Ethiopians were encouraged by parents and their cultural group to integrate into the new culture, unlike Somalis who were unwilling to integrate as Muslims within a Western culture. The third group, Nigerians, was integrated already due to their proficiency in English (Akinde, 2013). It can be derived then that the influence of religious identity during acculturation and cultures' religious backgrounds may be problematic to integrating in Western cultures.

Acculturation occurring between two cultural groups has also been described as a unidimensional process (Gordon, 1964; Schildkraut, 2007) and as a bidimensional (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; David, Okazaki, & Saw, 2009) and tridirectional model (Flannery, Reise & Yu, 2001). When engagement between two cultures is holistic toward cultures, the original and the dominant cultures' process of acculturation is described as unidimensional (also called unidirectional, or linear) (Phinney, 1996; Ryder, Alden & Paulhus, 2000). By this attitude of acculturation the ethnic group assimilates in the new culture and abandons the original one (bidirectional and orthogonal), which describes the positive interaction between both cultures. This kind of attachment represents integration, which as described earlier is viewed as the most effective approach of acculturation (Berry 1997; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). However, as aforementioned, some researchers have argued that integration cannot be an indication of successful acculturation due to the dialectical nature of the terminology and

the inherently contradictory nature of the theology of some religious groups (Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001).

As a result of existing between two cultures, children as TCKs become unlinked, so they lose holistic belonging to both cultures they live between. Pollack and Reken (2009) clarified that TCKs feel rootless, and they can sense their state of un-belonging between their two worlds. However, to refer again to McCaig's (1992) poignant assessment, "We aren't really rootless. We're rooted differently. Our root system is defined more by people, less by places" (p. 1). Schwartz et al. (2010) also added multidimensionality as another process of acculturation, referring not only to the connection to both cultures, the original and the dominant one, but also to the outcome resulting from the shift. The researchers asserted that acculturation should be demonstrated as classifications rather than as one holistic outcome; they thus suggested different potential outcomes such as "behavioral acculturation, value acculturation, or identity based acculturation" (p. 244). For example, in Nesteruk & Marks's study (2011), parents from Eastern Europe resided in the U.S. encouraged integration of their children in the new culture to promote the children's quality of life and to learn new language, but they were careful to balance between many cultural differences such as aspects of freedom and obedience of authority. Such a process of acculturation is the preference of the parents in Nesteruk and Marks's study and confirms the multidimensionality of the process by categorizing the process of acculturation. Moore (2011) has discussed the concepts of multiculturalism, biculturalism, and shifting identities, demonstrating the potential benefits of the cross-cultural experience of TCKs. She expanded on Baker's (2001) ideas, pointing out that multiculturalism makes successfully holding two or more

identities possible. Moore (2011) added that Sorrow (2000) also discussed the idea of shifting identities in response to the need of current moments during acculturation, which makes multicultural individuals able to switch between identities to fit in different cultures. According to LaFromboise et al. (1993), biculturalism not only makes acquiring a second culture possible, but also has the potential to create a positive sense across different cultures, to prompt development of knowledge about values and beliefs of both cultures, and to promote communication. Cultural intelligence, a contemporary term that has been created recently, refers to the successful switching between two cultures. Cultural intelligence indicates “a person’s capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts” (Early & Ang, 2003, p. 59). According to Berry (2010), cultural intelligence might just be a rumored concept, as there is lacking empirical evidence for its validity to the levels of interaction competence in a cross-cultural world.

The tridirectionally process happens when immigrants become marginalized, connecting neither to the original culture nor to the domain culture. Consequently, a third culture emerges as a combination of both cultures. Flannery et al. (2001) discussed how a combination of two cultures creates a so-called ethnogenesis, which is an addendum of the biodimensional model, which represents the third culture.

#### Levels of Acculturation

Marin (1992) clarifies that the behavioral outcome that results from living in a new culture functions on three levels, depending on the length of acculturation and the personal differences. The first level is relevant to the behaviors that are related more to the cultural identity than to personal identity, like meaning of holidays, food, and media.

The second level is about the changes of the performed behaviors of daily life (e.g., language, ethnicity of friends). The deepest level is related to the changes of the individual's basic values like religious beliefs and the value of family (as cited in Organista, Marin, & Chun, 2010). For example, El-Banyan (1974) found that the international experience of Saudis after studying in U.S. universities led to changes relating to high cultural values level when they altered their perspective about the importance of women in sharing in decision making just as men do. Changes at the third level of acculturation are usually difficult to measure due to the complexity of defining cultural values and offering cultural appropriate measures to evaluate them. Thus, most of the studies have focused on the first and second levels relative to the third one (Organista, Marin, & Chun, 2010).

#### Acculturation of Children

Studies of children's acculturation have shown different approaches in relation to different factors. With respect to age, Akinde (2013) found that adolescents are more integrated than youths or "preadolescents". Barn (2014) claimed that younger children preferred separation while older children preferred integration (acculturation moves from separation to integration over time). Brown et al. (2013) attributed this attitude of acculturation of young children to the ongoing constructing of self-concept and social identity. Barn (2014) particularly found that children aged 8-10 years old reported slightly more social problems with teachers than younger children. Feelings of loneliness were found more in the younger age group (5-8 years old), which may be an indication of the developing of the self-concept during this early age. L. Sirin et al., (2014) found that children aged 11-12 years old reported fewer mental health symptoms over time. In



relation to limited research about the strategy of acculturation of Muslim children, studies showed that those children employed a less adaptive approach of acculturation due to their expectations of peer exclusion (Kunst & Sam, 2013) and prejudice (Ward et al., 2011).

An attitude of acculturation that is reciprocal and dimensional affects the two groups in contact. This relationship has been investigated by Verkuyten, Thijs, and Sierksma (2014), who found that children from the domain culture prefer to integrate with peers who are maintaining less of their original identity and integrating more of the domain culture. Aronson and Brown (2013) investigated the perception of Native European American children aged 6-10 years old, and found that the children from the domain culture preferred integration approach with their Somali peers other than separation from them teachers, which lead to more positive interaction between both groups. Verkuyten et al. (2014) investigated the perception of native Dutch children toward two groups of minorities. The researchers found that Turkish and Chinese groups prefer to integrate. However, the Chinese group showed a relatively higher level of integration than the Turkish peer group. According to Verkuyten et al. (2014), this particular attitude might indicate the different socioeconomic state of each group and the religious background. Turks in contrast to the Chinese group are the largest minority with a poor socioeconomic condition. Turks, as Muslims, are also seen mistakenly as threatening to the Dutch identity, which may affect their attitude toward integration. Another comparative study by Robinson (2009) examined the integration attitude of Pakistani (Muslim) and Indians (Punjabi Sikh and Gujarati Hindu) living in Britain, and

showed that children of religious and low socioeconomic backgrounds acculturate with difficulty due to discrimination and disadvantaged conditions.

Although many models of acculturation have been designed to measure an acculturation approach, these measures have focused on adults and colleges students (Akinde, 2013; Cetrez, 2010; Peterson and Plamondon, 2009; Schwartz, 2012; Unlu Inc et al., 2014). Therefore, Nigbur et al. (2008) built a quantitative scale to measure the acculturation approach of primary school children in British schools (“Identities in Transition: What Some People Say”) based on Berry’s original model of acculturation (1997, 2002). The study clarified the possibility of measuring the acculturation of young children and the outcome of such processes as self-esteem and the behavior of children in the classroom.

#### Acculturation of Arabs and Muslims

Most of the earlier Arab immigrants were from the greater Syria Region, where people were mostly Christian, uneducated, and poor. Then a significant transition started with World War II, namely that the Arab immigrants to the United States began to come from all regions and were mostly highly educated Muslims. That trend continues today, and a number of these Arab immigrants, some of who were students, decided to stay in the United States (Suleiman, 1999). The Middle East is libeled by the Western classical imaginary, which shows it as a contradicted nation with extremely different images. Funk and Said (2004) argued that Westerns are tempted to view Middle East as “a part of the world that may justifiably be considered strange and even arbitrary – a place that runs in accordance with unfamiliar rules that only learned historians and foreign policy experts

can understand, an exception to generally held principles and expectations” (p. 6). U.S. media has emphasized this image by offering a negative view of Middle Easterners consistently for over 100 years (Shaw, 2009). Qumsiyeh (n.d., para. 5) stated that people from Middle East have been identified as “belly dancers, billionaires, or bombers” (as cited in Shaw, 2009, p. 36). Shaw (2010) demonstrated some studies to show the dimensions of the negative stereotype targeting such nations. The negative stereotype toward Middle Easterners has emerged from the lack of knowledge and the highly negative attitude about Arabs and Muslims. Thus, this attitude against Muslims has affected young Muslims. Ayish (2003), for example, found that Arab-American high school students were aware of this negative perspective toward them, and it in turn hinders their academic success.

#### Acculturation and Islamic Arabic Identity

Differentiations of ideologies for some cultures make the process of acculturation significantly distinct (Barn, 2014; Berry, 2006). Therefore, rational understanding of acculturation requires an examination of the ethnic context of a group. A complete understanding of acculturation would need to start with a fairly comprehensive examination of the societal contexts as Berry (2005) asserted:

In the society of origin, the cultural characteristics that accompany individuals into the acculturation process need description, in part to understand (literally) where the person is coming from and in part to establish cultural features for comparison with the society of settlement. The combination of political, economic, and demographic conditions being faced by individuals in their society of origin also needs to be studied as a basis for understanding the degree of voluntariness in the migration motivation of acculturating individuals. (p.702)

Acculturation processes might not be a universal experience for all Arabic Muslims. Each experience of inter- ethnic groups is still different and affected by

political, social, and religious dimensions (Barn, 2010). Each group is unique by its special national and ethnic personality and due to its so-called micro-groups (Estes & Tiliouine, 2013). The micro cultural groups are defined by Wagley and Harris (1958) as “particular recognizable groupings, which share particular goals, beliefs, norms, values, and behaviors of the overall culture and are joined by a common agenda, sex, practice, or history” (as cited in Katie, 2012, p. 2). Barn (2014) asserted that “given cultural practices and beliefs are principal components of ethnic identity, Arab ethnicity can be further split to inter-ethnicities (such as Somali, Saudi, Yemeni, and Libyan) to account for cultural differences in the nation members of the league of Arab States” (p.11). Saudi culture as a micro group of Arab Muslims may acculturate differently according to its own national context. For example, Saudi culture is similar to other Arabic cultures in their appreciation of family relationships, obligations, and high collective behavior as values (Nydell, 2006). However, levels of cultural considerations may increase or decrease based on other racial and national dimensions of each micro-group. On the other hand, people from the host culture also acculturate differently with immigrants even if they have the same lingual and religious backgrounds. For example, Lebanon immigrants are identified by people differently during acculturation in America based on their racial status as White, while Somali are identified as Black, even though both groups are Arabic and Muslim (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007). A shared league of Arab States was forged in 1945 to recognize the political, cultural, economic, national, and religious trends of their members. Arab was defined as a panethnic group consisting of countries within the region, which includes regions extending from North East Africa to Southeast Asia where people speak Arabic and share inspirations about Arab goals. However, such a definition

does not consider the cultural differences among members of each state. Not all Arab nations have the same cultural, political, and economic context; for example, members of the Asian States of the Yemen and Saudi Arabia have different national and cultural backgrounds compared to people from other Arabic African countries like Somali and Libya (Estes & Tiliouine, 2013). The majority of Arabs are linked to Islam as the dominant religion, in which the holy book is in Arabic. Henderson, Wood, and Kritsonis (2007) explained as follows:

Muslims strictly adhere Shari'a, which is clearly set out in the Qur'an. Muslims believe that the holy book provides information about a vast array of topics including the origins of the universe, how to practice their religion in their daily lives, and how to gain entry into Heaven. (p.3)

However, there are variations among Muslims. For example, Muslims can be Sunni Muslims or Shiite Muslims, black or white Muslims. Muslims are also ethnically varied, with Arab Muslims and Anglo Muslims. Ideologies of Muslims also range from fundamentalist to moderate to extreme. A phenomenological study by Adem (2012) was conducted on three groups of students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade who were studying in different nations (i.e., Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq). Hand writing compositions and visual expressions were the tools of collecting data. Adem studied different levels of values like honesty, peace, respect, and patriotism. Saudi students reported the highest level as peace, but the lowest level as honesty and respect, in comparison to Iraqi and Turk students. The religious level was raised in Iraq and Turkey while the scientific level was low in Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In Adam's study the values were considered crucial to promote emotional skills in the teaching context. Although the data was collected from

three Islamic countries, significant differences were noticed regarding the levels of values for students in this study.

Individuals from collectivistic societies are expected to show high collectivistic behavior, which influences their relationships and attitude (Razek, 2012). Hui and Triandis (1986) identified collectivism as:

A cluster of a wide variety of beliefs and behaviors which come under one of the following seven categories: costs and benefits, sharing material resources, sharing nonmaterial resources, susceptibility to social influence, self-presentation, sharing of outcomes, feeling of involvement in others' lives... It is a sense of oneness with other people, a perception of complex ties and relationships, and tendency to keep other people in mind. (p. 229)

Razek and Coyner (2011) emphasized Long's idea (2005), noting that Saudi Arabia "ranks high in collectivistic category as Saudis demonstrate adherence to their tradition customs and social values" (p. 45). It can be assumed that families coming from such a society should act differently in terms of acculturation. Unfortunately, research targeting Saudi in general and children in particular is too limited, and this is because the significant existence of Saudi families in the United States with Saudi TCKs in U.S. schools is a new phenomenon (Razek, 2012).

Traditional historical perspectives along with religious beliefs, which sometimes can be poorly integrated, affect the cultural environment in most Islamic Arabic societies. From a traditional perspective away from Islamic values, gender roles form a fundamental aspect for Arabs in general and Saudis in particular (Abu-Ali & Reisen, 1999; AlMunajjed, 1997; Fanjar 1987; Zant 2002). Although Arabic societies have been changing, some traditional aspects regarding gender roles are still dominant. In Arabic societies, securing the family financially and socially is the man's role, while the woman

usually is expected to work inside the home, looking after her husband and raising the children. Therefore, masculine authority is emphasized in Arabic societies leading to different roles for men and women (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002). In addition, gender segregation is still applied to almost every instructional and educational sector including public and private schooling, elementary education and high educational institutions (Alhazmi, 2000; Mayer, 2000). Thus, traditional gender roles and gender segregation may be seen as significant factors to affect the way that Saudi parents and children look at their societies and identify their original cultural beliefs. It also may hinder their interaction in a mixed gender environment and challenge their cultural identity (Mayer & Alhazmi, 2000).

According to this portfolio, acculturation is clearly a questionable conceptualization for Muslims if it leads to decreasing Islamic identity or weakening Islamic knowledge. Alghorani (2003) studied 167 Muslim children from Islamic schools and other Muslim children from public schools in Chicago in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade from different Islamic regions (Arabic, South and East, and other). The researcher examined the following scales: Islamic identity, Islamic knowledge, Islamic practice, CBMII, Acculturation, and Personal adjustment. He found a positive relationship between Islamic identity and Islamic knowledge, Islamic practice, and personal adjustment. However, this relation was reported negatively in terms of acculturation. It was reported that “Arabs” and “South and East Asians” were less acculturated than students from “other” family origins. Alghorani also found a slightly a positive relationship between the number of years students spent in Islamic schools and the level of Islamic identity and practice. A significant difference was found between male and

female students regarding Islamic knowledge. On the other hand, the researcher found a non-strong reverse relationship between the number of years students spent in public schools with Islamic knowledge and practice, but acculturation and adjustment increased. In this sense, integration along with adjustment may not be the best approach for Muslims since this results in decreasing of their Islamic identity and practice.

#### Acculturation between Family Context and School Context

Growing up in one culture is already a challenge. Fernea (1995) investigated childhood in Muslim Middle East in the past and present, and showed the theoretical affect of experiencing different values within one culture and the difficulty of examining a double moral system in the same cultural contest. Fernea (1995) has cited that Dr. Mohammed Shoufani, of the Ministry of Education office in Marrakech, Morocco, stated the following in a June, 1988 interview:

Children are the most important and the most complicated people in our society today, pulled as they are between two worlds, that of their illiterate, unambitious, resigned parents and that of their “modern” educated, highly aspiring peers. At a time when old absolutes are crumbling and old values are disregarded, what are young people to do? They are endangered because they are, in terms of values at least, at sea. And the government is left with the responsibility of making this new life more meaningful. (P.1)

Growing up between two highly different cultures, thereby, is more complicated for families in general (Velliari, 2015). Sirin et al. (2014) asserted that having different systems of belief between home and school has been described as a problematic term in many studies on “cultural incongruence” (Sirin et al., 2009), “cultural discontinuity” (Delpit, 2006), and “cultural mismatch” (Garcia, Cull, and Magnuson, 2000). Thus, parents play a role in transmission of their cultural values and morals, which might challenge the mainstream dominant culture. For example, Muslims practice different



habits related to nutrition, cleanliness, and many other aspects of daily life (Halstead, 2007). Furthermore, many aspects of life lead Muslim to experience differences in parenting style, value of family, value of collectivism versus individualism, marriage, relationships between genders, and sexual identity. For example, Muslims must obey their parents and respect the authority of adults, show a collective behavior toward the group, legitimately identify sexual identity based on two genders (Mayer, 2000), and be culturally oriented regarding to marriage and formation of sexual identity (Ahsan, 2007). Halstead (2007) argued that raising Muslim children in the United States risks a decrease of their Islamic values, which are not consistent with the secular values of American society. The risk of losing identity affects parental perspectives and attitudes about their children's acculturation in American schools. Acculturation in a different culture also affects parent-child relationships. Examining two perspectives toward the world may be problematic in terms of identifying the identity within the social context, making children feel confused, out of place and unsupported. Ahmad and Szpara (2003) have conducted a study on Muslim children in an urban American city to investigate American schools' understanding of the Muslim community, their perceptions toward Muslims, and the impact of the cultural differences on learning and acculturation of Muslim children. The researchers interviewed Muslim parents and their children, girls and boys ages from 13 to 22, to share their experiences. The study concluded that those Muslim children experience different values and morals. The study also showed that those children would like to see their schools with more knowledge about Islam and more interaction with the Islamic community in America. Such conflicts are about not only the lack of understanding of their religion, but also the disagreement between Western and Islamic

understandings of moral systems and how or what motivates children to be morally oriented. This disagreement exposes children to two contradictory moral systems at the same time. Hallstead (2007) has discussed the consequences:

Disagreements between Western and Islamic approaches to moral education come to the fore when Muslim children are brought up and educated in Western countries, because they may receive one kind of moral education in state schools, based on a framework of Western liberal democratic values, and a very different kind of moral education in mosque schools in the evenings or at weekends, based on the Islamic values . . . exposing children to different kinds of moral education and guidance at an early age before they have internalized a consistent framework of moral values of their own can lead to moral confusion, to uncertain identity and to other undesirable outcomes. (p. 292).

Albeart and Herrera (2010) examined the meaning of being a Muslim youth in times of liberalism and demonstrated that being a Muslim youth in a Western culture is complicated due to social differences and the recent political issues. The standing conflict that may appear is not limited to the lack of knowledge about Islamic community and the difference of moral systems between two cultures. Cultural conflicts may be a result of political issues related to the specific time, in which Americans are expressing animosity against specific groups like Muslim Arab groups after September 11. A stereotype about Muslims who have been described as terrorists after these events has been a dilemma for Arab Muslims in America (Sirin & Fine, 2007). To describe the inadequate environment of Muslim children in schools due to the political and the social misunderstanding about Muslims, Britto (2008) explained as follows:

For children, one of the most important ecological contexts is their school. Since September 11, 2001, there have been increasing reports of schools becoming a milieu of discrimination, bullying, and exclusion of Arab Muslim students . . . Arab American youths tend to feel isolated and separated from their peers and the surrounding academic environment and feel that this is largely due to cultural misunderstandings and discrimination (25). In particular, girls who wear the hijab,

or headdress, report feeling the most vulnerable, a phenomenon the media has dubbed hijabophobia. (p. 854).

Being different or non-white as a child in the United States may stigmatize children and risk discrimination. Many studies have demonstrated the effects of stereotyping minorities, which may be evidence that Muslim children as a minority are exposed to types of discrimination. A number of researchers (Augoustinos & Rosewarne, 2001; Bigler & Liben, 1993) have asserted earlier in their research that children aged 4-9 years old attribute more negative traits to African-Americans, but more positive traits to Caucasian-Americans (Elashi, Mills, & Grant, 2010). Although this study is relevant to ethnic groups, it can also be evidence that children might discriminate against any minorities based on stereotypes and negative backgrounds, such as the negative stereotype against Islam and Muslims. Another study was conducted to investigate the experiences of Asian and African-Caribbean backgrounds in nursery/infant and middle school sittings in the United Kingdom, and the relations with other children in relation to how they negotiate their racial identities. Wright (2010) discussed how children can engage in persistent discrimination with a transcript of an incident that occurred with a group of six white 6-years-olds. In the incident, the children engaged in persistent discrimination including teasing, jostling, and rejection of Taseem, an Asian girl who asked the observer for help solving a Math problem:

CW: Taseem, do understand how 'times by' works?

Jane (a white girl): No she will not understand, she is a Paki.

*Taseem is very upset by this comment and is on the verge of tears.*

CW (to Jane): What do you mean?

Jane: Because she's Paki.

*The other children in the class are sniggering.*

CW: And why should she not understand multiplications because she's Pakistani?

Jane: Because she is not one of us and she's not our culture.

Michael (a white boy): she's a Paki! (Laughs).  
CW: What is our culture?  
CV: She is in England, she lives in England.  
Jane: Yeah, but she comes from Pakistan.  
Alice (a white girl): Yeah, Pakistani, she was born in Pakistan she means.  
Taseem (dejected but not protesting): I wasn't; I was born here. (Wright, 2010, p.136)

The conversation ended, and the Asian girl continued to negotiate her identity.

This conversation showed that the behavior against "others" is existent in young children's classrooms, and young children negotiate their identities in many different ways. This study asserted the importance of paying attention to the ability of children to gain a complex and effective understanding of their social lives and their identities (Wright, 2010).

The studies have shown evidence that Arabic Muslim youths and adults encounter difficulties of belonging, and in many cases they feel isolated and misunderstood (i.e. Ahmad and Szpara, 2003; Albeat and Herrera, 2010; Britto, 2008; Sirin & Fine, 2007). Other studies have clarified that children recognize the differences of others, and children can use strategies to negotiate their identities (i.e. Ahmad and Szpara, 2003; Wright, 2010). Saudi young children are not an exception, and may be affected by the stereotype and the bad reputation about Islam and Muslims. Young children may be more affected by cultural differences, and they may be exposed to emotional conflict due the sensitive nature of their emotional and social development as young children in early and middle childhood. Facing the complexity of identifying multiple identities to fit into more than one culture and to acculturate successfully in multiple cultural contexts is challenging (Tindongan, 2011).

## Acculturation of Third Culture Kids

Pollack and Reken (2009) clarified that classical studies of TCKs can provide researchers with knowledge to understand the experience of cross-cultural kids (CCKs), such as children of immigrants or children of multicultural parents. In a similar vein, it is assumed that studies of acculturation of different CCKs or multicultural groups can be helpful to understand the experience of TCKs in particular. Although the experience of TCKs is unique by the reality of living between two cultures and having high mobility, some similarities can be addressed as insights to understand how people acculturate while living in two cultures. However, the experience of acculturation of TCKs might be differently complicated. TCKs might cope not only with issues of developing identity in one cultural context, but also with the psychological impact of being a child who feels rootless, un-belonging, confused, and faced with multiple transitions and permanent mobility. TCKs experience the challenge of culture shock twice, once after leaving their home and then in reverse after returning (Fry, 2007; Pollack & Reken, 2009). Cottrell (2006) argued that classical acculturation paradigms addressed a thoughtful understanding of the experience of people living in a different culture, but they failed to demonstrate the complexity of cross-cultural mobility that is distinct to the experience of TCKs from the classic conceptualization of acculturation. Cottrell (2006) addressed some differences among CCKs with respect to TCKs, arguing that acculturation is not a comprehensive paradigm to articulate the experience of TCKs. The differences between TCKs and other CCKs are summarized in table 2:

Table 2

*Differences between Third Culture Kids and Other Groups of Cross-Culture Kids*

Cross-Culture Kids (The Main Group)	Third Culture Kids (One Category of Cross-Culture Kids)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialized as children in complex cultural environments because of parental decisions, such as children of immigrants, children of mixed marriages</li> <li>• Residence is permanent</li> <li>• Returning home is not determined</li> <li>• May have no representational roles</li>   <li>• Parents may be employees of host culture organizations or working independently</li>   <li>• Belong to no sponsor or agency</li>   <li>• Stability and growth in one culture, so they have the opportunity to understand what is going on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialized in complex cultural environments because of their parents' employment or study abroad</li>   <li>• Residence is temporary</li> <li>• Returning home is expected</li> <li>• Have representational roles like Brazilian diplomats, British military</li>   <li>• Parents are employers of international organizations (or may be not allowed to work at all due to immigration rules)</li>   <li>• Under sponsors who play a significant role in their lives</li>   <li>• High mobility and growth between two cultures consistently, so they have no opportunity to understand the complexity of different systems</li> </ul>

*Note.* Adapted from Cottrell (2006).

Living between two cultures is a shared experience for all CCKs, but the levels of examining this experience are to some extent different. All CCK sectors, including TCKs, have been socialized in complex cultural environments, but with different contexts. CCKs leave their homes because of certain circumstances like war or marriage. TCKs are children of parents who have employment abroad or are international students. Having different circumstances and goals of movement generates a different essence of the complexities despite the similarities. While the children of missionaries find their experience hard due to the religious commitments and being religiously orientated by parents, children with biracial parents face the different difficulty of having two worlds

inside one home with all the differences and potential contradictions (Pollack and Reken, 2009). Some CCKs find it difficult to live outside the original culture, but others find it difficult to return to it. Mostly, the residence of CCKs is permanent, and thus they do not have determined time or close plans to return back home, while the residence of TCKs has a defined end, specifically once the parent achieves the target of work or graduating. Studies have shown that the length of stay influences the ability to acculturate successfully and adapt to life in the new culture (Berry & Sam, 2006). TCKs, due to their temporary stay, may lack a steady environment during their development years. Moreover, since TCKs' return home is almost definite, individuals may become more confused by the ever-present differences and expectations between the original culture and the new culture. CCKs such as immigrants and children of biracial parents do not necessarily have a representative role of agency or sponsorship unlike TCKs, who usually do have representational roles (e.g., Saudi Arabian international students). While parents of CCKs may work independently or for local organizations, parents of TCKs are dependent on international organizations or agencies and are not self-dependent in the host culture. This can affect the family's financial status and privileges. TCKs' position under the domain of their parents' sponsoring agencies plays a significant role in their decisions and choices like decisions of movement, but CCKs may be more independent. In summary, relative to TCKs, CCKs enjoy far more stability and growth in just one culture. Children of immigrants and other CCKs in general have the opportunity to digest the surrounding culture, but TCKs in particular face high mobility and growth between two cultures, which consistently leaves them with no opportunity to understand the complexity of different systems or grow in one place during their critical developmental

years. Table 3 below illustrated the variations of third culture kids based on the historical period of time, the nationality, and the reason of mobility.

Table 3

*The Variations of Third Culture Kids*

Variations of Third Culture Kids (TCKs)	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical TCKs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colonial TCKs have different norm expectations from modern TCKs. They differ according to the nature of relations between countries at a given time, e.g., friendly vs. hostile.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-national TCKs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Japanese-Mexicans will differ in detail from American-Brazilians.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional TCKs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missionary TCKs differ from diplomatic TCKs from business TCKs, etc.</li> </ul>

*Note.* Adapted from Cottrell (2006).

The term third culture kid is complicated due to the similarities which should be explored and interpreted differently based on the aforementioned variations. Cottrell (2006) clarified that TCKs can be understood in three variations. The first is historical TCKs, who represent the classical group of children who grow up in a clustered environment or colonies, unlike recent TCKs. The political and social relationships between cultures makes the historical experience of these past TCKs different from the experience of recent TCKs. The second group is the binational children, who reflect a lived experience of a particular group with a particular worldview. For example, Japanese-Mexicans are different from American-Brazilians. The third group is functional



TCKs. This group represents the differences among the multiple groups of TCKs (e.g., missionary’s children versus diplomats’ children versus business people’s children, etc.).

In this current study, as a conclusion derived from the prior literature (Berry, 2010; Cottrell, 2006), I will create detailed variations, arguing that there are specific potential variations that cause Saudi TCKs to differ from other Muslim immigrants in America. Table 4 below shows a comparison of Muslim immigrants and Saudi TCKs derived from the literature.

Table 4

*Differences between Muslim Immigrants and Third Culture Kids Living in the United States*

Muslim Immigrants	Saudi Third Culture Kids
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potentially sufficient time to adapt to and cope with acculturation stress</li> <li>• Stability and clarity of future plans</li> <li>• Potentially more exposed to discrimination (whether due to race or religion): many left their countries due to political factors, and so are conscious or sensitive to being discriminated against</li> <li>• Often minimal stress about returning home without achievements</li> <li>• Understanding of the systems of host country (e.g., housing,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited time to adjust to and accommodate acculturation stress</li> <li>• High mobility with no clear future plans</li> <li>• Little expectation of discrimination (may face racial discrimination as “people of color”), but often face misunderstandings about Saudi Arabia in terms of oppression of women, religious-based curriculum, and ignorance</li> <li>• Intense pressure to achieve before returning home, especially as failure to fulfill requirements of U.S. universities may result in revoked scholarships</li> <li>• Confusion about how systems work due to mobility and un-settled lifestyle</li> </ul>

law) gained via stability and settling

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### Children of Muslim Immigrants and Saudi Third Culture Kids

Families of immigrants, due to their constant residence, might have enough time to adapt and cope with acculturation stress, but families of sojourners like Saudi TCKs may have limited time to adjust to and accommodate acculturation stress. The life of immigrants relative to sojourners like Saudis may be more stable and boarded by clear future plans versus high mobility with no clear plans of residence in specific areas due to universities' admission circumstances. Immigrants might be more sensitive to discrimination because many left their countries feeling oppression due to war and political factors, so they are might be conscious or sensitive for discrimination. Immigrants may also face discrimination based on their racial identity as white or black. However, some sojourners like Saudis may not expect discrimination for political or racial factors, but they may encounter misunderstandings about Saudi culture (Jammaz, 1972) in terms of oppression against women (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Mishra, 2007; Winters, 2015), religious-based curriculum, poor educational system (PESTLE Country Analysis Report: Saudi Arabia, 2014), and ignorance (Winters, 2015).

Regardless, Shaw (2009) and Hofer (2009) found that Saudi students hold a positive attitude toward Americans. Shaw conducted a case study research and interviewed 25 Saudi students using elicitation photo approach to explore their perception of studying in Oregon State University. Saudis were willing to interact with Americans and reported no discrimination toward themselves as Muslims. Hofer (2009) in a quantitative study investigated adjustment problems affecting educational success for

Saudi students studying in the State of Missouri. Although 419 survey were distributed, only 81 were received. The researcher concluded that Saudi students were satisfied and willing to integrate and make friendships with Americans.

After September 11, Denman and Hilal (2011) found that Americans' attitudes toward Saudis had changed; therefore, some Saudi students in the United States were not willing to express their opinions concerning the misunderstandings toward them. Saudi students may or may not be in a good socioeconomic state, but they are mostly sponsored by their governmental agency for a temporary time. Shabeeb (1996) found that the greatest difficulties Saudi students faced during their studying in the United States were communicating in the English language and maintaining financial aid. Families of immigrants sometimes are extended and have many generations with them, but Saudis as international students often miss the support of their extended families (Clerehan, McCall, McKenna, & Alshahrani, 2012). Immigrants may feel no stress about returning home without academic achievements. Saudis, as Arabic Gulf sponsored students, for instance, are threatened by thought of returning back home after having failed to meet their home's cultural high expectations (Guantlett, 2010), and of losing their scholarships if they fail to fulfill the requirements of U.S. universities (Razek, 2014). Stability and settling helps immigrants to understand the system of the host country (e.g., housing, law), but mobility and non-settling might confuse sojourners like Saudis about how the new culture works. Inspired by Silove, Tarn, Bowles, and Reid (1991), Dewaelea and Oudenhoven (2009) explained the difficulty of settlement and adaptation for new arriving immigrants as follows: "This urgent need to learn new skills and absorbing information about their new environment combined with the experience of loss, bereavement, dislocation and cultural

differences can cause continuous traumatic stress disorder”. This description by Dewaele and Oudenhoven (2009) can describe the situation of TCKs in particular since they always expect to move and arrive to new places and may urgently need to learn new information about each new environment they move to. Immigrants might have no stress or urgent needs when it comes to coping with the complexity of reentry, but sojourners face the stress of re-entry again and may encounter reverse culture shock (Berry et al., 2010). When immigrants return home (if they return), they often do so when they are mature and able to deal with the transition despite the difficulty of such a transition. Saudi TCKs, however, face this transition across different cultures as young children still developing identities and making sense of the world. Relatively no potential stress is expected in terms of changing schools, systems, homes, friends as TCKs may experience (Pollack and Reken, 2009). Devens (2005) studied a group of non-TCKs and a group of TCKs aged between 11-14 years old and attending an international school. Devens explored the impact of the multiculturalism experience and the relationship between the experience of TCKs and depression. The researcher found a positive relationship between the numbers of schools that children had attended and the level of depression.

It is not intended here to demonstrate the experience of TCKs as an overwhelming and more complicated journey in comparison to the experience of other CCKs. Rather, the aim is to clarify the borders of TCKs’ experience or, in other words, to define what makes their experience unique and different from other experiences of acculturation. Each experience of acculturation is of course unique according to its circumstances and affected by multiple factors that influence groups in many different ways and at many different levels (Berry et al., 2010; Pollack & Reken, 2009). Focusing on TCKs as one

group of CCKs and as children of sojourners does not exclude the complexity of the experience of acculturation of other cross-cultural sectors, nor ignore the significance of such discourses.

Discourses around acculturated groups are ongoing, and more investigation is needed for understanding acculturation of other cultural groups (Berry, 2001; Mehta, 1998; Suinn, Ahuna & Khoo, 1992). TCKs' experience has been addressed within many cultural groups like Chicano (a third culture of Mexican and American cultures) (Flannery et al., 2001), Half-Arab, Half-Finnish (Zayat, 2008), Japanese third culture of kaigaishijo and kikokushijo (Ebuchi, 1994), third culture of Swedish ATCK (Wu & Koolash, 2011), and American TCKs (Peterson & Plamondon, 2009). It can be argued that studying Saudi children as TCKs will add to the theoretical line of prior studies of TCK subgroups because Saudi children have distinctive and strong cultural and religious identities that might add a new horizon to the conversation of TCKs. Saudi students with their children are supposed to add a new hue to the colorful image of diversity in the United States. This is because that is the existence of international students including Saudis will enhance positive cultural environment that will help others to understand U.S. culture, and that will give Americans the needed skills to integrate with people from different cultures as well (Hall, 2013; Taylor & Albasri, 2014).

#### Overview of Literature about Saudi International Students

The trend of sending Saudi students to study overseas is not a temporary phenomenon. As early as the 1950s, Saudi Arabia started sponsoring scholarships for Saudi students to study Arab and Islamic studies, but only in Arabic regions like Egypt and Lebanon. Subsequently, the Saudi government included other countries in order to

benefit from their high educational systems; in 1960, Saudi scholars were sent to study in the United States and Europe. By 1975, the Saudi government has sponsored thousands of students to gain high degrees in American and European institutions. Since the beginning of 70<sup>th</sup>, Saudi scholars have been addressing the international experience of Saudi Arabian students. Hence, literature of the experience of Saudi Arabian international students will be discussed by highlighting the themes and gaps of prior work. Many issues have been addressed regarding adaptation challenges, success strategies, cultural values, and other themes exploring the experience of Saudi students in the United States and other Western countries. Reviewing the prior studies will yield an understanding of the prior experience of students coming from the same culture. It is understandable, however, that the experience of adults is significantly different from that of children. Studying children may thus fill a possible gap, since all studies have targeted Saudis as international students rather than as Saudi children. According to this review, the literature of Saudi students can be grouped into three categories: outdated classical studies, studies with a quantitative-focus approach, and studies focused on the experience of Saudis as international students “adults” in U.S. and other Western countries’ universities. There is an obvious absence of studies about Saudi children studying overseas. This research gap may exist because the significant number of Saudi families staying in the United States is a relatively new phenomenon (Taylor & Albasri, 2014).

Mostly, researchers have investigated the experience of Saudi international students in the United States from the following aspects: the challenge of acculturation and adaptation in U.S. institutions (Alshedokhi, 1986; Hakami, 2012; Jammaz, 1972; Razek & Coyner, 2011; Shabeeb, 1996), academic difficulties (Alshehry, 1989; Hofer,

2009; Mustafa,1985), strategies of success and successful adaptation (Al-Jasir,1993; Al-Musaiteer, 2015; Heyn, 2013; Shaw, 2010), the impact of self efficacy as a strategy of success (Razek and Coyner, 2014), the impact of cultural backgrounds on learning and acculturation, cultural values and changes that happen due to studying abroad (Akhtarkhavari,1994; Alfauzan,1992; El-Banyan, 1974), cultural differences between Saudis and Americans (Alhazmi, 2010; Razek, 2015 [in press]), cultural perception about Americans and integration (Al-Khedaire,1978), transitions of Saudi professional women and challenges that they face after returning back home (Alandijani, 2013), Saudi women's development of two identifies after living outside their culture (Al-Ghamdi, 2015), and fears of reentry (Heyn, 2013).

Among the previous studies, particular studies will be discussed in more detail due to their relevance to the current research. Firstly, Hakami's (2012) study applied a quantitative approach to identify the acculturation challenges posed to Saudi female students living in the United States; the study developed a scale to measure the probable level of acculturation challenges. The researcher developed the scale based on nine potential challenges were derived from the literature of acculturation: (a) culture/acculturation, (b) social, (c) psychological, (d) familial, (e) language, (f) educational system, (g) financial, (h) student visa, and (i) religious challenges. The researcher found a remarkable negative correlation between acculturation challenges and educational level, level of English language, and length of stay in the United States, and a significant positive correlation was reported with acculturation challenges and marital status. No correlation was found with age. The study also showed a negative relationship between acculturation challenges and support and welcome provided by the university.

Alandijani (2013) conducted a narrative research to explore the experience of reentry of four Saudi professional women who had studied abroad. She asserted that Saudi women could overcome the difficulties of re-entry and the challenge of transition back into their work place. However, the women had a difficult time helping their children to readjust, and this was the most challenging aspect upon re-entering their culture. Having difficulties with children's readjustment is significant to the current study, and not enough information exists about the experience of such children during their experience overseas.

From the limited literature about Saudi children in the United States, Alosaimi (1995) investigated the parental practices of Saudi parents that were adopted to orientate their children with regard to television viewing. Alosaimi explored the impact U.S. television had on Saudi children. Questionnaires were distributed to 400 Saudi parents studying at American universities. The researcher found that similar to U.S. children, Saudi children are affected in the same way by television advertisement, violence, and educational programming. It was also found that Saudi parents tended to adopt the same parental orientation when controlling their children's viewing of television, by being restrictive, evaluative, and unfocused. This study may be relevant to show that the challenges during socialization could be similar among cultures. Despite differences, sharing experiences might support acculturation between different cultures by focusing on similarities more than differences (Kennedy & Bloch, 2010). It is also discerned from this study that TCKs (Velliariis, 2015), including Saudi children at an early age, despite their constructive cultural backgrounds are significantly affected by the surrounding milieu during acculturation outside their culture. Shaikh Ali (1986) cited Loony (1974) in



explaining that educators have considered television as somewhat problematic in educating children, “particularly in disadvantaged children” (p. 3). Shaikh Ali (1986) conducted a study on Saudi preschoolers in the United States to explore the impact of watching television shows such as Sesame Street on Saudi children who spoke Arabic and English and on those who spoke only Arabic.

