



<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz>

ResearchSpace@Auckland

Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage.

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback>

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the [Library Thesis Consent Form](#) and [Deposit Licence](#).

Note : Masters Theses

The digital copy of a masters thesis is as submitted for examination and contains no corrections. The print copy, usually available in the University Library, may contain corrections made by hand, which have been requested by the supervisor.

International Education as a Conduit for Engagement between Countries: The Case of Saudi Students in New Zealand

Bridget Egan
University of Auckland

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
International Business, The University of Auckland, 2013

Abstract

This research aims to generate an understanding of friendship building between people from two very different cultures, Saudi Arabia and New Zealand. In particular, it focuses on the experiences of Saudi students currently studying in New Zealand on scholarships provided by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education. The main goal of the scholarship programme is to up-skill Saudi youth; however, this goal is accompanied by an expectation that Saudi students will also gain “soft” skills through international experience and intercultural friendships. The latter is also framed in terms of “person-to-person diplomacy”, designed to improve relations between Saudi Arabia and the host country.

Yet improved relations and associated benefits are not automatic, but an outcome of positive rather than negative engagement in the host country. As such, this research seeks to generate insights into the range of factors which impact upon positive friendship building by Saudi students in New Zealand, amid a dearth of empirical studies on intercultural studies involving engagement of Saudi nationals abroad.

This research uses a mixed methods approach informed by contact theory, which includes a survey questionnaire and interviews with Saudi students, interviews with appropriate Saudi and New Zealand officials working in their respective Ministries, informal discussions with New Zealand homestays, and observation of student behaviour. The main contributions of this research are as follows:

- 1) This research examines the application of contact theory in the case of Saudi students in New Zealand, and reconsiders its theoretical starting point.
- 2) This study finds no foundation in the assertion that Saudi students generally hold prejudicial feelings towards their hosts due to differences in culture or religion. In consideration of the factors which impact on student experience, this study questions the notion of initial prejudice, instead suggesting people from this very different culture suspend judgement in order to gain a full experience of their host country.
- 3) A model for understanding the differing behaviour of people from a seemingly homogenous culture is developed, in order to describe three different types of behaviour, “conservative”, “middle” and “open”.
- 4) A model for understanding the relationship between a range of variables which impact upon a Saudi student’s experience of friendship building in New Zealand is provided.

Acknowledgements

I am particularly grateful to my two supervisors, Nigel Haworth and Hugh Whittaker. I appreciate their sound advice. They understood the direction I wanted to take with this research from the beginning, and were great at sending me down interesting paths while also making sure I kept on track. Thank you to Dr Zaidah Mustaffa for her help at the beginning of my research with my ethics proposal and later assisting with data entry into SPSS.

My thanks to all the participants in this study. This includes interview participants from the Saudi Embassy and Cultural Attaché in Australia, New Zealand Embassy in Riyadh, US Embassy in Riyadh and the Ministry of Higher Education in Riyadh. A special thanks to the students who took an interest in this research, and who gave up their time to complete the survey questionnaires. To those who allowed me to interview them, thank you for trusting me with your experiences.

Finally, thank you to my family, especially my children Andrez and Isabella, who kept themselves busy when mum was working on her thesis.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
List of Figures	xvii
List of Tables	xix
Chapter 1 : Introduction	1
1.1 Aims of the Research	1
1.2 Scope	5
1.3 Methodology	6
1.4 Outline of the Research.....	8
Chapter 2 : Saudi International Engagement Challenges	11
2.1 Theoretical Perspectives.....	11
2.2 Rationale for Choosing Contact Theory	12
2.2.1 Explaining Contact Theory	14
2.2.2 Authority Support.....	16
2.2.3 Friendship Potential.....	16
2.2.4 Contact Theory in Practice	18
2.2.5 Contact Theory Provides a Framework for Assessing Data	19
2.2.6 Critique of Contact Theory	20
2.3 Threat Theories	21
2.3.1 Reducing intergroup threat.....	23
2.4 Perspectives on Saudi Engagement within the International Community.....	25
2.4.1 Theological Positions	25
2.4.2 Conservatism and International Engagement.....	27
2.4.3 Supposed “Clash of Civilisations”	28
2.4.4 Potential Prejudices	29
2.4.5 Person-to-Person Diplomacy Encouraged	29
2.5 Foreign Policy’s Influence on Saudi Public Opinion of Others.....	31
2.6 Saudi National Culture.....	32
2.6.1 Individualist and Collectivist Cultural Differences.....	34
2.7 Conclusion	36
Chapter 3 : Development of Global International Education	39
3.1 Historical Overview of Recent Internationalisation of Education	39
3.2 Benefits of International Education	43
3.2.1 The Individual	43
3.2.2 The Nation.....	44
3.2.3 Global Citizenship.....	46
3.3 Trends in the International Flow of Students.....	47

3.3.1	GATS	47
3.3.2	Cultural or Commercial Approach of Host Countries	47
3.3.3	Sending and Host Country Trends	48
3.3.4	Middle Eastern Enrolments Abroad	49
3.4	Conclusion	49
Chapter 4	: The Role of Education in Saudi Development	51
4.1	Development Challenges	51
4.1.1	Social and Demographic Challenges.....	51
4.1.2	Economic Challenges	52
4.1.3	Education Challenges	54
4.2	The Education Solution.....	57
4.2.1	Background on Saudi Education Development	57
4.2.2	Saudi Education Development in the 21 st Century	58
4.2.3	The Role of International Education	59
4.3	Conclusion	64
Chapter 5	: Research Methods.....	67
5.1	Introduction.....	67
5.2	Approach to Theory building	67
5.3	The Selection of an Appropriate Research Method	68
5.4	Stage One: Quantitative Study - Design, Sources of Data, Collection Protocol.....	71
5.4.1	Questionnaire Design	71
5.4.2	Measures.....	72
5.4.3	Questionnaire Development and Collection Method.....	74
5.4.4	Questionnaire Analysis	75
5.5	Qualitative Study - Design, Sources of Data, Collection Protocol	75
5.5.1	Interview Questionnaire Design – Officials and Students	76
5.5.2	Stage Two: Interview Participants and Data Collection – Saudi Officials	77
5.5.3	Stage Three: Interview Participants and Data Collection – Saudi Students	77
5.5.4	Analysis of Interviews.....	78
5.5.5	Parallel Data Collection: Emergent focus	78
5.6	Conclusion	79
Chapter 6	: Saudi Arabia chooses New Zealand as a Study Destination for Scholarship students – Official Views.....	81
6.1	Part One: Motivation for Sending Students Abroad	82
6.2	Part Two: Sending Students to New Zealand	82
6.2.1	Developing Bilateral Relations with New Zealand.....	82
6.2.2	Motivation for Sending Students to New Zealand.....	83
6.2.3	A Fortuitous Set of Variables.....	84
6.2.4	Creating Student Ambassadors	85

6.2.5	A positive perception of New Zealand.....	87
6.2.6	Friendship with a Non-Muslim Country	87
6.3	Part Three: Implementation of the Program in New Zealand	88
6.3.1	Scholarship provisions for Saudi Students.....	88
6.3.2	The Number of Saudi Students in New Zealand.....	88
6.3.3	Demographics of Students in New Zealand.....	90
6.3.4	Approving Scholarships for New Zealand	91
6.3.5	Choice of Institution.....	92
6.3.6	Implementation Issues - New Zealand Institutions / Foreign Affairs	93
6.3.7	Implementation Issues - Students.....	94
6.3.8	Interaction with Locals.....	95
6.4	The Future Outlook.....	96
6.4.1	Reintegration of Students on Return Home	96
6.4.2	Future Engagement between New Zealand and Saudi Arabia.....	97
6.5	Conclusion	99
Chapter 7 : Understanding Student Experience via Quantitative Data Analysis.....		101
7.1	Expectations	102
7.1.1	Motivation to Study in New Zealand	102
7.2	Experience.....	104
7.2.1	Impressions of Each Other	104
7.2.2	The Extent to Which Saudi Students have been Making Friends in New Zealand 106	
7.2.3	How Students are Using their Time to Make Friends in New Zealand	109
7.2.4	Students General Interest in Making Friends in New Zealand	111
7.2.5	Factors Which Affect Friendship Building in New Zealand.....	114
7.2.6	External Influences and their Effects on Friendship Building	117
7.2.7	Does Prior International Experience Correlate to Greater Aptitude to Make Friends Abroad?	120
7.2.8	Students Impressions of the New Zealand Experience	120
7.3	Outcomes	124
7.3.1	Maintaining Links with New Zealand in Future	124
7.4	Further Analysis.....	127
7.4.1	Comparing Key Findings with the Region Students Came From.....	127
7.5	Conclusion	129
Chapter 8 : Impressions of Each Other		133
8.1	“New Zealand is in Europe” (Preconceptions Before Travelling).....	134
8.2	“There’s No Racism Here” (How Saudis View New Zealanders)	135
8.3	“Just Oil and Terrorists?” (Impressions of How New Zealanders Seem to View Saudis).....	139

8.4	“Five Fingers on One Hand” (Different Kinds of Saudis).....	142
8.5	Conclusion	146
Chapter 9 : Getting Used to Differences		149
9.1	“There Is No Difference, We Are All Human” (Similarities and Differences).....	149
9.2	“Following the Rules” (Distinct Cultural Frameworks)	150
9.3	“Money, Alcohol and Relationships” (Differing Priorities)	152
9.3.1	Money.....	153
9.3.2	Alcohol.....	155
9.3.3	Relationships	156
9.4	“Eating Ice-cream in New Zealand” (Freedom in New Zealand to Behave as One Chooses).....	159
9.5	“Looking at Each Other Like Spies” (Students Monitor Each Other).....	159
9.6	“Everything I do Like the Saudi Woman” (The Saudi Female Experience)	160
9.7	Conclusion	162
Chapter 10 : Friendships		165
10.1	“Saudis like to Make Friends Everywhere” (Willingness to Make Friends).....	165
10.2	“Becoming Part of the Furniture”(Ease of Making Friends)	166
10.2.1	Anxiety.....	167
10.2.2	English Language Ability.....	167
10.2.3	Opportunity to Meet	168
10.3	“They can, they can, they can...” (Making Friends and Keeping Values).....	172
10.3.1	Friendship Experience of the Different Types of Saudi.....	173
10.4	“I Don’t Listen to Them” (Advice from Families and Friends).....	175
10.4.1	Encouraged to Make Friends.....	176
10.4.2	Discouraged from Making Friends	177
10.4.3	Mixed Messages	179
10.5	“We Divide New Zealand People into Two Groups”(Students Advise Each Other On Whom to Befriend in NZ)	179
10.6	“I Try Not to Cross the Red Line” (Gender Differences in Making Friends).....	180
10.7	Conclusion	183
Chapter 11 : Reflections on Studying in New Zealand		185
11.1	“After I Moved to New Zealand I Changed a lot” (Personal Transformation).....	185
11.1.1	Independence.....	185
11.1.2	Reflections on Culture and Religion	188
11.1.3	Transformation of Different Types of Saudis	190
11.1.4	Identity	191
11.2	“Forget about Religion”(Strategies for Making Friends with Locals).....	193
11.3	“It’s too Hard to Get Good Grades” (Reflections on Education in New Zealand)	195
11.4	“New Zealand is Outside the World”(Benefits of Studying Far From Home)	196

11.5	“The People of New Zealand are still good for Muslims” (New Zealand as a Study Destination for Muslim Students)	197
11.6	Conclusion	198
Chapter 12 : Discussion		201
12.1	Key Findings	201
12.1.1	Differing Impressions of Each Other	201
12.1.2	Nerves - Saudis and Locals	204
12.1.3	Differences in Experience Depending on Worldview.....	204
12.2	Addressing the Research Questions	207
12.2.1	Q1: To what extent are Saudi students successfully building friendships in New Zealand? (Friendship Potential)	207
12.2.2	Q2: What factors influence relationship building and friendships in the context of Saudi students in New Zealand?	209
12.2.3	Q 3: How do Saudi students reconcile prejudicial messages they may have received at home with the new directive to make friends abroad with people outside of their culture and religion?	212
12.2.4	Q 4: To What Extent does Authority Support Influence Positive Engagement Abroad in the Case of Saudi Students?	215
12.3	Theoretical Perspectives on Saudi Friendship Building in New Zealand.....	217
12.3.1	Selection Bias	219
12.3.2	Are Saudi Students Prejudiced?	219
12.3.3	Applying Contact Theory to a Non-Prejudiced Group	220
12.3.4	Reconciling Differences	222
12.3.5	A Prejudiced Type of Saudi	224
12.3.6	Local Prejudice Towards Saudis	224
12.4	Critical Reflection on the Use of Contact Theory.....	225
12.5	Conclusion	226
Chapter 13 : Conclusions.....		229
13.1	Contact Theory Hypothesis.....	231
13.2	Implications for Contact Theory	234
13.3	Outcomes Resulting from this Engagement.....	237
13.4	Recommendations to New Zealand	238
13.4.1	Recommendations to New Zealand Foreign Affairs.....	238
13.4.2	Recommendations to Staff at New Zealand Institutions	239
13.5	Recommendations to Saudi Ministries.....	240
13.6	Limitations	242
13.7	Recommendation for Future Study	244
13.8	Concluding Statement	245
References		277

List of Figures

Figure 5.1. Research Stages	70
Figure 5.2. Petersons (2010) Model on Constructing a Questionnaire	71
Figure 6.1. Number of Visas Issued Onshore and Offshore Since 1998.....	89
Figure 6.2. Student Demographics in 2010/2011	90
Figure 6.3. Number of Male and Female Students since 1998.....	91
Figure 7.1. Factors Which Affected Decision to Study in New Zealand (Male and Female).....	102
Figure 7.2. Age Differences in Factors Influencing Decision to Study in New Zealand	104
Figure 7.3. Percentage of Students who have Respective Number of Friends in Each Group	107
Figure 7.4. Percentage of Spare Time Spent with Friends of Different Backgrounds	108
Figure 7.5. Percentage of Students Engaging in Activities with Friends of Different Backgrounds ..	109
Figure 7.6. Percentage of Male and Female Students Engaging in a Range of Activities with New Zealanders	109
Figure 7.7. Percentage of Respondents Affected by Series of Factors.....	115
Figure 7.8. Response on Factors Affecting Ability to Make Friends According to Length of Time in New Zealand	116
Figure 7.9. Encouragement and Discouragement of Friendships by Authority Figures	118
Figure 7.10. Overall Experience of English, Foundation and University	121
Figure 7.11. Overall Experience of Homestay, Friendships with NZ People and Saudis	122
Figure 7.12. Impressions of New Zealand Experience.....	123
Figure 7.13. Intention to Maintain Friendships in Future	125
Figure 7.14. Intention to Live or Work in New Zealand in Future	125
Figure 7.15. Intention to Invest in New Zealand.....	126
Figure 12.1. Saudi Anxieties over Homestay Experience:.....	202
Figure 12.2. New Host Family Anxieties over Hosting a Saudi Student	203
Figure 12.3. Hurdles in Friendship Building.....	210
Figure 13.1. Factors Which Influence Students' Ability to Make Friends.....	233

List of Tables

Table 2.1. Social Psychology Theories on Personality, Identity and Behaviour.....	12
Table 2.2. Threat Theories	22
Table 2.3. Collectivist and Individualist Cultures	35
Table 3.1. Key International Education Initiatives Since 1945	41
Table 5.1. Research Worldviews and their Implications.....	69
Table 7.1. Adjectives Used to Describe New Zealand People	105
Table 7.2. Adjectives to Describe Saudis.....	105
Table 7.3. Percentage of Students that Engage in at Least 4 Activities with Saudis / New Zealanders	110
Table 7.4. Interest in Making Friends with New Zealanders and Other International People	111
Table 7.5. Ease of Making Friends with People of Different Backgrounds.....	112
Table 7.6. Interest and Ease of Making Friends in Relation to Living Arrangements	113
Table 7.7. Factors Which Affect Friendship Building with Locals.....	115
Table 7.8. Impression of New Zealanders Over Time	124
Table 7.9. Regional Variations on Key Responses	128
Table 12.1. Worldviews across Common Variables in the Study-abroad Experience.....	206
Table 13.1. Adaptation of Pettigrew’s Intergroup Process Model	231

Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1 Aims of the Research

The international education literature argues that the growth of international education post World War II is associated with, inter-alia, government policies supporting closer engagement between countries. Governments, international organisations, and academic institutions have promoted international education as a means of improving cross-cultural relations. Intrinsic to such efforts is a generally held belief that these education experiences will lead to mutual understanding, prejudice reduction, and ultimately peaceful co-existence and co-operation. Theoretical considerations suggest, however, that international relations are not automatically improved by international education, and that there is a range of factors which impact on the relative effectiveness of international student exchange in a given situation.

Recent Saudi education policy has demonstrated a similar commitment to the promotion of international education as a form of engagement between countries. Saudi Arabia has recently initiated the world's largest national fully funded international scholarship programme, sending more than 100,000 students abroad over the past five years. One of the often stated objectives of this scholarship programme is to encourage person-to-person diplomacy, as it is hoped that along with skills and knowledge acquired, friendships made abroad will stand Saudis in good stead in the future. Person-to-person diplomacy is expected to lead to productive friendships and on-going benefits for the countries involved in the exchange.

The recent advent of the Saudi scholarship program has been accompanied by some commentary on Saudi engagement in the international community and challenges to this; however, no recent empirical studies have provided an objective discussion on the topic. No research has been undertaken to understand the perspective of students on engagement abroad within the current scholarship programme, or to understand the outcomes or benefits of this friendship building situation. There is also very little related research. Cross-cultural research, for instance, has focused less attention on the Middle East than on other regions. It has also tended to bundle Middle Eastern countries into one group, with characteristics explained in terms of the group (Sadi & Henderson, 2005) (thus underestimating country-specific differences) (Hickson & Pugh, 1995). An analysis of all articles from the *Journal of International Business Studies* between 1990 and 1999 found that less than 1% of articles

focused on a Muslim Middle Eastern country (Robertson, Al-Khatib, Al-Habib, & Lanoue, 2001). Given the economic position of Saudi Arabia, and the abundance of other commentary on Saudi Arabia, the dearth of academic research seems to be a major oversight.

This thesis therefore contributes to a little developed body of literature. It analyses Saudi engagement through education in the context of Saudi students studying in New Zealand. It focuses on the role of engagement in a range of factors motivating the scholarship programme, and the associated experiences of Saudi students in New Zealand. It discusses intended and actual engagement with New Zealand through individual student experiences in New Zealand. In particular, it provides a greater understanding of the factors which affect relationship building in this process of engagement.

This research develops understanding of the friendship building process across three overlapping stages: expectations, experience, and outcomes. The first stage relates to the expectations that both the Saudi Ministries (of Higher Education and Foreign Affairs) and students have of the study-abroad experience. In particular, it explores Saudi education policy as it relates to the expectations and drivers of international exchange. This includes the role of engagement within education policy, and the way this expectation is transmitted to students, as well as the expectations of Saudi student participants in New Zealand. This line of enquiry has, at its core, a focus on the extent to which international education is an effective mechanism for developing person-to-person diplomacy and relationship building, in the case of Saudi students in New Zealand. In order to discuss this, it is necessary to gain policy insights such as the extent to which engagement is, in fact, an important element of the exchange programme compared to other motivations. This research therefore explores the expectations of the Saudi ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs, vis-à-vis engagement outcomes, before an examination of the student experience.

The second and central stage considered in this thesis is the experience of students. This relates to the implementation of policy objectives towards engagement and, in particular, the extent to which engagement may or may not be important to the individuals taking part in the scholarship programme. In addressing this focus, the research seeks an understanding of the extent to which Saudi students want to form friendships with New Zealanders and people of other nationalities in New Zealand, and the factors which affect their ability to do so. Analysis at this level discusses the experience of Saudi participants in international education in New

Zealand as these relate to engagement, and responds to these two key research questions, as discussed:

- To what extent are Saudi students successfully building friendships in New Zealand?
- What factors influence relationship building in the context of Saudi students in New Zealand?

These initial questions guided the research direction and led to development of an appropriate literature review, from which several additional formal questions relating to the same were developed, as presented in the following chapter (chapter two). Further, following analysis of the student experience, the final stage in the study-abroad situation, which will be discussed later in the research, relates to the outcomes of the study-abroad experience; that is, the concrete benefits to the individuals and countries involved. In particular, this explores how the Saudi scholarship program is influencing wider relations between Saudi Arabia and New Zealand in terms of on-going exchange beyond education.

It is expected that in reviewing Saudi student engagement in New Zealand, the research will contribute to related bodies of literature and appropriate theories, as well as providing practical recommendations for the export education industry. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Extending understanding of the benefits and difficulties of engagement to individuals through international education
- Extending understanding of theoretical frameworks in intergroup relations
- Providing an understanding of contact theory in the context of Saudi students abroad
- Identifying theoretical gaps in the contact theory literature
- Including an analysis of the New Zealand international education sector vis-à-vis Saudi students, in order to provide feedback to both the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education and New Zealand educational and government authorities
- Providing a framework for understanding potential ongoing benefits to the economies of the countries involved in the exchange through growth in international business

The findings of the research may be of wide interest due to the international implications for Saudi Arabia's international relations development. It is expected that while the theory is guided by theoretical considerations, the main value of the study is in the empirical data gathered. Saudi's role as a major oil producer and its accompanying geo-political and economic responsibilities, as well as emerging human capability development challenges,

impact on innumerable stakeholders. The Saudi scholarship program continues an international trend of increased engagement through education; however, Saudi's uptake of international education is within a complex set of socio-political circumstances, both internally, externally, and with relevance to the international community, given Saudi Arabia's role in the global economy.

The context of this study suggests research outcomes may be of particular significance to New Zealand policy makers. Saudi Arabia's development of international relations is important to New Zealand. This significance has been signalled by the New Zealand Government's recent recognition of the Gulf region as a high-potential economic opportunity, particularly apposite in terms of Saudi Arabia. New Zealand is a recipient country within the Saudi scholarship programme and the number of Saudi students studying in New Zealand has increased sharply as a result, bringing with it numerous opportunities to forge closer relations, trade and investment with Saudi Arabia. Prior to recent education developments, the relationship between New Zealand and Saudi Arabia centred on trade of basic commodities, including export of staple foods to Saudi Arabia; milk, dairy products, meat and import of oil (Global Trade Information Services, 2012) with little diversification in this trade. The growth in export education and educational consultancy in Saudi has, however, opened the way for broader engagement. Since the advent of the Saudi scholarship programme, Saudi students have increasingly become a significant proportion of the international student mix in New Zealand. Whilst this means a considerable immediate benefit to the New Zealand economy, relationships developed through exchange suggest benefits beyond the initial engagement. When considering the recent growth of education linkages, a hypothesis to consider, in tune with, for example, the experience of the Colombo Plan, is that familiarity with New Zealand as a result of positive education experience may provide a platform upon which wider business and cultural opportunities can be built.

A greater understanding of Saudi international education policy enacted via individual students in New Zealand provides both the Saudi and New Zealand ministries with greater insight into the dynamics of this growing relationship. Proponents of the Saudi scholarship scheme have contributed enormous resources to sending students abroad and thus have a vested interest in positive outcomes for the programme. The findings of this study are important from the perspective of multiple stakeholders, including the sending country (Saudi), the receiving country (New Zealand), the ministries, and the individuals involved.

This research also has personal significance to the researcher. I started a business recruiting international students from South America in 1998. Ten years later, I teamed up with a Saudi business partner to recruit students from Saudi Arabia. Due to strong demand in the Saudi market for New Zealand education, Saudi students are now the main focus of this business. Experience working with both my business partner and with Saudi students has given me some insight into both the opportunities and potential difficulties in engagement between these countries. The research project has allowed me to better understand the study-abroad experience of Saudi students, to be in a position to inform the necessary stakeholders, and thereby to maximise the positive aspects of engagement.

1.2 Scope

In order to approach this subject it is first necessary to define “international education” as it applies to this study. Broadly speaking “international education” can be defined as, “The dynamic process of exposing students and faculty to the ideas, methods, and people of other countries” (Murphy, 2007). In the context of this thesis, international education focuses on the physical movement of students, in this case Saudi students studying in New Zealand.

This research consists of an empirical study informed by relevant theoretical perspectives from the social psychology literature. Contact and Threat theories were considered early in the study, each potentially applicable, dependent on the outcomes of the empirical findings. Contact theory was considered the primary theory in discussion of engagement between Saudi students and non-Saudis, in the development of the research questions, and in the discussion of findings. In particular, the study focused on contact facilitating conditions - “friendship potential” (Pettigrew, 1998) and “institutional support” (Allport, 1954). A review of the literature suggests these two facilitating conditions are the most appropriate in the current context, for which validation will be provided in the following chapter. The research also utilises cross-cultural theoretical understandings in individualism and collectivism (including Triandis, 2001; Triandis & Suh, 2002), in order to gain a better understanding of key culture differences which influence engagement in this contact situation. Core value differences between the groups may exist on multiple levels; differences intrinsic to collective and individual cultures relating to cross-cultural theories, as well as political and religious differences which can be discussed in terms of intergroup relations theories. As such, grounding in cross-cultural perspectives as well as intergroup relations generates a broader understanding of the individuals in this particular contact situation.

1.3 Methodology

This research is an empirical study which adopts a combined method approach. Informed by contact theory, the study utilises both deductive and inductive reasoning. It is deductive in terms of application of existing theories to the current context, while inductive reasoning extends these. This allows understanding of the dynamics of the present contact situation since the primary theory utilised has not previously been applied to such a context.

The study consists of a fixed, explanatory, sequential, mixed methods design (surveys and interviews are conducted sequentially and analysed in turn), along with an emergent parallel data collection process (informal discussions with students and homestays provide further data to support the research). The latter was developed in order to further explain key findings obtained via the original research design. Mixed methods was preferred as the method enables the researcher to benefit from the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data, giving overall research findings a more exhaustive character and greater generalisability. This is especially important given the nature of the study and lack of previous research on this topic.

The study departs from theoretical underpinnings to extend knowledge of the benefits of the contact situation to the individuals and countries involved. This required an analysis of key indicators of engagement beyond education, as developed by the researcher and administered in the survey questionnaire of students. Data collection involved collection and analysis of primary data in two stages (fixed), representing the core research components and supplemented by a parallel emergent data source.

Stage One: Saudi Student Survey – Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

A survey was administered to 167 Saudi international students in New Zealand. Participants were studying in Christchurch, Dunedin and Auckland, at various stages of their education in New Zealand. This included students in the following courses: language schools, Foundation Studies, Bachelor and Postgraduate studies. The survey gauged student interest in engagement, range of engagement experiences in New Zealand, and general features of the same, with a focus on key issues related to both short and longer term engagement with New Zealanders. The survey evaluated key components of the study in terms of a range of variables as developed in the review of relevant literature.

Stage Two: In depth analysis of Saudi student experiences in New Zealand – Qualitative data collection and analysis

The findings of the primarily quantitative survey were analysed and followed by the qualitative stage of the research, designed to gain greater depth of understanding of key issues. Interviews were conducted with Saudi students and government officials from New Zealand and Saudi Arabia.

This research stage involved interviews with two groups.

- 1) Interviews with officials from the Saudi Embassy and Cultural Attaché in Canberra as well as interviews with officials from the Saudi Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia and diplomatic staff at the New Zealand embassy in Riyadh (in addition to informal meetings with Australian and US diplomats in Riyadh also).

Interviews with officials formed the basis for discussion of Saudi International Educational Policy, particularly as it operates in New Zealand. Insights were gained around the expectations the Ministries have of Saudi students participating in the scholarship programme, the manner in which these expectations are transmitted to students, and related issues.

- 2) Interviews with 16 Saudi students

An open-ended interview schedule was developed, partially based on the survey results and according to the explanatory research design mentioned earlier. Semi-structured questions were incorporated to allow the worldviews of participants to surface through discussion. Questions relating to key issues were designed to permit comparison and explanation of information gained. Thematic analysis of the discussions was informed by the theoretical constructs of the intergroup relations theories included in this study, with a focus on contact theory.

Stage Three: Parallel discussions with students and homestays – Emergent parallel qualitative data collection.

In certain parts of the data, analysis draws on extended experience in this field. The analysis includes observations based on the researcher's own experiences with students, and discussions with locals who have interacted with students over the research period in order to support and explain the findings in the first two stages. In particular, comments made by potential and current homestays as well as general observations of student behaviour are included in the analysis, in instances where the researcher has found that these help explain a phenomenon described by student interviews from an alternative (local) perspective.

1.4 Outline of the Research

The thesis consists of the following (12) chapters:

Chapter two provides the theoretical frameworks for the research and the general direction of the study. This includes perspectives on Saudi international engagement as well as general cultural differences.

Chapter three describes recent historical growth in education exchange and key international drivers of this trend so as to describe the broader context in which Saudi education policy has developed. This includes philosophical inclinations which have contributed to the ongoing development of international education as well as associated motivators at the level of both governments and individuals.

Chapter four provides a discussion of the role of education in Saudi development, including key development challenges and the education solutions which the Saudi government is implementing. This chapter includes an overview of the role of international education within broader education development, suggesting the place of engagement through international education within broader policy objectives.

Chapter five provides a description of the research methodology, data collection and analysis methods.

Chapter six outlines findings from interviews with Saudi officials in a discussion of Saudi education policy as it relates to the role of engagement of students in New Zealand.

Chapter seven discusses the quantitative data findings from the student survey, in an analysis of actual engagement of Saudi students in New Zealand and related issues within this context.

Chapters eight to eleven present the qualitative data results by building a picture of student experience through a range of stages. This begins in chapter eight with a description of students' preconceptions before travelling. In chapter nine, the exchange develops with a portrayal of Saudis and locals getting to know each other. Chapter ten develops this concept further with description of developing friendships. Chapter eleven summarises the transition students go through as they adapt to life in New Zealand.

Chapter twelve provides a discussion of key findings in relation to research questions, and the relationship between findings and the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

Chapter thirteen provides conclusions and a reflection on Saudi policy as enacted by students in New Zealand. Also included in this chapter is a range of suggestions to New Zealand and Saudi stakeholders, study limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2:

Saudi International Engagement Challenges

The following 3 chapters review relevant bodies of literature and information, broadly related to: a) engagement challenges for Saudi students abroad (Chapter Two); b) Saudi's international education position within broader international trends in engagement through education (Chapter Three); and c) international education in Saudi development and education plans (Chapter Four). Discussion of these topics provides the context in which to understand issues which affect the Saudi government and Saudi students, as both engage with New Zealand through international education.

The aim of the current chapter is to:

- Identify the applicability of contact theory and threat theories to the current research
- Identify potential barriers to engagement
- Examine existing perspectives on Saudi international engagement
- Establish the commentary surrounding the ability of Saudi Arabia to engage with the international community and with non-Muslim countries in particular
- Set the fundamental direction of the research

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives

Engagement between Saudi students in New Zealand and New Zealand people can be discussed in relation to developments in the field of social psychology. In particular, a broad body of literature within social psychology covers aspects of personality, identity, and behaviour. This field of literature was mostly developed after World War II as researchers became interested in studying and theorising about the behaviour of individuals in social situations. Theories explore interpersonal relations in both national and cross-cultural contexts, with a focus on how attitudes are formed and developed. In particular, Contact and Threat theories are used to discuss positive and negative relations between distinct cultural groups. The following table summarises theories within this body of literature which are well known and potentially applicable to the current research.

Table 2.1. Social Psychology Theories on Personality, Identity and Behaviour

Theory	Epistemological/Theoretical origin	Originator/Author	Conceptual Formation
Contact Theory	Social psychology	(Allport, 1954) (Williams, 1947)	Contact leads to prejudice reduction
Value Difference	Social psychology	(Merton, 1938)	Value differences lead to poor adaptation
Distinctiveness	Social psychology	(Brewer, 1991)	Need for validation and similarity + uniqueness & individuation
Social scientific theory	Social psychology	(Hull, 1978) (Alreshoud & Koeske, 1997)	Attitudes improve with greater amounts of social contact
The similarity principle	Social psychology	(Byrne, 1971)	People with similar interests and status seek each other out
Culture learning theory	Social & experimental psychology – social skills & interpersonal behaviour	(Argyle, 1969) (Tajfel, 1981)	Cross-cultural travellers need to learn culturally relevant social skills to survive & thrive in their new settings
Social identification theory	Ethnic, cross-cultural & social / psychology-self (includes individualism/collectivism)	(Deaux, 1996) (Phinney, 1990) (Berry, 1994, 1997) (Tajfel & Turner, 1987)	Cross-cultural transition may involve changes in inter-group relations and cultural identity
Social exchange theory	Social psychology & sociology	(Thibaut & Kelley, 1959)	If a relationship costs too much, too few advantages, relationship discontinued (individualist)
Social skills & culture learning	Social psychology	(Argyle & Kendon, 1967)	Lacking social skills may cause cross-cultural problems
Macrostructural theory	Sociology	(Blau, 1977)	Inter-racial contact may have positive or negative outcome given opportunity for intergroup contact. Social structure affects intergroup relations

2.2 Rationale for Choosing Contact Theory

Whilst any of the above theories might be applicable to the current research, this research is informed particularly by Contact Theory. Contact Theory is well established in the international relations literature, as will be discussed in this section with reference to studies involving different cultures. The focus of this study is an empirical assessment of an understudied group, Saudis, therefore the study benefits from the insights gained from more than 70 years of academic study in contact theory.

Given there were no Saudi students in New Zealand prior to 2000, the contact situation of this study is very recent. Preconceptions students have of New Zealanders are likely to be built on limited interactions and informed by attitudes students bring from their home country. Yet as reported in a study of Mexican students in Poland, Murphy (2007) noted that:

Sometimes, information about other cultures presented to students at the primary and secondary levels is simply wrong or presented only in accordance with stereotypes [...] their exposure to other cultures has been cursory or distorted (p. 172)

Lack of contact or information about other groups can lead to conflict (Hayes, McAllister, Dowds, 2007) or at the least, negative stereotyping. Given the short history of involvement with New Zealand through study-abroad, stereotypes may inform the Saudi student experience in New Zealand. This signals the usefulness of Contact Theory especially since some theorists contend that Contact Theory is “*The* most important theory regarding stereotype change within social psychology” (Stangor, Jonas, Stroebe and Hewstone, 1996, citing Amir, 1969; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Stephan, 1985). As an established construct, Contact Theory thus provides a solid foundation from which to develop a lens for understanding the Saudi student experience in New Zealand.

Yet, while Contact Theory maintains a prominent position amongst the social science theories, it should be acknowledged that a contact situation may be observed in reference to more than one theory since there is a fluid distinction and considerable overlap between them. For instance, Contact Theory finds common ground with Social Scientific Theory (Table 2.1) in terms of its use in explaining stereotype and attitude change through contact. Attitude change can also be explained through Social Identification Theory (Table 2.1), from the perspective of identity change through experience of the new culture. It can be further understood through Social Skills and Cultural Learning (Table 2.1) since the development of social skills renders students more capable of integrating in the new society, and more likely to improve their attitudes towards their hosts. These examples suggest a relationship between the theories, and indeed, it is acceptable to explain a given situation with reference to more than one theory. For instance, Goldsmith (2004) combines Macrostructural Theory with Contact Theory and Threat Theory (discussed further in the chapter), to observe interracial friendliness and conflict within schools. A range of other combinations is possible depending on the particular focus of a study, and the available prior information of the subjects.

Of the social science theories provided in Table 2.1, the conceptual formation of Contact Theory was, however, deemed to be sufficient to drive the direction of this study. This decision was based on the broad nature of Contact Theory itself, lack of prior studies relating social science theories with Saudi student experience abroad (and absence of studies on students in New Zealand), limited experience between the groups in question, exploratory nature of this study, accompanied by an abundance of Contact Theory studies applied to other intercultural groups.

In contrast to other theories which, as described in the conceptual formation column, look at particular dimensions within a given contact situation, contact theory is sufficiently broad to apply to the current study and to the full range of experiences of Saudi students in New Zealand. Contact Theory's conceptual formation - 'contact leads to prejudice reduction' - was deemed relevant to the current contact situation. This study involves groups of people in which, according to a review of relevant literature, prejudice may be a barrier to engagement and the desired outcomes of 'person-to-person diplomacy' and the friendship objectives of the scholarship program. Assuming prejudice is an aspect of the study-abroad experience, prejudice reduction is a necessary precursor to positive engagement between people. It thus serves as an appropriate starting point in developing greater understanding of the experiences of Saudi students abroad. Other theories summarised in Table 2.1 might be useful in explaining aspects of prejudice (if found), such as "Value Differences" (value differences lead to poor adaptation) or "Distinctiveness" (need for validation and similarity, uniqueness and individuation). However since this study is exploratory, such characteristics could not be anticipated in advance and were therefore not incorporated in the study design.

2.2.1 Explaining Contact Theory

Allport (1954) established Contact Theory, building on an earlier monograph by Williams (1947) on the reduction of intergroup prejudice. Allport defined prejudice as "an irrational generalisation about people [...] an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalisation" (Allport, 1954). Blumer (1958) extended this definition by adding that prejudice is "historically and culturally rooted and consists of feelings that a (minority) group is inferior, different, alien and threatening to one's own racial / ethnic group" (Dixon, 2006). We should note here that the irrational generalisation explanation may not be accepted by religious followers who perceive their prejudices as divinely inspired as opposed to irrational. Yet the religious element may be an element in this study in addition to Blumer's historical and culturally rooted feelings. Indeed, this research will consider the idea that prejudice in the current context may be based on a generalisation inspired by religious understandings and discourse. Given some of the religious perspectives taught in Saudi Arabia, Saudi students may possess some feelings of prejudice towards non-Saudis / non-Muslims, not discounting the fact that prejudice may be both ways.

Contact theory's central hypothesis is that contact between individuals of different groups can lead to diminished prejudice if certain conditions are met (Molina & Wittig, 2006). The conditions specified by Allport are: 1) Equal group status within the situation, 2) Common

goals, 3) Intergroup cooperation, and 4) Authority support (Pettigrew, 1998). Later researchers added the condition, 5) Acquaintance potential (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Cook, 1962) which was later extended by Pettigrew (1998) to 'friendship potential'.

Contact Theory was originally applied to desegregation studies in the US in the 1950s. The literature of the time noted that racial attitudes between blacks and whites became more positive the more the groups came into contact. Studies included observations of mixed racial sea voyages, mixed working situations, and close living quarters in public housing estates (Pettigrew, 1998). Education was later considered a contact situation of note, when in 1954, the US Supreme Court deemed segregated schools unconstitutional, thereby allowing education to become a facilitator for both improving race relations and reducing prejudice (Goldsmith, 2004; Hayes, McAllister, & Dowds, 2007). Again, in the context of this study, education as a facilitating contact situation parallels the current proposition, 'International Education as a Conduit for Engagement Between Countries', and relates directly to the stated diplomacy objectives of the Saudi ministries.

Contact theory has been utilised to inform research in a number of studies of intergroup relations in multicultural educational settings. This includes studies of mixed faith schools in Northern Ireland (Hayes, et al., 2007), Northern Ireland and Israel (Donnelly & Hughes, 2006), India and Israel (Antal, 2008), as well as numerous studies of US students studying in multiethnic classes (Molina & Wittig, 2006). It has also been applied in observation of US students abroad in the UK and Germany (Stangor, Jonas, Stroebe, & Hewstone, 1996). To my knowledge, no recent (post 2000) studies of Middle Eastern students have yet been undertaken in relation to contact theory.

The current research develops a discussion of two of Contact Theory's conditions for prejudice reduction as they relate to engagement of Saudi students and others in New Zealand. Previous research suggests that while optimal contact finds most facilitating conditions present, it is not essential that all of the contact conditions be met. For instance, a Contact Theory study by Eller and Abrams (2004) focused on 'intergroup friendships' and 'group status' while a study by Molina and Wittig (2004) merged 'intergroup cooperation' and 'common goals' as a singular variable. Another study, by Stangor, Jonas, Stroebe and Hewstone (1996) discussed Contact Theory as its guiding premise although made no mention of the contact facilitating conditions. Rather, the researchers developed a discussion of attitude and stereotype change of US students abroad, as indicative of contact outcomes. Given the list

of possible contact-facilitating conditions continues to expand as researchers add new facilitating conditions based on observations in various contexts (Pettigrew, 1998), some flexibility in the field has developed in order to explain a range of situations. In the current study, the researcher considers “Authority support” and “friendship potential” as the key facilitating conditions, which is reflected in the study design. It was decided that since engagement in this contact situation involves groups and individuals within the wider community, as opposed to two discrete groups, it would be impractical to try to apply or ascertain the role of each of Allport’s conditions individually, especially since the first 3 relate to discrete and well identified groups and situations.

2.2.2 Authority Support

Authority support refers to encouragement or permission to engage, given to a particular group by persons or institutions in positions of authority. This may be a crucial element in the engagement of Saudi students abroad. Previous researchers have suggested that when such authorities support a contact situation and measures designed to promote contact, a ‘new’ social climate may be cultivated, characterised by inclusiveness and tolerance along with new norms of acceptance (Molina & Wittig, 2006). In the current study, the hierarchical nature of Saudi culture might suggest that students will be particularly sensitive to the directives of authority figures, including the directive of scholarship authorities to engage.

The facilitating condition ‘authority support’ may be met in the current situation since Saudi students receive both explicit and implicit authority support to engage others while studying in New Zealand. The Saudi Ministry of Education explicitly supports the contact situation of Saudi scholarship students abroad by financing their studies so as to allow them to take part in the contact situation, and providing pre-departure orientation programs designed to improve their understandings of living abroad and adapting to a foreign culture. Implicit authority support is implied by the institutions who accept the students in the host country and who support their needs in New Zealand.

The above discussion leads to the following question:

Q: To what extent does authority support influence positive engagement abroad in the case of Saudi students?

2.2.3 Friendship Potential

“Friendship potential” is assessed in this study, because researchers have since Allport agreed that this fifth facilitating condition is the most potent, potentially because it involves all of the

other four conditions (Eller & Abrams, 2004). Previous findings of studies in multiethnic educational settings (Goldsmith, 2004; Hayes, et al., 2007; Molina & Wittig, 2006; Stangor, et al., 1996) have focused on contact conditions, with one study concluding that friendship potential is the most robust and consistent predictor of prejudice reduction (Molina & Wittig, 2006). The Saudi ministries expect that Saudi students will make friends while abroad and that these friendships will lead to mutual benefits for the students and countries involved. Collectivist cultures (as will be discussed later in the chapter) also put emphasis on relationships, thus this aspect may be a particularly important aspect to Saudis. As such, this study develops an understanding of friendship potential so as to ascertain whether this objective within the scholarship program is being met.

The following questions, which were introduced in chapter one, relate specifically to friendship potential:

Q: To what extent are Saudi students successfully building friendships in New Zealand?

Q: What factors influence relationship building and friendships in the context of Saudi students in New Zealand?

Allport wrote several accounts of the link between Contact Theory and religion. In a discussion of the world view of US Christians and Jews, he concluded in one essay that “two contrary sets of threads are woven into the fabric of all religion – the warp of brotherhood and the woof of bigotry” (Allport, 1966). On the other hand, in an earlier essay he stated that 'theological belief is not itself a direct factor in prejudice' (Allport, 1962). By this, he referred to the role of personality types as affecting levels of prejudice in individuals. Allport also wrote that 'divinely sanctioned ethnocentrism' was decreasing and 'ecumenicism, its polar opposite, was in ascendance', with a view that theocracy had almost disappeared. He argued that theological influences in daily life were diminishing while socio-cultural influences in religion were increasing (Allport, 1967). Whilst this might still be the case in the US and in other Western countries, it could also be argued that the role of socio-cultural influences in religion in Saudi Arabia has quite different characteristics to the socio-cultural influences in a Western context, and notably Saudi Arabia is one of the world's few remaining theocratic states. As such, the findings of a study of Saudi Muslim students using contact theory will not necessarily mirror previous contexts to which Allport and following researchers have applied the theory.

2.2.4 Contact Theory in Practice

Noting that Allport didn't discuss the 'how' and 'why' elements associated with contact theory, Pettigrew and Tropp (1998) developed an outline of the processes which individuals go through in an intergroup contact situation. This process is divided into 4 elements as summarised:

- 1) Learning about the 'out-group' – when learning corrects negative views of the out-group, contact should reduce prejudice.
- 2) Changing behaviour – under repeated contact, in varied situations. Repetition makes intergroup encounters comfortable and leads to liking.
- 3) Generating affective ties – emotion is critical in intergroup contact. Anxiety is common in initial encounters between groups, while continued contact generally reduces anxiety. Contrarily, bad experiences increase anxiety. Empathy for a stigmatised out-group member can improve attitudes toward whole out-group.
- 4) In-group reappraisal – in-group norms and customs turn out not to be the only ways to manage the social world and leads to deprovincialisation.

The above process model is useful in the current study as a basis for understanding the engagement process of Saudi students in New Zealand. The model allows analysis of student perspectives as they relate to length of time in New Zealand. The qualitative findings in chapters eight to eleven are broadly arranged to reflect the stages as identified. Of the four elements described by Pettigrew, this study focuses in particular on 'generating effective ties' (stage 3), since this is a key element in the friendship building process.

Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) explained the development of effective ties, noting that extended contact over time allows people to view themselves as being part of a larger group, and this leads to a process of recategorisation in which participants then start to obscure the "we" and "they" boundaries. This outcome has been observed in numerous types of different groups, beyond races and ethnicities, with effects of contact stronger on the part of majority group members than minority group members (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). This process of recategorisation is also explained in acculturation and identity theories (Phinney, 1992; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008), which address changes in perceptions of identity within the acculturation process, as people conceptualise home and host identities. Optimal intergroup contact of cross-groups is realised when friendships develop through extensive and repeated contact in a variety of social contexts, in order for the quality of contact to be positive. When Allport's conditions are met, this typically leads to an even greater reduction

in prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998). Fortunately, the Saudi scholarship program supports students abroad for approximately 5 years including language and tertiary studies, allowing students plenty of time for friendships to evolve. While the time element to this condition would appear to be met, this study will assess how students are using their time to develop friendships and whether a variety of social contexts are part of the students' experience in New Zealand.

2.2.5 Contact Theory Provides a Framework for Assessing Data

Beyond providing broad insight into contact situations, Contact Theory reveals a framework for assessing data. Previous studies have applied a range of measures under the umbrella of Contact Theory in order to understand various populations. Thus new studies can view populations using the lenses that have been developed by Contact Theory Theorists over the previous 70 years. A conventional format to analysing data in Contact Theory studies is evident across the literature on Contact Theory. This generally includes the following steps:

- 1) Subjects are described in terms of their prejudicial views of "others". This assessment might allude to previous studies or observations in the literature.
- 2) Data is gathered with the aim of understanding a friendship situation between distinct cultural or ethnic groups. This usually includes data on attitudes towards friendships with others and various measures which reflect the extent to which the groups in question are interacting. Examples include the amount of time groups spend together, number of friendships, range of activities the groups engage in.
- 3) Subjects are assessed in terms of how their views towards the 'other' group change over time
- 4) Certain 'Contact Facilitating Conditions' are identified either prior to data gathering or resulting from analysis of study findings.
- 5) More recent studies may apply Pettigrew's Intergroup Process Model to data (as discussed in 2.2.3) in order to understand the groups experiences and intergroup experiences and reflections over time.

Conventional Contact Theory study design brings a critical understanding of both Contact Theory and the data itself. Therefore this study has made extensive use of these existing frameworks in relation to data gathering and analysis. This study applies all of the above

steps. The study begins with a review of literature on the Saudi population and studies of Middle Eastern peoples in order to discuss the possibility of initial prejudice. This review includes an assessment of relevant contact facilitating conditions, identified prior to data gathering, and analysed in light of study findings. Data is gathered to generate understandings of the dynamics of the friendship situation in terms of extent of engagement and attitudes. Pettigrew's Intergroup Process Model is applied to the data, both from the perspective of the data presentation (the qualitative data chapters follow the Intergroup Process Model stages of engagement and reflections) and also analysed in the conclusions chapter (table 13.2). Thus application of Contact Theory frameworks are critical to both the current study design and analysis of the data.

2.2.6 Critique of Contact Theory

Triandis (1996) contends that most theories and data in contemporary psychology have been developed from studies of Western populations, while 70% of humans are not living in Western cultures. These include both Allport's original groups and later studies, which have been criticised as reflecting primarily the experience of black-white populations, and then assumed to apply to other racial groups (Dixon, 2006). Also, support for the contact hypothesis is not universal. Donnelley and Hughes (2006) explain that while US and Canadian researchers largely support contact theory, researchers in Britain, Australia and South Africa have found an inverse relationship between black-white contact and prejudice. In those countries studies found that the more contact white people had with black, the more prejudiced they became. Further, while there is broad support in the US for contact theory, some studies of US students abroad have found that initial negativism towards a host country population has been reinforced through experience.

Thus, contact outcomes can vary depending on the populations in question. This is also true of studies within the US. Dixon (2006) found, for instance, that whites were prejudiced towards black minorities when large groups lived nearby, but not prejudiced towards similar groups of Asian or Hispanic neighbours. Greater cultural differences and feelings of being threatened by a different way of life were cited as the reason for this prejudice. Of particular relevance to the current study, Dixon (2006) concluded that the situation of "Arabs post 9/11 may be comparable or even worse than that of blacks" (p. 2197). This contention has not as yet been tested in any empirical study. Further, in addition to differences between specific groups, contact theory is part of an experience continuum in which attitudes and stereotypes do not remain static. In the case of exchange students abroad, attitudes and stereotypes have

been observed as becoming more negative over time, since students tend to arrive with overly positive perceptions at the start of their stay, which are then moderated over time (Stangor, et al., 1996). This change can also incur a period of disillusionment before attitude improves (Alreshoud & Koeske, 1997).

While individual studies may find different outcomes, a meta-analysis of 515 studies within the contact literature, conducted by Pettigrew and Tropp (2008), found that contact theory did broadly hold true. They found that intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice, with 94% of studies showing an ‘inverse relationship between contact and prejudices’ (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008, p. 922). Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) concluded that future work should focus on negative factors that prevent intergroup contact from diminishing prejudice in order to develop a more comprehensive theory of intergroup contact. Analysis of the barriers to friendship building in the current context may add to this theory. It could also be added that the inclusion of studies involving groups in non-Western contexts would either build a case for the universal application of contact theory or alternatively explain its limitations vis-à-vis the groups in question.

2.3 Threat Theories

The intergroup relations literature establishes that intergroup situations can generate hostility or harmony (Dixon, 2006). Whilst contact theory is utilised to explain the context in which positive outcomes can be observed and obtained in inter-group situations through adhering to a set of conditions, intergroup threat literature generates theories which explain the negative outcomes which are also possible in inter-group situations, particularly when Allport and Pettigrew's conditions are not met. Pettigrew concedes that “high intergroup anxiety and threat can also impede both contact and its positive effects [in which] emotions often derive from no prior experience with the out-group” (Pettigrew, 1998, p. 78). Pettigrew also contends that societies may shape contact effects with two contrary scenarios resultant. A society which embraces intergroup harmony will encourage equal-status contact while another society may set norms of discrimination which can poison intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998). The previous literature suggests Saudi culture has not promoted equal status between Muslims and non-Muslims domestically (Bronson & Coleman, 2006; Harris, 2003; Kapiszewski, 2000; Prokop, 2002; Scott, 2001), which may potentially impact the contact situation in New Zealand. In the current study it is most likely that Saudi students have had no experience with New Zealanders prior to arrival and may potentially project expectations of Western and non-Muslim stereotypes which may or may not be prejudiced.

Should threat be found an element of engagement in New Zealand, the following question may be relevant:

Q: How do Saudi students reconcile prejudicial messages they may have received at home with the new directive to make friends abroad with people outside of their culture and religion?

A number of theories have developed to reflect the factors and conditions which influence potentially negative outcomes. The intergroup threat literature discusses 7 types of perceived threat, as summarised by Riek, Mania and colleagues (2006). These are presented in the following table along with a note on potential applicability to this study:

Table 2.2. Threat Theories

Threat	Conceptual Formation	Comment on Potential Applicability to Study
Realistic threat / Realistic Conflict Theory (RGCT)	When 2 groups are in competition for scarce resources, the potential success of one group threatens the well-being of the other, resulting in negative out-group attitudes. Can be tangible or issues of power/control.	Not relevant since NZ and Saudi have complementary resources Sheep vs. oil
Symbolic threat / Symbolic racism theory	Racism results from conflicting values, norms and beliefs rather than from competition or conflicting goals. Threats to important values can increase intergroup bias.	Potentially applicable. Different beliefs, Islam, Christianity, Agnosticism & Atheism Different cultural values Collectivism & Individualism
Intergroup anxiety	Feelings of uneasiness and awkwardness in the presence of out-group members, because of uncertainty about how to behave toward them, makes interactions with out-group seem threatening. Unfavourable out-group contact and negative expectancies lead to increases in intergroup anxiety.	Potentially applicable Saudis have no history of negative contact with New Zealanders, but possibly affected by Western stereotype expectations. Social skills less developed in collective society (Saudi) + tend to distinguish between in-group & out-group
Negative stereotype	Negative stereotypes create negative expectations. Negative expectancies influence social information processing and social judgments. High levels of negative contact between groups predict higher levels of perceived threat as does high in-group identification and perceived intergroup conflict.	Potentially applicable Stereotypes may be based on: Culture Politics Religion
Group esteem threat	If the actions of an out-group potentially decrease an in-group's esteem, a threat is posed that may instigate intergroup bias.	Applicable case by case
Distinctiveness threat	People seek membership in positively distinct groups; threats to in-group distinctiveness are therefore aversive.	Applicable case by case
Bicultural model of threat	Behavioural outcomes differ depending on type of threat. Two broad categories: threats to 1) group-level resources and 2) group integrity. Integrity threats include threats to group values, morality, competence and reciprocity relations.	Potentially applicable Perception of group integrity threats possible such as threats to group values and morals through adaptation to Western culture

From table 2.2, several types of potential threat have been identified, including Symbolic Threat, Intergroup Anxiety, Negative Stereotyping and Bicultural Model of Threat. Both the contact and threat literature focus on stereotyping as leading to certain contact outcomes. Riek et al. (2006) contend that “negative expectancies influence social information processing and social judgements” (p. 338). Therefore, the existence or absence of negative stereotyping vis-à-vis the other group is an important element in understanding the initial attitude of the group in question and the likelihood of a positive or negative contact outcome.

A meta-analysis of the intergroup threat literature examines in-group identification and negative stereotypes as they relate to threat with two key findings: a) In-group identification has a weak but significant effect on intergroup threat, b) High identifiers (that is people who identify strongly with the in-group) experience higher levels of intergroup threat than low identifiers (Riek, et al., 2006). Since Saudi culture is a highly collectivist culture (as will be discussed further in the chapter), Saudis are likely to be ‘high identifiers’ and therefore potentially more susceptible to experiencing intergroup threat.

2.3.1 Reducing intergroup threat

Reduction of intergroup prejudice (as observed in contact theory) might also be helpful in reducing intergroup threat. Contact between groups can weaken stereotypes especially when out-group members typical of the group are able to disconfirm the stereotype. Contact theorists propose that contact reduces prejudice by decreasing feelings of threat and anxiety (Molina & Wittig, 2006). According to Molina and Wittig (2006), comparatively less research has focused specifically on reducing intergroup threat. They note, however, that cultural diversity programs which provide information about the out-group are thought to be useful in reducing symbolic and realistic threats (as described in table 2.2). Intergroup friendships may reduce intergroup threat and address the motivational and emotional mechanisms which lead to perceptions of threat, hence suggesting a strong link between contact and threat theories centred on the role of friendship building. The friendship condition, which is the focus of this study of engagement, has been singled out as a primary element in both theories.

Research indicates that groups are usually perceived to be more threatening and to elicit more fear than individuals, as people rely less on group stereotypes when interacting with individuals (Riek, et al., 2006). This may be reason to expect positive engagement in person-to-person diplomacy through students, and friendship building in the current scholarship

program. The importance of individual interactions in decreasing threat will be discussed in the research.

Both contact and threat theories could be utilised to understand the success of person-to-person diplomacy. It has been argued that the effects of contact depend on the minority group in question and form of contact (Dixon, 2006). Huntington gives a lengthy description of the difficulties of engagement between the minority group in question in this study: (Saudi) Muslims and non-Muslims. He details hostility resulting from closer engagement through trade as he cites trade relationships as increasing engagement and;

Making threatening to each society practices and beliefs of the other which at a distance had seemed harmlessly exotic (Huntington, 1997, p. 224).

Huntington argues that engagement through trade provides an opportunity for people from different religious backgrounds to get to know each other better. However in doing so, people become more aware of their differences, stimulating mutual fear. Huntington is skeptical of engagement between Muslims and non-Muslims, a notion which is at the crux of an overarching premise of a 'clash of civilisations'. However, his examples of contact situations may not meet the Contact Theory conditions in terms of friendship potential. Even prior to development of the friendship facilitating condition by Pettigrew, within the first four original conditions, Allport suggested contact must be intimate, not trivial (Pettigrew, 1998). Research suggests that since interaction only creates positive outcomes under a limited set of conditions, should those conditions not be prevalent, interaction may create both interracial conflict as well as interracial friendship (Goldsmith, 2004).

In this context, the Saudi Ambassador in Australia, Nazer, was quoted speaking on the link between trade, education and friendship building. Nazer expressed a recognition of the limits of previous trade relationships stating that education is vital, "if you want, really, to build relations and understand each other's culture". He noted that before 2005 and the advent of the new Saudi scholarship fund, Saudi Arabia's relationship with Australia revolved solely around trade, which according to Nazer "never builds relationships" (Anonymous, 2007). This situation parallels New Zealand's growing relationship with Saudi Arabia and reinforces the role of friendship building in person-to-person diplomacy.

Therefore the practical implementation of Saudi Arabia's diplomacy objective may be linked to the success of friendship building by individual students. This highlights the importance of

this study in its analysis of engagement between Saudi students and others in New Zealand. Further, while contact theory has been utilised to understand both immediate and ongoing prejudice reduction at the level of individuals, there are few, if any, contact studies on long term outcomes of a business or economic nature resulting from improved relations. This is perhaps due to the dominance of studies from the fields of social psychology and education disciplines. It is assumed through the literature that long term benefits derive from international exchange (as will be further explained in the following chapter); however the link has not been made explicitly in relation to contact theory findings. This research therefore provides an analysis of the established realms of contact theory in terms of effect on intergroup relations, prejudice and threat, and also discusses the longer term potential of the relationship. While previous studies have primarily reflected on the contact situation per se, informed by contact theory, this research will extend the discussion to include discussion of the impact of contact on future engagement between the countries involved.

2.4 Perspectives on Saudi Engagement within the International Community

Saudi engagement within the international community can be viewed through the lens of contact and threat theories. Over the past four decades, Saudi development of international education and engagement with the international community more broadly has been influenced by varying domestic world views and ideological pulls. Internal politics have echoed shifting perspectives at all levels of society – from within government, the royal family and general population – on how Saudi Arabia should reform and develop within an Islamic framework. The Saudi monarchy assumes a prominent international role in ensuring the Islamic way of life is followed, justified by its history as the birthplace of Islam and home of two of Islam’s holiest cities. Thus, contending views on development focus on the range of options which might legitimately be pursued, whilst upholding Islamic values. Development issues include the extent to which Saudi Arabia should engage with and learn from non-Muslim countries.

2.4.1 Theological Positions

Opposing cultural movements have arisen within a range of divergent opinions, the extremes of which can be summarised as those who want a comprehensive reform of Saudi Arabia and those who wish to maintain a virtuous and traditional Islamic state (Dekmejian, 2003). Theological positions may complement each perspective. One philosophy named Tawid / Thahawid (based on Monotheism as defined by Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab) includes the

belief that there is a conspiracy to destroy true Islam, and suggests a need to maintain Islamic traditions. In the recent era the application of this theory has been towards US (Western) advances accompanied by a belief that, 'US culture corrodes Saudi society from within'. As such, this philosophy suggests engagement with non-Muslim countries, particularly Western ones, is a threat to Islamic identity. Group threat is therefore inherent in this position. On the other hand, 'Taqrab' is a philosophy which seeks agreement between Muslims and non-Muslims and peaceful coexistence. Taqrab downplays the importance of violent jihad and urges Saudis to live peacefully with people of the Abrahamic religions, including 'Christian Americans, Jewish Israelis and Shi'ite Iranians' (Doran, 2004). Contact theory might therefore be relevant to proponents of Taqrab in terms of the facilitating conditions which lead diverse groups to intergroup harmony.

Whilst theological differences exist in relation to permissible degrees of engagement with non-Muslims, there is nevertheless an element of separation and mistrust of non-Muslims evident in Saudi society. This is seen in the restriction of engagement between the Saudi population and ex-patriate ('ex-pat') non-Muslims. Separate compounds created to house ex-pat non-Muslims were designed to protect the Saudi population by ensuring the ex-pat community did not impact Saudi culture and religious practises (Kapiszewski, 2000). Such policies show a formulated response to engagement concerns and a barrier to local engagement between people of different religions in Saudi Arabia. This constitutes a division of people into 'us' and 'them'. Religious concepts of 'al walaa' (love and alliance within the Islamic community) and 'al Bara'a', (hate and opposition to outsiders) promote such divisions (Prokop, 2003) and illustrate theological concepts which may have contributed to the division within Saudi Arabia.

Existing concepts thus suggest that engagement with non-Muslim countries may not be unanimously supported within Saudi Arabia. Indeed, division between believers and non-believers has been an ongoing element of the religious theology in Saudi Arabia. Messages to this extent have been provided by clerics over time. Following World War II, a fatwa (religious instruction) was provided by the then grand mufti against the use of non-Muslims in the oil industry. The grand mufti stated that the presence of non-believers would threaten Muslim beliefs, morality and their children's education. Similarly, in 1993, the same grand mufti warned Saudi parents about the dangers of sending their children to non-Muslim countries for holidays or education, explaining that:

Young men overseas might doubt their faith [...] and do wild things such as attend parties with women. People who want to travel [...] should visit Mecca and Medina instead (Weston, 2008).

While these religious warnings did not hinder development of the oil industry by non-Muslim guest workers, or stop the eventual development of international exchange, such warnings do suggest the types of sensitivities felt within the Saudi community as Saudis engage with more liberal peoples including non-Muslims.

2.4.2 Conservatism and International Engagement

Previously, conservatism restrained international education development. An attack in 1979 on the Grand Mosque in Mecca precipitated more conservative social policies. Fundamentalists responsible for the attack sought to overthrow the royal family and redeem Islam by expelling non-Muslims from Saudi Arabia, demonstrating an extreme form of religious intolerance of engagement. Although the fundamentalists were unsuccessful and those remaining were executed, the monarchy was and remains sensitive to the threat of fundamentalists. In the early 1980s women were forbidden to undertake studies abroad due to a concern that too many returned with un-Islamic ideas. The total number of students abroad declined from 12,500 in 1985 to 3,554 in 1990 as the government decreased the number of scholarships available for study-abroad in response to growing conservatism at home (Weston, 2008). In 1988, Crown Prince Abdullah cited fundamentalism amongst the rising youth population as the most serious threat to the Kingdom (Huntington, 1997, p. 119). In an Islamic state and according to Islamic theology, citizens are not allowed to rebel if a ruler governs according to Muslim law (Weston, 2008). Legitimacy to rule must therefore be maintained with broad support from the population and consensus that policies enacted fall within what is permissible under Islam. Engagement is therefore subject to religious scrutiny and constitutional legitimacy.

Given that theological perspectives allow multiple interpretations on the legitimacy of engagement between Saudi Muslims and non-Muslims, it is likely that the current King (Abdullah) is a proponent of Taqarab, of peaceful co-existence and engagement. Further, King Abdullah is seen as both a devout Muslim and a reformer. Development of the “King Abdullah Scholarship” programme is with the explicit endorsement of King Abdullah, who has spoken publicly of the necessity of developing better understanding between people of different religions, as will be further discussed in chapter four. While Saudi Arabia is often

characterised by conservative Wahhabism, Dekmejian (2003) notes a reformist agenda also evident in Saudi Arabia. In particular, Dekmejian describes the existence of a range of groups which include members from within “the government bureaucracy, tribal leaders, the intelligentsia, businessmen, the professorate, military officers and Saudi ARAMCO” who “share an alternative vision of the Saudi future based on a reformist agenda” (p. 400). Within this reform movement, proponents seek reforms which will modernise Saudi culture and for example address human rights including those of women and minorities and relax religious controls. Given the role of mostly US trained technocrats in government decision making in Saudi Arabia, it seems reasonable to assume that the international scholarship program is partially in response to reformist goals.

2.4.3 Supposed “Clash of Civilisations”

Huntington’s hypothesis of a supposed “civilisational” clash between Muslim and non-Muslim populations relates to irreconcilable differences between both groups. His theory largely describes perceived threat (namely symbolic), a notion which has been widely circulated in both the Middle East and in Western countries. However, whilst often quoted as the expert on the clash of civilisations, he is also criticised on the grounds that the clash may become a self-fulfilling prophecy resulting from the attention given to his line of enquiry, rather than a true reflection of relations between Muslim and non-Muslim peoples. Nevertheless, associated hypotheses have developed in relation to the debate on the part of both Muslims and non-Muslim observers.

Some voices within the Saudi religious establishment have warned that a cultural attack by Western countries seeking to destroy Islam must be countered by a Muslim cultural attack against the West. State sponsored Saudi newspapers along with members of the Saudi clergy have discussed such a scenario and its solution, suggesting Saudi Arabia should turn the supposed Christian crusade against Muslims into a crusade to Islamise Christianity. In this counterattack, proponents suggested Muslims attempt to influence the Western world, principally through Muslims living in Europe and the United States, “in order to penetrate the West’s cultural and social identity and force Western people to question their values and beliefs to the point that they would collapse” (Uriya, 2006). It is conceivable that such an underlying motivation could be a potential driver behind recent education engagement, especially given the number of students taking part in the Saudi scholarship program. However as chapter four will discuss, it seems more likely that there are other more urgent reasons why Saudi Arabia is now engaging with the international community through

education. In addition, Huntington proposed that Muslim settlement, intermarriage and birth rate in the West would account for a large increase in Islam and alter the religious balance of countries with large Muslim populations. Saudi students, however, are expected to return home and not to settle in the countries where they study, and scholarship rules do not permit students to marry non-Saudis whilst receiving scholarships. Further, given the number of students being sent abroad by the scholarship programme, the study body likely comprises individuals characterised by a range of worldviews and varying theological understandings.

2.4.4 Potential Prejudices

Engagement between Saudi students abroad and non-Muslims may be influenced by possible prejudices and conflicting messages students may have internalised through their upbringing. Some prior religious, cultural or family attitudes or experiences might have contradicted the current directive to go abroad and form friendships and learn. Varying external elements might influence a student's ability to engage with locals during their exchange. Such conflicting messages have potentially been transmitted through government policies, via the religious establishment, or in education (in addition to the perspectives of families and friends). Potentially conflicting messages and their sources could be summarised as:

Monarchy / Government: Domestically, the importance of living separate from non-believers in Saudi. In foreign policy: endorsement for study-abroad, encouragement of person-to-person diplomacy and friendship building abroad, opportunity to experience another culture and learn.

Religious establishment: Clerics' perspectives of engagement or exclusion from non-believers depending on their theological orientation. More liberal clerics would at a minimum warn students not to copy the beliefs and customs of non-believers; others might warn students in stronger terms not to mix with others of a differing religion.

Education: A high proportion of education through primary and high school is based on religious content. This includes delineation between believers and non-believers.

The extent to which students have internalised varying perspectives on engagement may dictate whether contact or threat theories are relevant to the current contact situation.

2.4.5 Person-to-Person Diplomacy Encouraged

Whilst an overview of perspectives on engagement has thus far suggested some preference within Saudi Arabia for separation from non-Muslims rather than engagement, the directive to

Saudi scholarship students has been with an often-repeated endorsement to engage whilst studying abroad. Royal views given in the public domain repeat the benefits of experiencing a new culture and of ‘person-to-person diplomacy’ and friendship building. Examples of such endorsement include speeches by Prince Turki Al-Faisal, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the US, who in a US TV interview discussed the philosophy of his father late King Faisal;

He hoped in the future Saudi Arabia would be a wellspring of understanding, culture and knowledge, not just for the Arab and Muslim world, but for all of humanity

Prince Turki Al-Faisal then gave a personal insight, explaining:

What my parents wanted for me then – a world class education and exposure to and an understanding of the diversity of the world – is exactly what the Saudi government wants for its citizens now [...] We’re promoting cooperation. We’re giving our citizens the tools and knowledge to succeed. And we’re letting our youth explore the world and form friendships that will benefit them down the road. If our citizens possess the skills and understanding to compete effectively with their global peers, then they will be active contributors of the global community. They will be promoters of peace and tolerance throughout the world (Al-Faisal, 2006).

Such quotes demonstrate a preference by two generations of royals towards understanding and engagement, in contrast to previously described policies of separation. This view is, however, viewed with scepticism by some observers who feel that recent international engagement is partially the royal families’ response to extremist movements at home and commitment to development through engagement rather than accommodating extreme perspectives at home which are often against the monarchical order. This contrasts with the earlier example of increased conservatism vis-à-vis the number of scholarship students abroad following the mosque attack in 1979, which, contrarily, led to a reduction in students abroad in order to regain stability at home by appeasing conservative elements.

Some critique of the commentary described in this section must be offered. Much observation of Saudi Arabia comes from external sources and based on comments made by members of the religious establishment and royal family. As such, these viewpoints may not reflect those of the Saudi population or may fail to explain the range of possible perspectives on a given subject, and are likely to be over simplified. This research aims to allow multiple perspectives to surface so as to gain a broader understanding of issues related to engagement through the

thus far under represented Saudi people, in this case students who are currently experiencing engagement abroad. Thus while the perspectives on engagement lean towards likely prejudices and perceived threat in the current context, there is no literature to either support or refute this when applied to the perceptions of ordinary Saudis.

2.5 Foreign Policy's Influence on Saudi Public Opinion of Others

Whilst there has been much focus on the propensity or otherwise of the Saudi religious establishment to engage Western and non-Muslim countries, there is some evidence that public opinion is swayed by the political decisions of Western countries rather than by differences of religion or culture. Various observers and researchers have noted rising anti-Americanism associated with US policies in the Middle East, although commentators have usually noted that these sentiments do not generally extend further than the political situation. Furia and Lucas's study of Arab (including Saudi) public opinion on foreign relations based on the "Zogby International Arab Values Survey" uncovered this dynamic (Furia & Lucas, 2006). In the study, respondents were asked to list a number of countries - Russia, China, the US, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, Iran, Japan, Turkey, Canada, Germany and the UK - in terms of most to least preferred. The study found that countries which supported US policies in Palestine and Iraq rated poorest, whilst the highest scoring country was France, which was also viewed as the Western country most friendly to Palestine. France rated higher in popularity than other Muslim countries in the study, suggesting that religious proximity is not the only factor considered in public evaluation of a foreign country.

Furia and Lucas (2006) concluded that "Arab publics evaluate non-Arab countries based in large part on their relatively recent foreign policy actions in the Middle East" (p. 586) and also disconfirmed the hypothesis that 'citizens of 'Muslim' countries will express systematically negative attitudes towards 'Western' countries. Furia and Lucas also concluded that there is substantial empirical support for the assertion that Arab attitudes towards foreign countries are driven less by what those countries 'are' than by what those countries 'do'. They contend that "the issue of Palestine is so important to Arabs that it may serve as a 'litmus' test for their evaluations of other countries as well" (Furia & Lucas, 2006, p. 596), a stance which has recently extended to the pre-emptive war on Iraq.

Other studies and analysis corroborate the role of politics and public opinion and the link between policies in the Middle East related to Israel and related Anti-Americanism (Abdalla, 2003; Hyland, 2006; Ratnesar, Calabresi, Thompson, MacLeod, & McAllister, 2002; Sez nec,

2005). Hyland (2006) found that whilst the US has traditionally been a favoured market for Middle Eastern money, investors turned away from the US as a form of protest against US foreign policy and the perceived anti-Muslim movement in the West. A Defence Science Board (DSB) poll of people in Saudi Arabia found that 94% gave an “unfavourable” rating to the US and its policies (Gardner, 2005). However the same DSB poll found that Saudis embraced Western science and education and US products such as movies. Thus there is a propensity on the part of the Saudi public to engage Western countries in several spheres whilst rejecting others.

While some commentators such as Huntington suggest that religion is the primary barrier in engagement between Arab Muslim and non-Muslim communities, the empirical studies discussed cast doubt on this assertion. In addition, as previously noted, statements by the Saudi royal family and its representatives have illustrated political will to engage the international community. both through public statements of such intention and through the support of the international student exchange. Based on the conclusions of Furia’s study, attitudes towards non-Muslim New Zealanders may be moderated by New Zealand’s comparably neutral policies in the Middle East. Prejudice, while possible due to the various perspectives noted in Saudi Arabia in terms of views towards non-Muslims, cannot be assumed.

2.6 Saudi National Culture

Saudi Arabia has a strong culture, with a unique blend of conservative religious identity and Arab and Bedouin traditions. Religion has a prominent role in Saudi identity, which the Saudi administration has made a conscious effort to maintain (Rice, 1999), whilst living an ultramodern, high-tech existence (Rice, 2004). In a study of growing Westernisation in Saudi Arabia, Al Haq and Smadi (1996) contend that:

Islam in Saudi Arabia has exercised a more intense and permeating influence of the lives of the inhabitants than anywhere else in the Islamic world [and is a] strong motivating force that governs their behaviours; most phases and aspects of culture, and practically every act and movement of life (Al-Abed Al Haq & Smadi, 1996).

A values survey in 2007 of 1,526 Saudis found that 75% of Saudis consider religion the most important element of their identity while 87% of Saudis perform 5 daily prayers (Mostafa & Al-Hamdi, 2007). However whilst religion constitutes a key element of Saudi identity, in a comparison of religiosity across the Arab world, the same survey found that generally

religiosity was weaker in Saudi (and Iran) than in neighbouring countries Jordan and Egypt. Mostafa and Al-Hamdi (2007) concluded that in the countries where religion was enforced by the state, in spite of outward appearance, internalised religiosity was less.

According to Robertson et al. (2001), when compared to other Islamic cultures, Saudi culture is likely to be less susceptible to outside influences and more persistent in following traditional values. This may not be as a consequence of religious identity however; rather, a feature of cultural traditions, some of which pre-date Islam. Saudi Arabia has a hierarchical, patriarchal, collectivist culture based on tribal Bedouin traditions, in which loyalty and commitment to the family and group is paramount (Rice, 2004). In an anonymous report in the Political Risk Yearbook (2006), the author described Saudi culture as being dominated by the kinship principle, in which tribal affiliations and bloodlines have typically formed the basis for social standing. These aspects of culture have been challenged by modernisation (as will be explained in chapter four) so that stratification based on wealth rather than blood and kinship has become more prevalent.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia maintains high ethnic homogeneity. This is reinforced by strict immigration policies which, for example, make it difficult for Saudis to marry non-Saudis. Many Saudis are concerned about the potentially negative influences of Asian nannies, and foreign teachers and wives (Kapiszewski, 2000). Each of these groups might try to introduce ideas which conflict with in-group norms. On the other hand, ethnic homogeneity allows Saudi Arabia to maintain a traditional and conservative culture, in which many modern social developments common in other countries are not allowed. Cinemas and nightclubs, for example, are forbidden, and strict segregation of the sexes is enforced even within extended families. Women must cover their hair and aren't allowed to drive. Such examples illustrate core values and societal norms in Saudi Arabia, which are considerably different from New Zealand local norms. Differences between Saudi and Western norms are often framed in terms of religion; however, the cultural dimension is considerable. Further, it is generally believed that culture distance can affect integration, since stronger cultural identity is linked with stronger co-national interaction (Murphy, 2007). A strong national and religious identity might then pose challenges for Saudi students' integration with locals and other international students in New Zealand.

Indeed, in the only study available which relates Contact Theory to Saudi students abroad, the authors found integration to be challenged. Alreshoud and Koeske (1997) explored the

attitudes of Saudi students towards their US hosts, and observed that cultural differences were so profound that the situation may have been too much of a challenge for contact theory. They found little attitude improvement towards hosts, amid responses which indicated there was little desire for contact with hosts. They felt that “the high level of cultural difference and possible negative host attitudes might attenuate the relationship” (p. 243). The researchers suggested that Contact Theory likely fares better in studies between groups which are culturally closer. Alreshoud and Koeske also raised the possibility that a more favourable initial attitude between dissimilar cultures might improve contact outcomes in other situations. They noticed that study participants usually lived close and preferred to interact with people of their own nationality. They also tended to take family with them when they studied abroad, so there was a tendency towards socialising with the in-group which affected their ability to interact with locals. Alreshoud and Koeske (1997) noted that:

Expectations of positive attitude development are challenged for Saudi students in the US because of extreme cultural differences, communication barriers and possible negative stereotypes that limit effective contact with Americans (Alreshoud & Koeske, 1997, p. 238).

In the current study of Saudi students in New Zealand, cultural differences and communication barriers (at least initially) are also significant. The existence of stereotypes and potentially negative attitudes towards locals are the only factors which remain unknown in this exchange. Therefore, the stereotypes and attitudes held by students may determine contact outcomes in this study. By extension, in terms of long term effects of contact, Stanger et al. (1996) concurred that in their study of US students in Germany and Great Britain, attitudes and stereotypes highly predicted the degree to which students indicated they were interested in returning to visit or live in the host country. Therefore, beyond the immediate situation, the stereotypes and attitudes Saudi students have of New Zealanders may not only affect their initial experience, but also the development of ongoing relationships between the countries. These elements will be explored in the thesis.

2.6.1 Individualist and Collectivist Cultural Differences

Broad differences in Saudi and New Zealand cultures can be explained by cross-cultural theories. The current study involves engagement between students from a highly collectivist and conservative society with people within an individualist and liberal culture. Studies on individualism and collectivism (such as Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory) may be

relevant to a better understanding of the broad characteristics of the people involved, and the potential challenges and/or dynamics. Cross-cultural theories provide insight into the key differences of each type of culture. The following table summarises some of the features of the collectivist and individualist culture types in this study, as described by Triandis (2001), and as classified by Hofstede (n.d.) and Rice (2004) who both assess Saudi Arabia as being collectivist, while New Zealand is individualist (Hofstede n.d);

Table 2.3. Collectivist and Individualist Cultures

Characteristic	Collectivist	Individualist
Form	Family, tribe, nation	Individual
Place in society	Interdependent	Independent, autonomous
Goals	Goals of in group	Personal goals
Relationships	Very concerned with relationships	Exchange theory in relationships
Conflict situations	Focus on maintaining relationships	Achieve justice
Behaviour	Based on in-group norms	Based on attitudes
Worldview	More ethnocentric	Less ethnocentric
Identity	Distinguish between in-group and out-group	Distinguish between self and others
Social skills	Shy entering new groups	Skilled at entering new groups
Morality	Collective, duty to help in group	Choice to help in-group
Communication	Context	Content

The above description of cultures as either collectivist or individualistic orientations falls within the classical sociological distinction as developed since the 1950s by academics including Parsons (Parsons, Talcott, & Shils, 1951) and Tonnies (Jackson, 2010). It was also considered an evolutionary dichotomy in which people typically move from collectivism to individualism. Later utilised by Triandis to explain key cultural differences, the above summary would suggest engagement in New Zealand may have some challenges. As portrayed in table 2.3, maintaining relationships is important in a collectivist culture. Yet Triandis (2001) explains that this relates primarily to maintaining relationships within the in-group. A collectivist identity means the person views themselves as an aspect of a group, in which they give priority to in-group goals. People in collective cultures tend to be allocentric in their views of others, that is, they use context, the situation and group disposition to decide their opinion of others. External rather than internal processes determine social behaviour. The thoughts of other people strongly influence individuals in a collectivist culture (Triandis & Suh, 2002), and the opinions of others in the in-group influence interactions with people in out-groups. Further, while the in-group is generally viewed very positively, the out-group may be viewed negatively. This dynamic would suggest Saudi students would be likely to

prioritise relationships with other Saudis over others in New Zealand, and that relationship building with others will be affected by external influences within their in-group.

In this context, students may need to overcome social norms as well as preconceptions of New Zealanders and people of other ethnicities and religions (as dictated by their in-group), in order to engage with non-Saudis in New Zealand. The extent to which students from this traditional, collectivist, conservative religious culture are able to engage with people outside of their religion and culture in New Zealand may depend on a range of factors. These might include the varying in-group and out-group norms and perspectives as explained, and the ability of individuals to adapt, a willingness to engage, and a range of contact facilitating conditions which this research will investigate and discuss.

2.7 Conclusion

A range of theories in the social psychology literature were reviewed for potential applicability in this study. It was decided that Contact and Threat theories might each be particularly applicable to the current context, given the nature of the groups involved in this study, and the research questions. That is, this study primarily seeks to understand the extent to which Saudi students are making friendships in New Zealand, and the range of factors that impact upon this.

Due to the collective nature of Saudi society and preference for in-group norms, along with conservative local cultural and religious beliefs, it was assumed that prejudice might be part of a Saudi student's experience in New Zealand. On the one hand, this aspect was reinforced by commentary on Saudi concerns around engagement with non-Muslims; however, this was balanced by commentary in the public domain (namely by the Royal Family) on the importance of a broad international experience for students. The two seem to contradict, and are likely to impact student perspectives on engagement, and their ability to implement person-to-person diplomacy in practice.

Theories on cross-cultural differences (namely collectivism and individualism) are useful to the extent that they assist identification of core differences between the two cultures. Combined with the description of traditional Saudi culture, this section suggests the hurdles students may have as they adapt to an environment which is comparably liberal and in which they have the directive to engage and make friends. Value differences are substantial. Interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims are not encouraged in all spheres of life in Saudi (namely in housing). Such elements may lead to internal conflict within individuals as

they reconcile learnt prejudices with the requirement to build friendships outside their religion and national and cultural identity. A student's ability to do so may reflect the extent to which any prejudices have been internalised.

Considering the challenges and utilising theoretical concepts in intergroup relations, this thesis will craft an analysis of the dynamics in the current exchange situation in order to ascertain the extent to which Saudi students are successfully building friendships in New Zealand. In particular, this study will assess the role of contact facilitating conditions, namely authority support and friendship potential, for their capacity in enabling students to overcome any prejudices in order to develop the friendships hoped for under the scholarship program. Once established, this will lead to an evaluation of the potential of ongoing engagement between Saudi Arabia and New Zealand resultant from student exchange.

Chapter 3:

Development of Global International Education

The aim of the current chapter is to:

- Establish a context for the current study of engagement through international education as having an international precedence and as part of a growing international trend
- Find clues as to the motivations behind governments, institutions and individuals for embarking on international education initiatives, so as to better understand the potential motivations of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education and Saudi students and the extent to which engagement features in motivation.

Chapter three provides an analysis of both historical and recent growth in international education, including key motivating factors and trends influencing its development. A discussion of these factors and trends provides an understanding of the context in which engagement through education is a key element. In particular, it establishes the extent to which “authority support” facilitates international education. The chapter is divided into three areas of discussion.

- 1) An explanation of recent history in the development of international education from the 1870s onwards.
- 2) An overview of some of the alleged key benefits of international education to individuals, countries and more generally on a global scale.
- 3) An overview of relevant recent trends in international education so as to bridge the background on international education per se with some current realities in the movement of students.

3.1 Historical Overview of Recent Internationalisation of Education

The internationalisation of education is grounded in the philosophical notion that there are benefits to be gained by both individuals and countries. One key benefit is the role of international education in furthering positive engagement between countries. International education is seen as a vehicle for allowing diverse nations to better understand each other, while contact between individuals from different countries has the potential to generate cooperation in areas of worldwide concern and development. Positive interaction between peoples of different cultures and languages can address universal concerns such as access to

education and health services, and threats to human security such as global diseases and environmental degradation (Stewart, 2005).

International education was encouraged in the US and Europe during the period 1870 to 1914. Academic developments at the time led to the founding of numerous international education organisations and congresses. These developments were largely due to an increasing awareness amongst academics of economic interdependence between countries and of the need for greater international cooperation and understanding (Fuchs, 2004). The internationalisation of education at that time consisted primarily of cooperation between academic professionals rather than students. It was driven by moral and political assumptions which led to reforms designed to promote greater international understanding. In particular, the concept of 'peace education' developed simultaneously in the US and Europe in the early 1900s (Fuchs, 2007).

Early attempts to internationalise education were disrupted by World War One and Two; however they were renewed immediately after WWII. Following WWII, international education developed through the movement of students as opposed to teachers. At this time the countries involved (namely the US, Germany and Japan), developed and encouraged an increase in study-abroad (Stewart, 2005). International exchange was sought to enhance understanding between countries whose international relations had been badly damaged by war.

A review of the literature on international education suggests that since 1945, international education has become an increasingly important element of foreign policy. Senator Fulbright described exchange between US and foreign students as essentially 'an instrument of foreign policy' while introducing legislation in 1945 to increase education exchange (Comp, 2004). This objective has since been shared by many countries as they have invited students of other nations to study locally and/or sent students abroad. In both cases, exchange has been used as a vehicle to make alliances and ensure security. Such initiatives also underlie policy objectives in areas of social engineering, with particular outcomes desired. The following table provides examples of international education since 1945 as 'an instrument of foreign policy' (Comp, 2004; Shibata, 2006) for purposes of 'social engineering' (Shibata, 2006) and 'engagement' (Tsvetkova, 2008) by governments:

Table 3.1. Key International Education Initiatives Since 1945

Country	Period	Objective	Source
US	Cold War 1945 - 1990	The US invited international students to study in the US in programmes which also included value orientation with a pro-democracy bias. During the cold war period, 17-45% of all members of parliaments in West Germany, the UK, France, Island and Belgium were former participants in such programmes (Tsvetkova, 2008). 80% of members of the Saudi Arabian government during the Cold War also partook in studies in the US.	(Tsvetkova, 2008) (Weston, 2008)
Russia	Cold War 1945 - 1990	Russia invited both future leaders (in the case of students from Uganda) and members of lower economic status from other countries (including Latin America) and provided students a 'pro-Russian orientation' aiming to secure loyalty and engagement with the students' countries. Russia invited international students to their home universities, utilising such programmes to gain the allegiance of populations in countries they wished to consider allies.	(Tsvetkova, 2008)
Germany	Post WWII	Germany engaged in international education post World War II to improve its international reputation by both sending student ambassadors and hosting foreign students. Germany expected that foreign students would have the opportunity to see experience Germany as an open society with respect for civil liberties. (Kehm, 2005)	(Kehm, 2005)
China	Since 1950s	Chinese government has sponsored international students to study in China, increasing the number of scholarship recipients incrementally since the turn of the century. The scholarship program has been designed to promote positive relationships and good will between China and scholarship students' home countries. The stated objective of the programme according to the China Scholarship Council is "to strengthen mutual understanding and friendship between the Chinese people and people from other countries and to develop cooperation and exchange in the fields of education, science, culture, economy and trade between China and other countries" Dong & Chapman note also the unspoken rationale of "soft – power diplomacy" (p. 161).	(Dong & Chapman, 2008)
Malaysia	Since 1950s	Malaysia undertook a social engineering strategy in educational exchange in the Look East Policy (LEP) which was developed with Japan in 1981 and which continues in the present day. Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohammad initiated LEP expecting development benefits from this exchange whereby Malaysians educated in Japan would gain social qualities including 'an industrious work ethic, a strong sense of public commitment and respect for order'. Meanwhile, Japan expected that Malaysians educated and trained in Japan would become Japan experts and go on to positions of responsibility in the public and private sectors as well as the armed forces (Shibata, 2006).	(Shibata, 2006)

Country	Period	Objective	Source
Europe	Since 2000	ERASMUS - Expanded Regional Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, now part of the SOCRATES program. A cultural program where studies abroad are subsidised, and with an aim to send 10% of European students to other European countries for a semester.	(Kehm, 2005)
US	Since 2000	During the current decade, the US has developed Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program for students specifically from Muslim countries including Saudi Arabia as an effort to build bridges with the countries identified. Through this program students spend a year in Washington studying and living with host families.	(Comp, 2004)
Saudi Arabia	Since 1980s, expanded program post 9/11	Saudi Arabia has sent nearly 100,000 students abroad since 9/11 in the largest international program of any individual country. Students have been sent abroad to gain skills and participate in person-to-person diplomacy.	(SPA/Saudi Gazette, 2011)

The above examples suggest the prominence of international exchange in foreign relations policy. In addition, both the US and UK have undertaken recent policy changes to ensure the further development of such programmes, with their leaders stating similar objectives. The ‘International Education Policy’ of Bill Clinton in 2000 was designed to expose students to democratic institutions (Comp, 2004), Clinton stated:

We are fortunate to count among our staunchest friends abroad those who have experienced our country and our values through in-depth exposure as students and scholars (Comp, 2004, p. 5).

In similar fashion, UK Prime Minister Blair stated:

People educated here have a lasting tie to our country. They promote Britain around the world, helping our trade and diplomacy. It is easier for our executives and our diplomats to do business with people familiar with Britain (Comp, 2004).

Blair introduced a policy designed to increase the number of students studying in the UK, aiming to become the world’s leading destination for international students. Both UK and US leaders identified the benefits of person-to-person engagement in international education as an element of broader domestic foreign relations policy and economic development. Both countries welcomed significant numbers of Saudi students following Saudi Arabia’s own initiation into large scale student exchange. In terms of relating foreign relations to contact theory, both sending and receiving countries provide ‘authority support’ to students in the respective engagement situations through their endorsement of the scholarship programs.

In addition to national programs, numerous private international exchange programs such as AFS (American Field Scholar), YF and Rotary send thousands of high school students abroad each year. These exchanges are built on the notion that educational youth exchange ‘will turn diversity into an asset instead of a source of conflict’, and develop ‘global citizens and global neighbours’ (www.afs.org). To this end, AFS developed a petition in 2008 which was delivered to the United Nations, in which AFS sought the further expansion of such exchange programs as a mechanism for promoting intercultural learning, mutual understanding, and peace. Thus the earlier mentioned notion of ‘peace education’ continues and is promoted in the present day.

3.2 Benefits of International Education

International education is usually discussed as having benefits on three levels: benefits to the individual, to the nation, and in relation to global citizenship. These areas overlap since benefits are not isolated; however they will be described here as three levels, as a framework for analysis of the motivations for each, along with the expected outcomes or benefits.

3.2.1 *The Individual*

At the individual level, there are generally three motivating factors which propel students to study-abroad:

1) excess demand for higher education in the student’s home country, 2) need for internationally recognised qualifications and 3) market requirements in terms of highly skilled labour (Bashir, 2007). Thus, according to Bashir, the individual invests the time and/or funds to study-abroad, primarily in order to gain personal career advancement as well as ‘demand for a different product’. Accordingly, students are motivated by the education product and associated benefits of this, as opposed to engagement, which doesn’t feature as a motivating factor in Bashir’s analysis.

The benefits of engagement (notably friendship and prejudice reduction through contact) may play a secondary role to the individual or possibly captured through the experience, while not the conscious driver of the individual seeking an international education. The students’ perspective on their motivation for studying abroad may also change once they are actually abroad. Murphy (2007) discusses the role of international education in personal growth and career development, noting these are commonly cited benefits mentioned in student evaluations post experience abroad. She notes a facilitating factor in the individual’s

development through international exchange is that students are not grouped together with others of the same nationality, so as to better live the opportunity to ‘learn about the complexities of another culture through personal contact and daily interactions’.

Observers note numerous other benefits accrued by individuals, beyond the primary factors which motivate students to choose to study-abroad. International education is considered beneficial in terms of allowing the student to develop perspective and better awareness and understanding of diversity. Skills gained through the study-abroad experience include intercultural competence (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002), culture and language skills (Martens & Starke, 2008), enhanced creativity through multicultural experience and motivation to adapt (Bellamy & Weinberg, 2006), personality development and cultural and social knowledge, ability to adapt and act appropriately in unfamiliar cultural situations (Kehm, 2005). These skills are enhanced by the lack of the usual reference point during the exchange experience.

Benefits are not isolated to international students but also extend to local students, since students that study on an international campus exhibit greater knowledge of international events, perspectives, and methods (Murphy, 2007). Whilst not the focus of this study, the impact of international exchange on local students is equally important, considering that international exchange has a reciprocal effect, and especially since the majority of students cannot or will not study-abroad. International exchange allows local students to become familiar with foreign cultures which they may not otherwise have had direct contact with (Kehm, 2005). The acquired personal skills facilitate cross-cultural engagement in both the contact situation and potentially in future engagement of people of other cultures since these skills are transferable. Thus, presuming Saudi students in the current study are engaging with people outside their nationality in New Zealand and therefore developing such competencies, engagement may well enhance personal growth.

3.2.2 *The Nation*

International exchange leads to tangible benefits for both the host and sending countries involved in the exchange. The development of the individual is assumed to be positively associated with development of the home country. In addition to character and perspective building, research suggests that returning students provide development assistance and may act as conduits for technology transfer, innovation and quality improvements, best practice, and transferring modern systems and ideas.

In terms of the latter point, the potential offered through international education in exposing students to new concepts and ideas, often in order to continue economic and political reforms at home (Murphy, 2007), may be relevant in the current context. A relationship between new concepts and internal reform may be an aspect of the current Saudi scholarship programme, as explored in the following chapter.

Development benefits of international education also encompass the benefits of ‘person-to-person diplomacy’. Gribbles (2008) considers that the development of ‘personal networks and diplomatic ties’ is a key policy incentive from the perspective of the sending country since students can ‘act as bridges for foreign investment and trade’. In the case of non-returning students, there may also be benefits in terms of financial remittances as students find higher paying jobs abroad and support relatives at home and maintain contact with their home country (Gribbles, 2008).

For the host country, multiple advantages are sought, of both a cultural and commercial nature. Host campuses value the multicultural diversity of the student body and related cross-cultural experience. In economic terms, institutions and the local economy derive gains from student spending on areas such as tuition fees, accommodation, tourism, and discretionary spending. Host institutions may also gain from increasing critical mass so as to allow institutions to maintain or extend courses. This may be especially true of OECD countries which have large scale facilities while faced with fixed costs and the prospect of declining roles due to ageing populations (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002). As in the case of US and UK policies this decade, governments hope that international students will favour companies from the host country during their career development, due to development of a close connection with the country (Kehm, 2005). Thus engagement is supposed to offer both short and long term economic benefits to the host country.

A note should be made that while sending and hosting countries extol the benefits of international exchange, there are potential risks as well as benefits. For the sending country, the risk of brain drain (Kehm, 2005; Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002; Murphy, 2007), especially in the case of non-returning students, can have a substantial negative affect on development of the home country. This concern is countered by the concept of ‘brain circulation’ in which temporary migrants maintain financial and cultural links with their home country and may develop entrepreneurial partnering through development of network building (Gribbles, 2008), as discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to the individual. There is also

risk for developing countries in the ‘adaption of foreign models’, which may not be appropriate for local realities, as well as the potential loss of human and intellectual capital, and potential weakening of the sending country’s university system (Murphy, 2007). “Cultural neo-colonialism” is an additional element which some observers contend may be a negative factor in international exchange between developing and more developed economies. For the most part, Gribbles (2008) contends that the advantages of international education can be harnessed by the sending country engaging and maintaining links with their external diasporas. For the host country, positive experience is assumed and linked to the goal of increased multicultural understanding through greater diversity; however, positive experience is not always substantiated within the literature on the benefits of international education, and will be explored in this research.

3.2.3 Global Citizenship

Beyond national policy, international education is at the heart of ongoing academic discourse within the education literature on development of ‘global citizens’ (Bellamy & Weinberg, 2006; Murphy, 2007; Shibata, 2006; White, 2008). A movement in the academic profession suggests promulgation of international education within a series of options designed to create ‘global citizens’. Similar to the notion of peace education (as discussed earlier in the chapter), it is argued that education may play a major role in orienting people towards global cooperation as a norm of social behaviour (White, 2008). Therefore, engagement through education is seen by some educators as leading to a better state of humanity, whereby cross-cultural relations are broadly improved as prejudices are reduced.

According to this discourse, improved relations through international exchange will serve as an element in solving world-wide issues requiring international co-operation, such as conflicts and economic development (Murphy, 2007), thereby promoting peace (Noddings, 2005). An increase in economic and educational interaction on a global scale is viewed as leading to [the prospect of] a future ‘global civil society’ (Shibata, 2006), with development of individuals through education key to this future state.

However, whilst the literature on creation of global citizens focuses on assumed positive benefits of international exchange, as discussed previously in this chapter, benefits may not be automatic. Benefits resulting from positive engagement may be contingent on certain facilitating conditions evident in the exchange situation.

3.3 Trends in the International Flow of Students

3.3.1 GATS

International student exchange is now of a scale as to be included under the rubric of 'international trade in educational services' in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) negotiations. The scale of student numbers abroad is apparent in OECD data, which shows that in 2004, there were 2.7 million tertiary students enrolled outside their country of citizenship (up from 1.6 million in 1999) (Bashir, 2007) and projections suggest this may double by 2015 (Gribbles, 2008). The inclusion of international education in GATS has been contentious in academic circles, reflecting discomfort with the perceived commoditisation of education viewed in this context as a 'tradable service'. Yet, whilst some countries have sought to develop the internationalisation of campuses for cultural reasons and engagement, others have openly sought such internationalisation with commercial goals.

3.3.2 Cultural or Commercial Approach of Host Countries

Countries can generally be divided into those taking either the cultural or commercial approach (though cultural impact is the same regardless of the country's motivation to promote its education sector). English speaking countries commonly view international education from a commercial perspective, as trade, and with a focus on student and teacher mobility (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002). The US, UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia have actively marketed educational offerings to potential students. Income incentives and associated higher levels of service to students have meant that countries which have followed a commercial approach have seen the highest growth in international student enrolments. Preference for studying in an English speaking country may also contribute to growth in these countries.

Europe supports cultural education exchange through formalised commitment to the ERASMUS exchange programme (Expanded Regional Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, now part of the SOCRATES program) for intra Europe study-abroad. This programme has supported more than 100,000 students in study-abroad experiences since 2000, and aims to enable 10% of European students to participate in this programme over time (Kehm, 2005). Within a cultural focus towards education, France and Germany subsidise the education of international students. This compares with Australia and New Zealand's commercial approach, whereby government policies prevent universities from subsidising the education of international students other than in relation to doctoral studies.

3.3.3 Sending and Host Country Trends

Whilst the number of students studying abroad has increased in the past decade, trends in terms of host and sending countries are changing. Generally, in the balance of trade, most English speaking countries receive larger numbers of students than they send abroad; Europe has a balance of both sending and receiving students, whilst most other regions tend to send students (Kehm, 2005). In 2001 the US and UK hosted 51% of all students studying abroad (Comp, 2004), with the OECD accounting generally for 85% of the world's foreign students, of which three quarters study in the US, UK, Germany, France, Australia and Japan (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002). Saudi Arabia is a sending country with virtually no domestic education offered to international students, and numerous restrictions in place to limit the ability of students from outside Saudi Arabia to study in local schools. The focus of sending countries, including Saudi, suggests a development agenda as students gravitate to more developed countries to acquire skills. However, since 1999, less traditional countries have been gaining market share, while growth in the US and UK has slowed, and some major sending countries are increasingly retaining larger numbers of students.

The US remains the major market for international students, with approximately a quarter of international students. However comparisons of international student increases across several countries during the period 1999–2005 found other markets grew faster. Whilst US enrolments grew 17% over this period, Australian enrolments grew 42% (tripling since 1990) (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002), France 81% and Japan by 108% (Woo, 2006). Competition from other less traditional sending countries also grew, with foreign enrolments in China reaching 141,000 in 2005 (McCormack, 2007a), and in 2007 more international students were studying in China than Chinese students going abroad (Dong & Chapman, 2008), reversing the trend in a non-OECD sending country. Asian countries, which have usually accounted for large numbers of externally bound international students, including China, South Korea and Singapore, have been actively developing research focused domestic universities and increasing their attractiveness to local students vis-à-vis international opportunities. English speaking countries have typically held an advantage since students wish to speak the main international language; however non-English speaking countries are now countering this by offering courses taught in English so as to appeal to a broader international student body (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002).

Whilst a strong 'receiving country', the US is also developing incentives to encourage US citizens to take part in study-abroad. The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed a

bill to create an annual \$80 million foundation specifically for study-abroad, to increase the number of students studying abroad by 500% (Woo, 2006). This initiative signals the continuing link between international diplomacy and international study, beyond the commercial focus of domestic international education described in this section, signalling the wider benefits of engagement through education.

3.3.4 Middle Eastern Enrolments Abroad

Political circumstances have affected the popularity of the US as a destination for international students, notable in the case of students from Muslim countries. Students from the Middle East, in particular, increasingly chose alternative destinations such as Europe, the Middle East or Asia for several years post 9/11. US enrolments from Indonesia, Oman, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia declined 12% from 2003 to 2005 (McCormack, 2007b). The Saudi scholarship program has since reversed the declining number of Saudi students in the US. Nevertheless, post 9/11, many students from Muslim countries viewed the US as a hostile environment and encountered increased difficulties in gaining student visas, in addition to security procedures including a mandatory FBI background check of male applicants from Muslim countries (Comp, 2004). This situation advantaged countries which did not traditionally receive Arab students and which were perceived as comparatively visa-friendly, including New Zealand which allows Saudi citizens to stay for 3 months without needing to apply for a visa in advance. With no international Arab students at universities in 1999, New Zealand universities now predict Saudi students alone will account for the third largest international student nationality studying at tertiary level in New Zealand within the next few years. The number of visas issued to Saudi students in New Zealand at the start of 2011 was up 25% over the same period in 2010 (Department of Labour, 2011). From an extremely low base of only one Saudi student in New Zealand in 2000, this number has risen year on year since (Immigration New Zealand, 2011), as is described in chapter six.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has described the motivating factors in the on-going promotion of international education as were prevalent in early development of this sector. These same factors continue to motivate governments and organisations in the current day. The perceived benefits of international education to countries and individuals has propelled adoption of international education by many countries including China, the US, Russia, Malaysia, the entire EU, and more recently Saudi Arabia and New Zealand.

The benefits related to international education exchange can be summarised as existing on three levels:

- The individual in terms of acquiring skills, knowledge, and improved career prospects
- The government / national level in terms of engagement leading to diplomacy, trade, and national development
- The societal level through potential to promote world peace and global human development.

In all spheres, whether engagement with people from a different country is explicit or implicit within the internationalisation of education, engagement plays a key role in the international experience and in generating the benefits described by each. Governments seek the benefits of friendship building through exchange, anticipating its positive effects, therefore providing ‘authority support’ and ‘friendship potential’ through the contact situation. These are the two key contact facilitating conditions in prejudice reduction which this research will discuss. In the case of Saudi students abroad, the scholarship program supports students to study and build friendships abroad. The extent to which they are willing and able to make friendships has not thus far been understood, and is the focus of this thesis.

The description provided in this chapter of key trends in worldwide international exchange in the movement of students provides greater context for the research. The general trend is of increasing importance vis-à-vis student exchange in foreign policy. The Saudi scholarship programme is therefore well placed within this movement. As countries consider international education a key element of foreign policy, they anticipate economic benefits. Therefore, any increase or decrease in student numbers may then impact on outcomes. US authorities have worried at the decline in the number of Saudi students post 9/11, since engagement through education has been an on-going element of foreign policy between the two countries (Weston, 2008). This logic would then suggest that engagement advantages may then transfer to other countries now attracting Saudi students, including New Zealand, as will be investigated in this research.

Chapter 4:

The Role of Education in Saudi Development

The aim of the current chapter is to:

- Discuss key challenges in Saudi development
- Explain the Saudi government focus on education (both domestic and international) as a component in resolving development challenges
- Establish the role of “engagement” within Saudi international education policy

Chapter four provides an analysis of development challenges in Saudi Arabia in several areas; namely, social and demographic, economic, and education. Education is discussed as both a challenge and a solution to challenges in the other two areas. The Saudi state has reached a number of education milestones over the past 50 years and continues with big aspirations in the 21st century. These are discussed in this chapter. Due to the focus of this thesis, the goals discussed relate primarily to the role of international education as a key part of government policy in social development, up-skilling of Saudis, and in improving interreligious understanding.

4.1 Development Challenges

Saudi Arabia is undergoing considerable change due to rapid modernisation and swift population growth, aided by oil revenues. The speed of development has been accompanied by a number of development challenges relating to social, demographic and economic trends as mentioned. The education sector also has a number of challenges, while at the same time is considered a vehicle for solving problems. This section addresses these broad challenges in order to set the context of education solutions – including the emphasis on sending Saudi students abroad.

4.1.1 Social and Demographic Challenges

At the heart of issues affecting Saudi Arabia are demographic and related social development challenges. The Saudi population grew from 5 million in 1974 (Moaddel, 2006) to 21 million (plus 5.5 million foreign guest workers) in 2011 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). Some estimates suggest the population will double over the next 20 years. Swift population growth and 75% of the population under 30 years makes Saudi Arabia one of the world’s youngest

countries (Anonymous, 2008). This trend has been accompanied by urbanisation, which increased from 16% of the population in 1950 to 82% in 2010 (Anonymous, 2008).

Population growth has impacted on numerous areas of life. For instance, growth has placed pressure on infrastructure (Elliott, 2001), and exacerbated social challenges. In particular, as identified by a Saudi political scientist, key demographic related social issues include a shrinking middle class, rising poverty, and fundamentalism (Bremmer, 2004). Other pressures created by the demographic situation include social frustration due to unemployment and the restrictiveness of society (Doran, 2004). Bremmer (2004) notes emerging demographic issues are within a society which has little information about the outside world (Bremmer, 2004). The government has recognised that social development must match new internal and also changing external realities and has actively been implementing new initiatives in response to these, such as the international scholarship program.

External commentators suggest that the conservative nature of Saudi society has also had a negative effect on economic development, especially in terms of the ability of international firms to operate in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, this has led to the term ‘Dubai envy’ which reflects a sense of ‘missing out’ on opportunities to less conservative neighbours. Bronson and Coleman (2006) quotes a senior Bahraini official as noting that ‘most of the investment infrastructure in Bahrain and the UAE really should be in Saudi Arabia’ since Saudi Arabia’s market of 26 million people dwarfs those of the other gulf countries with populations of less than three million each. Bronson and Coleman (2006) notes that Saudi Arabia’s ‘oppressive social atmosphere and sclerotic bureaucracy’ have forced international companies to base themselves close to the kingdom rather than in it (Bronson & Coleman, 2006). Thus Saudi Arabia’s social and demographic challenges impact on the economy, which will be further discussed in the next section, along with other economic issues.

4.1.2 Economic Challenges

Saudi Arabia’s role in the international economy cannot be overestimated. The Middle East accounts for at least 80% of the world's exportable oil reserves and Saudi is the only country with spare production capacity (Ayoob, 2006). Saudi Arabia holds approximately 20% of the world’s oil reserves (SaudiAramco, 2012). Oil prices continue to rise, and analysts suggest that oil prices between 2006 and 2025 could on average be 50% higher than in the previous 20 years (Economic Intelligence Unit, 2006). A 40% growth in demand by 2025 is also predicted (Ayoob, 2006). Thus Saudi Arabia's revenue streams, as well as its strategic role in

the global economy, are guaranteed for at least a generation, assuming no viable alternative to oil is found over this period.

Yet, while oil provides enormous revenue for the country, the fact that Saudi Arabia depends on oil for approximately 90% of its income (Alkhazim, 2003) makes the economy extremely vulnerable to oil price fluctuations and overly dependent on one source of revenue. This revenue has however produced benefits and allowed Saudi Arabia to develop at great speed and without the political constraints associated with taxation. The oil boom of the 1970s was accompanied by rapid changes in Saudi Arabia, including the expansion of Saudi bureaucracy, sedentarisation of tribes, urbanisation, and demographic growth (Moaddel, 2006). This accompanied the development of services to meet the growing population, including infrastructure, health, and education. Whilst Saudi income has risen substantially due to increased oil prices in the past few years, high population growth has meant per capita incomes have declined over the previous two decades (Bronson & Coleman, 2006). GDP grew 1.6% per year from 1990 to 2000 while population grew by 2.7% per year over this same period (Bremmer, 2004).

The Saudi economy contends with serious structural and economic challenges related to changing demographics. Unemployment continues to rise in a growing labour force. Meanwhile, ex-pats account for a considerable portion of the private sector, compared to Saudis (Kapiszewski, 2000). Dependence on foreign workers is a result of oil revenue development which, while allowing the country to develop at great speed, required ex-pat skills on a large scale. According to Bahgat (1999), this development has led to structural problems not shared by other developing countries, which have usually developed at a slower pace and with local labour (Bahgat, 1999). Nevertheless, the ensuing mismatch of local / foreign labour in Saudi has compounded structural issues related to population growth.

Saudi Arabia recognises oil is a finite resource and is utilising oil resources to plan for the future and develop its labour force. The government has addressed the imbalance of Saudi and local workers with "Saudization" policies designed to replace foreign workers with Saudi nationals (Elliott, 2001; Sadi & Henderson, 2005). However these policies have not been widely popular in Saudi Arabia as companies have found many Saudi nationals lacking the required skills and experience, modern work ethic, and motivation. Therefore, there has been little incentive to employ less productive locals. At the same time, Saudis have also been disinclined to take work in the private sector due to comparatively lower salaries, longer

hours, and a more competitive environment, all of which are often under an ex-pat supervisor and without the high status they associate with the public sector (Kapiszewski, 2000). Kapiszewski (2000) explains that “Saudis as a nation, are not culturally and psychologically prepared for Saudisation” (p. 29).

The government has attempted to counter lack of enthusiasm amongst companies for hiring nationals, accompanied by local preference for public sector jobs, by introducing a number of measures to encourage both groups. That is, the government has tried to encourage companies to hire locals, while also encouraging locals to seek jobs in private companies. These measures have included quotas whereby companies are required to employ a certain ratio of Saudis and a new salary scale proposing that locals be paid twice as much as expats. However, companies have viewed their competitiveness as undermined by employing locals at greater cost (Bremmer, 2004) and comparatively lower output. On-going education initiatives have attempted to influence the employability of Saudis, as will be discussed in the next section.

4.1.3 Education Challenges

The Saudi education system has been the subject of analysis and criticism both internally and externally, and especially post 9/11, but appears to be adapting to internal and external pressures. This was pre-empted in 1990, when businessmen made a petition to Saudi rulers, asking them to review educational policy. They wrote that this was necessary in order to “catch up with the caravan of nations that have vastly surpassed us in every field” (Prokop, 2003, p. 86). This concern is on-going; however, more recently, education challenges can be understood mainly as comprising issues related to: a) curriculum, b) quality, and c) availability of places. While external attention has primarily focused on curriculum content, quality and availability have also been addressed by the Saudi government in recent education directives. These three areas will be discussed here.

4.1.3.1 Curriculum

External criticism of Saudi curriculum has focused on the content of religious education. Prokop (2003, p. 86) explains;

The content of the official textbooks is heavily influenced by the Wahhabi ideology. Teaching about the ‘others’ – other cultures, ideologies and religions, or adherents of other Muslim schools of jurisprudence or sects – reflects the Wahhabi view of the world divided into the believers and preservers of the true faith and the kuffar, the unbelievers.

Critics contend this ideology has led to schools promulgating a fundamentalist view of Islam (Bronson & Coleman, 2006; Economic Intelligence Unit, 2003a; Moaddel, 2006). According to this viewpoint, students have developed little understanding of the world outside, and practices of rote learning of patriotic and religious texts has rendered many Saudi women and men 'functionally illiterate' and unable to compete in the global market place (Bremmer, 2004). Some US media blamed Saudi culture and education for responsibility in the 9/11 attacks with allegations that Saudi youth were supposedly brainwashed by the most extremist school of Islam. Observers contend that Saudi educational institutions were responsible for "promoting anti-Semitism, anti-Western attitudes and intolerance of other religions" (Moaddel, 2006), along with "endemic jihad promotion and [...] hatemongering" (Bronson & Coleman, 2006). This has involved descriptions of Christians and Jews as infidels and enemies (Anonymous, 2006).

Examples of textbook quotes to which critics referred to include:

It is permissible to visit a non-Muslim country, provided that the stay includes hidden hostility toward and hatred of infidels - taken in 2000 from a 7th grade textbook (Weston, 2008, p. 410)

Arabs and Muslims will succeed god willing in beating the Jews and their allies (from a 6th grade text book) (Ratnesar, et al., 2002, p. 28)

Regardless of whether such quotes were symptomatic of broader education endorsed fundamentalism, Saudi Arabia took steps to address the concerns highlighted by external critics. In 2003, the Saudi ministry of education made changes to the curriculum by purging texts of intolerant teaching and removing passages that promoted enmity and hostility. The ministry also addressed fundamentalist teachings amongst clerics, a process which involved firing 1500 clerics and retraining 1000 more in tolerance of non-Muslims (Economic Intelligence Unit, 2003b; Weston, 2008).

However, a later study of textbooks at a Saudi diplomatic school in Germany found that "2/3 teach Muslims to hate non-Muslims, while one in five praise martyrdom, and urge violence against non-Muslims" (Crawford, 2004). While Saudi Arabia has publicly supported curriculum reform, purging national texts of prejudiced elements after they were highlighted post 9/11, the discovery of such textbooks still in use in Germany, combined with the intolerance of some clerics, left some observers sceptical of the extent and commitment of the Saudi government in genuinely seeking rapprochement with non-Muslims and reform of

intolerant teachings. An alternate viewpoint, however, might suggest that Saudi challenges in social development are illustrated by both, especially since enactment of government directives and policy can depend on the views of the individuals carrying out the instructions. It is possible some stakeholders agreed with such texts while others were happy to see them cut out of the curriculum.

Regardless of specific religious focus, religious education and Arabic language make up more than half of the curriculum from 1st grade to high school (Weston, 2008). These subjects have been criticised for taking up too much time and detracting from other subjects which will improve job prospects, such as maths and science. Higher education has been similarly criticised for the number of students being turned out in disciplines which are not contributing significantly to the Saudi economy. According to Krieger (2007), universities graduate too many students in the disciplines of social studies and religion and too few in health, engineering, and business. This has led to a national deficit in businessmen and scientists, (Krieger, 2007) and a shortage of graduates in technical and specialist fields. This trend is exacerbated by a common perception amongst young Saudis that vocational education is low status and science too difficult (Kapiszewski, 2000).

Earlier education reform encouraged religious education in an attempt to create a religious utopia; however this led to unemployment (Anonymous, 2006). The deficit in non-religious subjects has affected Saudi ability to compete with foreign workers. Increased flexibility in the curriculum is now a component of development policy in order to allow education institutions to address the imbalance of learning material (Kapiszewski, 2000), as is up-skilling in areas of shortage through study-abroad.

4.1.3.2 Quality

Several observers suggest quality is a key challenge in the Saudi education sector (Bahgat, 1999; Kapiszewski, 2000; Weston, 2008). According to Kapiszewski, poor quality is a result of numerous weaknesses in the Saudi education system, such as poor teaching methods, a lack of qualified teachers, and a system in which students are given free university access and stipends. The latter is blamed for students being unmotivated. Students are not encouraged to ask questions, with rote learning characteristic of Saudi education (Weston, 2008). A 1996 study found that 45% of university teachers were foreigners (Weston, 2008), demonstrating a dependence on external sources as Saudi has developed its domestic education requirements.

The private sector would like to see increased flexibility in teaching styles (Kapiszewski, 2000), although domestic policies have stifled this.

4.1.3.3 Availability of Places

The rising youth population has impacted upon the availability of places at tertiary level. One estimate suggests that up to 75,000 Saudi university applicants per year are unable to find places at domestic universities (2007) and this number is set to increase. The higher education ministry set about countering the shortage of available places by large scale development of higher institutions, and countered the shortfall in necessary disciplines by increasing places in specific disciplines. Education plans have included development of eleven new universities, in addition to 110 higher institutes, between 2003 and 2007 (El-Rashidi, 2007). This is not the first time Saudi Arabia has embarked on the rapid expansion of institutions. There is some precedence in the development of institutions to meet the needs of the population. The number of engineering colleges rose from five to 42 in the 1980s (Weston, 2008). In both decades, the Ministry of Higher Education has acted to address internal demands.

Other recent initiatives which have also addressed the availability of places (as well as quality and curriculum development issues), have included inviting foreign universities to set up in the kingdom (Kapiszewski, 2000), lifting a ban on private education, and offering incentives such as free land and scholarships, as well as building costs for private education providers (Krieger, 2007). As a result of these initiatives, a German–Saudi business school has been agreed, as has a Texan backed university with classes only in English, and the government is considering allowing universities from other countries including the UK and Australia to open branches in Saudi (Weston, 2008) p. 452. Negotiations with other external education providers from non-traditional partners including New Zealand are also underway.

4.2 The Education Solution

4.2.1 Background on Saudi Education Development

Education is viewed as creating challenges but also providing solutions to the issues discussed in this chapter. While Saudi education reform is currently underway, this is not a new focus, but rather part of a continuum which started in the 1960s. This has been made possible by oil income, and accelerated by population growth and increased oil revenue in the 21st century. The strong connection drawn between oil and education was explained by Prince Turki Al Faisal (previous Saudi ambassador to the US) when he stated:

We know our best and infinite resource is our people [...] so while we enrich ourselves with one, we must invest in the other (Hanley, 2007).

This notion explains Saudi's on-going investment in education development, which originated from internal pressures. Saudi has reached a number of milestones in education development since the 1960s, when education reform was originally initiated. Prior to this time, 95% of the population was illiterate (Weston, 2008). Starting from a low education base, education reform in the 1960s and early 1970s focused initially on development of primary schools. In the mid 1960s, 6% of students went to high school, and there were no girls' schools. However, girls' schools developed quickly and numbered 214,000 by 1974 (Weston, 2008). Comparison of these early statistics with more recent surveys shows that the Saudi education sector has made huge advances in the previous 60 years. By 2006, 84% of the adult population and 96.6% of the youth population were literate, with 30% of the population (25% male / 36% female) in tertiary education (stats.uis.unesco.org).

Thus over 60 years Saudi Arabia implemented a full education system for all citizens, which now provides basic skills to the population, literacy, and a pathway for students from primary to secondary and tertiary studies. The speed with which the education sector has developed has not been without structural and quality issues, as discussed previously. In addition, the education sector is also now charged with addressing the most important challenges facing Saudi development.

4.2.2 Saudi Education Development in the 21st Century

Education and training now have a prominent position in Saudi's development plan in seeking to up-skill nationals and diversify the economy (Bremmer, 2004; Rice, 2004). Education, it is hoped, will improve Saudi competitiveness, and ensure continued development and a lessening of dependence on oil. Education is therefore used as a tool which allows the social and economic development necessary to grow the non-oil sector.