Heyn (2013) conducted a phenomenology study on nine Saudi students studying in U.S. colleges aged 20-38 years old. The students were graduate and undergraduate students; two of them were single while seven of them were married, and all had lived in the United States more than 2 years. Many trends were identified in this study regarding the perspectives of those students about the United States before and after studying in the country. One trend was about the strategies and personal strengths that the students had used to succeed. The study showed that the trends of those students were both positive and negative. Most had held a positive perspective about the United States before living there, particularly regarding the country as having an exceptional educational system. Safety issues, unfriendliness from Americans, racism, and having no place to practice religious practices were identified as negative presumptions about Americans. After living in the United States, the researcher found that language difficulty and feeling unqualified were the dominant negative perspectives. In addition, other perspectives about missing culture and family, racism, self-independence, and weather challenges were identified. However, Saudi Arabian students did adopt many strategies to succeed, including the following: (1) primary motivation, like considering their families’ and Saudi government’s expectations of success; (2) personal strength as motivation, organization, flexibility, and discipline; support system from professors, religion, other

Saudi Arabian students, and family. Alsharideh and Goe (1998) found that interaction with the campus community in universities was also a supportive factor in the adaptation process, and one that led to success in academic life. Razek (2014) and Shaw (2010) also studied the success strategies of Saudi students and found similar themes confirming the importance of a special support system for Saudi students. Although these studies showed that professors play a supportive role in the success and adaptation of Saudi students as international students, other studies (Amer, 1985; Schmitt, Spears, and Pranscombe, 2003; Trice, 2000; Lee and Rice, 2007) revealed that international students did not receive support from their professors and were neglected in classrooms.

Hoftside (2001) explained that the orientation of Gulf State students makes their experience of studying abroad a unique experience relative to the experience of other international students. Hoftside assumed that individualism orientation that are demonstrated by showing levels of Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance explain how some institutional efforts and strategies offered by Australian universities to help undergraduate international students to achieve successful transition are not functional to satisfy the needs of students coming from Arabic countries. Hoftside asserted that Arabic students have a different system of cultural values that has to be identified to translate their behavior. For example, establishing work based on favors might not be seen as a positive attitude in the Australian context, which may lead Arabic students to feel disappointed and unsatisfied with their academic performance. Guantlett (2010) also discussed how Gulf sponsored students are burdened by high expectations for a high GPA, by comparisons of their performance with that of native students, and by the pressure of meeting parents' expectations. Razek (2012), like Guantlett (2010), also

found that Saudi students in U.S. universities tend to burden themselves with the stress and fears associated with disappointing their families or their governmental sponsor, and tend to fear losing their social position as students study in their U.S. university, which would mean a lot in Saudi Arabia. Guantlett (2010) clarified that “Gulf students therefore bring a unique set of concerns and commitments to the Australian education setting” (p. 123). In an effort to explain the identity of Arabic Gulf students as members of collectivist culture, Hoftsede (2001) declared the following:

Gulf students are fielding the consequences of decisions made for them by families looking backward and public servants looking forward. Importantly, the pressure and confusion impede Gulf students’ abilities to overcome hurdles to their successful completion of their studies at overseas universities. (p. 156)

Indeed, Razek (2012) found that American professionals perceived their Saudi students as less motivated and less patient when facing challenges during their studying. The researchers identified many factors as associated with such attitudes from some Saudi students, including unreasonable expectations, a different perspective toward success, the significant difference between the Saudi and American educational system, and the lack of English. All of these factors lead Saudi students to struggle when trying to adapt to studying in a U.S. university. However, Kamal (2008) noted that Saudi students behave differently according to their original regions in Saudi Arabia, so their attitudes of adaptation may be different. The researchers clarified that cultural values might be practiced differently among Saudi students who live in urban or rural areas, north or south, and these differences may in turn influence their international experience regarding social interaction, potential conflicts, culture shock, and adjustment. Researchers have recommended considering this cultural perspective when designing orientation programs

for international students to help students coming from Arabic regions to success (Guantlet, 2010; Kamal, 2008; Razek, 2012).

### Summary

According to the literature review, the studies about the experience of Saudi international students in the U.S. are limited, and most were conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s (e.g., Al-Jasir, 1993; Jammaz, 1972; Mustafa, 1985; Shabeeb, 1996). This may be because the number of Saudi students studying abroad was not relatively significant (Shaw, 2009), or this may be due to religious restrictions, which forbid traveling to “the lands of unbelievers” for Muslims (Abu-Sahlieh, 1996; Ibn Baz, 2000). Shaw (2009) also attributed this shortage of studies about Saudis studying overseas to the historical structure of Saudi Arabia, which was described as being in social isolation or closed for several decades, during which a considerable percentage of its population was Beduins. Over time, dramatic changes took place that influenced Saudi society such as increases in oil money, the wide spread of other cultures via globalization, and the opening up of the country, which led to sending Saudis to study abroad. The already low number of Saudis declined significantly due to September 11, as the crisis affected their acculturation in the United States. Fewer than 5000 Saudi students were studying in the United States by 2005, and most Saudis, if they went abroad, studied in countries other than the United States.

The Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia established the scholarship program of King Abdullah in 2005. Since the start of this program, the number of Saudi international students has increased significantly. In 2010 for example, more than 80,500 Saudi students were studying overseas (Deputyship for Planning and Information, 2010).

This number is expected to reach more than 140,000 sponsored students by 2015 (Mahboob, 2010) due to the extending of the scholarship program of King Abdullah for more than 5 years (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). In 2013, Saudi Arabia was considered one among the three fastest growing populations in the United States, and students from Saudi Arabia and China together represented 73% of the increasing body of international students in the United States (IIE, 2015).

In first place, the literature about Saudis in the United States is clearly focusing on the experience of Saudi adults as international students in U.S. universities. Seeking literature on the Ohio Link, Google Scholar, ProQuest, Dissertations and Theses, Education Research Complete, Academic Search Complete, Eric, and Sociological Collection databases failed to generate a single study about the experience of acculturation of Saudi children in the United States. Although prior studies about Saudi international students should illuminate our understanding about Saudi culture and their ways of acculturating, still there is a lack of understanding regarding the experience of Saudi children during their middle age. Research on this subject might provide us with new and different aspects regarding this experience not only from a cultural perspective, but also from a developmental perspective as well.

Moreover, traditional studies despite their significance cannot reflect the contemporary experience of current Saudi students in the United States, as students' experience is affected by contextual changes over time. Many social, economic, and political circumstances have been shifted, which intensifies the need for more recent studies. For example, some of the earlier studies touched on the academic and cultural challenges of studying abroad for Saudi students before many significant events, perhaps

the most notable being September 11, as the terrorist attack significantly affected the acculturation experience and adaptation of Muslims and Arabic in general (Hofer, 2009). Knowing that 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis substantially affected acculturation attitude of Americans, particularly against specific Islamic Arabic regions such as Saudi Arabia (Taylor & Albasri, 2014). U.S. media has also enhanced stereotypes and misunderstandings surrounding Saudis and other Muslims in the United States, which has been a problematic dimension undermining cultural integration. Abdullah (n.a. para, 11) clarified that labeling any Muslim as an “Islamic terrorist, Muslim fundamentalist, Wahhabi zealot, Shia extremist, Sunni bomber, Islamic Jihadi, Arab Killer, Islamic suicide bomber” has been a common theme in media (As cited in Shaw, 2009). Such circumstances have led to different perspectives and different strategies of acculturation among Americans and other Islamic and Arabic groups.

However, Shaw (2009) argued that the consequences of the events of 9/11 on the integration of Middle East and Arabic students with Americans is not the only reason that make the voice of Saudi students almost absent in American literature, except with regards to the crisis of September 11. Rather, she argued the following:

While the literature discussed the many influences that affect international students and their success, there is one factor that uniquely concerns the educational experiences of Saudi students studying the in U.S. This is the misconceptions and stereotypes that Americans have for Saudis, Arabs, Arab/Muslims, and Middle Easterners. Particularly after September 11<sup>th</sup>, but going back much, much earlier to early European colonialism and continuing through more recent U.S. imperialism, Western consciousness has been bombarded with images that inform opinions of and knowledge about a sizeable portion of the world, the Middle East. (p. 34)

From an advanced perspective, however, Mayer and Alhazmi (2000) believed that unlike early Saudi experiences of studying abroad, the experiences of Saudi students

studying through the Abdul-Aziz program, which represents a wide cross-section of Saudi society, can make cross-cultural diversity possible.

The aforementioned studies have contributed to an understanding of the perspectives of Saudi students after living and studying in Western cultures like the United States. However, no single study until the present one has discussed the lived experience of young Saudi children in U.S. schools under the conceptualization of TCKs. Thus, literature about Saudis in the United States has discussed irrelevant issues that might not be salient in childhood. The experience of Saudi children in particular is absent. Therefore, this study's purpose is to add some knowledge about the experience of Saudi young children (7-10 years old) studying in U.S. schools. This is particularly significant since a number of Saudi children are studying in U.S. schools now, and their experience should be considered as a contribution in favor of multiculturalism and diversity for both cultures alike NUMBER. Based on the cultural pluralism theory (1914), the United States has been identified as a place for every culture regardless of religion, race, or gender. Therefore, including the voice of Saudi Muslim children may contribute to support multiculturalism, to promote diversity, and to meet the cultural needs for those children who study in the U.S schools. No data was found about the number of Saudi students studying in U.S. elementary schools, but the growing number of Saudi students in U.S. universities may be an indicator of the significant presence of the Saudi population in the United States. The 2014 Open Doors report about data of international students in the U.S. declared that:

Although students from the three countries make up a relatively small share of the overall international population (Saudi Arabia has the largest, at a little more than 6 percent), these nations are an increasingly important recruitment market for American colleges, in no small measure because they pay their students' way.

Eighty-six percent of the Saudi students who study abroad and 68 percent of the Kuwaitis go to the United States. Just under half of the Brazilians do . . . the number of Saudi students grew 21 percent, to nearly 54,000. Saudi Arabia now ranks fourth as a student exporter to the United States (IIE, 2014, para 12).

In the 2015 Open Doors report, Witherell (2015) announced that “There was an 11 percent increase in the number of students from Saudi Arabia, bringing Saudi students in the United States to nearly 60,000, largely funded by the Saudi government scholarship program, now approaching its 12<sup>th</sup> year” (para19).

What is more important is that Saudi Arabian students and their families are a part of the Islamic population in the United States in the first place. Islamic population represents a remarkable part in the country, as the existence of Muslims and mosques is a reality in many regions of the U.S. (Henderson, Wood, & Kritsonis, 2007). According to Hajar (2003), Islam is the world’s fastest growing religion and there are more than 1.1 billion followers in the world. Watanabe (2001) stated that there were about 5-8 million Muslims in the U.S. in the year 2000.

### Integrating Literature into Current Study

Some studies of TCKs and acculturation have emphasized that growing up in two cultures might bring hardship in people’s lives. Other studies have found that acculturation in different cultures is becoming a fruitful reality in people’s lives. This experience might influence people’s knowledge, improve their cultural interaction, and enhance their ability of understanding others. Since the impact of experiencing multiple cultures during childhood is not fully determined, such experiences should be approached first by studying the cultural contexts of children (Nguyen, 2006). Exploring the experience of acculturation development of a group of TCKs such as Saudi children



might reinforce our understanding regarding the experience of acculturation for such a micro-group for many reasons. Firstly, Saudi families in the United States come from a collectivistic conservative culture upholding strict religious and cultural beliefs, but they are socializing their children in an individualistic secular culture. The distance between the two cultures is marked. For instance, the differences between Saudi and U.S. students in terms of attitude and behavior toward same- and mixed-sex intimacy (Hewitt & Alqahtani, 2003) is highly different. The educational system in Saudi Arabia is different relatively to the U.S. educational system in many ways. The Saudi system has single gender-schools (Mayer, 2000; Alhazmi and Nyland, 2010), often fails to prepare students with necessary skills, relies on passive learning (Prokop, 2005), and focuses on a religious curriculum. The religious curriculum is sometimes described as a negative aspect and the educational curriculum of Saudi Arabia is seen as poorly constructed, as in many ways results in failing to promote the needed skills of Saudi children (PESTLE Country Analysis Report: Saudi Arabia, 2013).

Particularly, some Saudi children may have studied in Saudi schools that are single-gender schools, which may have in turn lacked an educational curriculum with proper teachers and motivation. Compounding all the stress that these differences may cause children is the fact that their parents already have their own stressors due to having to adjust to studying in the U.S. universities as international students (Razek & Coyner, 2011). This background makes the Saudi experience of acculturation in U.S. schools not only different from the experience of other ethnic groups, but also different from the experience of other Muslim groups living in the United States. Britto (2013) indicated that a cultural identity includes ethnicity, religion, and gender. In his study, he concluded

that the emergent combination of ethnicity, religion, and gender makes it necessary to build special conceptual designs for Muslim children in maintaining their identities. Furthermore, Saudi children and their parents come to study in the United States where the attitude toward Muslims in general and Saudis in particular is still tinged by a negative reputation and stereotypes about Islam in place since September 11 (Shaw, 2009).

Indeed, the time of identifying this phenomenon of having numbers of Saudi children in the United States is also significant. For example, the recent time is critical and may affect the acculturation process of Muslims in general living in the United States. Violence today by so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, ISIS a group who links its identity to Islam, and other political conflicts dominating the Arabic and Islamic world in general may threaten both parties during acculturation, the dominant and the ethnic groups. Looking at Islam as threatening for Western identity even before September 11, ISIS, and the political chaos in the world still affect how acculturation takes place for individuals in general. However, this current political climate may be more critical for children because of their sensitive developmental nature, which is affected by their surrounding environment. In conclusion, misunderstandings about Islam in general complicate the experience of Muslim Arabs, including Saudis, living in a Western culture. However, Saudi children may examine different dimensions due to their distinct background as a micro-group or a subgroup of Arabs and Muslims. This is particularly because of their cultural identity and their current political and social reality. Saudi children accompany their parents to live in a different culture, coming from a country known for its special political, religious, and social dimensions, and they then

experience being a minority in a Western culture with all the cross-cultural barriers of language and traditional customs.

Moreover, the reality of Saudi children's parents, who are living with their own set of stressors such as learning a new language, fulfilling the university's requirements, satisfying their Saudi organizational system to retain their scholarship for studying abroad, and fulfilling financial and social commitments. Moreover, the socioeconomic status of Saudi families living in the United States is slightly privileged due to governmental financial support from the Saudi Arabia Culture Mission, which acts as an agent to supports their health and academic and social wellbeing; families of other ethnicities living in the United States are usually financially self-dependent.

Continuing on the work of prior studies of TCKs that investigated the individual experience of other cultural groups (e.g., Japanese, Sweden, and Turkish TCKs), this study will introduce the experience of Saudi TCKs by exploring the challenge and opportunities that Saudi TCKs encounter in U.S. schools during middle childhood (7-10) years from a developmental perspective.

This study may contribute within the line of research targeting the Saudi population in the United States. It will thus draw on the past quantitative study of Hakami (2012) that addressed the acculturation challenges of Saudi female students in the United States, and on the study of Heyn (2013), who examined the lived experience of Saudi male students studying in the United States. Hakami (2012) and Heyn (2013) explored the experience of Saudi students as international students from different methodological perspectives. This study particularly aspires to complete this line by studying another relevant group of Saudis in the United States. Particularly, this study aims to explore the

lived experience of Saudi children (7-10 years old) during their acculturation not only as international students in the United States, but also as TCKs via a developmental perspective. No study has been done yet regarding the experience of acculturation of Saudi children particularly under the conceptualization of TCKs.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This study aimed to explore the experience of cultural acculturation of Saudi young children aged (7-10) years studying in American schools, in terms of cultural adaptation, by investigating the perspectives of children, their parents and their teachers. Under the concept of third culture kids (TCKs), this study targeted Saudi young children who have spent no less than 2 years of their early childhood in the United States accompanying parents who are studying in American institutions. This study was guided by four questions:

1. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northeast Ohio elementary school, particularly for cultural adaptation?
2. How do Saudi third culture kids develop their cultural identity?
3. What is the parent's role in their Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation?
4. What is the teacher's role in Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation?

#### Phenomenological Case Study Research

In this study, the researcher adopted a qualitative phenomenological case study research to explore the lived experience of Saudi children in the United States regarding their cultural adaptation. Many researchers such as Lindgren and Kehoe (1981) and Vaughn, Schumm, Jallard, Slusher, and Saumell (1986) have asserted that the purpose of

a phenomenological approach is to understand the phenomenon from the everyday interactions and perceptions of the groups who experience the phenomenon, as this understanding allows an exploration of the perceptions and feelings of participants (as cited in Henry, Casserly, Coady, & Marshall, 2008). In this case, this is an exploration of the perspectives of three children, parents, and teachers of Saudi third culture kids.

This case study, which has been designed based on phenomenological philosophical thought, was intended to reflect the essence of the personal experience of Saudi children for cultural adaptation and to reflect the uniqueness of this experience in terms of growing up as Muslim children in a highly different culture. Many researchers have applied a phenomenological approach as their philosophy or a research method in qualitative research while using case study as a methodology (e.g., Henry, Casserly, Coady, and Marshall, 2008; Roberts, 2009).

Phenomenology is a school of philosophy from the 20<sup>th</sup> century proposed by Husserl (1970) and used as an approach in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). It is defined as “the study of the world as it appears to individuals when they lay aside the prevailing understandings of those phenomena and revisit their immediate experiences of the phenomena” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 495). Husserl (1970) claimed that in phenomenology research, a phenomenon should be approached precisely and systemically by making participants conscious about the phenomenon. That is, the researcher should focus on the experiences of people and transform the essence of people’s real lives into something conscious and interpretable. The experience of Saudi children in the United States is investigated here as a case study through the lens of phenomenological research because using this type of qualitative tradition helps to

investigate how Saudi children identify their lived experiences, develop their identities, and how their parents and their teachers play roles in their cultural adaptation. This approach also helped to reveal the challenges and opportunities that these children encounter through the experience of adaptation in U.S. schools. In conducting such research, the researcher tried to engage intellectually and emotionally in the selected research problem ( Merriam, 2002).

Henry, Casserly, Coady, and Marshall (2008) asserted that in phenomenology research “researchers have initial knowledge about the topic and are interested in developing a more in depth understanding or in clarifying potentially conflicting or equivocal information from previous data” (p. 10). As a Saudi Muslim researcher who is a student in the United States and a mother for TCKs and an early childhood educator who has been advocating for young children for years, I am interested in gaining knowledge about the experience of this group with its religious and cultural background.

Another characteristic of phenomenological approach is choosing appropriate participants in respect to the study’s purpose. Gall et al. (2007) have ascribed many characteristics to phenomenological approaches. First, participants are considered co-researchers who deepen the meaning of the study and the interpretation. In this study, I have chosen children along with parents and teachers as participants to share their perspectives, thoughts, and experiences about the phenomenon of being TCKs and the opportunities and challenges of acculturation. In addition, Gall et al. added that to study the essence of the phenomena, researchers and participants must discover the uniqueness of the experience itself together, not just independently. Therefore, one long interview was initially conducted with each participant to gain a comprehensive vision of the

experience itself. That long interview was the primary interview, and I conducted it with each child and their mother to deepen our understanding about the child's experience, and to enhance communication during the next interviews.

Case study research is an investigation and analysis of a case, intended to capture the complexity of the phenomenon or the object (Stake, 1995). Qualitative case study research according to Stake (1995) is "a palette of methods" (pp. xi–xii) that reflects a combination of "naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research methods" in a miscellaneous design. As Merriam (2009) asserted, case study research has been used as a comprehensive design to justify or provide a wider examination to fundamental qualitative descriptive studies that do not harmonize with other traditional frameworks. Case study research in particular has been used as a qualitative research design by many researchers of TCKs (e.g., Greenholtz & Kim, 2009; Joerchel, 2006; Wu & Koolash, 2011). As a qualitative approach, case study should allow for researchers to learn about children and explore their perspectives (Duveen & Lloyd, 1993) and capture the complexity of a phenomenon. This approach is critical to providing children with the opportunity to show us their world and to allowing us to learn from their stories (Christensen, 2004).

To discuss the characteristics of case study, we should first clarify that a phenomenon is the basic premise for identifying a case. A phenomenon should be bounded by time and place, and it should be relevant to a specific group or program (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010; Merriam, 2009). A phenomenon can be studied by a single case study or via multiple cases that share the same characteristics. It is difficult to determine the ideal number of cases, but in general no more than four to five cases are



preferred (Creswell, 2014). Gall et al. (2010) asserted that a case study should also be studied in its natural setting by applying fieldwork and observing the participants for an extended time. However, Creswell (2014) argued that this is not always required, and a case study approach can be applied with no observation or extensive fieldwork depending on the nature of the case and on the phenomenon being studied. Because of the direct involvement with the participants during observation and interviews, researchers of case studies are considered the basic instrument of data collection (Gall et al., 2010).

The characteristics of a case should reflect a contemporary phenomenon extensively (Yin, 1994). Therefore, researchers of a case study should focus on describing, explaining, or evaluating a case by asking informative questions, listening well, using multiple resources of data, evaluating and categorizing data, and creating recommendations and implications. Yin (1994) identified four stages in applying case study: constructing the case, conducting the case, analyzing the case, and developing recommendations. In this research, I intend to explore the lived experience of acculturation of Saudi TCKs in relation to their fundamental ecological environments (school and home) in terms of the opportunities and challenges that these TCKs face during cultural adaptation. In collecting data, unlike a researcher employing other qualitative research methodology, a researcher employing case study should use many methods to study the case adequately. Accordingly, I used different approaches, such as interviews and photo elicitation, to collect data.

Yin (1994) also claimed that researchers of case studies should aim to explore, explain, or describe the case in order to deeply understand the individual and collective experience of a group or individual. Thus, by looking to the case study as a bounded

system that is relevant to a specific cultural group, my study can be defined as a case study that explores, explains, and describes the experience of Saudi children in a specific time and specific place (i.e. Saudi children in the United States) by investigating the perspectives of Saudi children, their parents, and their teachers. Merriam (2009) cites that Yin (2008) has discussed the effectiveness of using case study as an approach to answer questions like “how” and “why,” which were the questions that guided my study. This study aimed to explore the experience of Saudi TCKs aged 7-10 years to identify the challenges and opportunities that result from the experience of acculturation. Moreover, the increasing number of Saudi families in the United States is a new phenomenon and has particular circumstances of interests, events, individuals, and practices that can be addressed as a case study.

Thus, a case study is performed to shed light on a certain phenomenon and all its details and processes (Gall et al., 2010) in depth and with heavy description by using many different methods over an extended period of time, and in natural settings like homes (Gall et al., 2010; Merriam, 2002, 2009). The experience of the distinct group of Saudi TCKs is not present in existing literature. Using multiple methods in a case study approach will help to extract holistic information from all the ecological environments that affect Saudi children’s acculturation during their developmental years. Since this study aims to explore the lived experience of Saudi children, such experience cannot be understood by conducting merely a survey or relying on solely children’s perspective (Gall et al., 2010). For example, in a study about inclusion in education, Henry, Casserly, Coady, & Marshall (2008) argued, “Such multilevel perspective facilitated the gathering of evidence not just about day-to-day implications of inclusion, but rather about wider

educational and social contexts and the structural and cultural features of inclusion” (p. 14). It can be argued that multilevel perspectives are also an effective approach to gather evidence when studying the acculturation experience of a group of children, so the study included multiple complex social contexts as well. Having multiple voices and perspectives provided me with more evidence and more understanding to the case and its social contexts, and allowed me to better demonstrate the differences across the participants via rich data (Flick, 2009).

Hanlon (2003) stated that “democratic participation encourages all participants to contribute and be respected and valued equally throughout the research process” (p. 62). He observed that such democratic participation could be achieved by incorporating multiple perspectives in the research. According to James, Jenks, and Prout (1998), conducting individual case studies illuminates the meaning that children derive from their own experiences and at the same time allows for critical aspects of their lives to crystallize by integrating perspectives of social figures surrounding them.

Dixon and Hayden (2008) commended the effectiveness of interviewing individuals, particularly parents, as a group, noting that parent’s perspectives can powerfully benefit case study research about their children’s lived experience. The researchers explained as follows:

Acquiring information from parents through the group interview proved invaluable, providing great insights into their own and their children’s depth of feelings. Parents gave useful guidance in planning the questionnaire, together with constructive suggestion for improvement of the induction process, especially concerning the question of buddies and the depth of feeling of the children (Dixon & Hayden, 2008, p. 494).

Saudi TCKs, like other children, experience some spontaneous moments resulting from their communication with their milieu. It is essential to study these moments and stories as an inclusive case and to focus on moments that might be invisible or not fully understood when using other methods. In other words, although this study aimed to explore the lived experience of children, designing it as a case study was more informative because we need to understand the whole phenomenon, which will demand investigation of not only the children but also the “enculturation” and “acculturation” agents that play a significant role during this experience. Heah, Case, McGuire, and Law (2007) clarified that having parents and teachers as participants in the research of children with disabilities is critical to enrich data; it can be argued that the same approach might also be effective in interviewing cross-cultural children due to their special cultural needs.

A phenomenological case study is more appropriate for this research because it investigates a current lived experience, i.e., the living situation of young children who undergo the phenomenon of acculturation in different ecological environments. The recent political and social circumstances, Islamophobia, and hate criminals make it critical to know how such a group of Muslim children grow among such events (Shaw, 2010). Case study was more comprehensive for capturing the TCK lived experience and what the experience was like for the children and their parents and teachers as they constructed meanings from such experiences. Specifically, case study focuses on a case under a phenomenon by abstracting rich data from stories, statements, and pictures that reflect the lived experience in a specific time and place. Merriam (2009) clarified, “Of course defining a case study in terms of the unit of analysis, the bounded system, allows

for any number of qualitative strategies to be combined with the case” (p. 179). In this study, case study fit well in a phenomenological approach because case studies aim to understand the case based on lived experience from the participants’ perspectives and feelings. As Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) asserted, “case studies are designed to bring out details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data” (Yin, 1994, p. 3).

Given the complexity of the acculturation process, the lived experience of acculturation of Saudi children may not be understood merely by investigating the perspective of those children alone. Many social agents such as family and school are involved and in many ways affect how those children live during the experience. The essence of the acculturation of cross-cultural kids is that children are growing up between and within the processes of enculturation (at home) and acculturation (in the school) (Horenczyk & Vedder, 2006). Therefore, having the perspective of parents and teachers deepened my understanding of the phenomenon or the studied case of TCKs.

#### Analyzing Phenomenological Case Study

According to Moustakas (1994), researchers in phenomenology research must analyze data by breaking all the interview data into segments, finding emerging themes and units, and then synthesizing the findings. Researchers must also reflect on and interpret the findings and compare the meaning and differences among the emerging units. The phenomenologist should provide a structure of imagination and creativity to recollect all the thoughts and provide a meaning to the phenomena. In my study, I extracted and analyzed themes for the data, synthesized those themes, and then

interpreted the findings by connecting the themes to the theoretical framework discussed earlier in Chapter one (Gall et al., 2007).

A case study can use many different approaches to analyze data depending on what kind of case study is applied. The researcher can focus on a single case or multiple cases that share the same point of view or similar affective approaches (Creswell, 2013). My case study analysis approach was interpretational analysis. Interpretational analysis refers to the process when the researcher examines the data in depth trying to find themes and patterns, developing categories from the patterns, and coding segments (Creswell, 2014).

Particularly, I applied a general guide of qualitative research synthesized by Merriam (2015) which has been found to fit all qualitative paradigms in general. Since I studied the phenomenon of acculturation of Saudi TCKs in a certain setting as a case study, I planned to apply a general guide of analyzing data. This approach was more cogent for both phenomenology and the case study approach. I started this process of analyzing data by collecting all transcripts, photos, and documents with the potential to serve as evidence in analysis. I read all the data I gathered, progressing from source to source (e.g., data from children, data from parents, data from teachers), and then I revisited the data again, prepared to create codes. I adopted open coding to designate particular codes or identified codes. Those codes might be words, phrases, or even colors, and identifying them eased the process of looking at the whole picture. I created and then connected codes by adding them in the margins of the transcripts. I then started categorizing, which means identifying categories, themes, or answers to my research questions (Merriam, 2015). Themes included one or a combination of words, statements,

expressions, and paragraphs that made sense in relation to the purpose of my study. By revisiting the codes, I constructed a *schema* to categorize the codes under more comprehensive and general categories (Merriam, 2015). I went through the data again to find and more abstract categories. After this primary categorization, I divided the big categories into smaller pieces so that subcategories started to emerge, and I transferred each unit or code to the appropriate category. Finally, I went through all the categories to connect my findings to my theoretical framework, prior studies, or theories discussed in the literature. Until I found data repeating again and again, I continued the process of revisiting the data, retrieving significant codes, and placing those codes under the relevant category (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2015). More importantly, I conducted a cross-case analysis through the three cases to find and compare similarities and differences in the categories or (answers) among children, parents, and teachers. This form of analysis was critical to providing the deeper understanding necessary to explore, describe, and interpret data. It was also critical to finding a general and unified result toward understanding the phenomenon in these cases. Throughout the entire process of analysis, I discussed my bias and my thoughts and reflected on my own experience, so again I could pull my own experience away from the participants' experiences.

#### Ethical and Methodological Perspective on Researching Children

Unlike the majority of recent studies about acculturated groups that focus mostly on adolescent experience, in this study I focused on school-age children, particularly children in middle childhood (7-10 years old) who have spent their early childhood in the United States. The lack of acculturation research targeting this age specifically has been emphasized by many researchers (Barn, 2014; Brown et al., 2013; Dixona and Hayden,

2008; Nigbur et al., 2008). Nevertheless, schools have recently been taking seriously the perspective of school-age children when planning instructional programs. This is because children at this age are capable of providing a meaningful reflection of their own experiences during interaction with the world (Dixona & Hayden, 2008). Relative to adults' voices, children's voices are insufficiently presented in research. If children are addressed, often the focus is completely on reflecting the experience of children or students through the perceptions of adults. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) highlighted the necessity of asking the children themselves about their perspectives with respect to their emotional, social, and cognitive abilities.

According to Ervin (1988), researchers can confidently rely on children's voices when holding interviews, as children can adequately translate their experience and convey their feelings well (as cited in Hayden, 2008). Therefore, children's voices should, if carefully addressed and appropriately investigated, present a valuable contribution to the research. Considering the experiences of the children themselves rather than relying fully on adults' perspective will offer fresh-memory information that reflects close recent experience that is present in the children's minds (Dixona & Hayden, 2008).

By excluding children's voices, social research fails to incorporate children's unique perspectives and instead treats children as objects instead of participants (Grover, 2004). Until they are permitted to tell their stories and unveil their worlds, children will continue to be "vulnerable to presentations that others impose on them" (Barron, 2000, p. 33). Though the voices of adults, as interpreters, cannot be excluded, the voices of children must not be neglected in research (Barron, 2000). Grover (2004) asserted that



giving voice to children in social research permits access to a valuable and unique perspective; children's voices should not be dismissed based on simplistic age criteria.

In respect to the ethical perspective, some scholars have claimed that research with children is challenging, as the researcher must find an appropriate approach to conduct such studies. Morrow and Richards (1996) argued that because children are considered vulnerable and incompetent, unlike adults, researchers should carefully consider the risks as well as the benefits of engaging children in social research. Harden, Scott, Backett-Milburn, and Jackson (2000) emphasized that the risks of researching children can be lessened by carefully designing an appropriate data collection method, specifically one which considers children's needs and abilities, informs children and their caregivers about the research, enhances confidence, and ensures anonymity.

Many researchers have confirmed the importance of regulating data collection methods according to the developmental stage of children. Possibilities for doing so include choosing a friendly setting, designing a friendly questionnaire, adopting clear and simple language, and enhancing a positive researcher-child relationship. Irwin and Jonson (2005) observed that researchers performing children studies are often criticized for obscuring the process and issues of their methodological practices during their research. Therefore, Irwin and Jonson affirm the need to reduce potential issues when interviewing children such as: leading the child, introducing an uncomfortable setting, implementing an intimidating interview structure. To this end, researchers should describe precisely the practices and dilemmas they faced during their research.

Dilemmas of methodology in research do not belong exclusively to research about children. However, in research with children these dilemmas are more exaggerated due to

the disparate power relationship between the researcher as an adult and the participant as a child, and to consent and access (Mauthner, 1997). Thus, qualitative research in general presents some theoretical challenges and ethical issues (Harden et al., 2000), but qualitative research with children compounds those challenges. Shi (2013), for instance, categorized some fundamental and situational dilemmas that researchers have encountered in phenomenology research with elementary school children for whom English was a second language. The fundamental issue she identified is that, beyond the challenge of phenomenology as a research approach in general, in the situational context of researching with children, the approach presents a particular challenge when the researcher aims to understand the lived experience of children with different cultural and language backgrounds.

Maybin (2013) claimed that children are deeply capable of conveying their cultural experience. Children are aware of the symbols present in the social environment around them, and they are conscious and reflexive about the social interaction between them and their parents, teachers and peers. This awareness is present as well within the context of research and interview. Children also understand what can and cannot be told, and they will adopt an approach to consciously express their experiences. As Maybin concluded, “Discussions of how to promote children’s voices within education need to acknowledge the complexity of their active and enquiring spontaneous dialogic explorations of knowledge, and the heteroglossic development of their beliefs and values” (p. 16).

## Data Collection

Kent State University and the University of Akron in the state of Ohio have a considerable number of Saudi students who reside in the surrounding areas. The selected school that I chose to conduct my case study research was located in Northeast Ohio and it was one of the schools with a number of children of Saudi parents who study in both universities. After communicating with the school and acquiring approval to collect data, I met teachers who have Saudi children from first to fifth grades and were willing to participate. After gaining their agreement to participate in the research, I began the process of selecting the sample children. I selected the sample based on purposeful sampling, as “sample selection in qualitative research is usually . . . nonrandom, purposeful, and small as opposed to larger, more random sampling in quantitative research” (Merriam, 2009, p. 16). Among 16 types of purposeful sampling, I selected two types to provide rich information for my study: homogenous and snowball sampling (Gall et al., 2010). First, I used a random sample of a number of children who meet the research criteria (Hooghe et al., 2012), namely Saudi children between 7 and 10 years old who have been in the United States no less than two years with their parents, who speak English at least at an intermediate level. Next, I selected only three children from the homogeneous sample whose experiences, cultural backgrounds, and proficiency in English may allow them to provide especially rich and informative data. Sampling provided me with three groups, namely three children, three parents, and three teachers. The amount of time allotted for the study (at least two months) was sufficient to study the impact of the experience of acculturation on these children after spending years of their childhood in the United States. When random sampling did not provide me with three

cases, I applied snowball sampling (Gall et al., 2010). Snowball sampling is an approach used to find participants who are willing to participate, willing to share their stories, and able to be deeply informative with respect to the study through recommendations from other participants who know them. To enhance subjectivity, I chose families I do not know personally. I found participants (children) in two ways: (1) asking teachers to suggest children who would be able to take part in the research and meet its criteria, and/or (2) contacting a first family (one suggested by a teacher) and then asking that family to suggest another family that may be willing to take part in the research. The process of finding the participants was incorporated by the researcher, the teacher, or the mother if needed (i.e. by finding other participants as snowball).

Because the majority of Saudis are students, they were likely to understand the purpose of educational research and to appreciate the value of participation in such research. It was expected that participants (parents) could express themselves in English well since they were either English language learner (ELL) students or undergraduate and graduate students. In order to participate in this study, children who were willing to participate should have spent at least two years studying in U.S. public schools. Therefore, it was expected that most of the children to participate in this study would be able to speak English at least at an intermediate level. The English proficiency level of those students was determined by their teachers' evaluation. However, sociolinguistic researchers have asserted that bilingual youth prefer speaking in their cultural language when they are accompanying their mothers or at home (Organista, Marin, & Chun, 2010). Therefore, both languages were treated as acceptable during the interviews, as I am

bilingual myself, and was able to communicate with the participants in both Arabic and English.

### Data Collection Procedure

Like many other researchers who have applied the case study approach, I collected data from multiple participants to understand their holistic experience and all its embedded social dimensions (Guo & Dalli, 2012; Joerchel, 2006; Ogbu, 1995).

### Participants

As noted, participants were children and their parents and teachers. The sample size can be small because this research is qualitative, meaning it investigates the naturally unique lives and experiences of participants (Merriam, 2002). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) argued the following regarding interpretive phenomenology analysis:

It is inappropriate to use a large sample size just because that is more common in psychological studies. With IPA, we aim at producing an in-depth examination of certain phenomena, and not generating a theory to be generalized over the whole population. (However, comparing multiple IPA studies on a particular problem may provide insights into universal patterns or mechanisms. . . . The primary concern of IPA researchers is to elicit rich, detailed, and first-person accounts of experiences and phenomena under investigation. (p. 9)

In the present study, the participants were three children and their parents and homeroom teachers. The children were elementary school students aged 7-10 years old who recently studied in American schools and have been in the United States no less than 2 years. Either one or both parents of the child were studying in a U.S. university as a graduate or undergraduate student.

## Rationale of Choosing Settings

Data has been collected, or in other words, fieldwork will be performed, in everyday settings of the participants (Gall et al., 2010). In educational research, fieldwork can take place not only in the schools where the educational interactive and learning process happens for the students, teachers, and school administration staff, but also in the homes where the children practice their active lives (Gall et al., 2010). Therefore, data about the ecological environment of the school and acculturation experience of the child in the school were gained via teachers, and data about family relationships and home environment were collected via mothers. Parents have been interviewed face to face while teachers provided their answers for interview questions via email. The teachers provided data about the children's behavior inside the classroom, about the children's interactions with their peers, about the children's attitudes toward social interaction, and about possible challenges or opportunities in the children's lives. The teachers' stories and answers around such events revealed details of the children's experience of being TCKs. Regarding interviews with mothers, I conducted the interviews in a quiet, public place like the Kent Public Library to bring a feeling of formality and commitment to the process.

Data was collected from three primary teachers of three Saudi students studying in an elementary school. According to the report of Start Class (2016), the chosen elementary is a public school located in Northeast Ohio and serves 590 students from Pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I found this school particularly to be convenient to conduct a case study for a few reasons. The average number of students in other elementary schools located in the Ohio is 412 students, so the selected elementary school is considered a big

school. The school's student to teacher ratio is 21:1. This ratio is large relative to the average ratio in elementary schools in the United States (16:1) and in elementary schools in Ohio (18:1). The distribution of the school includes different ethnicities. The chosen elementary school has a higher average of Caucasian students among other ethnicities at 89.2% Caucasians; the average of Caucasian students in other schools in the city is approximately 43.2% Caucasian students. The percentage of Caucasian American relative to other ethnicities may be evidence to show that Saudi Arabian students in this school are presented as a minority. The principal of the school informed that during 2015-2016 school year, out of the 634 students, only 36 were from Saudi Arabia (Personal communication, April 4, 2016). On the other hand, the location of the school makes it convenient for many Saudi students attending Kent State University to enroll their children. Most of the Saudi students in the school are expected to live close to each other and may be able to communicate even outside the school as a Saudi community and this is might affect the acculturation experience of the participants.

All these factors made the selected school a cogent place to capture the phenomenon of TCKs. Saudi students in this school are clearly viewed as non-majority among Caucasian students, and perhaps even among other ethnicities as well. The size of the school and the large number of students attending the school may affect the practices of satisfying children's cultural needs or affect teachers' attitude and capacity to understand or communicate with all children in general and minorities in particular.

#### Time Allotted for the Procedure

Phenomenological research requires building a connection between researchers and participants to gain a comprehensive understanding to the phenomena itself (Gall et

al., 2007). Thus, to understand the experience of Saudi TCKs as Muslims studying in the United States for a certain time, I collected data about children for at least two months by interviewing and by gathering information from children and their mothers, and teachers via email communication or by visits to school. I stopped seeking more information when no new given data appeared within the cases, or in other words, until the poll of data reaches saturation (Merriam, 2009).