The education development plan aims to turn Saudi into a 'knowledge based information society'. To this end, 25% of the 2008 Saudi budget was allocated to education and training, which amounted to the largest sum in Saudi's history (Anonymous, 2008). This follows a 2003 expansion and reform of higher education, and tripling of the higher education budget in 2004. Considering the enormous education budget both as a total and as a percentage of GDP, plans to build a considerable number of new universities and institutes, in addition to curriculum reform and the international scholarship fund sending thousands abroad, Saudi's

education reform has been noted as "the most ambitious effort in the world right now" by the director of the Centre for International Higher Education (Krieger, 2007).

4.2.3 The Role of International Education

Saudi Arabia has become a prominent proponent of international exchange and is making a considerable contribution to emerging global international education. The kingdom has the world's largest individual-country, fully funded, international scholarship fund, which early in 2008 sent 28,000 Saudi students to more than 25 countries abroad to pursue language and tertiary studies (<http://www.mofa.gov.sa>). The number of Saudi scholarship students is continually rising, with estimates in excess of 100,000 students abroad in 2011. International education has thus been given great emphasis and generous support as Saudi Arabia addresses demographic and development challenges.

Prior to the current government funded Saudi scholarship program, demand for international education had grown, with 25-30,000 Saudi students studying abroad in 2001 at their own expense and an additional 6,000 on government scholarships (MHE, 2001). These figures suggest a growing culture of study-abroad from within Saudi society, concurrent with the government endorsed initiative. The Saudi monarchy has for a number of years recognised the advantages of an international education in employment choices. "Technocrats" (typically Saudis who have gained qualifications abroad) have gained high positions in non-religious ministries since the 1960s. In 1964, King Faisal placed technocrats in high positions in every non-religious ministry (Weston, 2008), while in 1995 King Fahad replaced 175 officials, including half the cabinet, with younger men, of whom the majority had postgraduate degrees from Western universities (Weston, 2008). Currently under King Abdullah, two thirds of the Saudi cabinet have graduate degrees from the US (Weston, 2008), thus continuing this tradition.

The upward mobility of returning students in positions of authority in Saudi, along with the scale of the current scholarship programme, suggests a commitment towards international education as a critical element of Saudi Arabia's education development reform. Analysis of motivations for the uptake of sending large numbers of Saudi students abroad suggests multiple objectives, which will be discussed here.

4.2.3.1 International Education for Social development

Until recently, a person was considered to be well-educated if that person was well educated in Islam, hence the previous focus on religious education at high school and university. Now,

however, the Saudi ministries recognise that Saudis need a broader Western style training in order to develop the reasoning skills required in a technological society, while maintaining Islamic values. This leads to a basic dilemma shared by the Gulf countries as they decide how to reconcile modernisation and traditional values (Bahgat, 1999). Within this context, and as stated by the Minister and Vice-Minister of Education, the government seeks to reorient Saudi Arabia away from a traditional lifestyle, to one that is based on knowledge, while also making Saudi education and society more globally oriented with a focus on global education, both within Saudi Arabia and abroad (Anonymous, 2008). Dean of Alfaisal's medical college has said:

It's not just about transferring the curriculum [...] it's about transferring the Western culture of learning, the commitment to lifelong education" (Krieger, 2007)

In this undertaking, Saudi reformers hope to choose the elements of Western education that fit Saudi social and cultural standards.

A consultant to the Saudi Ministry of Education suggests these are efforts in social engineering and explains:

The culture is initially going to constrain what they can do in terms of reforming education. But in that struggle, education will also shape the culture and open many more opportunities for the future (Krieger, 2007)

The former president of the American University of Kuwait compares Saudi's education reform to 'opening a Pandora's box' in which students "won't be able to limit this new state of mind to the classroom" (Krieger, 2007). Indeed, research suggests that the internationalisation of education is often tied to evolving economic and political transformations designed to bridge the gap between developing and developed countries, and as a strategy for the formation of citizens able to function in the multicultural global system.

4.2.3.2 International Education for Up-Skilling

According to Bahgat (1999), analysts view the region's limited pool of technical and managerial skills as the biggest constraint to development. Meanwhile, an increasingly competitive environment in Saudi Arabia means that academic performance and technical skills have become more important. In this climate, Saudis who have been educated abroad are better able to match the comparable skills of foreign workers (Prokop, 2003), and people qualified in English are given priority in education, promotion, and advancement (Al-Abed Al

Haq & Smadi, 1996). Perhaps in reflection of this trend, of the 24 countries that Saudi scholarship students are being sent to, most students hope to go to English speaking countries; in particular, the US, Canada, Australia and Britain (in preference order) (Al Shemary, 2008). Demand for appropriately skilled Saudis in numerous fields is high (Kapiszewski, 2000). International education serves as a quick solution in order to meet demand, by making available to Saudis courses that aren't available at home or which have limited availability.

Saudi Arabia's uptake of international education to increase its skill base also reflects international trends on the role of education for the evolving world economy. In Harvard's first major review of US undergraduate curriculum in 30 years, researchers concluded that "in a fast-changing world, students urgently need a deeper understanding of the principles of science and a far greater grasp of international affairs" (Stewart, 2005). Saudi is addressing both areas and with the resources to back each on a considerable scale. The opening of KAUST University (King Abdullah University of Science and Technology) in 2009 (King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, 2009) and a billion dollar scholarship fund set up to finance study-abroad opportunities illustrate recognition of both the role and demand for international higher education to address the objectives of furthering science, education, and international affairs, as will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.3.3 International Education for International Relations

From a political perspective, Saudi Arabia seems to conform to wider consensus (as discussed in chapter three) that international education has a place in the broader picture of international diplomacy. Person-to-person diplomacy, employed by various nations post World War II, during and after the Cold War, and in recent times, is a stated objective of the Saudi Royal family in initiating the recent scholarship program.

Prince Turki explained such objectives in an address to students in the US (sentiments which he has also discussed to wider audiences in terms of the benefits of sending students abroad generally):

People to people diplomacy can work only if citizens are talking together [...] they can learn, make friends, and experience foreign cultures. Thanks to this exchange the next generation of citizens and leaders will understand each other. These students will build bridges of understanding. They are our true ambassadors for the kingdom because they engage with their peers, students, families, teachers, and townspeople wherever they're studying [...] as a result of these friendships [...] when an American hard-line evangelical

makes a racist comment about Arabs, the Saudi people will understand this is a minority view. Similarly when a radical Saudi imam makes a hateful comment, the American people will understand it is the view of one fanatical cleric, not the view of the Saudi people [...] never forget you are Saudi and have your own identity, traditions and culture. Be willing to share that with your counterparts. Never keep yourself from engaging with Americans. It's how people learn (Hanley, 2007)

Thus Prince Turki outlined expected benefits to both individual students in this speech, as well as to the nations involved, especially in his comments on the views each country has of its fundamentalist 'other'. This is likely in response to US hostility post 9/11; an effort to gain perspective and bridge relations between the two countries. Bollag (2006) contends that the expansion of the Saudi scholarship programme, especially in sending students to US, is 'part of efforts to improve relations between the two countries'. Further, Prince Turki's comments on the benefits of the scholarship program are echoed by George Washington University president Joel Trachtenberg:

They're making friendships that will last a lifetime. It's helpful on many levels, intellectual, economical, and cultural (Hanley, 2007). Thus in receiving Saudi Scholarship students, the US also seeks to improve relations.

The King Abdullah scholarship programme reflects a propensity on the part of Saudi Arabia to engage the outside world, including non-Muslim countries, as it develops external relations. This rapprochement is not limited to policies involving actions outside of Saudi Arabia. In one of the latest of a series of internationally focused internal reforms in education, King Abdullah developed the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) with a 10 billion riyal starting fund, which made KAUST instantly the 6th wealthiest university in the world (Krieger, 2007) when it opened in 2009. In contrast to usual academic norms in Saudi Arabia, the university offers scholarships to international students in order to attract a diverse international student body, and is run as a world-class university in which classes are not segregated by gender.

In the University's inauguration speech, King Abdullah stated that he hopes KAUST will become a 'House of Wisdom' in which:

The university shall be a beacon for peace, hope and reconciliation and shall serve the people of the Kingdom and benefit all the peoples of the world, in keeping with the

teachings of the Holy Quran, which explains that God created mankind in order for us to come to know each other (King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, 2009)

King Abdullah has also stated that KAUST is:

Inspired by the eternal teachings of Islam that call for seeking knowledge, engaging in development works, and promoting better understanding between peoples. The establishment of this university has been a living idea in my mind for more than 25 years (Anonymous, 2008).

4.2.3.4 International Education for Improving Interreligious Understanding

Comments made by various members of the Royal family and by other observers (including the statements above) suggest that the Saudi scholarship scheme may be motivated in part by a desire to promote Islam in the host country and/or to promote interreligious understanding between the students and local people. King Abdullah has been active in calling for interfaith dialogue through recent initiatives. He suggested a Muslim World League conference titled “International Islamic Conference for Dialogue”, which was held in May 2008, and was seen as a step towards an envisioned future meeting, “Between the people of different religions and civilisations” worldwide (Al-Zaydi, 2008a). He also called for a Conference of Dialogue of Civilisations between the Islamic World and Japan ‘for the dialogue of religions on the basis of human brotherhood’.

On the topic of interfaith dialogue, King Abdullah has said:

For the past two years I have been thinking about humanity. I found that all humanity at present is living through a crisis that has shaken the equilibrium of mind, morality and humanity, and for this reason I presented my thinking to our scholars in the KSA.

The king finished his speech by saying that he was going to:

Ask all heavenly religions – Islam, Christianity and Judaism – to meet with each other in good faith and sincerity toward all religions, because we turn our faces to one god.

Al-Zaydi notes that:

Surely a call for all human beings to meet and talk on the basis of human brotherhood annoys extremists in all societies all over the world (Al-Zaydi, 2008b).

Al Zaydi (2008b) views the above comments as made within the context of a 'communication crisis' in which he sees mistrust between the Muslim and Christian communities around the world. According to him King Abdullah addresses this situation by encouraging interfaith dialogue. Al-Zaydi writes:

When human beings meet and talk on the basis of human brotherhood, the calls for wards of civilizations and the exchange of verbal abuse among different cultures will have no place or effect, because the cultures will be meeting to talk face to face, not by distorted proxy (Al-Zaydi, 2008b).

The mistrust between the communities can be understood as mistrust of Christians by conservative elements within Saudi, and mistrust of Saudis post 9/11 within Western countries. For the latter, although the Saudi scholarship program mirrors international trends reflecting a growing recognition of the benefits of international education, the country of origin of the students has awoken some debate in the political climate both post 9/11 from a Western perspective and in terms of perspectives at home in Saudi Arabia. One Western perspective is that the purpose of the Saudi study-abroad program through Asia and the west is to spread Islam globally (Prokop, 2003). Meanwhile in Saudi, conservatives are fearful of the negative influences on Saudi youth associated with studying abroad (Bangura, 2004, November). The Saudi Ministry of Higher Education addresses the concerns of Saudi citizens with a pre-departure orientation programme for scholarship students on Islamic and foreign cultures, aimed at ensuring youth don't succumb to moral temptations, plus ongoing events for students while studying abroad to reinforce the necessity of adhering to the standards they have learnt at home, whilst also learning in the new country. These aspects of the scholarship program will be further discussed in the following chapter, which provides an overview of the scholarship program from the perspective of the officials implementing the program.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed a range of ongoing development issues in which education is both one of the areas requiring development, and also a key solution to other challenges. International education has been implemented as part of a raft of recent changes, which seek to improve the skills of the Saudi population, address the needs of the private sector, and also ensure positive external relations through person-to-person diplomacy. Thus both internal and external challenges are addressed by sending students abroad to study. It may be that objectives differ amongst different groups. Some might for instance be focused on skills

needs, while others focus on promoting a positive image of Islam abroad. Further, while speeches in the public domain are largely presented by members of the royal family, the prominence of technocrats behind the scenes suggests that the international scholarship program might be partially based on the advice and recommendations of the previous generation of returning students.

It appears the government recognises that the future prosperity of Saudi Arabia depends on the state's ability to diversify away from oil and create jobs and future prospects for Saudi's rapidly increasing population. With more than 90% employed in the public sector, the shift away from dependence on guest workers with superior technical and management skills will only be possible once the Saudi youth are able to compete on an equal footing. This requires a greater breadth of academic skills in disciplines which support development needs. International education allows students to gain these skills, especially where internal policies don't allow a similar focus to domestic students either due to policy or availability.

In addition to requirements for advanced academic and technical skills, the economic climate and demographic features necessitate greater skills in cross-cultural competency. Such soft skills will allow Saudi to engage the international community and ensure on-going ties with people of other nationalities and religions for the benefit of trade, technology transfer and investment. This aspect of the study-abroad experience is less straight forward than acquiring technical skills. Indeed students may encounter difficulties as they attempt to develop cross-cultural skills, engage locals and form friendships abroad. Potential issues were suggested here in terms of issues of trust and differing levels of conservatism. These and other elements of the students experience will be further explored in chapters eight to eleven, with descriptions of the students experience in New Zealand. Key areas which affect student experience of friendship will be explored in detail in order to understand the reality of student exchange in this context. Thus the focus of the remainder of this research is on the development of soft skills, integral to the person-to-person diplomacy objectives quoted in this chapter.

Chapter 5:

Research Methods

5.1 Introduction

As explained in chapter two, previous research on intergroup relations has focused on education as a facilitating condition for positive outcomes between distinct groups. A still broader body of ‘international education’ literature largely extols the benefits of international education in international relations in terms of global objectives. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has embraced international education through its generous scholarship program. Yet the two have not previously been studied together. That is, I was unable to find a recent intergroup relations study related to contact theory specifically, which focused on Saudi students abroad, and no studies within the broader literature on Arab students in New Zealand. This contact situation was introduced in chapters one and two, along with several key questions which this research addresses. In this chapter, the research methods chosen will be explained.

5.2 Approach to Theory building

The current study falls within the field of intergroup relations, which itself is incorporated in the broader research category of social psychology. The latter includes aspects of personality, identity, and behaviour, while intergroup relations relate these aspects to cross-cultural exchange. A range of theories were potentially applicable to the current study, including acculturation and identity theories (Phinney, 1992; Zhou, et al., 2008). Yet as explained in chapter two, this study primarily sought guidance from contact theory, as it was best suited to the aims of this research. This study sought to understand how people from two very different cultures could build friendships, given that each might have preconceptions of the other which could potentially influence friendship outcomes.

A number of key observations from previous contact theory studies informed the direction of this study. These included the following:

- 1) Students who interact with hosts in a variety of situations had more positive attitudes towards hosts (Arab students interacting with Americans in a study by Alreshoud & Koeske, 1997)
- 2) Favourable initial attitude leads to positive contact – attitude and social contact are related (Alreshoud & Koeske, 1997)

- 3) Greater social contact increases positive perceptions of the other (Alreshoud & Koeske, 1997)
- 4) Greater exposure of host culture reduces fear or discomfort and increases understanding and positive perception of host culture (Hull, 1978; Laubscher, 1994)
- 5) Education is a convenient situation for facilitating intergroup contact (Goldsmith, 2004; Hayes, et al., 2007).
- 6) Authority support creates a climate which encourages positive interaction (Molina & Wittig, 2006)
- 7) Friendship potential is the most consistent predictor of prejudice reduction (Molina & Wittig, 2006)

The above observations are explored in the current contact situation, in order to understand the experience of Saudi students in New Zealand. Further, a broader discussion ensues of the range of factors which explain friendship building in this context. To this end, the study furthers understanding of the contact situation per se, and the relevant emphasis of various elements of contact theory when applied to Saudis in New Zealand.

In order to understand the contact situation, this study focuses on attitudes (preconceptions and propensity to mix, views of the other) and experience (following through on desire for contact, adaptation, personal transformation). Based on the observations noted above, it was expected that there would be a relationship between attitudes and experience. That is, that those who desired contact, had a positive initial view of the host, and were more adaptable, would have more friends and so on.

5.3 The Selection of an Appropriate Research Method

According to Alreshoud and Koeske (1997), contact theory has been deemed both most effective in qualitative studies, while criticised in the same as not generalizable. This study attempts to bridge inadequacies associated with either solely qualitative or quantitative research by combining the two in mixed methods. Reasons for doing so include:

- A need to explain findings from the exploratory quantitative survey
- Preference for understanding the contact situation from multiple perspectives
- Providing participants with multiple ways to voice their responses, considering some will be more candid in anonymous surveys while others in discussion where they can qualify their answers in greater detail. The mixed methods approach allows for both preferences
- Greater ability to generalise findings

According to definitions by Creswell and Pleno Clark this study has the following worldview:

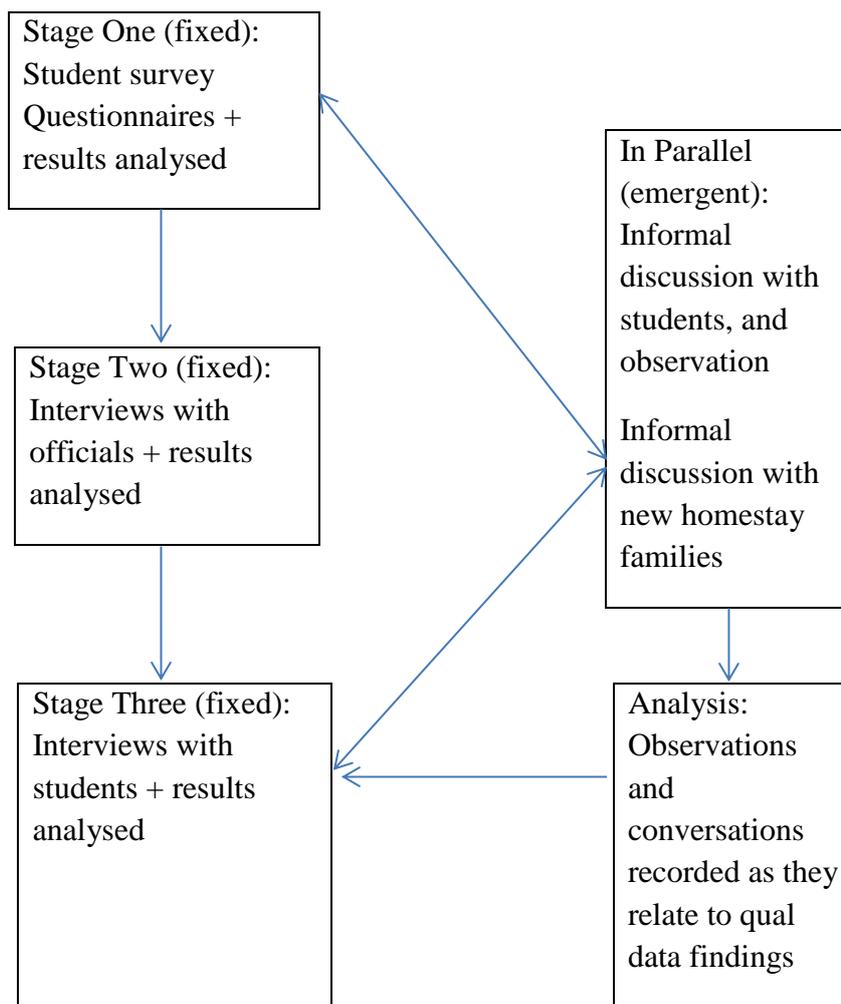
Table 5.1. Research Worldviews and their Implications

Worldview Element	Pragmatism	Key observation from current study
Ontology (What is the nature of reality?)	Singular and multiple realities (e.g researchers test hypotheses and provide multiple perspectives)	Contact theory hypotheses form basis of study, combined with participant perspectives and analysis of both
Epistemology (What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?)	Practicality (e.g researchers collect data by “what works” to address research question)	Initially the study was designed to gain formal data only. It became obvious that informal data would support and explain data gained in formal data collection
Axiology (What is the role of values?)	Multiple stances (e.g., researchers include both biased and unbiased perspectives)	Analysis of findings includes unedited quotes from participants as well as the personal observations of researcher
Methodology (What is the process of research?)	Combining (e.g., researchers collect both quantitative and qualitative data and mix them)	A combination of one quantitative survey and two interview groups and observations
Rhetoric (What is the language of research?)	Formal or informal (e.g., researchers may employ both formal and informal styles of writing)	Both writing styles are included. Formal writing explains the theoretical basis of the study and quantitative findings while informal style builds a picture from qualitative information

Adapted from Creswell, J., & Clark, P. (2010). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, p 42.

The starting point for the research was a fixed mixed methods design which predetermined that quantitative and qualitative data would be incorporated, as stage one and stage two. This order was decided early on as the quantitative section was designed to investigate a range of factors identified in the literature review along with initial assumptions about the students’ experience. The qualitative followed so as to further understand insights gained in quantitative data collection, and to allow participants to discuss views which may not have been anticipated. During the research, an emergent element was added as it became evident that an additional qualitative dimension would enrich the data in the form of informal discussions with students and homestays. These stages can be explained as follows:

Figure 5.1. Research Stages



The above combined research method was both sequential (stage one and two) and concurrent (in parallel), therefore following an overall multiphase combination timing (Creswell & Clark, 2010, p. 66). The study followed an explanatory, sequential, mixed methods design in terms of its formal data collection. That is, quantitative data was collected and analysed before collection and analysis of qualitative data. Findings from qualitative data were emphasised over quantitative due to multiple qualitative data sets and greater ability to delve into insights of participants.

‘Combined methods’ was applied to this study in order to gain a thorough understanding of Saudi student experience. It allows for any potential bias relating to either quantitative or qualitative data collection methods, in terms of possible interview bias or participant bias. Further, the combination of formal data gathering as a result of research planning, and emergent informal data gathering through incidental interactions with students and homestays, allowed a degree of explanation of phenomena to surface. Complementarity, which as defined by Green, Caracelli and Graham “seeks elaboration, enhancement,

illustration and clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method”, was sought, as were initiation (in particular ‘the discovery of paradox and contradiction’) and expansion (extending the breadth of inquiry) (1981 - Creswell & Clark, 2010, p. 62).

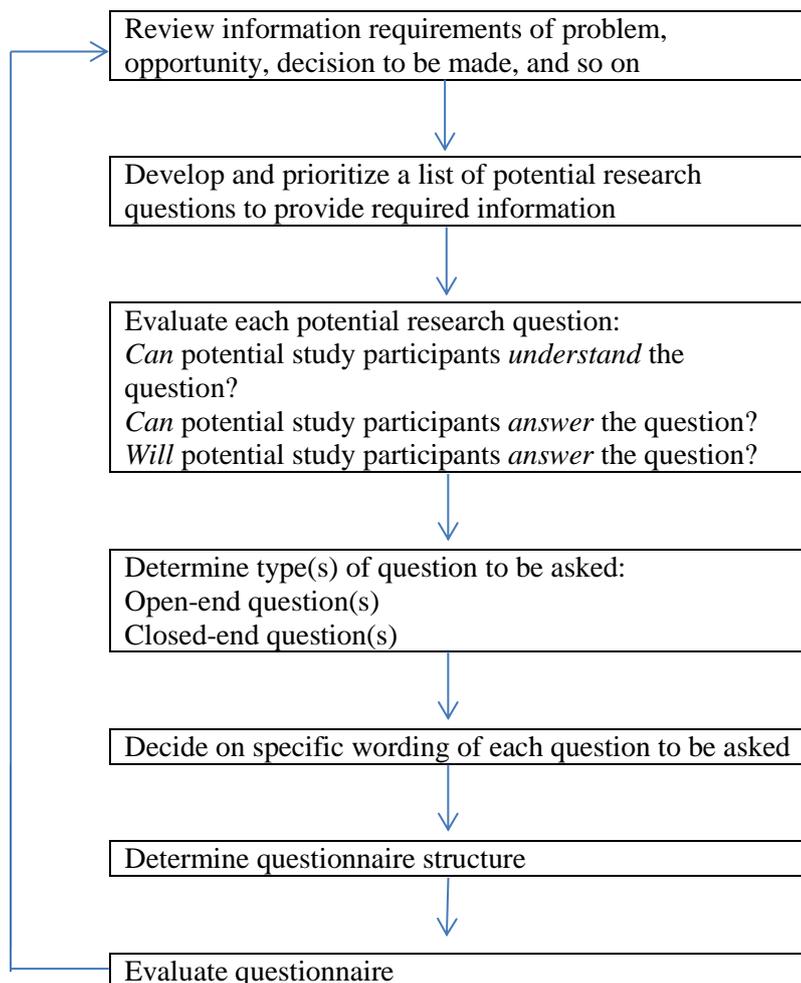
5.4 Stage One: Quantitative Study - Design, Sources of Data, Collection Protocol

This section explains data collection in stage one from the figure above.

5.4.1 Questionnaire Design

Designing the questionnaire involved consideration on a range of fronts. The questionnaire could not be too long that respondents wouldn’t answer all questions while gaining the necessary data. Some information gained could be potentially sensitive, therefore question order and wording needed to be such that all participants would be able to answer questions candidly. A direct questioning strategy was adopted, which considered steps provided by Peterson (2000) in order to develop an ‘effective questionnaire’. This included the following:

Figure 5.2. Petersons (2010) Model on Constructing a Questionnaire



In particular, in terms of the above diagram, evaluating each research question was critical. In order for participants to understand the questions, the questionnaire was provided in English with Arabic translation. Questions related to participants' experience and attention was given not to include any questions which would be overly sensitive but to approach potentially sensitive subjects by not highlighting those questions – embedding them amongst others not deemed sensitive. Question order was considered to increase response rates. As Peterson (2000) suggests, easier questions which were less personal or threatening were placed at the beginning of the survey, with more personal / complex questions later in the survey. Also following Peterson's recommendation, questions crucial to the research were placed in the centre of the questionnaire.

In designing questions on contact with New Zealanders, this study recognised that while Saudis and New Zealanders were the two groups in question, friendships made by Saudis likely extended beyond these two groups. As with the previously identified functional model of friendship networks (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977), this study also assumed three social networks: 1) primary, consisting of home nationals (monocultural), 2) host nationals, including teachers, other students, counsellors (bicultural), and 3) other foreign students (multicultural). These groups also served for comparison.

A range of question types were included in the study, including dichotomous questions for demographic and behavioural information. As suggested by Peterson (2000, p. 50), questions were 'brief, relevant, unambiguous, specific and objective'. Close-ended questions comprised the majority of interview questions so as to facilitate comparative analysis. Open ended were primarily included as follow up to closed end options so as to exhaust a range of options, to probe the participants. That is, to understand whether 'other' responses, which had not been considered by the researcher, reflected a student's experience. At the end of the study students were given 'freedom of response' (Peterson, 2000) where they were able to write any comments related to the study. This section allowed for other potentially insightful information to surface.

5.4.2 Measures

This section explains a range of measures / factors, which were considered in the questionnaire.

a) Contact with New Zealanders.

Similar to a study by Alreshoud and Koeske (1997), this section asks participants to indicate which of 13 different recreational activities they have undertaken with other people, including New Zealanders, other Saudis, other Arabs, other international people. This is also explored in terms of the number of friends they have and how much time they spend with each group.

b) Attitudes towards New Zealanders.

Attitudes towards New Zealanders were viewed from the perspective of preconceptions before travel (factors which motivated them to travel to NZ and the extent to which making friends with New Zealanders was a factor), as well as observations through experience. Opinion of locals is gained via a question which requires participants to provide 3 adjectives to describe Saudis and 3 to describe New Zealanders. It is also possible to understand attitudes by analysis of other questions indirectly related, since greater interaction and positive answers on friendships suggests positive attitude towards locals. Also asked was how their impressions of New Zealanders changed over time from 'much more positive' to 'much more negative'.

c) Desired Contact.

I assumed that students who identified meeting New Zealanders as one of the reasons they wanted to study in New Zealand would be more inclined to make friends with the same. The first survey question asks students what motivated them to study in New Zealand, from a range of 9 factors, with a five-step rating scale from extremely important (1) to not important at all (5). Students were also asked more directly if they wanted to make friends with New Zealanders, rating "I am interested in making friends with New Zealanders" on a five point scale from agree strongly (1) to disagree strongly (5). This was contrasted with similar statements for Saudis and other international students. Students were also asked to comment on their likely future engagement with locals in the question, "I hope to maintain friendships with New Zealand people after my studies" which they could also use the five point scale already mentioned to respond. Caution is offered however given that social scientists have found that satisfaction and intention questions are answered spontaneously and both commonly over-report high levels of satisfaction or intention to behave in a certain way (Peterson, 2000). This stated, researchers have also found that measuring intention increases the likelihood that the intended behaviour will occur.

d) Ease of making friends.

Students were asked to agree or disagree on a 1 to 5 scale (1= agree strongly, 5= disagree strongly) with the following statements: “I am interested in making friends with NZ people”, “Saudi students find it easy to make friends with NZ people” (which was also contrasted with being interested in making friends with people from other countries in NZ). The latter comment allowed students who might feel inhibited to voice their own ease, or lack of it, to comment on general friendship building within the community. This also allowed for greater generalisation of the finding.

e) Barriers to friendship building.

Students were asked to rate a series of barriers which were predetermined by the researcher, based on general observation of the experience of international students, and informed by the literature. These were English ability, cultural differences, opportunities to meet, religious differences, or students could identify ‘other’ factors. Each was rated from 1 to 5 (1= affects a lot, 5 = doesn’t affect at all). Also questioned was the role of authority figures in encouraging students to make friends – authority figures could either act as a barrier or facilitate friendship building. Students were asked to consider encouragement or discouragement by New Zealand education officials, parents, religious leaders in Saudi and New Zealand, Saudi officials or ‘other’, and rate each on a 1 to 5 scale (1= encourages strongly to 5= discourages strongly).

f) General background.

The final section of the questionnaire allows participants to self-report their demographic details. This includes age, gender, city of origin, whether they are on a scholarship, their course of study, length of time in New Zealand, living situation, and religious background. Demographic information allows the researcher to profile the study participants and is useful for statistical analyses in terms of identifying the types of respondents who answer a given question in a particular manner. Demographic information is included in the thesis appendix along with a copy of the questionnaire.

5.4.3 Questionnaire Development and Collection Method

The questionnaire was developed from a pilot test on two students who were not participants in the quantitative section of this study. This included a small convenience sample (chosen at the convenience of the researcher, as opposed to random sampling) of two Saudi friends. They completed the questionnaire and gave me feedback on their ease of understanding the questions and the length of the survey.

Convenience sampling was also used for the main study. This involved enlisting helpers in the Saudi community who assisted me in gaining access to Saudi student functions and classes in order to get survey participants to complete the survey on the spot. Participants from Dunedin completed the survey in their lunch break at the English language school. Participants in Christchurch completed the survey at Saudi functions at the same time. In one locale, women gathered and I administered the survey, while the head of the Christchurch Saudi club administered the survey to male students at a separate venue. In Auckland, I undertook a similar collection method, attending the female section of a Saudi event while Saudi friends administered the survey to males. In addition, I accessed Auckland participants at the University of Auckland English Language Academy and Crown English school over lunchtimes, and from an ACG foundation course at the end of their exam. A total of 167 participant surveys were included in the data, with several surveys not included due to few questions being completed – typically by female participants. A high response rate was gained due to students completing the survey questionnaire on the spot, and also due to their interest in the topic.

5.4.4 Questionnaire Analysis

Analysis of questionnaire responses relied primarily on descriptive analyses to identify key trends in friendship building. The analysis also used cross-tabs to explore moderators of contact and relationship building such as demographic profiles including age and course with items indicating desired contact, experience of friendships (number of friends and time spent with friends), and expectations for on-going engagement with New Zealand and New Zealand people. Regression analysis was utilised to test relationships between key variables, identified earlier on as the study as having the potential to influence contact.

5.5 Qualitative Study - Design, Sources of Data, Collection Protocol

Saris and Gallhofer (2007) explain that one of the advantages of interview research is that respondents don't need to have reading or writing abilities. This is particularly relevant to the Saudi student group (and potentially to Saudi officials for the same reason) since Saudi Arabia has a long oratory communication and education tradition in comparison to more recent formalised education (also discussed in chapter 4). Students may then prefer discussion over other modes of communication, thus it stands to reason that interviews may be a preferred mode of communication in this research. On the other hand, it could also be argued that interviewer effects might influence participants to answer questions in socially desirable

ways especially when confronted by sensitive questions (Saris & Gallhoffer, 2007). Self-administered procedures meanwhile feature less of the social desirability effect. Nevertheless, due to combining quantitative and qualitative data, ‘combined methods’ overcomes the potential of each bias. In addition, for the purpose of this study, the researcher gave greater emphasis to the data gained through qualitative data collection, with the view that students were better able to express their opinions and describe their experiences through discussion. In addition, survey questionnaires may be more suitable to linear thinkers (as is found in individualist cultures) while interviews may suit less linear thinkers (more common in collective cultures such as Saudi).

5.5.1 Interview Questionnaire Design – Officials and Students

Interview questions were designed to gain qualitative data from two groups; Saudi officials and Saudi students. Questions administered to Saudi officials were direct and administered as semi-structured interviews, allowing for a general discussion on the scholarship program. The primary focus of the interviews was to gain insight into the official motives behind the scholarship program. In particular, interviews related to the development of the scholarship program to include New Zealand as a destination for Saudi students. It was expected that these discussions would inform the analysis of parallel discussions with students. In particular, a deeper understanding of ‘authority support’ in relation to the contact situation in New Zealand was sought, since, as stated in the first chapter, ‘authority support’ is seen as a facilitating condition for developing positive relations in a contact situation.

The question design for student interviews was also semi-structured, however, it involved both a direct and indirect questioning strategy (Peterson, 2000), in order to gain an understanding of potentially sensitive information. This mix of direct and indirect questioning is recommended when the subject matter being investigated is socially sensitive (Peterson, 2000). It is possible that students in this study might have concerns about confidentiality being maintained, and the implications for them in the event of such a breach of confidence. All questions were open ended and designed to allow students to discuss their experiences of friendship in New Zealand.

Indirect questioning in the form of, “What would a typical Saudi worry about?” allowed students to reveal information about behaviours and thoughts they might have felt embarrassed to reveal directly. Further, this line of enquiry also allowed the researcher to

draw out information beyond their individual experience, to see what they might typify as more general trends in Saudi / NZ friendship building.

5.5.2 Stage Two: Interview Participants and Data Collection – Saudi Officials

Included in this study were interviews with 7 officials from the following offices:

- The Saudi Embassy and Cultural Attaché in Canberra (at that time representing New Zealand)
- The Australian, New Zealand and US embassies in Riyadh
- The Saudi Ministry of Higher Education in Riyadh.

In the case of the officials in Australia, interviews were requested directly with the relevant individuals. Interview appointments in Saudi Arabia were facilitated by staff at the New Zealand Embassy in Riyadh, whom were informed of the types of people the researcher needed to contact. A staff member at the embassy gained access to individuals they felt would be appropriate to discuss the research questions with. All but two interviews were recorded, and later transcribed.

5.5.3 Stage Three: Interview Participants and Data Collection – Saudi Students

After collating and analysing survey data, approximately 20 potential interview participants were identified. Choice of subject was based on gaining a representative sample, and considered the location students came from in Saudi, the city they were studying in in New Zealand, gender, the type of course they were enrolled in, and in some cases how they answered interview questions. Students were contacted by email (since they gave their emails in the survey questionnaire). Several did not respond to my request or were unavailable. A total of 16 students participated in the interview section of the research, 9 male and 7 female, studying in Christchurch, Auckland, Dunedin and Wellington. The sample included 5 people I knew well in addition to 11 whom I met as a result of the survey process. Students came from numerous Saudi cities: Taif, Jeddah, Makkah, Qatif, Riyadh, Baha, Zorfi and Hail, representing the various geographical regions of Saudi, North, South, East, West and Central. Participants studied a range of programs in New Zealand: English, Master degrees, foundation studies, bachelor degrees, Postgraduate diplomas and PhD. Interviews were conducted at student homes and at a friend's office in Christchurch, and in Auckland at friends' homes and in my office. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

5.5.4 Analysis of Interviews

After transcription, interviews were entered into the NVivo software package to facilitate analysis. Information was grouped in terms of recurring themes and content analysis was employed. Themes were both predefined and emergent from the study. Subgroups within themes were categorised using a coding scheme. Analysis focused on developing a story within the answers, in order to illustrate the following;

- 1) The purpose and implementation of the scholarship scheme (from interviews with officials) and
- 2) The range of student experiences and attitudes over time spent in New Zealand (from interviews with students)

5.5.5 Parallel Data Collection: Emergent focus

As part of the research I was open to the mixed methods approach of emerging data. While developing the study and gathering study participant data, I also had on-going experiences with Saudi students outside of the study group, and with New Zealanders who interacted with Saudis. Early on in the study, it became clear that these perspectives would become an important criteria for assessing Saudi student experience. As I analysed the qualitative findings and began to try to explain Saudi student experience, it became evident that my parallel experiences with students and others could benefit this study in terms of providing greater perspective and allowing more thoughtful analysis. Therefore the research design was developed so as to include perspectives beyond the original study participants.

Analysis drew on conversations I had had with students, homestays, and staff at institutions. In particular, conversations with homestays proved insightful. Through my own business I interviewed more than 100 potential homestay families over the period of the research in order to determine whether they would be suitable hosts. I also had on-going conversations with families in relation to students they were hosting. The collection of views expressed by families was not initially a key component in the research, since the research was designed to explore the experiences and perspectives of students from first-hand accounts of students rather than locals. Thus families discussed students in the context of real life experiences rather than for the benefit of my research. The value of these discussions became increasingly apparent at the data analysis stage, upon finding that student perspectives could be further explained by homestay family observations. This was especially due to the fact that many students discussed friendship building in formal interviews and open ended survey questions in relation to their homestay experiences. Further, at work I also advised students going into

homestays, and experiencing other issues while adapting to New Zealand. Given that these experiences provided greater personal understanding of this contact situation, I incorporated some of my own observations in the research. This aspect was an emergent research focus rather than fixed at the start of the study, as discussed.

5.6 Conclusion

Combined methods was employed in the current study, as it was deemed the most thorough method to explore a phenomena which little prior research has investigated. Both survey and interview questions looked at a range of factors which could affect Saudi student experience of building friendships in New Zealand. Interviews expanded on themes which were initially presented in the quantitative section of the research. For instance, pre-determined factors were assessed through the survey questionnaire (cultural differences, English, opportunity to meet, and religious differences) and then further explored in interviews indirectly. In interviews, students were able to explain the factors that affected their ability to make friends in New Zealand in their own words, without mention of the pre-determined factors examined in the surveys. This allowed for a more thorough understanding of the student experience of friendships.

Through interview conversations, students were able to explain their perspectives in depth and often utilising examples of their experiences in order to present their ideas. Such description is common in a culture which has long drawn on its oratory history and abilities, and allowed for a method of analysis and presentation which kept the student perspective at the heart of the study.

Chapter 6:

Saudi Arabia chooses New Zealand as a Study Destination for Scholarship students –

Official Views

According to Mr Davies¹ (Cultural Attaché at the New Zealand embassy in Riyadh), the scholarship programme in its current form (in terms of scale and variety of countries included) was developed after King Abdullah took the throne in 2005. It initially consisted of an agreement between King Abdullah and President Bush to send 5,000 students to the US, increasing over five years to 15,000. The scholarship program was designed to bridge understanding between the countries and to build the skills of Saudi youth. A first batch of students was sent to the US, UK, and Canada, followed by a second batch of students sent to Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

The New Zealand group was the result of a visit from the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education in 2006, when they presented the New Zealand Ministry of Education with the concept of sending 500 scholarship students to NZ. The Minister of Education agreed, and after six months was spent planning, the first students arrived. Four years later, the programme has grown well beyond early projections. According to a US embassy source, in the US alone, there were more than 63,000 Saudi students in 2010². In New Zealand, 3800 student visas were issued to Saudi students in the 2010/11 financial year, not counting a considerable number of short term students on visitor visas. This figure is expected to increase.

The number of Saudi students in New Zealand is thus significant and increasing. This chapter will explore the motivations behind these statistics, based on interview discussions with Saudi and New Zealand officials working in their respective foreign offices. The first two parts of the chapter look at the motives behind the scholarship growth, with a focus on growth in Saudi international education in New Zealand from a diplomatic perspective. Once policy motives are explained, the chapter then explores the practical implementation of the programme in terms of characteristics and issues. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of future prospects for relations between Saudi Arabia and New Zealand.

¹ Mr Tony Davies, Cultural Attaché New Zealand Embassy in Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 14/4/2010

² US Embassy staff, Riyadh, 2/5/2010

6.1 Part One: Motivation for Sending Students Abroad

Staff at the Ministry of Higher Education have developed the scholarship programme with a number of goals. They expect students will gain the following advantages from their time abroad:

- Cultural experience – a wider understanding of cultures outside the Middle East;
- An international experience in the universities they study in and diversity of education;
- Personal skills such as being organised, punctual – skills seen as cultural outside of the Middle East and in Western countries in particular;
- Academic skills. Scholarships are given in specific disciplines such as engineering, medicine, IT and technology, business, and accounting, areas where there are shortages amongst graduates in Saudi.

These experiences and attributes should make students more employable at home. Dr Aleisa³ (International Affairs Advisor in the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education) mentioned that the quality of education in Western countries, in particular, is more applied than theoretical, so students will find positions more easily when they return home since they won't need as much training as Saudis who studied at home. In reference to the government's policy of Saudization (discussed in chapter four), Dr Aleisa described a situation in which:

The government is fighting to encourage business to employ Saudis. This is his country; he wants to get married, to be comfortable.

This quote indicates the stakes involved in the scholarship programme. The features described above form part of the study-abroad experience across a range of destination countries. The New Zealand experience is thus part of a broad plan to improve the prospects of young Saudis, along with building closer relations between the countries, which will be discussed next.

6.2 Part Two: Sending Students to New Zealand

6.2.1 Developing Bilateral Relations with New Zealand

Chapter three discussed the encouragement of bilateral relations as an integral part of international scholarship programs generally. Officials from both Saudi and NZ ministries concurred in their interviews that bilateral relations were an important element in the

³ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

scholarship program in New Zealand. This was summarised by Mr Alassiri⁴ (Deputy Ambassador of the Saudi Embassy in Canberra), as follows, and will be explained in this section:

When the government supports students to go to New Zealand it has significance, this country is a friendly country. We encourage you to go there and to study there. I believe this has been understood fully by the NZ government and by Saudi.

Also he put this in context saying that:

With an increase of income and ambitious plans of the government to develop education, it was a nice opportunity for both countries, Saudi Arabia and New Zealand to develop very strong cultural relations.

Dr Aleisa⁵ pointed out that as a result of the scholarship programme staff at the NZ Embassy are now engaged in a wider arena in Saudi. The embassy has moved away from a solely business focus to involvement in social issues, and embassy staff have learnt a lot more about Saudi Arabia through their interactions with students and their families. This demonstrates the personal dimension of relationship building from the very first point of contact between diplomatic staff and Saudi nationals, even prior to students stepping abroad.

6.2.2 Motivation for Sending Students to New Zealand

New Zealand has some advantages when compared to other study destinations. Following 9/11, New Zealand was viewed as a country which was welcoming to Saudis, at a time when perception of the US as a study destination had deteriorated. Some Saudi students were mistreated in the US especially due to airport security issues, and so chose to study in NZ as an alternative. The visa free policy was one reason Saudis felt encouraged to go to New Zealand, especially for short term courses over summer, since they were able to bypass the hassle of applying for visas. This was explained by Dr Aleisa,⁶ “The easier it is for students to get the visa, the more likely they will go [...] this makes them more welcome.”

Saudi ministries started to receive positive feedback from students who paid their own fees in New Zealand before the country was included in the scholarship programme. Word of mouth

⁴ Mr Hussein Alassiri, Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Interview Canberra, 5/03/2009

⁵ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

⁶ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

helped expand New Zealand's profile as a good option, as students got information from previous students, and chatted online, and heard that NZ was 'good, easy and life is attractive'. According to Dr Aleisa, students "usually recycle this experience so they usually follow each other"⁷. Mr Alassiri⁸ voiced similar sentiments:

Someone who find nice environment, nice people, he enjoys his time and he goes back to his country and he tells his friends about this, so because of the good experience of the students so then because of this, students started to come to New Zealand to study.

Some students travelled to New Zealand and then asked for a scholarship. The Saudi Ministry of Higher Education reviewed the education system and universities and included New Zealand as a destination for scholarship students. They discovered that New Zealand had international class education, and a system not dissimilar to the UK model. Officials found that students could learn both hard and soft skills in New Zealand; knowledge, education, and life skills. Dr Aleisa⁹ gave an example of the type of soft skill they hoped Saudi students could learn:

We know New Zealanders are a very well organised people and Saudis can learn for example to be punctual, this is the objective of education in general.

Saudi officials received feedback from students that they preferred NZ and Australia because of a lower cost of living when compared to the UK and US. One official explained that since students got the same living allowance no matter which country they went to, they could enjoy a higher standard of living. Students also found the admission process easier in NZ than some other countries. Further, the same Saudi official noted that compared to other English speaking countries including Australia, students found it easier to make friends in New Zealand. This is corroborated in student interviews, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

6.2.3 A Fortuitous Set of Variables

Dr Matheson (New Zealand Ambassador in Riyadh),¹⁰ gave several reasons for why Saudi has engaged New Zealand. He signalled three key points: 1) King Abdullah coming to succession as the King, 2) 9/11, and 3) very fundamental political developments in the Middle

⁷ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

⁸ Mr Hussein Alassiri, Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Interview Canberra, 5/03/2009

⁹ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

¹⁰ Dr Trevor Matheson, New Zealand Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 11/04/2010

East, all of which led to a “Look east” directive. While Dr Matheson acknowledged that links with the US, UK, and Canada are critical to Saudi Arabia and will be maintained, he explained that King Abdullah wanted to diversify into what Saudi Arabia sees as an emerging economic power in the Asia Pacific region, recognising opportunities in New Zealand. This was evident in the interview with Mr Alassiri,¹¹ who explained that Saudi views New Zealand as a developed country and is seeking to increase the relationship, especially in relation to trade.

According to Dr Matheson,¹² there has been a fortuitous set of variables which mean New Zealand’s objectives and strategic development over the previous decade have aligned well with those of Saudi Arabia. New Zealand’s international persona has developed over the past 15 to 20 years and moved away from that of a meat and dairy commodity trading country to one that is ‘a more innovative international persona’. Over this period, governments have placed:

A great emphasis on acknowledging that NZ has a unique set of skills and services in the international education area and in some ways it’s been fortuitous that the rise of international education and the need for the kingdom to develop international linkages overseas has coincided with this persona that New Zealand has wanted to develop.

On the back of this developing persona, New Zealand has actively sought education linkages with Saudi Arabia, with two major ministerial visits to Saudi Arabia in the early 2000s. This coincided with developing interest in New Zealand on the part of Saudi students.

6.2.4 *Creating Student Ambassadors*

The Saudi participants in this study unanimously corroborated the view that their various ministries hope students in New Zealand act as ambassadors for the Kingdom, and that when they live in New Zealand they integrate with local people, and give a good impression of Saudi. This according to Mr Alassiri¹³ “will be reflected in the bilateral agreement, trade and investments”. Dr Aleisa¹⁴ described students as ambassadors, explaining:

We can have more than one ambassador, there may be one embassy in New Zealand but you are going to have thousands of ambassadors, so I think it’s good for relations between

¹¹ Mr Hussein Alassiri, Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Interview Canberra, 5/03/2009

¹² Dr Trevor Matheson, New Zealand Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 11/04/2010

¹³ Mr Hussein Alassiri, Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Interview Canberra, 5/03/2009

¹⁴ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

the two countries so the students can understand the culture [...], the government of Saudi Arabia is trying to build very good relationships, and I think the scholarship is one of these very important programs that can start very strong relationships.

At least one Saudi official hoped that in acting as ambassadors for Saudi, students would positively represent their background. Dr Aleisa¹⁵ mentioned:

We believe, this is what the prophet said, this is how Islam came to China, we didn't fight, Islam came through building relations and trade. It is not an objective but a by-product, when you act positively reflecting yourself, your country, your religion, this is a good thing.

Parallel to student ambassadors, Saudi has also increased its formal diplomatic presence in New Zealand. The increasing linkages with New Zealand due to the scholarship program have led to the opening of a Saudi consulate, which has since my interview with Mr Alassiri been open since January 2010. Plans are afoot to open a Saudi embassy in Wellington, thereby extending Saudi Arabia's formal relations with New Zealand.

Mr Davies¹⁶ referred to the likelihood of further improved relations due to the experiences of Saudi nationals in New Zealand. He gave as an example the Colombo plan and resulting increase in Malaysian students studying in New Zealand, and noted that it would be easier to interact with a Malaysian who had studied at Victoria University, for instance, since along with their NZ qualification, they had also learnt about NZ culture. This link between study experience and international relations was also mirrored in the interview with a US embassy staff member, who explained that in person-to-person diplomacy there's an allegiance to where the student's father studied previously in the States, to where the cousins went, and so on. Accordingly, exchange in education has contributed to strong Saudi-US bilateral relations, which she anticipates will continue to grow as the Shura council seeks replacements for its members. Dr Aleisa¹⁷ discussed the prospect of future cabinet ministers in Saudi Arabia graduating from Australia or NZ as a very good target to aim for. This would broaden the traditional base of typically US educated senior public officials in Saudi Arabia.

¹⁵ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

¹⁶ Mr Tony Davies, Cultural Attaché at the New Zealand Embassy in Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 14/4/2010

¹⁷ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

6.2.5 A positive perception of New Zealand

According to the NZ embassy in Riyadh, Saudi has always had a positive perception of New Zealand, partially attributed to New Zealand's independent foreign policy. Officials cited anecdotal evidence from various countries in the Middle East that perception was positively influenced by New Zealand's abstention from the recent war in Iraq.

Dr Matheson¹⁸ explained this further:

They've seen us as independent minded but principled in the sense that we've stood for and backed up, and taken a perception that whenever any international crisis comes along, that we've stuck to the principles of foreign policy

In addition to this positive political perspective, King Abdullah has also recognised New Zealand as a leading agricultural producing country. He has endorsed relationship building between the countries under the Saudi Ministry of Agriculture, with several joint missions since his coming to power. Dr Matheson¹⁹ explained:

They acknowledge that we certainly have economic prowess in the food and beverage areas and agricultural production, but it goes beyond production per se, because by international standards we are not extremely large producers apart from dairy, but we have internationally recognised skills in research and science in agricultural production, which they would like to utilise and see significant advantages.

Thus developing education linkages with New Zealand combines with closer collaboration in other areas.

6.2.6 Friendship with a Non-Muslim Country

Mr Davies²⁰ discussed the concept of engagement with New Zealand as a Western country vis-à-vis other Islamic countries:

I think the fact that New Zealand has a unique advantage, and the disadvantage also, in the fact that we are not an Islamic country, will hold us back in some areas because naturally there's always a greater prospect that a country like Saudi Arabia will reach out to advanced Islamic countries such as Malaysia, and others, to help develop their skills, and help develop because they can see a similarity, and they are going through the same sort of

¹⁸ Dr Trevor Matheson, New Zealand Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 11/04/2010

¹⁹ Dr Trevor Matheson, New Zealand Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 11/04/2010

²⁰ Mr Tony Davies, Cultural Attaché in the New Zealand Embassy Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 14/4/2010

religious issues and cultural changes or challenges. But at the same time, I think that part of the process that the custodian and other leaders here clearly want to take the best of both worlds. They want to take the quality of education, the quality of science and research, that's available there in the West including New Zealand, and try and match that with their process.

Given that the majority of students are studying in non-Muslim countries, the religion of the host country appears to have no bearing on the choice of study destination. Indeed, the figures could suggest that the scholarship provider is more interested in students gaining skills and experiencing people, cultures, and religions which are different.

6.3 Part Three: Implementation of the Program in New Zealand

While this chapter has thus far explained the emergence of the scholarship program in terms of broad goals, this section will explain the implementation of the program in terms of the program design and local implementation characteristics and issues.

6.3.1 Scholarship provisions for Saudi Students

The Saudi scholarship program provides students with a five- or six-year financial guarantee which covers up to one and a half years full time English tuition, foundation studies for those who are required to take it as a prerequisite course, a three or four year bachelor, or three year postgraduate pathway including Master degree. On completion of this study period, students are also able to apply to extend their scholarship to include a PhD. The scholarship provides for all course fees, a generous living allowance, tuition fees for any dependents, as well as one year of English for a spouse, additional living allowance for married couples, insurance and flights home once a year for all family members.

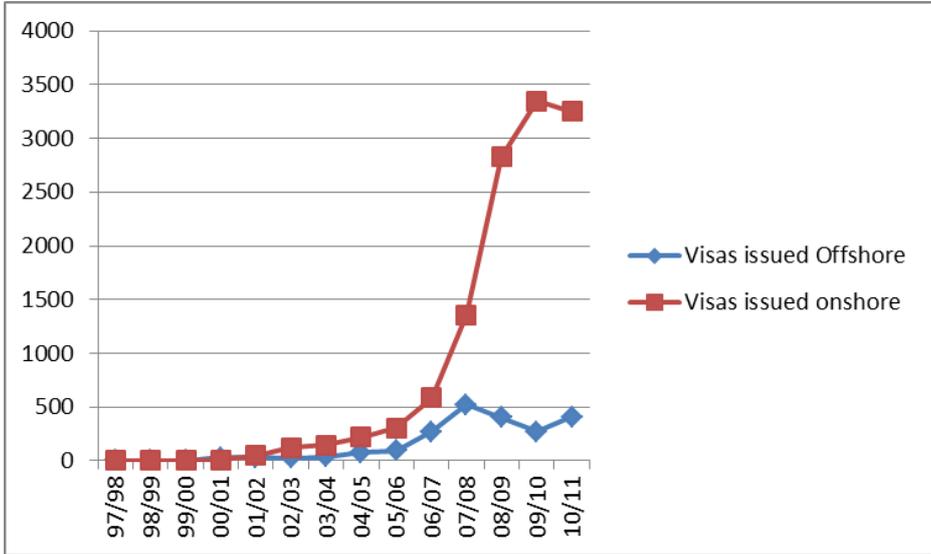
6.3.2 The Number of Saudi Students in New Zealand

Following the 2006 agreement between the New Zealand Ministry of Education and its Saudi counterpart, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education agreed to send a specific number of students. This number was revised each year and communicated to New Zealand universities. There were some teething problems with this aspect of the scheme in that the numbers universities expected to receive differed from the number who actually arrived to study and often it wasn't until planes landed that the New Zealand institutions gained the accurate figures. As a result, while initially there were quotas for Saudi students to study in disciplines

where entry to international students was limited, these places were revised and it became more difficult for students to gain access to certain courses, namely in the medical sciences.

Students who gained scholarships under the original scholarship program were chosen through a competitive application process focused on academic merit. They applied for student visas to travel to New Zealand through the New Zealand Immigration Office in Thailand (and later Dubai), and were given five-year visas. From 2006 onwards, up to 500 students were sent each year to New Zealand on full scholarships and with student visas in their passports, according to the agreement between the ministries. Also since 2006, large numbers of prospective students have travelled to New Zealand without scholarships, on automatic three-month entry visas. These students have typically enrolled in English courses, changed their visas in New Zealand to student visas to study longer, and then applied for university studies. Once they have gained a student visa and an offer to study at university, they have then been able to apply for a scholarship. In the first years, such students applied for a scholarship either directly to the Saudi Ministry of Education in Riyadh or through the Saudi Embassy and Cultural Attaché in Canberra. More recently (mid 2009), a Cultural Attaché was located in Auckland and since then, students have been able to apply for scholarships in Auckland. It has become apparent that while the original intention of the scholarship program was to select and send scholarship students to New Zealand, the program has evolved so that now the majority of students apply for scholarships onshore. This is evident in the following graph which shows the number of student visas issued to Saudi students offshore and onshore over the past ten years:

Figure 6.1. Number of Visas Issued Onshore and Offshore Since 1998



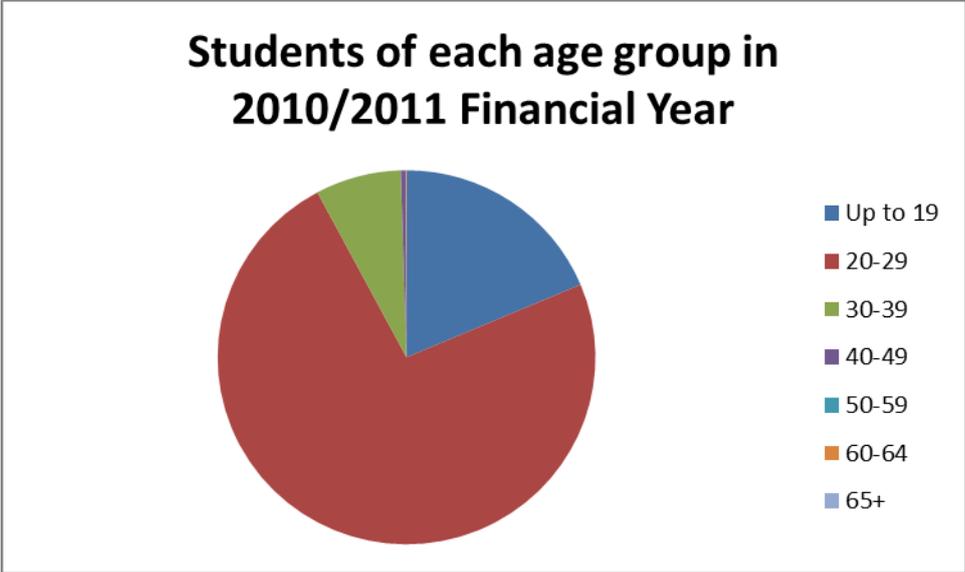
(Department of Labour, 2011)

The above graph illustrates the division between visas issued onshore / offshore and also general growth in numbers of Saudi students in New Zealand. While there were no more than two students up to March 2001, the numbers climbed to 397 in early 2006 and, post 2006, increased year on year to approximately 3800 students in early 2011.

6.3.3 Demographics of Students in New Zealand

The majority of students in New Zealand are less than 30 years of age, as shown in the following graph:

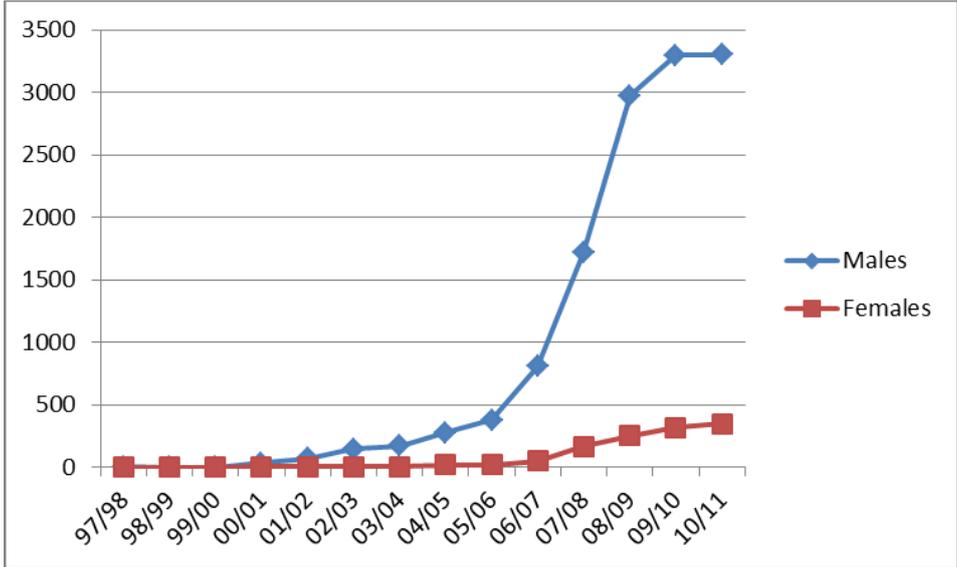
Figure 6.2. Student Demographics in 2010/2011



(Department of Labour, 2011)

Both male and female students are encouraged to apply for scholarships. In the US where students are sent directly from Saudi, according to a US Embassy source in Riyadh, the majority of students in graduate studies are female. In New Zealand the reverse is true. In 2010, for every Saudi female there were approximately 9 Saudi males. The below graph illustrates this:

Figure 6.3. Number of Male and Female Students since 1998



(Department of Labour, 2011)

The low number of females travelling to New Zealand to study may in part be due to restrictions on their travel abroad without a ‘mahrem’. According to Saudi norms, a female must leave Saudi accompanied by a ‘mahrem’ (father, brother or husband), who is then responsible for her in her new country. In reality, while a female might want to study-abroad, it is not always possible to find a mahrem willing to spend an extended period away from home. Some open minded families will allow a mahrem to accompany the female to the new country, leave her there, return home, and visit from time to time to check on her (however, in the majority of families this is not acceptable and it is also not allowed by Saudi authorities). I have also seen cases where students take short courses in New Zealand and the mahrem (usually a brother) might study in a separate city to his sister, or study in the same school but live in separate accommodation. Often the brother will find having his sister at home limits his freedom.

6.3.4 Approving Scholarships for New Zealand

Scholarships are not open indefinitely, but open and close. A student who is studying abroad at his or her own expense at a time the scholarship program opens is able to apply for a scholarship within a certain period of time. During 2010 and 2011, for example, there were two such windows of opportunity. In 2010, King Abdullah made an announcement that those students who were studying abroad on 25th May with student visas would automatically be eligible for a scholarship, so long as they had an offer letter for university studies. Students in New Zealand at the time raced to complete the necessary formalities and the Saudi cultural attaché spent several months processing and approving scholarship applications. All students

physically present in New Zealand on 25th May were given scholarships, and students who arrived shortly after the 25th were given scholarships on a case by case basis.

After this period closed, students continued to arrive in New Zealand, hoping the scholarship program would open again. In February 2011, King Abdullah made an announcement that students abroad would automatically gain scholarships (along with a number of other social security benefits open to the broader population). This window of opportunity differed from country to country. Students in the US had one week to get scholarship applications completed, while students in New Zealand were permitted to apply for a scholarship over the following several months. The scholarship periods are decided by the king at his discretion, within a trend of increasing numbers of scholarships and students abroad. It is difficult to anticipate when the next scholarship approval period will open as the officials working in the appropriate ministries generally do not receive notification in advance.

6.3.5 Choice of Institution

Saudi and New Zealand officials discussed the development of the scholarship program in terms of the institutions which were included in the program. When the scholarship program first opened in New Zealand, students were able to study at any of the universities and at a select number of English language institutes deemed to be of the highest standard. As the number of students increased, the Saudi ministry opened up other options extending the range of possible courses and institutions.

Drawing on professional experience, I have observed a number of adjustments in the implementation of the scholarship programme in line with these changing directives. Students are now able to study at a range of technical institutes and a greater number of language schools. The ministry monitors the number of students studying at each institution and closes scholarships to particular universities or language schools if it perceives that a quota has been reached. Thus the University of Waikato and Auckland University of Technology (AUT) were closed to new applications in 2010 as a result of high numbers of offer letters issued. Students tend to prefer certain universities over others and as such, some become popular (AUT, Massey, Waikato) while others have a reputation of being “too hard” (University of Auckland) in terms of academic course requirements.

Administrative procedures also affect a university’s popularity. Once scholarships are ‘open’, students try to get their offer letters as quickly as possible so as not to miss out on a scholarship. Meanwhile the Saudi Cultural Attaché has requirements in terms of the wording

of the offer letters in order to approve a scholarship for a particular course of studies. Therefore an offer letter from Otago or Massey University, which the student can obtain in two to three days, is preferred, as it provides a pathway from English classes, to a foundation course (with bridging program if the student doesn't meet direct entry in the case of Otago), to a bachelor degree with major specified. In contrast, several separate offer letters may lead to studies at University of Auckland, for instance, whereby the university often doesn't mention the major or may not be willing to provide an offer letter until the student has completed foundation studies (at a separate provider). The latter will take much longer to obtain and may not meet the Cultural Attaché's requirements in terms of required documents. Also, in the case of postgraduate studies, several universities automatically issue flexible pathway offers to students who don't meet direct entry requirements, while other universities issue "Declines" without offering further choices.

6.3.6 Implementation Issues - New Zealand Institutions / Foreign Affairs

New Zealand officials discussed the challenges brought about by the scale of the Saudi scholarship program and speed at which it was introduced. New Zealand ministries and institutions had to address a range of issues. After agreeing to accept Saudi students, New Zealand immigration had to work out what to do about visas for female student companions or 'mahrems'. Immigration created a visa which allowed the 'mahrem' to accompany a female student for the length of the study period.

Institutions, meanwhile, have adapted to a huge influx of Saudi students, many of whom arrived with very low levels of English. This has required extra resources in language schools for beginner classes. Also, even though Saudi authorities wanted Saudi students to stay in homestays, schools have had trouble organising homestay placements for the number of students requiring this. Students have been fussy about their homestays especially in regards to animals in the home and distance from the school. Schools have also had some troubles collecting necessary homestay payments from students. Because of these issues, some universities decided to place all Saudi students in other accommodation for the first semester, and then try to find homestay families for those students whom they met in person and felt could adapt to a homestay situation.

6.3.7 Implementation Issues - Students

Officials recognise that adapting to a new environment can be challenging for students. Challenges can be summarised as: a) adaptation concerns, and b) culture issues. Mr Alassiri²¹ sees issues around adapting to a new system whereby students arrive without knowing the language and don't know the local culture. He believes they need support from agencies that understand the situation the student is in. Several Saudi officials felt that at the beginning students feel cultural shock, but also acknowledged this is part of the experience and that when students understand the new culture and start running life normally, they are happy.

Saudi officials also worry that as students adapt to their new environment, there may be a temptation towards negative habits. Mr Alassiri²² discussed the concern that if students get used to drugs in New Zealand and go back home and take them there, the results will be disastrous for them; for instance, they will receive a death sentence for trafficking or prison for using. The prevalence of drugs is much greater in New Zealand so the Ministry tries to educate its students on the dangers of drugs – which is a taboo subject in Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, it is thought that if students travel with their wives and children, they will be more serious, mature, and less susceptible to such issues. Tony Davies²³ confirmed that students are told to be careful with alcohol and women abroad.

A US embassy representative²⁴ indicated that there is some friction between the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and the religious right, in terms of differing objectives. While the MoHE wants students to get educated abroad, the religious right is more concerned with students keeping their morals and returning. Indeed, Dr Aleisa (MoHE)²⁵ explained that the Ministry of Higher Education is primarily monitoring the GPA and if this is good and students aren't doing anything illegal, then this is what the ministry looks for. However he also acknowledged that some students believe that in a Western country anything is allowed, and so some get in trouble with police for taking drugs.

To address cultural and adaptation issues, students are given orientation sessions by various providers including the New Zealand embassy in Riyadh, the Ministry of Higher Education, and in the schools they attend in New Zealand. This suggests students who travel to NZ with

²¹ Mr Hussein Alassiri, Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Interview Canberra, 5/03/2009

²² Mr Hussein Alassiri, Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Interview Canberra 5/03/2009

²³ Mr Tony Davies, Cultural Attaché in the New Zealand Embassy Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 14/4/2010

²⁴ US Embassy staff, Interview Riyadh 2/5/2010

²⁵ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

scholarships undergo pre departure orientations, while students who travel to New Zealand as individuals and apply for scholarships (the majority) likely don't undergo any orientation specific to Saudis (and may have a disadvantage).

6.3.8 Interaction with Locals

All Saudi officials interviewed in this study concurred that engagement with locals is an important aspect of the student experience. Officials from both New Zealand and Saudi ministries agree that students are generally encouraged to make friends in New Zealand. Mr Alassiri²⁶ mentioned:

Person-to-person contact gives you feelings and gives you better understanding of the culture and it's not just like reading an article in the newspaper, or reading about Saudi Arabia, or about New Zealand. So, person-to-person contact is a very important thing.

To this end, the Ministry of Higher Education wishes that students are dispersed in the countries they study in and that they communicate with locals and in university activities rather than activities that are only within their community. As Dr Aleisa²⁷ said, "If they are going to learn from Saudis they can get it here in Saudi, no need to travel." He believes it's good for them to interact with students from other countries, to make friends abroad. The ministry has tried to encourage engagement abroad by, for example, making Saudi clubs part of the universities in which students study rather than clubs organised by Saudi cultural attachés. Mr Alassiri²⁸ explained that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also encourages activities through the Saudi clubs. Activities include student organised expos, Saudi days to show locals Saudi culture, giving advice to new students, and helping students liaise with the university and with the cultural mission. This is seen as a proactive way to be involved in the community.

Mr Davies²⁹ noted concerns that in places like Auckland where there is a big concentration of English schools around Queen St, Saudis congregate and have limited opportunities for interactions outside their friends. Dr Aleisa³⁰ mentioned that the MoHE wants students to integrate and not to be isolated from New Zealand culture. Homestays are seen as having a

²⁶ Mr Hussein Alassiri, Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Interview Canberra, 5/03/2009

²⁷ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

²⁸ Mr Hussein Alassiri, Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Interview Canberra, 5/03/2009

²⁹ Mr Tony Davies, Cultural Attaché in the New Zealand Embassy Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 14/4/2010

³⁰ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

valuable role in that the experience allows students to learn from another culture (Dr Aleisa, US embassy). Mr Davies sees the homestay situation as one of the main situations in which students are actively encouraged to engage with locals.

Dr Aleisa³¹ believes that you can tell whether a student has had more interactions with locals by his level of English. If his English is good he's been interacting with locals, and if his English is not strong, that means he hasn't. At a minimum he feels students should interact in order to gain language skills. He gives an example of visiting a prayer room at a NZ university and finding two Saudis eating their national dish Kapsa with their hands, complaining that their language school has too many Saudis. He told them they were to blame; they shouldn't be eating Kapsa in the prayer room, they should be eating hamburgers in the cafeteria.

Female students are also encouraged to "be inside the society so they can learn". Dr Aleisa³² explained that "We want them to benefit from the good things and avoid the bad things"; however, he notes that it is not as easy for a Saudi female to "go to another country and open all the doors". He expects there may be less interaction on the part of female students initially than male students, although notes it depends on the person.

Dr Aleisa³³ considers the program is designed to educate students about other cultures beyond the US and UK, and that in NZ, for example, it is interesting for students to learn of Maori culture. He mentioned, "It's very important for ourselves to be open to different cultures." This theme is repeated across the interviews, and according to Mr Davies³⁴ the overriding aim is to go out to get a wider understanding of cultures outside the Middle East. Such understanding requires students to engage with the local communities.

6.4 The Future Outlook

6.4.1 Reintegration of Students on Return Home

Students are encouraged and supported to return home and take up positions in Saudi Arabia. One official mentioned that the government encourages students to return and work in the private sector as the public sector is 'full', although this is not imposed on students by the

³¹ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

³² Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

³³ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

³⁴ Mr Tony Davies, Cultural Attaché in the New Zealand Embassy in Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 14/4/2010

MoHE. Dr Aleisa³⁵ expressed the view that since the private sector is more involved in foreign trade and dealing with foreign countries, students who have studied abroad return with an advantage. He also explained that although the government sector is more comfortable, it's not possible to find jobs for all in the public sector, which is another reason that it is hoped that graduates will gain employment in the private sector.

Various initiatives have been introduced to help to align this objective, and facilitate job seeking of students who have studied abroad. The Ministry of Labour is creating a job seeking database where students will be able to put their CVs and apply for jobs before graduating. In addition, local events offshore are also evolving, such as a recruitment event organised by the Saudi Australian embassy whereby companies and Saudi universities travel to Australia to seek candidates to work back home.

6.4.2 Future Engagement between New Zealand and Saudi Arabia

When I asked the New Zealand Ambassador³⁶ about the future of relations with Saudi as students return home, he described a resulting increase in relations:

I can see ourselves coming together much closer than is dictated by the fact that we are half a world away, and 22 hours by plane. I just see the gap between us diminishing significantly, and a great deal of good will which is already there, continue to grow.

Nevertheless, Dr Matheson³⁷ felt that 'the proof will be in the pudding' when the first graduates from NZ go home, and the Embassy will be able to see what becomes of the positive disposition towards NZ. He mentioned:

Are we going to see, and I hope we are going to see, that these students are coming back with really good qualifications, really good attitudes to research, and to be taking forward their professional acumen, and I hope also the evidence that they are going to be real fans and ambassadors of NZ here as they have been wonderful ambassadors for their country.

Dr Matheson³⁸ felt it will be interesting to compare students coming home from a range of countries and to see how the students who studied in NZ progress through various ministries and in the private sector, when compared to students who studied for example in Canada, the

³⁵ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

³⁶ Dr Trevor Matheson, New Zealand Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 11/04/2010

³⁷ Dr Trevor Matheson, New Zealand Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 11/04/2010

³⁸ Dr Trevor Matheson, New Zealand Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 11/04/2010

US, and Australia, and based on their own merit as opposed to whose son or daughter they are. This view is shared by Saudi ministers who have studied in the US and who have commented also that it will be interesting to get all these students back and see how they progress. According to Dr Matheson, whilst the ministers studied in the US, due to positive things being reported back about the NZ experience of students, the ministers are talking about the University of Auckland in the same breath as American universities.

Dr Matheson further explained that while the number of students studying in New Zealand grows, New Zealand expertise is also contributing to development of education inside the kingdom. The New Zealand Embassy in Riyadh sees greater cooperation in education developing, with partnerships between universities and between faculties. Dr Matheson³⁹ describes the region as ‘crying out for advanced education right across the board’, a scenario in which New Zealand is well placed to ‘help the custodian and the other royal families, as they take their countries through into the 21st century’. Further, as expected by New Zealand and Saudi officials, opportunities for engagement beyond education are developing.

Dr Matheson has met a number of students from Saudi Arabia whose parents are interested in investing in and building links with New Zealand. He explained,⁴⁰ “Education and the student links have been the opportunity, the launch pad for us to think of all these other areas.” The embassy has seen interest in the energy sector due to government change in policy around energy investment, tourism, hotels and infrastructure, and dairy. However whilst education has increased initial interest, Dr Matheson also acknowledges that a limiting factor is the limited scale of investment opportunities in New Zealand.

An additional dimension to engagement is the extent to which students might wish to stay and live or work in New Zealand. There is an expectation students will return home and Dr Aleisa⁴¹ felt the majority will return to Saudi Arabia. This is backed up by the American embassy in Riyadh where an official felt that 99% of students studying in the US would not wish to stay⁴². However, my survey found that 25% of students wish to stay in New Zealand after they complete their studies, a somewhat different proposition to what is expected, or what might be the case in other countries students are studying in.

³⁹ Dr Trevor Matheson, New Zealand Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 11/04/2010

⁴⁰ Dr Trevor Matheson, New Zealand Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, Interview Riyadh 11/04/2010

⁴¹ Dr Eisa Abdullah Aleisa, International Affairs Advisor in Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Interview Riyadh 12/4/2010

⁴² US Embassy staff member, Interview Riyadh, 2/5/2010

6.5 Conclusion

Over the past five years, New Zealand has transformed from being virtually unknown as a study destination for Saudi students to becoming a destination of choice. Thousands of Saudi students are choosing to study in New Zealand each year, and this number is increasing. Saudi Arabia has supported their students' decision to study in New Zealand, providing scholarships to these students and recently opening both a Consulate and Cultural Attaché, with plans to open an Embassy. Most of the work at these offices relates to supporting student citizens.

Saudi students have the support ('authority support' as per contact theory) of both Saudi and New Zealand officials to build friendships in New Zealand with local people. Indeed, it is expected by both that the friendships which result from the scholarship programme will have advantages for both countries in the development of cultural and trade links. Greater intercultural and academic skills will make young Saudis more employable on return home, and there is the potential for future public officials to be New Zealand educated. As in the case of the US, this will further allow the development of goodwill and associated benefits for both countries.

The remainder of this thesis reviews the experience of students' vis-à-vis engagement with locals in an exploration of policy in action. One official noted that friendships with locals are easier to build in New Zealand than other destination countries, so long as students leave their comfort zones and interact. The thesis considers the various factors which influence students' ability to make the friendships which are desired by officials in the ministries of both countries.

Chapter 7:

Understanding Student Experience via Quantitative Data Analysis

In order to understand broad trends in friendship building by Saudi students in New Zealand, a survey questionnaire was administered to 167 Saudi students. Students were contacted at Saudi cultural events in Christchurch and Auckland, at language schools in Dunedin and Auckland, and in one case at the end of a foundation studies exam. They were given a hard copy of the survey to complete, and most were completed at the student's place of study during study breaks, at the end of the exam, or at the Saudi student functions, in the three cities where the survey was conducted. In all cases, I had the assistance of Saudi friends who helped generate cooperation from participants and who waited for surveys to be completed and then collected these. In the case of the functions in Auckland and Christchurch, as these were single sex only, I attended the female events while Saudi male friends gave the surveys to males to complete at the male events. Collection methods led to a 100% response rate.

Students were living in Auckland (79), Christchurch (67) and Dunedin (22). They answered 16 questions relating to their experience of friendship building in New Zealand. The questionnaire was designed to generate understanding of the students' willingness to make friends with other nationalities including with New Zealanders, as well as an overview of their actual friendships, and factors which might influence their willingness or ability to make friends in New Zealand. Questions were organised into three sections, 'expectations', 'experience' and 'outcomes,' in addition to demographics. Focus was on 'experience,' which comprised the majority of the questions (11/16). It was expected that the information gained from the questionnaires would form a basis for discussion of general trends, while subsequent interviews would provide a deeper understanding and respond to any sensitive issues which emerged in the questionnaire responses. In addition, analysis of interview responses provides answers to questions raised through quantitative analysis in areas where it is not possible to reach conclusion on quantitative data alone.

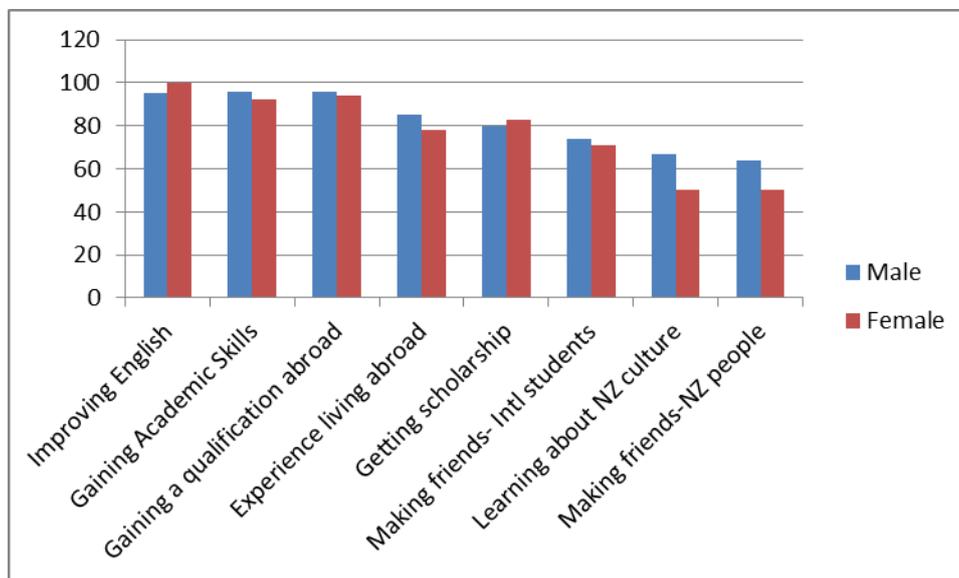
This section explains key findings from the survey questionnaire and thus begins to create a picture of Saudi students' experience of friendship building in New Zealand.

7.1 Expectations

7.1.1 Motivation to Study in New Zealand

To explore motivation to study-abroad, students were asked to rate a series of factors on a scale of 1 to 5 in terms of importance of each factor in their decision to study in New Zealand (1= extremely important, 2= quite important, 3= neither important nor not important, 4 = not very important 5 = not at all important). Results show that students consider a range of factors when deciding to study in New Zealand. The graph below illustrates students' responses of either 1 or 2 (extremely and quite important), differentiated by gender.

Figure 7.1. Factors Which Affected Decision to Study in New Zealand (Male and Female)



Responses can be grouped into three categories:

- 1) Factors which were foremost in students' minds. These were those factors relating to professional development and skills building - improving their language, gaining academic skills and a qualification abroad; followed by
- 2) Factors which were important to most students, namely experience abroad and gaining a scholarship income; and
- 3) Factors which were of secondary importance, such as making friends with either other international students or with New Zealanders, and learning about New Zealand culture.

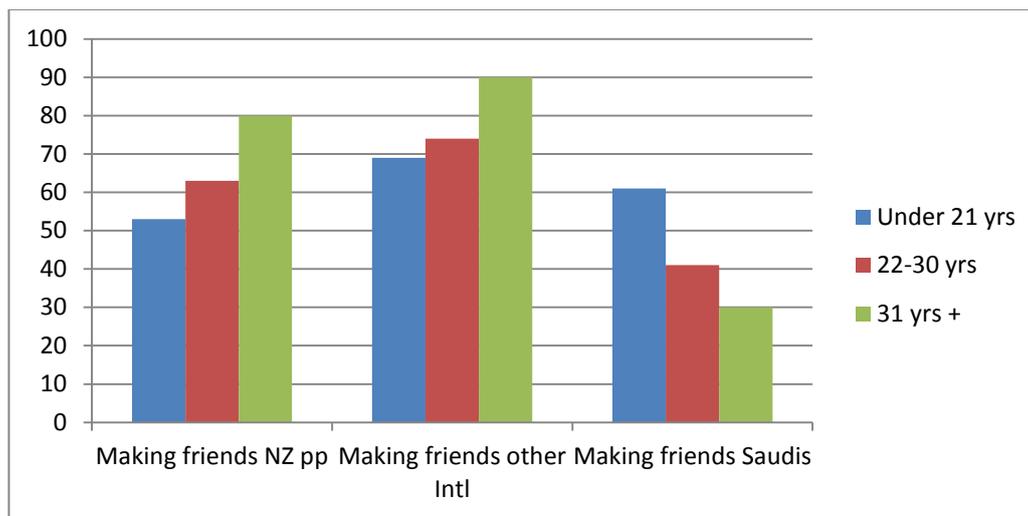
Male and female students rated most factors similarly, the exception being the factors which related to making friends with New Zealand people and learning about New Zealand culture. These factors were less important to female students than males, with only 50% of female students considering these two factors as either quite or extremely important in their decision to study in New Zealand. This might be explained by differences in lifestyle, as females might not expect to be interacting with locals to the same extent that males might. Student interview responses will be used to clarify the reasons for gender differences on motivation to make friends with New Zealand people.

Age differences in relation to reasons for studying in NZ

While making friends appears to be a less important factor generally, this is moderated by age. Older respondents (over 31s) were more likely to rate making friends with New Zealand people or with international students as an important factor when deciding to study in New Zealand than were younger students. Older respondents were also less likely to rate making friends with other Saudis as important. Therefore it seems mature students were more interested in making friends with other nationalities and less interested in making friends with their own nationality. The differences may reflect differences in stage of life. Since young students are presumably preparing to enter the workforce after graduating, it is natural they will be concerned with the practical implications of studying abroad on their future careers, whereas older students may have already made advances in their careers and therefore consider the experience from a broader perspective. This interpretation is supported by the observation that scholarship income as a motivator to study in NZ declined with age. (It was important for 80% of under-21s while important for only 50% of 40+).

Responses for the factors which relate specifically to motivation to make friends with each group (other Saudis, international students, New Zealanders) according to age are illustrated in figure 7.2:

Figure 7.2. Age Differences in Factors Influencing Decision to Study in New Zealand



Other factors which influenced students to study in NZ

Students were also given the opportunity to name ‘other’ factors which influenced them to study in New Zealand. Individual replies indicated that, for some, other education factors were important, such as the quality of education, variety of academic experience and research, and improving knowledge and skill in a professional field. Some looked at the personal development side of the experience including: improving behaviour in a good way, improving their psychological wellbeing, and learning to be independent. Others considered the experience for a change, to enjoy nature, to learn to drive a car, to gain more opportunities, or to share culture (as a two way aspect, as opposed to the one directional factor given in the survey question). ‘Other’ responses therefore reflected a variety of personal motivations, both of a professional and personal growth nature.

7.2 Experience

7.2.1 Impressions of Each Other

In order to gauge students’ general impressions of New Zealanders and Saudis, students were asked to provide 3 adjectives for each. Students described New Zealanders and Saudis in equally positive terms. New Zealanders were described as ‘friendly, kind, helpful, lovely, honest, nice, smiley’ and Saudis typically ‘generous, kind, helpful, sociable, funny, easy going, lazy’. Some adjectives typical of a collectivist society were given to describe Saudis such as ‘as brothers, love each other, social, generous’ while some adjectives of New Zealand can be classed as typical of a more individualist society ‘law abiding, open minded, unsociable’. The following tables 1 and 2 provide a list of the most common adjectives suggested by students, recorded in terms of responses by gender:

Table 7.1. Adjectives Used to Describe New Zealand People

New Zealanders	Male Respondents	Female Respondents	Total
Friendly	52	12	64
Kind	24	15	35
Helpful	17	5	22
Lovely	7	3	10
Honest / Truthful	5	3	8
Nice	5	1	6
Smiley	1	5	6
<i>Unsociable</i>	5	1	6
Polite	4	2	6
Good	5	0	5
Law abiding	3	2	5
Relaxed	3	2	5
Respectful	4	1	5
<i>Stuck up/snobbish</i>	3	2	5
Easygoing	5	0	5
<i>Not friendly</i>	4	0	4
<i>Not generous /</i>	1	3	4
Open minded	1	3	4
Sociable	3	1	4

Table 7.2. Adjectives to Describe Saudis

Saudis	Male	Female	Total
Generous	27	11	38
Kind	10	8	18
Helpful	10	4	14
Sociable	8	5	13
Funny	9	0	9
Lovely	3	3	6
Easy going	5	0	5
Nice	3	2	5
Not bad	5	0	5
As brothers	4	0	4
<i>Lazy</i>	4	0	4
Smart	4	0	4
Love each other	3	0	3
Brave	3	0	3
Outgoing	3	0	3
Risktaking	3	0	3
Active	3	0	3
Good intentions	2	1	3

In all, 101 different adjectives were given to describe New Zealanders. Of the 19 most frequently used adjectives, only 3 were negative, and the top 5 were all positive descriptions. Both male and female students tended to use similar adjectives for describing New Zealanders, although there was less consensus between the genders when describing Saudis.

Considering Saudi men and women are largely segregated, and considering the choice of adjectives, it seems the students may have considered their own gender when answering this question. Additionally, it may be that Saudis see similar characteristics in NZ men and women, but not so between Saudi males and females.

Students used 92 adjectives to describe Saudis, of which 19 could be considered as negative. Comparing the adjectives used for each group, there were 21% negative adjectives for Saudis compared to 24% negative adjectives for New Zealanders. These figures are quite similar, suggesting the students don't see either group as being particularly better or worse than the other, and indeed half of the six most repeated adjectives for each group were the same, indicating a number of perceived commonalities.

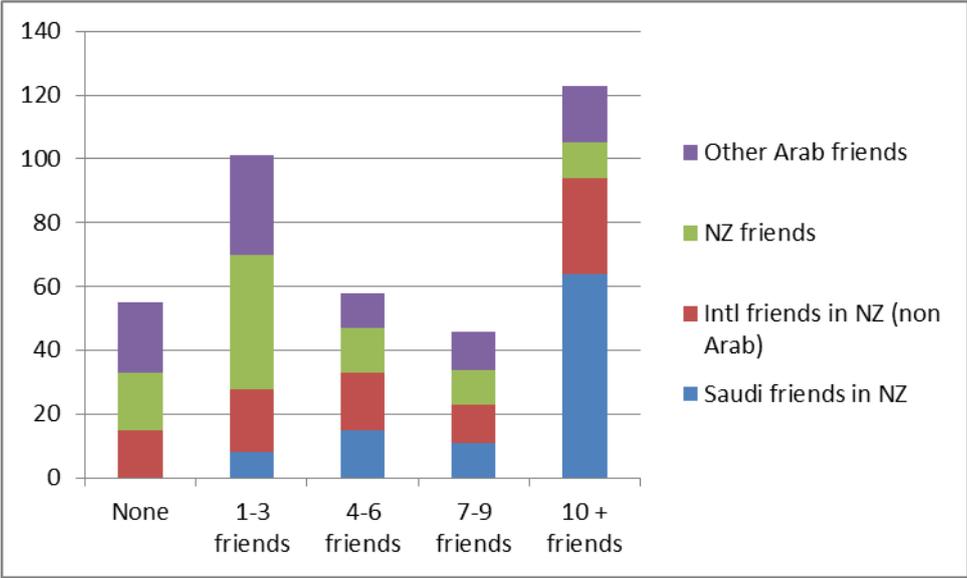
Further, while students were asked to list 3 adjectives, if we consider the first adjective mentioned (and logically the first that comes to mind), only 13% of students listed a negative adjective for New Zealanders compared to 8% of first answers for Saudis.

Considering the length of time students had been in NZ and their responses to this question, I found that no negative adjectives were used by students who had been in NZ for less than 3 months to describe New Zealand people. This suggests students arrive with a positive expectation of New Zealand people. The notion that students arrive with some prejudice towards New Zealand people is therefore not supported by this finding, which puts into question the original premise guiding this study, of contact theory and its associated proposition of prejudice reduction. Interviews will shed further light on the relevance of contact theory in the current context and the existence, if any, of prejudice amongst the student population.

7.2.2 The Extent to Which Saudi Students have been Making Friends in New Zealand

Students in New Zealand make friends from several groups: from amongst their own nationality (Saudi), with other international friends of similar ethnicity (Arab), other international students of different ethnicities, and with local students (New Zealanders). An indication of the extent to which Saudi students are successfully making friends with each group can be gained by understanding how many friends they have in the same. The following graphs provide this information:

Figure 7.3. Percentage of Students who have Respective Number of Friends in Each Group



Although students have fewer New Zealand friends than friends of other backgrounds (Saudi, other international, other Arab), the number who have no New Zealand friends is in the minority. Students were most likely to have up to three “NZ friends” and also more likely to have at least 10 “Saudi friends”, followed by a significant number of “International friends”. This suggests students are finding it easier to make friends with people other than New Zealanders, although number of friends doesn’t indicate the depth of these friendships.

Also, students were more likely to have a greater number of New Zealand friends the longer they were in New Zealand. The survey found that less than 2% of students who had been in NZ for less than 3 months had at least 4 NZ friends, while the percentage of people with at least 4 NZ friends increased to 75% of students after 4 years.

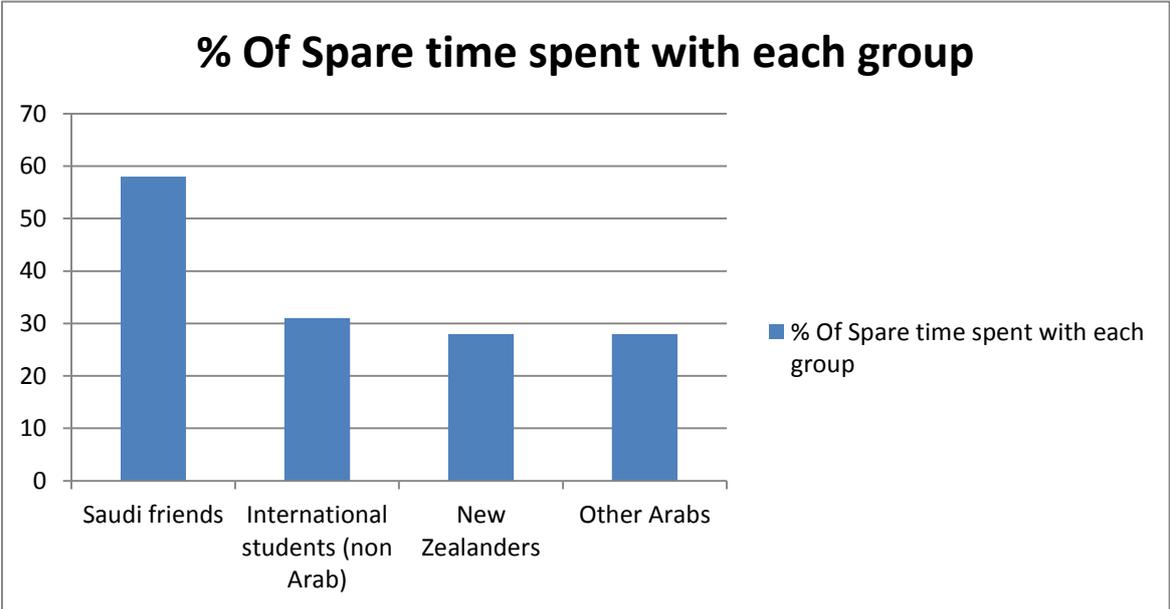
Course of Study and Number of Friends

Students were also more likely to have at least four New Zealand friends when they are studying for a PhD (100% of students) or Master’s degree (86%), compared to Graduate Diploma (50%), Certificate course (40%), Foundation (39%), Bachelor (38%), Postgraduate diploma (33%) or lastly English (27%). English students were also the most likely to have no NZ friends (27% of students). This is understandable, since students don’t study English with locals. These figures reflect the variety of experiences depending on the course of study, given that contact with other students in some university courses may be more or less personal. In interviews, students discussed having less intimate personal contact with classmates than smaller postgraduate classes for example.

In terms of friendships with other international students, students were most likely to have at least 4 international friends when studying a Graduate diploma or Postgraduate diploma (100% of students), followed by Foundation studies and Master’s degree (71% of students), PhD (67% of students), English (60%), Bachelor (46%). This result is a little surprising, as it might be expected they would have the most international friends when studying English.

Analysis of the percentage of a student’s spare time spent with each group provides further detail on their friendships. This might give an indication of the depth of experiences they have with each group. The responses are shown in the following graph:

Figure 7.4. Percentage of Spare Time Spent with Friends of Different Backgrounds⁴³



While the number of friends shown earlier was skewed towards larger numbers of international friends, other Arabs, and other Saudis, the actual amount of spare time students are spending with New Zealand friends is similar to all groups except other Saudis. Results show that students spend about twice as much spare time with other Saudis, and similar amounts of spare time with other international (Arab and non-Arab) and New Zealand people. Given that ease of making friends with New Zealand people appears to be considerably less than with the other groups (shown later in the chapter in table 7.5), it is significant that students are nonetheless spending comparable amounts of their spare time with New Zealanders. This suggests students are making efforts to go outside their comfort zones and make friends with locals and may indicate a greater depth of friendship with New Zealanders

⁴³ Note: While the above question asked students to account for percentage of time spent with each group, answers for very few students added up to 100%. This could be either because students didn’t understand the question, or they spent time with more than one group at the same time

than other international students, given they are spending the same amount of time with New Zealanders while time is spread across fewer New Zealand friends. It is likely that in many cases New Zealand friends refers to homestay families, which would explain the substantial amounts of time spent together.

7.2.3 How Students are Using their Time to Make Friends in New Zealand

Students were given the opportunity to indicate which of a range of given activities they had partaken in with each of the potential types of friends. The following graphs show the percentage of students who joined each activity with each type of friend followed by 2) differentiation between male and female respondents activities with New Zealanders only.

Figure 7.5. Percentage of Students Engaging in Activities with Friends of Different Backgrounds

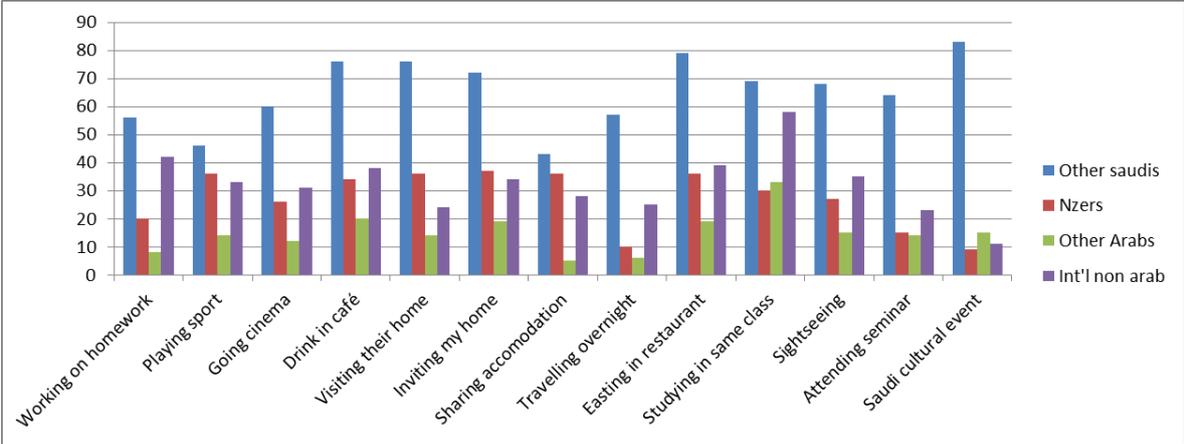
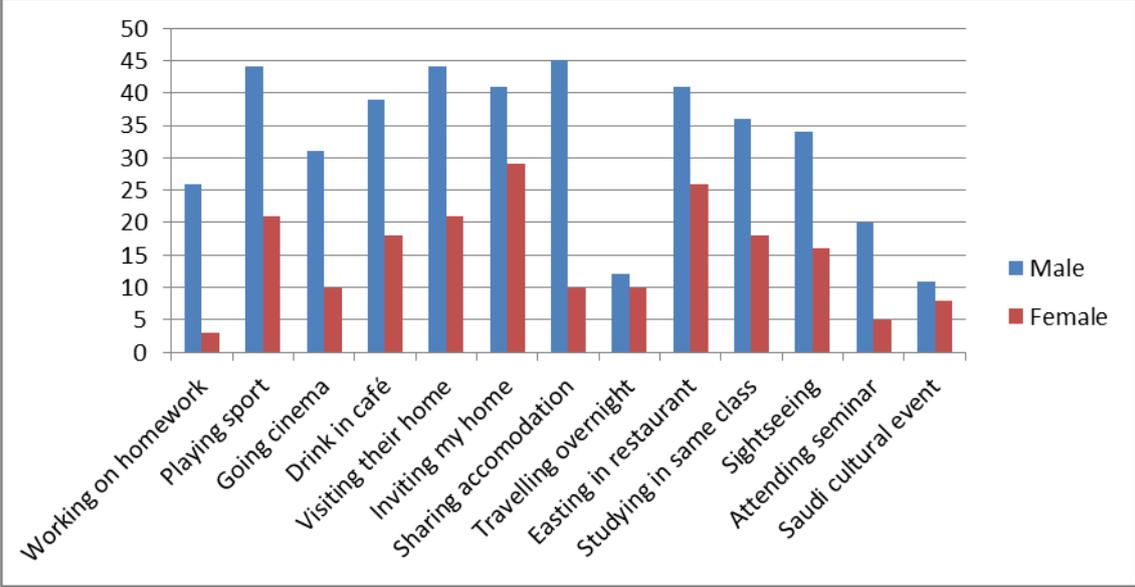


Figure 7.6. Percentage of Male and Female Students Engaging in a Range of Activities with New Zealanders



The above graphs show while there are gender differences in the responses, generally Saudis are engaging in a range of activities with other Saudi students and to a lesser extent also with other students in New Zealand and New Zealanders.

The popularity of activities varied with each type of friend although it seems the most common way for students to socialise with all others is by eating at a restaurant or drinking at a café together. There are some other patterns. A comparison can be drawn by considering the ‘top 5’ activities with each type of friend.

The top 5 activities with other Saudi students were: attending a Saudi cultural event (83%), eating in a restaurant (79%), drinking in a café (76%), visiting their home (76%), inviting to my home (72%) – almost all activities with other Saudis involve sharing food.

The top 5 activities with New Zealanders were: inviting them to my home (37%), visiting their home (36%), sharing accommodation (36%), eating in a restaurant (36%), playing sports (36%). 3/5 of the most popular activities with New Zealanders relate to time spent at home and 4/5 involve sharing food.

The top 5 activities with other international non-Arab students were: studying in same class (58%), doing homework together (42%), eating in a restaurant (39%), going to a café (38%), sightseeing (35%). Compared to activities with New Zealanders, activities with other international students are more likely to be outside the home or related to studies.

In the case of each activity with New Zealanders, the proportion of males undertaking the activity with New Zealanders was consistently higher than the proportion of females. This suggests Saudi males are more sociable and/or generally undertake a greater range of social activities outside the home. This suggestion is supported by a closer look at the number of activities Saudi males and females were undertaking with other Saudis compared with New Zealanders as below:

Table 7.3. Percentage of Students that Engage in at Least 4 Activities with Saudis / New Zealanders

	At least 4 activities with other Saudis	At least 4 activities with New Zealanders
Male students	90%	49%
Female students	84%	21%

The figures above suggest that male students are interacting with New Zealanders much more broadly than female students, and that a greater engagement on the part of female students may be required if quality friendships are sought.

In addition to gender, the study found that the number of activities differed depending on the course of study (as it did earlier with course of study and number of friends). Students studying at postgraduate level, for example, undertook more activities with New Zealanders than did English, foundation or bachelor students.

7.2.4 Students General Interest in Making Friends in New Zealand

Most students are interested in making friends with New Zealand people and people from other countries and very few are not. The following table illustrates responses to this effect:

Table 7.4. Interest in Making Friends with New Zealanders and Other International People

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
I am interested in making friends with NZ people	77%	21.2%	1.8%
I am interested in making friends with people from other countries	76%	22.2%	1.8%

Although students were willing to make friends with New Zealand people it was not necessarily easy for them to do so, as the following responses in table 7.5 indicate:

Table 7.5. Ease of Making Friends with People of Different Backgrounds

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Saudi students find it easy to make friends with NZ people	37%	30%	33%
Saudi students find it easy to make friends with non-Arab international students	74%	18.8%	7.2%
Making friends is key to the scholarship program	42%	34%	24%

The results suggest that most students are positively inclined to making friends with New Zealand people and also with other international students. Actually doing so was not easy for the majority of students. Twice as many students found it easy to make friends with other international students as with New Zealand people. This may be due to the fact students are usually studying with other international students, while they might have to make more effort to find and befriend locals if not studying with them, especially while studying English. Less than half of students view ‘making friends’ as a key part of the scholarship program. Perhaps they viewed the purpose of the scholarship program more closely related to their personal reasons for studying abroad, and a focus on acquiring academic skills.

Living Arrangement and Making Friends

The majority of students, regardless of their current living arrangements (whether with their own family, living alone, with friends, or homestay), were interested in making friends with New Zealand people. In fact the highest percentage of people interested in making friends with NZ people were either already flatting with NZ people or living with Saudi family. On the other hand, in terms of ease of making friends with NZ people, of the students who were living with Saudi friends only 6% agreed that Saudi students find it easy to make friends (62% disagreed). These results are given below:

Table 7.6. Interest and Ease of Making Friends in Relation to Living Arrangements

	Flatting with NZ people	Living with Saudi family	Living with Saudi friends	Living in Homestay
I am interested in making friends with NZ people	81%	80%	75%	78%
Saudi students find it easy to make friends with NZ people	36%	45%	6%	42%

While most students flatting with New Zealanders were interested in making friends with New Zealand people, a lesser number replied that they found it easy to make friends with New Zealand people. This suggests the experience of close interaction with New Zealanders in a flatting situation (likely with New Zealanders of similar age) may highlight differences or difficulties. While these students had the will to make friends, the reality may not have been as straightforward.

Current course and ease of making friends

Students who thought Saudi students find it easy to make friends with other international students were most likely to be studying English or a Master degree followed by Foundation studies and lastly a bachelor degree. Results for “Saudi students find it easy to make friends with NZ people” were not as varied.

English classes comprise of students of various nationalities excluding New Zealanders. The interactive style of learning lends itself to building close relationships with class mates, so it is not surprising students find it easy to make friends with other international students while studying English. Likewise, classes in both Foundation studies and Master degrees are smaller and more personal than bachelor classes generally.

Gender and making friends

A larger proportion of men were interested in making friends with NZ people (82%) compared to females (67%). Additionally, while no men indicated that they were not interested in making friends with New Zealand people, 9% of females responded they were not. Male students were slightly more interested in making friends with NZ people over

international students (82/77%), while female students were slightly more interested in making friends with other international students over New Zealand people (71/67%).

In the case of both male and female students, interest in making friends with other international students matched ease of making friends with them. Again, this could primarily be due to having ‘opportunity to meet’ through English language courses. Contrarily, interest in making friends with New Zealand people in both cases surpassed ease of making friends with New Zealanders by close to 50%.

7.2.5 Factors Which Affect Friendship Building in New Zealand

There is potentially a vast range of factors which might affect the ability of individuals to make friends in New Zealand with local people. Several potential factors were identified and included in the survey questionnaire:

- a) English ability – since communication and confidence might affect friendship building
- b) Opportunities to meet – since students might not be sure where to make friends with locals, they may be mixing with other Saudis or other international students
- c) Cultural factors – differences in culture could leave students anxious of behavioural norms, unsure of how to make friends
- d) Religious differences – may lead to concerns around value differences.

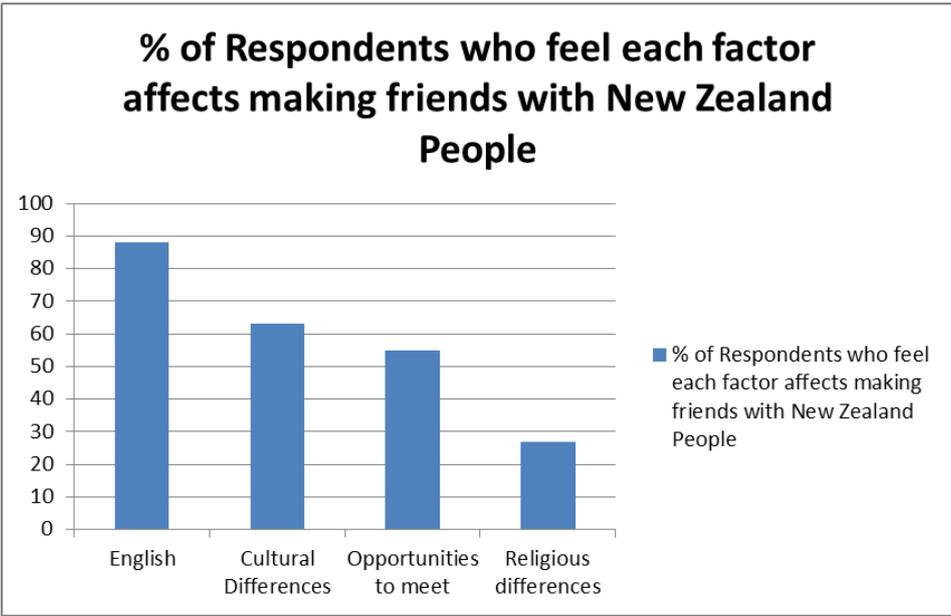
The first two factors relate to practical considerations while the last two concern students’ national identities, and the norms they have grown up with. Students were asked to indicate the extent to which each factor did or did not affect them when making friends in New Zealand. The following table and graph show these results:

Table 7.7. Factors Which Affect Friendship Building with Locals

Factor	Affects a lot	Affects a little	Neutral	Doesn't affect
English	60%	28%	5%	4%
Cultural differences	24%	39%	20%	15%
Opportunities to meet	21%	34%	30%	9%
Religious differences	11%	17%	26%	44%

Answers to ‘affects a lot’ and ‘a little’ were combined to demonstrate the extent to which each factor influences students as shown below:

Figure 7.7. Percentage of Respondents Affected by Series of Factors



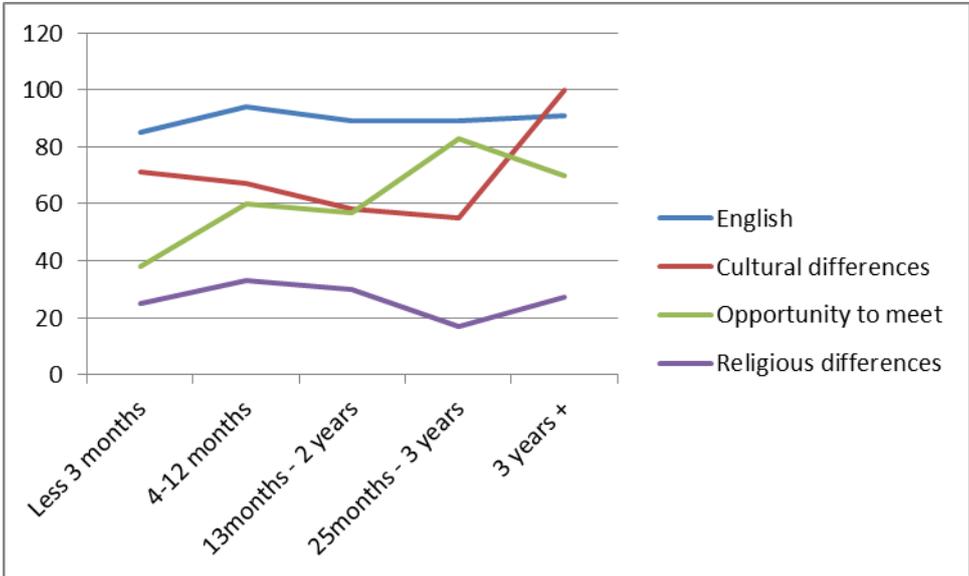
According to the above results, most students view their English ability as the primary factor affecting friendship building. Considering students first improve their English before pursuing further studies, this may be a temporary barrier. It could also explain why students find it easier to make friends with other international students, who may have similar levels of English as them. Following English, the second most important factor was cultural differences; more than 60% felt cultural differences affected friendship building. ‘Opportunities to meet’ was considered the next factor for over half of students.

Of all four factors considered, ‘religious differences’ was not only the least important factor, but it also got a considerable score in terms of number of people who stated it was specifically not a factor. Most respondents who didn’t agree with the first three factors remained neutral while 44% responded religious differences were not a factor. This was the only factor where a larger number of people disagreed with its importance as a factor than agreed. Of those who found it to be a factor (28%), a greater proportion of males (30%) compared to females (21%) saw religious differences as a factor. Conversely, 41% of males and 57% of females felt religion did not affect relationship building at all. These scores suggest that practical considerations (opportunity to meet and English ability) took precedence over religious identity as barriers to friendship building.

Length of time in New Zealand and factors which affect making friends

Comparing how long students have been in NZ with the factors they consider important, it is useful to consider the attitudes of people who have been in NZ less than 3 months (and who may have arrived with preconceived ideas) alongside others who have been here considerably longer to see how views differ. The following table shows this comparison:

Figure 7.8. Response on Factors Affecting Ability to Make Friends According to Length of Time in New Zealand



English Ability and Length of Time in NZ

English ability remained a constant factor regardless of the length of time a student was in NZ. This suggests that students may have perceived their English ability to be consistently less than native level fluency and so continually a factor. Alternatively, perhaps they found it

easier to make friends as they learnt more English and so were able to credit greater English skill to greater ease of making friends.

Cultural differences and Length of Time in NZ

71% of students who had been in NZ less than three months thought cultural factors were a consideration in making friends with NZ people; however this number reduced to 55% for people who had been in New Zealand between 25 months and three years. For all people who had been in NZ for more than three years (100%), cultural differences were identified as a key factor. Perhaps greater familiarisation with culture led students to initially see cultural boundaries as less significant over a medium length of time (up to three years) but then reconsidered their opinions after a longer stay (more than three years). Perhaps a longer stay in New Zealand allowed students to make observations based on a greater range of experiences, thus affecting their views on the importance of culture. Students who had been in New Zealand for more than three years might have reflected on these differences as affecting them previously, affecting newcomers, and/or possibly became more aware of differences through more in depth experience and familiarity.

Opportunities to meet and Length of Time in NZ

38% of people who had been in NZ less than 3 months thought 'opportunities to meet' was a factor. However this total increased to 83% of students who had been in New Zealand for up to three years. Students new to New Zealand may have expected they would have an opportunity to make friends in NZ and found over time this wasn't as easy as originally expected.

Religious Differences and Length of time in New Zealand

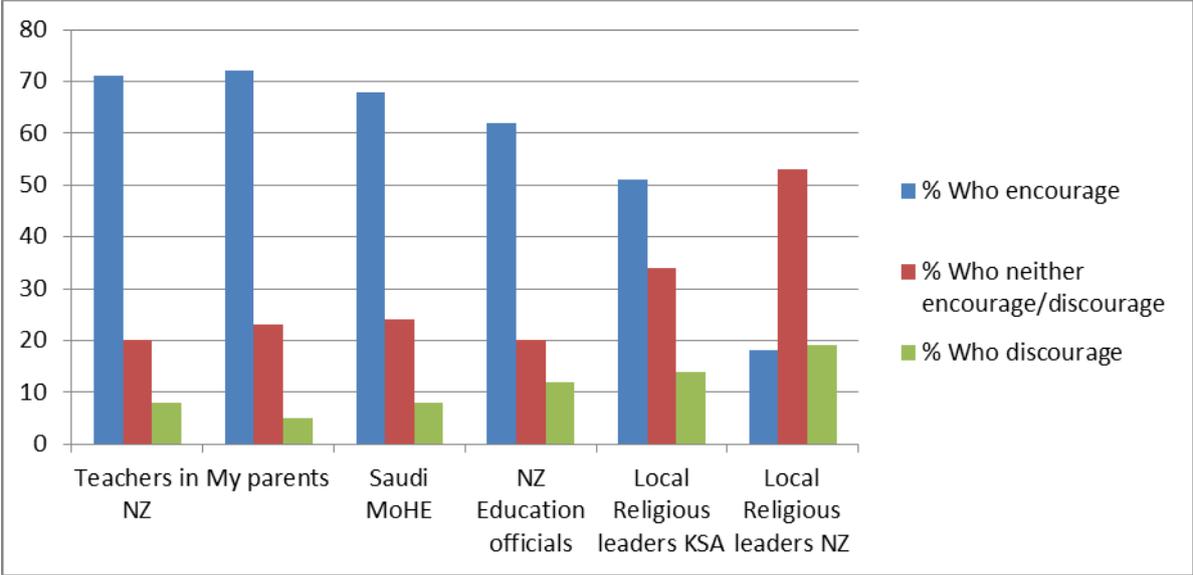
Only 25% of students in NZ less than three months saw religious differences as a factor, suggesting most students didn't arrive with preconceived ideas that this would affect them making friends. This number didn't increase or decrease in any pattern, suggesting that individuals have their minds made up on this regardless of their length of time in New Zealand. This being the case, they didn't see the need to change their minds.

7.2.6 External Influences and their Effects on Friendship Building

The survey sought to identify potential external sources of encouragement and/or discouragement, which might affect the students' propensity to make friends with people from other countries. This line of enquiry relates to the contact theory proposition that

authority support is a contact facilitating condition which can either assist positive engagement or alternatively set up norms of discrimination. A set of potential authority figures from both Saudi Arabia and New Zealand was identified. The following results were gained:

Figure 7.9. Encouragement and Discouragement of Friendships by Authority Figures



Across the board, most students felt they were encouraged by each external group to make friends with New Zealanders, the exception being local religious leaders in New Zealand. The people most likely to encourage students to make friends were teachers in New Zealand and parents. Parents were most likely to ‘encourage strongly’. Considering these answers alongside the length of time students have been in New Zealand, I found that parental encouragement is reasonably constant regardless of how long the students have in NZ – that is that 73% of students in NZ for less than 3 months felt encouraged, this figure varying at between 73% and 86% of respondents in each time period up to more than 4 years. This suggests parental support of engagement is in the background regardless of the length of time a student is in New Zealand, or regardless of how long they have been away from home.

Students were more likely to consider themselves encouraged by teachers when studying English, a Master degree or PhD and less so when studying a bachelor degree. This might be explained by closer interaction with teachers in those courses, which have smaller class size and more dialogue between students and teachers.

After parents and teachers, various education officials – from the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education followed by NZ education officials – also encouraged students to make friends.

The most discouragement (affecting less than 20% of students) was from religious leaders in New Zealand and Saudi Arabia (in that order). The number of home country religious leaders who encourage students was however significantly higher than the percentage that discouraged students from making friends. The survey identified NZ religious leaders as the largest authority group that discourages students from making friends, or which at least are neutral about it. If this is a true reflection of religious instruction in New Zealand, this is quite worrying as it suggests that even though the Saudi ministry of Education spends large resources to send students abroad where they should mix with locals, and even though parents and home country religious leaders also support students to make friends abroad, their efforts might be undermined in New Zealand if local religious leaders are less open. The question didn't however identify if 'local religious leaders' refers to religious leaders from NZ or from within the recent Saudi community.

Closer observation of responses by gender revealed that authority figures generally encourage males more than females to make friends, with the exception of parents who are more encouraging of females. Also in terms of the number of students who are discouraged by each group, females are generally more likely to feel discouraged, although differences are not large and account for a minority of students. A larger proportion of females in NZ felt discouraged than encouraged to make friends by local religious leaders. Considering female students don't attend public religious services with males in New Zealand and since New Zealand religious services are unisex, this would suggest the discouragement is from within the Saudi community.

In addition to pre-defined groups, students were asked if 'other groups' either encouraged or discouraged them. The responses collected were that the following groups either encourage or discourage students: New Zealand advisors / agents, friends in NZ and Saudi, homestays, themselves, and the media.

Since the role of external sources (authority support) is central to contact theory, analysis was made of the relationship between external encouragement / discouragement of each group and its effect on the way students make friends in New Zealand. Using multiple regression I found two slightly paradoxical findings:

- The more students are discouraged from making friends by local religious leaders in NZ, the fewer friends they have. Discouragement from local religious leaders appears to be the most influential group in terms of negative authority support.

- The more KSA religious figures discourage students from making friends abroad, the more friends they have

One interpretation is that students are doing what they are encouraged to do by local religious figures and not what they are told by KSA religious leaders, against whom they rebel when in NZ. This could be for a couple of reasons. Perhaps the students disagree with those religious leaders in Saudi Arabia who discourage them from making friends abroad, and so seek to put their disagreement into action. Alternatively, different reactions to local / home country leaders may be due to some students deeming the advice of local leaders to be more relevant to their current experience.

7.2.7 Does Prior International Experience Correlate to Greater Aptitude to Make Friends Abroad?

By asking students how many countries (and which countries) they had travelled to previously, I hoped to find out if there was any relationship between the number of countries a person had visited previously and their likelihood of having a greater number of friends in New Zealand. I thought that students who had visited a number of countries may have been more open minded and therefore more open to making friends abroad. However I found there didn't seem to be any relationship between the number of countries a person had previously visited and the number of friends they had in New Zealand. Indeed, students who had never travelled beyond Saudi Arabia had just as many NZ friends as others who had travelled to 7 or more countries. Only 20% of people who had never travelled except to NZ had no NZ friends. This suggests that students with less or no experience travelling were not disadvantaged in terms of making friends in New Zealand, and that students who had no previous (possibly cross-cultural) experience beyond their border still had the same propensity to build friendships.