After completing the process for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and gaining approval to collect data, I started the process of finding participants who were willing to take part in the research and ensuring that they read and sign the Consent Form for the research (see Appendices). I started collecting data in September, 2016 and ended by November, 2016.

#### Researcher as Instrument in Qualitative Research

I have embedded myself as the “researcher” in the procedure of collecting data because I should, as a qualitative researcher, demonstrated my role as a basic instrument of the study and acknowledged my potential bias. As a Muslim researcher, I understood that I will be dealing with the data and the research procedure subjectively. It was important that I examine my bias and reflect consistently about my feelings and my position as a researcher (Merriam, 2002, 2009). Regarding the data collection process, I already know many Saudi students in Akron and Kent. Although these social connections supported my effort to reach participants and to communicate with them frequently, I chose families I did not know to maintain subjectivity. My position as a teacher and a mother enhanced my ability as a researcher to hear, embrace, and to interact with the children and parents and to manage my presence during the interviews. Merriam (2002)



has indicated that phenomenological researchers tend to “explore their own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of their prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions” (p. 94). Particularly, my position as a researcher was to explore the phenomenon using participants’ lenses and not as a Saudi Muslim mother who shares and lives the same experiences as the participants.

### Instrumentation and Procedure

Data was collected based on different approaches and from three different groups of participants including children, mothers, and teachers. The procedure included interviewing, a questionnaire, and photo elicitation.

#### Interviews

According to Merriam (2009), “Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them . . . [and] when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate” (p. 88). Merriam suggested using interview in phenomenological research as a suitable approach to investigate people’s experiences. With respect to the interview procedure, I obtained the families’ agreement to participate, gained the participants’ contact information, and adjusted the date, time, and place of the interview to ensure there were no serious difficulties for participants to attend. I met the mothers in Kent Public Library. The library is an accessible place with a friendly atmosphere; it has many study rooms and is usually not too crowded. The interviews with the mothers lasted approximately 45 minutes, and at least three were held over at least two months. Each mother has been interviewed on a separate day, so I was able to review and reflect on each interview immediately afterward. Children were interviewed at their homes to help them feel

comfortable and talk freely. To keep the children interested, the interviews lasted no more than 30 minutes. Based on each family's convenience, the interview was conducted in a quiet room like a home office, a backyard, or a quiet living room to avoid interruption. The mother of the child was present during the interview based on child's preference. Some children feel comfortable and provide richer data with parents' attendance, but others perform better without their parents (Gardner & Randall, 2012). After discussing this point with the child and the mother prior to each interview I posed open-ended questions to interview children while using photos to help them visualize their emotions, memories, and ideas along with using language and verbal expressions. The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of both highly structured and unstructured questions. The interviews were open ended, flexibly worded, and guided by a list of questions or issues to be discussed with the participants (Merriam, 2009). These questions were developed and designed based on the existing literature about TCKs' acculturation by Berry (2006) and Pollack and Reken (2009). Similar studies have performed interviews intended to research similar concepts (e.g., Ercan, 2011; Joerchel; 2006). Therefore, I based some of my questions on the questions used in those other studies. The lists of questions used before and during the interviews are presented into a data matrix in the appendices.

Interviewing the mothers.

Prior to interviewing the children, I interviewed the mothers. There were three reasons for this: Sitting with the mothers first will (1) provide the children with confidence and familiarity with the researcher, (2) allow the mother to review a copy of the questionnaire, so the mother will be aware of any requested demographic information and of the questions developed based on TCK literature, and (3) provide me as a researcher with some starting points for my conversation with the child. Dr. M. Jennifer (Personal communication, 2014) suggested that interviewing mothers might help to capture meanings and insights to ease the interview with the child because the spontaneous moments between children and their mothers can hold enormously valuable meanings that can strengthen data. Mothers, for example, may invite the researcher to talk with the child about a specific story or incident that the mother believes is an informative part of their child's experience. Gardner and Randall (2012) argued that it may be informative to ask parents about the lives of their children in order to address the perspective of children in a social context.

*Questionnaire for Mothers.*

The questionnaire found in *Appendix E*, was designed to guide the interviews with the mothers and aimed to gain information about the experience of their Saudi children as TCKs who have spent a part of their childhood between and among different cultures. TCK literature shows that TCKs have many common social and psychological characteristics, and their experiences show similar benefits and challenges. However, most studies are about the experiences of U.S. TCKs living in non-Western cultures due to their parents careers. Since the cross-cultural experience affects multiple cultures,

studying other groups' cross-cultural experiences will help shed light on TCKs specifically and on cross-cultural experience in general. Through the interviews, the Saudi parents will provide their perspectives about their children's experience as TCKs. Interviews were addressed according to the literature of acculturation and TCKs (e.g., Berry, 2006; Gilbert, 2008; Pollack and Reken, 1999, 2009; McCaig, 2004; Zayat, 2008). Questions were designed to answer the following questions: (1) What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northeast Ohio elementary school, particularly for cultural adaptation? (2) How do Saudi third culture kids develop their cultural identity? (3) What is the parent's role in their Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation? And (4) What is the teacher's role in Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation?

Table 2  
Validity Matrix

Research Concept	Definitions	References	Survey Categories	Survey Item Number
Characteristics of TCKs	Significant time of developmental years spent outside the parent's culture; social & psychological characteristics like feelings of unresolved grief and unbelonging to specific culture; often children of persons who were also TCKs	Pollack & Reken, 1999; McCaig 2004; Downie, 1976; Gaw, 2007; Gilbert, 2008; Pollack & Reken, 2009	Identity and characteristics of TCKs.	*2-3-4-6-7-8-9-17 *10-11-13 *14-15-16-17-72 *12-19-20
Advantages of being a TCK	Extended worldview; understanding of diversity; interaction experience in cross-cultural content; ability to make decisions; rich bilingual & bicultural experience	Pollack & Reken, 1999; McCaig, 2004; Zayat, 2008; Zebler, 2005; Moore, 2011	Perspective about the opportunities of acculturation	18-19-20-24-25-28-32-37-44-46
Challenges of being a TCK	Parent-child relationship issues; difficulty developing and maintaining friendships; culture shock; confusion; marginality; bullying due to failure to "fit in"; reentry	Austin, 1986; Bell, 1997; Downie, 1976; Firestone, 1992; Fray, 1988; Pollock and Reken, 1999; Schulz, 1985, 1986; Stelling, 1992	Perspectives about the challenges of acculturation	38-18-26-41-42-43-44-45-39-40

On our first meeting prior to the interviews, I gave a survey and pencil to each mother. During our first interview, we went through the survey together to discuss each point via open-ended questions. This process allowed me to touch deeply on each point and allowed each mother to explain her perspective in detail. At the end of the first

interview, I thanked the mother and gave her my contact information to communicate with me at her convenience if she was willing to add more information or comments.

#### Interviewing the children.

Interviewing children is an inherently questionable concept for ethical reasons, and as such it is methodologically challenging. To eliminate possible dilemmas related to the protection of children's identity and confidence, I considered many aspects that may have increased the chosen method's validity and helped protect the child's identity and rights as a subjective, not objective, instrument in the study. Mauthner (1997) found that interview was an appropriate method to collect data from children older than 5-6 years old. Based on Mauthner's finding, interview is considered an appropriate collection method for the children in this study. Many researchers have described this approach of data collection as a developmentally appropriate approach and an effective and valid tool for young children (Mauthner, 1997). Mauthner also pointed out that structured activities can be effectively integrated into interviews in order to provide a focus for children, especially when the research topic is abstract or not immediately salient in children's lives. Although language is considered a dilemma in research with children whose original language is not English (Shi, 2013), this is not an issue in this study because my participants and I are from the same ethnicity and all speak Arabic. This shared background made it easier to understand one another during the interview. Moreover, since the participants must have been in American schools no less than 2 years, it was expected that they would be able to express themselves adequately in English. Although the interview proceeded in English to prevent inaccuracies due to translation, the participants were permitted to speak in Arabic if they found it easier to express

meaningful data in their native language. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) claimed that participants can be more explicit and free in communicating their experiences with an individual who speaks the same first language. The similar cultural background of the researcher and the participants should enhance the trust and reduce the uncertainty when children tell their stories, so the participants sometimes avoided talking about a conflict or a discrimination story to a researcher from the dominant culture (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

*Photo-elicitation approach.*

During interviewing many researchers use photo-elicitation. Photo-elicitation refers to photo interviewing, or the insertion of photos into interviews to help evoke memories, reveal participants' beliefs, views and meanings, demonstrate group interaction (Harper, 2002; Hurworth, 2003; Prosser, 1998), expatiate data, and prompt participants to communicate their thoughts and stories (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004).

Researchers use a single or multiple photographs as stimulus during the interview (Meo, 2010) and adopt different strategies to inserting photos within research interviews. Morrow (2001), for example, adopted photo elicitation by giving a camera to a group of children and asking them to capture their lives, while other researchers shared pictures taken by children during their "neighborhood walks" (Bryant, 1985). Most researchers (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Jackson, 2005; Rasmussen, 2004; Smith & Barker, 2000) have provided a single camera for each child to capture his/her own experience (as cited in Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, & Baruchel, 2006). The act of participants taking photos has been identified as photo-voice (Wang & Burris, 1997), auto driving (Heisley & Levy, 1991), and reflexive photography (Douglas, 1998) (as cited in Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007).

Many researchers have found photo-elicitation to be a useful tool during interviewing, especially with children, because it provides the researcher with an alternative way of using language and enhances the memory of the participants in recalling and expressing thoughts and feelings during the interviews (Alerby & Hörnqvist, 2005; Clark- Ibáñez, 2004; Collier & Collier, 1986; Douglas, 1998; Harper, 2002; Hurworth, 2004; Samuels, 2004; Shaw, 2009; Stanczak, 2004; Twine, 2006). Harper (2002) discussed how several studies of identity valued photo elicitation since they were focused on the ways people present themselves through clothes or how people are segmented by ethnic differences. Harper explained, “The idea behind breaking the frame is that photographs may lead an individual to a new view of their social existence. It is also possible to use images as bridges between worlds that are more culturally distinct” (p. 16).

Shaw (2009) asserted that using this approach was significantly successful because it confirmed information that would not emerge during interviews without photos. Regarding participants’ reactions to photo-elicitation, Linzmayer and Halpenny (2013) and Shaw (2009) declared that participants were excited to use their cameras and take photos by themselves and talk about them deeply during the interview. Moreover, the researchers noticed that the time answering questions and the details and information were increased ten-times relative to the interviews with no photos. Shaw (2009) asserted that the participants unexpectedly provided pictures that were full of stories along with metaphors that reflected their feelings and thoughts, confirming the power of this approach in providing deep and rich data. In short, photo-elicitation provides



unpredictable data, allows triangulation of data, and encourages participants' creativity.

Shaw (2009) explained his experience employing photo-elicitation as follows:

Eventually, through probing I discovered that the bicycles were a metaphor for feelings of inclusion in OSU and represented the value the participants placed in feeling a part of the campus community. This was something that was not revealed in the other types of interviews. Had photo-elicitation interviews not been conducted, I would have missed an important element of success. In this instance, the photos added depth, richness, and new data (p. 210).

In this study, I used photos taken by the children themselves via cameras. This was intended to prevent a focus on any one specific image that may have limited or confused the meaning derived by children, or on any image that may not be clear enough to stimulate children to reflect on their lived experience (Harper, 2002).

Before the basic interview, I met the child to develop a relationship and provide some comfort in getting to one another. I introduced myself by telling the child my name and my intention to learn more about their friends, teachers, school, interests, etc. After gaining the child's agreement to participate, I showed some photos of mine to the child while explaining a bit about the things, places, people, and stories in the pictures and about what I do and do not like. This was important to give the child a sense of meaning or guidance in terms of "how and why" the child is taking photos. After this brief scenario, I encouraged the child to apply the same strategy in capturing some photos during the next two weeks so the child can then show them to me during our coming meeting. I asked the children to capture things that would be fun to show to me or to talk about. Children could use their own electronics, such as iPads or cameras or, if those are not an option, I provided the children with cameras for taking photos. During the interview, I invited the child to talk about the photos that had been chosen. The photos

would then guide our conversations and the interview questions from one point to another. During this conversation, I asked open-ended questions alongside semi-structured questions.

During the main interview, it was important to inform mothers to not interrupt or contribute to the storytelling. Having the mothers “in the same room” with no intervention and without engaging in the conversation was intended to provide the children with comfort and some freedom to express their thoughts. To keep the mother away from engaging in the conversation, I provided her a small book about TCKs to read while I was interviewing the child. I sat down with the child and started to discuss the pictures. The discussion helped to illuminate things, places, and people that the child likes or dislikes and why. I recorded our interview with two devices and took notes. The interview took no more than 30 minutes. After the interview, I gave the child a small children’s book about TCKs to educate them about possible issues related to the life of TCKs. This book is called, “*Slurping Soup and other confusions: true stories and activities to help third culture kids during transition*” (Tonges Menezes, & Emigh, 2013). A title of the book is found in Appendix I.

Interviewing the teachers.

After getting approval to conduct research in the selected school, I gained information from the administration about the number of children, classes, and teachers who met the research criteria. Then, I conversed with the teachers in a meeting for 15 minutes explaining the research. The teachers who were willing to participate signed the Consent sheet. I gave the teachers the written interview via email to respond to and to

return in two weeks. Teachers contacted h me via email or phone for more information or clarification.

#### *Email interviews.*

To encourage teachers to provide information at their convenience and to avoid pressuring teachers for sensitive information about their feelings and thoughts about their students, and to avoid causing stress to teachers during their work time, written questions were distributed to basic class teachers to request information from the teachers about potential Saudi children participants. The main class teachers and homeroom teachers who interact most with the children were the participants in this study. Open-ended questions were developed from the literature on cross culture kids to capture how teachers describe the experience of a Saudi TCK and in what way the teachers would help the children in cultural adaptation. Questions are included in the final paper's appendixes.

#### Internal Validity

Internal validity is concerned with what degree the findings of the study correspond to the reality and reflect what is truly being investigated (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) noted that although ensuring validity is a challenge in qualitative research, many approaches can be adopted to achieve validity. The first approach I adopted to achieve validity was triangulation. According to Merriam (2002), triangulation can enhance the provided information and strengthen the data by revealing corresponding information or different components among the data collected from different methods and different participants. I used theoretical triangulation by applying many different theories. Furthermore, I triangulated the data collection methods (Gall et al., 2007, 2010;

Merriam, 2002, 2009) by employing interviews, photo-elicitation, and email interviews. Data was collected based on children's perspectives, parents' perspectives, and teachers' perspectives. Two locations were as sites for the interviews, namely homes (for the children) and a public library (for the mothers). Using triangulation of theories, data collection methods, participants, and settings helped me to understand and interpret the data from different approaches and enhanced the study validity of this qualitative research (Merriam, 2009).

My second strategy was adequate engagement in data collection. I consistently asked myself when I should stop collecting data. Some writers call for challenging our own findings as researchers and seeking out the data that contradicts our assumptions or findings to enhance validity. Merriam (2009) added that researchers can determine when they should stop collecting data when nothing new is emerging, or when the same findings appear again.

My third strategy was reflexivity. This approach, as Merriam (2015) asserts, can enhance my position as a researcher. I explained my position within the study, and I addressed my biases. Preeminently, I reflected on my findings, interpretations, and my assumptions by writing in my diary. This strategy showed how my values and assumptions as a researcher impacted the final findings (Merriam, 2009).

With respect to privacy considerations, I confirmed the privacy of the information while collecting data. Documents, records, and notes were kept safely in my home office and inside a locked drawer. The names of the participants were changed and used only for research purposes. Participants were informed through the consent forms about privacy of information and the right to withdraw from the research participation.

Moreover, I interviewed only one participant every day to avoid confusion when reporting the data. After every interview, I wrote down the data immediately to ensure all details are recalled and no information was omitted. More than one device was used to record data as well, in case of any technical or electronic problems arise.

### External Validity

External validity refers to the possibility of applying the findings of one study to another situation (Merriam, 2009). Since research using the qualitative approach reflects the experience of humans as they live it and does not manipulate conditions in the way that research using the quantitative approach does, generalizing is often an issue in qualitative research. However, many methods can be adopted to enhance the generalizability of a study's findings. Of the many strategies that Merriam (2009) has mentioned, I adopted thick description of the data, and maximum variation to improve the generalizability of my findings.

In the current research, I recorded in detail all of the research processes and decisions I made to determine a setting, a question, or a participant, such as writing my potential bias through the section of the (subjectivity statement) demonstrating my own experience with my children as third culture kids. This thick description of the research process should help the readers understand ways in which this study can be valuable to them and used in other areas, not only because of the similarities, but also because of the differences. Maximum variation was used to purposely vary sample selections to reflect a typical sample similar to other samples, or to purposely select a unique sample that would be generalizable merely because of its uniqueness. In this study, I described the sample and offered thick description showing how I investigated the experience of Saudi children

in the United States as Muslims in terms of their lived experience of cultural adaptation and their cultural identity development. Although this research explored the experience of a specific cultural group which was distinct by its cultural identity and social reality, this research along with other relevant research should develop our knowledge about cross-cultural kids and the cultural needs of different ethnicities. After all, Merriam (2015) asserts, generalization in qualitative research is built on the reader's decision to make a meaning of the participants' stories and connect them to his/her own experience.

As this is qualitative research, data collection may present problems. Participants during the interview, for example, experienced unexpected emotional difficulty, or difficulty talking about personal details with the researcher, who is an "outsider." Ensuring privacy of the data can be challenging, too. Sometimes, even when the participants are not identified, some clues can make it possible to identify their identities (Gall et al., 2010). The ethics of the researcher are fundamental to reflecting the participants' experience as it really is. Yin (2013) suggested strategies to enhance subjectivity when collecting data such as: asking good questions that lead to rich and relevant conversation, reviewing the evidence quickly after collecting the data to decide the need for additional information, being a good listener not only for verbal context but also for what is between the lines, staying adaptive and prepared to face any changes in the study procedure, and avoiding bias when recording data. In general, Gall et al. (2010) clarified four ethics to be considered when dealing with data: utilitarian ethics to measure the consequences of data on the participants, deontological ethics to identify the absolute values of the researcher (e.g., justice and respect), relational ethics to measure the caring attitude for others, and ecological ethics to manage considerations about the culture and

the society of the participants. Merriam (2009) also addressed that the work of case study researchers should reflect their training, experience, and personal ethics. Finally, peer review will also help to judge my interpretation of the data (Gall et al., 2007). During my study, I kept these ethical issues in mind not only because of my personal ethics as a Muslim, but also because of my ethics as an educational scholar who respects integrity, knowledge, and the value of the human experience. I have been guided not only by my passion for working with and for children as a researcher, but also by my nine years of experience working with kindergarten children. My work history has provided me with the knowledge, experience, capability, and confidence to respect children's needs and emotions, and to consider children's developmental characteristics and human rights.

As for collecting data, I collected, recorded, and analyzed the data from participants based on a procedure including the method of data collection and the individual purpose of each method. Matrix of data procedure is illustrated in table 6.

Table 6

*Matrix of Data Procedure*

The Method	Purpose of the method	Recording of Data	Participants	Analysis
Interview	To explore how mothers, help their children in cultural adaptation. To discuss the children's experience of cultural adaptation (e.g., children's relationships, attitude toward school and family, values, traditions).	Audio recorded, notes, taped and transcribed	4 Saudi mothers	Coding then creating themes and categories
Interview	To allow the children to identify themselves and talk about their school, friends, family, and things they like and dislike in KSA and the United States.	Audio recorded, notes, taped and transcribed	4 Saudi children from KG-5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Coding then creating themes and categories
Photo-elicitation	To encourage and motivate the children to recall and discuss stories and people related to their experiences.	Audio recorded, notes, taped and transcribed	4 Saudi children	Coding then creating themes and categories
A guided interview via email	To provide information about their role in adaptation of the children and the children's attitude, behavior, relationships, and adaptation in the school.	Written and sent by email	4 home room teachers	Coding then creating themes and categories



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the experience of Saudi young children aged (7-10) years studying in American schools. Perspectives of the children, their parents and the teachers are investigated. Children participants are Saudis who have spent two years or more of their childhood in the United States with their parents, who either one or both are pursuing their studying in American institutions. Parents and teachers of Saudi children also shared their experiences in helping these children to adopt. The researcher pursues to answer four questions: (1) What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northeast Ohio elementary school, particularly for cultural adaptation? (2) How do Saudi third culture kids develop their cultural identity? (3) What is the parent's role in their Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation? (4) What is the teacher's role in Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation?

To answer the above questions, the researcher adapted a phenomenology case study approach to find, in more depth, how Saudi children go through the experience of growing between different cultures. Under this methodological scope, the researcher endeavored to reflect the uniqueness of each case showing how each child live such an experience along with the roles of social agents as parents and teachers.

Based on the interviews with the children, along with the use of photo elicitation and drawings, different themes emerged to answer the prior questions. Data from parents

was recruited through a questionnaire and face to face interview. Qualitative methodology extracted answers from teachers over guided interviews, which were sent and received via email. For validity purposes, quotations were written as they were said by the participants during the interviews and they were not corrected grammatically. Regarding the pictures of the children that they discuss during the photo elicitation, parents did not give a permission to show the pictures in the research. The number of the participating children was little and the identities of the children might be easily recognized through the pictures. However, the drawings of the children are included within the findings.

Data was initially analyzed by coding to generate categories and main topics, and to create themes. Each theme was represented an answer for each question. Each case was analyzed individually to create different or similar themes. The analysis was carried out in two stages. Stage one included the analysis of each case individually. The second stage included a cross analysis among all the cases to demonstrate the similar and different findings and to identify the outcome of the data. The analysis of each case was intended to answer each of the first three questions in sequence. However, the fourth question was answered and integrated to present the three cases together.

When reading through this chapter it will be noticed the following: I will demonstrate the findings of question one, two, and three for each case aside. In the other words, I will demonstrate the lived experience of each child and how this child develop his/her cultural identity along with the answer of third question which is about the role of the parent in cultural adaptation. In respect to findings of fourth question which is about the teachers' role in cultural adaptation of each child, this discussion will be

demonstrated in a last separated and general section. The answer of question four is not necessarily focuses on the experience of each teachers with each child alone. This is intended because based on the answers of the interviews, teachers adapt general practices that serve all children regardless their cultural backgrounds to adapt and success, and they were not in need to include special practices to help Saudi children in specific to adapt. Therefore, I found it more informative to discuss the findings of the three teachers to include the three children. The answer of question four will be discussed under the teachers' perspectives and their general practices of teaching for Saudi and international students, and their reality in the classrooms. The organization of the findings of the questions for the three cases is demonstrated in figure 4 below.

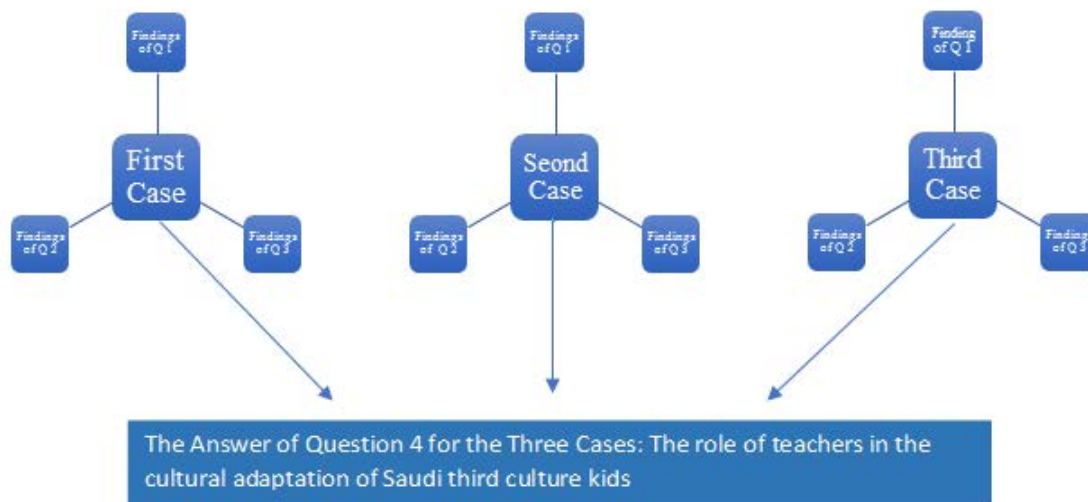


Figure 4. Organization of the Manuscript of Chapter 4

#### Procedure of Finding Setting and Participants

After my proposal defense in April 2016, I started the process of IRB. After getting the approval in June 2016, I contacted a principle of an elementary school that

met the research's criteria. Although she had given me a verbal agreement in the first place, the superintendent did not approve conducting studies in that school at that time. Therefore, I personally visited five more elementary schools and only one school granted me the approval to conduct the research on their community.

Unfortunately, the process of IRB and finding a school was done in the Summer of 2016, so I could not start recruiting the participants then. In September 2016, I started contacting the participants, getting the consent forms signed, and collecting data. By the end of October 2016, I completed interviewing the participants.

### Setting

In this research, three students and their teachers were chosen from an elementary school located in Northeast Ohio Elementary School. The chosen school has a considerable number of Saudi students since it is located in a university town. The participants are children from second, third, and fifth grade. Interviews were conducted with parents in Kent library while children were interviewed in their homes. I met with the teachers twice. The first time was to explain the research purpose and to get the consent forms signed, while the second meeting was to thank them and to give them the appreciation gifts after completing their questionnaires via emails.

### Biography of Participating Children and Parents

After having a list of Saudi children who met the criteria of the study (age, years of stay in the US, ability to communicate in English), teachers were then chosen. Four teachers were willing to participate. The researcher provided the teachers with the email context so they can send it to the parents. Parents would re-send their agreement and start communicating with me if they were willing to participate. It was very difficult to find

four participants at the beginning because there were cases in which either the child or the parent would not be willing to participate for different reasons. The researcher had to exclude one of the teachers who already assigned the consent form because her student and his family were not willing to participate. After two weeks, one of the parents contacted me and was more than glad to participate. She was informed about the research by one of the participants' parents. Then, the researcher contacted his teacher and she agreed to participate. Participants' profiles are provided in table 7. Names of the participants are pseudonyms.

Table 7

*Summary of Saudi Children Participants*

Children	Age	Gender	School Grade	Place of Origin**	Years in the US	Schools Attended	Educational Status for Fathers	Current Educational Status for Mothers
Sara	10	Female	5 <sup>th</sup>	Jeddah	2	2	Bachelor	Doctoral student
Sami	8	Male	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Tabuk	4	1	Bachelor	Doctoral student
Ali	7	Male	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Abha	3	2	Master	Bachelor

*Note.*

\*\* Place of origin refers to the city in Saudi Arabia where the participants come from

### Biography of Participating Teachers

Sami's teacher is a teacher of third grade and works in Kent City Schools. In 2016, she continues her third year teaching third grade in a school with large number of ESL students, specifically Arabic students. For her 22 years as a fourth-grade teacher, she

had no significant diverse body in a prior school. She only had one Arab family and one ESL student from Senegal.

Sara's teacher is her fifth grade teacher. The teacher has been teaching for sixteenth years, with this being her fifteenth at Sara's school. She has taught a wide variety of grades, including preschool, kindergarten, first, fourth, and fifth. The teacher did not mention any information about her experience of teaching international students through her working as a teacher.

Ali's teacher was born in Wayne New Jersey. She went to school in Elmira New York where she did her student teaching. She taught in a very inner city district with many low income students when she was there. She taught Kindergarten for 2 years in New Jersey. She moved to Ohio, and she taught kindergarten for 2 years in Cleveland heights. This is her 15<sup>th</sup> year teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in Kent Ohio. She has taught many children from several countries since she is so close to Kent State University.

Two of the teachers participating in this research have experienced working with international students over the world despite that they taught Saudi students only when teaching in Kent City Schools. After providing a brief description about each teacher, the role of these teachers in helping Saudi children to adapt is discussed. Moreover, the researcher found it critical to demonstrate their perspectives toward the experience of TCK in general and Saudi TCK in particular. Such perspectives will affect their attitude and their pedagogy in the classrooms and will impact their acculturation with their students.

## Interviewing and Self-Reflection

Compared to the first and second chapters of my research, I believed that collecting data would be the easiest part of my dissertation, but it was not. In the first place, it was not easy to have an access to a school. For an unknown reason, I was not given an approval to conduct my study. I visited more than five schools in order to get approved. After a long journey and a long time, I found the school that I collected data from. Fortunately, I found a very cooperative team of a principal and teachers who were willing to help and support. Therefore, it was very easy to find four teachers to participate. However, reaching the mothers who were willing to participate was a challenge. The teachers made efforts to communicate with the mothers who met the search's requirements, but it was hard and time consuming. Finding participants was a challenge because: (1) there was a limited number of children who have spent two or more years in the US, (2) the mothers were students and too busy to participate, (3) the child was not willing to participate, (4) and some of the mothers could not communicate well in English. In fact, it was difficult to find more than three groups to represent three cases.

Interviewing was another unique experience. With mothers, I felt more connected. I also felt that the mothers themselves felt comfortable with me and were opened to share freely their perspectives and stories. During the first interview, I found myself talking more than listening. Therefore, in the following interviews, I focused on listening.

Interviewing children, on the other hand, was more challenging than interviewing mothers. Sometimes, the child would only give very limited data about a topic even when I introduce the question in different ways. However, hearing children's voices was an

interesting experience. Children, in general, express their feelings and perspectives in unique approaches that differ from adults' points of view. As TCKs, Saudi children added a new perspective during the interviews for they included stories and views to describe their success, confusion, sadness, wonder, and all their feelings and stories that reflected their cultural adaptation experience. Photo elicitation on the other hand, did not provide me with rich data as expected. Interestingly, children responded to my photos more than their photos. They revealed data when commenting on my photos and asked me about the people in the photos.

#### First Case: Sami

*“Life is Too Tough without Daddy!”*

#### The Lived Experience of Sami as a Saudi TCK in Cultural Adaptation

Sami is 8 years old. He was born in Saudi Arabia in the city of Madinah. Sami's family came from Saudi Arabia in April 2012. At that time, Sami was nearly 3,5 years when he started his day care in the US. Sami's mother started her ELI program, then her master program and graduated in Christmas 2015. She then started her PhD program at the same university. Sami's mother is originally from Madinah in Saudi Arabia, but she moved to Tabuk where Sami was born and where he spent nearly two years, but he did not settle there. Sami and his family had to spend their vacations in Madinah, the home city of his grandma, so he only went to daycare in Tabuk. Sami had spent the first three years of his childhood in Saudi Arabia when he moved to the States and enrolled in a preschool and then a kindergarten there.

Sami's father first came with his family to the US. However, in February 2015, his father had to go back for his work in Saudi Arabia. During summer, Sami and his



parents used to go back for vacation and stay in Tabuk. However, more recently, and because the father is already in Saudi Arabia, they would go and meet him in Madina. Last Christmas, Sami's father visited his family only for two weeks and went back home.

The father has been working in Saudi military and had to go back to his work in Saudi Arabia due to the recent war taking place there. Now, Sami lives in the US with his mother and a sibling. Regarding schools, Sami has no consistent mobility because he has been studying in the same school for three years now. Sami seems to be a happy, confident child who is eager to learn. Now, he is in his third grade.

During the first meeting with Sami, he was playing in their complex playground with his mother. When Sami's mother introduced me to him, he was excited and willing to communicate with me and immediately signed the assent form. I had a short conversation with his mother to schedule time for the next interview. After watching him playing in the playground for 15 minutes, I invited him to watch some of my photos. We sat next to each other facing his mother while she was texting on her cellphone. He asked me to show him my photos. I explained briefly that he should choose between taking photos of things he would like to tell me about during the next meeting, or bringing photos he already has. I showed him my photos. By the time, the child started to comment and ask me about the names and places in my photos. When I showed Sami a photo of my family members standing next to each other, he smiled and commented, "Beautiful! Everybody in the family and everybody is kind of hugging." From the first moment you meet Sami, you can tell that he is a happy child and willing to communicate. When I asked him if he was willing to take a short break during the interview, he said "no I am not tired, I am glad to be here."

Family relationships/ loss and grief.

Due to his father's absence, Sami has been recently closer to his mother. In that regard, his mother expressed how much he became attached to her by saying, "He sleeps next to me, he walks at night from his bed and comes to sleep next to me. He has this emotional side." In respect to living away from home and staying in the US, I asked Sami whether it is important for his mother to study in the US., and he responded, "Not kind of, because we have everything in Saudi Arabia. NOPE, NOPE, she learns a different language, in Saudi Arabia is kind of small buildings, and they only have one classroom."

During the first meeting with the child and when he commented on one of my photos, in which I was sitting alone in a café thinking about my family, Sami replied, "Life is too tough without daddy! He is in Tabuk in the army and I missed him a lot." Although Sami seemed happy and comfortable, one can tell that he misses his father alot. Many times Sami has mentioned how much he loves his father and he really wants to be with him. When Sami started showing his own pictures, he commented:

This is my dad, he is in the army in Tabuk, every Christmas he comes to us. Many times he come to Madinah to visit..... last moment I kissed him, no the last moment we were entering the border, then I felt sad (looking down sadly)... I feel sad because I do not see him A LOT.

He described how he felt the last time when he was with his father. This sensitivity toward the absence of his father was described by Sami's mother saying:

I feel like he feels about his dad's absence and he is not with him. When we were there in Saudi Arabia, he expresses his feeling to his dad, talks with him a lot by facetime, he is more... you know. I have two kids, and Sami is the youngest. His sister now is in Middle school sixth grade, but she... (laughing) oh my sweetheart, but she does not show her feelings as same as Sami.

Since Sami expressed his emotions, his mother described his feeling of loss and consistent need to be with his family in Saudi Arabia. The circle of losing and missing is linked to his father and other family members in Saudi Arabia. Sami's mother said:

In Eid, when he called my family there in Saudi Arabia, he told his grandma "I wish if I were with you to go to *Aid Al Adha* prayer". In *Aid* there is details, moments. He is willing to be with them and share them. He feels like it is better to spend these moments with them. That way his personality is so sensitive.

Although he is happy, Sami demonstrated his feelings about his family back home from time to time. However, what makes the feeling of loss more complex is the kind of work his father's does here. Going back home for a war is expected to be hard for a child of his age. When I asked his mother, what did Sami say about this? She replied:

Of course, in the beginning I did not tell him that his dad left because there was a war in Saudi Arabia. Once, he heard his sister talking about that, he started to cry "oh there is a war!", and he started his imageries, you know, he has imagination.

Sami misses his home and the people he left there. Some special moments exaggerate his need to his father and family. When I asked him if he prefers to stay in the US or goes back to Saudi Arabia, he said "Saudi Arabia, because I want to see dad everyday". It is during some holidays when Sami shows his feeling of grief. Sami's mother described in tears how such feelings have been affecting her child:

So I feel that he is really missing his dad the most (*tears*). In our daily life, he remembers details about him, for example if we were in a restaurant, his dad's t-shirt would be with him always. Sometimes, even when you do things with him, it is not as when his dad does it with him. When we went to *Aid Al Adha* prayer, he said "if dad was here I would join him to pray with men". So if his dad was with him, that would be better for him.

When Sami showed me his grandparent's photo, he commented, "this is my grandpa, when people attacked *AlKaaba*, he rescued *Alkaaba*! .....I feel happy because he is okay and nothing happened to him." It seems like Sami was relieved because his

grandparent, who worked in the army in the past, returned safe, so his father should be okay as well. However, happy moments with loved ones in Saudi Arabia occupy Sami's mind. When I asked him to prepare his photos, he said, "have one already, I have a picture about the person I like. It is my grandma; we were on the roof having our breakfast! (Laughing)."

Some of Sami's fears have been relieved because he sees his father during summer. Although Sami as a child is sensitive, he seems happy and confident. Sami regulates his loss and relieves his fears by adopting positive attitude and good expectations. He is conscious that even if his father is not here, they are going to meet during summer.

Reentry and presentation of Saudi Arabia.

Sami is aware that staying in the US is temporal saying, "when I become in fifth grade we will leave and never come back till my mom finish her PhD." He wants to return back to stay with his father and share his family the happy moments. However, when I asked him about Saudi Arabia, Sami showed a passive perspective about schools there:

No but my mom told me about it. She says there is no recess, it is all work and it is not that much fun and people, and the only fun girls only like draw and boys only play soccer and that's all..... I feel bad about them because they do not have recess they only have like 10 minutes of lunch.

When I asked him how he feels about returning back to Saudi Arabia, he replied, "Kind of happy, kind of sad... I am sad because I miss my family. I happy. Here is a lot of fun activities, Zip city, Chucky cheese, but I am sad because I cannot see my family."

School and presentation of the US.

Some factors impacted the lived experience of this child as an international student in the school. According to the mother, the music teacher, for example, shows her appreciation and interaction with the children by educating herself about Arabic culture and Islamic holidays. The mother witnessed:

The holidays, you know it is okay for them he wants to be absent and they told him it is okay to be absent even the music teacher, I like this woman! ... Yaa and the last year, he was absent because of *Aid Aladha*, she asked him about that and she like, when is the next holiday? Religion holiday? I want to celebrate it, ..., it is like she will appreciate it because of the kids that they are Muslims. In the music class, that was last year in my daughter in fifth grade, she told them to bring their favorite song in their language. And they do not want them to feel different, so every international kid: Chinese, or from Korea, she is like wants them to be proud of their music culture.

Within the lived experience of Sami, many factors have influenced his life as a third culture kid. Interaction between home and school has been described by Sami's mother and his teacher in different ways. In many occasions the parent of Sami may visit the school and talk to the teachers. Sami feels so good about that and describes how he feels when his parents visit him at school: "Very very very very very very very happy!." Sami's mother asserted that communicating with the teachers in the school is not difficult, describing the teachers as "open and understanding". For example, she added:

In second grade Sami in the beginning of the year he become so shy even with eye contact with his teacher. I concern to tell her in first grade and in second grade, but in third grade I did not. I told her, he is not usually like this only during the first days, so they understand that. He examines the teacher and then engage. She was very understanding, so she gave him his time and she listens to him well and gives him his time to express his ideas and talk..... American teachers know how to react. They do not get nervous easily, they know how to deal with kids...

The teacher asserted the importance of the cooperation of parents in general and communicating with understandable parents. In regard to her communication with Sami's

parents, she said, “As with ALL students, having parents who value education makes a difference. If we can work together, it enhances the experience and learning”. When I asked the teacher about Sami as a Saudi child, she responded about all her Saudi students saying “I adore them, they work hard in spite of the language barrier. They (and their families) seem to value education and respect teachers”. In Sami’s case, both the teacher and the mother have good perceptions toward each other in regard to interaction, learning, and educating children.

The child showed involvement in various school activities that affected his adaptation. When I asked him what he loves the most about school, he said “PE, Gym! We play a lot of games, new games”.

Sami’s mother believes that American schools are good environments for Saudi children learning and she mentioned many examples of the things offered for children:

How do they deal with the religious day when they are absent, how they accept that, the first year that they do not know English “you do not have to do homework or everything, the first priority is learning and you can do it.” It is not that a hard thing and I know you, they know how to encourage kids, this I think is amazing here.

The teacher also clarified how the school supports the needs of Muslim children saying, “I believe our school offers lunch choices that are acceptable to Arabic families. Muslim holidays are acceptable reasons for absence from school but are not necessarily addressed in class.”

Both mother and teacher found that school is sensitive to Muslim Arabic needs. The cultural respect of the school is demonstrated by showing understanding and patience. School often excuse Muslim children to be absent during their religious

holidays, appreciate their culture, and offer interesting activities to engage all children and enhance learning.

Peer relationships.

Regarding friendship, Sami has American and Saudi friends. However, he interacts more with Saudi children, who are in the US, and American children more than Saudi children in Saudi Arabia. Back home, he would communicate with proper children with limited interaction. Sami's mother asserted that her son makes friends quickly adding:

There, in Saudi Arabia no, he has specific children who likes to be his friends, which is different than here. Here, he can play with anyone meet him, it is natural. However, Sultan likes to play outside everyday with our neighbors of course between Saudis or Americans.