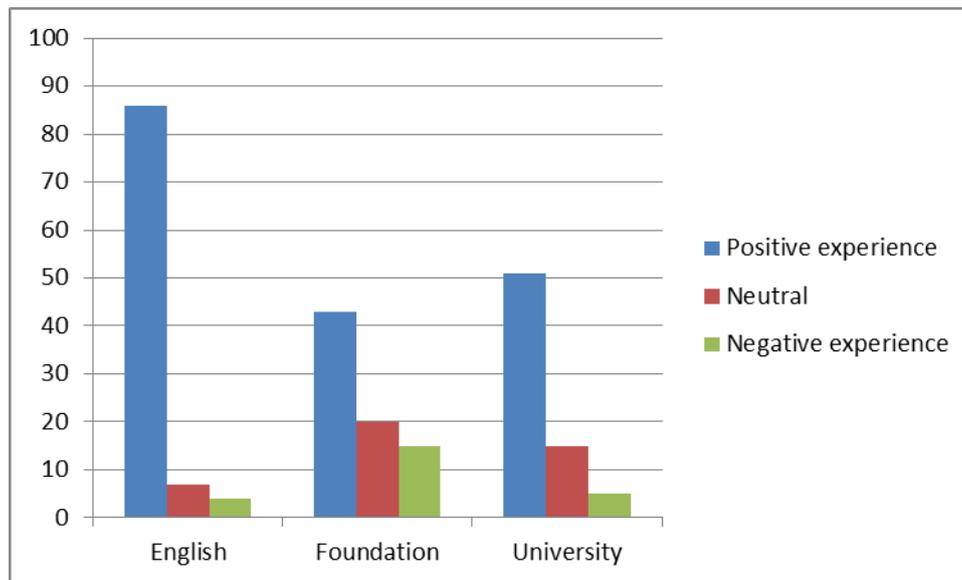
In terms of the nature of previous travel, the survey found that for the majority of students, New Zealand was not their first experience of a Western English speaking country, as 64% of the total surveyed had already visited an English-speaking Western country before travelling to New Zealand. A minority (24% of respondents) had previously only travelled to other Islamic countries.

7.2.8 Students Impressions of the New Zealand Experience

Students were asked to rate various elements of their experiences in New Zealand. Let us begin with their experience of courses.

A) Experience of English / Foundation / University Courses

Figure 7.10. Overall Experience of English, Foundation and University

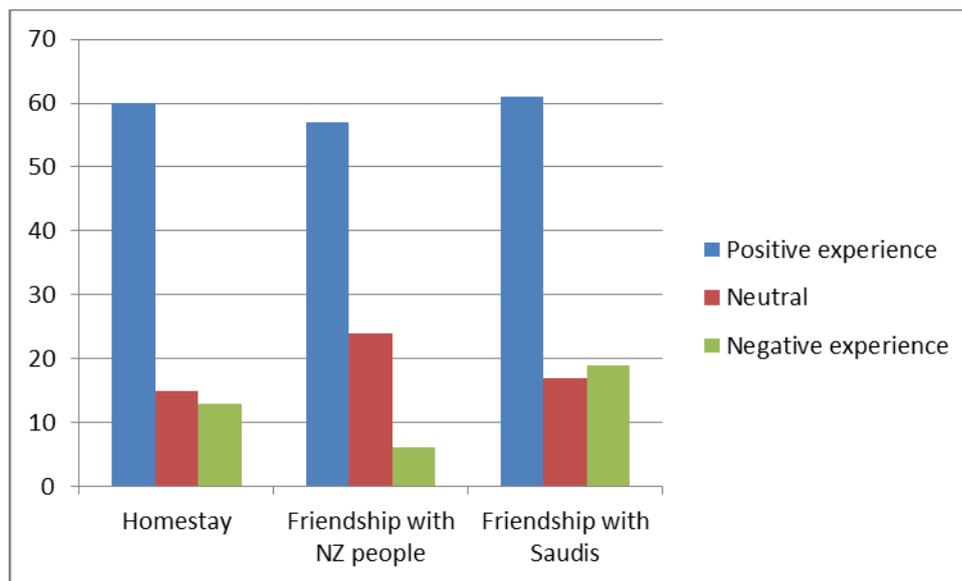


The above shows that more students have a positive experience when studying English (85% rated English a positive experience), while less than half those who had studied foundation (43%) found this course positive. University courses were slightly more positive (52%) than foundation, although still much less than English. Students may enjoy English courses more as these involve social interaction with other students and teachers with less arduous academic requirements. The failure rate in foundation studies is quite high, and students who enter university may be better prepared than those who fail foundation, and thus have a more positive impression of university studies also.

Friendships

The following graph compares student ratings of homestay and friendship with New Zealanders and Saudis. Experience of homestay is included in this group since it is assumed that homestays are one of the key friendship circles for Saudi students. Including friendship with Saudis alongside New Zealanders provides a useful reference point.

Figure 7.11. Overall Experience of Homestay, Friendships with NZ People and Saudis



The above graph shows that students rate experience of homestay, of New Zealanders, and of Saudis quite similarly, and in all cases more than 50% of students see these as positive experiences. This still leaves at least 40% of students who are either neutral or consider experience of friendships with New Zealanders, Saudis, and homestay as negative experiences.

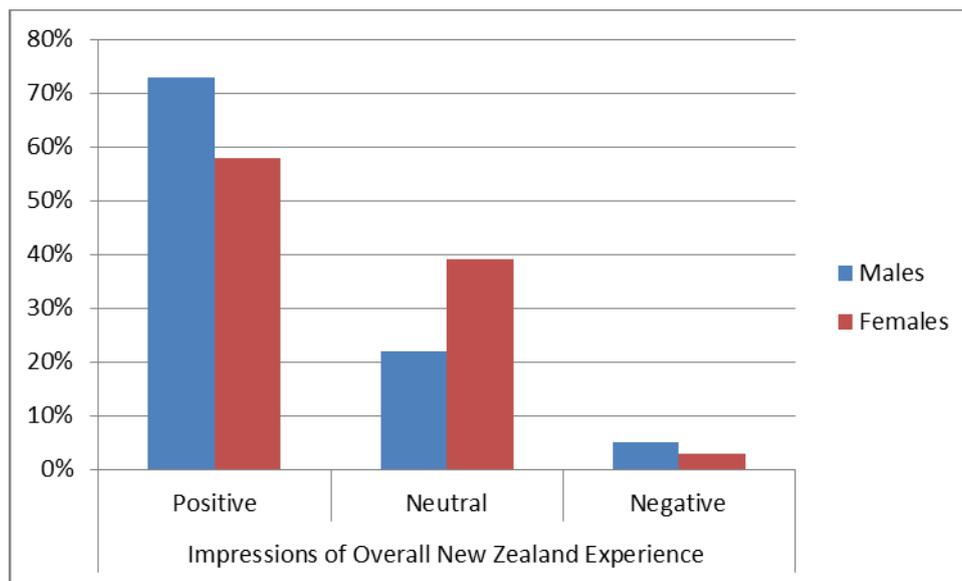
There were some gender differences, with females more likely to rate experience of friendships with Saudis as positive and less likely to rate homestay as positive compared to males (70% of males rated homestay as positive compared to just 54% of females). This might suggest a greater ability on the part of male students to adapt to the new culture, and possibly a greater degree of female conformity to home cultural norms.

The highest proportion of negative experiences for any group was for friendship with other Saudis. A higher number of students were dissatisfied with friendships with others Saudis than with locals. This suggests that friendships with New Zealanders have developed comparatively well.

B) Overall Experience of New Zealand

Asked to rate their overall experience of New Zealand, 69% of students felt the overall experience of New Zealand was positive and 15% were neutral on this question. There was, however, a considerable difference in the overall experience of males and females, as shown below:

Figure 7.12. Impressions of New Zealand Experience



While a smaller proportion of females rated the experience as positive, the majority were neutral, with only 3% of females rating the experience as negative as opposed to being neutral. This gender difference, combined with lower female scores for homestay also, suggests some fundamental differences in terms of the experience of male and female students and possibly differing expectations and/or levels of comfort with a new environment and culture.

In Contact Theory, the number of distinct shared activities undertaken by two groups is linked to positive intergroup engagement (prejudice reduction). Multiple Regression was used to test the relationship between the students' overall experience in New Zealand as related to the number of activities students undertook with New Zealand people (which also indicates their engagement with the local culture). Multiple regression analysis found:

The more activities a student does with New Zealand people the more positive their overall experience

Thus, males have a better overall experience in New Zealand because they interact with local people through a wider range of activities than female students. Students may feel more positive as they feel more engaged with New Zealand society through the greater range of activities, bringing them into closer contact with a larger circle of locals, possibly decreasing feelings of homesickness.

C) Impression Change of New Zealanders Over Time

Students were asked how their impression of New Zealanders has changed during their time in New Zealand. The following results were gained:

Table 7.8. Impression of New Zealanders Over Time

	Much more positive	A little more positive	Neutral	A little more negative	Much more negative
Students impression of NZ people over time	30%	32.5%	20.5%	14.6%	2.4%

The survey found that 62.5% of people thought their impression of NZ people was more positive over time, with 30% of respondents saying it was ‘much more positive’. While the majority had a more favourable impression of locals, there was still a sizeable group (17%) who gained a more negative impression of NZ people.

Multiple Regression was used to understand the relationship between external parties (authority support) and their potential effect on a student’s impression change of New Zealanders. Of the different groups (parents, teachers, religious leaders, education officials) there was only one link found, the following:

- Multiple regression found that the more *parents* encourage their children to make friends in NZ the more their impression of NZ people improves
- Thus the opinions of parents played an important role in guiding their children’s opinions of locals, as they did with influencing the number of friends their children had. Parents appeared to be the most important group in terms of positive authority support and in terms of conversion of authority support into relationship building in New Zealand.

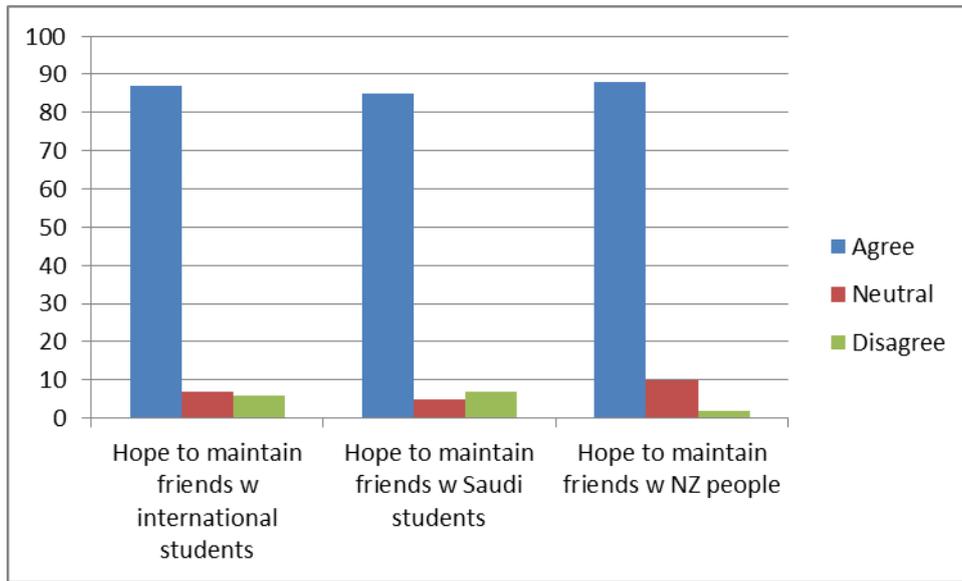
7.3 Outcomes

7.3.1 Maintaining Links with New Zealand in Future

Several questions were designed to provide a picture of the potential for on-going relations resulting from the students experience in New Zealand. The following table shows results to this question:

Maintaining Friendships

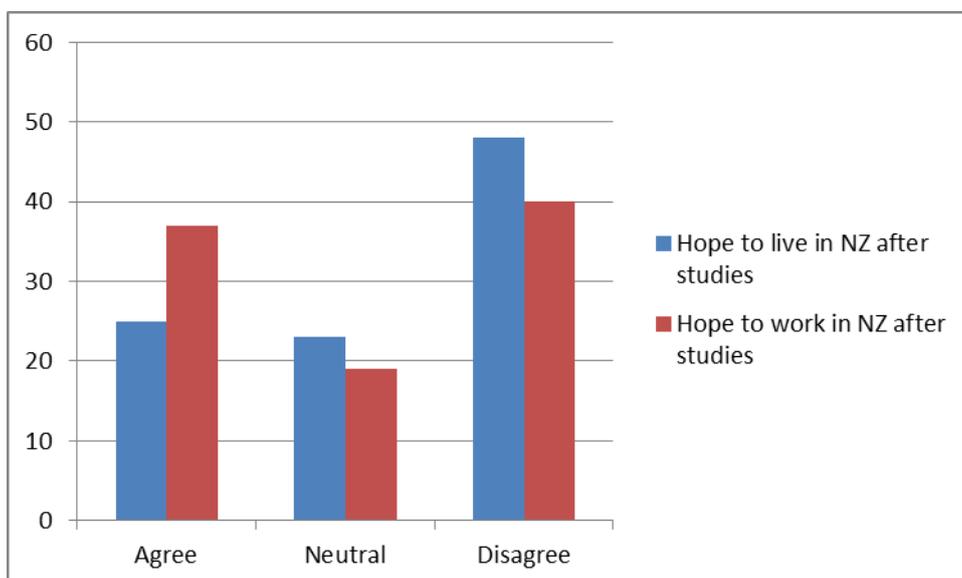
Figure 7.13. Intention to Maintain Friendships in Future



The above shows that the majority of students wanted to maintain friends in future with all groups – other Saudis, international friends and New Zealand friends. There was greater consistency in the responses of male students (89-91% across groups) compared to female students. The latter responded that 100% wanted to maintain friendships with other Saudis, 97% with other international students but only 84% with New Zealanders. The difference could be partially due to the fact that males had more New Zealand friends than female students did and engaged in more activities with locals, and therefore it was more compelling for males to maintain these friendships.

Intention to Live / Work in New Zealand

Figure 7.14. Intention to Live or Work in New Zealand in Future



The extent to which students adapted to New Zealand can be seen in the above graph which shows the percentage who wished to live or work in New Zealand after studies. A significant portion of students wished to live (25%) or work (37%) in New Zealand after studies. This group would be even more significant if students who were neutral decided to live / work in New Zealand since the number who were actually sure they did *not* wish to live or work in New Zealand was less than 50%.

Gender differences were apparent in responses to this question, with 41% of males wanting to work in New Zealand compared to 26% of females. This could reflect the fact that males were expected to work once they finished studying whereas it was an option for many females but not expected of them. It could also be a reflection of the greater number of friendships made by males and perhaps greater sense of ease at the thought of working in New Zealand. The high percentage of students hoping to stay in NZ after graduation suggests that there has been a high level of adaptation to New Zealand, and provides an additional measure of positive feelings towards their stay.

Actual / Predicted Investment in New Zealand

Figure 7.15. Intention to Invest in New Zealand

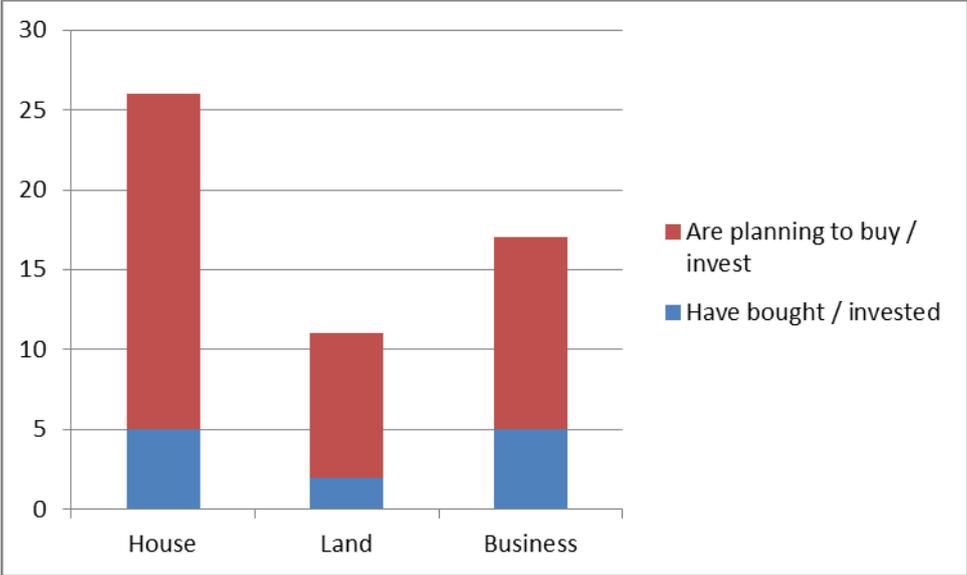


Figure 7.15 shows the percentage of students who had either bought a house (5%) or planned to buy a house (21%), who had bought land (2%) or planned to buy land (9%), and who had invested in a business or planned to invest in a business (12%). Buying a house appeared to be the most popular investment in New Zealand, and was in similar proportion to the people who planned to live in New Zealand, perhaps suggesting that there was a sizeable group of students who were actively planning to stay in New Zealand.

The percentage of students wanting to buy a house is greater in the case of students who had been in New Zealand longer. Fifty per cent of students who had been in NZ for more than 36 months planned to buy a house (57% of students in NZ more than 4 years). There was no such pattern in relation to students who were planning to invest in a business, which could be due to students being either from entrepreneurial backgrounds or not, regardless of their length of stay.

Given that the sample size is of 168/7000 Saudi students currently in NZ (according to consular estimates, including students on visitor visas), the effects for the NZ economy in terms of economic contribution, beyond the immediate benefits of export education, is potentially significant.

Students were given the opportunity to indicate the types of businesses they had either already invested in or were planning to. Their answers were: property, education, Import/Export, farms, golf restaurants or other restaurants. The seven participants that were interested in investing in a business in NZ were from Riyadh (2), Jeddah (4) and Alhasa (1).

7.4 Further Analysis

7.4.1 Comparing Key Findings with the Region Students Came From

The students in this study came from different regions of Saudi. I used cross tabulations to see if there are any regional differences in terms the students' backgrounds and their responses.

The following lists a number of key variables in relation to the region of Saudi from which students came:

Table 7.9. Regional Variations on Key Responses

	North	East	South	West	Central
Am interested in making friends with New Zealand people	70%	81%	57%	81%	81%
Am interested in making friends with international students	70%	75%	57%	75%	81%
Saudis find it easy to make friends with New Zealand	50%	50%	14%	40%	40%
Impression change of NZ more positive	55%	77%	67%	64%	74%
Cultural differences affect making friends with New Zealand people	60%	56%	71%	64%	75%
Religious differences affect making friends with New Zealand people	20%	22%	29%	30%	29%
Parents discourage me from making friends in New Zealand	0%	3%	0%	4%	7%
Overall experience of New Zealand positive	70%	72%	57%	67%	70%
Hope to live in New Zealand	10%	25%	29%	29%	12%
Hope to work in New Zealand	20%	28%	71%	46%	31%

Responses were generally similar regardless of the region students came from. Students from the South of Saudi Arabia tended to answer a little differently. Southerners were less interested in making friends with NZ people or international students, and less likely to believe Saudis make friends easily with New Zealand people. While none were discouraged by parents from making friends, Southerners were less inclined to see their experience as positive yet most interested in working in New Zealand after they graduated. A greater percentage of Southerners were interested in working in New Zealand than making friends with New Zealand people, suggesting their motives for an on-going relationship with New Zealand were primarily related to professional development. The South of Saudi tends to be more conservative, less cosmopolitan, and with fewer economic prospects than other regions. This could explain the findings for Southerners.

Northerners were less interested in living or working in NZ, while people from the South and West were most likely to work or live in NZ. People from Central Saudi Arabia were very interested in making friends with locals, found cultural differences affected making friends, yet they had the best overall experience in NZ.

People from the North and East of Saudi Arabia were more likely to think that Saudis made friends easily and less likely to see religious differences as affecting relationship building. This observation is paradoxical considering the north of Saudi is quite conservative yet the East is more international, less conservative.

City Specific Differences in Response to Key Questions

In my analysis of responses I also looked at specific city differences as I wanted to see if students from smaller towns or more conservative areas of Saudi Arabia responded differently. This is not possible to ascertain in analysis of regions since within regions there are both larger (more cosmopolitan) cities and smaller (more conservative) towns. I found that, for example, two out of three students from Buraydah thought that religious differences affected friendship building with New Zealanders “a lot”, while only 2/36 from Jeddah felt the same. Buraydah is known as a very conservative city in the centre of Saudi, the birthplace of Wahabbi Islam, while Jeddah is seen as one of the most cosmopolitan cross-cultural cities of Saudi. This may account for such difference. In the case of Buraydah however, 2/2 felt “extremely positive” about their experience in NZ, and 3/3 wanted to maintain friendships with NZ people after studies, showing that even students from the most conservative parts of Saudi were still willing and able to enjoy New Zealand and make good friendships.

Smaller cities seemed to have a higher percentage of respondents who thought that their local religious leaders at home discouraged them from making friends abroad, although the sample sizes were much smaller. For example 1/1 from Saihat, Sakaka, Sharqiah, and Qatib felt they were discouraged. By comparison, I found that across the larger cities 2/13 from Makkah, 5/34 from Jeddah, 3/27 from Riyadh, and 2/11 from Damman felt discouraged from making friends in New Zealand by their religious leaders at home. In larger cities students may interact with religious leaders with more liberal viewpoints as opposed to a more traditional and conservative doctrine in smaller centres; however, the sample size is not large enough to offer this suggestion conclusively.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has found that when Saudi students decide to study in New Zealand, foremost in their minds is the opportunity to up-skill. They are concerned with gaining a language and academic skills, both of which take precedence over less tangible consequences such as making friends abroad. Nevertheless, students typically arrive with positive disposition towards NZ people and hoping to make friends both with locals and other international

students. Students that are younger place greater emphasis on making friends with other Saudis while older students are more interested in making friends with non-Saudis.

Students mostly describe New Zealanders in positive terms, as typically ‘friendly, kind, helpful, lovely, honest, nice and smiley’ while describing themselves as “generous, kind, helpful, sociable, funny, easy going and lazy”. Distinctions are made in terms of individualist type characteristics of New Zealanders as “law abiding, open minded, unsociable”, contrasted with collectivist Saudis described as “as brothers, love each other, social, generous”. Some common traits were shared by both - “kind” and “helpful” - while the number of negative characteristics described was similar for both groups. The descriptions given suggest that while students see differences in each group, they are critical of locals and Saudis in equal measure.

It is generally easier for students to make friends with other international students, especially while studying English, which can be expected since their course of study dictates who they will be spending time with. Thus students have a greater number of New Zealand friends the longer they are in New Zealand, and when studying postgraduate courses. Friendships with locals often involve activities to do with their home, either living with locals in homestay accommodation, or inviting New Zealand friends to their home. Since homestay accommodation is encouraged by Saudi education officials and facilitated through their English schools, this is the logical place for most Saudi students to meet and befriend locals. On the other hand, activities with other international students mostly relate to sharing experiences away from the home. Whilst friendships with international students may be easier and more numerous, such friendships may be less intimate than those with locals, given the different activities with each.

Male and female students have a very different experience of friendship in New Zealand due to differing lifestyles and choices. Female students are less likely to stay in homestay accommodation, and therefore find it more difficult to make friends with locals. Partially as a result of choice of accommodation, they partake in fewer activities with locals than male students. Contrasting levels of engagement influences differing levels of satisfaction with the overall experience of New Zealand, and friendships with New Zealanders. Males felt more positive on both fronts. Multiple regression analysis found that the more activities a student did with New Zealand people, the more positive their overall experience. Therefore it can be

expected that female students will enjoy their time in New Zealand more if they are involved in a greater range of activities with locals.

Factors which were deemed to affect students' ability to make friends in New Zealand included English, culture differences, and opportunities to meet. The majority felt religious differences were not only not identified as a factor, but specifically NOT a factor. The few students who felt religious differences did affect making friends in New Zealand came from smaller and more conservative regions of Saudi, where they felt religious leaders at home were more likely to discourage friendships abroad. However, these same students had extremely positive experiences in New Zealand and hope to maintain friendships with New Zealand people.

Students identified those who encouraged or discouraged them from making friends in New Zealand. Their most positive influences were parents and teachers, and to a lesser degree officials from Saudi and New Zealand. With the exception of some religious leaders in Saudi Arabia and New Zealand, students generally felt encouraged to make friends. In almost all accounts, multiple regression found a link between encouragement/discouragement and certain perspectives on friendships. Parental encouragement improved perception of New Zealand people. Discouragement by local religious leaders in NZ led to students having fewer friends, while discouragement from religious leaders in Saudi led to students having more friends in New Zealand. These contrasting results suggest the varying levels of respect students hold for each external influence, with parents holding the most sway over positive interaction with locals.

A significant number of students wish to live (25%) or work (37%) in New Zealand after studies while only 50% are sure they want to return home. Were New Zealand not seen as a "friendly" country, it is doubtful that such a large proportion would feel comfortable enough to consider spending such an extended period here. In addition, more than 25% of students plan to invest in property, land or a business. These results, combined with broad enthusiasm for maintaining friendships with New Zealanders (true of 88% of students), suggest that while friendship building was not a strong motivator when students decided to study in New Zealand, it was certainly an outcome for most. Friendship at the level of the individual and between countries appears to be resulting from the scholarship program.

Yet while broad trends have been noted as a result of survey analysis, some questions remain. Students who have been in New Zealand for varying lengths of times gave positive

descriptions of locals, but how were these impressions informed both prior to travelling to New Zealand and during their experience? Does a positive impression mean that prejudice is not an element of the encounter? Why are female students less likely to make friends with locals? Are there barriers specific to female students or are they just less interested in making friends with locals than male students? While there is a will on the part of students to make friends, why is making friends with locals not so easy? Do differences in values affect relationship building even though most students thought religious differences per se didn't? The following four chapters will provide a more complete picture of student experience in New Zealand and expand on the responses derived in this section. This will allow for a greater understanding of the context of answers given in the survey questionnaires, and provide additional insights in relation to the questions raised here, leading to a more thoughtful analysis of various elements which impact on Saudi student experience of friendships in New Zealand.

Chapter 8:

Impressions of Each Other

The previous chapter provided understandings of the Saudi student experience in New Zealand gained through quantitative data collection. It described key trends and insights into the extent to which students are willing to make friends with people outside of their culture while in New Zealand. However, questions remain in terms of some of the more sensitive aspects of student experience, such as how students are able to navigate vast cultural differences in order to adapt to their new environment and successfully build relationships.

In order to understand various aspects of student experience in New Zealand more fully, semi-structured interviews were conducted. These were designed to capture a range of experiences, and to provide explanations of trends. Interview participants included nine male and seven female students from different regions of Saudi, of whom five were studying in Christchurch, one in Wellington, one in Dunedin, and the remainder in Auckland. Five interviews took place in Christchurch at the office of a Saudi friend and, in one case, at a student's home. In Auckland, interviews were conducted either at students' apartments or at my office downtown.

The following four chapters distil the essence of the interviews, as they relate to themes which emerged from discussions. The focus is on the views of participants and material gained from interviews, supplemented by my own observations of Saudi friends and clients, and informal discussions with homestay families and staff in educational institutions. Inclusion of multiple viewpoints generates greater understanding of the context of student experience.

The chapters are arranged so as to capture the student experience through a series of stages. Chapter eight sets the scene by providing a description of student motivations for studying in New Zealand, exploring the views held by students before they travelled to New Zealand, and their early impressions of New Zealanders. This is followed by chapter nine, which looks at student perceptions of differences between Saudi and New Zealand cultures, as their views mature through experience and adjustment to living in a new culture. Chapter ten discusses friendship building as students navigate life bridging old and new norms, trying to stay true to their cultural identity while following or rejecting the views of others who would encourage them or discourage them from making friends with locals. Chapter eleven reviews students' reflections on personal transformation, as well as their thoughts on the advantages and

disadvantages of studying in New Zealand. The sequence of topics leads to a broad understanding of the context of Saudi student experience in New Zealand and deeper understanding of students' motivations and experiences.

8.1 “New Zealand is in Europe” (Preconceptions Before Travelling)

Saudis often travel to places that other people have recommended to them, relying on feedback from friends and family on their previous experiences. Word of mouth is extremely important. A case in point is a town in Turkey where a Saudi family once had a holiday. There was nothing particularly special about the town; it was not a tourist destination, but the family enjoyed themselves and told others about their experience after returning home. Several years later this town is a thriving destination for Saudi holiday makers. According to the person who told me this story, there is still no real reason for this town to be popular but, nevertheless, the number of Saudi tourists continues to grow. Perhaps similarly, New Zealand has become popular with Saudi students in a short period of time, to a large extent by word of mouth. With only one or two students in 2000, there were close to 4,000 students in 2011 and this number is increasing year by year. Students continue to recommend New Zealand to their friends and family. Since Saudi families tend to be large, the scope for numbers to continue increasing as students already in New Zealand are joined by siblings, cousins, uncles and spouses, suggests the continuation of this trend is assured.

While other English speaking countries have been well known to Saudi students for many years - namely the US and UK - students have chosen to come to New Zealand with comparatively little information about the country or people. Prior to travelling, half of the interview participants thought that New Zealand was in Europe. This being so, they expected New Zealand people would be similar to Europeans; that they would be ‘organised people’.

Some of the students I interviewed heard about New Zealand through friends or family who had already been in New Zealand. Through such intermediaries, students learnt that people in New Zealand would be ‘polite and friendly’. Students who didn’t have any friends or family in New Zealand used Google to become better informed about where they were going. Some had no preconceptions about what New Zealand people would be like, and took a leap of faith in choosing to study in a comparatively unknown destination. A few were tempted by the possibility of travelling to the ‘end of the earth’ without needing to apply for a visa, and on the recommendation of the travel or education agent selling them a package. Often students make the decision to travel on a whim and spend minimum time researching where they are

going. It is not uncommon in my office to get a call from a Saudi in Singapore or Malaysia who is 10 hours away from New Zealand, requesting that we find him a homestay family to stay with when he arrives, and an English school to start shortly after. And payment? *Hopefully* a relative will transfer money after he arrives.

Female students are more apprehensive than males prior to travelling, as they have had less independence at home, and worry more about how local people will react to their style of dress. One female student mentioned to me that she was worried about travelling to a country where the people have another religion. She said:

Actually I didn't have any idea about them, I think maybe they will deal with us a different way because we are wearing scarves.

Such concerns are surely amplified by women who arrive fully covered in a niqab (showing just the eyes). Also, since conservative Islamic dress has become an issue in Europe, the preconception that New Zealand is in Europe means students may impose concerns of how Europeans will deal with them on New Zealanders.

8.2 “There’s No Racism Here” (How Saudis View New Zealanders)

Respondents spoke at much greater length of the positive attributes and experiences of New Zealanders than negative. New Zealand people were described in interviews as kind, friendly, helpful, relaxed, honest, polite, and organised. One summed up her view of New Zealanders as:

Nice people, polite people, happy people. When I go any shop, how are you? How was your day? Have a nice weekend, nice talking.

According to another:

Honestly I believe kiwi people are the most friendly people around the world.

Students appreciate some of the social and work ethics of New Zealand people. For example, students consider New Zealanders to be hard working, which they contrast with Saudis who they explain “don’t like working long time” and “don’t like to study”. One described locals as “really organised people, if they say I’m going to see you at this particular time, they will be there, overall they are following their commitment.” Further, “the under table things are not popular here like somewhere else, they are following the rules, they are really good”.

In addition, New Zealand's independent foreign policy is appreciated by students. One female student stated that:

They only care about New Zealand, they don't care about the policy outside New Zealand.

A lack of interference in the decisions of other countries was seen as a positive attribute.

In general, New Zealand culture is viewed as open, and New Zealand as a country where it is 'acceptable for locals to meet new people'. According to one student, this is the main reason that New Zealand attracts many new immigrants. Most Saudi students perceive comparatively less racism in New Zealand society compared to other English speaking countries. Indeed, respondents were unanimous in viewing New Zealand as the most accepting English speaking country for Arabs. A number of general comments were made in surveys and interviews, the following:

I heard like seven years ago that people here are more welcoming than the other countries.

They will get along with any people, I mean any people from any countries, from different language, they will get along with them easily.

They really consider foreigners, they treat me and they cope with me, as a kiwi.

You don't see pictures of people or how people treat you, there's no racism and that stuff in here. This is the main reason why I came here.

New Zealand is a country who respects foreign people and the inhabitants of NZ are very advanced in the education system therefore they have this kind of kindness and respect.

New Zealand is one of the best gateways to learn English [...] because New Zealanders are welcoming people and like foreign people.

Further, students contrasted this with experiences of friends who had studied in other English speaking countries. One student compared what she had heard from a friend studying in Britain and explained;

What I heard about British people 'cos my friends have studied in Britain and they say many bad things about them [...] just the racism, this is the biggest one, especially with Arab people, they match Arab people with terrorists and other Islamic people.

Another student compared New Zealanders to Australians and British:

They are kind compared to other people like Australia, UK, I heard they discriminate people.

The responses show some consensus that students find New Zealand people to be welcoming. The absence of overt racism was one of the key factors cited by several students as their reason to study in New Zealand. However, students also felt that this generalisation did not apply to all parts of New Zealand. Respondents noticed differences among New Zealanders, depending on which part of the country people come from. Students saw differences in people from Auckland, Christchurch or Dunedin, and North / South Islanders.

While interviews gained the aforementioned positive feedback on perception of New Zealanders vis-à-vis other English speaking cultures, some general comments recorded in the surveys differed, depending on whether students were studying in Auckland or Christchurch. It should be added here that comments made by students related to their experiences of Christchurch prior to a 7.1 earthquake in the city in September 2010, after which most students were transferred out to other parts of New Zealand to continue their studies. Nevertheless, based on their experiences at the time, comments relating to experiences in Auckland tended to be positive, whilst students studying in Christchurch were more likely to mention negative ones. Two students studying in Christchurch wrote the following in their survey responses:

Making friendship with New Zealand people is a little bit different. I think because of their culture some of them don't like foreign students. It is difficult for New Zealand people to accept another culture.

People don't like much Arab people. I have no idea why. They don't like us or other people from other countries.

The varying levels of tolerance and acceptance of international students by locals in Auckland and Christchurch, was explained in student interviews. This student found that North Islanders, and particularly Aucklanders, were considered more international and more open to other cultures, while South Islanders, and in particular people from Christchurch, were considered less friendly to people of other cultures. One student who was currently studying in Auckland, but had spent considerable time in Christchurch, explained this view:

South Island some people are racist especially Christchurch [...] North Islanders are the best because multicultural [...] So in my experience the place where the most culture is the best place.

Students studying in Christchurch discussed racist incidents occurring to either themselves or their friends. A student I interviewed in Christchurch, who had been there for less than one month, explained:

People here in Christchurch are different from people in Auckland, that is what I've heard. A friend said you will have hard time and it's hard to find a kiwi friend especially in Christchurch.

This same student mentioned to me that he had been verbally abused by people in passing cars at least three times in Christchurch in his first weeks in the city. Locals shouted at him that he should return home. He compared these experiences to past experiences in the US, where he had studied his bachelor and Master degree, and conceded that while New Zealanders had a general reputation for being friendly to foreigners; this wasn't so in Christchurch.

Some concerns were shared by female students in both cities. For example, in Christchurch female students worried that people would not accept them while wearing a hijab (head scarf). Several students commented that Saudi females have had trouble in Christchurch, as the headscarf attracted negative attention from locals. One student in Christchurch felt New Zealand people didn't like her because she wore the hijab, and that there is a general misunderstanding with New Zealand people thinking Muslim women wear the hijab all the time, when in fact they only wear it when out in public.

A female student in Auckland commented that she has friends who wear the niqab (full covering showing just the eyes). She noticed that some people look at them strangely, so they don't feel comfortable. However, even though she is Saudi and used to this dress at home, she also found it strange to see fellow Saudis dressed this way in New Zealand. She told me that when she saw women in the niqab it also made her look twice, so she understood the reaction these clothes might have on locals. Students in both cities noticed attention due to this conservative Islamic dress, although the degree to which this attention was negative appears to differ. In Christchurch, such clothing attracted attention in the form of rude comments, while in Auckland it consisted mainly of strange glances from passers-by. From various comments made by students, it seems that it is often older people in New Zealand who are most surprised to see women fully covered and most likely to comment on it.

Answers recorded in both interviews and in the survey comments section illustrate differences between the student experience in Auckland and Christchurch. While students were just as likely to want to make friends, and actually make friends regardless of where in New Zealand they are living, negative experiences, in terms of interactions with locals, were more common in Christchurch than in the other cities where students were studying. Even students who were generally positive about their overall perception of locals commented on negative experiences they had had, when able to provide open answers in the survey. In those comments there was an obvious distinction in that positive comments recorded tended to come from students in Auckland, and negative comments were more frequent from students in Christchurch. This suggests that, while overall experiences may actually be positive, individual incidents can mar an otherwise positive overall experience, depending on the city the student is residing.

8.3 “Just Oil and Terrorists?” (Impressions of How New Zealanders Seem to View Saudis)

New Zealand agreed to accept large numbers of Saudi students, as well as tourists, under a visa free arrangement at a time when other English speaking Western countries (namely the US) were increasing security measures at borders, and making it difficult for Saudis to travel easily to their countries. While students had to apply for visas to all other English speaking countries, and often with intense requirements in terms of proof of background and information on family members, New Zealand allowed potential students to stay in New Zealand for up to 3 months with automatic entry visas. They were then able to extend their stay in New Zealand by applying for a student visa once they had an offer to study in an institution, once fees were paid and they had demonstrated sufficient savings to pay for their accommodation. In the case of scholarship students, they required a financial guarantee from the Saudi cultural attaché and course acceptance letter. These requirements were significantly less than those required by students applying for visas at home, whether they were applying for student visas to study in New Zealand, or other English speaking country. Increased scrutiny of visa applications by other countries was in direct response to 9/11 and fear that some of the people travelling might be doing so with dangerous intentions. Such decisions were made within an environment of anxiety and fear towards the ‘real’ motives of Saudis tourists / students.

Media portrayals of political events augmented concerns and, at that time, New Zealanders had little actual experience of Saudis with which to form a balanced perspective. One student I interviewed told me he was one of the first students to study in New Zealand, arriving for

the first time in 2003. He described his homestay experience and the initial reservations the family had when deciding to host him. They told him that when approached by his language school about hosting him, they had to spend some time deciding whether or not this was a good idea, even though they had already hosted students of other nationalities. They were anxious as to what to expect of a Saudi. After they met him they found that he was a kind person, and they developed a great relationship, so much so that they later referred to him with terms of endearment, calling him their son and maintaining a friendship after he left their home. This scenario is not uncommon. I met an elderly couple as they were applying for a visa to visit their “Saudi son” in Jeddah for two months. The student had initially stayed with them for a short term English course, paying homestay fees. He returned twice after for a holiday and stayed free of charge, since the homestay felt he had become part of the family.

This student found that peoples understanding of Saudis and Muslims developed with experience:

I think now NZ people know about Muslims. When I came in 2000 and 2003, nobody knows anything about Muslims. When I come after that, 2008, more people know a lot about the Saudi guys, the Muslims, now I think a lot of New Zealanders know.

While a large number of homestay families have since become familiar with Saudi culture, certain perceptions remain at large. Several students discussed views New Zealand people have of Saudis, finding that people either have a lack of knowledge about Saudi Arabia and Saudi people, or only know about Saudis in relation to 9/11. In the words of one student:

They just know about 11 September and Osama bin Laden and just know about this and if I say I am Saudi, he say, “Osama bin Laden?” And I said, “This is not Islam, this is just the government and the government USA, not all people like this”.

Reactions towards Saudis can at times reflect prejudices. In the case of one student, following the London bombs of 2005, the student was thrown out of his homestay (who came from England) as the family associated the actions of the bombers with all Saudis or Muslims. In this case negative stereotyping persisted, even though the family had the opportunity to get to know the student as an individual.

While some locals may hold negative stereotypes of Saudis, others are interested to learn more about them, either through friendship, or hosting students. At my office I organise homestay accommodation for Saudis. This has brought me into contact with about 100

homestay families. Each time I interview a new family interested in hosting a Saudi, part of the discussion involves allaying the potential hosts' apprehension at the country of origin of the students. Families are curious to learn more about Saudi Arabia, but at the same time concerned about whether students will, for example, accept living in a non-Muslim home. Some worry that students will not feel comfortable staying in a family which is Christian, Buddhist, or atheist. Some worry if they will be able to go about their normal lives, or if they will need to make adjustments to accommodate someone who will potentially be very different. Families wonder if students will respect the homestay female members, as they assume Saudis don't respect women. I am often in the position of explaining that students are in fact looking forwards to a new experience and happy to stay with people of different (or no) religions, and expecting to fit in with the norms of the family. A number of students ask specifically to stay with Christian families and hold respect for Christians as 'people of the book' (gospel). It is much more likely that a student will ask to stay with a Christian family than a Muslim one. Students prefer to stay with locals who are of a different religion than Muslim families, given the latter are less likely to be native New Zealanders.

In addition to stereotypes, several students found some New Zealanders don't know where Saudi Arabia is, can't identify what part of the world they come from, or think Saudi Arabia is in Africa. One found that this lack of knowledge led some New Zealand people to become interested in getting to know them and learning about Saudi Arabia. He also explained:

People only know about terrorists or oil, nothing at all, sometimes about Islam.

On the other hand, a female student recognised the potential for locals to feel anxious about engaging Saudis. She felt that since New Zealand people might not have information about Saudis, that:

They might not accept us for the first time in the street or in the shop, but perhaps they would accept us in the school.

Thus, while acknowledging possible sensitivities in engaging Saudis, she also identifies education as a facilitator for closer interaction with locals.

Overall, my conversations with students indicate that in many cases New Zealand people have had a superficial knowledge of Saudi Arabia, based on media information, rather than first-hand experience of people. Little prior knowledge of Saudi Arabia has led to anxiety towards meeting Saudis in some cases. However, the arrival of large numbers of students is fast

building cross-cultural awareness. Thousands of families have been hosting students over the past several years, and staff at most tertiary education institutions are dealing with Saudi students on a daily basis. The number of “Saudi sons” is increasing, alongside mutual frustrations as Saudis and New Zealanders get to know each other better. These frustrations will be explored in the next chapter.

8.4 “Five Fingers on One Hand” (Different Kinds of Saudis)

The impressions locals and Saudis have of each other are initially based on preconceptions and early experiences each has of the other. Yet Saudis are particularly familiar with the concept of each person being different. They use a well-known idiom to explain the differences between people, that “there are five fingers on one hand.” By this they mean that just as the hand has five fingers which are each different in shape and size, so too are people different. They often relate this to the differences they see in their children. A parent can have five children and each one can have a completely different personality, some good and well behaved, and others difficult. Using this idiom, Saudis tend to be realistic about the role of personality in deciding the behaviour of individuals, recognising natural diversity amongst people, whether they are Saudi or from other countries. This concept moderates their generalisations of others.

Just as Saudi students see different types of New Zealanders (contrasts between people from Christchurch / Auckland and North/South) they also see different types of Saudis. Differences between Saudis can be in terms of differing personalities within the same family, in relation to the part of Saudi that students come from (West and East being more open, Central North and South more conservative), depending on the city they grew up in, differences in religious understanding, and world view and so on. One student compared a norm acceptable within his family which others might not approve of (friendships with the opposite sex):

My sister is wearing hijab and she’s good Muslim, and she has friends girls and boys and she has no problems with them, you cannot say that to all Saudis.

Locals gain an impression of what appears to be different types of Saudi, and comments made by students reflect differing outlooks. In the interview conversations I asked students what a ‘typical’ Saudi would be concerned with when studying in New Zealand. In this way I hoped to be able to capture potentially sensitive information from students, allowing them to distance themselves personally from the question, while identifying the concerns of others and explaining multiple perspectives. This line of enquiry led me to conclude that there are

generally three “types” of Saudis. These types are useful to allude to in summarising key differences in outlook and behaviour, although the concept will be further refined in chapter ten. The first is the “Open Saudi”. This Saudi is described by one student as a Saudi who will “throw the religion away and experience something completely new” and join New Zealand life partying, drinking, smoking, taking drugs, and having sex. Thus, this student will feel that their time in the new country can best be spent by partaking in all the activities which they feel are condoned in the new environment, with risky behaviour seen as the norm and acceptable to him / her. This student will not be concerned with the values he / she has learnt previously, especially if these will conflict with the goal of having a new and full experience of the host country.

The second type of Saudi is considered the “Middle” or “normal” Saudi. This Saudi is happy to make friends, while maintaining their core values. This type of Saudi doesn’t mind being around people who drink. They will either refrain from drinking, or drink in moderation. They don’t feel that differing values should stop them from making friends with locals, but rather they should be mindful of the values which are important to them, while also adapting to the new environment.

The third type of Saudi is the “Conservative Saudi”. This person doesn’t want to mix with people from a different culture or religion and has a very rigid interpretation of religion. One student compared this type of Saudi to Jehovah’s witnesses, noting that they just want to say what they have to say to you, and stay in their own group. He explained that such Saudis are viewed as less open minded, just learning from their sheikh (religious leader), just absorbing what they see in their own lives or in the media, in terms of what’s right and wrong. Accordingly, “they don’t say why or try to understand from different views”. The student further described his view of the conservative Saudi, which he also considered to be ‘typical’:

My image when you say typical Saudi is like he doesn’t like to learn about the right things, he likes just specific people. Typical Saudi doesn’t like new friends, foreigners, this is my image. They like just staying in Saudi, they don’t like to travel around or learn.

The conservative Saudi is less likely to mix with locals, worried about the potentially negative impact locals might have on their behaviour. This student is less likely to spend a lot of time abroad in a non-Muslim country, and according to one student, more likely to think “oh I hate this one; oh I hate everyone so back to my country”.

Given the number of students in New Zealand and observing that they come from all parts of Saudi, it seems there is likely to be a mix of open, middle and conservative Saudis in New Zealand. Conversations with several interview participants led me to question them on their perception on the ratio of each type of Saudi (and thereby the likelihood of a similar percentage of each type in New Zealand). Answers differed. One felt that the conservative Saudi represented 70% of the population while another thought there was a balance between two typical Saudis, the 'religious' (conservative) and one 'normal' (normal / middle). On the other hand, another student estimated that 99.9% of Saudis try a lot of things while they are in New Zealand, such as drinking. If true this would suggest most students are more likely to be 'middle' or 'open'. This can be concurred by observations of student behaviour in New Zealand. One homestay mum I spoke with and who had hosted a number of Saudi students told me that she found most Saudis drink. Six out of eight students who had stayed with her had no qualms drinking alcohol with the family. Similarly, in a conversation with a Brazilian who had been studying in New Zealand, I asked if he had any experience of Saudis and he said he had been studying with Saudis. He replied, "Oh yes, they are quite similar to Brazilians, like us they like soccer and beer." Further, it seems that both male and female students try things not allowed at home, although female students are more discrete in their activities. According to one respondent, female students often tell friends 'don't tell my brother'.

While broad types can be defined, students may identify different aspects of themselves in each type. When I asked one student which type he felt he was he felt he didn't fit easily into any one category and answered:

I consider myself a super Saudi like maybe because I'm different from the religious, more open minded, and more serious than the normal Saudis which makes me different.

Differences in the 'types' of Saudis can be explained in terms of students' backgrounds, their family norms, their tribe, and the part of Saudi they come from. Saudis describe whole families as being either open minded, conservative, or in between. They are able to tell what kind of outlook people are likely to have by the surname. It is not uncommon to hear a Saudi say, "Oh, we know that the people from x family are open minded" or the opposite. Students tend to respect these differences although it often affects marriage choices, with families preferring their children marry others with similar values. They often choose to marry within

the extended family since they feel more comfortable knowing the kind of values that have been taught within their family will be maintained by the new spouse.

While in Saudi I heard about a conservative woman who had recently been granted a divorce because her husband had infringed her families' norms of modesty. She was from a tribe where even after marriage the husband was not allowed to see his wife's face. One day her curious husband lifted her veil to see her. She took him to court. The judge decided the man was in the wrong as he had decided to marry a woman from this tribe, thus he knew the standard of behaviour expected of him before he married, and therefore he shouldn't have tried to see her face. The judge's decision demonstrates that Saudis can go to extreme lengths to respect the differing norms of families.

Saudis see different norms of behaviour and thus different types of people depending on the region of Saudi people come from and the city. One student from Jeddah explained how people from his city were different from others:

Jeddah mixed culture, that's why I think it's the best place, because everyone understands that, even Saudis from different places they understand that when you go to Jeddah you have to behave differently, like you are somewhere else not in Saudi.

Another student explained:

People who come from Riyadh and Qassim and Buraydah more conservative.. for me, I came from Makkah and I was born in Jeddah and worked in Jeddah. You can see people in the west are less serious. Both of them are Muslim but what's the difference? Culture.

Another student compared Riyadh (his city) with those from Jeddah:

I think people from my region, around Riyadh [could study in NZ], but it wouldn't be that much fun for who is from Jeddah, they like to have more fun than us. Jeddah is looking for some other big country where nobody sleeps.

People from Jeddah are described as more open, less conservative, and more accepting of people with different customs. This contrasts more conservative regions such as the central north area (Qassim and Buraydah). Students expect people from these regions and other small towns to be 'conservative', while those from the East and West coast, which tend to be more international, will be more modern and therefore more likely to be the 'middle' or 'open' kind of Saudi. This study included interviews with students from both open and conservative areas,

male and female, including participants from the East (Makkah, Jeddah, Taif), South (Albaha), Central (Riyadh, Qassim), North (Hail) and East (Qatif). Thus this research provides insights from students with experience of the different types of Saudis discussed, regardless of which type they identify with.

The impressions Saudis have of New Zealanders may depend on their personal characteristics or type, while the impressions locals have of Saudis may equally depend on what type of Saudi they come into contact with. This is particularly relevant in the case of homestay families since they usually host one Saudi student at a time and therefore might be more prone to making generalisations based on their experience of this “type” of Saudi.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the early impressions Saudi’s have of New Zealand when deciding to study here, as well as some of the preconceptions existent in New Zealand and Saudi views of each other. Interview conversations with students found that Saudi students generally arrive in the country with a positive disposition towards locals, expecting them to be friendly and organised. Prior to travelling this is due to feedback from friends or relatives who have travelled ahead of them, or due to general stereotypes of European people. They don’t often tend to spend much time researching the country they will travel to, more likely to make their decision spontaneously. Experience in New Zealand leads them to perceive that local people may be different depending on the city that they study in and whether the people they meet are from the North or South Island.

They consent that people are all different and appreciate New Zealanders positive attributes as people who are nice, happy, polite, and hard working with a positive and independent foreign policy. Students accept the idiom that “that there are five fingers on one hand” and so are generally philosophical about negative experiences. It seems they are unlikely to hold negative experiences or perceptions of regional differences as symptomatic of broader New Zealand culture. Considering word of mouth has contributed to the rise of New Zealand as a study destination, it is important that positive impression and experiences outweigh negative so as not to disrupt the good image already in the minds of many Saudis. Given the experience of the Turkish village and recent trends, New Zealand has the potential to benefit from exponential growth in Saudi student numbers.

New Zealanders are mostly getting to know Saudi students through homestay experiences and in the institutions where they study. Initially some families have been hesitant about hosting

students due to anxieties about their nationality in relation to world events (namely 9/11), media descriptions, and lack of prior experience or knowledge of Saudi Arabia. Later interaction with students has often disconfirmed stereotypes and also increased appreciation of Saudi Arabians, to the extent that some students have become part of the family. Through the homestay experience, many families have developed understanding of the characteristics of Saudi students, just as students have gained understanding of local norms and outlook.

Host families and staff working at institutions will have spent time with Saudis from more than one of the groups discussed in this chapter. They may have come to know students who are “open”, “normal / middle” and/or “conservative”. Each has a differing perspective on how they can participate in New Zealand society and thus interactions will have differing outcomes, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Interactions between students and others in New Zealand lead to a greater understanding that students may have similar and dissimilar traits, individuals albeit from a collectivist society. Cultural awareness thus develops through the exchange so that Saudi culture is no longer seen as unknown and homogenous.

Chapter 9:

Getting Used to Differences

As discussed in the previous chapter, some students arrive in New Zealand with preconceptions informed by conversations they have had with others who have travelled to New Zealand, and by their own internet research. Others travel with very little information about New Zealand culture and thus arrive to an empty canvas. In both cases, students go on to develop their own observations of culture through the range of activities they engage in locally, and the contact they have with the various people who influence their experience of life in New Zealand. This contact allows their understandings of both cultures to mature. Some find they learn as much about their own culture as they do about the other.

Students are confronted with a range of differing customs and expectations, as they adjust to life in New Zealand. They recognise core differences in behaviour and cultural (or religious) norms. They face the dilemma of how they can get on with their lives in New Zealand and make friends, while maintaining core values. They can choose to adapt to new norms or maintain and explain their own, or take a hybrid approach. This chapter will discuss cultural and behavioural differences as experienced by the interview participants. It will provide examples of frustrations experienced by students and locals interacting with students. Discussion focuses on key areas where students feel that New Zealanders behave differently, namely through prioritising ‘process’ over morals or values in a range of situations. The chapter explores differences in the way each culture views money, relationships, alcohol, and gender roles.

9.1 “There Is No Difference, We Are All Human” (Similarities and Differences)

Students develop a deeper understanding of culture differences as they spend time in New Zealand. They usually learn through experiences in homestays, general interactions with locals, and friendships with other international students while they study English. When questioned about these differences a number of students started by acknowledging and commenting on commonalities in terms of the human experience. One mentioned at the outset, “There is no difference, we are all human.” Another stated:

There is a saying ‘the reality doesn’t change from place to place, the reality is the reality’ but how we come to the reality, maybe you will go this way and we will go this way.

Therefore, on one level these students see Saudis and New Zealanders as equal in humanity, while on another (cultural) level they accepted there were differences. While survey responses were less emphatic, in interviews a number of students explained that cultural differences were considerable and affect all aspects of their experience in New Zealand. One respondent summed this up as:

The culture makes people different in everything; behaviour, the way of talk, everything, the lifestyle.

These differences were discussed at length in conversations with students, as explained in this chapter.

9.2 “Following the Rules” (Distinct Cultural Frameworks)

Students describe New Zealanders as people who ‘follow the rules’. By this they generally mean that locals are punctual, have a disciplined work and study ethic, strong organisational skills, follow through on commitments made, and keep their word, while following a myriad of rules. Indeed, students tend to feel bombarded by the rules and processes which are common in New Zealand, but alien to them. A student I met in Saudi Arabia, who had issues with the institution he was studying in and who unsuccessfully sought to redress these, told me:

In New Zealand they kill you with process. They are very clever, they keep the process going forever so that in the end you just give up, and nothing is personal, they just blame everything on process.

It seems New Zealand has process (rules) for everything. Students are confronted by rules around enrolments into schools (to do with course acceptance, prior qualifications recognition, payment dates, start dates, minimum ages, minimum length of study, refunds policies), rules for under age students (guardianship and other permission forms, week and weekend curfews), accommodation processes (homestay payments, rules in homestays such as length of showers and usage of heaters, advance payments, notifying families if not returning home, gaining permission to have friends over, bond payment for rentals, rental contracts, bond refunds and cleaning), visa application rules (applying before visas finish, visa requirements), and general behaviour expectation such as punctuality (one English school doesn’t let students into class if they arrive even minutes late) and homework. Students often

get into trouble for not knowing the “rules”. Such cases include signing rental agreements without understanding there is a minimum length of time they must stay.

Some rules are perplexing. For example, students might have family members visit them in New Zealand and stay with them, such as younger brothers, sisters or cousins. Yet when they enrol these brothers, sisters or cousins into English schools, they are told (if they are under 13) they must be living with their parents to be eligible to study. Immigration allows them to travel to NZ and stay with their siblings, but as soon as they enrol in a course, then they need to be living with parents. A recent example is of two brothers who stayed with their cousin for one month, enrolled in a language school and transferred to homestay accommodation for that period. The cousin planned to take the boys for a two week holiday after the course and homestay finished but was told by the school he would need written permission from the boys’ parents. Given he was initially responsible for them and chose to enrol them in the school, the need to then get permission to have them back took him by surprise.

On the other hand while New Zealanders ‘follow the rules’, according to interviews, Saudi students ‘don’t follow the rules’. By their own account, Saudis tend to be easy going, lazy, and undisciplined when it comes to work and study. This sees them late for classes, taking an unusually high number of absences, spending little time on homework, and failing exams. They have had little experience of the process rules expected of them in New Zealand. Sometimes this is because such rules don’t exist in Saudi and/or are flexible, and sometimes because other family members such as fathers, older brothers, and uncles have taken responsibility for areas of their lives which they now have to organise themselves.

Whilst students may not follow New Zealand norms (rules), however, social behaviours expected of them in terms of their own culture and religion can be extensive. While New Zealand norms are seen as process focused, Saudi norms focus on social and value based behaviours. Saudis follow a wide range of expected protocols linked to particular situations including friendship situations, entertaining, marriage, and family relationships. Students go to great lengths to be (or at least appear) obedient to the wishes of their families. They respect the opinions of their parents and other authority figures and it is considered impolite to argue with elders. They have numerous rules around demonstrating friendship and considering the needs of friends. It is for example a great shame to turn down a friend’s request for help or money. In Saudi you could stay as a guest at someone’s home but no more than three days. In Saudi you shouldn’t be honest if it means causing offence. The list of expected behaviours is

exhaustive. There are certain topics Saudis should not discuss with each other. Politics is never to be discussed, a Sunni Muslim shouldn't discuss religion or religious differences with a Shia, a man should never ask another man about his wife and definitely never comment on her good looks. These examples suggest that contrary to having no rules, Saudis just have a different set of rules.

Many Saudis are raised to be religiously conservative in contrast to New Zealand which is liberal, so it might be expected that students would talk about religious differences. However in the majority of cases students didn't frame discussion in terms of religion, but rather differences in behaviour (part of which is nevertheless due to religious teachings) and culture. Students discussed some of the salient differences in cultural norms, providing their views on differing behaviour.

Respondents indicated a collective notion of what Saudis can and can't do and of typical personality traits. As mentioned previously, Saudis don't for example, have study habits. One respondent explained:

Everywhere around the world you will find people who study during the course, but in Saudi you will not find this habit because they have fun all the course until the end, just one day before the exam, they make everything, and we have a lot of jokes about this habit.

Another example is that 'Saudis can't work in an office for a long time'. One student was surprised to find New Zealand people staying in their office from 9am until 5pm, as he felt Saudis cannot do that. Amongst a number of descriptions of the Saudi personality, one respondent noted that Saudis are 'stressed and like everything in a hurry'. While previously described as easy going, they can alternatively been seen as stressed because they don't organise or plan things, therefore when something is needed, it is often needed immediately, hence a 'stressed Saudi'. Further explanation of Saudi and New Zealand habits and norms will be discussed under the following heading.

9.3 “Money, Alcohol and Relationships” (Differing Priorities)

Themes which reoccurred in discussion of differing norms of behaviour related to money, alcohol, and relationships. Issues relating to each of these areas will be discussed in this section.

9.3.1 Money

Saudis and New Zealanders seem to have a different orientation towards money. New Zealanders were described by some students as very concerned about money in their dealings with others, focused on money before other things. Several students had particularly negative experiences. Some felt that if they weren't paying for something, friendship and relationship building wasn't forthcoming. This was especially so in the case of some homestays, where several students indicated that the homestays were only interested in them because of their homestay payments. One explained:

The homestay [...] before the first of the month when I give them the money they cook very good, and they talk with me very well, the end of the month they not talk, they not really cook.

Some felt that their homestays were only interested in payments and not genuinely interested in getting to know them. One found her homestay was always asking for money. Some homestays were overly concerned with the expense of hosting students, enforcing very short showers (in one case a 3-minute maximum), monitoring heater usage, and in some extreme cases making students feel uncomfortable if they seemed to be eating too much. Given that this is the most intimate contact most Saudis have with locals, this characteristic is then generalised to be a characteristic of New Zealand friendships. Students are left feeling that New Zealanders are only interested in them for money.

One student explained that money is more important than friendship for New Zealanders, stating:

They love money very much and they don't have friendship if you are going to take some money from them it's really bad... they are going to break a friendship just for a couple of dollars.

In one case a landlord went to the extent of forging a student's signature in order to keep her bond. This same student was unhappy at receiving excessive charges for minor damages in apartments she had stayed in. According to her, landlords in Saudi expect a certain amount of wear and tear and aren't likely to charge outgoing tenants for every minor scratch on their wall. This demonstrates the difference between process-based and value-based norms. In the first, the landlord must account for each scratch, while the latter approach displays understanding of the occupants' situation.

Further, students find New Zealanders' preoccupation with money and expenses as unusual since Saudis show their friendship and hospitality through generosity. It is normal for Saudis to be very generous with their friends and guests, inviting people to large meals at home, giving guests gifts, lending money whenever a friend is in need. By contrast, students find that young New Zealanders in particular are quite individualist when it comes to relationships with others and entertaining. A young Saudi told me about his life in Dunedin. He found that when he visited young New Zealanders they never seemed to have any refreshments to share with guests, so he found a solution. He started to take his own teabags (and sometimes biscuits) to homes when visiting friends (and sharing these with his hosts). He had learnt that young New Zealanders could not spare a tea bag. He wasn't upset by this, rather he was proud to have found a solution; he adapted to the situation ensuring both he and his host would enjoy some basic refreshments together.

It could be that some homestays and young New Zealanders are on particularly tight budgets, which leads them to worry about expenses relating to the home. In some cases families might not develop genuine bonds with particular students, and thereby not exhibit behaviour fitting of real friendship. However these explanations would still be unfamiliar to Saudis. Saudis hold in high esteem stories of the poor Bedouin of old, who if they had only one meal would serve it to their guests and then go hungry. The differences are cultural rather than economic as Saudis have long regarded generosity to visitors as central to their culture and value system.

Of note, however, is that while students see locals as overly concerned with money, modern Saudi culture has become consumption-oriented. Shopping is the national hobby and students spend a significant portion of their scholarship incomes on purchasing personal items and clothing in New Zealand. Therefore while New Zealanders may focus on costs related to the home, students maximise personal consumption. It is common for students to use up all of their weekly allowance and borrow from friends towards the end of the month (before their next allowance is paid). Students are not used to budgeting and once they have the scholarship they don't worry about where their money will come from, as they will either be well provided by the scholarship or borrow from friends or family if they are short of funds. This situation may be in contrast to local students and homestays which might not have the same financial security. This difference can cause misunderstandings when students perceive that a family's reminder that homestay fees are due, for example, is based on prioritising the

financial side of the accommodation arrangement, rather than necessary financial management of the home.

9.3.2 Alcohol

Almost all discussions with students touched on the topic of alcohol. In particular, in terms of the level of comfort students feel when people drink alcohol in front of them, and the extent to which some partake. Several mentioned alcohol within a broader discussion of meeting young people in New Zealand. The types of venues where friendships are made can be problematic for some Saudis, as alcohol is almost always present. Many feel uncomfortable to go to bars to meet friends. One stated, “We aren’t used to going to clubs, here it is normal.” Another mentioned he didn’t feel comfortable to stay in the same place if someone was drinking, explaining, “I would feel really strange, because I don’t see that’s good so why would I stay there.”

Several students were surprised by New Zealand’s youth drinking culture. One mentioned, “Just what I’m surprised from kiwi people, they drink too much, that really shocked me.” Some are uncomfortable around people who drink in excess and several have felt nervous being out at night because of the negative behaviour of drunkards. One student almost returned home due to the noise of neighbours partying. He discussed his differing values as being at odds with those of locals:

When I talk sometimes with the people here and I say I don’t drink and I fast in Ramadan, I don’t for example date, they get shocked actually, they don’t even guess why. It’s so different for them and the opposite for me when I came here. I had really big problem when I came here first because I lived in an apartment and my neighbours were very loud with partying, so I almost went back.

This student could be considered a “conservative” (as per the typology introduced in the previous chapter), yet he was still interested in making friends with New Zealanders, he just found it challenging. However, whilst a number of students commented on feeling uneasy around people who drink alcohol, others enjoy partaking. In contrast with more conservative students, there are also quite a few who enjoy drinking alcohol. One found it facilitates making friends with locals due to a lack of inhibition when people drink, allowing them to get to know locals and make friends regardless of where they are from. Typically students with this perspective enjoy the youth party life style and have a larger circle of friends. However, this observation reinforces the challenges students who don’t drink have when getting to

know locals. For one student this was a dilemma, he wanted to fit in with locals but he didn't drink alcohol. He didn't mind if others did, but he knew that he looked out of place. So, he faked drinking alcohol and mimicked how others behaved; he said he even felt drunk himself after a while. After several years in New Zealand, most of his local friends are sure he drinks alcohol at every event, whereas he hasn't tried it in his life.

Whilst some students worry about the negative habits of locals such as drinking, one student offered an alternative perspective. He explained that it is not Saudis who should be concerned at picking up negative habits, but rather New Zealanders from Saudis. He noticed a high number of Saudis drinking in excess, smoking marijuana, and getting into fights. He had heard that one bar was frustrated with the behaviour of some Saudis, leading it to put up a sign saying that they didn't want Saudis in the bar. These behaviours reflect a segment of the Saudi population in New Zealand, who try the activities they feel are condoned in a Western country, to excess. For some students, letting go of old restraints without acquiring new ones leads them to a level of freedom that is not condoned in New Zealand society either. Their choices might reflect their "type" as discussed in the previous chapter, which provides some explanation as to why behaviours in New Zealand differ.

9.3.3 Relationships

9.3.3.1 Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships are very different in Saudi Arabia and New Zealand. Saudis place much importance on family and friendships and spend a significant time cultivating these bonds. A great deal of spare time is spent relaxing with friends. I've observed Saudis to be very emotionally sensitive and go to great lengths not to offend those close to them. They typically avoid subjects which might insult or lead to disagreement. Communication style is very different. New Zealanders were described by one student as people for whom 'one plus one equals two'. By this she meant that New Zealanders can discuss any topic in a linear manner whereby a subject is raised, discussion is rational, in a logical order, and a conclusion follows. New Zealanders are concise and clear. Saudis on the other hand tend to talk in a circular motion. They might raise a conclusion to start with to get feedback from others and then go backwards and forwards proposing multiple options before finishing with consensus or abandoning the topic.

At times homestays and staff working in language schools get quite frustrated with Saudi students as they change their minds often and don't follow through on commitments. Some

change homestays more than five times until they are comfortable, others pay their fees late or incompletely. Most need several reminders that they should let their homestay know they will be late for dinner or not home at all. A student may disappear from the homestay for several days with no notice, only to resurface a few days later unaware that they have caused any concern for the family. Some students may also appear very direct and abrupt in some situations, possibly due to English as second language issues but also due to launching into the middle of a topic without building up the scene.

While students are mindful not to offend in their own culture, few are familiar with how not to offend in the new one. Students often move out of homestays of their own accord at very short notice and leave homestay families wondering what they did wrong. One homestay was quite surprised when the student she had enjoyed hosting informed her that his bags were packed and a taxi was on its way to take him to some new accommodation with friends. She didn't know he was moving out and had put a lot of effort into looking after him. She thought they had been getting on very well.

Whilst the family thought things were going well, they may have inadvertently upset their student. Students can be too polite to mention to families if things aren't going as well as they hoped, and prefer just to leave rather than upset the family. They don't realise that the family will be more upset if they leave suddenly than if they explain their issue. In the survey questionnaire, one student described a situation in his homestay which had disappointed him. The homestay mother worked in the city and finished work at the same time as the student finished his course. However, she didn't want to drive her homestay student home with her. He thought she was unfriendly. She may have just had a different concept of personal space and independence. This example shows differing expectations around the extent to which friendships may be extended (or not) and demonstrated. Students often want instant families, a Kiwi mum or dad, but often this is not automatic but earned or develops over time through compromise and acceptance.

The above behaviours and situations reflect misunderstandings as students try to adapt to a life in which they are responsible for themselves. A significant portion of students are in their late teens, early 20s, at an age where they are still maturing. They often don't understand the implications on their actions on others, and are not aware of the reasons behind the process norms common in New Zealand. This does however cause frustration for students, host families and staff, as each tries to make their perspectives understood.

9.3.3.2 *Family Relationships*

Students perceive that family relationships in New Zealand are as not as close as those in Saudi. In particular students note the way elder family members aren't included in family life. Interview comments relating to such observations included:

They don't have really good relationships with their families as what we have in our countries.

Most of the time I see old men and women alone.

They don't respect elderly people, if you take the bus and there are older people standing up, the teenagers even they don't give them their chair.

Students found that New Zealanders don't spend much time with their aged relatives. This is contrasted with Saudi Arabia, where there are no rest homes as it is seen as a duty and privilege to look after parents in their old age. Further, respect for parents and elders is expected in Saudi Arabia. Saudis often go to great lengths to demonstrate their respect for elders, by not disagreeing in public with elders even when their own opinions may be at odds. An example of this is a student who visited our office with his elderly father. The student's cheeks turned red and he sat silently while his father asked all female members of staff if they would consider marrying him (the father), and conversed in a manner which might have been humorous in Saudi but strange (embarrassing) in New Zealand. After the student left a Saudi member of staff said, "Poor guy, what could he say? It was his father."

While Saudis may have closer relations with friends, family and elders, they see New Zealanders as being friendlier with strangers. In Saudi Arabia they are wary of people they don't know and wouldn't smile or greet someone they weren't introduced to. On the other hand, several students mentioned that smiling and greeting strangers in the street or on the bus is one of the first new behaviours they learnt in New Zealand. On the other hand, when one tried this new behaviour when he returned home, local Saudis reacted by asking him if he was crazy. One compared asking for directions from strangers in New Zealand and Saudi:

When I see the people outside in the street its really good 'cos when I ask them, "Oh, do you know where's this place?," they help me.

By contrast:

Not like in my country, sometimes when I ask anyone they say, "Oh, I don't know" or they give me the wrong way just for fun, that's young people they do like that.

Therefore while Saudi students may have trouble understanding family and friendship bonds which may seem not as strong in New Zealand, they feel a greater degree of trust and respect from strangers in New Zealand than they do at home.

9.4 “Eating Ice-cream in New Zealand” (Freedom in New Zealand to Behave as One Chooses)

While core value differences have been described, students also find a myriad of minor differences which further influence their cross-cultural experience. In many cases students enjoy experimenting with new norms and adapting to these. One described enjoying the independence of his life in New Zealand. It is also common for respondents to enjoy the opportunity to behaviour more informally than what they are used to.

One student gave the example of an old man he saw eating ice cream in New Zealand. He explained that if an old man in Saudi ate ice cream, people would laugh at him, because the culture dictates that ice cream is just for children. He used this example as a metaphor for the numerous areas of culture where cultural norms dictate the behaviour of people in Saudi, with social repercussions for not adhering to these. He also explained that, in contrast, New Zealand people can do anything as they never think about culture. He summarised:

The New Zealand people never think about the culture, they are just happy. But in Saudi Arabia there are some things you can't do it because the culture says no don't do it, some things you can't do it because the religion says no don't do it, like that and you keep straight but you walk in the middle, you can't go like that [zig zag].

Students move from a culture which seems to have many cultural rules to one which seems not to have any. They enjoy their new found freedom to do anything they want, but don't realise that while there may not be so many rules imposed on them externally, local culture does have some expectations, including self-imposed discipline.

9.5 “Looking at Each Other Like Spies” (Students Monitor Each Other)

A core view held by students is that people in New Zealand have the freedom to behave how they like while in Saudi behaviour is restricted by how they will be perceived by others. One participant described the way Saudis view each other: “They are always looking at each other like spies, what he is doing, why, I don't want to do that 'cos he's looking at me.”

A number of students have even said that within the Saudi community some are actual spies. One thought that as many of 20% of Saudis might be spies, checking on the behaviour of peers. I have no way to verify whether this is true but it remains a common perception.

Several respondents noted issues with other Saudis in New Zealand, including negative experiences with some friends. A female student described difficulties being able to do the things she wanted to in New Zealand due to social pressure. She gave an example of wanting to smoke Shisha and needing to find a place where there were no Saudis so that she and her friends could smoke without Saudi males speaking badly about them. She also had trouble with Saudis who didn't approve of the fact that she didn't cover her head in New Zealand, and who didn't allow their sisters or wives to spend time with her in case she had a 'negative' influence on them. In this case Saudis felt she wasn't a good person and also spoke negatively about her husband. They criticised him for not having control over her, and not being jealous. She felt frustrated that "Saudis move their culture from there to here", thereby infringing on her freedoms. As a result, she decided to separate herself from the Saudi community as much as possible. This example illustrates challenges for some who might wish to break away from cultural norms while abroad. The large number of Saudis abroad means those wishing to forge a new identity or change some habits will do so under the watchful eye of fellow Saudis. They are not anonymous in the new environment but rather attached to both home country and overseas Saudi communities.

9.6 "Everything I do Like the Saudi Woman" (The Saudi Female Experience)

A Saudi female's life differs a great deal from a male's life. This is true both of females in Saudi Arabia and living in New Zealand. Female students tend to be more conservative in outlook and are expected to maintain the traditions they have learnt at home. One female participant stated this general observation:

Saudi females' life is totally different than the male life, the male can do anything. The girls cannot do anything, so I'm talking about the females because it is totally different life.

Gender roles are highly defined in Saudi culture and students spoke with respect for the roles they saw as assigned to each. Female students explained that women aren't expected to work, and according to participants, the male has greater responsibilities in Saudi since he must provide for the family. In addition, according to a male student, Saudi men 'respect women more than usual':

If we are in the street and a lady wants to cross the road, we must stop for her, and in any shop if there is a lady, we have to stop until she finishes and then we get what we want.

He contrasted this with New Zealand where:

There is nothing to be considered about any gender, you will do whatever you want and everybody can finish his or her business.

In my interviews, female students discussed Saudi culture norms at greater length than men and demonstrated greater adherence to Saudi norms and identity. This was validated by the fact that six out of eight women interviewed felt they were 'typical' Saudis (compared to only two out of eight men). In terms of the typology discussed in the research, 'typical' to a female Saudi tends to mean 'conservative'. One participant explained how she felt she was typical:

Of course I'm typical Saudi in my culture, in my religion, in my dressing, everything... yes, everything I do like the Saudi woman

These comments demonstrate a national feminine identity. They also reflect a stronger adhesion to Saudi values amongst female respondents and less flexibility to diverge from what is expected culturally. This strong identity also means female students have some unique challenges in getting to know New Zealanders. Local cultural norms make some female students feel uncomfortable. For example, one female student didn't feel comfortable that New Zealand females have boyfriends. Another found it unusual that New Zealand females tend to move out from their parents' house before marriage, which a student said is impossible in her country. It is less likely for female students to go into a homestay, and when they do they usually request female only households. This is preferred so that female students can take off their head coverings at home. Yet in requiring female only homes (if allowed to go to homestay at all), the range of experiences available to female students is restricted compared to male students. Indeed, when asked about their perceptions of locals, female students found it harder to describe the characteristics of locals and spoke very briefly about any experiences with locals. Their brief responses indicated they had had less interaction than the male participants in this study. In many cases Saudi males have travelled to New Zealand first, stayed in homestays, and then moved to apartments to live with sisters or wives when they arrive. The females are often not given the same option.

In both interviews and surveys, female students identify their clothing as a barrier, in particular due to local perceptions towards their style of dress. One explained that is difficult for New Zealanders to understand Saudi culture since:

They don't understand why we are wearing scarf, why the men and women are separate.

Different style of dress sometimes attracts negative attention from locals. One student in Auckland explained to a doctor she was wearing a hijab (scarf) as part of her religion. The doctor became angry, insulted her religion and called Islam rubbish and other abusive phrases. Such negative incidents experienced by some female students make many sensitive about local perception of their dress.

Further, female students have more concerns over interacting with strangers. Some female students worry about giving their phone number out as they don't like males to call them. They typically don't allow others to take photos of them in case these end up online on Facebook or on phones. These examples reinforce the fact that generally females exhibit greater conservatism in terms of outlook and in practise, reflecting their own viewpoints and behaviours expected of them by their families and husbands.

9.7 Conclusion

Saudis generally view New Zealand as a country where people follow the rules with priority given to process over individual preferences. Process is an inflexible and straight way of dealing with situations. Saudi culture, on the other hand, features greater flexibility in interpersonal dealings, whilst maintaining strict social moral norms. The descriptions given by students suggest that Saudi culture is no less rules based, but rather features a differing set of rules. The comparison could be summarised as process vs. moral or relationship based. Importance in the latter set is placed on maintaining values and social cohesion, and is a strong element in students' identity.

Differing norms can lead to mutual frustrations as Saudis and New Zealanders interact. Saudis appreciate New Zealanders as being organised people; however, focus on process can be unfriendly and at times appear materialistic. It can be problematic for students when they are unsure of local norms and unable to organise themselves accordingly. This leads to confrontations with homestays and educational staff who might not be used to a Saudi way of doing things.

New Zealanders might demonstrate respect for women through equality, while Saudis by extra consideration and protection. These differences provide an example of differing norms of social behaviour seeking similar goals. It exemplifies the earlier quote of there being two cultures, same reality, but different ways of getting there. As a result, Saudi females have a very different experience in New Zealand than do male students. Female students exhibit greater conservatism and experience social pressures to conform and are less likely to engage in a range of activities with locals. Differences in behavioural norms and gender expectations can lead to challenges in friendship building for both male and female students. Whilst this chapter has established the differences existent, the following chapter will explore the extent to which students are able to compromise the norms they have learnt and make friends nevertheless.

Chapter 10:

Friendships

In order to fulfil the purpose of the Scholarship programme, students are subject to a range of expectations which include: adapting to a new environment, meeting academic objectives, and making friends with locals and other international students. The survey questionnaire found that students understand the friendship goal to varying degrees, some accepting it as a significant part of the scholarship program and others not viewing it as important. Nevertheless, both sets of empirical results in this study suggest that the majority of students have intended and indeed tried to make friends with locals and other international students while living in New Zealand.

The research has thus far interpreted culture differences; however, unresolved are issues relating to friendship building. While there is positive intent and effort, the extent to which students are successful in building friendships depends on a range of factors. These include their English language ability, the opportunities students have or create to interact with others, and the way students cooperate with homestay families and other locals. This chapter explores these factors in order to demonstrate how Saudi students are able to bridge very different values and cultural norms, to build friendships. Also covered is how students adopt new behaviours in New Zealand to varying degrees depending on their particular worldviews. Included in this is a discussion of three types of Saudi students as introduced in chapter eight. The chapter concludes with a review of the external influences which can impact upon student willingness or otherwise to make friends outside their ethnic community while in New Zealand, in order to create a framework for understanding the various internal and external forces which influence friendship building in New Zealand.

10.1 “Saudis like to Make Friends Everywhere” (Willingness to Make Friends)

Responses gained from both interviews and questionnaires demonstrated that Saudi students are both sociable and willing to make friends with locals and other international students in New Zealand. One female interview respondent summed up general Saudi sociability:

Saudis like to make friends everywhere especially with the other nationalities. Guys do it more than girls. I notice with my brothers, they always like to make other nationality friends. Also my cousins.

Openness towards friendships with people from different countries appears to be the case for most Saudis who participated in this study. Students have made friends through participation in a range of activities and mentioned the situations where they made friends, and those they enjoyed. Interview responses mirrored those given in the survey questionnaire. Students described making friends through the following activities: studying together in English classes and university, study groups, clubbing and parties, football and other sports, meeting at coffee shops, living with New Zealanders either in homestay or flatting, and becoming friends with tutors and neighbours. Students enjoyed dining together, sightseeing, and sports. One student particularly appreciated having his first girlfriend in New Zealand, another appreciated helpful shop assistants, while one commented on the friendship which had developed with helpful neighbours who had looked after his home when he and his family were away. Most friendship situations involved social interactions in daily life activities.

Of the 16 students interviewed, only 3 hadn't yet made any New Zealand friends. These included two female students and one male who had been in Christchurch for less than a month. Students who 'didn't have *many* friends' were more likely to be female or living in Christchurch, while male students and those living in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin had greater circles of local friends.

Positive experiences with locals were emphasised in interviews and students talked at greater length and with enthusiasm for these while briefly mentioning any negative experiences. Even so, negative experiences did occur. Of the 13 students who had made friends in New Zealand, 9 had had negative experiences with friends (although one of those was with another Saudi). As described in the previous chapter, negative experiences often related to money and perception that friends (especially homestays) were more concerned with the income they gained from students than other aspects of friendship.

10.2 “Becoming Part of the Furniture”(Ease of Making Friends)

While students generally expressed interest in making friends, analysis of student interviews shed light on issues which may conflict with this goal. The considerable divide in differing cultural norms and expectations can create challenges as students try to build relationships with locals. Success in making friends can be impacted by anxiety when students are confronted with the new culture, English ability, behaviour in homestay, and opportunity to meet locals. These themes are discussed in this section in order to understand the importance of each.

10.2.1 Anxiety

Considering the many cultural differences apparent in New Zealand–Saudi interactions, it might be expected that students would feel some anxiety when befriending locals. However when asked specifically if they felt nervous making friends with locals, only one (female) student answered in the affirmative, stating that:

In the beginning, because I don't know the first what they think of me.

When students were questioned further on their experiences of making friends, another conceded that cultural differences did lead him to feel nervous about making relationships in New Zealand. He explained his nerves:

Because you feel different, you don't know what's their reaction when you tell them something, if your culture would seem acceptable or not.

Both comments indicate the students were more concerned about how their culture appeared to locals than the other way around. Intrinsic in this is the notion that since they are abroad it is their cultural norms which should be questioned, rather than those of the host country. While these two students mentioned some anxiety when making friends, others stated emphatically that they didn't feel nervous. Replies towards the latter orientation included:

Not at all, they are friendly I don't think they have some problem if I contact them.

No, they are friendly; they don't make something between us.

No, because I know they are kind.

The two responses are not contradictory. The picture that emerges is that on the one hand students found local people to be friendly and approachable thereby encouraging them to make friends; however as they got closer to locals, some worried that locals might be concerned by culture differences or might not understand them. Therefore anxiety was possible when Saudis were confronted with having to explain different perspectives.

10.2.2 English Language Ability

Students thought improving English language ability was especially important in order to make friends in New Zealand. Almost half the interview participants felt that language was a barrier to making friends, regardless of the length of time they had been in New Zealand. One mentioned in an interview that “the most important thing is the language”. Some found that New Zealand people were not patient in talking with people who didn't speak good English,

and preferred to talk to others who could speak quickly. One described sitting in a café with a group of locals who quickly grew bored with him when he tried to join the conversation due to his inability to keep up with the speed of the conversation. He noted:

But when I sit with a group it's really difficult because you know, my English not really like really good like them, and also, I think that's maybe the first reason NZ people don't talk with different people, because not the same language.

Another explained:

With English, if I want to make relationships with kiwis they will easily get pissed off with me, because I don't understand, some of them. In Dunedin, with young people. Sometimes they are ok, sometimes they are not ok so I don't understand exactly what they need.

Generally students found that English ability affected relationship building throughout their experience, and felt they would make friends more effectively if their English was fluent. One found that even so, students should still make an effort:

Honestly, in the beginning, if you have a problem with the English, you have to start and go out and be friendly.

10.2.3 Opportunity to Meet

According to survey results and as discussed previously, students found it more difficult to meet locals while they were studying English, possibly due to the fact that the people they spent most time with were not from New Zealand. This was confirmed in interviews. Respondents found that beyond staying in homestay accommodation, it was difficult to make friends with New Zealanders while not studying together. This finding reinforces the value of the homestay experience as the primary vehicle for students who are new to New Zealand to build relationships with locals. Indeed, of all the places students tend to meet New Zealanders, the experiences which seemed to impact them the most and informed them of local culture was the homestay. Yet students had mixed homestay experiences. Some developed very close relationships with particular homestays while others were disappointed (as described in previous chapter). In one case, a student told me he had such a great stay with his homestay and developed such a close relationship with them that after a while they told him he had become “part of the furniture”. In turn he commented that:

When I went to Saudi Arabia I really missed them because I don't know how they took a place in my heart.

The homestay situation has already been described as one of the most viable opportunities for students to build relationships with locals; therefore it is fitting that it should be mentioned in this section which addresses friendship building specifically. Practical observation of the homestay experience over an extended period suggests that most students who go into a homestay hope that they will form a close bond with the family. Yet success in homestay requires effort from both the homestay family and the student. While not specifically discussed in the research interviews, I have observed varying levels of respect towards homestay families. This in turn leads to differing outcomes, mutual affection or mutual disillusion. Students who are emotionally mature look forward to staying with a family so that they can get to know locals and are flexible in adapting to the household norms of their host family. Such students tend to get on very well with homestay families, and families who have hosted such students have been left with a very positive impression of Saudi culture and often request another Saudi homestay student after a previous student has left.

Students with less maturity, however, show less respect for the homestay and are often interested in what they can gain from the situation rather than what they can contribute to and learn from home life. This type of student is typically overly concerned with superficial aspects of the homestay experience such as the size of the bedroom, the location (close to the bus stop or city), the quality of homestay food, and whether the family will talk to them (as opposed to seeing the opportunity for themselves to engage the family in conversation). Such students also tend to be fickle in deciding to stay with a family, sometimes leaving after just a few hours or a day, citing very minor reasons. It is common for homestay coordinators to grow frustrated placing Saudi students since they have to respond to unreasonable demands from such students who, for example, might ask to change homestay as soon as they are dropped off to the family, solely on the basis of what the outside of the home looks like (not being of the standard they envisioned) without giving themselves a chance to get to know the family and thereby make a more informed decision. Some students break contractual agreements to pay homestay families a notice period before leaving, or leave without advising the family. These situations jeopardise a family's willingness to host another Saudi student and reduce the pool of families available for other Saudi students. This, combined with either negative stereotypes and/or lack of knowledge of Saudi culture, means many schools have a challenge trying to secure sufficient families for the number of students wishing to stay. Thus while the homestay situation provides an opportunity for friendship building between Saudis and New Zealanders, unfortunately negative situations – both from the perspective of students

and families – means in some cases the opposite outcome results. Each is left with a worse impression of the other culture than prior to entering the homestay situation.

While homestay may be the primary situation in which to make friends with locals, students expect university will be another. However, one student interviewed found that some New Zealand university students were less willing to make friends with people from other countries. This student noticed that university students tended to group together with others of the same background. She felt that this was likely the same anywhere in the world, including in Saudi Arabia. It might be that local students have established networks and therefore don't feel the need to make 'new' friends to the same extent that international students do. In contrast, students tend to make friends easily with students from different countries while studying English with other international students. Students studying English are all away from home, and therefore in a similar situation, all willing to make 'new' friends.

Comparing homestay accommodation with meeting students randomly at university, it seems reasonable to assume that, all going well, the homestay provides a greater opportunity for close friendships to build. In a homestay, students share their daily lives with locals in a situation where friendships between people of different cultures has to an extent been pre-arranged. Often families are used to receiving students from different countries and are therefore experienced at adjusting to differences. Friendships outside of homestay such as at university might require a more pro-active approach from students and greater understanding of local culture since friendships are less automatic. Indeed when seeking to make friends with locals, some students were unsure of local customs around friendship expectations. One student felt local people were not open to the range of social interactions she was used to. She explained:

They are not too open [...] In Saudi I can invite them [friends] to my house but here its different, it's like they feel my home is my privacy.

This comment suggests the student is not sure of how to progress a relationship beyond initial friendliness. For Saudis, entertaining friends at home, especially through providing a meal, is an acceptable way to make friends and students are often quick to invite other Saudis to their homes. However this student's experience suggests some locals may have a different perception of personal space and free time. It seems likely that initial contact with locals is easy but deeper friendships are not as easy as they would be with others of their own culture. This could be true of most cross-cultural friendships since differing social norms and

understandings mean more effort is required to understand each other both linguistically and culturally.

10.2.3.1 Nightlife

Some students have however found a way to bypass the barriers to making friends thus far described. Some have found that it is easier to make friends with locals through nightlife, or 'clubbing'. One student observed that people were much more friendly after a few drinks, and prone to exchanging Facebook addresses and phone numbers at nightclubs. He explained:

In daytime people are serious [...] people get drunk and break this shyness and talk.

Thus nightlife becomes the avenue for which students can more effectively make friends with other young people, without the concerns associated with more formal scenarios. English fluency is not so important, anxiety is reduced, and both Saudis and locals are able to let their guards down and forget differences in culture. It seems therefore that the two scenarios in which students are more likely to make friendships with locals are either in homestay or through participating in nightlife. However this poses a challenge for students who either don't stay in homestay or don't join nightlife activities. Some students seem unsure of where they can effectively make friends beyond these situations.

As mentioned previously, Saudis develop friendships at home and within their community through sharing food and tea or coffee. On the other hand, students observe that the local consumption of choice of young people is typically alcohol. Therefore students often feel the pressure to join in, essentially swapping coffee for alcohol, both through wanting to experiment, and in an effort to integrate. The perception of the role of alcohol in social situations (discussed in the previous chapter) suggests students may not be familiar with the wider range of other activities available to them for making friends. This is especially true of the majority of students who live in the city centres since while bars and nightclubs are obvious social places, sports and hobby clubs are not as visible. In addition, extracurricular activities (beyond socialising) are not as popular in Saudi so students don't typically seek them out in New Zealand. While some students do play sports, emphasis is on interacting with locals in social situations which inevitably involves temptation towards substances not usually condoned in Saudi.

10.3 “They can, they can, they can...” (Making Friends and Keeping Values)

While students are keen to make friends, many feel a push-pull between wanting to make friends and adhering to their values over the long term. This is explained by one student:

It's easy to make friends here, the hard thing is to maintain the relationship because you reach a level with your friends where they want you to break rules but you can't break it, so this will be the end for you. You have to be like them to be with them, there are some people like this. They feel not comfortable with you, and for them you are not interesting.

The rules this student refers to relate to pressure to drink, smoke drugs or date girls / boys. Students feel pressure from New Zealanders (and other international students) to break cultural and religious norms to act more like locals. At home in Saudi, students similarly expect their friends to behave like them. That is, students are generally conditioned at home to make friends with people who have similar (albeit different from New Zealand) values and behaviour. One student explained this:

I think we grow in my country, the people don't accept different people, we want all people copy each other, it's difficult to accept someone who is different. Men it's a problem because they come and everything is open and most Saudi people, more than half they drink and go with girls and when they go back to their country they won't even accept that his sister goes to study, but he does everything, and they very open, very gentlemen with the foreign girls but in their special life with their wife, no.

These observations suggest that to a certain extent both Saudis and New Zealanders expect others to be like them, to be accepted as friends. In the experience of Saudi males, conformity in New Zealand requires them to break moral rules or ignore values. Some students struggle to reconcile such pressures with their willingness to make friends. Females on the other hand have greater pressures from their families and within the Saudi community to maintain Saudi values regardless of any desire to make local friends. Thus the experience of each gender is quite different. Men are allowed to exercise greater flexibility in adapting to local norms and therefore have an advantage over female students when it comes to making friends locally, since they can act as locals to a greater extent.

One of the areas in which gender differences are most different is the area of friendships with the opposite sex. Such friendships are not encouraged in Saudi and therefore are often a new proposition for many students in New Zealand. Relationships involving physical contact

outside of marriage are not condoned in Saudi society, while quite normal in New Zealand. It is especially difficult for Saudi females to have male friends in New Zealand, while many Saudi males enjoy this experience. One female interview participant described the strict behavioural norms expected of Saudi men at home:

Men in my country he has rules for example not allowed to kiss any people or touch any girl except his wife or his mother or his aunt like that, maybe New Zealanders because there's another religion they can touch, they can kiss, they can they can they can...

These same rules apply to women and both genders can run into difficulties when trying to maintain the conservative norms described above and at the same time be friendly in New Zealand. A case drawn from experience illustrates this. One student who had not long been in New Zealand, and who had made friends with his classmates. When a Russian female friend was leaving to return to her home country, she hugged each student in the class to farewell them. When it was his turn for a hug he jumped a metre back in fright. He had never touched a female outside his family, and as much as he liked the Russian girl, he couldn't bring himself to hug her. This same student later made friends with a "kiwi" neighbour. She became quite fond of him and decided she wanted to be more than friends. She invited him to her home, and started to undress. He went to the bathroom and promptly jumped out the window and ran home. Their friendship ended, as she wasn't willing to be his friend after this incident. In both cases he was following the rules he had learnt at home, doing what would normally be expected of him, yet such conservatism is not easily explained to New Zealand locals or other international students.

10.3.1 Friendship Experience of the Different Types of Saudi

Students adopt various New Zealand behaviours (break rules) depending on their personal views on how to participate in local life, whilst maintaining or letting go of the norms they have grown up with. Thus students participate in activities in New Zealand either adapting to local customs, or maintaining their own cultural behaviours and carefully selecting the activities they can join. Differing levels of conservatism or adherence to home country norms influence the extent to which different students alter their behaviour while making friends in New Zealand.

According to student interviews, Saudis generally adapt to the culture of the country they visit in order to fit in with locals. This can be seen most visibly in the way students adopt local dress. The majority of Saudi students (across the spectrum) change their style of dress abroad

both in the case of men and women. Men switch their thobe (traditional male clothing, a full length white dress with red and white head wrap) for jeans and tee-shirts, often wearing shorts in summer (not allowed in Saudi). Women adapt their clothing to varying extents also. Most Saudi women in New Zealand exchange their traditional black abaya (full length coat), for coats or full length clothes of brighter colours. Many choose not to wear the black veil face covering, instead opting for a hijab – head scarf – or no head covering at all. While most students make changes to their dress, the particular types of clothes adopted by both men and women can reflect the student's conservatism.

In chapter eight, students were described in terms of conservative, middle or normal, and open orientations. These terms can be used to explain differing experiences of friendship in New Zealand, along with varying levels of adaptation to local norms, starting with clothing choices. A conservative female might feel uncomfortable exchanging Saudi local dress for any other, while an open male might arrive in New Zealand wearing shorts. On the other hand, a middle / normal Saudi might initially feel uncomfortable wearing shorts and tee-shirts, but might over time might adapt to this clothing. Thus in addition to varying levels of conservatism, the length of time a student is in New Zealand can influence their adaptation to local norms.

New social skills are also developed and adopted depending on students' perspectives on what is permissible in engagement with locals. Students learn to interact in a different manner in order to mix with locals. According to interviews, a 'normal' Saudi learns to smile at people in the street and say good morning on the bus. He makes behavioural changes to be the same as the people in the country he is staying. One student explained:

The first thing I love it in New Zealand when I see the people smile and say hi, and that's first thing I learnt when I came here.

An 'open Saudi' adopts local culture and makes friends with locals without any restrictions. This Saudi seeks out members of the opposite sex along with alcohol and drugs, without religion stopping him or her. This was explained by a student who stated:

Saudi people, when they come here, they want to try new life actually, sometimes they throw the religion away and they experience something completely new.

Also:

They will start looking and searching and trying to get more and more [vice] cos he has no religion that stops him, and he's not wise enough to know this is wrong.

The 'open Saudi' joins all activities of choice with little regard for previously instilled values. By contrast, the conservative Saudi is more likely to worry about his or her relationships in terms of how friendships abroad might affect them negatively. Respondents felt a conservative Saudi worries about 'his' (students discussed types of students in terms of male characters) ethics and religion. According to students;

They worry about are they going to change or not? It's a good thing to change, but they think am I going to lose my religion? Or am I going to be open minded?

They worry about the religion, if they will miss the religion, if they will forget god, these things, the culture.

The media tells us when we go and travel, don't lose your religion.

A conservative Saudi thus worries that the new experience might lead him away from religion and that he might forget god or his culture. He worries about the prospect of changing and becoming more open minded. He prefers to be friends with people from the Gulf countries since this means he is less likely to stray in the religion, and doesn't need to explain himself. Students felt that while some conservative Saudis will want to make local friends, others won't want to mix with foreign people. Some won't want to be friends with people who drink:

They care about the drink cos they don't drink, so if they see someone drinking they won't be their friend. They will start to feel scared of the person.

Further, perception of the 'conservative' or 'religious' Saudi is that they will most likely strategize about how to live abroad without being influenced by others and work out how to focus on getting benefit from the situation, like language skills, and then return to Saudi. As explained in chapter nine, this stereotype is based on students' views of other Saudis rather than of first hand explanations of self.

10.4 "I Don't Listen to Them" (Advice from Families and Friends)

Students' varying worldviews and propensity for making friends outside their culture and religion can be influenced by the various 'authority figures' in their lives. Contact theory (discussed in chapter two) posits that authority support is a friendship facilitating condition in

a contact situation. This dimension was explored through targeted interview questions in order to understand its relevance in the current study. During interviews, students discussed the close relationships they had with their families at home, and the respect and attention they gave to their elders. Therefore it stands to reason that they would also be interested in the opinions of their families, vis-à-vis making friends with locals or other international students. Many had indeed discussed friendships in New Zealand with their families, both prior to travelling and while in New Zealand, and had received varying messages. In some cases students received messages of encouragement and advice and sometimes warnings about such friendships. Parents were the most notable authority figures, giving students varying levels of encouragement to make friends.

10.4.1 Encouraged to Make Friends

According to interview responses, students have been encouraged to make friends with locals by various authority figures. These include their families, New Zealand host families, friends, New Zealand teachers, and the Saudi government through development of the scholarship program. Most obvious was the role family played in influencing students. Students felt encouraged by family members to make friends so that they could benefit from their New Zealand experience. In particular, families encouraged them so that they would learn the language, the culture, to be sociable and so they could gain assistance with their lives in New Zealand. Some students were specifically advised by parents not to mix with other Saudis or Arabic speakers, since this would slow down their language advancement. One son was offered the following advice:

My father said never sit with Arab people because my language, sit with different people. My father was in America and I have 4 brothers and all of them in different countries, nobody in Saudi Arabia.

His father also advised him:

You don't have to be a Saudi in everything, just make friends.

Students from families such as this one, where other members of the family have studied abroad, were more likely to be encouraged to make friends. Another student reached this conclusion, stating:

A few have encouraged me but very few, the ones he has studied overseas, he will encourage me.

The above quote suggests encouragement in this student's home environment is not common (limited to those who have studied abroad); however this contrasts with the experience of another student who mentioned:

All people tell me to make friends like even in the religion they tell us to be friendly.

In addition to encouragement from external sources, students also mentioned their internal motivations to make friends while studying abroad. One female student explained:

Nobody will tell me that [to make friends] because they know I can make friends without any encouragement.

Another voiced similar sentiments:

It's a good idea for me to have NZ friends because I am in NZ, but nobody tells me this.

One student explained that while not being told to make friends via specific messages, he had internalised the message nevertheless. He stated:

We heard that at the beginning of our language to improve our language. Our teachers, and the life here telling me that, I'm living here so I have to make friends.

Students generally felt motivated to make friends in New Zealand either through specific messages of encouragement from external parties (namely their parents) or, in the absence of positive authority figures, through their own observation and conclusion.

10.4.2 Discouraged from Making Friends

While some students were encouraged to make friends in New Zealand, others were discouraged. Several students talked about the people or groups who had discouraged them from making friends abroad. These included 1) Saudi friends in NZ or Saudi, 2) family, and 3) religious leaders. While survey results (chapter seven) indicated that less than 20% of students felt discouraged from making friends by either family or religious groups (friends weren't considered in the survey question), interviews found that it was common for students to be warned about mixing with people from other countries. Students were often told to watch out for people who had different cultures and who might for example find drinking and drugs to be acceptable. Such advice wasn't limited to mixing with New Zealanders but people of other nationalities in general. Those warning students worried that students could be negatively influenced and pick up bad habits.

While some groups were identified as discouraging some students, generally students varied in terms of the extent to which they felt they had been warned not to befriend non-Saudis. Two contrasting experiences were discussed, one being:

No one has told me not to be friends with people in New Zealand

(Similar to all people have encouraged me, as per the previous section), to:

Most of them will discourage me.. I'm discouraged from my family side, from religious leaders, from everyone.

Generalisations of discouragement are difficult to apply to all students (as are those of encouragement) since responses demonstrate experiences at home have been quite different. There was however a split between positive and negative perspectives on friendships at home. Since I wanted to understand any effects negative encouragement might have had on a student, I asked students who had described varying levels of discouragement how that influenced their willingness to make friends in New Zealand. The respondents unanimously replied that discouragement did not stop them from making friends. Examples of responses included:

It won't affect me, what to do is always what I want to do. I listen to them, I see what's their opinion, I see why they said that I shouldn't make friends or something, if I find people or a good person of course I would love to be friends.

Also:

But I think everybody is different, even in my people. You see some people are good, some people are bad, you don't judge all the people like that.

And:

I would be more careful but that won't stop me, I look for certain people who are nice to be friends with.

Thus although some students accepted that discouragement towards making friends abroad was an aspect of their experience, this did not affect their willingness to make friends. In some cases, students considered the qualities of the people they hoped to befriend, mindful of the advice to be careful but not to the extent that it would stop them from making friends with locals.

10.4.3 Mixed Messages

After identifying potential sources of encouragement and discouragement, students were asked what effect potentially opposing messages had had on them as they decided to make friends in New Zealand. This question was included in order to understand the weight students gave to positive or negative messages as they developed their own perspectives on friendship building in New Zealand. Several noted that although they had listened to mixed messages, they didn't have a strong effect on their willingness to make friends. Several opinions shared were:

Actually I don't listen to both of them, I experience this myself, I meet the person and decide if worth it to be a friend or not, I'm not easily influenced.

Now I'm like 20, old enough to know what's right and what's wrong, and if they discourage me then I will think why, what, how, I'll think about it and I will see if they convince me with their ideas its ok, if they don't then I'm not going to listen to them.

Because I have seen many good Saudi in my life and many bad Saudi in my life. I will find them here as well, I have found good and bad people so I have the decision to make which way will I make my relationships.

The comments made on effects of mixed messages of encouragement and discouragement suggest that at least some students were not easily influenced. They considered a range of opinions and respected opinions of family, but in the end made up their own minds. Indeed some appeared quite stubborn in rejecting discouragement if they had experiences which were at odds with the advice given to them. They develop their own thoughts around the validity of friendship building, regardless of external messages in some cases. It seems students are more willing to follow positive encouragement towards friendship over negative especially since positive messages are more in line with their own inclinations and conclusions.

10.5 “We Divide New Zealand People into Two Groups”(Students Advise Each Other On Whom to Befriend in NZ)

The discussion thus far has explained differing values and behaviours which inform student propensity to adapt to local culture and make friends, accompanied by the opinions of various authority figures that might influence the same. Across the sections thus far examined, sensitivities towards the experience abroad have surfaced. These can be summarised as concerns within the Saudi community around the risks of picking up bad habits through experience abroad. Such apprehension has led some local Saudis to warn new comers not to

get too close to New Zealand people since in their view this can lead them to negative behaviours such as partying and drinking alcohol. Such advice is forthcoming within the Saudi student community locally, as described by one student:

We divide New Zealand people into two groups, who are I would say bad in our eyes (drink too much, do something we don't like in our religion or tradition), we encourage each other not to have relationships with them. I mean Saudis, Saudi community, because we don't have these bad habits, these vice. It is not about New Zealand per se or even Chinese.

When prompted to explain who he 'could' be friends with, the student replied:

The other people, who drink reasonably.

This example demonstrates that on the one hand, some Saudis in the community discourage others from freely choosing their friends in New Zealand, thus discouraging some friendships. However the latter comment about mixing with people who drink reasonably suggests an understanding that to make friends locally, some compromise is necessary. While Saudi (Islamic) ethics do not allow Saudis to drink at all, some are willing to encourage friendship with people from other countries who drink in moderation. This provides an example of how the Saudi community works collectively to support each other with advice on the kinds of people to befriend or avoid. It demonstrates a philosophy which delineates not between differences in ethnicity, nationality or religion per se, but rather based solely on differing values and moral behaviour. Key to positive friendship building in this scenario is Saudis helping Saudis stay away from people who might negatively impact their core values, while making friends with people whose values, while not identical, would not conflict greatly either. This compromise reflects a strategy based on experience and underlines a recognition that while some vices should be mitigated, not all locals are the same, and Saudis should seek to make friends and protect core values concurrently.

10.6 “I Try Not to Cross the Red Line” (Gender Differences in Making Friends)

As has been mentioned already in this section, female students have a different experience of making friends with locals than male students, due to greater conformity to cultural and religious norms. Norms dictate they shouldn't venture from what is expected of them culturally. In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter, female students are often more apprehensive about how they will be considered due to their different style of dress. Given the

two very different experiences of friendships in New Zealand and the fact many generalisations are explained in terms of the male character, this section will emphasise the female experience of friendship in New Zealand in order to provide a balanced representation.

Saudi females in New Zealand tend to spend more time at home and have fewer opportunities to interact with locals than male students. They are less likely to stay in a homestay, and tend to have more responsibilities in the homes, especially if accompanied by their spouse or children. The demands of getting used to a new environment, caring for children and assuming primary duties in the home, all while studying, means female students may have little time for extra-curricular and friendship building activities. Further, in the case of married Saudis, husbands can influence who a wife may or may not befriend in New Zealand. Therefore a female's propensity to make friends with locals may be influenced by the willingness of her husband (or brother) towards the same. This custom was explained by one female student:

In Saudi the man can choose his wife's friends, can choose if she finishes her education, if she can go to work or not. Young people start to change, but I'm surprised about the women who accept that, they can refuse. They see the internet, it's open.

The latter observation that women might see another way of life and refuse their traditional roles is perhaps a frightening proposition for conservative Saudis, while welcomed by more open Saudis. Indeed often male students make friends with a range of people while restricting the friendships available to a wife or sister, in an effort to protect them from potentially 'negative' influences. Just as Saudis generally encourage other Saudis away from locals that partake in vice (dividing New Zealanders into two groups), males can decide it simpler just to steer females away from all locals, so as not to worry about this distinction.

Other factors also influence the propensity of females to make friends. One student who was willing (and allowed) to make friends with locals, found it difficult to do so as she felt that local students her age were at a different stage of life. She felt she differed from locals her age since she was married and had a child. She saw this as a barrier to friendship building in terms of how she was viewed by her peers, who were put off by her family situation. This situation may be relatively common considering Saudi students often marry young and it is not uncommon for couples to be accompanied by several children while they study in New Zealand.

Female students are often willing to make (female) friends, even though this is not as easy as it is for male students. However many face greater restrictions in terms of where they might meet locals. According to one student:

Most won't want to go clubbing, to bars or to travel overnight with people outside their family.

Further, females find additional challenges when trying to make friends with males in New Zealand, especially since this is not accepted in Saudi culture. While male Saudis may have male or female friends in New Zealand, female students are not usually allowed to do the same. The type of venue people meet, as suggested in the above quote, further complicates this. One female told me she would be interested in having male friends in New Zealand, however even though she was open to the idea, she thought this would be difficult since she felt they would likely want to go to a bar, and meeting there would be against her values. She explained that while she was happy to make male friends, generally most other females preferred to be alone than go to places where there were males.

Students commented that both males and females were scared of mingling with the other gender in case this led to a sexual situation. Students are used to gender segregation at home and while some enjoy the mixing of genders in New Zealand, others feel uncomfortable, especially amongst Saudis. This is evident in female participation, or lack of it, at Saudi events locally. At most local Saudi events, males and females are segregated with different rooms available for each. Such events are attended by a significant number of female Saudis. On the other hand, events where male and female students share a room (even if seated in different parts of the room) have a very low female turn out. Such events are a relatively recent modern initiative for which organisers face a boycott by most female students if they are not provided a separate area or room. Students appear more sensitive about mixing with other Saudis of opposite sex than they are with foreigners, since students will in most cases go to mixed gender classes, while avoiding mixed gender Saudi events.

Preference for gender segregation is one illustration of the cultural hurdles females students must overcome in order to make local friends. Some do make friends despite the challenges. Two students explained how they navigated differences in values by staying mindful of a red line. That is, there were some things they could try in New Zealand, but there was a 'red line' which they could not cross. Crossing the line refers to some activities which would not be

accepted by themselves or others. Views differ from person-to-person as to what is on the right or wrong side of the red line.

Students generally discussed cultural differences as the main hurdle to understanding each other, however one female student found that religious behaviour was in fact one of the main issues which affected making friends in New Zealand. According to her the prohibitions expected of Muslims which were permitted by Christians and Jews were a barrier to developing friendships. According to this viewpoint, it is not difference in religion per se which affects friendships, but the requirement to follow the value oriented behaviour associated with the religion. Female students often exhibit more conservative understandings than males of the religion and greater adherence to cultural and religious practices. This, combined with less experience outside the home (both in Saudi Arabia and in New Zealand) and more domestic responsibility for the family, means it is not as easy for females to make friends with people outside of their community as males. Male students find it easier to make friends abroad as they are more likely to differentiate between cultural and religious practices, demonstrate more flexibility in behaviour abroad, and have more time and inclination for extracurricular activities.

10.7 Conclusion

Most students are willing to make friends with locals and students of other nationalities and generally participate in a range of social activities with others. However, willingness can be combined with anxiety, as students seek to adapt their behaviour appropriately while maintaining values. Values accepted in each culture are not universal, as in the case of becoming “open minded”. While being open minded would be considered a positive attribute in New Zealand culture, open minded in Saudi culture can signify allowing vice and is therefore not a quality to aspire to. Although anxiety around differing values may affect some students, the success of friendship building in New Zealand is often governed by practical rather than emotional considerations. Students generally find locals to be approachable (and hence don’t feel nervous to make friends) while concluding that their English ability and opportunity to meet locals have the largest effect on relationship building. An external perspective (my own) would be that their behaviour towards locals also has a considerable influence on effective friendship building, as demonstrated in homestay experiences.

Male students find it easier to build friendships than females since they are more likely to stay in homestays, and undertake a greater range of activities in their spare time. Female students

have some unique challenges in friendship building. Different life styles and expectations mean female students are more likely to closely hold onto their Saudi identity and customs, and less likely to adopt behaviours which might conflict with conservative religious interpretation. For Saudi females there are a greater range of norms which are not negotiable. This is most visible in terms of clothing. While Saudi men leave their traditional garments behind, except for a small segment of more open Saudis, female students will generally compromise in their clothing rather than adopt full local attire.

Students find that locals can do whatever they want in terms of social behaviour ('they can they can...'), and are not restricted by religious obligations. Saudis generally choose to befriend locals, mindful of these differences. Each student navigates a path which allows them to make friends while adapting or maintaining differences. As discussed, the outcomes in terms of flexibility of behaviour will depend on how open or conservative a student is.

Families and other external parties are also mindful of the differences students will be confronted with. As such, students receive varying messages from friends and family, in terms of advice or warning about making friends with other nationalities in New Zealand. While they respect the opinions of those close to them, comments made by students suggest that they make up their own minds about whether or not to make friends with others, based on their personal observations and experience. While there are different 'types' of Saudis (conservative, middle, and open) demonstrating varying opinions and behaviours, varying comments towards engagement with locals suggest that students have been raised in different 'types' of families. For instance, students who come from families where studying abroad is common are more likely to be encouraged to make friends in New Zealand. This highlights the longer term benefits of international education, across generations, in terms of encouragement of relationship building. It may also indicate a movement between different types of behaviour as a result of the study experience. This will be further discussed in chapter twelve.

Chapter 11:

Reflections on Studying in New Zealand

The study-abroad experience leads students to observe and adapt to new norms and also to reflect on their own. Most of the students in this study developed an appreciation of aspects of New Zealand culture while simultaneously questioning norms they had previously taken for granted. This aspect of student experience comprises questioning of the old and new which in itself can be a transformative experience, as students' worldviews respond to the stimulus of the study-abroad experience.

This chapter discusses some of the issues which students reflected on as a result of their time in New Zealand. This includes observations of behaviour changes in themselves and their peers, and strategies for bridging home country norms with new ones in order to build friendships in New Zealand. General comments on their experience are discussed, such as opinions on the suitability of New Zealand as a study destination for Saudi students and advice from students on how Saudis can make friends in New Zealand with greater success.

The students who took part in this study had been in New Zealand up to three years, although their scholarship allows them to stay for an initial five years total, with potential to extend even further if they are accepted into further studies (for example, a Master's or PhD). Thus the opinions of students discussed in this chapter takes them up to the three year mark at most, leaving a further two or more ahead of them in which they may further refine their viewpoints.

11.1 “After I Moved to New Zealand I Changed a lot” (Personal Transformation)

Interview participants discussed the various areas in which they felt they had developed in maturity and outlook. Students remarked on becoming more independent, developing new perspectives on their cultural and religious upbringings, and learning new norms in order to adapt to New Zealand, including strategies to help make friends. This section will discuss each aspect of personal development in turn.

11.1.1 Independence

Most of the students sent abroad on the scholarship program are either in their late teens or early 20s, an age where they are still maturing. Their study-abroad experience sees them catapulted from an environment where they often don't have much responsibility either for

themselves or their home to one where they must take full responsibility. Effectively they are ‘dropped in the deep end’. At home in Saudi they might have a maid, a cook, in the case of female students a driver, and numerous older family members looking after their wellbeing and expenses. Arriving in New Zealand they must learn a range of skills to survive in their new environment including organising and adjusting to accommodation, financial management, taking public transport, and a range of study and course related skills, all within the overarching situation in which they must adapt to a new and very different culture.

The situation students find themselves in requires that they quickly mature and become responsible for themselves. Yet such a transformation takes time, sometimes to the frustration of the homestay families and institutions coping with immature students. Several interview participants found that young New Zealanders of a similar age were more independent than Saudis partially because they were able to leave home when they were younger, and also because they had more personal responsibilities. One surmised that in New Zealand, “everyone has their own life”. This creates extra pressure on Saudi students to learn to be more self-sufficient so that they can keep up with locals and interact on an equal footing. One student explained this situation, providing an example of a New Zealander and Saudi both aged 16 years:

So imagine you have 2 friends, 16 both of them and the other guy is useless he doesn’t know how to do anything, and the other 16 years and he knows how to do everything, and together, it’s hard. So the other person he has to change, to try to improve.

Through this example the student sought to explain how Saudis have to try to catch up with their New Zealand friends in terms of independent behaviour. He felt it was up to the Saudi to change rather than for the New Zealander to adapt to the less mature Saudi. In essence this demonstrates recognition of differing levels of maturity and an acceptance that living in New Zealand means adapting and learning new norms of behaviour.

From the perspective of homestay families, many would appreciate their students becoming involved in a greater range of activities outside the home. Families seem to have two main experiences of students, either the homestay student spends a lot of time away from the home typically socialising with friends and staying over at friends’ homes downtown so that he can go out in the weekend, or the student is underfoot. The latter tend to spend a lot of time on the internet (often using up the families monthly internet quota in a matter of days), sleep in very late, and often need the homestay family to encourage them each day to get out of bed, have a

shower, wash their clothes, and go to class. Interviews with families suggest that they see life styles (and mentality) to be so different that it is common for them to comment that their Saudi student “seems to be on another planet”. In such cases students seem to be disorganised, unfocused, unmotivated, and not seeming to make an effort to fit into the norms of the family or join in activities outside the home. This often contrasts a homestay experience of students from other countries in Asia, Europe or South America, leading them to believe that Saudis are the most unusual students they have hosted. Fortunately the other half of students lead families to perceive Saudi students as some of the most interesting and engaging of the different nationalities they have hosted. Students seem therefore to be either one extreme or the other, either requiring a lot of extra attention and consideration from the host family or very enjoyable to have around.

The underfoot student is quite common. Yet whilst the homestay may be required to make a greater effort to teach Saudi students new norms of behaviour, many students do over time pick up new habits. Greater independence while abroad is an automatic consequence of the study-abroad program regardless of gender since the range of new experiences for male and female students requires greater initiative and problem solving, without the support students have at home. Female students develop varying levels of independence in New Zealand depending on their domestic situation. Some are accompanied by husbands who continue to take financial responsibility for the family, although in many cases the wife may be the primary scholarship holder with both spouses receiving scholarship income. Some are in New Zealand with brothers and others by themselves. The extent to which each gain a full range of experience in self-sufficiency may depend on the extent to which they travel to New Zealand with male relatives or spouses entrusted with assisting them. One participant described her experience of self-development. She found that the lifestyle change improved who she was on a personal level. She explained that in Saudi her husband and father had been responsible for all areas of her life. Since living in New Zealand she had become responsible for herself, especially since her husband often had to return to Saudi. In this new situation she learnt to look after herself. She enjoyed becoming more independent and found that she was bored when she returned home and had less to do.

Students generally find that learning to be more independent is a positive feature of studying in New Zealand. A Saudi friend told me that for female students leaving Saudi to live in New Zealand the experience may be akin to a bird in a cage having the door opened. She might not fly out immediately. She has been fed and looked after, hasn't needed to worry about

anything, especially not accommodation or daily life stresses (other than perhaps boredom). When the bird is able to fly out the world might seem scary, she might not want or know how to look after herself. Similarly this friend felt that Saudi females go through such a transition as they get used to having more options and more independence. In the beginning this might be unsettling and it may take a while for Saudi females to get used to this freedom. They might return to what they know and feel comfortable with. The (male) friend who described this was very encouraging of allowing females room to develop but also understanding of the challenges which they felt.

11.1.2 Reflections on Culture and Religion

Experience in New Zealand led some students to introspection, and criticism of various norms they had grown up with. Some students distanced themselves from being considering “typical” Saudis since they no longer agreed with certain cultural / religious practices in Saudi. Foremost in several conversations was the way Saudi culture had mixed with Islam. One student summarised that in Saudi, “The culture is more strong than Islam”. He then explained further what he meant by this:

I see some things in our culture that I’m not totally 100% OK with, they are not from our religion, they are from different sources actually. They are so stupid. For example, back home if you talk to a woman that’s like, I wouldn’t say a shame but it’s like you are trying to have something with her, and it’s totally from outside our religion.. Maybe from the old tribes, the Bedouin people.

Some students who professed they were not typical found they weren’t typical in terms of their views of Islam. One explained:

I’m not a really religious person. I’m Muslim, I like many things in Islam but the way that people see that and deal with that, I think it’s wrong, because it’s not like these people can’t live. We have a lot of sickness, psychological sickness of this.

This particular student identified with being Muslim but her opinions differed from some of the Saudi Islamic teachings common at home, which she felt were too restrictive. She seemed to suggest that the worldviews of more open Saudis were necessary for a more positive community development at home. Another student described how he developed a new understanding of religion which he credited to his study experience in New Zealand. He

explained a personal transformation from a ‘conservative’ Saudi to ‘open’ and then ‘middle’ (as per the typologies described in chapter eight):

I was religious close minded. I understood religion but in the wrong way. My religion it’s like the religion of dealing with people and socialising with people but because I stayed in Saudi, I didn’t go out that much, it didn’t make me like if I met any new people like foreigners, it was hard to talk to them or I didn’t want to socialise with them because I was Muslim. But after I travelled to New Zealand and studied in New Zealand, I started to understand my religion more. I understand my religion more in New Zealand than I understood my religion back home because back home everyone like says ohh religion, take everything from religion, but actually they didn’t practise the real religion. But here in New Zealand or any non-Muslim country where there is a minority of Muslims, you see the real Muslims who are practising the real Islam, how they socialise, how they interact with non-Muslims, with society. For me after I moved to New Zealand I changed a lot, I became more open minded in terms of having friends of both genders, females and males, in terms of its ok to go out with females, have friends even girlfriends, just changed a lot. I think I’m a better person.