It seems that Sami enjoys friendships from both cultures. However, the level of friendship in Saudi Arabia is kind of limited and selective unlike in the US. To describe how the child usually interacts with peers at school, the teacher clarified, "He/she interacts with other students at recess, easily finds groups or partners during class, and often takes charge within the group. He/she is very confident."

Another relevant aspect is how this child negotiate his identity to build friendships and to create successful relationships with peers from both cultures. He told me confidently how an international child makes a friend by saying happily "Try to have fun with them... he can learn English and speak with them, can I be your friend and that's all!" In this regard, the child seemed confidence about his interaction in the school. The teacher also confirmed "My student gets along well with the American students".

Feeling offended.

In relationship to the fitting issue, language plays a role in what impacts the communication of the child in Saudi Arabia. The child reported how some people there make “fun” of his language. When he showed me his photo in Madinah, he commented sadly that he feels sad because:

They laugh on my English language there in Madinah, they told me come on talk in English, they told me speak in Arabic, speak in English, and he added that they commented “he does not know anything!”.

When I asked the child about his feelings in his American school and if he has ever felt mad at school, he replied “it never happened”. However, he added more information about having mean or annoying situations at school, he whispered saying:

Sami: Yup two of them. Should I tell you their names?

The researcher: Yes, you can but it is gonna be a secret, nobody will know about their names. I will not even write their real names on the paper, I will change the names.

Sami: Someone his name is Jack, he screams in my face, he says you are weird and he beats me.

The researcher: He is mean only with you or with other kids too?

Sami: With all.

The researcher: Why?

Sami: I do not know. He always put his butt in my face.

The researcher: This is silly.

Sami: NO, he always beat people and scream on them. He tells others shut up and this and that.

The researcher: Did you ever told the teacher about him? What did she say?

Sami: She told me to talk with him and he spit his gum on somebody.

The researcher: Why he did tell you that you are weird?

Sami: (Silence)

The researcher: Who are the other kids who usually annoy them?

Sami: I do not know.

My dialogue with the child showed that he got bothered or annoyed by another kid in the class. Nothing in the conversation indicated clearly if the child was bullied or offended because of his cultural identity. However, it might be informative to add that the



child was hesitant to report such an incident or to mention that child's name. When I asked him about the reason why he called him "weird", he was silent and did not answer my question. No information was provided from his teacher or his mother about such a story.

#### Presentation of the third culture

##### Fitting (Alienation).

While Sami lives different experiences that might be interesting to share in Saudi Arabia and in the US, he is not willing to share cultures. When he is in Saudi Arabia, Sami evade speaking in English or talking about his life in America or his American school or even talking about his friends. He also avoids speaking about his original culture in the US. Sami does not like to tell stories or events about Saudi Arabia including Islamic holidays. When I asked the child if he has ever shared something about his culture in his American school, he said, "I did not, but my teacher wants me to teach her Arabic." When asking him if he likes sharing Arabic food or telling his friends in the school about Saudi Arabia, he denied that, saying that these events are, "It is kind of fun and that's all." Both the mother and the teacher asserted that the child avoid mixing between two cultures. The teacher said:

My student has not talked about Saudi Arabia at all in the 40+ days I have known him/her. I expressed an interest in learning a few Arabic words or phrases but was told "no", that he/she did not want to teach me any. This child has never shared any memories or feelings about his/her family or Saudi Arabia. He seems to not want to talk about it.

Also, the mother explained that Sami tries to separate both cultures by avoiding sharing information about any of them. She inferred that he would prefer to do what the majority do, what is acceptable and a common attitude in both cultures. She denoted:

He always tries to separate himself here and there...he absolutely tries to separate between the two cultures. He does not want to share both cultures in the same time. He does not want to interfere to two cultures there. When he is here, he does not want to talk about Saudi Arabia what they are doing there, even if someone asks him he just gives a short answer that's it, he does not want to talk about that. When we are there, no he is proud of that he wants to go with his dad to pray, he wants to wear *Thop* "a traditional costume for Saudi men" a lot.

However, Sami's function successfully in both cultures. According to his mother, he communicates more effectively in the US, but he also interacts well in Saudi Arabia, even though if it is only with specific children. The mother inferred that he endeavors to fit in within both cultures. He wouldn't like to be considered as an outsider in both cultures, so his way to achieve that is by doing what people in each culture do. To describe Sami's interaction in both cultures, his mother added:

Here wants to be like them and there he wants to be like them. He wants to fit; he wants to fit in this group. Whatever they want him to do he will do it even their style of playing, when playing soccer rough playing he wants to play like them.

Growth of self.

Although the impact of the father's absence, Sami faced his feeling of loss and missing by showing care and empathy. As a male, he would behave as a keeper for his family here in the US. When I asked his mother if his behavior has changed after his father's absence, she said: "He is being more overwhelmed by things. For example, if it is raining, snowing... he thinks about me what to do, things like these. On the contrary, he sometimes says I am your man mom".

On the other hand, Sami has been growing. After living here and studying in the US, he has learned how to express his needs, regulate himself, and do things with his best. Sami's mother explained to me how his personality has changed positively. He shows good responding, more responsibility, and more mature behaviors. The mother

believed that such changes are not necessarily because he is growing up, but because he has been influenced by the experience of learning in his school in the US. She clarified, “Also Sami when he wants to do something, he wants me to give him enough time. If I hugged him, he wants me to mean it, even when I teach him, even if I tell him a story.” When I asked her if this is related to his nature in general, she added, “I think he acquires this here, yes they teach him how to be more quiet and how to count your steps and when do something, you should mean it, you should think about it, you should give it its time to do it.” On the other hand, Sami’s mother believed that growing up away from the influence of family there in Saudi Arabia helped the child to be independent and responsible. She resonated these changes saying:

I think because he is growing up away than other children. You know at Saudi Arabia, family share your raising, the street, the school, everything shares you how to raise your kids, here he is more away from them, and the people that they surrounding him are good.... Whenever I try to working something on his personality, I see the results on his personality.

The mother indicated that growing of Sami’s personality is affected by positive learning in his American school, and being far away from the collectivism of Saudi Arabia’s culture. She feels that she can regulate her child more effectively than in Saudi Arabia. Sami’s teacher also asserted that his student likes to follow class rules, eager to help, and would like to show good attitude and responsibility. The teacher clarified: “My student is confident and happy. He/she has many friends and tends to be a leader in the classroom”.

## Developing Cultural Identity of Sami

Awareness and identification.

During the interview, Sami started to show his photos. He showed me a photo of him with his family in *Mecca*. He described, “this is *Mecca!* I have been one time and touched the *Kaaba*.” When I asked him about *Mecca* (*Mecca is regarded as the holiest city in the religion of Islam and a pilgrimage to it is known as the Hajj which is obligatory for all able Muslims*), Sami replied, “*Mecca, Allah* (the name of God), lives in it, we go to him to worship him, but we did not go to *Hajj* yet and then comes *Eid*.” What does *Hajj* mean? He replied, “It means aaa actually I do not know, when we go to worship Allah.” The child also identified that “*Kabba* is the home of God and people go around it to make....” *Tawaf*? “Yes.” That it is very beautiful, one American dollar equals four riyal in Saudi Arabia and it is beautiful there and there is trash everywhere in the street that’s all.

At home, Sami talked about Islam and practiced what was convenient for his age, but he would not practice in other places except Islamic school. The mother said, “He practices only when he at home or in Arabic school, at these places he acted like a Muslim.” Sami’s identified an aspect for someone to be a Muslim, so when I asked him what should he do to be a Muslim? He replied, “Worship Allah.” Although Sami was familiar with many American holidays, he acclaimed that he would not celebrate them. When I asked him why? He said, “I do not know.” When I asked him to think, he said, “Okay! Because it is not our celebration.”

Sami believed that he is Arab and American. The child identified himself based on two aspects, religion and language. According to Sami, he is Muslim and Arab, but

also an American because he can speak English. I asked him if studying in American schools makes some one, like his mother, an American, he replied, “Yaa... , Because she studied in America 4 years.” However, when I asked him on how someone can be a Muslim, he explained, “They go to Saudi Arabia and Mecca and then they come to here and learn English.” I continued asking him, can someone coming from another country be American? How? He said, “Ya, they have to come to America and like start learn English and they will become American.” For Sami, Being Muslim requires going to Mecca which is the holiest spot for Muslims, but to be an American you should learn English.

Sami recognized that he is a Muslim coming from Saudi Arabia, saying “I am from Al Madinah.” However, when we continued our talk about language, he clarified, “I am half Saudi and half American... because I am spending four years here and I know almost every, a lot of words, and I can talk and it took me like a week to learn English that’s all.” Sami believed that someone can be a Muslim only by going to Mecca and being born in Saudi Arabia, saying “You go to Mecca to be a Muslim and be born in Saudi Arabia.” I replied, but some people were born here and they are still Muslims, he said, “So because they go to Makkah, this is the only way.”

Multiple identities.

Regarding the experience of studying the US, I asked Sami about his feeling, he replied, “Happy because I know two languages.” Sami has multiple friendships with Arab and American children. When I asked him about holidays, he mentioned both Islamic holidays, saying, “*Eid* and *Eid Al Adha* and *Al haj*.” And adding American holidays too, “Amm, President day, Halloween, Christmas.” Furthermore, the child believed that if

someone wants to be happy at school, he should improve his English language, saying, “Try to read books listen to books so he can understand the words.” Sami’s mother also indicated to her son’s ability to accept differences, saying, “About American, whatever they do he accepted because maybe this is about the way they live. Even sometimes he does not question it.” According to Sami’s teacher, “My student gets along well with the American students. He/she seems very acclimated to our school and culture.” Regarding Saudi Arabia, when I asked him about his feeling for studying in Saudi Arabia, he said, “I am gonna be so happy because I am gonna be with my family for the rest of my life, until I go to college. I will go to school there to British school my auntie, her homework is English, so she knows a lot a lot of English.”

On the other hand, when Sami drew his picture, he drew himself as an adult living between his job as a soccer player and a father living with his family in Madinah, the place where he was born.

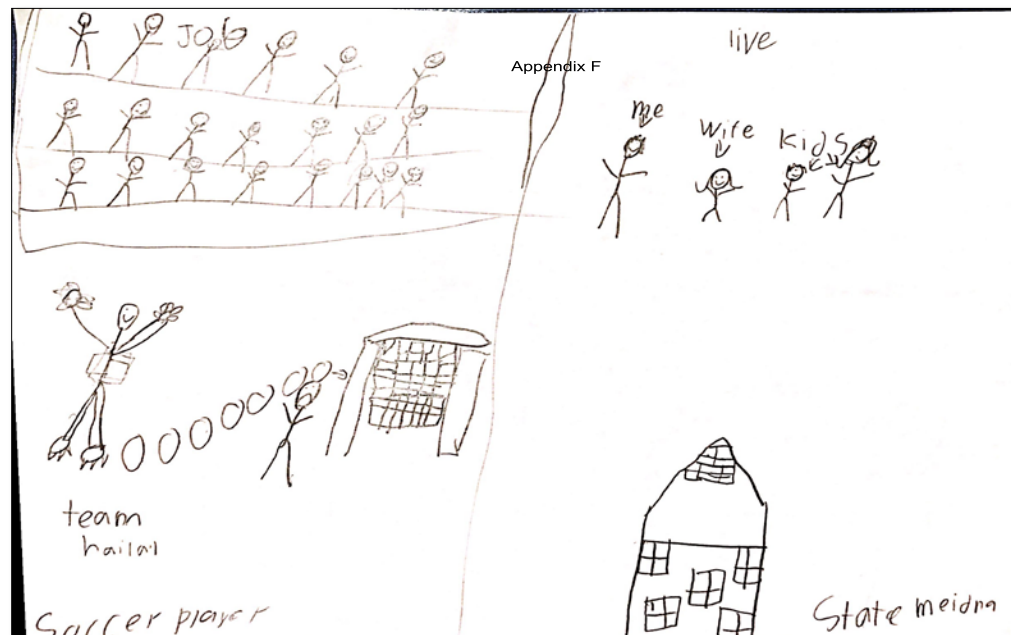


figure 5. Drawing of Sami

Cultural bridge.

Since Sami is bilingual, he can interact in English and Arabic. This language skill helped Sami facilitate a communication between two cultural parties and bridge a cultural interaction. Within our speaking about the interaction of his mother and teacher, Sami clarified how he may help his mother as a translator:

Sometimes she asks us to help in English because me and my sister kind to know more than her. Sometimes she cannot read. No she can read all of them but sometimes she does not know what they mean, so me and my sister tell her what it means.

Sami does not only help as a translator, but he would also facilitate cultural practices and help teaching some religious practices to other Muslim children. Sami's mother clarified how much her child is willing to help:

especially if the kid does not know English..., praying purifying, like last time I will show you, like his friend, the Kuwaiti one he does not know how to do *wodoa* "purifying" and he told him how to do that, he be the *Imam*.

The teacher also recounted Sami's attitude toward Saudi friends, that indicates his role as a cultural bridge:

He has had opportunities to intervene when another Saudi child is injured or upset. For example, a younger Saudi child had fallen on the playground and my student eagerly helped him, with his arm around his shoulder in a comforting way, to the clinic for treatment. My student also reported an incident that happened on the bus where another Saudi student was mistreated by an American same-age peer. He/she reported the incident to the bus driver and principal, helping to translate the events for the other student.

The child may be feel responsible to help other Saudis at school either as an interpreter or a supporter. The child shows his empathy to connect his Saudi friends to express their needs.

## Role of Sami's Mother in Cultural Adaptation

### Negotiation.

As a mother of a third culture kid, Sami's mother pursues to explain things out. Through her daily interaction with her child, she negotiates her child by showing the positive side helping him to manage his feelings and understand his needs. For example, when Sami feel sad for missing his family and not spending holidays with them in Saudi Arabia, she told, "But when I talk to him, we have also here activities sometimes, we can be happy also here and they are not. This is the life and he understands that." Explaining cultural differences and potential confusion is inevitable. Once, Sami asked his mother if a male medical doctor can see a Muslim woman, she replied:

Yes, it is okay. When I delivered you, it was by a doctor he was a man so it is okay. If it is emergency it is okay, I always tell them all the time. Our religion is not something that difficult, there is excuses, I told them a lot of that because here they ask why this girl does not wear Hijab, why? They noticed these things here. Why she is a Muslim and she does not cover her hair Why? I tell them if there is a dangerous on the person it is give up something. Our religion does not harm anyone, so it is okay.

In relation to celebrating American holidays, Sami's mother is willing to explain and negotiate such cultural aspects helping him to adapt with, saying, " I told him we are okay with that but we did not believe in that or we did not practice that, but it is okay to celebrate with them and appreciate these days for them. It is okay to participate with them, there is no problem".

### Avoiding.

Sometimes, Sami's mother avoids explaining or clarifying. She just avoid bringing issues up. She considers her child's age, so because he is too young she does not want him to engage in a conflict or a confusion, saying, "I do not go far away of talking



about this stuff.” Therefore, she believes that her child might have not been affected by the experience of living as a Muslim in a different culture. In this regard, she said, “ I think he is too small to that, but I hope no. I do not know. His brain is clear at home, but he does not talk about that.” She sometimes avoids talking about things that might make him sad. When Sami’s’ mother tell him about his father who went back to go to war, she did not want to be completely clear, telling, “It is hard, sometimes you feel very sorry for him to be sad about things have not happen in the first place. He becomes anxious for nothing.”

Enhancing integration.

To help Sami adapt and live the experience of growing up smoothly, Sami’s mother doesn’t mind her child to share with his American friends their holidays, enjoying and celebrating. She said, “I feel it is okay to share them and celebrate with them not as a religion part but as... they are his friends; he should share them celebrate them.”

Sami’s mother does not believe that sharing American culture may affect her child’s cultural identity, so she does not believe that, “He will be like them and he will believe like them no no. Even during Valentine time, I made gifts for his friends but I did not write happy valentine. I wrote I want to be your friend, thank you for the teacher.”

While she encourages her child to integrate, she is trying to help him balance cultural differences and engage with maintaining their cultural identity. She added, “I am not affecting my children’s state of mind and in the same way, it is okay I would let them participate and be happy at school and do not forget their culture and how they live.”

On the other hand, Sami’s mother does not mind her child’s integration because she wants him to practice his cultural practices with conviction. Sami’s mother justified,

“I am not that strict with (him) by the way they hate what they do and practice or just practice it at home and not practice it outside our home.”

The mother believes that her role for helping her child to achieve cultural adaptation is to explain and clarify things, saying, “To explain to him, some time if he has a conflict, for example, why they did that and why we did that. My role is to explain to him that to balance between these things.”

Sometimes, Sami’s mother finds it important to explain how aspects may differ from one culture to another, even in relation to simple daily aspects of communication. Regarding greeting people, she explained how American people might see it weird for men to greet each other by kissing, but it is acceptable behavior for Arabs. She said, “whatever people he say in the mosque, in our family it is okay to help someone, someone who shakes your hand when some kisses you it is okay, because this our *SALAM* this how we greeting.”

However, sometimes, Sami’s mother finds it sort of confusing to explain cultural differences to her son’s American friends or even to Sami that he should act differently in the US than in Saudi Arabia. She clarified, “How you explain to his friends it is okay in our culture to do that. And when you go to Saudi Arabia it is okay to kiss? Yaa, so it is hard in child age to let him how he can to differentiates.

Enhancing cultural identity.

Sami’s mother is looking forward enhancing her child’s identity and maintaining his personality. Sami tends to avoid mixing cultures by ignoring one while he is in the second. His mother does not feel comfortable with this, saying, “this is difficult for me

because for his personality, I do not want him to do that, I want him to be as him to be as Sami. I do not want him to change as to culture or to place he goes to.

She attempts to focus on her child's religious identity by helping him perform Islamic practices like praying. She believes that the most important aspect to help her child is by keeping his instinct clear and related to his identity as a Muslim. She asserted since her child is still too young, she does not want to put pressure on him, and wants him to do out of willingness and love, saying, "Because they do not hate these things and still it is not practicing every single prayer, he does not know *Tahyat (an action during praying)*, but Insha'Allah by the time it will happen. The most important thing is the outcome and the valid and right instinct and interest about this aspect, a mom will feel comfortable, thanks God."

Sami's mother endeavor to enroll her child in Islamic schools on Saturdays and take him to the mosque where he can communicate with Muslim community and learn Arabic language and Islam. Thus, to keep Arabic language as a fundamental aspect of cultural identity, the mother pursues to teach her child the Quran. Sami's mother is convinced that learning Quran enhances language skills of a child, by helping him speak Arabic fluently and improve his Arabic accent. Therefore, she strives to provide him with opportunity to learn Quran. In this regard, Sami's mother contravenes her Saudi friend, saying, "One of my friends told me you should show him (Sami) Arabic shows, no the thing that fix his tongue and correct his accent is Quran."

Self-efficacy as a parent.

What helps Sami's mother impact her child during this journey is her beliefs about herself as a mother. When I asked her if she has ever felt that she failed to deal with

her child regarding cultural differences between school and home, she responded, “I never felt that. I am not the person that I am gonna give up no even with what it will happen, I hope. I will try!” Her experience has enhanced her self-esteem and believing in God, saying, “The lesson that I have learned, as much as you trust God, God will make it an easy mission for you. As much as you have fears and doubt you gonna face difficulties and barriers. Be strong, trustful and go ahead.”

#### Second Case: Sara

*“I wish Saudi Arabians got along with Americans. I heard that we are having war, I want that to stop and we get along and be friends.”*

#### The Lived Experience of Sara as Saudi TCK in Cultural Adaptation

Sara is 10 year old girl in her 5<sup>th</sup> grade. She studied in Saudi Arabia, Mecca until 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and moved to the US. She has been living in the US for almost 3 years. Firstly, she came from Saudi Arabia to the US with her parents and a sibling. Currently, she lives in the US with her mother, sibling, and her uncle. Sara’s father used to visit his family, sometimes, in the US, but not anymore.

Family relationships/ Anger.

Living in the US away from home attached to another circumstance within Sara’s experience. Sara’s went back home, leaving his family in the US. When I asked her about people who miss, she mentioned her grandma and auntie, but not her father. The impact of returning home is linked to a conflict that Sara’s family is going through. When asking about how does Sara relate to Saudi Arabia, her mother responded:

“Well it has been over a year since I was in Saudi Arabia, so she is pretty detached now. Okay Last time we were in Saudi Arabia that was Summer of 2015 last year and that time it was a bit a hectic time because I was going through a

separation, so if she does not speak much about Saudi Arabia it is understandable it is like a phase that she does not want to remember .... What she speaks about basically is my family, her granny, her aunties, that is what she speaks about she misses them that is the basic part that, but culture, no.

According to Sara's mother, having such a conflict in the relationship with her father impacted her life differently:

I think the situation is a little bit difficult, is the situation of her dad. I had an incident with her where I felt that she does not want to remember that time because it is related to her dad because she is afraid he will take her back to Saudi Arabia. And she cried at that time and (said) I do want to go back especially if it is through him. So I would say in her situation, it is a bit complex. It is not just the culture change. The whole thing that she has been through."

Sara is not willing to return home, not only because of a possible cultural challenge of reentry, but because returning back means reconnecting with her father.

Although Sara seldom talks about her father, she is offended by his abandon. When I asked her about people who she adores the most, Sara said:

I can choose between two people. God and mom, the most important people in my life.

Researcher: Why?

Sara: because my mom always helps us with our grade help us with everything.

R: What about your other family members? Like your brother, your dad, your uncle?

S: My brother is the second person in my life because he is always supports me.

R: How about your uncle and father?

S: My uncle I think he would be the fourth. So you first said is God. Your mom, your brother, your auntie.

S: I cannot really choose between my uncle, my auntie, and my grandma because they are really supportive.

R: And the last is your dad?

S: Silence... I am not sure; he might though be most last.

R: why?

S: Mom can I tell her why? (*mother replied, yes*)

S: Because he moved to Saudi Arabia and he met someone else.

R: So how do you feel about that?

S: Angry.

R: Why?

S: (Silence)...mmm and also yaa angry because amm he is my father and he spouse to be my father and he decide to go to Saudi Arabia and not staying with us in America.

Sara's mother explained how Sara shows her response to such a dilemma, saying:

I think that she is just pushing it to the back. She does not want to face it? There is another instance when it happened few months ago when she started crying that I do not wanna leave you, that does going to take us by force and she started but you have to bring the issue for her to respond, you have to mention her dad, you have to open these things, she would not open on her own. If she is may be expressing that in some levels but at least it is not stopping her from enjoying life.

Having family problems might not affect Sara's enjoying her life, at least apparently, but her fears of another loss increased. She becomes more attached to her mother after the loss of a relationship with his father. This gap of a broken relationship had to be filled with a stronger relation like her relation with her mother. Sara's mom noticed that:

The thing that I noticed after the issue with her dad's is increased fear. She starts to be so worried about me if I am late. Even when my mom was here. Like if I spend long hours in the university, she will start to going around the house and would not sleep. Call mom, I wanna be sure that she is Okay. She is coming back and she would call me. When I leave the house whether I leave her with her brother, even for a walk, sometimes I go for tem minutes and come back. She always has to hug me and kiss me and she is like I miss you already. So she is being more attached to me! So there is like this broken relation here, so she is building up the other one here. Now it is with my brother. She hugs him and kisses him when goes away to his friends and come back, if she is awake, she would hug him and kiss him...so I hoping that my brother filling this kind of gap what her father left.

As a child, Sara needs to grow up surrounded by relationships full of love, care, and support especially when living away from home. Therefore, she described her loved people by support and care. In this regard, she demonstrated her feelings about her family in Saudi Arabia:

My home is really big, and it also had a really big roof that I can ride my bike there and my grandma was living down the stairs and I can go to here when ever I want. I feel happy and I do not really think about it now (laughing).

She talked about memories and people she left back there, but she added that she felt happy not thinking about these memories now. Sara wouldn't talk about her father even when she showed her photos and talked about her family. One of the photos was in a restaurant in the US with her mother, brother, her auntie, and her grandma. When I commented that the whole family is here in the US! She replied, "Not the whole family, my auntie and my grandma are still in Saudi Arabia. This is my grandma, my uncle, me, my brother, and my auntie and my mom."

Reentry and presentation of Saudi Arabia.

When I started asking Sara about people in Saudi Arabia, Sara had a perspective toward people living there versus her perspective about American or other people living in the US:

Sara: I think sometimes people there, are mean. Okay. And I think they should change the rules about driving, and I also dislike that it is not really a free country.

Researcher: Why?

S: Because (silence) .... Ammm it is like I do not know how to explain it.

R: It is okay, you can say it in Arabic.

S: They are some rules that they want you to do but you do not really want do them...

Sometimes people like say bad words, and some goes to make some fun of something when driving.

R: And There is no good people there?

S: I think there is some good people.

R: Like who?

S: My friends back in Saudi Arabia.

S: I like people in America (laughing).

R: And people in Saudi Arabia?

S: Not really.

Sara ended this part of our conversation by repeating the same reasons that impacted her perspective about Saudis; because they are rude and say bad words when

driving. She also thought that coming to the US make people better than before, saying about people here and there, “A lot different!” she added, some people are mean in Saudi Arabia and when they came here in America, they be nice. When I asked her how does she know that? She said, “Because all my friends are nice and they sort times about what I wanna play and what they want to play.”

Regarding studying in the US, Sara believed that it is important for her mother to study here in the US. She reasoned that saying, “Because she already knows a lot of English and I want here to learn more so she can teach us.” When I replied that she can learn English in Saudi Arabia too, she answered, “She used to be an English teacher. It is better to live here in America.”

School and presentation of the US.

Sara as a third culture kid growing up between different cultures is exposed to many different aspects and ways of communication, learning, and expressing self.

Regarding her adaptation to such differences, Sara’s mother commented:

She is adapting the culture she is learning from the kids what to say and what not to say. I remember an incident that happens few days ago, she met her friends by chance and my brother was with me and he was like why you do not go and say hi and hug her like what we do in Saudi Arabia? She said, Yes, American just do that. They do not have to stop and talk and agrees and chalk hands, it is just hi and so she is adapting

The mother also explained how Sara’s way of interaction has changed referring to her experience in the US as a factor of this change. She discussed that:

Her interaction most of the time is in English even we try for sure her to speak Arabic at home. This one, two, the kind of interaction she has with her brother, she developed I would think a very American attitude. She would by the end of the day, sometime she would fight with him and told him like you do not give me quality time.



When I discussed with the mother whether this change is related to her exposure to different cultures, she asserted:

I would say the quality time thing, yes certainly American. She is becoming more confident and stronger I would think because she grows stronger at school, she learned how to navigate the school, how to make friends, and how to stop people from disturbing her or harassing her whatever as what she has suffered in the beginning, and she learned how to deal with her brother and how to stop him.

Sometimes, Sara speaks out about what she wants to be when she grows up, something that shows her inspiration about American celebrities. The mother acclaimed that she might face some challenge in that regard. Sara's mother told an example of a conversation between her and Sara:

One time she says like when I grow up I am going to be a Bob star and sing and be a singer, and I was like you cannot do that. And she like why why not? Because you are a Muslim and you cannot be going out, you know Bob stars have to wear short dresses, etcetera. And she said Okay I can be a singer at home through the YouTube and I could wear proper clothes, why not? And then later on she is like I am gonna be an actress when I go to high school because she is watching this show for Middle school and High school girls, I do not if it was a reality TV or a show. So she was like I am gonna be like them. And again, the same thing I told her you cannot be an actor because you are a Muslim and the dress code and all and etcetera. She was like but I could wear long sleeves, I can wear long...., there is nothing against that.

Sara is happy and adjusts to her school in the US. The mother mentioned many examples showing how American schools supported her child experience of adaptation. In her school, Sara enjoys having field trips, freedom of choosing her clothes every day, and involving a lot of activities as gardening, Choir, and Self Patrol. Sara's mother said, "...and she knows that she has more space to express herself and now she is taking Ballet classes, another reason and she knows when she go back, she will not be able to do all these stuff." According to Sara's mother, not only activities impact her child to adapt well, but also feeling

welcome and fitting. The mother explained in details how much school activities impact her child and affect her adaptation at the school environment. To describe this affect, the mother added:

She feels welcomed and she feels involved and especially this year. She is in so many different activities and yesterday, I had to pick her late because she was in the Safety Patrol and she was like “Oh boy! I love Safety Patrol! I love going around and shaking”, (smiling) she feels like confident, she has this confidence and I would not think that she has this space to express herself and being involved back home.

When I asked Sara if she ever felt mad, sad, or uncomfortable at school, she replied, “I do not think I did (laughing), no because I always a good kid,... nothing, ever.”

However, Sara encounters challenge of her academic performance and she seems uncomfortable about that. When I discussed with her how she feels when her mother visits her at school, she replied:

Sara: I would be happy, but if my mom does something embarrassing, I would be embarrassed.”

Researcher: What parents do to make their children embarrassed?

S: Like as are you doing okay and then you answered and say shout out.

R: Can you please explain it because I did not really understand.

S: Yaa because most of my teachers say that all you grade are private just for me to see not for others.

R: Even your mom?

S: No my mom can see it (laughing).

What I understood from Sara’s description that she might feel embarrassed if her mother discusses her grades with the teacher in front of others. In another part of our meeting, Sara told me she thinks that her grades are not good, and seemed disappointed. When I asked her if she feels happy about her grades, she was silent, looked to her mother, and then sadly said, “Kind of.” The teacher also added:

I have witnessed . . . ., disappointment when she has not done well on a vocabulary test, but this disappointment was observed non-verbally, as she did not say anything; I could tell by the way she looked at her test that she was disappointed.

On the other hand, challenge that Sara may face at school is supported by a considerate educational system for international students, as her mother asserted:

The system in general. I would think. She studied till second grade in Saudi Arabia and then they put her in third grade here. The thing which is very good is they assigned an ESL teacher to meet with her every month in a while. Couple days in a week. So it helped her with the language issue. Her grades is still turned now sometimes are not good as should because of the language barrier, and this what her teacher actually says. Although on the surface she is perfectly capable of speaking, full sentences, but I think the language is a part of Math, science, spelling, she has a problem with spelling. So she had some struggle with language. But the struggle significantly minimized through these classes.

The mother added another aspect of adaptation of her child, referring to the impact of the school system, saying:

The school is aware of that. I think even in the beginning they would, yea she used to, some of the tests she would take some of the tests because they know she is struggling with the language so it is not fair for her to talk these tests. So they would give her like extra activities while other students will take the tests.

Sara's teacher also demonstrates the school endeavors to help international students to succeed and adapt, saying:

On the other hand, Sara's mother interpreted that her daughter may not having hardship in adaptation as a Muslim studying in the US because American schools are religious free. As a result, there is no challenge to any religious identity, saying, "Ammm the good thing would I think at this level since she fifth grader yet, the school does not promote any religion, but she respects religions when she came with the candies for *Aid Aladha*, all her (*American*) friends were aware about that and they kept telling her "*Aid Mubarak, Aid Mubarak*" (*an Arabic phrase to congratulate others during Aid*), they know that, but if there is negativity it is not really show, I am just worry what they have now as a "crush", everyone has a crush at school and you these things that what worries me , but it is still not a huge thing at this age, may be latter I start worrying about that.

Peer relationships.

In the beginning, Sara struggled to build friendships in the American school, as she described. By the time, Sara created relationships at school with Saudis and American children. Sara described how did she feel:

In the first year I came, my friend Loci always had someone to play with and she never made time for me, so all I did go to recess and just lay up for lunch till after ten minutes we go. It was boring I think. Now I am happy because I have a lot of friends to play with and I know who to pick so I made time for each one.”

As Sara’s mother said, “It was difficult in the beginning, but I think she developed to the skill to handle Americans or Saudis especially since the Saudis that she knows have been here for a long time, so they are Americanized also.”

However, mostly, Sara preferred to interact more with Saudi children, as her mother explained:

... she would prefer Saudi so that she would relates to them in different levels. She will, I mean they are always have their sort of “secret language” and special time together because that is what was happening with our neighbors last year. They would meet at recess they would meet at home. Although they speak English, but there is a special kind of bonding. You call them third culture kids, so may be that the reason both of them are third culture kids so they have another additional common thing between them.

Recently, Sara barely has Saudi friends, and her mother clarified, “Yesterday I had a conversation with her about this and I was like why? And she said well, there is one Saudi so technically I do not have a choice.” On the other hand, when I asked the mother about her friendships in Saudi Arabia, she said:

she keeps in touch with my niece which is in Australia. So they speak on Skype. Okay and both of them speak English and both of them listen to English songs. So what you see them basically speaking English and playing together on Skype in English. Her cousins in Saudi Arabia ammm most of the interaction is through PS4. And not a huge interaction actually she does not feel a gap that she needs to fill out with them she already already has a lot of her life with her friends and her activities.

When I asked Sara about her friends in the US and how she makes friends in the end, she explained, “Because in first year I came here I did not know Loja, second year I was in the school and I knew Duaa. Duaa has a lot of friends, who become my friends.” Sara is planning to visit her American friends in their houses. I asked her about the sort of games that she is going to play with them, she smiled saying:

It depends on what we having may be playing day, games, monopoly, Uno, Tag, and my friend she wanted to teach me Gymnastic, my friend Linda will go to special walk to find special things in the wild. If I visited my friend Sali, we will practice Soccer. If we have sleepover, we are going to do bellows fight, tell scary stories, drink some hot chocolate in the winter.

Sara kept talking about her friendships while she was happy and confident. By asking her how might someone build a friendship? She explained:

First you find someone who like stuff you like, and then ammm talk with them, play with them sometimes, and you got to meet their friends and their friends will be your friends and keep of going, you will get 30 friends! (smiling). And I have 30 friends they all are really friends really sweet really kind.

Sara’s teacher described her personality in class and her attitude with friends, saying:

This student is very shy, so she really doesn’t express what she needs without being asked. I have not witnessed any conflicts, as she gets along very well with her peers. I have witnessed laughter and joy when observing her with her friends.

When I asked the teacher about her peer relationships and her interaction in the class, she told:

With her peers, this child plays very well and seems very happy-go-lucky. She maintains a positive attitude and serves as a quiet role model for her peers in terms of behavior. Her English is very clear, so communication is not an issue that I can see.

Since Sara has studied in both Saudi and American schools, I asked her about schools here and there, she preferred American school, saying:

School here because teachers are really nice and they always help you, but teachers in Saudi Arabia is really strict. Like maybe if you talked they may screamed at you and you get embarrassed and something like this.

Researcher: Did anyone scream on you there?

Sara: No.

R: So how do you know that?

S: Because there is that girl that none of the class likes her, she is really mean, really strict. She got in trouble one day, and I was like, I should not talk any more in the class.

Sara told me about one teacher in her first school in Saudi Arabia who liked to talk about:

S: My Math teacher she is skinny but strict.

R: Sometimes people even if they are strict, they are still nice.

S: I think that but I am not sure (Silence and thinking), No, only to adults might be nice, but for kids I do not think so.

Memories about school, teachers, and friends in Saudi Arabia were still remembered. Sara presented her perspective about Saudi and American schools based on her lived experience here and there.

Even the mother asserted that Sara wanted to stay in the US preferring American school, saying, “Okay, I would think she is not practically thrilled to return back, she actually prefers her. She understands that the school system here is more considered.”

Feeling offended.

Sara has expressed her feeling of satisfaction about school and described her happiness for having multiple friendships. However, I asked her if there are any people who are mean to her at school:

Sara: Jennifer, she is technically my enemy.

Researcher: Why?

S: Because I was sitting in her chair and I she get off this is my chair, no one allowed to sit there, then when I lied on the stick that hold the.... She like push back and push forth and hit my back.

R: Does she regularly do that?

S: I think only for Saudi Arabians, she hates some.

R: Why?

S: I do not know she made the same thing for my friend who went back to Saudi Arabia.

R: Do you mean she does that only with Saudi children, or she is mean with every one?

S: I think only Saudi Arabians.

R: Okay, did you tell the teacher about that.

S: But they really do not do anything about that, they just say do not do it again.

Although Sara was so positive talking about her friends at school, she indicated to some difficulty in interaction with one of her classmates. As Sara believes, only Saudi Arabian students may be offended by this girl.

Presentation of the third culture.

Sara has had an opportunity to live in a neighborhood full of Saudi families in addition to her American colleagues at school, which helped her build multiple relationships. To this regard, Sara's mother said:

She had the two sides, a lot of Saudis family there, and in the morning they went to the school and be with the Americans. And the afternoon, she goes out and be with Saudis. So she had these both two sides.

One factor that helped Sara balance cultural differences and adapt better is having Saudi people in the neighborhood. Sara's mother considered neighborhood as a factor that supports Sara from the beginning, saying:

If we are speaking things about the beginning, I think one of the factors is that help her adapt is we have neighbors that help her out, my neighbors' girls, she used to play with them at school, the Saudi girls that I told your about. Because they go together to the school... Yea, the neighbors it seems that they help her in that regard. So it was helpful as I told you, but now she is in the stage that does not really matter for her as long as she has a friend. So always friendships. Yes one of things that help her to adapt.

On the other hand, Sara makes her plans to return to the US and study in an American college in the future. She look for the future as most of third culture kids as her mother witnessed that, saying, "And even when she speaks about that, she speaks about it

in a way I coming back, she always says that, I wanna study my college here, I will be coming back.”

Growth of self.

Another aspect that has been discussed during the interview was the current political atmosphere of the US. When I asked Sara’s mother if her daughter has discussed such issues with her, she narrated:

Few weeks ago, Tala came and was discussing the presidential campaign between Trump and Clinton. And both of them are not good for the country and she explained the reasons and then I was how do you know this! And she was like my friend Allison told me about this, we discussed.

Thus, I asked Sara if she heard about Donald Trump, she replied:

I would rather vote for him because Hillary Clinton she said people who have job, she will collect their money..... he wants to send them (*Muslims*) back if he become president, yes, he said that Muslims will not take a step in the USA.

Sara justified her perspective about voting for Trump even if he kicked Muslims out, saying,

“ Yaa but because I want Americans to not be poor, so.” Sara’s mother narrated what

Sara has told her before about Trump and Clinton:

Both of them are bad for America. Trump hates Muslims, so he is not good. Clinton and she also I do not know mentioned Barney or something, she said according to her friend, if they became president, they are going to take money from the working class, if you were working, she told me mom if you are working and have a job here they are going to take part of your money, so in the end both of them are bad. One wants to stop Muslim of coming here and one will take money if you are working.

Developing Cultural Identity

Awareness and identification.

Sara showed her pride and recognition to her Islamic and Saudi culture. She is willing always to introduce some ideas for her American friends and share some customs



and traditions about Saudi Arabia showing cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the US, saying, “Women and men wear different stuff. Women they have *Abayas* (*costume of Saudi women used as a veil*), we do not have Christmas, and we do not believe in Santa.” Sara’s mother also asserted that her daughter liked to share her culture during Saudi International Day:

She wants to wear actually green (*the color of Saudi flag*), she has this long dress long green dress like (*Jalabiya*) something like this. She wants to wear it and she wants to take some candy with her. She is not in the position where she is afraid to show that she is Muslim even though with Donald Trump’s issue and every thing, that may affect her in anyway that she does not want to show that she is a Muslim. Indicating to Saudi Arabia, the mother added, “She refers to it as a home country.”

Sara told me how she felt during *Eid Al Fitr* that she spent in the US, saying, “Very happy!” and she told her friends about this holiday “I told them that we have a holiday that calls *Eid Al Fitr* and we buy new clothes and we get to celebrate it with our family.”

Sara identified herself as a Muslim coming from Saudi Arabia. We had a conversation about that:

Researcher: How people in your school know that you are Muslim?

Sara: Because I told them.

R: Do they understand what does that mean?

S: No, so I had to explain it.

R: How did you explain it?

S: I told them that the way you pray, we pray differently and we pray five times a day. And we have to wear scarf around our face and we have to cover our hair but we not really have to, .... It does not matter who is first men or women, we have less holidays than Americans.”