This student also explained how he passed through several transformations since arriving in New Zealand, first becoming super religious (conservative), later more open and now feeling he had turned into a ‘middle’ Saudi. In his opinion, a more open world view was a positive outcome of his study-abroad, even though this conclusion conflicts with his original conservative perspective on religion and integration with non-Muslims. Similarly, over the last few years several students have told me that New Zealand society seems to be Islamic in character without Islam. They notice that people are treated equally, with respect for all, regardless of the job they do or where they come from. Equality and respect are deemed Islamic values and some students find these are more common in New Zealand than at home. This conclusion is paradoxical, students travel from an Islamic country without Islam to a non-Islamic country with. While no student would make such a statement outright, the fact students observe characteristics of both societies in relation to religious values and behaviour, as opposed to official state religions, shows a level of sophistication in reflections on the meanings and practise of their religion in both countries. Students develop an ability to differentiate between what is stated and what is practised across a range of measures of their own choosing.

11.1.3 Transformation of Different Types of Saudis

The examples given in the previous section described transformative experiences of different types of students. The female who found Saudi Islam too restrictive was 'open' before studying in New Zealand and it seems her experiences in New Zealand confirmed her existing views. The second, a conservative male, became more flexible in his worldview reaching the conclusion that his previous conservatism had been misplaced. While he previously believed he was following his Islamic beliefs carefully, in his opinion (now) this behaviour was less Islamic compared to his more open behaviour in New Zealand. This realisation requires a new perspective on religion; that greater conservatism does not equate with better moral behaviour and religiosity.

An adage suggest that a person can't say his morals are strong if he hasn't had the chance to test them. That is, a person can't say he would never take cocaine if it had never been offered to him. Similarly perhaps, some Saudis feel morally strong and 'conservative' in the absence of temptation at home (although this is changing and some illegal substances for example are becoming increasingly available and morality is opening up at home). When Saudis study in New Zealand they feel that all things are open and available and they therefore have a chance to test their will to either partake or refuse, and discover the true extent that their morals guide them in decision making.

Some students undergo a transformation from being conservative or middle to open or vice versa as they become part of a society where options become available to them. This was described by one interview participant:

In Saudi some things are like haram, you're not allowed to do some things and there are so many rules. In New Zealand when you go to a free country you can do whatever you want. Some of them they start to feel like ok I will drink, I'm in a free country so they start to do everything, EVERYTHING, and by the time they start to feel guilty and become more religious. On the other side, no they come like totally open minded. This is what I see, two kinds just two kinds.

This example shows that in some cases an 'open' experience can lead the student to feel guilty and then overcompensate by reverting to greater conservatism. In these scenarios students are sensitive to bridging religious understanding, with either acceptance or rejection of behaviours they themselves have subscribed to while in New Zealand. These experiences affect students in different ways, in part due to their original orientations towards greater or

lesser conservatism at home and also due to the conclusions they reach after experimenting with things not condoned in Saudi while in New Zealand. Some students noticed that when Saudis partake in 'vice' they often go to extremes. So while taking recreational drugs in some New Zealand circles can be considered 'normal', and dating 'normal', some Saudis will take drugs in excess and become very promiscuous. It could be that since morals have been dictated by others at home, and in the absence of temptation, some students haven't fully developed their own individual capacity to follow personal limitations. This then sets students up for some extreme experiences in New Zealand as they both experiment and deal with the psychological effect of their actions, namely guilt or a change of perspective about what is allowed.

My own observation is that students often seem to have a case of delayed teenage years. Students haven't had a chance to explore boundaries at home so they do this in New Zealand. This is corroborated by the opinion of one student I interviewed, who explained this is in fact why Saudis are different from all other international students. Students who come from countries where they have already experienced freedom are able to concentrate on studies in New Zealand, whereas Saudis can't because for them the experience of life in New Zealand is more interesting. For many, life experience and freedom are their main motivations to study-abroad. Changes in behavioural norms in New Zealand and new experiences can lead students to become more or less conservative than they were originally, with some moving between the two states throughout their experience abroad.

11.1.4 Identity

The transformation a student undergoes while abroad affects their identity. Until now this discussion has been framed in terms of orientation towards Saudi norms of being 'open', 'middle', or 'conservative'. Yet another and long term change in identity is how a student absorbs some of the cultural characteristics of the host country. One student who had studied his bachelor and Master degree in the US and who had only been in New Zealand for a month felt that his mind was now half American and half Saudi. He no longer felt he could identify solely with being Saudi. In the New Zealand scenario there may be a significant number of Saudis who are on their way to becoming half NZ and half Saudi. Given the descriptions of adapting to some New Zealand norms and behaviours, and given the length of time most scholarship students will spend in New Zealand (an average of 5 years each), such a transformation may well be underway. The extent to which this affects individuals will be moderated by the extent to which each student holds onto their cultural identity, and how they

see themselves in terms of being more or less 'conservative' and therefore more or less open to taking on 'foreign' habits.

Some students in this study already felt their ideas and behaviours differed from what was considered normal in Saudi. For example, one female student thought beyond just getting married and having a big family, and another had the confidence to talk to people. A male student liked to read, another liked to say thank you and be appreciative and smile at people he didn't know. One student didn't like the dangerous driving which he saw as the norm in Saudi. These are specific examples students used to illustrate the ways they felt they were different from most Saudis. In some cases students who felt they were different looked towards life decisions which would allow them to continue to express their new perspectives. One female student hoped to marry an open minded Saudi in future so that she would be able to take off her hijab (since her father didn't allow her to); another refused to marry a Saudi, instead hoping to meet a more open minded foreign Muslim. At the same time, some Saudi men have also grown frustrated by what they see as a Saudi female culture in which women are pampered, unhappy, unmotivated, and seem to complain a lot. In Saudi this has led to a significant number of Saudi men taking foreign wives, to the extent that the Saudi government has put restrictions on international marriages seeking to stem the tide of 'spinsters' in Saudi Arabia. Certainly both men and women who seek to marry outside of their culture view their identities as more fluid than more conservative Saudis who would seek to maintain family and tribal norms.

Some students have become used to New Zealand norms to the extent that home norms now frustrate them. Several students told me that when they went home for holidays they no longer accepted the hierarchy of a society in which some people were given special treatment over others. One mentioned his annoyance at VIP treatment in government departments. He didn't think it was fair that, for example, ordinary Saudis had to line up in long queues to apply for passports while VIPs had their own room and could finish their passport processing much quicker. Another Saudi who was starting a business at home and who needed to get certain permissions from officials thought he would try the New Zealand style of transparent negotiations and go direct to the person in charge and make his case. He found out quickly he couldn't even make an appointment and needed to find a middle person who was connected to this person so as to be able to get the permissions required. This same person found that other Saudis at home weren't organised, weren't punctual and he got frustrated at having to jump through apparently unnecessary hoops and making very little progress. Unfortunately,

adopting New Zealand norms didn't get him very far since the culture at home hadn't changed. This situation involves reverse culture shock, as students learn new ways of doing things which they hope to try at home. Over the short term such frustration is likely to play out in Saudi society as students return either for holidays or after they finish their studies. Longer term however there may be incremental changes as students who are half Australian, half Canadian, half Japanese, half Chinese and so on return home and take up positions in government departments and private enterprises. An international culture for doing business may develop over the long term.

Indeed one of the Saudi officials I spoke to discussed new skills which both male and female students would learn abroad. He explained that students will learn new skills abroad which can't immediately be used at home due to differences in culture and local laws but which in time should be useful. He gave the example of female students learning to drive. He felt that while females would not be able to drive when they went home, it was a worthy skill to learn, as this way when the law eventually changes there will be a critical mass of females who are able to drive and take advantage of the law change immediately. This example hints at possible longer term social engineering objectives of the scholarship program through sending a critical mass of youth abroad.

11.2 “Forget about Religion”(Strategies for Making Friends with Locals)

Greater maturity impacts on students' approaches to friendship building in New Zealand. Some students arrived with preconceived ideas of friendship rules, which were relaxed and refined over time as students learned how they could maintain their identity and meet people with different perspectives. One student described how he developed the ability to make friends under his own terms:

I'm not scared of meeting anyone now, I have girlfriends, they are not going to eat me, they are not going to freak me, as long as I'm interacting with them with my rules, and there are boundaries I don't cross, then that's it, why I should be scared? I socialise with you and I stick with my religion, I don't have to do like you do, like if you drink I have to drink, if you sleep I have to sleep, no it's not like this.

Thus this student developed the ability to maintain areas of morality he felt were part of his core identity, while being flexible in other areas, so he could experience friendships with both male and female locals. His description suggests he has had to reconcile his values with those

of locals, reaching the conclusion based on experience that he did not have to compromise the areas of his identity which he felt were immutable.

Some interview participants discussed the mind-set students should adopt in order to make friends. One felt they should be open-minded. As an example he explained that if locals ask a Saudi to go to a party, the Saudi should join them. Another mentioned that New Zealanders and Saudis should both be flexible and meet in the middle. He suggested that Saudis could talk about Saudi culture and give more knowledge about Saudi so that others could understand them more. He felt it was important to explain each culture to the other.

In one example a student found that Saudi generosity could be misunderstood by friends so she developed a way to deal with this situation, as explained:

Sometimes they think when you do something, you want something from them. So you have to explain why you do this before you do something. You have to say I grew up like this.

This student referred to the custom of gift giving and inviting friends for meals. She chose to overcome misunderstandings through explaining why she did things a certain way. Another advised that students should focus on making just one friend, being good with them, and then they would introduce the student to others. Others suggested friendships could be made by proactively expanding their activities. One student thought both locals and Saudis should forget about religion and establish relationships through businesses, friendship centres, and sharing activities such as volunteer work. Rather than considering differences, these activities would focus on finding a common goal.

Interview participants shared suggestions of ways that Saudis could make friendships in New Zealand. Their ideas focused on cross-cultural events to share experiences and culture. One thought instead of studying at a language school the cultural attaché could give permission for 4 students to live with a teacher and learn English with the teacher and share experiences. Another thought the Saudi cultural mission or consulate could organise parties and invite Saudi students and local people. One student thought a cultural festival or international festival at university might be a good idea, with diverse nationalities represented. This student had noticed at their university that various international clubs were not open to all nationalities but rather singled out nationalities with activities for their own communities; he thought it might be better if international events were multicultural. Another student thought

university lecturers could choose mixed nationality study groups rather than letting students choose their own since this often led to students choosing others of the same nationality. In general, students' suggestions related to cross-cultural events where diversity would be appreciated. Some ideas discussed would require support from various New Zealand and Saudi offices and officials. By making such suggestions students show an appreciation for the fact that authority figures can make a contribution to their efforts to make friends in New Zealand. Perhaps some students would feel more empowered by events which help to raise a positive profile for their culture and counter any negative stereotypes. This seems a logical perspective considering the misconceptions some students have encountered amongst locals, as discussed previously.

In all, a range of suggestions were provided by students. Willingness to come up with solutions for making friends demonstrated they were interested in friendship and that they had considered the issue outside of the interviews.

11.3 “It’s too Hard to Get Good Grades” (Reflections on Education in New Zealand)

Students were generally happy with the New Zealand environment and New Zealand people as has been discussed already. Students have found New Zealanders to be approachable and friendly, which has positively impacted their transition to this new stage of life. However, a number of students cited issues in their education experience which had not been so positive. Three female students stated they would not recommend New Zealand because they found the system too academic and too hard to get good grades compared to other English speaking countries.

There was some agreement amongst respondents that students who chose to study in New Zealand should be hardworking students, since the academic system is much more difficult than other English speaking countries. One explained that in New Zealand no exceptions were made for students who speak English as a second language, which students felt differs from the experience of their friends studying in the UK and US, even in elite universities. Another student explained that when students returned to Saudi and were evaluated for work positions, students who had low grade averages from New Zealand universities were seen as a similar standing to students who had high grades but who had studied in the US or UK. This may be consolation to students finishing their courses with average grades; however in the majority of cases students are primarily worried about whether they will pass courses in New Zealand. It is common for students to finish English studies (with difficulty in gaining the necessary

IELTS score) to then fail foundation studies, only to relocate to British or American universities where entrance standards may be lower.

Whilst Saudi students might blame the institutions for their failure, few blame themselves. Yet staff at institutions often cite the lack of study or organisational skills, as well as attendance issues, as the main reason why Saudi students have a high failure rate compared to other nationalities. In addition, it seems many students are not academically prepared for study in New Zealand which raises questions about the quality of their high school education and/or accuracy of grading scales used. Added to this is the observation that most students seem to think they have a right to a scholarship, rather than being required to earn it. One student I spoke with had calculated the oil revenue Saudi receives and the amount provided to the education scholarship fund, describing it as a drop in the ocean. Because of this he felt that the least the Saudi government could do is to provide scholarships. Such attitudes lead some students to feel angry with institutions and even with their scholarship provider when they fail courses, expecting others to find solutions, looking for other options abroad rather than addressing the causes of their failure.

11.4 “New Zealand is Outside the World”(Benefits of Studying Far From Home)

Students considered the distance New Zealand is from Saudi with mixed feelings when deciding whether or not they would recommend the country to others. Some found the distance from family was difficult, while others appreciated the distance for other reasons. On the one hand, due to the distance, few parents visited their children in New Zealand, often preferring to meet up and take holidays in Asia (for instance in Malaysia) so they didn't have to travel so far. This was compared with options to study in Europe or the US where families were able to visit their children more often. Students in these countries could travel home more often also. On the other hand, however, a number of students commented on the benefits of being so far away. Two respondents explained they would recommend New Zealand specifically because of this:

Strongly yes. If they are going outside Saudi Arabia I would say go to New Zealand because it's very quiet, it's like outside of the world, by its own, quiet country, nice people. They are really far from the world, and sometimes I think it's cute for them because it's good to be far from the war, from the pollution.

It seems that the fact that New Zealand is far from the rest of the world is associated with being good for Muslims (as will be discussed in the following section) and with being able to

maintain a neutral foreign policy. Students perceive the overall environment is conducive for Saudi students since the distance helps create the set of circumstances which they enjoy.

11.5 “The People of New Zealand are still good for Muslims” (New Zealand as a Study Destination for Muslim Students)

Students were asked to describe the type of Saudi who would benefit most from studying in New Zealand. On the one hand respondents agreed that New Zealand was welcoming for all, but opinions differed as to whether or not conservative Saudis should come. Some said they should because New Zealand is welcoming, stating:

Even the closed minded people, they will find their way here.

All of them, even the conservative people they will enjoy studying here because it's less racist, its less violent here. It's a good environment for all types of Saudis.

Further, some were very positive about recommending New Zealand to other students, primarily due to their perception of New Zealand people as good. One explained:

Yes, secure, nice place to study. I recommend even to females, no racism, nothing, not being hit by any terrorist attacks or anything, so the people of New Zealand are still good for Muslims.

This comment highlights New Zealand's advantage of being far away and non-aligned with political events in the Muslim world. However, even so, a couple of students felt that the conservative student won't be able to adjust. One explained his perspective drawing a comparison between two contrasting experiences depending on the type of Saudi.

The normal one he can live here... but the strong Saudi [conservative] can't stay here. I mean like religious man, like some people in Saudi Arabia is really really strict, not like sometimes he can have fun, enjoy, laugh, smile, no, some of them they can't stay here long time, or they can't live here. You see all the people here fun, enjoy, different culture and different religion.

The latter example refers to the experience of the conservative Saudi in New Zealand. Consensus suggests however that students view New Zealanders as generally welcoming to Muslim students, more so than other English speaking countries (as described in chapter eight), and therefore the English speaking country most conducive to all types of Saudis. However there may be a small minority who might find living in a non-Muslim country too alien and not adjust. In my experience, however, only one student I have encountered has ever

gone prematurely (after 3 days), and that was primarily because he missed his mother. This student had never been away from home and couldn't phone home as the sound of his mother's voice brought him to tears. Also, while this study captured experiences of students from most parts of Saudi Arabia, students of both conservative and open orientations, none of the responses are indicative of students who would feel so uncomfortable in a non-Muslim country as to return home. It seems such opinions of the conservative Saudi who wouldn't adjust are based on fictitious stereotypes of conservative people at home rather than actual students in New Zealand.

Students generally had a positive impression of New Zealand to the extent that all students interviewed hoped to maintain linkages beyond their studies. A third of interview participants felt they would like to stay in New Zealand after studies and either work or start a business. The students who wanted to start businesses came from Jeddah (2), Makkah, and Riyadh, while a student from Qassim wanted to work in New Zealand in future. One of the students planning to return home would nevertheless like to buy a property, while the remaining students planned to return home without buying property but maintaining friendships. Thus all students interviewed intended to maintain a connection with New Zealand one way or another. This small sample suggests that students hailing from different regions of Saudi feel comfortable enough in New Zealand to consider their future in this country. That all students expected to maintain some links with New Zealand, if only through friendships, suggests the experiment of sending students abroad to form links with the host country is successfully leading to concrete results in the case of New Zealand.

11.6 Conclusion

The experience of studying abroad leads students to develop new skills and perspectives. It gives them a chance to become more independent and self-sufficient. They reflect on norms they have grown up with and compare these with those they observe and experience in the new environment. This results in the development of new perspectives which may be a hybrid of the old and new, as they have a chance to test the validity of previously held assumptions, alongside observations of differing viewpoints and life styles. The transformative experience of individual students differs according to the reflections of each student.

Experience in New Zealand leads students to reflect on their conservative norms, to alter some behaviour, and to consider the way religion is followed at home. In some cases students disagreed with conduct which was expected of them previously and started to question the

religious practices they had been taught, primarily since they saw culture dominating religion at home. The conclusions each student draws, and the way they bridge the old and the new, influences their behaviour and adaptation in New Zealand and the extent to which each student feels close to the new culture.

Students found New Zealand a comparatively easy country to adapt to, perceived to be a country which is open and welcoming for Muslim students. They appreciated the fact that New Zealand was far from international politics, seemingly uncorrupted by anti-Muslim rhetoric, with local people interested in learning more about Saudi Arabia. This has drawn many students to consider New Zealand as their study destination of choice. There is potential in the development of Saudi New Zealanders as a natural outcome of the amount of time students are spending in New Zealand, also since a significant percentage are intending to build futures in New Zealand beyond their studies.

Chapter 12:

Discussion

This research is about International Education as a conduit for engagement between countries; the case of Saudi students in New Zealand. Within this broad theme, the research attempts to develop an understanding of the extent to which international education is an effective mechanism for developing person-to-person diplomacy and relationship building, the factors which impact intergroup relations in this context, and the outcomes resulting from engagement. These aspects of student exchange have so far been explained in terms of:

- 1) Background to the current research question – theoretical perspectives, international education development trends based on philosophical and economic grounds, Saudi development issues
- 2) Student experience of friendships in New Zealand including motivations, impressions, barriers to friendships, transformation, reflections

While friendship is the overall theme, development of the same is affected by a number of interrelated issues, as has been explained in the research thus far. This chapter will discuss those issues as they relate to student experience, observations of student behaviour, and their relation to theoretical perspectives. The chapter begins with a broad discussion of key research findings across both the qualitative and quantitative data collection phases. It then expands on the general discussion to address the series of questions proposed in the research (chapter two) in order to tie together the aims and findings of the research. Finally, theoretical perspectives are discussed, in order to explain these observations within the Contact Theory framework which informed the direction of research enquiry and analysis. It is hoped that the output of this chapter will be a comprehensive analysis of the research questions in context, alongside an analysis of the critical role of Contact Theory in this study

12.1 Key Findings

12.1.1 Differing Impressions of Each Other

One of the salient features of this study is the differing impressions Saudis and New Zealanders have of each other. Quantitative and qualitative data sets addressed impressions Saudis had of New Zealanders, both before travelling to New Zealand and after getting to know the culture. Local impressions of Saudis were also discussed, from the perspective of

homestay families. What became apparent when analysing these viewpoints is that Saudi students generally maintained positive impressions of locals both before travelling and once in New Zealand. This was informed by the good experience of others who had travelled ahead and by generally positive expectations of ‘European’ people, followed by appreciation of the attributes of locals, observed once in New Zealand. On the other hand, local homestays were initially apprehensive of hosting Saudis, and then developed a greater understanding of both positive and negative aspects of Saudi behaviour or culture. Differing expectations can be explained in terms of students’ practical considerations vis-à-vis family life, compared with local social apprehension of hosting Saudis. This can be demonstrated in the following diagrams which represent pictorially the factors each considered of the other before deciding to live together.

Figure 12.1. Saudi Anxieties over Homestay Experience:

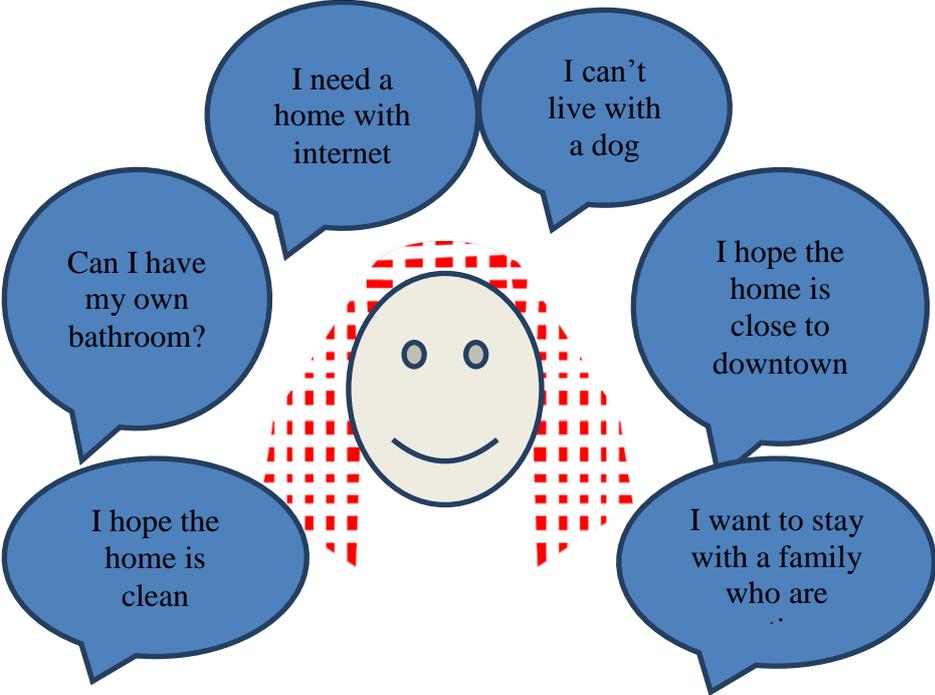
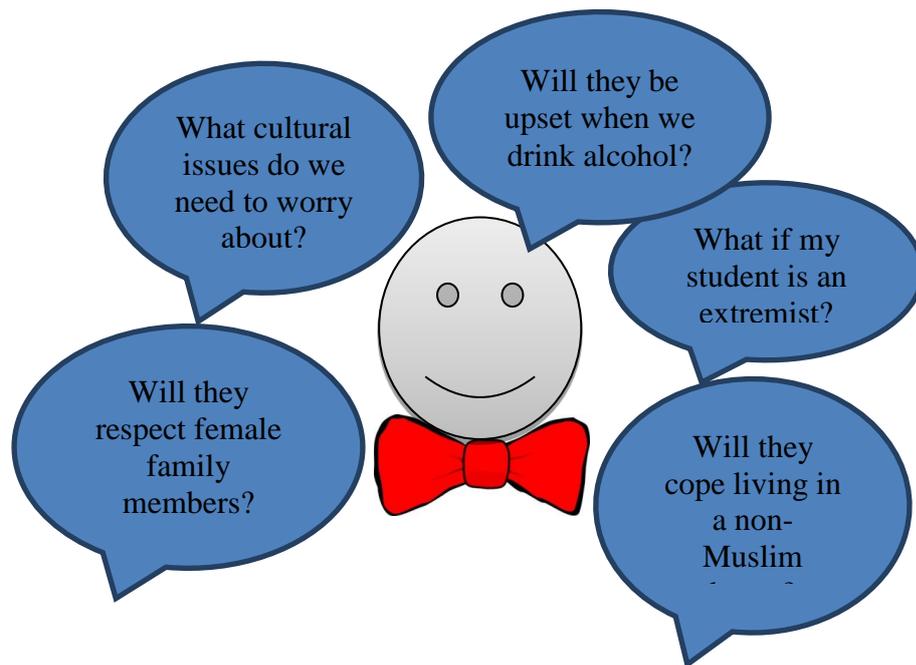


Figure 12.2. New Host Family Anxieties over Hosting a Saudi Student



Saudi students were primarily interested in how comfortable the home would be, while homestays generally worried how they would get along with their student, based on preconceptions of Saudi culture. Impressions of each other altered over time as each gained a more sophisticated understanding of the other. Saudis going into homestay later in their experience still had practical considerations on their mind; however they were also more aware of differences in culture. With time in New Zealand, students generally found that New Zealanders had a lot of rules for organising daily life, and were quite concerned with their finances. Saudi students had a lot to learn to keep up with New Zealand norms since they had not experienced the full range of rules now expected of them, or in many cases because they had few responsibilities at home in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, homestays who had hosted a number of Saudis overcame their original apprehensions, which they later exchanged for a new series of concerns. Prior to hosting subsequent students, homestays had practical concerns such as will the next student get out of bed to go to class every day? Are they expected to wake them? Will the student pay their homestay fees on time? Can we host an older or more mature student next time please? Thus from the local perspective, it seems while one stereotype was disconfirmed through experience, it was replaced by a new set of expectations of Saudi students.

12.1.2 Nerves - Saudis and Locals

With the exception of several females who worried about whether locals would accept their form of dress, students generally weren't nervous about meeting locals or making friends. Their positive impressions of locals, along with their desire to have a new experience, overrode any potential to feel nervous. Students were generally pleased to stay in homestays with people of other religions or of none, interested in having new experiences and improving their language. In many cases it seemed, however, that it was difficult for students to develop close friendships with locals.

Often local preconceptions of Saudis were not initially favourable. New potential homestay families worried that students wouldn't want to befriend non-Muslims, or be able to adjust to living in a non-Muslim household. There was an element of anxiety on the part of new families, who for instance had heard of extremists and didn't know how to discern one. A number of potential homestay families were nervous to host Saudis, and often did so only after being convinced that their negative stereotypes were not representative of most students. On the other hand, families who had hosted students previously developed a greater understanding of Saudi culture, which led to either an appreciation of students or, due to behavioural difficulties, deciding they didn't wish to continue to host Saudi students. Regardless of whether opinion became more positive or negative, and albeit generalised by homestay families beyond experience with a limited number of students, opinion was based on experience rather than an original narrow and potentially irrational generalisation.

As discussed thus far, the homestay experience can lead to better understanding of Saudi and New Zealand cultures. This does not necessarily mean a positive appreciation of the other culture, but rather a reconsideration of stereotypes. The homestay experience can be both positive or negative, depending on the interaction between the student and family. A student's background and outlook often affected homestay outcomes, as will be explained in the following section.

12.1.3 Differences in Experience Depending on Worldview

Descriptions of three types of Saudis were introduced in chapter eight and expanded on in chapter ten. Students generally acknowledged that there were different types. In some interviews, students described differing behaviours, and some described others as being more or less conservative, or more or less open. This led to the categorisations of 'conservative',

‘middle’, or ‘open’. Reference to these types of Saudi allows differing values and behaviours to be explained.

This study found a complex web of differing values amongst Saudi students, as students navigate different situations in New Zealand. However the categories used to illustrate different personality types seldom describe an individual across all situations. Few students can be summed up as solely displaying the characteristics of one ‘type’, since different situations bring out a student’s inner open, conservative or middle self. It is more realistic to expect that each student displays characteristics associated with more than one type depending on the situation, as they bridge cultural norms and religious world views, and exhibit individual perceptions. One example which relates to friendships specifically is that while most Saudis see themselves as open in making friends with New Zealanders, and more sociable than locals, this relates primarily to friendship with the same sex. Most students would feel comfortable making friends with others of the same sex in New Zealand (displaying a middle or open orientation) while somewhat less comfortable making friends with people of the opposite sex (suggestive of a conservative or middle orientation), since they have not had the opportunity or permission to do so at home.

Observation of behaviours suggests that distinctions are not fixed. Rather, culture and personality are fluid. The study found that a student’s ‘type’ or profile changed over time, based on a students’ observations, experience and personal development. In order to explain this, it is useful to first consider the types of behaviours of the three types when confronted with a series of variables, summarised according to participant responses and observation of students. The following table provides a picture of a range of student experiences, depending on personal worldviews classified as ‘conservative’, ‘middle’, and ‘open’:

Table 12.1. Worldviews across Common Variables in the Study-abroad Experience

Variable	Conservative	Middle	Open
Alcohol	Doesn't drink, doesn't like to be around others who drink, warns other Saudis of the dangers of drinking	Either doesn't drink or drinks in moderation, doesn't mind being around others who drink	Drinks without limitations, sometimes in excess
Drugs	Doesn't take drugs and doesn't like to be around others who do	Might take drugs occasionally and/or doesn't mind if others do	Can take drugs without limitations, sometimes in excess
Religion	Rigid interpretation of religion, only Saudi conservative Islam the true path, will make every effort to keep the values and behaviours taught	Has a flexible perspective on religion, believes in Islam and accepts that religious behaviour depends on the culture where the religion is being practised	Might forget religion when abroad so doesn't feel guilty breaking religious norms. Might feel that Saudi conservatism is off track and that Saudis need to be more open minded. Not concerned about the religious views of others and whether friends are Muslim or not
Friendships	Prefers friends who have similar beliefs. Might limit contact with people of different religion	Respects beliefs of others, seeks to follow own religion while adapting. Differentiates between culture and religion. Makes friends while maintaining core values	Makes male and female friends, has girlfriends / boyfriends irrespective of backgrounds. Might be promiscuous
Culture Adaptation	Maintains cultural practices. Doesn't want experience to alter his/her culture norms	Adapts many aspects of new culture, for example different clothing style	Adapts to most new culture norms without looking back
Social Behaviour	Worries about how to maintain Saudi social norms in the new environment	Learns social skills common in the new culture such as greeting strangers	Joins all activities he/she is interested in and behaves as a local

A student's experience of friendship in New Zealand will depend on their view of each of the variables in the table above. Students may move between each group depending on the circumstance or variable, and may change perspectives over time. For example, a conservative Saudi might feel that Saudi Islam is the only true religious viewpoint (conservative view) but might have friends who drink (middle) and might learn to say hi to strangers (middle). Similarly, a Saudi might respect others' beliefs while maintaining own (middle), but prefer to be friends with others of the same views (conservative) so as not to be tempted to go off track. Another might not drink alcohol at all since this is explicitly

forbidden in the Quran as an instruction against taking intoxicants (conservative) while thinking recreational drug use is fine while abroad (open) since it is not specifically mentioned. This same student might also have girlfriends (open) although feel guilty about it (middle). These scenarios suggest a range of possible combinations within broad trends. How each student leans towards one or other 'type' is dictated by how each student is able to reconcile taught behaviours and values with temptations and new experiences in New Zealand.

Movement between three types of behaviour is primarily in response to students' internal voices. Appropriate behaviour is negotiated internally within the frameworks of conservative, middle and open voices. Students have a common understanding of the conservative behaviours expected of them within their own culture, and usually try to adopt appropriate outward appearances. The social and gregarious nature of most Saudis is, however, at odds with the conservatism expected of them. This social nature, combined with the new frontier to explore when studying abroad, leads students to dismiss their conservative internal voice in order to have fuller experiences when outside their country. Women to a greater degree maintain their conservative voice, due to greater pressure within their community to conform, and greater social consequences if conservatism isn't maintained.

Saudi sociability and willingness to make friends will be further explained in the next section along with factors which influence friendships, external influences on friendships, and differences in gender. These will be explained in the context of the initial research questions, so as to develop a discussion of both the findings thus far discussed, and additional findings which relate to the research focus.

12.2 Addressing the Research Questions

Contact Theory Frameworks (see 2.2.4) were applied to the current scenario. This led to the development of a questionnaire and interview questions directed at answering four broad questions relating to the Saudi student experience in New Zealand. This section addresses these questions in order to explain key findings in relation to each.

12.2.1 Q1: To what extent are Saudi students successfully building friendships in New Zealand? (Friendship Potential)

According to Contact Theory, and as discussed in Chapter Two, the extent to which students are inclined towards and/or likely to make friends, is called 'friendship potential,' This is considered a key facilitating condition in the current contact situation. In this study, the above

question, “To what extent are Saudi students successfully building friendships in New Zealand?” is included in order to assess the contact situation, with some measurement, before exploring the topic in greater depth (see step three in 2.2.4). ‘The extent to which..’ was ascertained by statistics on the range of activities the students engaged in with locals, the number of local friends they had and general perceptions of friendships in New Zealand. ‘Successfully building’ was measured by the positive experience of friendships in New Zealand, and inclination towards friendships, both demonstrated by the number of activities and number of local friends.

In terms of inclination to meet others, the study found that Saudis were for the most part sociable and interested in meeting people from other countries including New Zealand. Actually doing so was more difficult. Most students felt it was difficult to make friends with locals in practice, particularly outside of the homestay situation. They found it easier to make friends with other international students, especially while studying English. Gender differences were considerable. Males made friends more easily than females, since female students undertook a smaller range of activities with locals. Yet the study found that the more activities a student did with New Zealand people, the more positive their overall experience. As a result, female students had a less favourable general impression of their New Zealand experience than male students.

Students spent twice as much spare time with other Saudis than with New Zealanders, although the majority did have New Zealand friends. They typically spent time with locals in the home, sharing food and/or accommodation. The homestay environment provided the best opportunity for students to get to know locals. In a homestay, interaction was pre-arranged by education providers with families who were willing to meet and host Saudis. Even so, friendship was not automatic. A homestay experience could lead to either positive or negative impressions of each other, as has been discussed, depending on a range of factors including mutual hospitality, flexibility, and consideration. Also, this situation was biased towards male students, since few female students either chose, or were allowed to stay with, a homestay family.

Outside of homestay (and aside from nightlife), it was difficult for students to make local friends. In some cases they found willingness to do so was not reciprocated, as in the case of local university students who were less friendly, perhaps since they had existing networks. Saudi students, being away from extended families and friends, were in some instances more

open to making friends than locals. Initial expectations that they would make local friends of similar age were not fulfilled, although those who studied for longer in New Zealand did have larger numbers of local friends. This was often in relation to their course of study, with PhD and master's degree students more likely to make local friends.

Thus while most students were receptive to making local friends, they nevertheless spent more time and conducted a greater range of activities with other Saudis, holding a significantly higher proportion of friends from Saudi Arabia also. Even so, their impression of local friendships was on par with impression of friendships with other Saudis, suggesting there is yet some potential for increased friendship building with locals, if hurdles can be overcome.

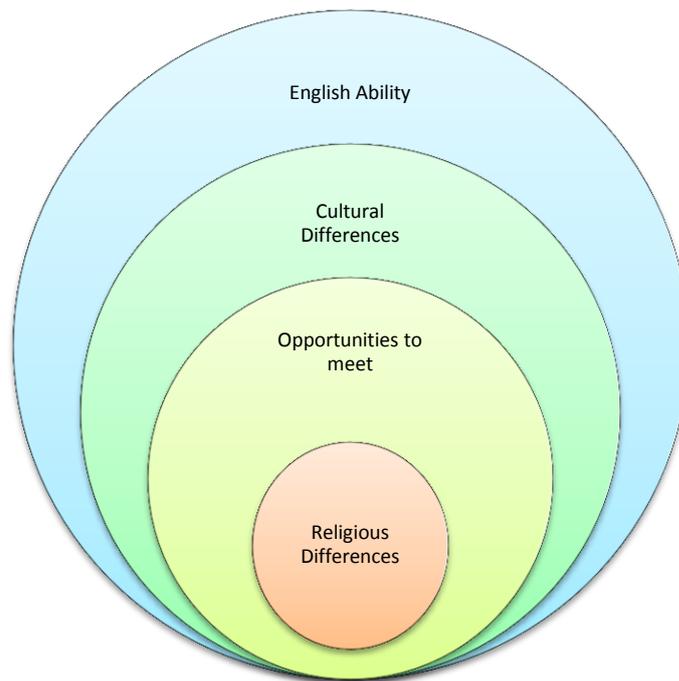
12.2.2 Q2: What factors influence relationship building and friendships in the context of Saudi students in New Zealand?

At face value, the person-to-person diplomacy objectives of the scholarship program stand a good chance of being fulfilled in New Zealand, given the social characteristic of Saudis and absence of deep-seated prejudice on the part of locals. This combines with a generally positive impression towards locals and the aforementioned satisfaction with local friendships. Yet a number of challenges stand in the way of meaningful friendship building.

Practical Hurdles

A series of potential practical hurdles or factors were suggested to students in the survey questionnaire; namely, cultural differences, English ability, opportunity to meet, and religious differences. The relative importance of each is represented in the following diagram:

Figure 12.3. Hurdles in Friendship Building



The picture that emerged from the survey was that students were willing to make friends, but had some practical hurdles to overcome in terms of improving their language skills, bridging cultural differences, and finding ways to meet locals. More than half of students found that their English ability, cultural differences, and opportunities to meet were barriers to making friends (in this order). This was confirmed in interviews. In particular, cultural differences were discussed at length as students described their experiences with locals and the strategies they had developed to both adapt to their new environment and to make friends. On the other hand, ‘religious differences’ was the least important factor, affecting 27% of students. A significant proportion (44%) felt that religious differences didn’t affect their ability to make friends. The remainder were neutral. Given the attention given to cultural differences in both surveys and interviews, these will be discussed in further detail.

Cultural Differences

In the case of Saudi students studying in New Zealand, students move from a conservative homeland to a liberal society where few locals have understanding or experience of Saudi norms and perspectives. Locals often see differences between the two countries in terms of religion, while students make a distinction between culture and religion, usually quoting culture as the primary difference. Some also acknowledge that it is difficult to separate culture and religion at home since religious explanations are commonly suggested for behaviours which are in fact culturally based. Nevertheless, regardless of origin (whether cultural or

religious), behaviour norms differ across a vast range of situations. New Zealanders are, for example, seen to be concerned by contractual rules and obligations which are usually process oriented, while Saudis are more concerned with social etiquette such as helping friends and not offending others. Each follows a set of unspoken rules which are second nature; however they are a differing set of rules. This means that the rules and norms of the 'other' are not immediately obvious without explanation or learnt through experience. In order to successfully build friendships in New Zealand, students must adapt to their new surroundings which, given the differences, is not straightforward.

Cultural Adaptation According to Type

Students navigate a wide array of differing norms and situations in order to adapt to life in New Zealand. Some do so without compromising their beliefs, whilst others make either small or significant adjustments. The extent to which students make behavioural changes depends on the degree to which they feel comfortable either leaving behind or compromising previous norms. Varying levels of flexible behaviour were discussed early in the chapter in relation to three types of behaviour displaying different values and behaviour in New Zealand; 'conservative', 'middle', and 'open'. The different types represent differing perspectives on the extent to which students can uphold or ignore the values they have learnt at home (as demonstrated in table 12.1, by partaking or not in alcohol and drugs), type of clothing, attitudes towards people of different religions and social behaviour outside of their culture and religion. Students who veered towards more open behaviours found it easier to make friends with locals, since they effectively mirrored (or often surpassed) local social norms.

Cultural Adaptation According to Gender

Along with differences in 'type', the study found differences according to gender. Female students were less interested in making friends with locals than males and had fewer local friends. They were generally more conservative and less likely to deviate from the values and behaviours they had learnt at home. Some were restricted from mixing with locals due to preference for befriending others with similar values, not being allowed to stay in homestays, greater duties in the home especially in regards to children, or due to the preferences of their brother or husband. If the latter decided his wife or sister shouldn't make friends with locals (even though the same rule didn't usually apply to him), then the wife or sister was limited in her ability to do so since obedience was expected. As a result female students often had less experience of locals, and therefore interviews with female students were often shorter, with

less anecdotal experiences described. However, in spite of the challenges, the majority of female participants had a positive impression of locals and made some friends.

Other Factors

A range of other factors also influence a student's propensity to make friends. These include their maturity, the range of activities they engage in with locals (as mentioned in the previous question) and external influences, which will be addressed next.

12.2.3 Q 3: How do Saudi students reconcile prejudicial messages they may have received at home with the new directive to make friends abroad with people outside of their culture and religion?

To answer this question it is first necessary to understand whether students consider they have been subjected to prejudicial messages at home, and how this might differ from person to person. Both students themselves and homestays have certain perceptions of conservative Saudis, which may not match reality. There's a perception amongst both, and most relevant to this study amongst students, that there exists an extremely conservative Saudi who in some cases would be so conservative that they would not be able to adapt to life outside Saudi or in a non-Muslim country. Yet either this type is not travelling abroad on the scholarship program, perception is exaggerated, or this conservative Saudi is more flexible than the image he or she projects in Saudi. I come to this conclusion as not one student in my 167 questionnaires or 16 interviews matched this description. At best, this type of Saudi was alluded to by others, with estimates ranging from 50 to 70% of the Saudi population being ultra-conservative, according to students. Students felt that if this student were studying abroad it would most likely be to gain a qualification and improve job prospects. Experience of another culture would then become a necessary evil.

Yet despite the general perception of the ultra-conservative Saudi who couldn't live in New Zealand, in my experience I have only known one student to return quickly because he couldn't stay (the 23 year old male mentioned in the previous chapter, who returned home because he missed his mum too much, not because he couldn't mix with locals). With approximately 170,000 students abroad, there are likely to be some very conservative students amongst them, and my research included participants from very conservative areas. However I found that even these students were willing to engage with locals, thus disconfirming the stereotype and suggesting the proportion of students who are genuinely ultra-conservative to the point they couldn't mix with locals are a minority. An alternative explanation could be

that ultra-conservative views are held by segments of another perhaps older generation to the one currently travelling abroad to study.

This study reflects primarily the views of moderate Saudis, albeit from all parts of the country and with varying levels of conservatism. Half of interview participants considered themselves to be “typical” (usually conservative or middle) Saudis (and the others more open), suggesting that the majority of Saudi youths are willing to make friends abroad. Even so, students discussed the existence of mixed messages at home vis-à-vis making friends abroad in non-Muslim countries. Some were advised to be careful of people abroad with different values, to limit contact or choose their friends wisely. Others were encouraged to make friends with New Zealanders over Saudis. Such messages (both positive and negative) came from family, especially parents, religious figures, friends, and the media. This raises the question as to how students were able to reconcile the directive to make friends abroad as part of the scholarship program, while also being cautioned against doing so. The review of literature covered in chapter two discussed norms of discrimination and negative stereotyping in Saudi Arabia, most notable in the separation of Saudis and ex-pats, which will be further explored later in this chapter. Upon analysis of study findings and consideration of the literature review, there seems to be a number of possibilities which might explain how students were able to reconcile different advice from home:

- 1) The students didn't internalise norms of discrimination – for instance, either they didn't perceive the segregation of guest workers as discriminatory, or they themselves were not prejudiced (the role of personality).
- 2) They disagreed with discriminatory norms at home or negative advice given – the study found for example, that the more students were subject to negative encouragement from religious leaders at home, the more local friends they had in New Zealand.
- 3) Some were positively influenced by more liberal religious leaders in New Zealand or Saudi Arabia.
- 4) Students balanced positive and negative messages from varying authority figures including their families and made up their own conclusions.
- 5) Positive interaction with locals disconfirmed negative stereotypes.

- 6) Students saw one set of rules for Saudi and another for the country they travelled to, moving fluidly between the countries, respecting the norms of each.
- 7) They were so happy to have an experience abroad that previous norms of discrimination were forgotten in order to have a full experience.

On a case by case basis all scenarios were represented, and in particular, students were generally so happy to have a different and new experience that they left behind any discriminatory norms they were accustomed to – whether these were conscious or subconscious. Indeed, although some messages from home warned about travel in non-Muslim countries, students felt that New Zealand was a good destination for Muslim students. The generally positive interaction with locals, combined with New Zealand's neutral foreign policies in the Middle East and lack of political meddling in the affairs of other countries in that region, meant students perceived New Zealand as a country that was friendly to Muslims.

Prejudice Reduction When Reconciling Negative Advice

While prejudice reduction was not an obvious element in student experience due to lack of initial prejudice, the study noted one case where a student did undergo such a transition. Although this was only one person's experience, the interview was particularly candid. His experience may represent the experience of some students, possibly missed in this study due to shyness over explaining views which might offend. As mentioned earlier in the research, he explained his personal transformation over two years studying in New Zealand. He had previously received negative messages about non-Muslims in his home environment, by both family and religious leaders. Arriving in New Zealand he had a very conservative mind set, worried about mixing with non-Muslims and limiting his activities with locals. Over time he changed his ideas about non-Muslims and also his personal religious beliefs. He no longer felt that being Muslim meant closing himself off from non-Muslims; rather, he felt the best examples of 'good Muslims' were in fact living in non-Muslim countries and interacting positively with people of other backgrounds.

This story illustrates the potential for reflection on 'others', through study-abroad, as well as reflection on what it means to be Muslim. Such experience can lead some students to question whether being Muslim means remaining [ultra] conservative as taught at home, or whether they can learn to get on with people of other religions. It is common to hear remarks from students who reflect on Islamic values, noting that some of these values are in fact more common in this non-Muslim population. As mentioned earlier in chapter eleven, several

students commented that New Zealand society was Islamic without Islam. Values of honesty, respect, and equality amongst people are Islamic ideals, which some students have mentioned they find more often in New Zealand than in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, students might not have easy access to alcohol or drugs as they do in New Zealand; however they question the evidence of the other positive values at home also. Students then weigh up the relative importance of each variable: alcohol, drugs, respect, equality, honesty. While at home they may have focused on avoiding vice, while in New Zealand some students start to focus on the intangible values which in some cases they view as missing in their environment at home. For some, this means a transformation in terms of views of a non-Muslim society (and indeed what it means to be a Muslim), no longer preoccupied by vice at home or abroad, but focused on the positive aspects of the new culture. Effectively the distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim decreases, while respect for positive aspects of New Zealand culture increases.

While this section has discussed mixed messages about making friends in a non-Muslim country, I should reinforce that students didn't discuss any negativity about New Zealanders as non-Muslims per se. According to interviews, messages of concern in Saudi focused on the vice students could pick up in non-Muslim countries due to differing values and social behaviour.

12.2.4 Q 4: To What Extent does Authority Support Influence Positive Engagement Abroad in the Case of Saudi Students?

Authority support in terms of the Saudi student experience in New Zealand can be viewed from the perspective of various authorities either encouraging or discouraging students to make friends. Support is seen as positive advice (encouragement), or as contributing towards a situation which is conducive to building friends in this situation. Authority support, as a "contact theory" facilitating condition, is an important element in encouraging prejudice reduction and development of positive intergroup relations.

Before considering the role of authority support, it is necessary to repeat that Saudi students are basically very sociable by nature. They prioritise relationships and spending their spare time with friends. As discussed in interviews, when they live in New Zealand they are inclined towards making friends with those around them. Thus students seek friendships with other students, with homestays, and with others they meet through extra-curricular activities. This is sometimes in contradiction to advice they have been given from home, or in New Zealand, as will be further discussed in this section.

Saudi students are sensitive to advice given to them by people in positions of authority, as is common in a supposedly collectivist society. This includes family, government officials, teachers, and religious leaders. Students respect the opinions of these figures and also of their friends, and are not likely to argue with authority figures even if they disagree. Yet both survey and interview responses indicated that they are stubborn in their own opinions, and make up their own minds about locals and the ways they can interact in New Zealand to make friends. Students are generally more likely to listen to encouragement to make friends in New Zealand, and ignore discouragement, since the latter conflicts with their social nature. At best, discouragement leads some to reconsider friends with particularly negative habits, but it does not appear to stop students from making local friends generally. Male students bridge these seemingly conflicting traits by openly respecting opinions of elders even if different from their own, taking them on board, and then acting as they choose. Females, as mentioned earlier, don't have the same freedoms to behave as they choose, so friendship outcomes tend to depend on the males accompanying them to New Zealand.

Of the various authority figures included in the survey questionnaire (parents, teachers, religious figures in Saudi and NZ, Saudi education figures), the study found that parents were the only authority figures to have a significant positive impact on a student's likelihood of actually making friends in New Zealand. Students who were encouraged by parents to make friends had more friends than those who had been discouraged. In this (collective) culture, parents exert influence over their children's behaviour. They often provided on-going advice during their child's stay, to ensure their children maintained good behaviour abroad. This sometimes included advice to mix with locals and stay away from other Saudis, and in other cases students were told to be careful of local friends, who might lead them astray.

The survey questionnaire found that religious leaders had an unusual impact on students' friendships in New Zealand. Students had fewer friends if local religious leaders discouraged them from making friends in New Zealand, and more friends if religious leaders at home discouraged them. Therefore they seemed more likely to listen to local leaders and ignore religious leaders at home. The caveat on this observation is that the students affected by local religious leaders were mainly female, and females were not likely to attend New Zealand religious ceremonies or pray at the mosque since New Zealand mosques don't have fully separate areas for women. It is not possible to explain this finding, except to assume that some authorities in the Saudi community informed the female religious experience in New Zealand.

Of the officials most likely to influence a student's experience of friendships in New Zealand, I expected students to mention the Cultural Attaché. After all, this is the Ministry of Education's policy implementation office in New Zealand. Students interact with the Cultural Attaché throughout their stay, applying for and gaining scholarships, booking airfares home, communicating class attendance and grades, attending national and religious celebrations, and education seminars. Yet while discussing authority support in interviews, not one student mentioned either encouragement or discouragement from the Cultural Attaché office. Meanwhile, only 42% saw making friends as being a key part of the scholarship program. This raises questions in terms of implementation of the policy of 'person-to-person diplomacy'. To be fair, the Cultural Attaché opened in 2010 when there were already several thousand students studying in New Zealand and most Saudi staff were comparatively new to New Zealand. It is likely they were busy with more practical considerations in the short term. Also, while perhaps not stating the objective overtly, cultural attaché staff have encouraged students to stay in homestays, and prefer students don't group together in schools or downtown Auckland. They have actively encouraged students to study in schools with fewer Saudis, thus assisting students towards situations where they are more likely to interact with locals and people of other nationalities. Therefore, while students didn't perceive direct encouragement from the Cultural Attaché towards friendship building, it has been demonstrated in practice through facilitating contact.

To conclude, authority support has an important role in the development of friendships in New Zealand. Most parents provide students positive reinforcement to go ahead and befriend locals, while students are supported more subtly by the Cultural Attaché, which develops the conditions for friendships to take place. Fortunately in most cases where there is discouragement, students look past this to make up their own minds, based on personal observation and experience.

12.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Saudi Friendship Building in New Zealand

Prior to 2001, the notion of New Zealand as a key study destination for Saudi students didn't exist. There were virtually no Saudi students in New Zealand. Few people from Saudi Arabia or New Zealand had first-hand knowledge of each other. Since then, and especially since 2004, Saudi student numbers have risen, allowing a significant and growing number of people from both countries to get to know each other better. Given the lack of prior contact between Saudis and New Zealanders, after consideration of the widespread use of Contact Theory and the context of the study, I decided that Contact Theory would provide an appropriate

framework both the study design and data analysis.. Contact theory has been used in intergroup studies to explain shifts in perception of the ‘other’ and has as its central premise that meaningful contact leads to prejudice reduction. This concept has been applied in previous studies of minorities and groups, and holds that greater interaction usually improves the impressions groups have of each other. Other studies have looked at relations between blacks and whites in the US, Israelis and Palestinians, Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, and so on. In each case it was assumed (and usually demonstrated) that an element of prejudice was characteristic at the start of the contact situation.

Allport (1954), the original contact theory theorist, described a range of inter group prejudices, including inter racial and religious inspired prejudice. In the current scenario involving Islamic and non-Islamic people, the latter, ‘religious prejudice’ was identified as a potential aspect of the student experience in New Zealand. While no recent study had considered contact theory in relation to a Saudi and Western population, religious prejudices had been discussed by several academics and in popular media. Huntington (1997), in particular, described a philosophical conflict between Islamic and non-Islamic populations, and through his work informed a wide audience of the difficulties in engagement between these two groups. Media information has characterised Saudi Arabia as displaying a particularly conservative form of Islam, with attention given to extreme religious ideas. In the absence of prior empirical research on this subject, it seemed plausible to assume that there may be some prejudice on the part of Saudi students as they engaged with non-Muslims in New Zealand.

Earlier in the research (chapter two), Saudi society was described as having some characteristics indicative of state prejudice. Muslims and non-Muslims are segregated, with non-Muslims living in ex-patriot housing compounds. The State allows only one religion and bans public observance of non-Islamic religions. It also dictates the way all people should practise the religion, enforcing religious laws relating to clothing, segregation of sexes, and commerce norms (such as shopping hours around prayer times). Saudi society has a myriad of religious inspired norms based on the State’s interpretation of the values its subjects should follow. It seemed reasonable to assume that other states with differing values might be viewed unfavourably, and that citizens brought up in an environment in which it was assumed their state upheld a model of moral traditions would be wary of people from countries where a different set of values was adhered to (assuming citizens agreed with the State). Thus, Saudis were viewed as being potentially prejudiced against New Zealanders.

Findings showed, however, that the above assumption was flawed, especially in terms of definition and measurement. To discuss contact theory in practice (Saudis and New Zealanders), it is then necessary to first consider what ‘prejudice’ actually refers to in this contact situation, and qualify whether Saudi students were indeed ‘prejudiced’.

What Does Prejudice Refer to?

According to Allport (1954) and as quoted in chapter two, prejudice is ‘an irrational generalisation about people [usually of a different race, religion and so on], an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalisation’. In the application of contact theory, prejudice is generally a negative perception, often based on lack of experience of the other, which then changes over time when the two groups in question spend time together. Negative stereotypes are a form of prejudice. In the current study, prejudice applies to a student who would not be interested in making friends with locals due to negative stereotyping. The remainder of the chapter discusses prejudice as it relates to the experience of Saudi students in New Zealand.

12.3.1 Selection Bias

Pettigrew (1998) noted that it can be difficult to study contact theory in intergroup situations due to selection bias. That is, prejudiced people are less likely to make contact with other groups due to their antipathy towards those groups. Prejudiced Saudi students might not choose to study in New Zealand and subject themselves to experience of a culture they didn’t agree with. However, on the contrary, this research found that there was not one type of Saudi who chose to study-abroad, but that students with differing worldviews were amongst the student population in New Zealand. This study included the views of students from diverse geographical regions, from cities large and small, from cosmopolitan and conservative areas. I’ve observed a number of Saudi religious police studying in New Zealand, which suggests conservative Saudis are amongst the student community. Further, students’ opinions on themes differed, indicative of a varied sample, and they also reflected on their observations of other students and ‘typical’ (usually conservative) Saudis, which allowed me to look beyond the views and experience of participants.

12.3.2 Are Saudi Students Prejudiced?

Contact theory is relevant if the groups at hand are prejudiced, in terms of being able to measure perception change through contact. Therefore it was important to assess whether Saudi students were inherently and/or originally prejudiced towards local people on arrival.

Due to a lack of previous research on Saudis, it wasn't possible to find out in advance if the students were shown in previous studies to be prejudiced. Therefore the study was designed to find out both if prejudice existed and then, assuming it did, whether prejudice was reduced through contact with New Zealand people. In particular, perception change was to be considered in relation to the facilitating conditions of friendship potential and authority support, as discussed in chapter two.

In order to assess whether students had prejudicial feelings towards locals, the study sought early on to identify the impressions students had of New Zealanders both before travelling and during their time in New Zealand. Requesting students list adjectives to describe each group was one means of measuring impressions of each, with the home group as a reference group. The study found that students used predominantly positive adjectives to describe both groups, and a similar number of negative adjectives for both also. All adjectives provided by students who had been in the country for a short period (less than three months) were positive, suggesting students arrived with a positive impression of locals. It seems that students didn't perceive either New Zealanders or Saudis to be any better or worse in characteristics than the other. Interview responses confirmed that students arrived in New Zealand with a positive impression of locals, based on positive feedback from others who had travelled ahead of them. According to survey responses, the positive impression of locals in most cases further improved over time. The notion that students might have negative stereotypes which were improved on was not an accurate portrayal of the Saudi student experience. Thus the original assumption that Saudi students would likely be prejudiced towards locals was not supported.

12.3.3 Applying Contact Theory to a Non-Prejudiced Group

Lack of evidence of widespread initial prejudice did not mean that prejudice was not an element of the Saudi student experience in some cases, or that contact theory was unwarranted in exploring contact between these groups. Contact theory was useful in that it provided a framework for understanding the elements of a contact situation which could improve contact outcomes. It revealed variables to be considered in the study design, and a model for understanding the friendship process of two distinct cultural groups. This study applied two of these elements as will be discussed later in this chapter, "Friendship Potential" and "Authority Support", and gained insights as a result.

Although participants weren't found to be prejudiced, they reflected on the experience of others who had not participated in the study, and who had more conservative views. They felt

other Saudis might have less favourable views of non-Muslims. As discussed earlier in this chapter, some raised the possibility that there were other Saudis who were so conservative that they would not be able to study-abroad in a non-Muslim country. Also explained previously, while respondents were generally happy to mix with and befriend locals, some were warned by family or authority figures at home against doing so. The latter often reflected apprehension at value differences and the potential for students to pick up bad habits, rather than differences in religion per se (albeit religious-inspired value differences in some cases).

While not the original focus, discussion of homestay preconceptions and experience provided an unanticipated dimension to the study with particular relevance to contact theory. Initially, inclusion of homestay comments was designed to allow a local perspective to balance and respond to the observations and comments students made about their homestay experiences. The inclusion of homestay perspectives, however, raised the notion of an initial irrational generalisation of Saudis on the part of new homestay families. Homestay preconceptions of Saudis prior to experience of hosting students appear to have been informed by media portrayals of the Middle East. Yet as discussed by Edward Said (2007), popular media (and more so post 9/11) has not provided positive images of Middle Eastern peoples, and has been divisive, creating perceptions of ‘them’ (Middle Eastern people) and ‘us’ (Westerners). According to Said, over time this has created negative generalisations and caricatures of Middle Eastern people. In terms of Saudis, these caricatures have often been based on an unfavourable view of Islamic practises in Saudi, recently focused on extremists, and when applied to students, creating a negative stereotype which students then needed to disconfirm in order for the homestay family to feel better about hosting a Saudi. Thus while challenges exist for both groups, it seems that the main challenge for locals is primarily overcoming negative stereotyping (prejudice) of Saudis, while for Saudis, it is learning to reconcile value differences.

According to student interviews, it seems people in both societies seek friendships with others who behave similarly. It may be human nature to search out people who have similar ideas so as to validate our own. It is a greater challenge to venture outside of comfort zones to become friends with people who think and behave differently. Yet in the case of the participants in this study, it seems that generally there has been a willingness to do so. While prejudice has been described on the part of some locals, it has been superficial and not deep seated. Generally prejudice on the part of locals has been due to lack of knowledge or experience of

Saudis, combined with a will to confront preconceptions. For the most part, differences haven't stopped Saudi students from being willing to and actually making friends, and many families have opened their doors to Saudi students in spite of initial hesitations.

12.3.4 Reconciling Differences

Some Saudi students have found New Zealand liberal religious and social norms difficult to reconcile with their own. However, in most cases, students have prioritised making friends over maintaining all the norms they are used to, finding strategies to bridge the gap. All students interviewed focused on positive advice to make friends with locals, over negative, which demonstrated that students made up their own minds on a range of issues, including friendships with locals.