In the US, every Saturday, Sara goes to an Islamic school at the mosque where she learns Quran and Arabic language. When I discussed with her, how someone might be a Muslim? She told me, “I learn in my Arabic school that if you want to become a

Muslim, you have to say *an la ilaha illa Allah, Mohammed rassoul Allah (there is no God except Allah and Muhammad is the a messenger of Allah).*”

By talking about things that Sara really misses about Saudi Arabia which cannot find in the US and what she admires the most, she said, “*AL Kaaba!*” (*a home of God, located in the holy mosque in Mecca*). She added, “Because it is the God’s house....we visited and I felt really happy, I like this place but it is too crowded.... We spin around the *Kaaba* and also prayed, and only brought the scarf with me.”

Sara described many fundamental aspects and religious practices that Muslims must do like witnessing, praying, Tawaf around Al Kaaba, and covering the head when praying. According to Sara’s mother, Sara has been watching English TV shows even before coming to the US, which has benefited her a lot through adaptation and making friends. Regarding Arabic language, after living in the US for many years, Sara barely interacts in Arabic as her mother asserted, “Her interaction most of the time is in English even we try for sure her to speak Arabic at home.” Sara also acclaimed that she mostly speaks in English, saying, “Because I know more English than Arabic.” She also informed me that her favorite books, songs, and shows are in English.

Multiple identities.

Between the two cultures, Sara negotiates her identity focusing on the positive sides of each. In Saudi Arabia, despite her sadness to leave the US, she will be happy to return to join her family. Here in the US, Sara enjoys having friendships and activities that help her express herself. She expressed her feelings toward her American friends saying, “They are really nice and they share things with you. Sometimes they may be rude because they have a bad day.”

One thing that Sara wants to be in the relationship between her original culture, the place where she was born, and the new culture where she lived and learned, she expressed:

S: Saudi Arabians got along with Americans.

R: Like what? Explain please.

S: Like, I heard that we are having war, I want that to stop and we get along and be friends.

It might be because Sara feels connected to both cultures that she wants them to bond, hoping that tension will be solved.

Regarding sharing cultural holidays, Sara is opened to share Americans their holidays. She knows that such celebrations are not part of the Islamic culture. However, she would like to celebrate with her American friends. Sara recognized American holidays, so when I asked her if she like to celebrate these holidays, she said, “Yes I do, but I do not really really celebrate it. Sometimes we are in Saudi Arabia and we do not do that stuff, I do not really celebrate it, I just joined the party and get fun.”

Sara not only has Saudi and American friends, but also have a Chinese friend who loves her and interacts with her in and out school. When Sara showed me her photos, we had a discussion:

Sara: This is me and this my friend Luo and this her sister, she is now in second grade. They are really nice, but sometimes her sister squeeze too tight.

Researcher: What does that mean?

S: Like when she hugs me, she squeezes me too tight.

R: Ha hug you, okay that means she loves you, are they Arab or American?

S: They are half American half Chinese.

R: How about you?

S: I feel like I am half American, half Arabic.

R: Why is that?

S: Because I have a home in Saudi Arabia and a home in America.

Starting from her photos, Sara and I conversed as following:

Researcher: Can some one coming from another country become American?  
Sara: Yes, I think they have to take a test about the United States and if they got most of them correct you will be American.  
R: And if you do not have this papers?  
S: You are not an American.  
R: So do you consider yourself American or Arabic?  
S: My friends said, I am right now half Arabic and half American (laughing), Yaa they say so.  
R: Why she said that?  
S: She said because your mom goes to college and you go to school here, so you half Saudi half American.  
R: What about yourself, what do you think?  
S: I think I am 50% Saudi and 50% American. Because my mom goes to college and I am not sure if she signed the papers that she supposes to do it, but she has sign to papers before to go to college or any school.  
R: So does studying in American school make some one American?  
S: Without doing the paper, no.  
R: Can someone be American and Saudi in the same time?  
S: Yaa, they might have home in Saudi Arabia and home over here and they study here.

Sara is aware that being an American citizen requires having some documents and proper process. However, she considers herself half Saudi and half American since she has home there and a school here, a loved family there and loved friends here. Therefore, when she drew her picture, she drew herself as a happy adult living in a big home with her brother and cousins in Saudi Arabia.

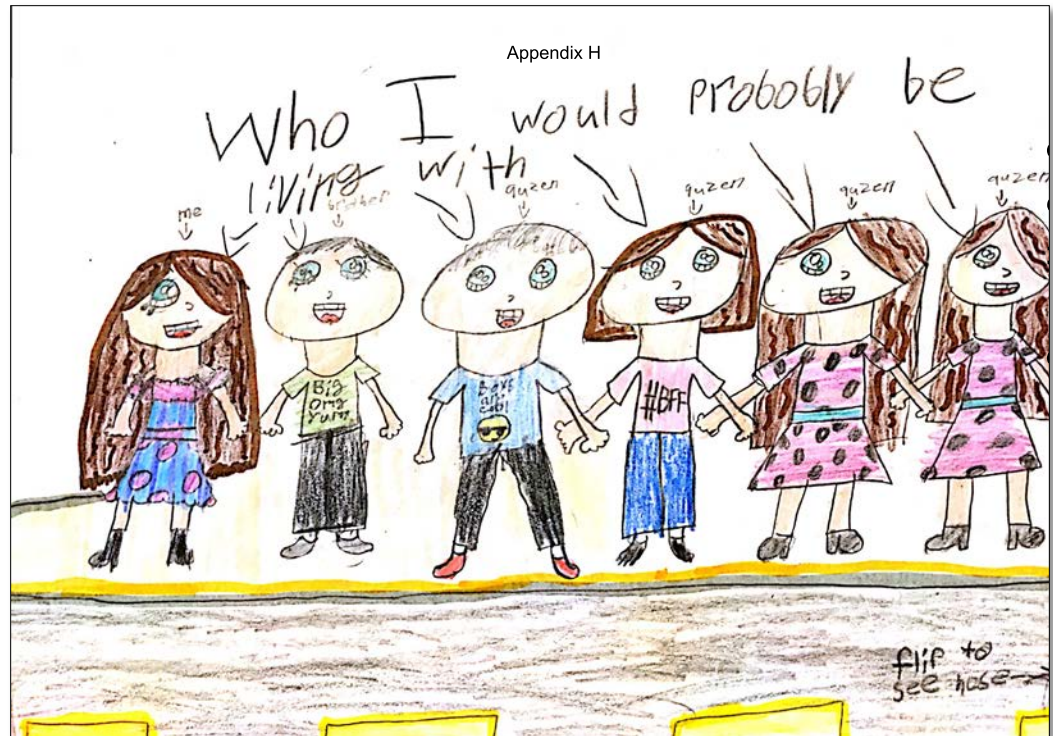


figure 6. Drawing of Sara

### Role of Sara's Mother in Cultural Adaptation

#### Negotiation.

Sara's mother would negotiate her daughter in many occasions. She might basify her concern or worry when wondering or questioning something. In regard to Donald Trump and when she wonders or show some concern about what if Tramp kicked us out of America? The mother responded, "Do not worry, I do not think he will win, there is a lot of Muslims in America." When Sara and her mother engage in a conversation about what she wants to be when she grows up, her mother narrated her response to that, "I would say what she was spoke about being an actress, and she is being a singer..... It affects her, but she is too young to realize that especially because she is outside of the whole mentality back home, and it what it is good."

Avoiding.

Sometimes, Sara's mother found it complicated to explain or negotiate about some issues which relate to her child's identity as a Muslim. Therefore, she prefers to avoid bringing some subjects up or talking about them. When Sara told her mother that she wants to be a pop singer when growing up, she told her reaction saying, "So I tried to drag the subject and I told her okay later on when you grow up we gonna have this talk." In regard to going back to Saudi Arabia, Sara's mother believes that going back is inevitable and her child will not mind and will adapt anyway. Therefore, she does not even talk about returning back as it is too early and there is no need to open it up now.

The mother said:

So if I am done studying here and I went back, I would say she would accept it because it is inevitable, I mean everyone who study here and carry scholarship will go back. She should be handle it, so it will not be easy I know, but she is not making any issue of that. The issue is she does not want to return suddenly with her dad. Because it is too early to talk about returning back to Saudi Arabia after finishing.

Enhancing integration.

Sara's mother found encouraging her child to interact and communicate with

Americans is a positive aspect. The mother said:

No, I have a very positive idea about that. One of the reasons I came here and insist to be with me, my children with me because I want them to exposed to different cultures to different languages, you know the thing about language, every new language that you have it as you have a new brain. So I wanted that for them and I am seeing that. There is some struggle in language level when you speak about sciences and core subjects, but still I think the progress is much more than the negative sides.

The perspective of Sara's mother is to integrate with a new culture to learn from it, see how other people live and think, and to improve your language and thinking skills. Therefore, she encourages her child to apply this concept.

Self-efficacy as a parent.

Although Sara's mother has not compared herself to others in general, but when she was discussed about this, she believed that having a moderate sense of integration along with preparing her children to deal with English language were her supportive role that eases her children cultural adaptation unlike some other Saudi mothers. Sara's mother explained her perspective saying:

I think in many ways I am pretty supportive and encourage my kids to fit into the new culture. Perhaps I find myself more supportive than other mothers to some extent because I have tried to pave the way for my kids to easily adapt even before coming here to the US.. I have helped them to learn English and I have exposed them to things in English such as TV shows or cartoons...

According to Sara's mother, after living in the US, she has been changing some of her ways and strategies in dealing with Sara to help her adapt better and achieve success in both cultures. She explained:

Sometimes I have to use English, the other thing which I conscious to do so, I am giving more freedom than I used to. When we would be walking in the street for example, she would go for ride wheeling she would jump while I am walking. Her father does not allow her to do that. As for me and her uncle we would. Now she can do whatever she wants as long as we around here and there is no danger, so I would think this is one of the things that I am giving them more freedom. And also giving her more responsibility to take care about themselves. I question them both to help me cleaning out even if it is just like small chores, they just have to clean the table. I did not used to do that before.

Seeking school support.

Sara's mother does not hesitate to seek support or to contact with the school about any updates or something significant happening to the child. The mother narrated how she got help by counseling services at school. She explained:

In the beginning when we came here, she had rough time making friends. Americans would not speak to her and would not play with her and I had to go to school and speak with to the counselor to arrange for that. That I think was the main thing I think, I was worried at that time that might affect her adaptation, that

she will not be able, I mean she would have to struggle with this for along time, but bit by bit it was resolved...and with the counseling, the counseling intervention it was resolved.”

Focusing on similarities than differences /being balanced.

In her efforts to support her children’s experience in the US, she would try to make them think positively and balance between things without focusing on differences.

She tries to let them have their own perspectives and to be independent. She explained:

Ammm other things I would think positively affect them is that I am not imposing my own previous ideas on them. I just want them to enjoy being children for the moment and in a country where ideas is not imposed. They do not feel the pressure of being Muslims, they do not feel the pressure of being Christian, nothing, no religious pressure on them. So I pushed them to keep the prayers anything related, I am not imposing any ideas on them. I feel grateful that they do not have this kind of pressure here.

Keeping kids as kids is reflected in Sara’s mother perspective. She finds focusing on religious and cultural differences is stressing, so she focuses on similarities rather than differences.

Challenging stereotype and ideology about Western mentality.

In this regard, she tries not to deliver any perspectives or ideas to her children, and keep them enjoying their lived experience, saying:

I do not want them to get stressed about the same issues that we were raised to get stressed about. I mean you came from Saudi Arabia; you know the whole mentality is about conspiracy. They want to destroy our religion; they want to destroy our country. Since we are living here, I do not want them to get there. It is just a waste of energy and they can not do much. When he came up with this, I was like it is better saver for both of us, me and him, not to fight about this and make an issue. Just ignore it, and I do not, may be I am wrong, but I do not him to go through that stress.

Sara’s mother looks forward to creating new perspectives with her daughter. She endeavors to promote integration focusing on positive outcomes without involving in any kind of cultural conflicts or confusion.



### Third Case: Ali

*“ No! America is fun, but I will not forget Saudi Arabia, I am Saudi!”*

#### The lived Experience of Saudi TCK in Cultural Adaptation

Ali is 7 years old in his second grade. He has not studied in Saudi schools. The first year of school was in a kindergarten. After that, Ali moved to another school in Kent. This is his second year at the same school. Ali is a member in a family of 7 children including Ali. Ali's parents are both studying in the US. The mother is undergraduate student in nursing while his father is a graduate student in journalism. Ali has come from a small town in Abha which is in Asir region south-west of Saudi Arabia. Ali's family has moved from this small town to the US and it was their first transition outside their home.

#### Family relationships/ Attachment.

Ali is the fifth child in his family. He accompanied his parents and siblings to study in the US. While his old siblings have studied in Saudi Arabia before coming to the US, Ali has never studied there. He started his kindergarten in the US. Coming to the US was a big transition for Ali and his family. The mother explained, saying:

I have been in my job satisfied having my salary. I was a nurse in a military hospital in Saudi Arabia, my salary was really good and I got my promotion every year. Everything was good! I chose to quit completely to work in another place and I can get a scholarship. I chose to study abroad to let my kids study in American schools. It benefits my kids in the first place. It was easier for me to complete my Diploma and get my Bachelor after only two years. Now I had to start from zero. I have to start over.

According to Ali's mother, he is described as a very sensitive child, so he might be annoyed easily by his siblings even with a little comment from them about his language or his understanding. The mother clarified, “Although it is a normal comment,

he gets so sensitive and start crying, he likes to be in a good position and to be always good, and like my work is good, my study is good, and everything is good.”

A relationship between Ali and his mother has changed after coming to the US. Affected by the social trend around them, they have been changing. Ali’s mother described growing of such bounding:

There in Saudi Arabia there is a gap between moms and their kids. Here I feel like I become more attached to my kids. Can you imagine, the first day of the school, he surprised me, I got him to the bus, the second day he said, “mom hug me”, because he saw and me too all the kids were hugged by their moms before leaving. I felt like he was more attached to me than before. He is telling me about everything happen to him, tell me stories. Since my kids are too many now I talk him alone to join me sometimes in Dunkin Donuts I study and he reads a book. I am giving him his own chance to interact with me, giving him a special time to talk and tell stories. I intended to be with him alone to be open to talk and express himself. I want to see his thoughts; I am worried about him.

Ali as his other siblings takes care of his younger sibling. The children in this family are responsible to take care of each other even when they are too young.

According to Ali’s mother, since in Saudi Arabia she used to leave her children at home with their grandma, her children are familiar with such a situation. Each one of the children should take care of his younger sibling and so on. The mother explained:

In Saudi Arabia, it is okay to leave your kids alone at home with my mother in law. My kids also are raised that the old sibling takes care of the young one, so they already got used to do it, it is like “you are responsible about this one, if he was not safe, you gonna be grounded”. When I came here, my husband had to drop me off to the ESL. So it was too difficult to make my old kids absent to stay with their siblings and daycare here is too expensive, we cannot afford it. So I was asking Ali to take care of his little sister, she was 3 years old and he was in a kindergarten, 5 years old. But he could take care of them and even now, he feels that he is a responsible of his sister and his sister feels like she is responsible of his young brother and so on. He usually takes cares of each other and interested about each other.

During our conversation, the mother completed her speaking about how the relationships of Ali's family have changed after the experience of living in the US, which relates to the experience of Ali. She emotionally described:

You know sister, I feel that we are so tough there, we have no compassion as same as here. Oh God! Here they taught me a compassion. I used to be not interested in many things, they even have not come to my mind, but since I came here they have taught me how it is important to hug my kids before and after school. I did not imagine this, I swear since the first day of the school, he saw a mom hugging her daughter, so he came the second day telling me, mom hug me, before he gets in the bus.

According to Ali's mother, Ali's father often relies on her to manage things in the US especially things related to schools. Sometimes, the father reacts to cultural differences as a threat to his son religious identity. In general, the father does not discuss Islam or religious practices, but practice some with Ali, like taking him to the mosques, and whenever he discusses a religious concept, he discussed with anger without explanation.

Ali's mother narrated an incident of her and Ali's father that happened last winter when Ali refused to go back with his mother and siblings to Saudi Arabia during winter break and preferred to stay here with his father, saying:

When Ali did not want to go back to Saudi Arabia during last winter because he wanted to attend Christmas, my husband was so mad and screamed on him "we are Muslims!" I told him to take it easy and that's has nothing to Islam. You should to explain to him quietly and you do not have to scream. I do not want Ali to lose his teacher's trust. She told him Santa will bring presents and I do not want to make her liar. I got mad when his dad did that. He was so offensive to him. His dad is afraid that he loses his religion. His dad gets very nervous about this issue. There is no explanation for that, he is afraid that his son might be a Christian, and it is gonna be too late to control him. Especially when he asks us to celebrate Halloween and Christmas and buy Christmas tree and Pumpkin. I wanted to bring the pumpkin for him to carve, but his dad refused to do so. But I told him celebrating their holidays does not mean that we gonna practice their religion!

When I asked Ali's mother about his relationships with his siblings, she asserted that he gets well with his siblings. However, she noticed that his interaction with his little sister has changed, saying:

Now, I think he beats his sister because he is beaten from a friend at school. He is sensitive as I told you. Lately, he is being so jealous from his little sister. She is five years old. He beats her up and kicks her. He does want here to join us to Dunkin Donate. He is being aggressive with here. At home there is nothing. I cannot say that we are a super family and happy all the time and we have nothing. It is normal as any family to have some problems, but I do not feel that something affecting him. I think he is jealous from his sister because she is the spoiled kid now at home. He says sometimes, you love her and you do not love me. His sister is really spoiled and she is daddy's girl, but my kids' relationships in general is good.

During the interview there was no data from Ali about his family. When I asked him about his parents and siblings, he responded by only smiling. However, when I asked Ali to draw a picture about him when he grow up and the people who he wishes to be with, he drew a big food table in Saudi Arabia in a Mall in Abha. In this picture, Ali was sitting between his mother and father at the head of the table facing his uncle, and his 6 siblings were around the table joining him. When I asked him about the person who faces him, he said, "This is my uncle, he is in Saudi Arabia. He does not love me but he loves my sister because she is so cute."

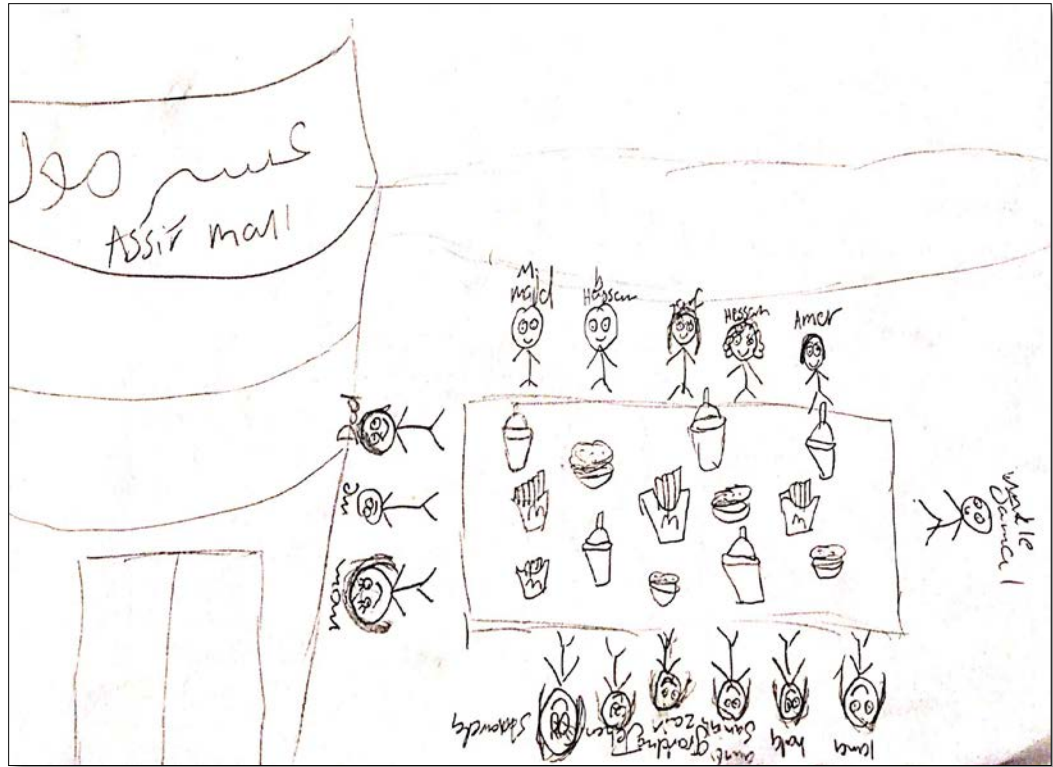


Figure 7. Drawing of Ali

Reentry and presentation of Saudi Arabia.

Ali left Saudi Arabia when he was 5 years old, and never went there even during vacations. He came from a small town and a collective society. Since that society described as collective, each family may have many children where there was no consideration to the individual but to the group. When I asked Ali's mother about his relationships and the people he usually communicates with in Saudi Arabia, she responded:

Yes, my family and his cousins, but he since was there, he was not interested, his grandma was screaming on him (laughing). He hates to be there. Because families in the village are too big, children usually play on mountains with their cuisines and other kids. A lot of children play outside 24 hours in the desert. Children have no time to feel individual, and toughness, life there is tough.

Therefore, Ali's mother believed that he didn't really have bonding there, especially because he left Saudi Arabia early and his first experience of schooling was in the US. Even when I asked Ali about the most loved ones he misses in Saudi Arabia, he said, "In Saudi? No I do not have a lot of people." Asking other questions about his home and family there revealed no other information. However, when we talked about schools in Saudi Arabia, he believed that schools there were good. When I asked him how he knew that, he responded, "I expect because people in Arabic school in America, they play with us and give us candy." Ali had a good impression about Saudi schools, influenced by the role of the Islamic school that he attended in the US on Saturdays. For Ali, since Arab people in Arabic schools in the US are good, schools in Saudi Arabia should be good as well.

Even when Ali expressed his willingness to go back to Saudi Arabia, he mentioned that he will come back to study high school and college in the US, his mother clarified, "He knows about returning back, but sometimes he says I want to go back to Saudi Arabia but he does not really mean it. He does not want to go back because I know he is happy here, Yaa may be the school has affected him but he loved to stay here because he always says I want to study high school here and in Kent State University. He loves the life here, because he did not have the chance to live there.

#### School and Presentation of the US.

Ali's mother was fascinated in American schools and how they develop her child's personality. She noticed that Ali has changed after studying in the US and this change was not because he is growing. Having activities that help them express themselves at school helped her son as she explained:

No no, it is not because he is growing, even his siblings were so shy there in Saudi Arabia. In their schools there, it was too much, they do not give them the chance to express themselves, and to improve their confidence and believe in themselves. Here is the opposite. They share in Choir! (laughing) all of them. They were so shy even my sons were so shy by the way. My kids were in a public school.

On the first hand, cultural needs of Muslim students are met in the school as Ali's mother clarified, "They asked me if it is okay to study music, about food and ham, they respect this issue." On the other hand, Ali's mother found the curriculum of her son influential, saying, "

In Saudi Arabia, I studied anatomy class in nursing. Here, my son studies the same thing in first grade. He has taught names of bones as same as I did in the university in my major! This information is offered in specialized classes; it is not primary classes. It is not a high school level of information. He showed me the abdominal positions! I told my husband, he is learning what I was learning just in his first grade! (laughing). In the schools, they ask Ali to write a summary!

In this regard, Ali's mother added:

In Math, my son studied fractions in first grade! We have not studied that in this age! Their curriculum is very very strong, I really like it! Schools here are satisfying, so if you studied in American schools you do not have to study in a university! (laughing). Activities too, they make acting, arts, technology. Actually one of the reasons that make me study here, is schools.

However, Ali is not completely satisfied with his current school. When talking about transitions that he has been through, his mother told me that he hated to move from his first school, he was happier there, and he wanted always to go back to that school. When I asked Ali about schools and which grade he loves the most, he said, "Kindergarten, because now sometimes they give us difficult homework and sometime teachers are mad in second grade and in first grade. In first grade not too much but in kindergarten they never get mad of us. When I discussed with his mother the potential reasons for his bond with the first school, she explained:

I expect the community of the first school, it was not about studies or the contexts. He is very interested about his work and want to be good, not careless in the school and he is afraid for not doing the homework. It is not about studying, in his first school, he told me I want to study the university here in Kent State University. He loved people and the school there in that school, but when he went to his school now he said no I want to go back to Saudi Arabia...he used to walk happy and active going to his school, but now he says that his teacher is nervous and his friends are fighting with him. I expect that they treat them tough to learn.

Ali's mother believed that transition affected his psychology a lot in terms of changing the school as well as the behavior of his friends and way of communicating with him, she stated:

Changing the school and his friends' behavior with him, otherwise he really loved life here and he was so glad a lot. He used to wake up and go to school happily. Now, I feel school is like a routine and he is forced to go. Yes, he wakes up everyday before even I wake him up, gets ready and asks for his breakfast, put up his bag back. However, I do not feel that he goes to school with love or he feels comfortable, no. He goes like he knows that's a routine and I have to do it. So, I do not feel that there is a difference between here and there. In Saudi Arabia, we are forced to go schools. The opposite was right in his first school. He used to go school happily. My kids in Saudi Arabia used to cry every single day, daily. They do not want go to school, and what happens with him now is the same. Even my son who was in fifth grade, he has been forced to go to school there.

On the other hand, Ali's teacher stated that Ali always seems happy and interacts with all children. She described him in different statements, "He asks for help whenever there is something he doesn't understand how to do. He will raise his hand and ask, or ask a peer for help." She added how Ali might react usually saying:

He always has a smile on his face. Today we had a Halloween parade and he was the only one without a costume. I asked if he wanted parts of mine, and he politely smiled and said "No thank you. My mom forgot mine. I am okay" He is so easy going and always seems happy no matter the situation.

Regarding his behavior in class, the teacher did not mention any conflicts or troubles with him, instead she said, "He is always on target and has never had to be corrected for any behaviors." The child shows an excitement and follows rules of the



class, as his teacher clarified, “He loves reading group, and being the first to answer the questions in group...., he is very chatty at times with those at his table. He is always smiling, but is also a rule follower and is always on task.”

Peer relationships.

In the first place, relationships of Ali are related to find a peer for playing and having fun. He has American and Saudis friends with no clear preference, as Ali said:

One time. Arabic friend, his home is close from the school. We played soccer, hide and seek, and sometimes we play play and sometimes we play with others we do not know them. We like, do you want to play?”

In the neighbor, since there isn't many Arab families around, except for one family, he usually plays with American neighbors. The mother said:

He likes to play with Americans, he does not interest to find Arabic kids to play with. I feel he is happy to play with them. Actually, there is no Arabic neighbors in his age. A friend of his brother lives in another campus, but they come to play with them but they older than him. However, I do not expect that he will refuse to play with Arabic kids if he found someone Arabic to play with.

Ali however, does not like to play with girls, so he always has some troubles with girls. His mother told:

There is Arabic child, but she is a girl and he does not like to play with girls (laughing). When he rides the bus, he gets mad when she rides with him and says why he rides before me? I told him, she should ride before you because she is a girl, see when I want to get into a place, men give me away to inter before them? You have to, honey.

The mother completed her speaking to explain how her son's attitude toward girls might reflects the mentality of some Saudis men:

They got to do as men there! Even our generations, we have not taught that women should be respected. American do that even with simple thing like opening the door! So he hates this girl and all girls because of that, since she goes into the bus before him.

Feeling offended.

During our conversation about Ali's school and relationships. The mother stated that Ali gets offended from some children at school. She indicated two reasons for having such incidents, her son's sensitivity and the potential socialization of some American children toward foreign students, so we conversed:

Mother: My son is so sensitive; I do not know. I feel like since he a foreign, you feel like as kids, they have not been taught by their families that it is wrong to act in this way, and you should respect any one even if he is an international. Adults here respect us because they are already mature and feel embarrassed from such issues. Kids act naturally so they bother him, and I already told you this is might be his fault because he is too sensitive.

Researcher: What makes you expect that he has been bothered because he is Saudi or an international student?

Mother: Sometimes, he told me that my friends say that I do not understand, that why I got that is because he is international, so they do not want to deal with him. They say how come you play with us, you are different, you cannot talk like us, you are stupid. That's affecting his psyche.

Interviewing Ali revealed that he is offended by some of his peers. When I asked him if someone bothers him or annoys him at school, he responded:

Ali: Like they say I am funny and I am annoying, yaa. Sometimes when I tell the teacher, one girl her name is (...), I know her and she annoying me, one time I told the teacher and the teacher got her in trouble.

Researcher: Have ever you tried to talk to her, to explain to her?

A: Yaaaa, sometimes I tell her, can you stop? But she said but she like ignore me, she thinks I am a funny kid and I am little and I do not know English. One time my friend hit me and hurt me and I cried. His name is (...); he is damned. And a girl pushed me down, but she did not mean it.

R: What did you do when he beaten you up?

A: Who hit me really bad? I will tell the teacher and told him "can you stop".

A: There is that boy (...).

R: Okay so a boy and a girl. Are they mean with every one?

A: The girl is damned with half of the students. The boy has one friend, if someone hit him, he cares about him and if he get to fight all people.

R: Oh so it is not only about you. He is mean with every one.

A: Yes, he cares about that student and he does not let any body touch him or play with him. He says come on let walk here. But the other boy he is (...), he does not like to play with him but he push him and play with him. He is annoying.

When I asked Ali if he ever felt alone at school he responded:

Yes, When the bus... not work, the bus driver was mad because the students were annoying. Half of them stood up and ate. They threw stuff and I set with Arabic who good with me, but we did not do anything and just they were damned with us with Arabic students. They threw something on us and then say Arabic people eating in the bus (making a teasing voice). Once this one threw on me and I told him stop!

R: Arabic people eating in the bus?!

A: We do not eat; we talk Arabic with each other. When we talk Arabic, half of them say that we talk in French. Half of them think we talk about them, like saying you are a dog! But we talk with each other, we are friends.

During our conversation about playing and who he would like to play with, Ali said:

It like I love to play with Arab. Because they do not hit like American and get mad.

R: Really! I have American friends, they are nice.

A: Yes I have American friend he plays with me.

R: Okay!

A: There is one his name is (...), he is good. That boy Jimmy, he guards him he does not let any one to play with him or talk to him. But (...) tells him, stop I wanna play with him. But he tells him no, he is damned.

The conversation with Ali showed that Ali is having some problems at school.

Although it is not an evidence of bullying or discrimination, it shows the perspective of Ali toward his relationships with Americans and how he thinks about himself.

Presentation of the third culture.

Ali examined multiple transitions as a third culture kid. During the experience of mobility, he has been affected by two stages. Firstly, moving from a small town to the US. Ali's mother discussed how such a big movement affected not only Ali but his whole family, saying:

It was a significant transition for him since he was too young. He is very fascinated about life here especially because we were leaving in a village. I was in Abha, but we were in a small town Inside Abha (Hejla), it is inside Abha and close to the airport and has schools but it is a small village. So he moved form a society in a village to America and it was the first time in his life to travel, for all of us. He was so fascinated, he was happy when he came and when went to the school he was happy too, but he only got upset after this school.

When Ali first came to the US, he started kindergarten in a school in Kent, but his family has moved to another house, so he had to change school too. According to Ali's mother, this transition affected Ali. He loved his first school, teachers, and friends there.

She explained, saying:

Actually he loves his first school more than this school. He loved his friends, his teacher there more than his teacher now. So far, he asks me to return him back to the first school, he is suffering from his friends now in this school. Now he is like "my friends fight with me and call me bad words and in the bus", and my son is not aggressive or the kind of kids who likes to fight others. So he is upset. He got really upset when he moved from that to Walls, he really had a hard time and since that time he does not forget. He studied one year in the new school but still he is not involved and he does not like this school. He studied only kindergarten there and he has been in the new school more than one year but he still wants his first school. He goes to school with no excitement.

At school, however, Ali showed good impression and seemed happy all the time.

No complaining or troubles have been noticed by his teacher. Instead, he seemed satisfied and getting well with his peers at school. Ali's teacher described his experience at school saying, "He has had a wonderful experience and has adjusted very well." And she described his art work saying, "Any self-drawing always shows him happy."

Growth of self.

After studying in American schools and acculturation with American teachers, Ali shows more responsible attitude in terms of relying on himself, helping his family, and in expressing himself. The mother said:

He becomes more responsible and care about his things, but he did not do that before. Now, he helps me to clean and put seats on the table and tell me this is how we do that in the school, the teacher tells us, so he improved. He tries to apply what his teacher tell or do in the class, it is taken for guarantee.

The mother also mentioned that Ali expressed himself better, found spaces to enjoy his childhood than before noticing a positive change:

There is a positive change, he becomes more brave than before, I want this I wanna go I wanna do. I wanna share in this activity in the school. He was not like this he was completely shy in Saudi Arabia even when he plays with his cuisines. I love our home here; he loves life here not the school...., he loves being free, going with me to his school, he loves the spaces here, walking with mommy, going to different places. There, we do not have the facilities as same as here like going outside with buses....., in first day of the school, I did not go with him to his school. He went alone by the bus quietly. He never cried or wanted me, nothing. I was so shocked! Can you imagine! In first day of the school, he went by himself! He did not trouble me as his siblings used to do there.

### Developing Cultural Identity

Awareness and identification.

When showing Ali my photos, he shared many ideas about Saudi Arabia showing his identification for himself as Muslim, Arab, and Muslim. He identified himself as Saudi and defined Muslims saying, “Muslims are Arab...., Muslims mean they pray and read Quran.”

In regard to how Ali defines himself, we had this conversation:

Researcher: Where are you from?

Ali: Saudi Arabia

R: okay, you are from Saudi Arabia but you are here?

A: (laughing) we come here for vacation.

R: Why?

A: To study and then after a long time we go back to Saudi for vacation.

R: So your friends here American or Arabic?

A: Half of them Arab and half of them are American.

R: Cool! What do you like to tell your American friends about your country, about Saudi Arabia?

A: I tell them like today is an international day.

R: What does that mean?

A: It means you wear international day clothes and celebrate and paint my face with green and white.

R: And what else? Did already tell them about that?

A: Yaa and my mom brought some Donuts.

R: Yummy!

A: I told them about international day and told them today is the international day and I gave them gifts.

R: Okay that’s good, did you tell them about *Eid Al Adha*?

A: (smiling), Yes!

R: What did you tell them?

A: In Eid we go to the mosque and wear *Thop*. And our moms and dads sometimes give us *Eidea* (*money given as a gift in Eid*).

Although Ali left Saudi Arabia in an early age and started his school in the US, Ali identified fundamental aspects of his original country showing his proud of his culture and willing to share his own culture with others. Ali's mother explained:

When he knows about Saudi international day, he usually asks to bring something with him to school, he asks and indeed he takes some balloons with him to the school and draw on his face and said I have to make something white and green (*colors of Saudi Arabia's flag*). I have to make these things to him and he asks for it and he would like to do it. He is really happy.

Ali's mother described that he wanted to show his American friends that we have our holidays and we celebrate too. She added, "All of his siblings do that, but I feel like he is proud of this and happy. He likes to show that we have our holidays because he notices they have their own holidays, but he celebrates American holidays too."

Ali also told about his feelings about Saudi Arabia and some of Saudi traditions as his mother clarified, "He tells his friends I like Saudi Arabia, we eat this food, I like this things, and he asks me also I want to wear *Thob* in *Eid* to go to school and they see me."

When I showed Ali my photos in *Mecca* in front of *AL Kaaba*, he commented:

I know a lot about it, when I went there, I wear (like this) clothes? Yaa and you pray with it. My sisters have been there before. It was in Summer. My father told me, next Summer will go to Makkah.

By asking Ali to describe Saudi Arabia for his American friends, he said:

Ammm I will show them pictures and I showed them a T-shirt and I showed them the king, king Abdullah...And I wore the t-shirt in the international day. I told them, there is a mosque we pray there and read Quran. And we go barefoot sometimes. I told them, Quran is a book we read.

In the prior statement, Ali described the basic elements of his identity. He would introduce himself by defining his nationality as Saudi and his religion as a Muslim. Ali

also connected Islamic identity to language. For him, to be Muslim, one should speak Arabic and practice Islam. When I asked him how he knows if someone is a Muslim, he responded, “Just I will ask him, are you Muslim. But if he said no, if he speaks English or asks him, are you Arabic? Are you Muslim. If he says yes, then he is Muslim.” He also added to show the difference between Arabs and Muslims, saying, “Arab are Muslims and American do not pray. Half of them know Arabic. Someone knows how to pray and speaks Arabic too.” It seemed that Islamic school in the US influenced Ali in terms of identity. When I asked him about this school, he responded, “They teach me Arabic letters and sometimes she learns me Quran.”

For Ali, Arabic language formed a fundamental aspect to identify Islamic identity. Ali introduced himself saying, “Saudi I talk Arabic language (smiling).” When I questioned him saying, “So if someone does not speak Arabic, he is not a Muslim? He explained, “Half of them know Arabic, their moms and dads taught them how to speak Arabic or if their uncle Arabic he maybe teach them.” Thus, Ali believed that a relationship between Islam and Arabic language is inevitable.

However, regarding language, since Ali started his school in America, he preferred reading English books, watching American shows, and playing with English words to test his siblings or a friend knowledge about some new English words that he knows. He said laughing, “Sometimes I talk in English to see if a student knows how to speak English.”

Between Ali’s original culture and new culture there is a strong identification of his cultural identity, however, he discussed the idea of being a part of both cultures, but he did not include himself within this idea of being “between”.

Researcher: Can some one coming from another country become American?  
 Ali: May be his mom or uncle is American and teaches him English and talk in English and then people think he is American then he is American. Like he forget Arabic language and Quran.  
 R: If some one study in American school, does he become American?  
 A: Yes because he will speak English.  
 R: So if you knew how to speak English, are you going to be American?  
 A: No! America is fun, but I will not forget.  
 R: Can someone become Saudi and American in the same time?  
 A: Oh Yaa by language, because he talks Arabic and English. He knows all of them.  
 R: There are some people know only English, but they are still Arab. Why?  
 A: Just a moment, maybe they forgot their language.  
 R: So they are American or Arabic?  
 A: If they know how to pray, may be some one like their uncle reminded them about their language.  
 R: When you grow up, where do you want to live?  
 A: I want to be in Abha.

Although Ali mentioned that People can be Saudi and American at the same time if they can speak both languages, he will be always a Muslim child coming from Saudi Arabia and speaks Arabic and English. For Ali, even studying in the US and knowing English will not make him American because he will not forget his original language.

Multiple identities.

Although Ali showed affiliation to his original culture and shared his pride about his country and religion, he at the same time identified many cultural aspects of the new culture and was willing to participate and share holidays with his friends at school.

Mixing between months and holidays, Ali narrated to me what he knows saying:

October, January, and Christmas and March. March is the best one! Because there is someone small, we read a book about him, and he wore different clothes and he is too small in real life. He but some gifts for us he said because you cannot catch me and he missed up the class (laughing). He missed the place, chairs and desks. He missed up all the classes he says you are not going to catch me (happily). But he is the coach which help the teacher, he got different clothes. They made footprint. Half of the students wrote we know where are you and half of them went to find him.



I asked him about Christmas and thanksgiving, and Ali answered, “Yes, thanksgiving and the turkey! Have you ever tried to eat turkey?” “Yes in the school, mom come there.” Ali communicates at home with both languages, Arabic and English, telling me, “Sometimes Arabic Sometimes English. Sometimes I ask them a question in English, I see if they can know it.”

In regard to his feeling about living in the US, Ali showed a good impression about life in the US. Ali’s mother explained:

He is happy about American culture here. I told you maybe because he has not known our culture in the schools of Saudi Arabia, he have not got educated about Arabic and religion. However, he tends to Saudi culture. For example, mom do not go out there is men there. When I wear something, like he says no mom do not go outside there is a neighbor either Arabic or American, so he remembers this from Saudi Arabia. He knows that in Saudi Arabia we have to cover and wear *Abaya*. In Saudi Arabia, I wear *Niqab* (*something to cover women’s face*).

Ali identified both cultures and is willing to live in both. Although he is looking forward to go back to Saudi Arabia, identifying his identity as Muslim from Arabic country, he enjoys the new culture and integrates within it.

Cultural bridge.

Ali believed that he can make friends after helping them in translation, saying, “There is a new Arabic boy in the school. The teacher said he does not know English and I translated for him. Then he come said do you wanna be friends? I said yaa.” Ali’s teacher also told that, “He has attached himself to another little boy in the other second grade class who speaks no English. He helps him and translates what he should be doing on a daily basis.” The teacher added, “He also feels a sense of importance when he is needed to translate for other students who have less English than him.”

Role of Ali’s Mother in Cultural Adaptation

Negotiation.

Since Ali is developing negotiation skills, it seemed that he is still in need to defend himself and express his needs and emotions conveniently. Therefore, Ali's mother tried to teach her child to rely on himself and negotiate someone who may bother or trouble him at school. She aimed to build her child's ability to defend himself which should affect his adaptation, so he can use skills of negotiation whenever he needed, not only in the US but after returning to Saudi Arabia. The mother asserted that whenever he came from school complaining about a friend in the bus and wanted to change the bus or the school or even going back to Saudi Arabia, she told him, "I told him why you change the bus, if someone beat you tell the driver or ask your friend to stop beating you."

Sometimes, Ali feels confused regarding some religious differences and his mother tries to explain to him such differences to distinguish between Islamic practices and practices of other religions. Ali's mother declared her worry when he imitates Americans and be so familiar with American culture, so she may negotiate him saying:

Like I want to wear this, I want to do like them, I want to go to church because my friends go every Saturday. I told him that they go to the church because of their religion. He thought that going to church is related to the school and every one has to go there, he does not want to be different. I told him no they go to church and we go to the mosque. They have a religion and we have our religion. So in Christmas he says no I wont go (to Saudi Arabia), the teacher says Santa will bring gifts for us and I will never go back, so I did not like to force him and makes him upset.

The mother resonated why she endeavor to explain and support him to defense himself:

I do not want my son to be dependent on me, that's will weaken his personality. So, like "that's it mom will defense me", We will return to Saudi Arabia and I will not be able to go his school there and talk with his teacher even I cannot talk with him by phone, you know. I will not be able to defend him and neither his dad, you know dads there. I want him, I told him always do not care about them, ignore them, you know what? You are better than them, you know two languages

while they only know one language, you know how to talk just ignore them. My son, I know him even his accent, his reading, he is really good! He talks better than me. God, sometimes he speaks words I do not understand. So I told him, you are good do not care about them, they are jealous so you understand Arabic and English. I do not want him to keep complaining everyday.

In her negotiation, Ali's mother also has recourse to showing his special ability as a bilingual supporting his self-esteem:

When he moved from the first school, I told him the new school is closer to home and you gonna have a lot of friends, I try to show him the positive side. I discuss with him because I feel that he is smart, he can understand me, he accepts my discussion. It is not just by giving him a gift to make him accept and that's it. He would like to discuss with him. About friends, I tell him do not care about them. You are better than him, they speak only one language, but you know two languages. I would try to support him and his self-confidence. I want him to be proud of himself.

The mother also sometimes initiates to explain some cultural issues what are forbidden in Islam, in effort to help her children to understand the issues from Islamic perspective:

When gay marriage was a legitimate, I was afraid they hear something, So I preferred to explained that for them. I told them, oh here in America they allow for women to marry women and men to marry men. I said, this is not logical how come! But it is okay for them because they are not Muslims. I focused on this point telling them that they are not Muslims and this is not natural. Men have to marry women and women have to marry men. They discuss their dad about that, telling them that even some people in church refused this. Even some American people do not agree. Ali got the idea but he never comments.

She negotiates her children about privileges that they have, and the benefits they gain from the experience of studying overseas linking this to the importance of working hard to succeed:

They do not want to return back to their lives in Saudi Arabia. They know already of they helped our mom, if they were helpful and help each other as a family, even Ali does not want to go back to that life at that home. They know that they have to study hard, to work to be able to stay here and study better in good schools and good universities. I told them about the difference! So they know that we have to study here to improve our lives, our jobs, and our learning.

Avoiding.

One of the ways that Ali's mother usually applies to help her child to live successfully in the new culture is avoiding to interact with the school to help the child. According to the mother, it is better for him to present herself as a bridge between her child's needs and the school's community. The mother clarified her perspective saying:

For me, it is okay to go to his teacher and talk with here, but it is not good for him, his personality will be affected. This is my way, I do not like to intervene. Although my mom used to intervene when something happens with me in the school or I be spoiled and do not want to go school, but I do not like this, I do not like to do the same.

Avoiding to explain or negotiate is also an adapted approach by Ali's mother. She sometimes avoids explaining some changes that she experiences after studying in the US, for example:

Here, if somehow tell you that there is no discrimination, there is a discrimination (racism)! Do not ever believe that there is no racism. And how they look to us. Even if they did not overt their view, be sure it is inside them plus, three quarters of my classes have American, it is seldom to find Saudi student with me in a class. To protect myself since I have been discriminated by many times, like when I was wearing my scarf and walk, someone screamed saying "fuck you!" yes! Without aggravation. The summer before the last one, my husband was outside the town and I was walking to Walgreen's to buy some stuff and go back. I was veiled, someone from the car screamed on me saying fuck you!

Since Ali's mother has been discriminated before, she had to take her scarf off and not wear her veil in the US. For Ali, this change of her appearance was confusing as she clarified:

Yes, and I do not feel like he is comfortable. First time, he asked me "mom you are not wearing hijab?! Although I do not like to remove my veil, I used not to do that. I am from village I used to wear Niqab. Even when I went during Christmas, I wore Negab "veil of face". In South of Saudi, it is impossible to uncover your face, even uncovering the eyes is a shame. Now, even my husband is convinced.

But Ali even in Saudi Arabia, he always warned me mom there is a man outside cover yourself.

Although Ali noticed the difference, his mother avoided to explain or clarify why she make different choices regarding her appearance as a Muslim woman.

Enhancing integration.

Ali's mother does not mind interaction with people from the new culture.

However, she tries to organize integration. It is acceptable for Ali to play with American neighbors but with limitations as she described:

For me it is okay for American to come to our house, but I do not let him going to their home. I am afraid to let him go alone, but it is okay if I was with him. I cannot let him go by himself as same as American parents do. I allowed to him playing outside with them, but not going inside. For example, he can swim with them outside, I am okay with that. I am worried, I do want him to see something, they are different. They have a different culture; I am afraid if he says two people kissing. This is normal for American, but it is not normal for us. I do not want him to see inappropriate things or eat pork while he does not know.

She encouraged integration and supported Ali during American holidays and cultural celebrations too, but with a detailed explanation about the cultural differences between Islamic holidays and American holidays. On the other hand, she liked to share Americans our holidays as well. She explained:

In our holidays I bring for him what he wants, encourage him, and teach him about these things, and teach him how to be proud of himself even if he was here in America. He is happy of that and would asks for it and come to me to ask me to bring a T-shirt for Saudi Arabia. In their holidays, I do not like to deprive him from celebration with them. However, I teach him, these celebrations are for them, I teach him about every holiday, this holiday about this and this holiday about this. For example, in Christmas I have taught him that this holiday is about Jesus and they celebrate it, but I let him to celebrate and do not prevent him from sharing. I actually asks his father to bring his gift for Santa in the school, so I do not want the teacher be as a liar but I clarify that for him. I tell him that we brought this thing for you but they will give it to you back. I explain the story for him but I never prevent him to celebrate with them. I let him wear as they want, but from inside he knows that this is not our holiday.

Enhancing cultural identity.

Ali's mother as a Muslim is concerned about her child's identity as a Muslim.

Although she revealed her concern about a threat of losing Islam by being affected by Western life, she sometimes endeavors to enhance her child's Islamic identity. Being too attached to American culture worries Ali's mother, as she said:

It is worrying me. As I told you, even he did not want to go back with us during last summer vacation because he is waiting for Christmas and his gift from Santa. At Christmas, he asked me, mom when we are going to buy Christmas tree? Two months before, he has been asking for Christmas tree. He wants to do like them and he love their life style. I am worried and scared that he got too fascinated in their lives and act or socialize like them more in the future. Since he was too young when he come from Saudi Arabia and have not got the basics of Islam and have not went to school there. In Saudi Arabia' schools, they teach children all the Islamic subjects, but I am teaching him some Quran and I will not be as schools in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, he goes to mosque every Friday with his dad, I taught him how to pray. In Arabic school here, last year he was studying there, and now he will complete studying there. I am concern to teach him Arabic and Quran. I am worried that he lose his culture.

She described some practices that she adapt in effort to connect Ali to his culture, "I put Quran all the time at home, and he has seen *Alhaj (pilgrimage)* on TV. I taught him about *Alhaj*."

Ali's mother interpreted her concern about Ali saying, "My other kids have been affected by American culture less than him because they have studied there in Saudi Arabia, they got the basics of Arabic and religion and everything, but he did not." She believed that keeping Islamic identity can be achieved, saying, "I think you keep your child identity by taking his to the mosque teaching him how to ray so he be connected and do not forget his religion.

Self-efficacy as a parent.

At the beginning, before coming to the US, searching information about

American schools helped Ali's mother to feel confident as she clarified:

I searched a lot and heard a lot about schools in America. In a website, someone has clarified and explained a lot about American schools and she was right. Mothers can go to their children in the school, you can tell your kids' food, she explained about their style of learning. I was worried about schools here, so I have read and searched a lot on internet. I searched for a long time about schools, language. This knowledge helped me, so I was not too surprised.

Ali's mother is not sure about her role in regard to communicating with the school. When she compares herself with other Saudi mothers, she wishes to do the same thing for her son. However, she sometimes feels that she is doing the right thing for her child.

I see like other mothers are better than me. They care more than me. I know some one, she told me that when his son tells her about something happen in the school, she goes to talk with his teacher. I do not do that. Maybe it seems like I do not care, but I care about my son. My care is not by going to school or fighting or talking with them. By this way, I feel the opposite, like I do not support my son, I feel like I make him dependent and rely on me to solve his problems. I feel I care about him when I teach him how to rely on himself and be dependent. I feel like I support him when I support his personality to believe in himself.

Ali's mother sees herself as a supportive for her child adaptation and success at school. She feels that her choices to give him spaces to be individual is a good choice for him. She explained:

However, I see other mothers visit their kids school, and I think it is may be the right thing, I do not know. But for me, I feel like this is the right thing to do with my kids. When I see other mothers, I like how do they care and I wish to do the same thing, but when I think about it I feel like it is not supportive to my son. My son is still upset. I can see the negative affect by his eyes, but I did not benefit my son directly. My concern is about his personality, not only to solve a problem and that's it.

Ali's mother found living in the US as a Muslim is difficult. As a mother, it is difficult to support the child identity. In her case, she clarified the reasons:

It is difficult to practice his religion in a country as America. It is not allowed for you to pray in a public place beside you cannot hear *Azan* (*the call for prayers*). As long as you live here for years, you do not hear *Azan*, but in Saudi Arabia we hear it 5 times a day. Here it is difficult, if you do not have a support, you might forget. Some one who reminds you. Parents, even if they try, they will not be able to do it. Parents here are too busy in their studies and their future. You will not be able to manage this with your kids, so it is so difficult to practice your religion as a Muslim....., even if they give them a chance to practice it, there is no *Azan* to be heard, it is very difficult and it is not a part of their curriculum.

Seeking school support.

Ali's mother believed that communicating with the school or seeking teacher's help or staff support may affect her child's independence and his ability to express his needs:

With papers. The teacher communicates with me by papers. I like to support my kids confidence and independence. How to express himself, why I should go to his teacher to tell her about something? Now he goes by himself, or at least stop you friend from bothering you. However, I can go to school if they call me telling me he get hurt or fall down. I go to school's festivals and activities. I did not feel comfortable to the teacher, although she was good, this was his first grade teacher, but I have not communicated with his second grade teacher yet. His first grade did nothing but I felt that she gets mad easily and he told me that before. Ali was complaining from his teacher in first grade, and he made his homework only because he was afraid of her.

#### Data from the Questionnaire of the Mothers

Data has been gained from mothers' survey demonstrated their perspectives regarding their children's experiences as third culture kids. Themes emerged from data are shown in the table 8 below.



Table 8

*Data of Mothers' Questionnaire*

Theme	Sami	Ali	Sara
Family relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Living in a different culture did not affect the relationship between the child and the mother.</li> <li>· The child trusts authority of parents and understand decisions for movement.</li> <li>· The child never resist parents' rules or conflict about Islamic values and habits.</li> <li>· Communicating with the child never become challenge to explain cultural differences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Living in a different culture did not affect the relationship between the child and the mother.</li> <li>· The child trusts authority of parents and understand decisions for movement.</li> <li>· The child never resist parents' rules or conflict about Islamic values and habits.</li> <li>· Communicating with the child becomes challenge to explain cultural differences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Living in a different culture affects the relationship between the child and the mother.</li> <li>· The child trusts authority of parents and understand decisions for movement.</li> <li>· The child never resist parents' rules or conflict about Islamic values and habits.</li> <li>· Communicating with the child becomes challenge to explain cultural differences.</li> </ul>
Saudi Arabia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Most of the time feels loss about people in SA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Sometimes feels loss about people in SA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Rarely feels loss about people in SA</li> </ul>
Peer relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The child most of the time enjoys friendships with Saudi, Arab, and, Americans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The child most of the time enjoys friendships with Saudi, Arabs, and, Americans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The child most of the time enjoys friendships with Saudi, Arab, and, Americans</li> </ul>

*(table continues)*

Table 8 continued  
*Data of mothers' questionnaires*

Theme	Sami	Ali	Sara
Feeling offended	· The child has never been discriminated for being Muslim or Arab.	· The child has never been discriminated for being Muslim or Arab.	· The child has been discriminated for being Muslim or Arab.
Cultural identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Aware of his nationality, religion, and country.</li> <li>· Identifies himself as Saudi.</li> <li>· Shows confusion regarding the moral system and right-wrong concepts and cultural differences between the two cultures.</li> <li>· The experience of living between different cultures will not affect the child's identity.</li> <li>· The child most of the time shows an interest in Islamic culture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Aware of his nationality, religion, and country.</li> <li>· Identifies himself as Saudi.</li> <li>· Shows confusion regarding the moral system and right-wrong concepts and cultural differences between the two cultures.</li> <li>· The experience of living between different cultures may affect the child's Islamic identity.</li> <li>· The child most of the time shows an interest in Islamic culture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Aware of his nationality, religion, and country.</li> <li>· Identifies herself as Saudi.</li> <li>· Shows confusion regarding the moral system and right-wrong concepts and cultural differences between the two cultures.</li> <li>· The experience of living between different cultures may affect the child's Islamic identity.</li> <li>· The child sometimes shows an interest in Islamic culture.</li> </ul>

*(table continues)*

Table 8. (continued)

*Data of mothers' questionnaires*

Theme	Sami	Ali	Sara
Cultural identity	· Never share cultures	· Sometimes is willing to share cultures	· Always likes to share his culture in the school
Feeling as TCK	· The child is confused about politics, cultural and religious values.	· The child is confused about politics, cultural and religious values.	· The child is not confused about politics, cultural and religious values.
Thinking as TCK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The child gains an expanded worldview, accept diversity.</li> <li>· The child shows good sense of cross-cultural experience and negotiation identity.</li> <li>· The child has rich cross-cultural experience and more linguistic skills</li> <li>· The child shows ability to interact freely with people regardless race, religion, or gender.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The child gains an expanded worldview, accept diversity.</li> <li>· The child shows good sense of cross-cultural experience and negotiation identity.</li> <li>· The child has rich cross-cultural experience and more social skills</li> <li>· The child shows ability to interact freely with people regardless race, religion, or gender.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The child gains an expanded worldview, accept diversity.</li> <li>· The child shows good sense of cross-cultural experience and negotiation identity.</li> <li>· The child has rich cross-cultural experience, observational, social, and more linguistic skills.</li> <li>· The child shows ability to interact freely with people regardless race, religion, or gender.</li> </ul>

Data of the questionnaires of mothers indicated that mothers describe their children experiences of cultural adaptation as good. Family relationships as same as peers relationships are positive and affective. The cross-cultural experience even affected the relationships of a mother and the child positively. It was more fruitful in terms of being more attached to the mother and such experience power this relationship as the mother described in more depth through the interview.

According to the mothers, children are enjoying the experience of studying and living in the US having more ability to communicate with different people, celebrate diversity and understand that each culture might be different and that difference is acceptable. Therefore, they can interact with everyone regardless his/her religion, race, or gender. As bilingual and bicultural children, Saudi TCKs have rich social, linguistic, and rich cultural experience.

Saudi TCKs identify themselves as Saudi, show pride and affiliation to their original culture as well as interest in Islamic and Arabic culture. However, two of the mothers stated that they feel this experience may affect their children's Islamic identity and make their children confused about the cultural differences regarding Islamic values or politics.

Although the mothers described their children's experience as excellence and that they seem happy and satisfied, one of the mothers reported that her child has been discriminated at school because of his identity and discussed this in details during the interview. However, all mothers find that their children are able to establish good relationships with all children regardless their cultural backgrounds.

## Role of the Teachers in Cultural Adaptation of Saudi TCKs

Treating all children regardless their cultural background was a fundamental aspect for teachers. Wherever children come from, they hold them to same expectations. One of the teachers said, “I treat my student with the same respect and hold him/her to same expectations as my other students.” Another teacher revealed, “I am open, loving, and caring and I treat all my students with the same respect.”

On the other hand, one of the teachers found that some subjects were not really connected to cultural needs of the children like science, explaining:

In my subject area, we don't really differentiate based on Muslim needs (science); however, in reading we work hard to meet students at their current level and bring them up to grade level with intensive supports with language and literacy.

While another teacher declared that having a considerable number of international students makes her classroom a welcome place for all children, saying:

We have a large population of students that come from all over the world, so I feel that my classroom is a welcoming place for all students, regardless of where students originated from. Again, we are a college town so diversity within our classroom is the norm, and all students have been through classrooms where diversity is the norm.

A teacher also added that her student is treated as other students in the class in terms of developing the child's academic performance saying, “He/she is grouped by academic level in all areas with the peers so that each student can make gains throughout the year.”

Teaching in the classrooms was assimilated for all children and only differ based on their learning needs regardless their cultures. The teachers adapted different approaches to help children adapt and succeed. One of the teachers mentioned three strategies she usually uses, saying, “I have downloaded apps to help with communication,

I have used picture cards to help with vocabulary acquisition. I have taken advice from our ESL teacher.” On the other hand, another teacher clarified that she varied her daily instructions to meet all her students’ needs, saying, “I work every day to differentiate my instruction to meet individual needs of all students, not just Saudi students, especially in the area of reading where everything is done in small groups. Vocabulary is a focus with Saudi students, as this is usually an area that is weak if there is one.” One teacher, since her student needs more attention in vocabulary, said, “I help this child to be successful by providing learning supports as needed, especially in the area of vocabulary where she can be a bit weak. We work together weekly to learn new words and apply them to a variety of situations. Other than that, she has needed minimal extra support in relationship to her American-born peers.

According to prior practices, it is addressed that the needs of all students are considered based on learning needs not cultural needs, except language, so no need to apply different ways in terms of cultural adaptation for Saudi students. The teacher said, “I do not feel that I need to do anything that I don’t do for ALL students in the classroom.”

A teacher declared that seeking peer support was enhanced for helping her students to support each other. She explained, “If my student is not feeling or doing well I turn to his/her classmates to help support him/her.”. In term of developing additional learning materials, she added, “I have used student peers to help the students feel that they are part of the group. According to the teacher, “Honestly, recess soccer has played a HUGE role in helping Saudi students acclimate, the teacher said:

I do this for all students, not just Saudi children. I don't feel that I have to do much. The other students in the classroom are eager to make friends. It has really been more of the peer influence that mine.

In regard to the child-teacher relationship, it seemed that establishing a kind relationship with the child and presenting positive attitude about strength of the child impacted the child adaptation as the teacher asserted, "I believe I have a great rapport with my student. We joke. He/she follows my rules and instruction. He/she participates appropriately in class. He/she is eager to help and succeed." When asking a teacher about her impact as a teacher and how she affect the child's experience, she responded, "Hopefully I affect this child in a positive way. I hope that I help to make the American learning experience a positive one for this child, and I hope to serve as a role model for this child.

Investing a parent-teacher interaction, as the teacher described her communication with her children and their families to enhance interaction, which in turns impact adaptation of her students. She said, "I speak to them. I speak to their parents. I have gone to their homes and invited them to my home for dinner. I have downloaded apps to help with communication." Another teacher found communication with the mother of her student is fluent, saying:

Communication with this parent is very easy, as I have had a sibling of this child in the past, so we already have a parent-teacher relationship in place. This child's parent (I have only ever met her mom) is very respectful and kind and I feel I can share information about her child easily and that what I say will be met with respect.

Having a kind relationship between parents and teachers generates trust and comfort upon children. One of the teachers, explained:

I think that this child knowing that I have a prior relationship with her parent helps her to feel comfortable in knowing that my decisions for her academically

are in her best interests. Again, she is very receptive to help, so there have been big issues, but overall I feel she trusts me a little more due to the fact that her mom trusts and respects me as her teacher.

It seemed that language significantly affects communication with parents, so whenever it happens to interact with parents, the teachers find an interpreter to facilitate communication between some of Saudi parents and teachers, as a teacher mentioned, “When there is a communication issue with parents not being able to understand, we seek someone to help translate so that the needs of the child are met.” On the other hand, valuing education by parents was appreciated aspect for enhancing children’s lives, as one of the teacher commented, “having parents who value education makes a difference.”

Knowledge about cultural needs of Saudi students represented in different levels. Teachers sought different resources to educate themselves about Saudi culture. Sara’s teacher stated:

I grew up in a town close to here with a small Arabic population, so I was aware to a certain degree of Saudi culture. One of my best friends in school was Arabic, so I was aware of cultural beliefs, holidays, and practices that were different from my own, and this experience I think helped me as I became a teacher in a district with a larger Saudi population. I have educated myself to a certain degree through reading a variety of articles to help me understand Saudi culture a bit better as it relates to me and my teaching of Saudi students. I have not formally taken any classes in this area. What I have learned has been through my own research. Through reading articles/books that have to do with teaching in a multicultural classroom.

However, one of the teachers declared, “I have never been educated on the needs or cultural differences of the Muslim students.” And she added, “I was not aware at all. I still feel grossly undereducated.” When I asked another teacher if she has educated herself about cultural needs of Saudis or Muslims in general, she said, “I have not. Perhaps I should. I would need someone to direct me to the proper resources.”



In general, two of three teachers revealed their lack of knowledge about cultural needs of Muslims students in general and Saudi students in particular.

#### Perspective toward the Experience of TCKs in General

Investigating the perspectives of American teachers about the experience of TCK in terms of exposing the child to many different cultures and how it may impact their role of cultural adaptation. One teacher revealed her perspective describing life of TCK as a double-edged experience, saying:

I feel that exposing a child to many different cultures can be both a good and bad. As a “child of the world”, getting the chance to experience many different cultures gives the child the opportunity to become a global citizen. This has many benefits to the child, both now and in the future, as the more we expand our knowledge of the world, the better off we are. However, as a child, I can see how frequent movement can have a negative influence, as the child may feel “lost”, especially if the two cultures in which the child is immersed are drastically different.

On the other hand, two teachers found the experience of TCK positive for children to learn and gain knowledge about different cultures. One of the teachers expressed her concern about potential political effect, clarifying:

Overall, I think the answer to this is yes, at least in my experience. Again, I feel it gives students an opportunity to learn about the world from a viewpoint that may be a bit different than their own, and I feel that this may broaden their view of the world. With the current political things going on in the United States, I worry how some of our Saudi students may react to things being said, but overall we work hard to shield all students from messages of hate.

Another teacher provided her perspective with examples, saying:

It gives them a better understanding of how other cultures live. Classroom environment is a great example, since some of my students are from India, China, and Japan; and they have class sizes of 60 plus students to one teacher. We have discussed how each country has classrooms of different sizes. Food they eat. Getting to know children from this and other countries helps to dispel any misconceptions and prejudices’ that they might have.

Most teachers demonstrated a positive sense in regard to the experience of third culture kids as a fruitful experience with some concerns related to feeling lost and being subjected to discrimination due to current political issues.

#### Perspective toward the Experience of Saudi TCKs

According to one of the teachers, American schools are not a good learning environment for Saudi children. By asking her if she thinks that American schools are good for Saudi children, she argued:

In my limited experience, no. I believe all of the ESL students need more interaction with and support from Arabic speaking adults. The school system needs to invest more money and time in educating these students.” The teacher added in another place, “We have one ELL teacher, who is insultingly underpaid, for 30+ ESL students, both Arabic and Chinese. Students receive 30 minutes of English lesson per day. Teachers are not trained or supported in the classroom.

A teacher declared her concern about lack of experience to teach and interact with Saudi children, who might be seen as temporary students, explaining:

This has been my only experience with Saudi students in 26 years of teaching in Kent. I feel that I am not trained or equipped with an understanding of their needs or cultural differences. When they come to me with no English I don’t know how to teach them or meet their needs. I feel that sometimes they are treated as temporary students and are not a priority.

#### Promoting Saudi Children Adaptation

##### *Inside classrooms.*

Through practices of teaching and interaction inside the classrooms, teachers adapted many different approaches to promote diversity helping children from all cultures to adapt and communicate regardless their origins using many strategies. These strategies include open discussions about different cultures, considering Islamic holidays, improving English language skills, offering learning supports, and having private communication to help the child if needed. A teacher described her effort to promote

adaptation on, saying. “Through open discussions, we are able to communicate about all kinds of cultural things. Again, diversity is the norm, not the exception, so all students are very open to different cultures and experiences.” Another teacher added, “We have spoken as a class of Islamic holidays..., and another student (not the one in the study) shared what the holiday was and why it was important.” In regard to language, a teacher clarified:

I help this child to be successful by providing learning supports as needed, especially in the area of vocabulary where she can be a bit weak. We work together weekly to learn new words and apply them to a variety of situations. Other than that, he/she has needed minimal extra support in relationship to his/her American-born peers.”

Another teacher negotiates her students about their feelings, as she said:

If this child isn’t feeling well, I approach him/her like I do all of my students, and inquire about what is going on. If he/she is not doing well on something, I pull him/her aside privately and discuss what we can work on together to help him/her to improve. This is not really unique to him/her, however, as I do this with all of my students.

To challenge potential stereotypes and promote sensitivity between children in class, one of the teachers mentioned, “We learn about each other and cultures throughout the year, and do many get to know you games at the start of the year.”

#### *Outside classrooms.*

School as a system was sensitive to the needs of international students and endeavor to meet the needs of all international students to adapt and succeed. Teachers have mentioned two fundamental aspects considered by the school. A teacher said, “I believe our school offers lunch choices that are acceptable to Arabic families. Muslim holidays are acceptable reasons for absence from school but are not necessarily addressed in class.” Another teacher added that children are free to abandon practices that contradict

their cultural beliefs, saying, “There is always several lunch choices that are pork free, so they are not forced to eat something that is forbidden in his culture. As for the holidays, we celebrated his holiday, and he is not forced to participate in any he feels uncomfortable with.”

All teachers as same as mothers praised the role of ESL teacher that help international students in terms of language difficulties. On the other hand, having an Arabic teacher benefits Saudi students in the first place not only in regard to language but also to help understand the cultural needs of Saudi students. A teacher clarified:

I do feel that Kent, and in particular Walls Elementary, supports cultural adaptation very well. Our ESL teacher (with a current load of 50 students in our school alone), is a fluent Arabic speaking woman, and I feel that this has made a great deal of difference with our large Arabic population, as there is someone who can clearly communicate with students and understands them from a viewpoint that only someone who has had multi-cultural experiences can.

Another teacher also addressed, “Again, our ESL teacher is the key, as she is able to communicate both with students as well as us unique Saudi needs. I do feel like, as a school, we try very hard to be respectful of some of the unique needs that Saudi students have.”

#### American Teachers Reflect their Perspectives about Saudi TCKs Experience

Through the questionnaire, the researcher intended to address a question to ask teachers about their feelings toward the experience of teaching Saudi students and what they think about Saudi children as students in American schools. One of the teachers found no unique problems to Saudi students asserting, “All children have their own unique issues and needs, so no more than any other child.”

Although all teachers expressed their love and care of Saudi students as same as they feel about all their students, their perspectives about having Saudi children in American schools were significantly contrasting. A teacher declared:

I enjoy having Saudi children in my class, as I feel that they are able to offer unique perspectives into schooling and life. I do feel that, in general, Saudi girls tend to be a bit more respectful to the teacher than Saudi boys; however, this is a general statement and not a hard and fast rule, as I have had several respectful Saudi boys as well.

When I asked the teacher if she experiences challenges while teaching Saudi students, she replied, “No, not really. Like I stated above, I feel that with some Saudi boys, there is a lack of respect, due to the fact that I am a woman. Otherwise, Saudi children are very similar to their American born peers.” Added:

From my perspective, culturally, being a woman as viewed from the Saudi culture can be an obstacle, especially if the student I am teaching is a male who has been taught that women are not as valuable as men. Again, this is not a regular experience for me but has been an issue in the past with a few of my male students.

In regard to motivation, another teacher addressed another aspect in respect to Saudi students’ motivation, saying:

Usually with Saudi children, the motivation that works in communication with the parent. Overall, Saudi students tend to value what their parents think a little more than American-born students do (this is a general statement and is not true for everyone), so usually the threat of a phone call home is enough to motivate the student to do what is needed to improve, both academically and behaviorally.

According to one of the teachers, Saudi children appreciate education and respect teachers, saying “Saudi children value school and respect their teachers. I do not feel that I need to do anything that I don’t do for ALL students in the classroom.” While another teacher stated that Saudi children are hard workers, saying, “I adore them. They work

hard in spite of the language barrier. They (and their families) seem to value education and respect teachers. I wish we were better prepared and supported.”

All teachers addressed in different ways that language is the significant challenge that affects Saudi children’s adaptation. For example, one teacher said, “Language is number one challenge for Saudi students.”

As a conclusion, teachers participating in this research help Saudi children to adapt. However, they do not necessarily aim through their practices to target international students including Saudis. They offer a welcoming environment for all children, love and teach all children no matter where they are from, and provide instructions for students who need, relying particularly on learning needs rather than cultural needs. It seems they focus on language difficulties and find the role of ESL teacher is sufficient to help international students to adapt and success.

This part belongs to the answer of question 4 (which is about the role of the teachers). Since this question was answered in relation to all three children not a case by case and although responses of teachers were analyzed collectively, I found it informative to include the voice of the teacher about each child. This was intended to demonstrate the individual perspective of the teacher about her child, even if she has provided general information. This particularly benefits in describing how teachers may describe the cultural adaptation of their students based on their acculturation in the classrooms:

Sami:

Through the questionnaire, Sami’s teacher provided a description clarifying how Sami acculturated in the class. In regard to his way to express his feelings and emotions, she said:

My student expresses his/her needs, feelings, and conflicts in the same way as his/her same age American peers. He/she reports unfair treatment such as pushing in line, mean words being said, or issues on the playground. He/she has a great sense of humor and enjoys talking to me about earning rewards in the classroom, telling me how he/she helped another student, or asking a do a job around the classroom.

In regard to personal characters that have been shown in the class, the teacher described her student, “He/she is very good-natured and happy all the time. This child has no discipline problems that are not aligned with his/her same age peers. He/she eagerly and successfully follows classroom and school rules... he/she is compliant and respectful. He/she is very confident. He/she seems very acclimated to our school and culture.”

Sara:

Regarding her interaction in class, Sara’s teacher described her as, “I have not had a situation of conflict with this child, as she is very quiet and compliant with anything I tell her to do. There have been no behavioral challenges up to this point, either. She is a very well behaved child.” The teacher added, “She is very compliant. She does anything I ask her to do and is very well behaved. I have had no discipline issues with her at all. This child is very kind and compliant and I feel she would blend well in any school, as she easily makes friends and is willing to work hard to meet goals.” Sara’s teacher assumed that she adapted very well saying:

I think this child has adapted very well. Her English language skills are good, so she is able to communicate well, and, from the outside, you would never really know that she hasn’t been here in America for her entire life. I can only observe her actions up to this point, which have been positive on all ends. She really is a well-rounded individual.”

Ali:

By asking Ali’s teacher about his communication in class and challenges that she may encounter with this child as an international student, she replied:

He is such a sweet young man, and I have not had any conflicts with him. He always has a smile on his face. Today we had a Halloween parade and he was the only one without a costume. I asked if he wanted parts of mine, and he politely smiled and said “No thank you. My mom forgot mine. I am okay” He is so easy going and always seems happy no matter the situation. He is always on target and has never had to be corrected for any behaviors.

Based on her observation and interaction with the child inside the classroom, she described her student’s experience of cultural adaptation, saying, “He has had a wonderful experience and has adjusted very well.”



## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, findings will be discussed based on ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1975), multiple worlds theory (Phelan et al., 1991), acculturation development model (Oppedal, 2006), and the literature of acculturation and adaptation of third culture kids. This study explored the lived experience of three Saudi children studying in Northeast Ohio Elementary School by investigating their perspectives along with their parents and teachers. This case study aimed to answer four questions in relation to the lived experience of cultural adaptation on Saudi third culture kids, how these children develop their cultural identities, and the roles that parents and teachers occupy in cultural adaptation.

In the first chapter, the introduction outlined the purpose of the research, questions and significance of the study along with a subjectivity statement and the theoretical framework. The second chapter included a detailed review of third culture kids in the literature, including acculturation, acculturation of children and Islamic groups in general and Saudis in particular. The second chapter then ended with a conclusion of the gap in the literature regarding the lived experience of Saudi children studying overseas. In the third chapter, a description of research design, methodology process, and internal and external validity were discussed in depth leading to the fourth chapter. Fourth chapter demonstrated the findings resulting from deep interviews, photo

elicitation, and questionnaires, and guided interviews via email. The fifth chapter, findings will be discussed, following by suggested implications and recommendations. This chapter will end by demonstrating the research's limitations.

Describing the lived experience of cultural adaptation of Saudi third culture kids necessitates a comprehensive examination of the complex relationships and interactions happening among individuals who impact the live of these children. Emerging from the heart of correlated ecological systems and moving from one level to another, children will affect and be affected within each level. All these levels represent ecological systems that generate the uniqueness of each lived experience - that is, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner,1994). A microsystem represents the outcome of interactions among family, school and other crucial systems in children's lives, such as religious institutions. For some children, as third culture kids, a mesosystem may appear and present possible contradictions and cultural differences among two or more systems. In a exosystem, children may face an explicit challenge resulting from indirect impact such as having stressed parents or due to parents' work difficulties. In a macrosystem, values and culture heritage impact children' lives and reflect the demand to understand cultural needs of each child in the school. All the prior ecological systems may be affected by the power of history and life events which in turn affect the children's lives as well, such as transitions and mobility experiences.

Analyzing the content of data revealed intertwined events that circulate within the live of three Saudi children participating in the research. The findings of the three cases will be discussed as one embedded case. However, significant differences among cases will be included through the discussion as well.

## Research Question One

The first question of the current research is: What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northeast Ohio elementary school, for cultural adaptation? Data offered by children and their mothers and teachers showed that the lived experience of Saudi TCKs participating in this research occurred through many opportunities during cultural adaptation. The cultural adaptation of Saudi TKCs was positively influenced by the multiple social support of their families, peers, and schools. Even while dealing with difficulties, children could make a good sense of their experiences overseas by integration and by having supportive ecological systems around them.

Applying the multiple worlds theory by Phelan et al. (1991), children as “third culture kids” will be exposed to some difficulties in effort to identify themselves and make meaning of their multiple worlds. Influenced by worlds of family, school, and peers, these children face the challenge of establishing successful adaptation. Each world of their multiple worlds may challenge children with its social structure and cultural fabric, which may also shape a new circle of challenge that the children will deal with.

Phelan et al. (1991) found four patterns that youths adapt to make a transition between their multiple realities in relation to different social circles (e.g. family, school, and peers). Two of the older children in the current research, despite being exposed to different cultural aspects between their original culture and the new culture, were still able to make sense of their experiences. Even with no comprehensive affiliation to people from both cultures, they could achieve positive adaptation so they were able to integrate and interact with both cultural groups well. Conversely, the youngest child experienced

some challenges in cultural adaptation in terms of interaction with the teachers.

Moreover, this child also experienced a challenge interacting with certain peers in the school, as he was sensitive to some aspects of feeling victimized or targeted due to his identity as “Arabic.” Despite this, he functioned well in the school and home, showing positive adaptation in general, he was not fully connected to people in the US or people in Saudi Arabia.

#### Relationships of Family, Teachers, Peers, and School

With respect to ecological system theory, family relationships represented a side of the exosystem. Children through this system may encounter challenge that results from having conflicted parents (Arditti, 2005) or stressful parents (Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2003). My research findings showed that two of the cases encountered difficulties because of the fathers’ absence. Absence of this significant relationship affected how these children developed their identities and made sense of their worlds. However, the reason behind the fathers’ absence differs upon the two cases, which resulted in a contradicted outcome for both. One child experienced his father’s absence as a result of war in Saudi Arabia, while the other child’s father left because of familial conflict, affecting the cases in different ways. In the case of Sami, reentry to the original culture was connected to a promise of meeting the missing father and regaining security. On the other hand, in Sara’s case, returning to Saudi Arabia was a threat to her security, since it relates to leaving her mother and living with her father, who left her behind in the US. Studies show that having familial conflicts and missing relationships make TCKs feel a sense of loss and grief. The experience of loss and grief may affect children’s adaptation before and after reentry. However, in this research, children showed different feelings

and actions regarding missing relationships, varying from sadness to anger and disregard. However, findings showed that social support provided by mothers was a significant factor impacting the adaptation of their children. Research shows that a child's emotions toward integration and the experience of adaptation are influenced by their parents' adaptation and attitude toward living cross-cultural life (Bell, 1996; Hormuth, 1988). In addition, the impact of social support by family in TCKs' lives was found in several studies (Bell, 1996; Hormuth, 1988; Nathanson & Marcenko, 1995); such impact was seen as a supportive of adaptation during the experience of cross-culture, before and after reentry (Yoshida et al., 2002). In the recent findings, the mothers accommodated their children's feeling of loss by offering explanations, and trying to fill the gap of relationships. The mothers smoothed the experiences of their children by explaining and providing clear information about their goal of living in the US, expected time of reentry, and future plans. Attachment of the child to the mother was an overt effect of the absence of the father. Mothers asserted how much their children were more attached to them than before. In Ali's case, relationships were affected by disagreements toward integration between his parents. While the mother preferred negotiation to integrate successfully, the other one tended toward separation. Thus, family conflicts that appeared sometimes resulted from disagreements between the parents about giving the child a space to integrate, aiming to maintaining Islamic identity of their child. In this research, family relationships integrated with the experience of living outside Saudi Arabia, whereas children unconsciously connected their personal realities to their acculturation preferences. They want to stay but want to leave, they somehow were connected to both realities because the two spaces meant to them either "a reconnecting to" or "a separation

from” loved ones as well as a potential ending or a possible new circle of loss and another experience of grief.

School-home relationships represented another component in the microsystem in that successful interaction between teachers and mothers influenced the adaptation of the children. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989, 1993) asserted that acculturating under the influence of a larger society affects children passively even with positive familial relationships (Bronfenbrenner as cited by NAEYC, 1997, p. 4). However, due to the presence of healthy relationships at school and opportunities to express the self, children showed positive cultural adaptation at home despite having some familial challenges.

Other research shows that having a powerful system at school promoted a good adaptation of Saudi students who successfully showed a competence rather than dysfunction during acculturation (Velliari,2015) at school and home. Barriers of interaction in schools have been shown in prior studies, including lack of knowledge, lack of consideration of complexities (Espinetti,2011), differentiation of the values system between teachers and parents, school environment, cultural misunderstanding of teachers about students and their parents that affects TCKs lives are presented in different studies (Delpit, 2006; L. Sirin, Ryce, & R. Sirin, 2009). In addition, as demonstrated by Lausa (1989), there are many factors affecting the experience of cross cultural kids such as: offering learning facilities for ESL students; English as a second language in the school; having students all over the world; the school climate; quality of parent-teacher interaction; parental support; and peer support. Results of current research showed that the school affected the adaptation of Saudi students. In respect to current findings, school activities played a remarkable role helping Saudi children to feel engaged and fitting in,

giving them more spaces to express themselves. It is found that activities presented in the school were sufficient to blind cultural differences between children, allowing them to focus on success as a group, enjoy the experience as a team, and focus on similarities than differences. The ELL teacher and the music teacher of the school appeared to occupy a significant role in enhancing cultural adaptation of Saudi TCKs. Both teachers and mothers praised the efforts of the school in facilitating learning of international students by having an Arabic ELL teacher. The mothers also mentioned how the music teacher in the school affected their children by being sensitive to cultural needs of Saudi children, adapting some practices like inserting some Arabic words in her curriculum, inviting Saudi children to teach her Arabic language, and by showing her interest about the Saudi culture. Within the microsystem, it can be seen that having an effect in one level will affect the child in another one, by integrating a net of influence affecting the cultural experience of Saudi TCKs in the current research.

Integration of Saudi children with their American, international, and Saudi peers regardless of their cultural background helped the children to overcome cultural difficulties, to feel a sense of belonging, and to fit in (Chen & Tse, 2008). However, friendships of Saudi TCKs in this study were found to be urgent and temporary, which is supported by many studies (Werkman, Farley, Butler, and Quayhagen, 1981). Current results were similar to prior found in different studies (Barron, 2007; Fredricks, 1996, Tanu, 2015), in that of the powerful role of peers in providing social support and affiliation. Prior findings also showed that children aged eight years and younger could introduce themselves and generate terms to identify others (Wellman, 1990) and demonstrated awareness about their identities and the cultural differences between the

two groups (Ruble & Dweck,1995). Saudi TCKs could evaluate their peers by describing their attitude toward Arabic peoples and identified their identities based on language (Coll et al. ,1996; Alvarez, Ruble, & Bolger, 2001). In the current study, Saudi TCKs tended to switch behaviors and perspectives to fit in and be affiliated in the new culture and the original culture (Kidder, 1992; Zayat, 2008).

#### Under Miso-System

As has been shown in studies of Bell (1996), Hormuth (1988), and Nathanson and Marcenko (1995), there were many factors influencing the experience of third culture kids, such as social support, school environment and diversity, peer relationships, and family support. The findings of this research showed that having supportive mothers, ELL teacher, activities, a school climate of acceptance toward diversity, affiliation of peers, neighborhood, and religious schooling have affected the experience of Saudi TCKs (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Although experiencing difficulties resulting from their fathers' absence, loss and grief, and being offended and experiencing victimization, multiple sources of social support were significant factors to smooth the children's transitions and help them to balance between two different cultures.

What affected the presence of positive relationships was a solid system within the school as indicated by Rutter (1979). Data showed that the school adopted a strong approach encouraging children to communicate and teaching children ways to create healthy peer relationships. School's efforts were demonstrated clearly toward two aspects: school counselors and teachers. They invited children to integrate by encouraging peer support inside the classrooms instead of excluding them as passive agents. Moreover, mothers enhance integration by supporting the efforts of the school



and generating a socially friendly environment that teaches children to focus on integration rather than separation during acculturation.

Saudi TCKs appreciated their experience of living outside their culture, finding it an important experience for them and their parents to study in good schools and learn a new language. This attitude toward the experience of cultural adaptation has been discussed in numerous studies (Crowne, 2008; Fluckiger, 2010; Fail, 1995; Peterson and Plamondon, 2009; Useem & Cottrell, 1993, 2001, 2002; Willis et al., 1994). Contrary to findings by Berry (2001), Costigan et al. (2010), Rumbaut (2008), and Schwartz et al. (2006) who argued that acculturation becomes more challenging with individuals whose cultures are vastly different to the new culture, Saudi TCKs in this study showed excellent adaptation despite the significant differences between Saudi culture and American culture.

### Research Question Two

The second research question is: How do Saudi third culture kids develop their cultural identity? It was found that Saudi third culture kids develop their identities by integration and establishing relationships that connect them to both cultures. They showed awareness of their cultural identities as Arab and Muslims, but at the same time they developed a bicultural attitude and were able to successfully hold multiple identities as well.

Adler (1977) defines cultural identity as “The symbol of one’s essential experience of oneself as it incorporates the worldview, value system, attitudes, and beliefs of a group with which such elements are shared” (p.230). For Third culture kids, cultural identity has different aspects to be formulated. Traditional studies showed that

TCKs' lives result in feeling alienation, marginalization, and cultural confusion (Bloomfield, 1983; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Useem & Cottrell, 1992; Willis et al., 1994). In this research, Saudi TCKs showed awareness to their original culture and identified themselves as Muslim Arabs coming from Saudi Arabia. This may result from the strong identification of cultural identity and the value of family upon Saudi culture. Saudis have been identified as a highly collectivist society, which may be affected by their identity formation and they interpret their strong connection to their origin even after a cross-cultural experience (Razek, 2012). The adaptation of Saudi TCKs in this study was similar to the adaptation of one of three groups identified in a prior study by Fujiwara et al. (1985) which described the adaptation attitude of three returnee groups. One of those attitudes is that Saudi TCKs developed their identities by achieving a good cultural adaptation at home and school by having good relationships with people from both cultures and having strong social support from mothers and the school system, despite having difficulties due to and the pervading passive stereotype about Saudi Arabia and perceived offenses. Saudi TCKs were proud to show their cultural beliefs and share Saudi traditions. Even when Saudi TCKs avoid sharing cultures, it was not to abandon the culture, but to avoid feeling alienated (Zayat, 2008).

Saudi TCKs however, connected their identities fundamentally to language, that is, to be American is to speak English, and to be Saudi is to speak Arabic. Losing the Arabic language means losing identity. Therefore, they considered themselves American and Saudi at the same time since they speak two languages. They also linked their identities to the place they lived and studied, so they are Saudi because they have a home there, and American because they study and have a home here, too. Fail, Thompson, &

Walker (2004) discussed that most TCKs either feel they belong to multiple cultures, or they feel as though they are not affiliated to any. However, some may hold multiple views toward themselves, having a wider perspective that includes different cultural views and may successfully identify themselves and use effective strategies to negotiate their identities in both cultures (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009). The youngest Saudi TCKs in the study were looking forward to returning back to their original culture to live and study, but one of them was willing to return and study in the US when he grows up, and wished to learn different languages, similar to most of the TCKs identified by Useem and Cottrell (2001).

One of the children in this study preferred to separate cultures. It seemed that he adopted this approach of separation to fit and to feel and look like his American peers. When this child was in Saudi Arabia during vacations, he endeavored to act as a settler there, thereby avoiding talking about his experience of living in the US, while he adopted the same attitude in the US. Awareness of Saudi culture and American culture helped this child to assimilate into both cultures as a way of fitting in. With the youngest participant, it was found that the child was more affected by Saudi culture and more willing to share his identity as Arabic coming from Saudi Arabia than the older participants. All three children identified themselves within the fundamental aspects of their religion, Islam. However, the oldest child only considered herself different than some Americans because of her religious identity, which was vastly different than the two other children who focused only on language as an aspect of cultural difference and identity. Studies showed that younger children tend toward separation rather than integration by being more connected to their cultural identity and traditional culture. It

was concluded that Saudi TCKs in this study shifted identities to copy both cultures and to fit into both. Many studies indicate the benefits of shifting identities (Moore, 2011; Sorrow, 2000; Baker, 2001). Saudi TCKs identified their original culture but at the same time respected cultural differences of others and held positive perspective toward their American teachers and friends (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). On the other hand, the children showed a slightly passive perspective about Saudi people living in Saudi Arabia, which may impact their identity development during the coming adaptation experience after reentry.

Opposite to what was found in many studies (Fry, 2007; Pearce, 2015; Pollack & Reken, 2009; Ward, Furnham & Bochner, 2001), Saudi TCKs made sense of their experiences in the US. They adopted different coping strategies during transitions and they made sense of the differences between American culture and Islamic Saudi culture by integrating with people in both cultures despite difficulties, such as victimization in relation to their cultural origin and language in both cultures. Prior studies found that some cultural groups may be unwelcomed for their religious and racial background (Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2004; Funk & Said, 2004; Sirin & Fine, 2007). Thus, two of the children declared experiencing unfair attitudes from certain American peers, believing it was caused by their ethnicity.

On the other hand, having other Saudis in the neighborhood and school helped Saudi TCKs to acculturate with the same cultural group, to feel connected, and to have a sense of affiliation (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). On the other hand, similar to findings by Weisskirc and Alva (2002) and Paterson and Larson (2011), Saudi TCKs as bilinguals showed pride being able to translate for others, so they never showed the stress of being

cultural bridge that was found in Coll and Magnuson (2014). Acting as a cultural bridge helped Saudi TCKS to develop their cultural identities toward both cultures by being a cultural facilitator between people from both cultures, which in turn enhanced their self-concept and cultural identity as they felt they could support relationships by being bilingual.

Feeling accepted and welcomed by American teachers and most of American friends impacted the negotiation strategies that Saudi TCKs needed to develop their identities (Dinh & Bond 2008; Toth & Vigver, 2003; Oudenhoven & Ward, 2013; Piontkowski, Rohmann, & Florack, 2002; Zagefca, Tip, Gonzalez, Brown, & Cinnirella, 2012). As it was found by LaFromboise et al. (1993), children develop bicultural and bilingual identity that enable them communicate and develop relationships with both cultures despite differences. The attitude of Saudi TCKs was described as an aspect of cultural intelligence (Early & Ang, 2003).

Saudi TCKs showed the ability to grow by focusing on successful relationships, successful work at school and by enjoying the experience of living overseas. Saudi TCKs identify themselves as good and grateful kids holding feelings for both cultures they live between while they appreciate having freedom and experience fairness in the school (Rutter, 1979). They developed sense of respect and responsibility toward themselves and their cultures and others around them. While they trusted adults in the US, they missed their loved adults in Saudi Arabia, so while they had this kind of supportive net, they focused on enjoying the experience rather than being marginalized or made to feel like an outsider.

Despite their awareness and pride, Saudi TCKs were still caught between, as third culture kids they connected to both cultures by having both languages, having two homes, and by having much-loved people here and there. In this way, they accomplished a third culture where they understand their identities differently and developed them in relation to multiple cultures (Pollack & Reken, 2009).

In their American school, Saudi TCKs showed a concern to meet expectations and achieve excellence by showing disappointment if they did not. They put high consideration on good academic performance, obeying teachers, and maintaining good relationships with their peers. They were willing to be loved, accepted, and successful. As found by Coll and Magnuson (2014) and Velliaris (2015), while Saudi TCKs experienced some acculturation stress during cultural adaptation, they functioned positively, showing competence in the new culture rather than dysfunction by doing well in the school, academically and socially.

### Research Question Three

The third question in my study is: What are the mothers' roles in their Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation? In this research, mothers adopted different approaches helping enhance cultural identities of their children. These approaches impacted the experience of the children and affected their identities and perspectives toward integration, reentry and Saudi Arabia.

Research by (Compas (1987), Garmezy (1983), Kallarackal et al. (1976) found a relationship between successful adaptation and strong social support from parents and caregivers. In this study it was also found that Saudi mothers particularly played role of their children's experience. They practiced many strategies to help their children

transition and make sense of their cultural experience considering that their children's psychological well-being and religious identity were fundamental aspects to be maintained. Saudi mothers in this study functioned in multiple levels through the different transitions (Costigan & Koryzm, 2010; Nesteruk & Marks, 2011). The levels were presented as follows: Before coming to the US, while living in the US, and after the experience of cross cultural living. Before coming to the US, they tried to gain knowledge about American schools and culture, so one of the mothers provided her daughter with exposure to the English language before coming to the US. During the experience of living in the US, mothers endeavored to negotiate cultural aspects and provide their children with explanation and answers about cultural differences without exposing them to any negative perspectives about people outside their cultural group. Mothers also tried to encourage integration (Alkinde, 2013) by focusing on similarities rather than differences, and by looking at their children's experiences as childhood experience rather than a cultural experience, being conscious of the potential impact of growing up in a non-Islamic culture on their religious identity (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Mothers also found that being balanced with their children was a powerful approach that helped their children avoid stress during cultural adaptation (Nestemk & Marks, 2011). Seeking school support and communication with the school was found to be a successful approach in cultural adaptation. However, one of the mothers argued that communication with her child's school when there was a problem contradicted her beliefs as a parent because she believed being involved is not a support, but may affect her child's independence and self-reliance. It was interesting to find that the attitudes of children

toward integration and sensitivity of discrimination and stereotype about Saudi Arabia were mostly influenced by mothers' perspectives.

#### Research Question Four

The last research question is: What are the teachers' roles in their Saudi third culture kids' cultural adaptation? It seemed that teachers in this research focused on assimilation rather than accommodation. It was found that teachers endeavored to develop language skills of Saudi children, but they did not provide any special considerations during interaction or instruction that were different from those provided for all children regardless their cultural backgrounds.

Strategies teachers apply to help in their Saudi students' cultural adaptation were not at all specialized or oriented based on cultural sensitivity. Teachers declared that they aimed to provide all students with the same opportunities needed for success in school. They asserted that having Saudi students in their classrooms did not affect their teaching experience except in relation to language. They found Saudi students needed more support in English language as international students, but they did not recognize significant cultural needs over their American peers. Therefore, the teachers mostly did not address the need to provide specific additional practices with Saudi students except what was presented by the school. As a part of the school system, Saudi students were given permission to be absent from school to celebrate Islamic cultural holidays, students were invited to share their cultural customs in the school, the option to share or abandon celebrations of American holidays, accommodations for the unique diet of Muslims, and by offering an Arabic ELL (English Language Learners) teacher to improve English language skills. The Arabic teacher worked also as a cultural bridge between teachers,



children, and parents when they found communication difficult. Having a supporting school system eased successful acculturation and smoothed cultural adaptation (Rutter, 1979).

Many researchers (Niyozov and Plum, 2009; Abukhattala, 2004; Douglass and Dunn, 2003) indicate the impact of teachers who lack knowledge about cultural needs of their students had on those students' experience of learning. The teachers showed a positive perspective toward diversity, but they expressed their lack of knowledge about Saudi culture, with the exception of one teacher who indicated that she had sought information and materials about Islamic and Arabic culture. Teachers declared that they did not believe they should include strategies other than adding more vocabulary and more instruction through curriculum to enhance language skills of Saudi students. They believed that Saudi students in general have the same needs and difficulties as their American peers, so they did not feel the need to adapt their teaching practices with Saudi students. In this regard, Britto (2008) asserted that Arabic Islamic identity is unique by its different structure, so it should be understood based on three fundamental aspects: religion, language, and gender relationships, which was not identified by the teachers in this study.

#### Implications of the Study

Findings of this research lead to implications for early childhood and elementary teachers of third culture kids, parents of third culture kids, and teachers in Saudi Arabia. Although generalization is a challenge in this qualitative inquiry, the lived experiences investigated in this research are still meaningful to those who live the same circumstances, and they can find something to learn from such stories. Other individuals

may make meaning from these stories and learn how to help children with similar lived experiences in their cross-cultural journey. Since ecological environments include individuals who interact and impact the life of children, understanding, trust and knowledge are needed to promote the cultural transitions that TCKs encounter during their early years of life.

#### Implications for Early Childhood and Elementary Teachers

It is acknowledged that achieving a comprehensive understanding of individual needs of each child in the classroom is challenge (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). However, Engelbrecht (2013) argued that educators who lack knowledge of their students' backgrounds may not be able to teach them well. To help children better adapt and succeed in schools, teachers should consider the cultural needs of each child and build their teaching practices and social interactions based on these needs. Teachers can satisfy cultural needs of children by implementing differentiated instruction to meet such needs and connect the children to relevant and meaningful content (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Children should learn in a considered environment where they can make sense of their identity and make meaning of their lives. They learn better when they find meaning within learning and a connection with people who share with them the experience of learning; and they learn by looking deeply for affiliation and confirmation of their identities. Identity formation is a continuous process that can be shaped by having valuable learning experience considering cultural values, self-esteem, and academic success (Cummins, 2001). Interpersonal experience with teachers affects strong identity formation. Therefore, teachers should educate themselves on cultural knowledge with an eye toward the value and importance of children like third culture kids, since children

need to establish a strong relationship with people they can learn from and grow with (Nieto, 2010).

Teachers need to recognize the strength of each child and start from there. This might not be sufficient with a lack of knowledge about the cultural identity of each child. It is critical that teachers build up from the children's experiences, inserting culture in the curriculum, designing instruction that includes the cultural story of each child, including pieces of their heritage with respect to cultural needs rather than focusing only on language difficulties, which shape only one aspect of a culture. When there is a connection between the child and the teacher, then considering the child's story and experiences are critical and supportive, which is particularly possible not only through curriculum but in "the second classroom, pedagogical spaces on the margins of the school day: before and after school, during lunch, at recess, in the halls, and other learning environment opportunities within the school day" (Nieto, 2010, p. 251).

Building trust is a cornerstone of building a relationship. Saudi TCKs - as all children - can learn and adapt better in classrooms where they do not lose connection and trust. They will grow and thrive in the environments that satisfy their needs, express their realities, include them as a priority not as transitory, respect their individual experiences, and connect them to their cultural identities.

#### Implications for Parents of Third Culture Kids

Social support for the family is found to be a key of successful cultural adaptation experience. When children are raised in homes where parents are present and supportive during transitions, children build trust, establish bonds and connect to their original backgrounds. Although the difficulties of identity formation during cultural adaptation

and transitions cross cultures, parents can smooth such experience by caring and understanding. It is important to encourage children to focus on positive aspects during this experience, such as: success in school, building friendly relationships, and by encouraging integration. However, parents should always consider connecting the children to their original culture and enhance their cultural identities especially in relation to religion and language, putting in their minds that children in this early age are not too young to make a meaning of such aspects. Early years of children's lives are critical to grow the seeds of cultural identity that are present in awareness and identification of a religious identity. Such a role cannot be entrusted to the Islamic school alone and will not be achieved by chance. Parents should confirm Islamic identity by incorporating teaching moments to educate their children about Islam and encourage them to communicate and connect to their cultural heritage. Parents can commit to transforming cultural practices by negotiation and explanation, along with providing the child the opportunity to integrate in order to make sense of the inevitable differences of cultural groups, and to understand themselves among such differences.

Reentry is described as a crisis in people's lives. It is a complicated process that may affect the whole family, rather than the child alone. Understanding difficulties that accompany reentry such as reverse culture shock and the challenge of affiliation and fitting in can help parents understand the challenge that their children might go through. Therefore, parents should empower themselves with knowledge, sources, and patience to support their children and help them to cope with such transitions smoothly. Parents are still needed to continue their negotiation and explanation. They should provide their children with knowledge and information about possible difficulties and ways to get

through them as well as ways to reinsert in their culture. Communication with schools is a golden key during the cultural adaptation journey. Parents should maintain contact with schools and teachers in both cultures to work together toward smooth and successful cultural adaptation after reentry.

#### Implications for Teachers of Third Culture Kids in the Original Culture

Phelan et al. (1991) argued that attitudes of children regarding their transitions across cultures influence their school experience, and their future in relation to getting more promising experiences. Therefore, teachers in the original cultures should deeply understand that teaching children such as third culture kids requires them to include new teaching approaches and ways of communication. It is necessary to value the knowledge and the experience these children bring to the classrooms. Teachers should understand the construction of the identity of third culture kids and respond to relevant issues of identity and affiliation with respect and understanding. Teachers of the original culture are responsible for opening doors for returnees by including them and understanding the challenge of transitions and giving them opportunities and time to prove themselves and to succeed.

#### Implications for Researchers of Children

Researchers working with young children should consider the challenge of interviews. Sometimes young children might be uninterested in participating in a specific time or a place, or even experience difficulty sharing information about a proper topic. I found that meeting the child before the basic interview was helpful to build a space of comfort between the child and me. Responding to the child's answers was a challenge as well, so I endeavored to be natural during the times I was listening and receiving data.

However, sometimes I needed to encourage children or comment about a story to establish intimacy and interaction during the interview, and researchers should be prepared to do this without affecting the child's responses.

It was noticed that photo elicitation was of great benefit during the interview, but in a unique way. Without intention, the children reflected their perspectives to my photos more than reflecting on their photos. I found little data from photos they brought. In future studies, I encourage researchers working with young children to consider having relevant photos by the researcher that stimulate the conversation rather than relying solely on photos brought by children. As a conclusion, giving children an opportunity to express their thoughts and stories was an investment and they added new and interesting perspectives.

#### Recommendations

This study contributed toward filling a gap in research of the experience of third culture kids. For the future, more studies are needed to understand in more depth varying perspectives of Saudi children about their experiences overseas. This qualitative study focused on the lived experience of a little group of Saudi children contributes to knowledge about other TCKs. However, further contributions about Saudi children and other TCKs will promote our knowledge about how these children go through cultural experiences and make sense of their identities. Mixed method studies with a significant number of children are also needed to generalize findings. More investigations are also needed to explore the adaptation of Saudi children after returning, and what Saudi schools do to prepare children for reentry. Another possible direction of future research is to explore the role of Saudi teachers and finding if they are ready to teach returnees who

would bring a new perspective to Saudi classrooms. There is still a need to know if the difficulties that children in early years face during cross cultural experience are related to development or acculturation crisis. It is interesting to investigate the acculturation of both Saudi children and American children to understand how they integrate and negotiate as two different cultural groups.

Data from this research revealed interesting perspectives of American teachers about Saudi children. Therefore, in future research, it might be informative to investigate the perspectives of American teachers as they relate to stereotypes about children of cultural groups in a different setting in the US. Moreover, participants of this study indicated that the ELL teacher has a significant role in the experience of international students in the school. Therefore, in future research, a focus on the role of ELL as a source of data is recommended. Having the perspective of ELL teachers may enrich the data about the experience of international students in schools.

Unlike the prior studies about Muslim adults and adolescents in the US, there was no sufficient evidence of discrimination except some actions that two of the children reported, so future studies should investigate in more depth the existence or the absence of discrimination during early and middle childhood of Muslim and Arabic children in early age.

In respect to the uniqueness of the current case study, it is important to be conscious of the danger of generalizing findings from one case to another, and from one setting to another one. Saudi children in a Northeast Ohio Elementary School may experience different lived experiences that represent distinct perspectives as compared to Saudi TCKs studying in other American elementary schools.

## Limitations

In research of young children, despite of the value of children's perspectives that they add to the research, interviewing was considered a challenge in terms of getting further details and deliberation to provide more data and to promote the interpretation and reflection about the child's perspective without misunderstanding or misinterpreting to his/her intention. However, including parents and teachers to provide data about the child was intended to support validity by synthesizing data from children along with their social agents.

In qualitative research, having a small number of participants limits generalization. However, the sample reflects the spirit of qualitative research which focuses on the value of the experience of the individual more than the number of experiences. Thus, it was not the researcher's intent to generalize the findings of this study as much as it was meant to reflect a unique and deep lived experience of three children and their parents and teachers which may or may not represent or reflect other similar experiences of other TCKs. The uniqueness of the case study still depends on the reader's choice in finding an interest, a lesson to be learned from others, or a meaning to be made from such experiences, despite their uniqueness.

Time was a challenge in this research. Although I proposed to collect data by the end of school year so teachers have sufficient time and more interaction to reflect a comprehensive perspective about the experience of the child through a whole year, having access to schools and having IRB approval were time consuming and done after the end of the 2016 school year and was provided during Summer. Therefore, this might



have affected the depth of rich and detailed data from teachers about each case separately.

Another limitation was the lack of the studies investigating Saudi children or Muslim children in middle and early childhood, which made it difficult to find extensive relevant literature in such area. On the other hand, I see this limitation as an advantage that gave significance to this research by adding a new cultural perspective to the literature of third culture kids in general, and to the literature about Saudi third culture kids specifically, adding to the conversation of Saudi children's adaptation overseas.

### Conclusion

As Oppedal (2006) argued that acculturation, a major concept of cultural adaptation, affects children during developmental years, but as an embodied part of their natural development. Based on acculturation development theory, acculturation and child development are a dual process that should be understood as a parallel line. To understand the lived experience of Saudi children for cultural adaptation, we should describe it as an inevitable process of development where the children are expected to meet challenges while interacting with the different worlds around them. It seems that dealing with changing worlds is a part of the developmental process not a separate one. Therefore, young children should be affected by their experiences of transitions, racism, and bilingual and bicultural lives because dealing with the outcome of changing worlds is a part of their developmental journey to grow and communicate with the world with all its potential challenges and opportunities.

The two sides that influence people's lives during cross-cultural experience are: psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. Through this research, it is

concluded that Saudi TCKs showed aspects of positive psychological and sociocultural adaptation during their cultural experience by making sense of their cultural identities, and integration successfully with their different worlds. According to the complex interaction of multiple ecological environments, Saudi TCKs are found to be affected explicitly and inexplicitly during their cross-cultural experiences. The sociocultural contexts they have grown up in appear in two levels: On a public level presented in American school and Islamic school, and on an individual level by peers.

Saudi TCKs' experience of cultural adaptation is a fruitful experience, despite the challenges and difficulties of transitions, making sense of cultural differences, building relationships, examining loss, and the need to replace significant relationships. Many significant factors affect the adaptation of the children such as: Having a strong religious and ethnic identity (Berry et al., 2010; Organista, 2010), the role of mothers (Berry et al., 2010) and the efforts of school in the new culture. It appears that families and schools negotiate cultural differences and meet the "continuing need for understanding sameness/difference as a couplet, not a binary and to reinforce different ways of understanding of notions of childhood" (Kennedy & Bloch, 2010). The impact of these factors influences the journeys of those children to be a successful and a promise experience during their childhood.

It can be discerned from Hervey's (2009) study that understanding the relationship between adaptation and acculturation during childhood is fundamental because such a process will predict the quality of future adjustment during different stages of life. In this regard, the researcher found a relationship between passive experience of transition during childhood and adjustment in college. In the current

research, her concern was evident regarding the negative perspective of Saudi TCKs about their original cultural society since such stereotype may affect their adaptation and interaction with peers and teachers after reentry. Therefore, Saudi teachers as well as Saudi schools should consider the experiences of returnees and understand the challenge of transitions and reentry in the culture. Saudi teachers should provide returnees with support and patience, helping children to identify themselves and refit in their culture and connect their multicultural experience to the experiences of others, which should enrich curriculum and open spaces to understand the “other” in the negotiation of diversity.

This study would contribute to promote our understanding in two directions: literature of third culture kids and literature of Saudis in the US. The first direction orients to continue building a systemic knowledge about third culture kids that focuses on the individual experience of a cultural group. Focusing on the experience of each international group should highlight its cultural identity. The experience of Saudi third culture kids presented in this study should represent a piece of knowledge that presents a perspective within prior studies about other cultural groups such as Japanese TCKs, Sweden TCKs, and Turkish TCKs. In this regard, this researcher recommends investigations of other cultural groups of TCKs in the future research.

The second direction is related to the literature of Saudis’ acculturation in the US. Within the literature of Saudis in the US, two studies have contributed to the knowledge about two sectors of Saudis in the US. In 2012, Hakami conducted a quantitative study about the acculturation experience of Saudi female students in the U.S., while Heyn (2013) in his qualitative study investigated the lived experience of Saudi male in the US. In this study, it was my intention to continue the investigation of the current body of

knowledge literature by exploring the experience of a third group of Saudis in the U.S.:  
Saudi third culture kids.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A



Office of Research Administration  
Akron, OH 44325-2102

### NOTICE OF APPROVAL

Date: June 27, 2016

To: Huda Bajamal,  
Curricular & Instructional Studies

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator <sup>SM</sup>

IRB Number: 20160504

Title: Saudi Third Culture Kids: A Phenomenological Case Study of Saudis' Acculturation in a Northeast Ohio Elementary School

Thank you for submitting your Application for Research Involving Human Subjects to the IRB for review. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and has been approved.

Approval Category: Expedited 7  
Approval Date: June 22, 2016  
Expiration Date: June 22, 2017  
Continuation Application Due: May 22, 2017

In addition, the following is/are approved:

- Research involving children
- Research involving prisoners
- Waiver of documentation of consent
- Waiver or alteration of consent

- IRB approval is given for not more than 12 months. If your project will be active for longer than one year, it is your responsibility to submit an Application for Continuation prior to the expiration date.
- If changes are made to the protocol before the expiration date you must submit a Request for Change form for review and approval before the change is implemented.
- When the project is completed you must submit a Final Report to close the IRB file.
- If this research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, you must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.
- All forms are available on the ORA website at <http://www.uakron.edu/research/ora/irb/irbforms.dot>
- CITI Certification is valid for three years. Any continuation of this protocol or approval of new research is contingent upon maintaining a current CITI certification. It is your responsibility to update your certification as needed. The link to the CITI home log-in screen is: <https://www.citiprogram.org/>

Approved consent form(s) attached

## APPENDIX B



Curriculum and Instructional Studies  
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### Appendix B

#### Child Assent

**Title of Study:** Saudi Third Culture Kids: A Phenomenological case study of Saudis' acculturation in an elementary school in northeast Ohio

1. My name is Huda Bajamal. I am a doctoral student in education at the University of Akron.
2. I would like you to take part in a research study to learn more about how Saudi children like you live and study in an American school while coming from a different country.
3. If you agree to participate in this study, you and I will meet three times at your home to talk about things that you like and dislike about living and studying in the US. I will also ask you to take or bring some photos about things and people that you might want to talk about during the interview. During our conversation, your parents can be in the room if they want.
4. Participating in this research is your choice and no one is going to force you to participate. Only you and I will share the conversation. However, one of your parents will be available in the same room, and they might take part in the conversation, if you want them to.
5. Participating in this study may help us learn about the life of Saudi children and how they feel about studying and living in the US. Your participation may help us develop ways to help Arabic children grow and learn in the US.
6. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. I will also ask your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. But even if your parents say "yes" you can still decide not to do this.
7. If you don't want to be in this study, you don't have to participate. Please remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don't want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.
8. To show our appreciation for your participation you will receive a gift card of \$10 and a book after conducting the last meeting (interview).
9. You can ask any questions you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can call me [540-998-9090]

APPROVED

IRB

Date 6/22/16  
The University of Akron

10. Signing your name means that you agree to be in this study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPROVED

IRB

6/22/16

University of Akron



## APPENDIX C



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### Appendix C

#### Parent Informed Consent

**Title of the Study:** Saudi Third Culture Kids: A Phenomenological case study of Saudis' acculturation in an elementary school in northeast Ohio

**Researcher:** Huda Bajamal

Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies, Elementary Education, University of Akron

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to inform you that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to allow you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researcher any questions you may have.

**Purpose:** This research is about the lived experience of cultural adaptation of Saudi third culture kids (Saudi children who live between two cultures during their childhood). There are many studies about other children with similar experience of living between two or more different cultures. However, nothing has been done to investigate the acculturation experience of Saudi Culture Kids. This study explores how Saudi children with ages between 7-10 years develop identities and adapt and what roles parents and teachers play in cultural adaptation of those children. Four children aged between 7-10 years who identify themselves as Saudis who can speak English fairly well and who have lived in the US no less than two years, their parents, and basic teachers are invited to participate in this study. You and your child's participation in the study will involve 3 interviews that will each take about 30 to 45 minutes. These meetings will take place at your home or in the library.

**Procedures:** Your child will participate in 3 interviews, 30 minutes each at home along with taking/bringing pictures prior to the interview. The child will use his/her I-pad or a camera (provided by the researcher) to capture pictures about things and people who he/she would like to talk about during the interview, or bring some of his/her own photos that have been taken before. The researcher will converse with the child about photos for things, places, and people who the child likes or dislikes in the US and Saudi Arabia. You can be available during the interview. However, it is preferred that there will be no interruption or sharing in the conversation between the researcher and the child unless the child prefers you to join the conversation. Your role during the interview might be limited to reminding the child or adding some details.

You will also be given a questionnaire to answer questions about your child. You will be interviewed 3 times, for 45 minutes each. During the interview, you will be asked open-ended questions regarding your child 'experience of growing up in the U.S. and your identification of your child after this experience.

**APPROVED**

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You child's teacher will also be asked to provide information on their interactions with you and your child as well as their interactions with Saudi children in general in the classroom.

**Risks and Discomforts:** This study poses a minimal risk for you and your child. You will complete a questionnaire that includes some questions that may cause you to experience some discomfort. Your child will be involved in a conversation that includes some questions about family relationships and home, interaction with teachers and peers' relationships in the school, and family relationships in Saudi Arabia and the US which may cause him/her to experience some discomfort or distress. You and your child may skip any question. The researcher is available to answer questions and concerns before, after, and during the interview.

**Potential Benefits:** You or your child will not directly benefit from participation in this study, but participation may contribute to a better understanding of children's experience as it relates to their original culture and the new culture that they live in. This study, along with other future research, may increase our knowledge about the outcome of living cross cultures during childhood, which may potentially benefit children in the future.

**Payments to Participants:** It does not cost anything to participate in this study. In appreciation of your time, you will be given a \$50 gift card. Also, if your child chooses to participate in this study, he/she will be given \$10 gift card along with a gift book about the experience of third culture kids.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw:** Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You and your child have the right to say no. You or your child may change your minds at any time and withdraw from the study. You and your child may also choose not to answer specific question or to stop participating at any time. Your decision will not affect your child's grades or relationships in the school.

**Confidential Data Collection:** All information will be collected in private locations either in your home or the library. Questionnaires and interviews will be coded with a number so that your names are not attached to them.

**Confidentiality of Records:** The data for this research will be kept confidential by the researcher. Only the researcher will have access to the data. After you and your child complete the questionnaire and the interviews, an identification number will be assigned to the documents. The consent form with you and your child's names will be separated from the questionnaire and filed in a locked cabinet. Completed questionnaires and recordings of the interviews will be kept in a locked office in the researcher's home. All documents will be destroyed three years after

completion of the study. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain confidential. It will not be possible for readers to know who participated in the study.

**Contact Information for Questions and Concerns:** If you have any concerns or questions about this study or seek more information, please contact: Huda Bajamal at (540-998-9090) Or

APPROVED  
IRB 6/22/16  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
The University of Akron

## APPENDIX D



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### Teacher Informed Consent

**Title of the Study:** Saudi Third Culture Kids: A Phenomenological case study of Saudis' acculturation in an elementary school in northeast Ohio

**Researcher:** Huda Bajamal

Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies, Elementary Education, University of Akron

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to inform you that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to allow you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researcher any questions you may have.

**Purpose:** This research aims at exploring the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids and how those children adapt and develop their identities. There are many studies about other children with similar experiences of living between two or more different cultures. However, nothing has been done to investigate the adaptation experience of Saudi Culture Kids. This study investigates how Saudi children with ages between 7-10 years develop identities and adapt, and what are the roles parents and teachers play in cultural adaptation of those children. Four children aged between 7-10 years who identify themselves as Saudis who can speak English fairly well and who have lived in the US no less than two years, their parents and basic teachers are invited to participate in this study. Parents and children will be interviewed face-to face, while teachers will complete an email questionnaire.

**Procedures:** You will take part in this research by answering written open-ended questions. Your answers should provide detailed descriptions about your Saudi students inside the classroom in terms of adjustment, social interaction, peer relationship, and your perspective about the child' experience of acculturation, and how you might identify this child from your perspective. Any further information or concerns regarding the questions can be -addressed with the researcher via email.

**Risks and Discomforts:** This study poses minimal risk for you. You will give information about the students and the relationships and interaction inside the classroom which may lead you to experience some discomfort or distress. You may skip any questions. The researcher is available to answer questions and concerns before, during and after you fill out the questionnaire.

**Benefits:** You will not directly benefit from participation in this study, but participation may help contribute to a better understanding of children's feelings as it relates to their culture and the new culture that they live in. This study along with future research may increase our knowledge about the outcomes of living across cultures during childhood, which may potentially benefit in providing knowledge about the cultural needs of those children to be addressed in the schools' curriculum and pedagogy.

APPROVED  
IRB  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
The University of Akron

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution - [uakron.edu/eeo](http://uakron.edu/eeo)

**Payments to Participants:** It does not cost anything to participate in this study. In appreciation of your time, you will be given a \$50 gift card and a gift book about third culture kids.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw:** Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your minds at any time and withdraw from the study. You may also choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. Your decision will not affect you in anyway.

**Confidential Data Collection:** All information will be collected on-line at a computer of your choice. The questionnaire will be coded with a number and your name will not be attached to it.

**Confidentiality of Records:** The data for this research will be kept confidential by the researcher. Only the researcher will have access to the data. After you complete the questionnaire, an identification number will be assigned to the documents. The consent form will be filed separate from your questionnaire in a locked cabinet in a locked office at the researcher's home. All documents will be destroyed three years after completing the study. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain confidential. It will not be possible for readers to know who participated in the study

**Contact Information for Questions and Concerns:** If you have any concerns or questions about this study or seek more information, please contact: Huda Bajamal at (540-998-9090) Or Dr. Gary Holliday at (330-972-7437). If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant you may contact, anonymously if you wish, The University of Akron Institutional Review Board (330-972-8311).

**Acceptance & signature:** I have read the information provided above and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPROVED**  
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The University of Akron

APPENDIX E  
DATA MATRIX

Question of the study	Data collection method	Questions of the participants	Coding construct
1. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northern Ohio elementary school, for cultural adaptation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview of children</li> <li>• Photo-elicitation</li> </ul> Photos that have been taken by the children prior to the interview, will be demonstrated during the interview. Children will show the photos that they have taken to talk about them during the interview.		Children will be asked to capture photos for 2 weeks for two things or people they like the most, two things or places that they do not like. In the beginning of the interview, children will be asked to show the photo and talk about it.
	Interview of children	1.1	Identity
		1.2 2.2 3.2 4.2 5.2 6.2 7.2 8.2 9.2 10.2	Alienation
		1.3 2.3 3.3	Family relationship

		1.4 2.4 3.4	Transitions
		1.5 2.5 3.5	Reentry
		1.6 2.6 3.6	Discrimination
		1.7 2.7 3.7 4.7 5.7 6.7	Unfitting
		1.8 2.8	Confusion
		1.9 2.9	Loss and grief
		1.10 2.10 3.10	Peer relationships
		Data from parents	Immigration and scholarship policies
		Data from parents	Attitude toward Muslims in the US
		Data from parents	Cultural and religious values

Question #1

2. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northern Ohio elementary school, for cultural adaptation?

This question will be answered by the following:

- Discussing photos during the interview (photos have been captured by the children earlier)
- Open-ended questions for children, parents, and teachers
- Questionnaire of parents

First: Photo elicitation: informal conversation about the photos

Show me photos that you have captured.

Let's talk about this photo.

Describe this photo to me, what are you doing, how do you feel, why do you feel this way?

Who are those kids?

Second: Children's questions

1. Identity

1.1 Who are you? Where are you from?

2. Alienation

1.2 What do you like others to know about your culture?

2.2 If you could change one thing about your culture, what would it be?

3.2 Who in your culture do you admire the most? Why?

4.2 What is your favorite song, book...?

5.2 Tell me about your country. People in your country, friends, places, and things you like

6.2 Tell me about your home in Saudi Arabia.

7.2 What do you love the most in your country?

8.2 Where do most of your relatives live?

9.2 How do your relatives (aunt/uncle/cousin) differ from you?

10.2 Tell me about your family in Saudi Arabia

3. Family relationships

1.3 Do you think it is important for your parents to study in the US?

2.3 How do you feel when your parents visit you at school?

3.3 Tell me when your parents visit the school and why? Tell me more when your parents have talked with your teacher.

4. Transition

1.4 What are some of your memories about other schools you have been?

2.4 Which school do you like the most and why?

3.4 Do you like to change schools and places to live? Why?

5. Reentry

1.5 How do you feel about returning back to Saudi Arabia?

2.5 Tell me about teachers that you have met in Saudi Arabia.

3.5 Tell me about your school in Saudi Arabia OR What do you think schools in Saudi Arabia look like?

6. Discrimination

1.6 Tell me when ever you felt mad in the school?

2.6 Do you find some one mean or annoying you in the school?

3.6 What makes you uncomfortable in the school?

7. Unfitting

1.7 Tell me about your American teachers.

2.7 What do you like most in your school here?

3.7 What do you hate the most in your school here?

- 4.7 Tell me when do you feel alone in the school
- 5.7 What are the five most important things that you wish to have in your school?
- 6.7 How do you feel about having American friends?
  
- 8. Confusion
  - 1.8 How do you feel about studying in American school? Why?
  - 2.8 Do you think schools in Saudi Arabia like Schools in the US? Why?
  
- 9. Loss and grief
  - 1.9 Tell me about your family in Saudi Arabia
  - 2.9 Describe to me your home there in Saudi Arabia, friends, things you like to talk about
  
- 10. Peer relationships
  - 1.10 How are your friends?
  - 2.10 Do you often go to their house?
  - 3.10 What sort of games do you play with them?
  - 4.10 Who do you like the most and why?
  - 5.10 Do you like to share your friends some food or pictures about your home? Why yes or no?
  - 6.10 Explain to me how do find good friends?
  - 7.10 Why some children might not be good friends?
  
- 11. Immigration and scholarship policies
  
- 12. Stereotype and attitude toward Muslims in the US
  
- 13. Cultural and religious values

Question of the study	Data collection method	Questions of the participants	Coding construct
2. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northern Ohio elementary school, for cultural adaptation?	Questionnaire of parents	1.1 2.1 3.1	Identity
		1.2 2.2 3.2 4.2 5.2	Alienation
		1.3 2.3 3.3	Family relationship
		1.4	Transitions
		1.5 2.5	Reentry
		Open ended question during the interview	Discrimination
		1.7	Unfitting
		1.8 2.8 3.8	Confusion
		1.9 2.9	Loss and grief
		1.10 2.10	Biculturalism



		3.10 4.10 5.10 6.10 7.10	
		Open ended question during the interview	Immigration and scholarship policies
		Open ended question during the interview	Attitude toward Muslims in the US
		Open ended question during the interview	Cultural and religious values

Question #1

1. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northern Ohio elementary school, for cultural adaptation?

First: Questionnaire of parents

Demographic questions

Q1 How old is your child?

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Q2 After getting your scholarship to study abroad, what countries, states, or cities have you been WITH your children to study abroad as student parent?

Please list them, \_\_\_\_\_

Q3 How many schools has your child attended as student in Saudi Arabia and outside Saudi Arabia?

In Saudi Arabia \_\_\_\_\_

Outside Saudi Arabia \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Identity

Q1.1 My child introduces him/her self as

- I am Saudi
- I am American
- I am Muslim
- None above, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Q2.1 Which language does your child like to read with?

- Arabic
- English
- Both

Q 3.1 What are the most frequently TV shows your child watch in the US?

- Arabic shows
- American shows
- Both

## 2. Alienation

Q1.2 My child shows more confidence and comfort with children who share the same experience as TCK more than other peers (TCK children who have lived among different cultures)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q2.2 When my child talks or share about Saudi culture he/she shows

- Enthusiasm
- Apathy (lack of interested in or concern, absence of emotion)
- Other feeling, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

Q3.2 My child is aware of his/her nationality, religion, and country as “Saudi Arabic Muslim”

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q4.2 My child likes to share Saudi culture like sharing Saudi food, costume, pictures, and stories with other from different cultures

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q5.2 My child shows an interest in Islamic culture (Islamic values, practices, clothes, heroes of Islam, Islamic community, Islamic holy days)

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

### 3. Family relationships

Q1.3 My child trusts our authority as parents, and understands our reasons and decisions for moving from country to country

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q2.3 My child resists our roles and conflicts with us about our habits and values as a Muslim family

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q3.3 Socialization in a different culture affects my relationship with my child

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

2. Transitions

Q1.4 Please describe how happy your child feels when staying in Saudi Arabia during long vacations?

- Very Unhappy
- Unhappy
- Somewhat Unhappy
- Somewhat Happy
- Happy
- Very Happy

2. Reentry

Q1.5 My child shows fears and concerns to return back to Saudi Arabia or study in Saudi schools

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q2.5 My child appears arrogant (showing off) with people in Saudi Arabia because his/her cross culture experience Bilingual-talking more than one language, & bicultural experience-living in different culture)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

7. Unfitting

Q1.7 My child feels a lone or left behind because he feels/looks different among other children in the host country

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

#### 8. Confusion

Q1.8 My child shows confusion regarding the moral system and right-wrong concepts that they experience between Saudi and the host culture (outside Saudi Arabia)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q2.8 My child is confused about some complex things as politics, religion, and values (like Osama Bin Laden, gender relationships, wearing a veil)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q3.8 I feel that the experience of living between/among changing cultures affects my child's Islamic identity

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q4.8 My child shows tendency to:

- Live outside Saudi Arabia for ever
- Going back to Saudi Arabia
- Moving forth and back between Saudi Arabia and the host country
- Shows no preference toward any place

#### 9. Loss and grief

Q1.9 My child shows a feeling of loss for people or things like some family members, toys, pets, or places that he/she has left in Saudi Arabia?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q2.9 My child shows sadness and grief when hear or watch bad events happening in Saudi Arabia as (flood, illness)

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

#### 10. Biculturalism

Q1.9 My child gains an extended worldview and accepts the concept of diversity and difference (it is okay to be a different, people have different colors, ethnics, and religions).

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q2.9 My child understands experiences in three-dimensional views (like how people live in different places, what happen in different countries, how might people think in different nations, how people eat and communicate in different places in the world)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q3.9 My child shows a good sense of cross-cultural experience (the ability to live, communicate, and negotiate the identity in a different culture)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q4.9 My child shows ability to switch language, behavior, and appearance depending on which country he/she is

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q5.9 My child shows ability to communicate more freely with different people in regard their race, religion, color, or gender.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q6.9 My child enjoys friendship with Saudi, Other Muslims, and American friends

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q7.9 Choose one or more of the skills that you feel your child has MORE than other children because of being TCK.

- Rich cross-cultural experience
- Rich observational skills
- Rich social skills
- Rich linguistic skills
- All above
- None above

Question of the study	Data collection method	Questions of the participants	Coding construct
2. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northern Ohio elementary school, for cultural adaptation?	Interview of mothers	1.1 2.1	Identity
		1.2 2.2 3.2	Alienation
		1.3 2.3 3.3 4.3	Family relationship
		1.4 2.4	Transitions
		1.5 2.5	Reentry
		1.6 2.6 3.6	Discrimination
		1.7 2.7 3.7	Unfitting
		1.8 2.8 3.8	Confusion
		1.9	Loss and grief
		1.10	Peer relationships
		1.11 2.11	Immigration and scholarship policies
		1.12	Attitude toward Muslims in the US



		1.13 2.13	Cultural and religious values
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Question #1

2. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northern Ohio elementary school, for cultural adaptation?

Second: Mothers' questions

1. Identity

- 1.1 Do you think it is an issue for your child to be exposed to so many different cultures when growing up? In what way?
- 2.1 How can you describe the experience of your child live as young Muslim in the US?

2. Alienation

- 1.2 Tell me a situation or incident when your child shows an interest or a concern about Saudi Arabia.
- 2.2 How does your child show his/her proudness about culture? How does she/he talk about Saudi Arabia
- 3.2 what information does she/he share with about her/his culture?

3. Family relationship

- 1.3 Describe the interaction of the child in home with his/her family or siblings
- 2.3 How does the child express his/her needs, feelings, or disagreement about something at home?
- 3.3 Describe a situation in which you encountered a challenge or a conflict with the child here in the US. How did you handle this situation?
- 4.3 Tell me about a situation when you changed your style to be more effectively with your child

4. Transitions

- 1.4 In which way constant mobility affect the child?
- 2.4 How can you describe your child's transition?

5. Reentry

- 1.5 Tell me an example shows how does your child feel about returning back to Saudi Arabia, or think about schools and friends there.
- 2.5 Tell me how do your child communicate with people in Saudi Arabia during vacations?

6. Discrimination

- 1.6 Do you have a particular negative incident of the child that may affect his adaption? Explain

## 7. Unfitting

1.7 Tell me about your child's friendships and how he/she act with other children, American and other. How about relatives and cuisines in Saudi Arabia

## 8. Confusion

1.8 Do you think it is an issue for your child to be exposed to so many different cultures when growing up? In what way?

2.8 How can you describe the experience of your child live as young Muslim in US?

3.8 How do you think that your child perceives the American culture at the school?

## 9. Loss and grief

1. 9Tell me a particular incident when your child shows his/her feelings about family and memories in Saudi Arabia.

## 10. Peer relationships

1.10 Tell me about your child's friendships, what does he/she prefer, who is his/her best friend and why? Does he prefer friendship with American? Saudis in the US? Or Saudis at home?

## 11. Immigration and scholarships policies

1.11 Tell me an example when you felt that your child is conscious about political issues, and in which way political issues affect your child?

2.11 Tell me in which way your challenges as an international student affects your child adaptation?

## 12. Stereotype and attitude toward Muslims

1.12 Tell me about an incident when you felt that your child has been affected by being Muslim, Arab, or Saudi.

## 13. Cultural and religious values

1.13 What kind of support teachers provide to your child sensitive needs as a Muslim student (Muslims pay special attention to some items such as: Free Pork products, purifying (cleanliness, celebrating Islamic holydays...?)

2.13 Can you recall a particular positive incident with the child either commenting or acting on being Arabic Muslim or "different" present in the U.S.

Tell me a particular incidence that plays an important role in your child adaptation?

What positive and negative experiences your child had at school?

How would you explain and interpret these experiences?

How do you evaluate your child experience in the school in comparison to your expectations?



Question of the study	Data collection method	Questions of the participants	Coding construct
2. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northern Ohio elementary school, for cultural adaptation?	Interview of teachers	1.1 2.1 3.1	Identity
		1.2 2.2 3.2	Alienation
		1.3 2.3 3.3	-----
		1.4 2.4 3.4	Transitions
		1.5 2.5 3.5	Reentry
		1.6 2.6 3.6	Discrimination
		1.7 2.7 3.7	Unfitting
		1.8 2.8 3.8	Confusion
		1.9 2.9 3.9	Loss and grief
		1.10 2.10 3.10	Peer relationships
		1.11 2.11 3.11	Immigration and scholarship policies
		1.12 2.12 3.12	Attitude toward Muslims in the US
		1.13 2.13 3.13	Cultural and religious values

Question #1

2. What is the lived experience of Saudi third culture kids studying in a Northern Ohio elementary school, particularly for cultural adaptation?

Third: Teachers' questions

2. Identity

How do you think exposing the child to many different cultures influence him/her when growing up? Can you provide examples?

How can you describe the experience of the child as a Muslim studying in American school?

2. Alienation

Tell me a situation or incident when your child shows an interest or a concern about Saudi Arabia.

How does the child show proud to his culture? How does she/he talk about Saudi Arabia, what information does she/he share with you or friends about her/his culture?

3. Teacher relationship

Based on your experience, what has been the greatest obstacle in communicating with this child

How does the child express his/her needs, feelings, or conflicts?

From your experience teaching Saudi students, did you notice any issues or specific challenges for these children to adapt compare to other international students?

Describe a situation in which you encountered a challenge or conflict with a child. How did you handle this situation?

Describe a situation when the child is interacting with you.

Regarding discipline in the classroom, do you think this child has a difficulty to respond or follow the rules? Explain.

4. Transition

5. Reentry

2. Discrimination

Do you have a particular negative incident of the child that may affect his adaption? Explain

7. Unfitting

Tell me about incident when you find the child play alone, find difficult to communicate, to express needs, to share peers, to involve with peers...

8. Confusion

How do you think exposing the child to many different cultures influence him/her when growing up? Can provide examples?

#### 9. Loss and grief

Tell me a particular incident when your child shows his/her feelings about family and memories in Saudi Arabia.

#### 10. Peer relationships

Tell me about your child's friendships, what does he/she prefer, who is his/her best friend and why? Does he prefer friendship with American? Saudis in the US? Or Saudis at home?

Can you recall a particular positive incident happened with the child that shows his comfort and confidence in the class.

Do you have a particular negative incident of the child that affects his feeling about himself or about his relationships or his culture in the class?

Describe the interaction of the child inside the classroom with the peers.

How does the child express his/her needs, feelings, or conflicts?

#### 11. Immigration and scholarships policies

Do you witness or recall any incident shows the influence of political issues in the US on the child?

Do you find any policy or a system in the school that influences the adaption of the child

#### 12. Stereotype and attitude toward Muslims

Tell me about incident when you felt that your child has been affected by being Muslim, Arabia, or Saudi.

Do you have a particular negative incident of the child that affects his feeling about himself or about his relationships or his culture in the class?

#### 13. Cultural and religious values

What kind of support teachers provide to your child sensitive needs as a Muslim student (Muslims pay special attention to some items such as: Free Pork products, purifying (cleanliness, celebrating Islamic holydays...?)

Can you recall a particular positive incident with the child either commenting or acting on being Arabic Muslim or "different" present in the U.S.

Based on your experience, what has been the greatest obstacle in communicating with this child

How would you explain and interpret the experience of adaption of this child at school?

How do you evaluate your child experience in the school in comparison to your expectations?

Overall, how would you describe the experience that children have at [this school] in relation to their cultural adaption?

Can you find or describe paper works, pictures, any documents that are related to how this child do and feel about himself/herself, peers, school, family, teachers,.....?

Question of the study	Tool collecting data	Questions for participants	Coding construct
2. How Saudi third culture kids develop their cultural identity?	Children's interview	1.1 2.1 3.1 4.1 5.1	Awareness and identification of original culture
		1.2 2.2 3.2 4.2 5.2	Components of cultural identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Gender relationships</li> </ul>
		1.3 2.3 3.3	Multiple identity (successfully holding two identities )

Question #2 How do Saudi third culture kids develop their cultural identity?

Children's interview

## 2.Awareness and identification

Where were you born?

If I ask you, "Where are you from," what would you say?

1.1What does "culture" mean to *you*?

2.1How would you describe your culture?

3.1Is your culture the same as that of your relatives?

4.1Can you describe something (anything) that is typical for your culture?

- 5.1 Can you describe a typical holiday/celebration that you and your family celebrate?
- 6.1 Does that belong to your culture? Why or why not?
- 7.1 What do you like most about your culture? Why?
- 8.1 What is unique about your culture?

## 2. Religion

- 1.2 How do people in the school know that you are Muslim?
- 2.2 What does mean to be a Muslim?
- 3.2 Tell me what Muslims do?
- 4.2 How do you know that some one is a Muslim?
- 5.2 Do you like to celebrate holidays like Christmas and thanksgiving? Explain please

## 3. Language

- 1.3 What language do you speak at home?
- 2.3 What language do you speak with your brothers or sisters?
- 3.3 What do you think, it is better to talk in English or Arabic? Why?
- 4.3 What is your favorite song? Book? TV program?

### 2. Self-perspective

- Please draw a picture of yourself when you are an adult.
- Can you tell me why you drew this picture?
- Where are you in this picture (in what country)?
- What are you doing?
- Are you married/do you have a family?
- Re you going to teach your children different languages? Why?

## 6. Multiple identities

- 1.6 Can some one coming from another country be American?
- 2.6 Does studying in American school makes some one American? How?
- .63 Can might some one be American and Saudi in the same time?



Question of the study	Data collection method	Questions of the participants	Coding construct
3.What are the teacher’s roles in their Saudi third culture kid’s cultural adaptation?	Teachers’ interview	1.1 2.1 3.1 4.1 5.1	Understanding cultural needs of children
		1.2 2.2 3.2	Knowledge about the culture of Saudis
		1.3 2.3 3.3	Interaction of child-teacher
		1.4 2.4 3.4 4.4 5.4 6.4 7.4	Support
		1.3 2.3 3.3	School-home relationships

Question # 3

What are the teacher’s roles in their Saudi third culture kid’s cultural adaptation?

Teachers’ interview

1. Understanding cultural needs

1.1 How would you compare the schools in terms of supporting cultural adaption for Saudi children?

2.1 Is [this school] unique? In what way?

3.1 Can you describe briefly what the school does to promote Saudi children adaption?

4.1 Give me an example or explain how the school curriculum considers Muslims’ needs?

5.1 Based on your experience, are US schools a good learning environment for Saudi children? Why yes or no?

2. Knowledge about the culture of Saudis

1.2How aware of Saudi culture were you before coming to [this school]? Afterwards?

2.2Have you further educated yourself about Arabic Islamic culture in general and Saudi culture in particular? In what way?

3.2How you would do to to help Saudi Muslim children to do and feel well?

### 3. Interaction of child-teacher

1.3 Describe your feeling of having Saudi Muslim children in your class.

2.3 Are there more problems in general with Saudi children?

3.3 Have you needed to seek an assistance or support from the principle or school's staff to help this child in adaption process or to help you to deal with?

### 4. Support

1.4 From you experience teaching this Saudi child, in which way do you affect the child's experience.

2.4 Please provide me with examples about how do you help this child to success and adapt.

3.4 Tell me when you witnessed a situation at class involving racial tension? How did you handle it?

4.4 Tell me about a time when you regulated your teaching strategies to work more effectively with Saudi children.

5.4 What do you do to help the child to fit in? to make comfortable transition?

6.4 What do you do if you felt that the child not feeling or doing well?

7.4 What obstacles do you think make helping Saudi children a challenge?

8.4 How do you seek opportunities to improve the learning environment of Saudi children?

9.4 Please describe how you would work to create a class environment that is welcoming for Saudi children, inclusive and increasingly diverse.

10.4 How do you challenge potential stereotypes and promote sensitivity between children in the class?

### 5. School-home relationships

1.5 How do you find communication with the child's parent?

2.5 What ways of motivation you found them more affective with Saudi children compare to others?

3.5 How does your interaction with parents affect your efforts to help their child?

Question of the study	Data collection method	Questions of the participants	Coding construct
2. What are the mothers' roles in their Saudi third culture kid's cultural adaptation?	Mothers' interview	1.1 2.1	Understanding challenge of adaptation
		1.2 2.2 3.2 4.2	Knowledge about the culture of American schools
		1.3 2.3 3.3 4.3 5.3	Self efficacy and expectations
		1.4 2.4 3.4 4.4 5.4	Interaction of child-parent
		1.5 2.5 3.5	Support

#### Question # 4

What are the mothers' roles in their Saudi third culture kid's cultural adaptation?

Mothers' interview

##### 1. Understanding challenge of adaptation

1.1 What is kind of the problems you experience with your child after studying in American school? And how did you help the child with?

2.1 What is the most difficult transition during adaption process that challenged you as parents? How do you handle it?

##### 2. Knowledge about the culture of American schools

1.2 How aware of American schools were you before coming to the US? Afterwards?

- 2.2 Have you further educated yourself about American culture in general and American schools in particular? In what way?
- 3.2 What do you feel about sharing your child in American holidays and having, visiting American friends?
- 4.2 Based on your experience, are American schools good learning environment for Saudi children? Please explain, provide me examples

### 3. Self-efficacy and expectations

- 1.3 How would you compare yourself to other Saudi mothers in the US in terms of supporting cultural adaption for your child?
- 2.3 Describe what your expectations are for your child to adapt to a new country before you bring them to US.
- 3.3 Describe what preparations you did to help your child make comfortable transitions
- 4.3 Describe your experience as a mother of Saudi child in the US
- 5.3 Describe your feeling of having a child study in American school  
What is your role in cultural adaptation of your child?

### 4. Interaction of child-parent

- 1.4 Describe a situation in which you encountered difficulty to communicate with your child.
- 2.4 Do you witness or recall any incident shows the influence of political issues in the US on the child? How did you react?
- 3.4 Tell me when if you informed about a situation at class involving racism against your child? How did you react?
- 4.4 Tell me examples when you had to engage with your child to talk about different cultural practices between Saudi culture and American culture relating to sensitive issues (Sex, religion....)
- 5.4 How do you feel when you fail to deal with your child about cultural differences between school and home?

### 5. Support

- 1.5 Can you describe briefly what do you do to promote your child's adaptation in the US?
- 2.5 Describe to me transitions in your child's life after studying abroad and what is your role with this process?
- 3.5 Please describe how you would work with a child to do well in the school, communicate with peers with maintaining his/her Islamic identity?

### 6. School-home relationships

- 1.6 How do you find communication with the child's teacher?
- 2.6 Tell me a situation or example when you found that your interaction with the teacher affects your child adaptation?

## APPENDIX F

### Questionnaire of Mothers

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire by Huda Bajamal, a PhD student at the University of Akron.

This questionnaire is about Saudi third culture kids. A Third Culture Kid, or TCK, is a child who has spent significant years of his/her childhood between changing worlds/ changing cultures. Such Saudi children who accompany their parents to study abroad and live between the culture of Saudi Arabia and one or more different cultures during their childhood.

Your perception as a parent for a “Third Culture Kid” is important, and it will enhance the findings of this study. This questionnaire aims at investigating the experience of adaptation of your child as a third culture kid, , aged between 7 to 10 years, and have lived for no less than two years between/among different cultures.

Please, if you have more than one child between 7-10 years old, your answers should ONLY reflect your perception about the experience of your child who is participating in this study.

This survey should not take more than 10 minutes of your time. Your answers will be completely confidential, and it will be used for the research purposes only. Your responses will be discussed in details during further interviews. If you have any questions, please contact the investigator at [hfb1@zips.uakron.edu](mailto:hfb1@zips.uakron.edu) or call, 540-998-9090

Q1. How old is your child?

- (7-8)
- (9-10)

Q2. After getting your scholarship to study abroad, what countries, states, or cities have you been with your children to study abroad as a student parent?  
Please name them,

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Q3. How many schools has your child attended as a student in Saudi Arabia and outside Saudi Arabia?

In Saudi Arabia \_\_\_\_\_

Outside Saudi Arabia \_\_\_\_\_

Q4. Based on communicating with your child, please describe how happy he/she feels about living between or among different cultures

- Very Unhappy
- Unhappy
- Somewhat Unhappy
- Somewhat Happy
- Happy
- Very Happy

Q5. In which language does your child like to read?

- Arabic
- English
- Both

Q6. What are the most frequent TV shows your child watches?

- Arabic shows
- American shows
- Both

Q7. My child shows more confidence and comfort with children who share the same experiences as TCK more than other peers (TCK children who have lived among different cultures)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q8. My child is satisfied about leaving Saudi Arabia for a significant time?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q9. How does your child introduce himself/ herself?

- I am Saudi
- I am American
- I am Muslim
- None above, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Q10. My child is aware of his/her nationality, religion, and country as a "Saudi Arabian Muslim"

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q11. My child shows confusion regarding the moral system and right-wrong concepts that they experience between Saudi and the host culture (outside Saudi Arabia)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q12. I feel that the experience of living between/among changing cultures affects my child's Islamic identity

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q13. When my child talks or share about Saudi culture, he/she shows

- Enthusiasm
  - Apathy (lack of interest, absence of emotion)
  - Other feelings, please explain
-

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Q14. Please describe how happy your child feels when staying in Saudi Arabia during long vacations?

- Very Unhappy
- Unhappy
- Somewhat Unhappy
- Somewhat Happy
- Happy
- Very Happy

Q15. My child likes to share Saudi culture; for example sharing Saudi food, costume, pictures, stories with other from different cultures

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q16. My child shows tendency to:

- Live outside Saudi Arabia for ever
- Going back to Saudi Arabia
- Moving back and forth between Saudi Arabia and the host country
- Shows no preference toward any place

Q17. My child feels lonely or left behind because he feels/looks different among other children in the host country

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree



Q18. My child shows a feeling of loss for people or things like some family members, toys, pets, or places that he/she has left in Saudi Arabia?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q19. My child shows sadness and grief when hearing or watching bad events happening in Saudi Arabia as (flood, illness)

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q20. My child gains an extended worldview and accepts the concept of diversity and difference (it is okay to be different, people have different colors, ethnicities, and religions).

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q21. My child understands experiences in three-dimensional views (like how people live in different places, what happen in different countries, how might people think in different nations, how people eat and communicate in different places in the world)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q22. My child shows a good sense of cross-cultural experience (the ability to live, communicate, and negotiate the identity in a different culture)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q23. My child shows an interest in Islamic culture (Islamic values, practices, clothes, heroes of Islam, Islamic community, Islamic holy days)

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q24. My child shows ability to switch language, behavior, and appearance depending on which country he/she is

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q25. My child shows ability to communicate more freely with different people regarding their race, religion, color, or gender.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q26. My child enjoys friendship with Saudi, Arabic, and American friends

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q27. Choose one or more of the skills that you feel your child has MORE than other children because of being TCK (You can use more than one choice)

- Rich cross-cultural experience
- Rich observational skills
- Rich social skills
- Rich linguistic skills
- All above
- None above

Q28. Living in a different culture affects my relationship with my child

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q29. My child is confused about some complex things as politics, religion, and values (like Osama Bin Laden, gender relationships, wearing a veil)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q30. My child trusts our authority as parents, and understands our reasons and decisions for moving from country to country

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q31. My child appears arrogant (showing off) because of his/her cross culture experience (Bilingual-talking more than one language, & bicultural experience-living in different culture)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q32. My child resists our roles and conflicts with us about our habits and values as a Muslim family

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q33. Communicating with my child is becoming challenge to me because of the differences between cultures

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree

Q34. My child lacks of making choices or decisions due to the persistent changes in his/her life and movement/ traveling from place to place

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q35. My child is bullied or discriminated at school because he/she is different (Muslim, Arabic, or Saudi)

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree

Q36. My child likes to share Saudi culture like sharing Saudi food, costume, pictures, stories with their American friends

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always

Q37. In general, how would you describe your child experience as TCK?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

Q38. What is the highest degree or level of school have you completed?

- High school
- Bachelor degree
- Master degree
- Doctorate degree

Q39. What is your marital status?

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

## APPENDIX G

### Questions by Email for Teachers

Dear teacher, thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire by Huda Bajamal, a PhD student at the University of Akron.

This questionnaire is about Saudi third culture kids. A Third Culture Kid, or TCK, is a child who has spent significant years of his/her childhood between changing worlds/changing cultures. Such Saudi children who accompany their parents to study abroad and live between the culture of Saudi Arabia and one or more different cultures during their childhood.

Your perception as a teacher for a “Third Culture Kid” is important, and it will enhance the findings of this study. This questionnaire aims at investigating the experience of adaptation of a Saudi child as a third culture kid, aged between 7 to 10 years, and have lived for no less than two years between/among different cultures.

This survey can be answered in more than one session. Your answers will be completely confidential, and it will be used for the research purposes only. If you have any questions, please contact the investigator at [hfb1@zips.uakron.edu](mailto:hfb1@zips.uakron.edu) or call, 540-998-9090

## Part One

1. How do you think exposing the child to many different cultures influence him/her when growing up? Can you provide examples?
2. How does THIS child show proud to his culture? How does she/he talk about Saudi Arabia, what information does she/he share with you or friends about her/his culture? Any a situation or incident when your child shows an interest or a concern about Saudi Arabia.
3. Based on your experience, what has been the greatest obstacle in communicating with THIS child?
4. How does THIS child express his/her needs, feelings, or conflicts?
5. Describe a situation in which you encountered a challenge or conflict with THIS child. How did you handle this situation?
6. Describe a situation when THIS child is interacting with you.
7. Regarding discipline in the classroom, do you think THIS child has a difficulty to respond or follow the rules? Explain.
  - 6.1 Do you have a particular negative incident of THIS child that may affect his adaption? Explain
  - 7.1 Tell me about incident when you find THIS child play alone, find difficult to communicate, to express needs, to share peers, to involve with peers...
8. Do you think exposing THIS child to many different cultures influence him/her when growing up? Can provide examples?
9. Tell me a particular incident when THIS child shows his/her feelings about family and memories in Saudi Arabia.
10. Tell me about THIS child's friendships, what does he/she prefer, who is his/her best friend and why? Does he/she prefer friendship with American? Saudis? Explain
11. Can you recall a particular positive incident happened with THIS child that shows his comfort and confidence in the school.
12. Do you have a particular negative incident of THIS child that affects his feeling about himself or about his relationships or his culture in the class?
13. Describe the interaction of THIS child inside the classroom with the peers.

14. Do you witness or recall any incident shows the influence of political issues in the US on THIS child?

15. Do you find any policy or a system in the school that influences the adaption of THIS child

16. Tell me about incident when you felt that THIS child has been affected by being Muslim, Arabia, or Saudi.

17. Do you have a particular negative incident of THIS child that affects his feeling about himself or about his relationships or his culture in the class?

18. What kind of support teachers provide to your child sensitive needs as a Muslim student (Muslims pay special attention to some items such as: Free Pork products, purifying (cleanliness, celebrating Islamic holydays...?)

19. Can you recall a particular positive incident with THIS child either commenting or acting on being Arabic Muslim or “different” present in the U.S.

20. How do you evaluate your child experience in the school in comparison to your expectations?

21. Overall, how would you describe the experience THIS child has at [this school] in relation to their cultural adaption?

22. Can you find or describe paper works, pictures, any documents that are related to how THIS child do and feel about himself/herself, peers, school, family, teachers...?

### Part Tow

1. How would you compare the schools in terms of supporting cultural adaption for Saudi children?

2. Can you describe briefly what the school does to promote Saudi children adaption?

3. Give me an example or explain how the school curriculum considers Muslims’ needs?

4. Based on your experience, are US schools a good learning environment for Saudi children? Why yes or no?

5. How aware of Saudi culture were you before coming to [this school]? Afterwards?

6. Have you further educated yourself about Arabic Islamic culture in general and Saudi culture in particular? In what way?

7. How you would do to to help Saudi Muslim children to do and feel well?



8. Describe your feeling of having Saudi Muslim children in your class.
9. Are there more problems in general with Saudi children?
10. Have you needed to seek an assistance or support from the principle or school's staff to help THIS child in adaption process or to help you to deal with?
11. From you experience teaching THIS Saudi child, in which way do you affect the child's experience.
12. Please provide me with examples about how do you help THIS child to success and adapt.
13. Tell me when you witnessed a situation at class involving racial tension? How did you handle it?
14. Tell me about a time when you regulated your teaching strategies to work more effectively with Saudi children.
15. What do you do to help THIS child to fit in? to make comfortable transition?
16. What do you do if you felt that THIS child not feeling or doing well?
17. What obstacles do you think make helping Saudi children a challenge?
18. How do you seek opportunities to improve the learning environment of Saudi children?
19. Please describe how you would work to create a class environment that is welcoming for Saudi children, inclusive and increasingly diverse.
20. How do you challenge potential stereotypes and promote sensitivity between children in the class?
21. How do you find communication with THIS child's parent?
22. What ways of motivation you found them more affective with Saudi children compare to others?
23. How does your interaction with parents affect your efforts to help THIS child?

## APPENDIX H

### Questions of Interviews

Derived from Joerchel's study (2006)

#### *Topic Guide and Vignettes for Interviewing the Child*

##### Topic guide

Please draw a picture of yourself when you are an adult, you have about 10 min.

Can you tell me why you drew this picture?

Where are you in this picture (in what country)?

What are you doing?

Are you married/do you have a family?

##### *I) General questions about yourself:*

How would you describe yourself?

And in relation to other children in your class?

What is unique about you (do you have something that other children don't, what makes you special)?

If I ask you, "where are you from," what would you say?

If someone from a different country asked you, would you say the same thing?

Where were you born?

Is there a difference for you between where you are from and where you were born?

##### *II) General questions about your family:*

Can you describe your family to me (where are your parent's from/how many siblings do you have/who do you live with)?

What language do you speak at home?

What language do you speak with your brothers or sisters?

How would you describe your sisters or brothers?

How are they different from you?

Where do most of your relatives live?

How do your relatives (aunt/uncle/cousin) differ from you?

##### *III) General questions about your friends:*

How are you friends?

Do you often go to their house?

What sort of games do you play with them?

Who do you like the most and why?

#### *IV) Vignettes*

##### *V) General questions about your culture:*

Can you describe to me what "culture" means/is? (background, tradition, customs, ethnicity)

What does "culture" mean to *you*?

How would you describe your culture?

Is your culture the same as that of your relatives?

Can you describe something (anything) that is typical for your culture?

Can you describe a typical holiday/celebration that you and your family celebrate?

Does that belong to your culture? Why or why not?

What do you like most about your culture? Why?

What is unique about your culture?

If you had three wishes about your family, friend, school what would they be?

How do you feel about studying in American school?

How do you feel about returning back to Saudi Arabia?

How do you feel when your parents visit you in the school?

Tell me about your family in Saudi Arabia

Describe to me your home there in Saudi Arabia, friends, things you like to talk about (Vasquez, 2000)

Derived from Ercan's study (2009):

Tell me how did you come here?

How long are you going to stay here?

Tell me about your home in Saudi Arabia.

Tell me about your school in Saudi Arabia.

Tell me about your holydays in Saudi Arabia.

What are your best memories related to your school and teachers?

What do you love the most in your country?

Tell me about your teachers here in US

Tell me about your American teachers

What do you like most in your school here?

What do you hate the most in your school here?

How do you introduce yourself to others?

How do people in the school know that you are Muslim?

Do you like to share your friends some food or pictures about your home? Why yes or no?

Do your parents happy of your performance?

How do they feel about your school?

Derived from Joerchel's study (2006)

*Topic Guide for Mothers and Teachers*

## Topic guide for mothers

### *I) General questions about you:*

Where are you from?

Where is (the child's) father/mother from?

How long have you been in England?

### *II) Questions about your family:*

What languages do you speak at home?

What language do you prefer to speak to the child?

Where do you go on vacation?

How often do you take the child to your homeland? How often to the other parent's homeland?

Can you describe a typical family vacation?

Approximately, how much time do you spend with other relatives? Where and when?

What kind of holidays do you spend at home?

Can you describe a typical family holiday that you celebrate with your family every year?

Who is present, what foods do you eat, what kind of cultural practices do your holidays involve?

What kind of meals do you eat at home on regular days?

### *III) Questions about promoting the child's identity:*

What kind of issues were you concerned with when thinking about having a child?

Is it important to you that the child knows "where he or she is from"?

Do you consciously contribute to it, in what way?

### *IV) Questions about dealing with the child's identity:*

Why did you send your child to [this school]?

Can you tell me something about [this school] that you particularly like that is unique about the school?

Have you looked at other schools? What would you say is unique about [this school]?

How do you respond to racial name calling in school?

Would you respond differently if the child had been teased about something else?

How would you respond when you hear about the child teasing someone else about their culture/race?

Can you describe an incident of when your child made a comment about when he or she was proud of where he/she was from?

Can you describe how you think the child benefits from growing up in a multicultural environment?

What are some of the characteristics that you think the child will acquire in such an environment?

Do you think it is difficult for your child to grow up in a mixed cultural environment?

Why or why not?

Derived from Joerchel's study (2006)

## Topic guide for teachers

### *I) Questions about you and the school*

How long have you been at [this school]?

Where were you before?

How would you compare the schools in terms of multiculturalism?

Is [this school] unique? In what way?

I have talked to the Headmaster about what this junior school does to promote multiculturalism, can you briefly describe what you think the school does for it?

### *II) Questions about multiculturalism*

How aware of multiculturalism were you before coming to [this school]?

Afterwards?

Have you further educated yourself? In what way?

### *III) Questions about the students and incidences at school*

How do you think that children perceive the many different cultures present at [this school]?

Can you recall a particular positive incident with children either commenting or acting on multiculturalism being present at [this school]?

Overall, how would you describe the experience that children have at [this school] in relation to multiculturalism?

Do you think it is an issue for children to be exposed to so many different cultures when growing up? In what way?

Do you have a particular negative incident of children and multiculturalism?

Are there differences in terms of nationality? Do some children have a harder time than others? Which ones and in what way?

Is there a difference between pure race and mixed race children in terms of how they perceive multicultural aspects?

Are there more problems in general with mixed children? Would you differentiate?

Questions are derived based on literature of third culture kids (e.g. Pollack and Reken, 2009; Berry, 2006)

Describe the interaction of the child inside the classroom with the peers.

How does the child express his/her needs, feelings, or conflicts?

Describe your experience of teaching Saudi children. How

Describe your feeling of having Saudi Muslim children in your class.

In your perspective, Are US schools a good learning environment for Saudi children?

Why yes or no?

Do you think that school curriculum consider Muslims' needs fairly?

Tell my story about clash between Saudi student and other students that you witnessed.

In your perspective, Are Saudi children happy? Why yes or no?

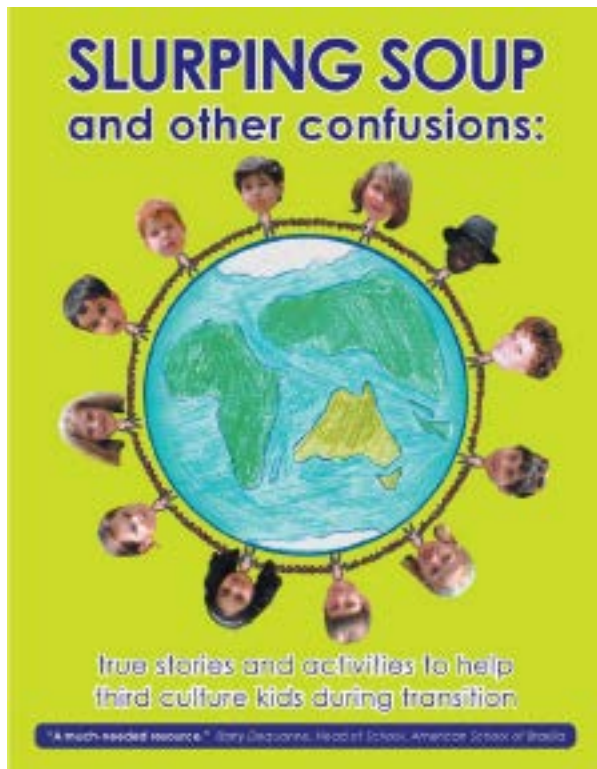
From your perspective, are Saudi parents able to express their needs and concerns regarding their children's Islamic habits or beliefs?

In which ways are Saudi children look different from among other students?  
What do you know about the culture of Saudi students?  
What do you know about Saudi students' lives as young Muslim in US?  
Do you like to add additional thoughts or comments that we have not attached yet?

## APPENDIX I

### Third Culture Kids' Book

A book given to the families and teachers as appreciation for participation in the research



Slurping Soup and other confusions: true stories and activities to help third culture kids during transition. Slurping Soup And Other Confusions is a collection of twenty-three real life stories from third culture kids. Each story is followed by a related activity. The activities are suitable for three to twelve year olds and include brainstorming, problem solving, party planning, family tree, quirky word games etc. The book aims to help children cope with the challenges of living internationally. The stories explore: - Adapting to new environments -Who am I? Where do I belong? - Home and family adjustment - Cultural differences - Friendship Change. This charming book is a catalyst for crucial discussions every expat family needs to have. "Slurping Soup is a must-have resource for parents, teachers and children dealing with transition. This interactive tool will assist elementary-aged children in understanding and coping with the challenges and emotions that go along with international relocations."

## My first year in Vietnam was weird



Another thing was, I missed playing footy. In Hanoi I started Tae Kwon Do. But I wanted to be a footy player when I grew up.

When I left Melbourne to live in Hanoi it was really weird. I missed the traffic lights in Melbourne. There weren't any in Hanoi and they needed them because of the crazy motor bikes going everywhere, even on the footpaths. The worst part about Hanoi was the bad smell outside our house where the taxis parked.



After the first year I started going to the Lycée, because I wasn't happy at the International school. But it was hard to learn to speak French and after a while I wanted to go back to the English school. I think I was pretty mixed up. Mum said I could change schools again if I was still not happy at the end of the year.

Later on in that year I met Jono, another Aussie who also went to the Lycée. My French got better and then I started to settle in and be very happy.

Now I have a black belt in Tae Kwon Do. I can speak French and some Vietnamese. I love Vietnamese food, especially phở and bún



A sample page of the book