This study found that students considered how to live in New Zealand society, mindful of differences. They wanted to make friends with locals, while being careful not to undermine the values they felt core to their identity. The extent to which this concerned them and the methods they used to bridge this gap varied from student to student, depending on their particular outlook and how they reconciled these differences and formed their own conclusions on how they could legitimately behave in the new culture. In some cases, students limited their range of interactions with locals if they felt their values would be violated to the extent that they would have to give up norms that formed part of their core identities and religious beliefs. Others gave up home norms at whim. In the case of students who limited interaction, in particular women and more conservative students, this does not automatically equate with prejudice. To call this prejudice requires a subjective judgement on the part of the researcher and brings us back to the question of 'irrational generalisation' of others (and religiously-inspired irrational generalisation). It is not irrational for a student who is nervous of others with more liberal behaviours to choose to stay away from people who have potentially unhealthy and harmful norms of social behaviour, such as taking drugs and drinking alcohol. Further, a generalisation about others, based on value differences and in particular, a risk of picking up negative habits, is not a form of prejudice. This then raises a flaw in the notion of prejudice and irrational generalisation within contact theory. The notion of a generalised anxiety towards others can be considered rational when self-protection is sought, especially in such a case where the behaviours of others are perceived as harmful. Views which seem irrational to one group may be quite rational to the other, therefore undermining the definition of irrational generalisations. For instance, some students chose to protect themselves and their families from the temptation to partake in alcohol and drugs by

choosing their friends carefully, and preferring to befriend others with similar values. In some cases, this meant less contact with locals. In the absence of being able to differentiate between locals with similar and dissimilar values, a minority of students preferred to make friends within their community.

Some students and their families worried about the negative impact of peer pressure abroad. Such concerns are not unique to Saudis; the potentially negative effects of peer pressure are well understood. Government policies are in place to try to mitigate the damage caused by drugs and alcohol, while at the level of the individual, a New Zealand parent might encourage their children to stay away from others they consider to have bad values and habits, just as a Saudi parent might. While the intent is the same, the difference between both sets of parents and, more broadly, the two societies, is the parameters around what constitutes acceptable behaviours, and the extent to which such a generalisation is made towards others. Saudi Arabia is a collectivist culture and patriarchal society which, when combined with a deep belief that conservative Islam is the true path, means that selective screening of friends at home is implemented on a collective, family and national scale. Emphasis is on maintaining appropriate in-group behaviours, so personal freedoms are restricted so as to avoid negative impact on others. Saudi society is segregated as described, and guest workers enjoy greater freedoms in restricted areas. While the subconscious message of segregation may include an element of prejudice, the intent of the formulated policy appears to be to protect the local population from unhealthy vice. The extent to which individuals might then internalise the concept of separation and generalise negative perceptions towards entire other groups would then constitute the degree of, or absence of, prejudice.

Segregation in Saudi can be interpreted as reflecting 'norms of discrimination' which, according to studies on intergroup relations, can poison intergroup relations. Norms of discrimination have the potential to affect students' impressions of 'others' and ability to make friends while studying abroad. However, this study found that even if norms of discrimination exist, they didn't affect students' impressions of New Zealanders. On the contrary, students had no intention of maintaining segregation from non-Muslims in New Zealand, but rather, enjoyed living with people of other faiths and cultures. Previously subject to Saudi social laws, once in New Zealand, students made up their own minds about engaging with locals and other international students. Indeed the majority of students in this study were willing to make friends with locals, although some did so with personal boundaries - red lines they weren't willing to cross.

12.3.5 A Prejudiced Type of Saudi

It was not possible to identify a subgroup with common characteristics suggesting a prejudiced mind set. Although a variety of questions in both interviews and the survey questionnaire explored prejudice from multiple angles, the study wasn't able to conclusively identify the type of person who would be most likely to be prejudiced. At best, participants were able to describe 'other Saudis' who were so conservative they could not befriend locals or non-Muslims; however this was based on respondents' stereotyping of other Saudis and not reflective of the experience of study participants. Indeed often those who others thought should fit the stereotype did not express the types of views other participants expected of them. I found, for instance, that people who hadn't travelled to a Western country before were just as likely to have local friends as those who had. People who had been discouraged from making friends by authority figures at home didn't listen to negative advice, and people from more conservative regions of Saudi were equally or even more positive about friendships in New Zealand than students from more cosmopolitan areas. This then raises the importance of a dimension of Allport's (1954) original theory which was not taken up substantively by later researchers, that personality influences the existence or absence of prejudice. Rather than consider the extent to which personality influenced behaviour towards others, later studies focused on facilitating conditions in intergroup situations based on the interplay of internal and external features (including the two that were also examined in this study - friendship potential and authority support). Yet when Allport examined the role of personality alongside religious belief in Christian and Jewish communities, he observed that people who had internalised their religion (those who practised their religion on a daily basis and attended regular religious services as opposed to those who were religious in name only or for social-cultural motives) were less prejudiced than those that hadn't. This might depend on the extent to which people of any of the aforementioned faiths accepted that they should or shouldn't mix with people of other faiths, which was not investigated in this study.

12.3.6 Local Prejudice Towards Saudis

On the other hand, while the study failed to reveal generalised mass prejudice on the part of students or negative stereotyping of locals, preconceptions held by locals did not always facilitate relationship building. Students arrived in New Zealand holding positive stereotypes of locals, while locals often had negative preconceptions of Saudis. Students thought that locals were friendly and approachable, although a general lack of knowledge or appreciation of Saudi culture stopped friendships from developing further in many cases. The study found

prejudice, in terms of an irrational generalisation towards Saudis, occurs, as indicated by the wariness of some homestays to initially receive Saudi homestay students compared to students of other nationalities. However this did not constitute antipathy. Comments made by families and students indicated the existence of ‘irrational fear’ of Saudis was based initially on lack of experience of Saudi culture and, as described earlier, negative portrayals in the media. Just as Saudis form what can be considered rational preferences for in-group norms, so too might locals hold notions of acceptable in-group (New Zealand) behaviour and assumptions of out-group or Saudi behaviour. Initial local assumptions, however, given they are not initially based on experience of Saudis, contrasts with an often more sophisticated understanding of locals on the part of Saudi students, who have usually gained knowledge from previous students, experienced life with locals, and in many cases have adapted strategies to try to gain the best from local culture while avoiding the worst. Saudis adhere to the philosophy that there are five fingers on one hand; that is, just as all Saudis are different, so too are locals. While not the focus of this study, this finding suggests contact theory is potentially applicable to understanding local views of Saudi students since an ‘irrational generalisation’ of Saudis is often an element of local perception. This was demonstrated most extremely by the family who threw out their Saudi student following the London bomb, since they couldn’t separate him from the perpetrators of this crime (chapter eight). Thankfully, as mentioned earlier, negative preconceptions of Saudis are not deep rooted and many families have displayed a will to understand Saudis better. Friendships, while not automatic, have developed between many students, locals and other international students, to the extent that a number of local families have extended their families to include students they term their ‘Saudi Sons’. Indeed the development of “Saudi sons”, and increasing number of Saudis who feel that they become half ‘kiwi’, suggests the potential for building bridges between the countries, one student at a time.

12.4 Critical Reflection on the Use of Contact Theory

As has been described in this chapter, Contact Theory has provided a useful framework for understanding and analysing data in relation to contact between two distinct cultural groups. On the one hand, as described in Chapter Two, 2.2.4, Contact Theory has informed research studies over the previous 70 years. As such a body of knowledge and associated methodology has developed and been applied to a number of different cultures. Prior criticism of Contact Theory as discussed in Chapter Two, has exposed differing outcomes depending on the groups in question, and a lack of studies outside of the US and Europe, raising issues around

the transferability of conclusions to other groups. This research was able to contribute to this body of literature by exploring two cultures which had not previously been united in a Contact Theory study. Yet as the groups in question had not been investigated in previous studies, the relevance and usefulness of the theory could not be ascertained with surety in advance.

This study has found that while Contact Theory's starting postulation of prejudice and subsequent prejudice reduction were not characteristic of the Saudi student group, the theory still has merit in its application to the current study. Indeed the framework provided by Contact Theory methodologies and line of enquiry, have provided the researcher with a suitable way to engage with the data effectively. Insight into student attitudes and experiences was gained through the application of Contact Theory. This is further summarized in Chapter Thirteen.

12.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed several key characteristics in the contact situation of Saudi students in New Zealand. It has acknowledged that friendships between these groups originate from different starting points, due to differing cultural norms and preconceptions of the other. Contact in practise, in terms of engagement and outcomes, is determined by each individual's orientations, worldviews and behaviour.

Friendships have been described in terms of general trends, such as the amount of time students have spent with locals and their willingness to interact and befriend others. Deeper insights were gained through observation and comment on homestay experiences. Saudis have been described here as friendly and willing to make friends with locals, although also preoccupied with practical concerns such as the level of comfort they would experience staying with a New Zealand family. New Zealand families, on the other hand, were initially anxious of hosting Saudi students due to cultural differences and expectations of Saudi social norms. Families developed either favourable or negative perceptions of Saudis and Saudi culture as a result of hosting Saudi students. Cultural differences affected daily interactions. Saudis were concerned about in-group (Saudi) social norms, while locals were focused on being organised. These factors have been found to affect the extent to which students have been able to make meaningful relationships with locals, although the study found that generally there was a will on the part of students to compromise in their behaviours in order to make friendships. Ability to compromise was, however, moderated by gender and

worldview. It was easier for “open” and male students to make local friends. Both Saudis and locals had challenges in order to bridge differences. Locals had to overcome negative stereotypes of Saudis, while Saudis had to reconcile value differences in order to forge a path which allowed them to interact and befriend locals, while maintaining core values.

The study found that students were subject to the opinions of others who either encouraged them to make friends with locals, or warned them to be careful doing so. Students explained how they reconciled apparently opposing messages. They generally respected other views, however, wished to have their own experiences of locals so as to form their own opinions of the same. In some instances this meant respecting the messenger while ignoring their advice. As such, students didn’t demonstrate prejudice towards locals. They didn’t apply either an “irrational generalisation,” or “antipathy” towards the local population. Opinions were informed by their experiences and those of other students, with a positive disposition towards hosts. Thus while it was common for students to fear catching negative habits, most appreciated positive aspects of New Zealand culture and made friends with locals.

Chapter 13:

Conclusions

Contact Theory has provided a basis for revealing prejudice in the local and Saudi student population (or lack of prejudice as a starting point to understanding intergroup relations in this context). It has also provided a framework for developing and analysing a data set which would provide answers to the core research questions. In particular, it has provided a framework for analysis of Saudi friendship building in New Zealand from multiple perspectives and considering several of the elements that contribute to positive intergroup relations. These were primarily the contact facilitating conditions, ‘friendship potential’ and ‘authority support’. Within a contemporary Contact Theory study design, I was able to draft a range of appropriate survey and interview questions. Analysis of key survey and interview findings leads me to agree with previous contact theory studies, that international education is an appropriate vehicle for positive intergroup contact. However, in the case of Saudi students, this needs to be accompanied by patience and understanding from stakeholders in the receiving country. Differing levels of maturity are evident and the experience abroad is often the first time many students are away from home without parents or siblings. The experience of living in a completely different culture is for some students exciting, while for others it is an enormous challenge. This leads to personal transformation and development, with some teething problems as students learn new norms of behaviour.

Study participants generally arrived in New Zealand with either no idea of what to expect of New Zealanders, or with positive expectations based on the prior experiences of other students. This was moderated by the city in which they studied since students noticed some racism in Christchurch but not in other cities. While they received warnings at home about mixing with locals with differing values, they were not nervous to engage. Rather, students were philosophical that while most locals were good people, there were ‘five fingers on one hand’ so they expected diversity amongst people.

Locals, on the other hand, were more likely to have narrow perceptions of what Saudis might be like, at least initially. Some new homestay families were nervous to receive Saudi students due to potential cultural and religious differences which they worried might affect their home life. Experience with hosting students led some homestays to improve their perspectives of Saudis, while in other cases, concerns were reaffirmed albeit for differing reasons. The latter experience was based on behavioural issues. Prejudice reduction was evident in homestay

situations where students learned the norms of the homestay, and became a social member of the household, thus improving the families' opinion of Saudis.

Yet learning new norms of behaviour in New Zealand is not straightforward for Saudi students. Of the intangible elements that most affected relationship building between Saudis and New Zealand locals, cultural differences had the largest effect on relationship building. Both groups were generally friendly towards each other and willing to make friends. Students stated their willingness to do so, found locals to be approachable and kind, and while most homestays initially had reservations, many were still willing to host Saudi students. Thus "friendship potential" was broadly an element of the exchange. In practise, it was common to hear from schools and families that Saudi students were the most different of any nationality they had hosted, while for Saudis, New Zealand culture was comparatively liberal. Frames of reference for each group are extremely different. This was described in the research as differing sets of norms / rules. While Saudi norms and rules are based on moral decisions and social behaviours, New Zealand norms and rules are procedure and efficiency based. Friendship is thus between two cultures which, beyond enthusiasm for getting to know each other, operate from two extremes, one conservative and collectivist, the other liberal and individualist.

Students combined their will to make friends with varying levels of flexibility towards new norms of behaviour in order to do so. To some, this involved letting go of previous values and norms and adopting and exceeding those of the host country (open Saudis). Others sought to maintain their identities while adapting in areas they felt wouldn't conflict with their core values (middle / normal Saudis). Yet others tried to maintain most cultural norms while having limited interactions with locals (conservative Saudis). As discussed in the research, students often identified with one or other type of Saudi depending on the situation. In addition, students' perspectives often changed over time.

It has been suggested that the changing perspectives of Saudi youth abroad is part of a social engineering dimension in the scholarship program, as Saudi seeks to integrate more fully in the international community. Officials who participated in this study perceived both academic and life skill acquisition as important elements of study-abroad. Learning through experience seems apt in the case of a government wanting its citizens to learn to cooperate with people from other cultures and religious backgrounds. Further, the study-abroad program provides students the opportunity to develop their own perspectives, and to try new norms abroad

before considering if these might work in Saudi. This will have repercussions at the individual level, and also in terms of development of Saudi Arabia. Already some students have felt frustrations at home after returning, feeling that things could be done differently. The hosting country is also impacted by the exchange. At a minimum, Saudi students in New Zealand wish to maintain friendships, therefore encouraging on-going cultural links between the countries. Some students have, or plan to, buy land, property or investments, or live and work in New Zealand after graduation. This may lead to a hybrid of cultural and commercial interests between Saudi Arabia and New Zealand.

13.1 Contact Theory Hypothesis

As discussed in the previous chapter, this study was designed to understand how students overcame prejudicial feelings towards locals. Qualitative chapters’ eight to eleven broadly followed students through the stages discussed in Pettigrew’s intergroup contact process model (chapter two 2.2.4); however there were several key differences in students experience when compared to those expected. These are summarised in the following table which combines the process model stages with notes on irregularities and key observations.

Table 13.1. Adaptation of Pettigrew’s Intergroup Process Model

Stage	Key Observation
1. Learning about the outgroup – “First impressions” (Chapter eight)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students didn’t hold negative stereotypes of locals which would normally be the first characteristic in a contact theory study. Usually negative stereotypes are corrected through contact. In this case, positive initial perception became more positive over time
2. Changing behaviour – “Getting to know each other” (Chapter nine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students needed to adapt to a new set of rules to adapt to life in New Zealand. Successful adaptation depended on their ability to learn new ways of doing things
3. Generating affective ties - “Friendship Building” (Chapter ten)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This step usually involves students overcoming anxieties to make friends. Students were not nervous of making friends with locals, although some were anxious of possible effects on their values
4. Ingroup reappraisal – “Reflections on Studying in New Zealand” (chapter eleven)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students reflected on differences in culture, different ways of doing things, cultural and religious practises

This research found that, contrary to an initial hypothesis that Saudis would be prejudiced towards New Zealanders and have to overcome this to fulfil the scholarship goal of friendship

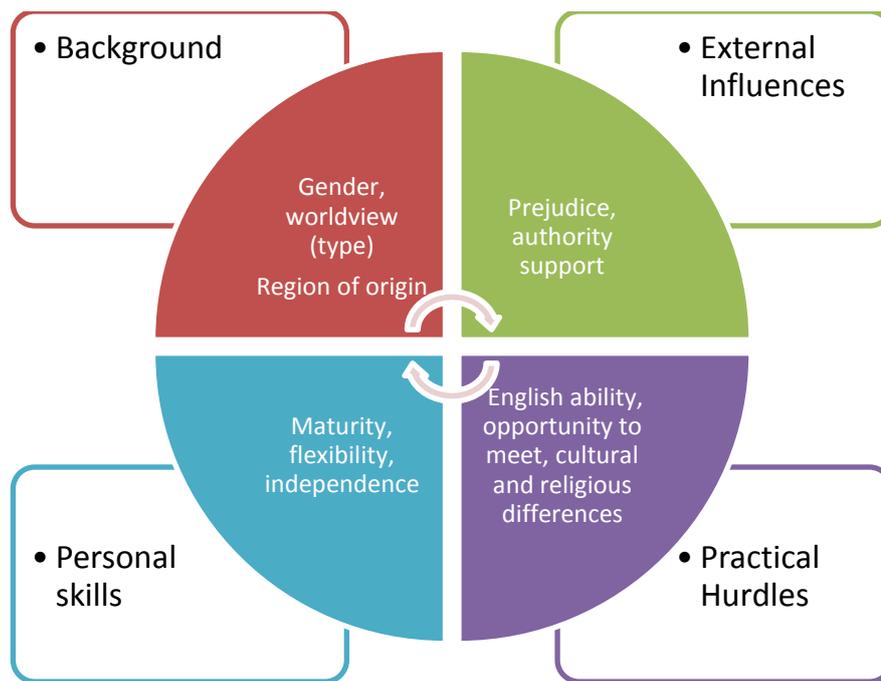
building, prejudice was primarily on the side of the hosting country. While New Zealanders seemed open and welcoming to foreigners, some students experienced negative attention due to their backgrounds. It was common for new homestays to feel nervous hosting Saudis for the first time. Therefore attitudes of New Zealanders could be explained by threat theories. In particular, threat theories which encompass the following features could be considered apt; ‘symbolic threat’ (racism from conflicting values, norms and beliefs), ‘intergroup anxiety’ (uncertainty of how to behave), and ‘negative stereotyping’. Contact with students often led to stereotypes being disconfirmed and anxiety around value difference reducing; however, this was often replaced by new stereotypes and anxiety around differing social behaviour rather than differences in values or beliefs.

While this study examined the Contact Theory applied to the student population studying abroad, in fact the premise behind it could be accurately applied to the local population. The arrival of Saudi students in New Zealand impacts on the beliefs of the local population, who often become more knowledgeable of Saudi culture, and therefore less prejudiced. On the other hand, both positive and negative views of Saudis develop based on experience with students. That is, when families get on well with students this leads to positive bias, and on the contrary negative experience leads to negative bias. In both cases, behaviour is compared with local norms and therefore perspective is more likely to be positive when students are able to adapt to New Zealand ways of doing things.

Students demonstrated two seemingly conflicting views of locals; they liked locals and appreciated numerous aspects of local culture, while being nervous that their values might be affected by friendships. Negative impressions of locals were held by a minority of students, and greater apprehension was experienced by female students. Females were more likely to be ‘high identifiers’ (chapter two) – identifying closely with cultural norms - and therefore more likely to experience higher levels of anxiety than males. It is appropriate to link a degree of ‘threat’ to the female experience of friendships while seldom finding this amongst Saudi males.

While students generally had positive impression of locals, there were a range of internal and external factors which affected their ability to adapt to New Zealand culture and make friends. This has been discussed in the research and is summarised in the following figure (figure 13.1):

Figure 13.1. Factors Which Influence Students' Ability to Make Friends



The weighting of the above factors differs from person to person. For instance, a conservative female (background), who has not been encouraged to make friends abroad (authority support – external influence), who is not mature (personal skills), and who speaks limited English (practical hurdle), will have a very different experience than an open male, encouraged by his family, with fluent English and who has been away from home for an extended period, and is therefore comparatively mature. There are a full range of experiences in-between for both genders, with certain factors weighted more heavily for male or female students.

Findings from this study suggest that the factors which most influence a student's propensity to make friends is the student's background. That is, gender and type had the most significant effect on a student's ability to make friends. This primarily reflects the circumstances of a student – homestays are the most likely place to make friends with locals, an option which is seldom available to female students - and students who are less conservative are able to bridge cultural norms more effectively. The student's city of origin was not found to influence a student's willingness to make friends or satisfaction with friendships; however, 'region of origin' was a factor in the case of students from the South of Saudi Arabia only. Students from this area were less interested in making local friends than Saudis from other parts of the country.

External influences were noted, although in most cases were not an essential factor in contributing to friendship directly. Students listened to advice from parents, while ignoring

other authority figures, especially when advice conflicted with their desire to make friends in New Zealand. On the other hand, while students did not credit either the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education or Foreign Affairs offices with contributing to friendship building in New Zealand, it can be concluded that these offices have worked together to support person-to-person diplomacy, by allowing students to study-abroad with scholarships, implementing policies which ensured there aren't too many Saudis at a given institution, and encouraging students to stay in homestay families.

Generally speaking, the extent to which students were able to develop personal skills and overcome practical hurdles impacted on friendship potential in New Zealand. Students arrived with varying levels of maturity and underwent a range of transformative experiences as they adapted to their new environment. They experienced varying practical hurdles depending on their course of study and level of English, as well as their perspectives on cultural and religious differences. Their ability to make friends while overcoming a range of hurdles was a reflection of their personal skills. Thus as per Figure 13.1, students' ability to make friends was affected by a range of factors summarised as: background, external influences, practical hurdles, and personal skills. While trends can be observed in relation to each, a student's overall experience is a unique blend of interrelated factors.

13.2 Implications for Contact Theory

In applying Contact Theory hypotheses and methodologies to the current contact situation, this study has generated understanding of Saudi friendships in New Zealand. It has also, however, exposed limitations in the theoretical underpinning of Contact Theory - namely, the assumption of initial prejudice in a contact situation. This may be too simplistic to account for a full range of circumstances. The depiction of 'prejudice' is a subjective judgement when applied to a culture with vastly differing cultural and religious values. This study suggests that vast differences don't mean automatic prejudice exists in a contact situation. Individuals can have differing worldviews while maintaining positive impressions of each other. Likewise, anxiety does not equate to antipathy, as threat theories would suggest, nor does an unwillingness to befriend others with differing values. Indeed a person can admire and like another, without wanting close contact or friendship.

Further, Contact Theory assumes one culture stands together as a coherent whole and the other also, so that prejudice reinforces in-group and out-group distinctions. Saudi culture, due

to its rigid interpretation of religious faith and strong tribal culture, would usually be considered a coherent group. Yet, as this thesis has explained, individuals within Saudi culture have differing values and norms of behaviour. Meanwhile, those who wish to maintain in-group norms for social-cultural reasons are also capable of appreciating differences of the out-group. If the assumptions underpinning contact theory don't stand fast in this case, then it is doubtful these assumptions would hold true to other even less seemingly homogenous groups.

Further, the full range of the human experience depends on a complicated web of interrelated elements, as shown in figure 13-1. As such, while generalisations can be made, outcomes vary from person to person, depending on how a person connects the factors which make up their individual experience. This includes aspects of personality, along with external factors such as attitudes of locals and family or friends, a person's background, prior experiences, upbringing and personal skills. Contact Theory helps the researcher to provide a snapshot in time since culture, personality, attitudes and experiences are fluid. It is useful in terms of providing understanding of general trends in intergroup relations although its applicability in terms of predicting individual experiences can be limited. It is possible for individuals to shift their perspectives back and forth based on what's going on in their lives. However, this is taken into account. Contact Theory helps inform the researcher of the variables which often accompany shifts in attitudes. Further, the methodologies developed in Contact Theory studies are not limited to measuring attitudes, but also consider behaviour. It is possible to gain a good understanding of prejudice and friendships by analysing the data on the range of experiences and interactions of the subjects. Questioning attitudes may not be as robust a predictor or explanation of prejudice as analysis of experiences and range of contact experiences. Therefore Contact Theory is useful specifically because it is broad enough to be used in the context of a wide range of situations and analysis can provide weighting to those parts most relevant to a given study.

The application of Contact Theory and analysis of results can be robust even if the assumptions underpinning the theory and outcomes vary across studies. The value of Contact Theory in the current study is primarily in the framework provided to enquire about student experiences and in the analysis of data. Further, whilst study participants were not deemed to be prejudiced, their life experiences were, however, characterised by opposing forces in prejudice. On the one hand, this thesis identified prejudicial characteristics evident in Saudi society and negative advice from others. On the other hand, this contrasts with a notable

aspect of the Saudi personality, sociability and an innate drive to seek friendships. How individuals reconcile these two opposing forces is not explained fully by Contact Theory since the individuals in this study did not display prejudicial attitudes at the beginning of the contact situation. One possible scenario is that Saudi students enter into a suspension of disbelief on arrival. That is, although they have heard negative messages relating to interactions with people of different faiths or cultures, they suspend judgement until experience. Contact then means judgement can be either favourable or unfavourable, moving from hypothetical to actual. This finding may apply to other groups with vastly different norms, and indeed may be more likely the greater the differences between the two groups. This study did not find that the greater the differences, the greater the difficulties in terms of prejudice. Indeed, willingness to suspend judgement may be a feature of contact situations where large differences exist, thereby facilitating contact.

This study has found that contact theory can be useful even in the absence of prejudicial attitudes, thereby moving Contact Theory into new territory. That is, Contact Theory can be applied to two types of studies – studies of prejudiced groups, whereby the assumption of prejudice is a reflection of the mind-set of study participants, and also in groups such as that of Saudi students, where prejudice (while an aspect of the participant's life experience) is not evident in their attitudes towards the other. In the latter case, the assumption of prejudice is discarded, while the factors which influence positive intergroup outcomes are explored. This includes contact facilitating conditions (such as friendship potential and authority support), as identified by earlier contact theorists, and the intergroup adaptation process as identified by Pettigrew and demonstrated in Table 13.1.

Adopting Contact Theory in this study I was able to engage the data effectively and gain insights into Saudi attitudes and experience. However, findings may have been more robust if the study had considered an inclusion of both Contact and Threat theories especially since the study anticipated some prejudice and cross-cultural challenges. In the study design of this research, participants were able to raise threat issues, unprompted in open questions, and potential 'challenges' to engagement were suggested to participants in the survey questionnaire. This method was developed in order to allow participants to feel comfortable with the line of questioning and hopefully more open to engaging with the research project. As the study was exploratory, it was decided that this approach would allow multiple perspectives to surface. The study found as discussed already, that positive impression of the other is not an automatic consequence of spending time together, and that from a New

Zealand homestay perspective, New Zealand families 'like' their students more if they have similar ways of doing things. This suggests that while the subjects of this study were Saudi students, a study of New Zealanders may have gained different and/or mixed results. When considering the perspectives of both groups, the intertwining of both contact and threat theories may provide fuller insights. Future studies might consider potential threats and challenges to engagement in greater detail, informed by this research.

13.3 Outcomes Resulting from this Engagement

Chapter one proposed a general question, "What outcomes are resulting from this engagement?" A direct response to this question summarises the research project. The outcomes of this engagement through exchange can be ascertained from the perspective of relationship building and friendship, which is generally developing, despite challenges. Students are developing links which they intend to maintain after graduation, either settling in New Zealand for a period (according to 25% of students) or in the majority of cases, maintaining friendships with locals. In the process of developing friendships, perspectives held by both students and locals change, as people from both cultures have a chance to get to know each other. This results in greater understanding of similarities and differences and leads individuals to a degree of introspection as they develop the means to find common ground. Individual growth is thus a core result of the scholarship program. Students undergo a personal transformation, increasing in maturity and independence, as they learn both study and life skills. Homestay families adopt a more sophisticated appreciation of Saudi culture. Longer term there may be economic benefits for both countries. For Saudi Arabia this will take the form of greater employability at home of returning students. New Zealand will see benefits in terms of the number of students (25%) who intend to invest in either businesses or homes in New Zealand.

Therefore, it seems that the scholarship program has benefits to students and locals on three fronts:

- 1) Immediate benefits in terms of learning skills and cross-cultural competencies
- 2) Short term benefits to the countries involved in terms of on-going goodwill amongst students, locals, and government officials in both countries
- 3) Longer term, it seems likely Saudi Arabia and New Zealand will benefit from trade and development.

Time will tell if the wider existential benefits of peaceful co-existence and co-operation will develop in line with peace education (chapter three).

13.4 Recommendations to New Zealand

Finally in this thesis, I would like to consider the implications of the study findings for the key stakeholders in this exchange, in both New Zealand and Saudi Arabia. This section will relate those findings to recommendations for New Zealand.

13.4.1 Recommendations to New Zealand Foreign Affairs

Due to immigration trends, New Zealand has historically developed strong ties with the UK, Australia, and the Pacific Islands. Culturally similar countries have been given higher status in relations. I had an experience of this first hand when I enquired about IT security training which is offered by a government department to New Zealand military personal. I was told that this was offered to international groups from the US, UK, Canada, and Australia, countries New Zealand shares intelligence with, but not to people from other countries including Saudi with whom we don't. While not the focus here, this could be perceived as a generalisation about 'others' on a national scale whereby cultural similarity generates greater feelings of trust.

On the other hand, recently New Zealand has also been developing relations with countries which are culturally dissimilar. This is evident in the world first free trade agreement with China (although New Zealand does have a significant minority Chinese population), and in the current development of a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Accepting free trade agreements with some, while adapting separate strategies in other areas of policy, demonstrates that as a country New Zealand distinguishes varying levels of friendship and the capacity of that friendship. This is presumably based on strategic perceptions of interests and risk assessment of 'others'. Yet New Zealand policy advisers could also consider what perception of others is based on, and whether it is possible, and indeed desirable, to develop closer relations with countries which are culturally dissimilar. Indeed this study has shown that it is possible to develop friendships with people from a country that is vastly different in terms of cultural norms and beliefs.

While Saudi Arabia is culturally very different, both locals and Saudis have demonstrated capacity to meet half way. Further, New Zealand has a positive reputation in the Middle East for its 'neutral' foreign policy stance and therefore might not need to adopt the policies of its

hitherto mentioned culturally similar friends. Indeed, approximately 7,000 Saudi students are studying in New Zealand, developing knowledge of New Zealand culture and forming links with New Zealand. This is a new opportunity to harness. Also, as in the case of Furia's (2006) study of Arab opinion (chapter two), Arabs (in this case Saudis) are more concerned with what countries 'do' than 'what they are'. That is, neutral foreign policy in the Middle East leads to a positive impression of the country, and overrides differences in culture or religion. It is important that New Zealand maintain neutral foreign policy in the Middle East so as not to lose the advantages gained.

13.4.2 Recommendations to Staff at New Zealand Institutions

The Saudi government has invested enormously in the education of its citizens, in order to help young Saudis catch up with international peers, and New Zealand is benefiting financially from this program. Therefore, New Zealand stakeholders should also be prepared to support the transition of students, and provide both on-going support and opportunities for closer interaction between Saudis and locals.

Staff at institutions must recognise that the scholarship program has been developed with both hard and soft skills in mind. Thus staff should look beyond recruitment or academic and revenue issues, and focus on the overall student experience. Students see their main alternatives for meeting locals as through homestay or nightlife (when locals let down their inhibitions and 'make friends with anybody'). Meanwhile students find it more difficult to make friends while studying bachelor degrees. Students themselves suggested that lecturers could encourage mixed nationality study groups to counter a tendency amongst students to form study groups with those of similar backgrounds. A buddy system for new students, if not already in place at a university, might also help the student assimilate, and ideally they should have a counsellor or mentor who understands their particular needs and the goals of the scholarship program, so they can offer advice accordingly.

Staff at New Zealand institutions must appreciate the cultural differences which contribute to challenges for Saudi students, especially those who are more conservative. There is a will on the part of students both to travel to New Zealand for their education and to make local friends while studying, yet differing cultural norms cannot be underestimated. Saudi students have needs and expectations which are different from students who come from countries which have a longer history of engagement with New Zealand. Using the same approaches which have worked with other student nationalities won't automatically translate to success

with Saudi students. Saudi has a comparatively younger education system, and is both conservative and deemed to be collectivist. As such, students are often much less independent and academic, and study skills are not as far developed as they need to be, to be successful in New Zealand. Further, students are distracted away from studies by social expectations in their community and their desire to have new experiences in New Zealand.

Saudi students are increasingly choosing New Zealand as a study destination of choice, partially due to the positive impression of locals. According to the students in the study, this is a point of difference when compared to other English speaking countries. If this is maintained or further developed through greater interaction, all stakeholders will benefit. Students want genuine friendships. While some New Zealanders are interested in getting to know Saudis, others are nervous to do so. The latter might be positively influenced by positive news stories in the media and through more education about Saudi culture. A greater focus on Saudi Arabia in cross-cultural studies would be helpful.

Education about Saudi Arabia and Saudis should ideally teach locals to be aware of sensitivities and that there must be some compromise so that both groups feel comfortable with the other. Values shouldn't be compromised in order to fit in and 'be like us' or on the basis that locals aren't capable of understanding a different culture. Saudis are going to the effort to learn about New Zealand, and greater reciprocity could be developed. Close friendships seem to be easier between Saudis who are willing to adjust their moral norms and partake of local vice. A better outcome would be that locals are able to understand Saudi culture rather than expecting Saudis to do activities they feel uncomfortable with. Diversity means mutual respect rather than influencing the other to be the same. This is a lesson for both New Zealand and Saudi people. As New Zealand appreciates the economic possibilities that the Middle East presents, what better way to show appreciation and develop close relations than by helping to maximise the positive outcomes for the youth who are in New Zealand currently.

13.5 Recommendations to Saudi Ministries

This study found that authority support, depending on the instigator, can have a positive effect on friendship building. In this case, parents were found to be the most positive influence on students' local engagement. Local religious leaders had a negative effect on relationship building in the case of some students, while students ignored discouragement from home country religious leaders. This suggests that the effect of encouragement or discouragement

by local Saudi officials is potentially stronger than that of officials who are still in Saudi. Yet the cultural attaché, the main official local body, wasn't mentioned by students. That said, although neither the cultural attaché nor the consulate have articulated the objectives of person-to-person diplomacy to students, they have been quietly laying the foundations for this to develop. This is most noticeable in the encouragement of students to stay in homestay families.

Yet students need further guidance from Saudi officials in New Zealand both through modelling of behaviours they should emulate and through assisting students to make friendships beyond homestays. There may be some limitations around the extent to which Saudi ministries can suggest students make friends, since Saudi culture dictates that respect be given to the norms of individual families [According to interviews, families have varying perspectives on the extent to which their children should make friends with locals]. However there are a number of ways they could do this both directly and indirectly. Using an indirect method for example, Saudi officials could model the behaviour they expect of students. This might include treating local and Saudi employees equally, in order to demonstrate respect for locals. By modelling considerate behaviour towards New Zealand counterparts and stakeholders, officials will encourage students to be thoughtful to locals, which may have a flow-on affect to the treatment of homestay families. In order to do this, officials must also develop their own understanding of local culture and demonstrate respect for the same. Yet there are challenges to this since Saudi officials operate in an environment which is Arabic speaking and mainly consisting of Saudi staff, while living with their Saudi families. In this case it is important they have local advisors whose advice they accept and that they seek cross-cultural training in order to understand differences and advise students accordingly.

In terms of direct methods to assist friendships, the cultural attaché could employ a counsellor to encourage students to join a wider range of activities, for instance sports clubs or volunteer organisations. Perhaps the scholarship could even be tied to this. That is, currently students maintain their scholarship through good class attendance and based on passing their English exam and subsequent courses. The cultural attaché could add to this list of requirements that a student must join an extracurricular activity. Just as students are monitored for attendance and grades, so too could counsellors keep a record of the students' activity of choice. This would encourage a greater range of social activities with locals; and provide an alternative to nightclubbing, so that normal and conservative students can make friends. Indeed, friendship needs to be cast beyond the homestay experience in order to guarantee all students a genuine

experience of friendship with locals. A homestay family is generally friendly with every student who stays with them, yet locals in other situations will befriend them if they like them. This perhaps provides a greater challenge for students but also an opportunity for personal development. Officials can also make local friends and encourage their families to do so, including their wives and daughters. If they can demonstrate how to make friends with locals without impinging Saudi values, then greater numbers of students might feel encouraged to do so also.

In some cases, gender segregation persists and inhibits female students, in particular, from having a full experience in New Zealand. There may even be some mixed messages on the same within the Saudi community. One of the Saudi ministries in Auckland accepts female Saudi staff and organises events which male and female Saudis are welcome to attend (with locals). The other doesn't hire Saudi female staff and organises same sex events. This provides a conflicting message to students within this contact situation, which needs to be balanced by greater encouragement of female students to mix with the opposite gender, in order that they feel comfortable meeting locals. The extent to which officials can effectively implement scholarship objectives may depend on their personal views on the same. This is especially evident in personal views on the role of Saudi women. Yet the encouragement of officials has great potential to positively influence the student experience.

Saudi ministries, both locally and internationally, could develop linkages with other like-minded organisations such as student exchange organisations. It might be possible to open more doors to students and provide a greater range of activities by joining forces. Many exchange organisations organise local networking events within a community of people who support the goals of international student exchange. Since these goals are shared by the Saudi scholarship provider, it seems that at a philosophical level there are synergies which could be developed. Such engagement need not conflict with Saudi norms. Indeed, Saudi ministries shouldn't apologise for wanting to keep the moral norms of students, but find ways to explain these to other organisations in a way which seeks mutual understanding.

13.6 Limitations

Due to the sensitivity of some of the themes within this topic, the study had a number of potential limitations, which I recognised and attempted to pre-empt. These included issues relating to participation, honesty in responses, avoidance of some topics, and interviewer effects as a non-Saudi.

The method I used to capture survey responses meant that the majority of students who were asked to participate generally did so. That is, I asked students to fill out the questionnaire on the spot and when they saw others doing so, this, combined with the persuasion of my helpers, meant most completed the surveys. When it came to interviews, some students were not available. It is possible that some of the more conservative students were less willing to participate in interviews or to answer interview questions fully. Some may have declined to partake in interviews in order to avoid offending me as a non-Saudi or because they weren't comfortable discussing their experiences, or didn't want their thoughts recorded. Some might have been uncomfortable discussing topics which they felt were of a political nature, especially given the common concern that there are spies within their community. On the other hand, given that I am not Saudi, some may have felt more liberated to discuss topics not normally discussed with other Saudis, for the same concerns mentioned. Some conversations were especially candid and it seemed students generally felt comfortable discussing their opinions.

I tried to get insights into the thoughts and attitudes of students who may have avoided me, nonetheless, by asking interview participants to explain the concerns and experiences of other and 'typical' Saudis. At least one interview participant admitted he was conservative and was thus able to discuss his experience from this viewpoint. Others discussed the views of other / conservative Saudis, thus I was able to get multiple viewpoints in this way.

Fortunately as a female I was able to interview both male and female participants although interviews with females were problematic. Interviews with female students were significantly shorter than those with males. It was at times difficult to encourage information sharing from female students about their experience, most likely because experience was extremely limited. For the same reason, females were much more likely to leave survey questions unanswered, and I received a number of surveys back from female students which had so few questions answered that they were not included in the data.

Some Saudi friends have questioned whether students were honest in their surveys and interviews and hence wondered if my research findings would be accurate. Some of the subjects discussed may have verged on the taboo. Saudis are sensitive about how Saudi culture is portrayed by outsiders, so there may have been an element of over-compensating and trying to project a positive image. On the other hand, I found interview discussions were candid, especially since students spoke of both positive and negative aspects of both their

culture and local culture. Also I have tried to mitigate interview bias by supplementing discussions with my own observations of students through my business and the many interviews and discussions I have had with host families and students over the past several years. In this way the research questions were approached from multiple viewpoints.

13.7 Recommendation for Future Study

As this study approached a topic which had not been investigated in empirical research previously, it was developed with a number of assumptions in mind, based on other external sources. Findings differed from those expected and at the same time raised a number of interrelated themes which are worthy of further study.

A richer understanding of contact situations involving Saudi students would be gained by the following studies:

- A study of local attitudes towards Saudi students, in particular preconceptions and change through interaction with students.
- A comparison of Saudi experiences of friendships in other countries. This could include countries which have had a longer period of friendship with Saudi Arabia and others which, similar to New Zealand, are comparatively new friendships.
- A study of intergenerational attitudes in Saudi towards friendship building in non-Islamic countries.
- A study of official perspectives on implementing the scholarship programs abroad, with interviews across the hierarchy at the Ministry of Higher Education and Saudi Cultural Attaches.
- A longitudinal study of the outcomes of friendship building across countries. This could include a comparison of the types of on-going contact with countries resulting from the scholarship program, including cultural exchange, investment and immigration.
- Perspectives on female friendship building abroad, including the views of female students in a more in-depth study of females abroad, including the views of other family members and Saudi officials.

13.8 Concluding Statement

In this contact situation, an absence of deep seated prejudice or political misadventure has been a positive starting point. Impressions each group has of the other have initially been based on limited information, and people from both countries seem curious to learn about each other. With positive first steps, there is yet much potential to grow the friendship between the countries, starting with the individuals involved in the student exchange. Indeed New Zealand may well provide an example of how, in spite of external commentary to the contrary, Islamic and non-Islamic peoples can build bridges and maintain positive relations, based on mutual respect.

Appendices

**Consent Form (Saudi Officials Australia)
(Consent Form will be held for 6 years)**

**Research on Engagement between Countries through International Education
Bridget Egan**

This research has received a University of Auckland Postgraduate Research Grant to be used towards research cost and I have also applied for a partial grant through Education New Zealand to assist with some of the costs associated with travel.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research and why I have been selected to participate in this research. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I voluntarily agree to take part in this study under the terms and conditions provided to me.
- I understand that I may choose to be audio-taped or not during the interview.
- I understand that in the event that I consent to be audio-taped, I may choose to turn off the recorder at any time during the interview.
- I understand that in the event that I consent to be audio-taped, only the researcher and her two supervisors have access to the interview tapes.
- I have been informed that the information that I provide will be kept safely at the University of Auckland, held for analysis for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw the information that I provide at any time before 30th December 2009.
- I understand that I may request a copy of the research findings.
- I agree / do not agree (please delete one) to be audio recorded

I give my consent based on (please delete one):

Anonymity and an understanding that I will under no circumstances be identified as an individual source of the information that I provide

or

Permission to use my name and position with information sited in the research as a result of this interview

Name:

Signature

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
ON 29-01-2009 for **3 years** from 29-01-2009 To 29-01-2012
Reference Number 2008/486

**Consent Form (Saudi Students in NZ)
(Consent Form will be held for 6 years)**

**Research on Engagement between Countries through International Education
Bridget Egan**

This research has received a University of Auckland Postgraduate Research Grant to be used towards research cost.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research and why I have been selected to participate in this research. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I voluntarily agree to take part in this study under the terms and conditions provided to me.
- I understand that I may choose to be audio-taped or not during the interview.
- I understand that in the event that I consent to be audio-taped, I may choose to turn off the recorder at any time during the interview.
- I understand that in the event that I consent to be audio-taped, only the researcher and her two supervisors have access to the interview tapes.
- I have been informed that the information that I provide will be kept safely at the University of Auckland, held for analysis for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw the information that I provide at any time before 30th December 2009.
- I understand that I may request a copy of the research findings.
- I agree / do not agree (please delete one) to be audio recorded

I give my consent based on (please delete one):

Anonymity and an understanding that I will under no circumstances be identified as an individual source of the information that I provide

or

Permission to use my name and position with information sited in the research as a result of this interview

Name:
Signature
Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
ON 29-01-2009 for **3 years** from 29-01-2009 To 29-01-2012
Reference Number 2008/486

Consent Form (Saudi Officials KSA)
(Consent Form will be held for 6 years)
Research on Engagement between Countries through International Education
Bridget Egan

This research has received a University of Auckland Postgraduate Research Grant to be used towards the cost of travel to KSA.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research and why I have been selected to participate in this research. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I voluntarily agree to take part in this study under the terms and conditions provided to me.
- I understand that I may choose to be audio-taped or not during the interview.
- I understand that in the event that I consent to be audio-taped, I may choose to turn off the recorder at any time during the interview.
- I understand that should an interpreter accompany the researcher in the interview and/or assist transcribing Arabic sections of the interview, this person will be bound by a confidentiality agreement with non-disclosure clause.
- I understand that in the event that I consent to be audio-taped, only the researcher and her two supervisors have access to the interview tapes.
- I have been informed that the information that I provide will be kept safely at the University of Auckland, held for analysis for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw the information that I provide at any time before 30th June 2010.
- I understand that I may request a copy of the research findings.
- I agree / do not agree (please delete one) to be audio recorded

I give my consent based on (please delete one):

Anonymity and an understanding that I will under no circumstances be identified as an individual source of the information that I provide

or

Permission to use my name and position with information sited in the research as a result of this interview

Name:

Signature

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
ON 29-01-2009 for **3 years** from 29-01-2009 To 29-01-2012
Reference Number 2008/486

Research on Engagement between Countries through International Education

Participation Information Sheet: Saudi Officials in Australia

This is a personal invitation to participate in a research study on Engagement between Countries through International Education. My name is Bridget Egan and I am currently a doctoral candidate at the Department of Management and International Business, The University of Auckland Business School.

The aim of the study is to develop an understanding of the experiences of Saudi students studying in New Zealand, with a focus on their engagement with non-Saudi people during their time in New Zealand. The study will include an assessment of the diplomacy objectives of the Saudi Ministry of Education and how these are being achieved in the context of individuals in New Zealand. The study is expected to lead to a set of recommendations on how social relations and network building between these groups might be optimised.

This research requires your participation in an interview. The session will take approximately 45 minutes. Questions asked during the interview will relate to; the objectives and expectations of the scholarship scheme, processes affecting scholarship students, relationship building in this context, re-integration and career prospects of returning Saudi students.

This research has received a University of Auckland Postgraduate Research Grant to be used towards research cost and I have also applied for a partial grant through Education New Zealand to assist with some of the costs associated with travel.

Please note that audio-recording of the interview will be optional. It will be entirely up to you whether the interview will be recorded or not. Even if you agree to being recorded, you may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time. In the case that you consent to have the interview recorded, only my two academic supervisors from the University and I will have access to the audio tapes. I will transcribe the interviews and the transcription notes and the audio tapes will be stored securely at the Department of Management and International Business, the University of Auckland Business School for six (6) years, after which they will be destroyed. The University of Auckland allows six years of data storage for publication purposes. This is a well-established procedure at the University and special care is taken to guarantee the confidentiality of the information.

Please also note that without your written consent, you will under no circumstances, be identified as an individual source of information. For writing and publishing purposes, all care will be taken to preserve the anonymity of the participants in this study.

Participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. If you consent to participate, you also have the right to withdraw the information that you provide before 30th of February 2009. Should translation of this interview be required, this will be done by a third party who will sign a third party confidentiality agreement.

You may also request a copy of the findings of the study and I will be happy to send you a copy of my finished work once I have completed my doctoral thesis.

Should you have any query regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Email Address: b.egan@auckland.ac.nz
Phone Number: 0211250361

Owen G Glenn Building
Floor 4, 12 Grafton Rd
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 373 7599
Facsimile 64 9 373 7477
<http://www.business.auckland.ac.nz/>
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

Alternatively, you may also contact my thesis main supervisor, Professor Nigel Haworth

Email Address: n.haworth@auckland.ac.nz

Phone Number: (64 9) 373 7599 x 85235

Finally, if you have any concerns of an ethical nature regarding this study, you can contact the Chair of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at +64 9 373-7599 extn. 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS
COMMITTEE ON 29-01-2009 for **3 years** from 29-01-2009 To 29-01-2012
Reference Number 2008/486

Research on Engagement between Countries through International Education

Participation Information Sheet: Officials in KSA

This is a personal invitation to participate in a research study on Engagement between Countries through International Education. My name is Bridget Egan and I am currently a doctoral candidate at the Department of Management and International Business, The University of Auckland Business School.

The aim of the study is to develop an understanding of the experiences of Saudi students studying in New Zealand, with a focus on their engagement with non-Saudi people during their time in New Zealand. The study will include an assessment of the diplomacy objectives of the Saudi Ministry of Education and how these are being achieved in the context of individuals in New Zealand. The study is expected to lead to a set of recommendations on how social relations and network building between these groups might be optimised.

This research requires your participation in an interview. The session will take approximately 45 minutes. Questions asked during the interview will relate to; your expectations of New Zealand people before travelling and friendship building during your time in New Zealand.

This research has received a University of Auckland Postgraduate Research Grant to be used towards research cost.

Please note that audio-recording of the interview will be optional. It will be entirely up to you whether the interview will be recorded or not. Even if you agree to being recorded, you may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time. In the case that you consent to have the interview recorded, only my two academic supervisors from the University and I will have access to the audio tapes. If an interpreter is used in either the interview or to assist transcribe any Arabic portions of an interview, this person will be bound by a confidentiality agreement whereby they agree not to disclose any information to anyone other than myself. I will transcribe the interviews and the transcription notes which are in English and the audio tapes will be stored securely at the Department of Management and International Business, the University of Auckland Business School for six (6) years, after which they will be destroyed. The University of Auckland allows six years of data storage for publication purposes. This is a well-established procedure at the University and special care is taken to guarantee the confidentiality of the information.

Participation is voluntary. Please also note that without your written consent, you will under no circumstances, be identified as an individual source of information. For writing and publishing purposes, all care will be taken to preserve the anonymity of the participants in this study. Should translation of this interview be required, this will be done by a third party who will sign a third party confidentiality agreement.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. If you consent to participate, you also have the right to withdraw the information that you provide before 30th of June 2010.

You may also request a copy of the findings of the study and I will be happy to send you a copy of my finished work once I have completed my doctoral thesis.

Should you have any query regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Email Address: b.egan@auckland.ac.nz
Phone Number: 0211250361

Alternatively, you may also contact my thesis main supervisor, Professor Nigel Haworth

Email Address: n.haworth@auckland.ac.nz

Phone Number: (64 9) 373 7599 x 85235

Finally, if you have any concerns of an ethical nature regarding this study, you can contact the Chair of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at +64 9 373-7599 extn. 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
ON 29-01-2009 for **3 years** from 29-01-2009 To 29-01-2012
Reference Number 2008/486

Research on Engagement between Countries through International Education

Participation Information Sheet: Saudi Students in New Zealand

This is a personal invitation to participate in a research study on Engagement between Countries through International Education. My name is Bridget Egan and I am currently a doctoral candidate at the Department of Management and International Business, The University of Auckland Business School.

The aim of the study is to develop an understanding of the experiences of Saudi students studying in New Zealand, with a focus on their engagement with non-Saudi people during their time in New Zealand. The study will include an assessment of the diplomacy objectives of the Saudi Ministry of Education and how these are being achieved in the context of individuals in New Zealand. The study is expected to lead to a set of recommendations on how social relations and network building between these groups might be optimised. This research requires your participation in a survey. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes. Questions asked in the survey will relate to your experience of friendship and outcomes from time spent in New Zealand. This research has received a University of Auckland Postgraduate Research Grant to be used towards research cost.

Please also note that information given in the survey questionnaire is anonymous and will be used in aggregate form only, you will under no circumstances, be identified as an individual source of information. For writing and publishing purposes, all care will be taken to preserve the anonymity of the participants in this study. Participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. If you consent to participate, you also have the right to withdraw the information that you provide before 30th of December 2009. Should translation of this survey be required, this will be done by a third party who will sign a third party confidentiality agreement.

You may also access a copy of the findings of the study once I have completed my doctoral thesis. Should you have any query regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Email Address: b.egan@auckland.ac.nz
Phone Number: 0211250361

Alternatively, you may also contact my thesis main supervisor, Professor Nigel Haworth
Email Address: n.haworth@auckland.ac.nz
Phone Number: (64 9) 373 7599 x 85235

Finally, if you have any concerns of an ethical nature regarding this study, you can contact the Chair of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at +64 9 373-7599 extn. 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
ON 29-01-2009 for **3 years** from 29-01-2009 To 29-01-2012
Reference Number 2008/486

Interview Questions (Officials in Canberra and KSA)

1) Scholarship Scheme Objectives

- A) Can you please explain the background to the scholarship program?
- B) Please explain the objectives of the scholarship program in terms of its role in;
- meeting development objectives of the Kingdom
 - in international relations

2) Focus on Sending students to particular countries

- How many countries are students sent to currently? Are there any plans to add/delete countries from this list?
- How does the Ministry decide which countries to include?
- What are the issues the Ministry considers when deciding the volume of students to go to a particular country?

3) Relationship building and benefits

- What kind of engagement would the Ministry like to see between Saudi students and those of the host country, and how does the Ministry encourage this?
- Please comment on feedback you might have had from students in terms of:
 - a) Any particular preferences regarding the choice of country where students prefer to study and their rationales in this decision making
 - b) Relationship building whilst studying abroad
 - c) Ease of adapting to a foreign country
 - d) Cultural issues which affect the experience either positively or negatively

As my research focuses on Saudi students in New Zealand could you please describe how New Zealand compares to other destinations, in these areas? (Destination preference / relationship building / ease of adaptation / cultural issues)

- Does the Ministry perceive any particular benefits in sending students to New Zealand? (Either current or anticipated future benefits?)
- Saudi students have only chosen NZ as a study destination in the past 4 or 5 years and the scholarship program has encouraged a steady increase in the number of students studying in NZ. Can you please comment on the way relations between these two countries have developed prior to and after commencing the Saudi scholarship program?
- Has the increase in students studying in NZ led to any other relationship benefits outside of education?
- What do you anticipate in terms of contact between Saudi Arabia and NZ in future as a result of the increasing number of students studying in NZ?

4) Scholarship Processes

- Could you please describe the scholarship programs available to students including:
 - a) Scholarship programs available for students to apply for within Saudi Arabia
 - b) Scholarship programs available for students who apply to study from NZ

- In terms of eligibility of scholarship students, what do you look for in each case?

To what extent do you consider the following areas (if at all)?

- a) students academic background
 - b) family background
 - c) the city or region the student comes from
 - d) the suitability of the course for Saudi's development needs
 - e) the suitability of the course for Saudi employment prospects
- or in the case of students applying from New Zealand, does having an offer letter take precedence over other considerations?

5) Re – integration and Career paths anticipated

- To what extent are the returning students' career prospects affected by their international education?

- Does the Ministry envision any preferred career paths for returning students?

- Has the Ministry captured information on the re integration of students on return to Saudi?

- Are there any issues around re-adaptation of students when they return home and does the Ministry provide any assistance in this area?

Interview Questions

1) Before you came to New Zealand what did you think New Zealanders would be like?
Why did you think this? What or who influenced these impressions?

2) What is your impression of New Zealand people now? How would you describe them?

3) Have you made friends with New Zealanders?

*Can you explain the situations where you find it easiest to make friends with New Zealand people?

*Are there any issues which make it difficult to make friends with NZers?

Do you feel nervous making friends with NZ people? Why / why not?

Which experiences with NZ people have been most enjoyable?

Have you had any negative experiences of friendship with NZers? Please explain

4) What are the key differences between Saudi and New Zealand people?

5) Do you feel you are encouraged to make friends with New Zealand people?

Who is encouraging you to make friends?

How important is their encouragement to you?

6) Do any people or groups discourage you from making friends in NZ? If so who?

>How does that affect you in terms of making friends in NZ?

If you've had mixed messages about making friends with New Zealanders ie some people encouraging you, others discouraging you, what are your own conclusions?

How do mixed messages affect you?

7) Do you consider yourself a typical Saudi? Why / why not?

>What would a typical Saudi worry about when making friends with local people?

8) Do you have any suggestions in terms of how to make friendship building between NZ people and Saudis easier?

5. PhD Research: Saudi Friendship building in New Zealand (NZ)

This survey focuses on how Saudi students are developing friendships with other Saudis, locals and people of other nationalities while studying in New Zealand. This is part of my PhD research into friendship building between countries as a result of international education. Your participation is highly valued. Your answer to each question will remain confidential and anonymous, and will be used in aggregate form only. Please answer all questions. Thank you very much for your participation.

بحث دكتوراة : الاستبيان التالي يركز عن الطلاب السعوديين وطريقه تطوير العلاقات الاجتماعيه مع الطلاب السعوديين الدارسين في نيوزلاند و الطلاب من جنسيات اخرى والمجتمع النيوزلاندي شاكرا لك على حسن تعاونك في المساعده في انجاح بحث الدكتوراة.

6. Section One: Expectations

الجزء الاول :التوقعات

Q1) When you were deciding to study in NZ, to what extent were the following issues important in your decision to study in New Zealand? (Please circle one number in each row)

عندما قررت الدراسه في نيوزلاند ماهي الاشياء المهمه التي اثرت في قراراتك من فضلك حدداختيار واحد من التالي :

	Extremely important مهم جدا	Quite important مهم	Neither important nor unimportant محايد	Not very important غير مهم	not at all important غير مهم ابدا
Gaining a qualification abroad الحصول على مؤهلات من الخارج	1	2	3	4	5
Making friends with NZ people عمل صداقات مع النيوزلانديين	1	2	3	4	5
Experience living abroad خبرة المعيشه في الخارج	1	2	3	4	5
Learning about NZ culture تعلم الثقافه النيوزلانديه	1	2	3	4	5
Improving English language skills تحسين مهارات اللغه الانجليزيه	1	2	3	4	5
Making friends with international students from other countries (non Saudis) تكوين صداقات مع طلبه من بلدان اخرى (غير سعوديين)	1	2	3	4	5
Getting scholarship income الحصول على المنحه الدراسيه(البعثه)	1	2	3	4	5
Gaining academic skills اكتساب المهارات الاكاديميه	1	2	3	4	5
Making friends with other Saudi students abroad تكوين صداقات اخرى مع طلبه سعوديين بالخارج	1	2	3	4	5
Other: (please specify) اخرى حدد اخرى:(يرجى التحديد)	1	2	3	4	5

7. Section Two: Experience القسم الثاني: التجربه

Q2) How many countries have you visited? (Including NZ)

كم عدد البلدان التي قمت بزيارتها؟ (مع نيوزلند)

Please name these countries:

رجاءا اكتب اسماء البلدان:

Q3) How strongly do you agree with the following statements (Please circle one number in each row) مامدى موافقتك على العبارات التالية (يرجى وضع دائره حول رقم واحد في كل صف)

	Agree strongly موافق بشدة	Agree موافق	Neither agree nor disagree محايد	Disagree غير موافق	Disagree strongly غير موافق بشدة
I am interested in making friends with NZ people انا مهتم لتكوين صداقات مع نيوزلنديين	1	2	3	4	5
Saudi students find it easy to make friends with NZ people الطلبه السعوديين يجدون من السهل تكوين صداقات مع النيوزلنديين	1	2	3	4	5
I am interested in making friends with people from other countries in NZ انا مهتم لتكوين صداقات مع اشخاص من بلدان اخرى في نيوزلند	1	2	3	4	5
Making friends with NZ people is a key part of the scholarship program عمل صداقات مع اشخاص من نيوزلند هو جزء اساسي من برنامج المنح الدراسيه(البعثه)	1	2	3	4	5
Saudi students find it easy to make friends with other non Arab international students الطلبه السعوديين يجدون من السهل تكوين صداقات مع طلبه غير عرب من بلدان اخرى	1	2	3	4	5

Q4) How strongly do the following factors affect making friends with New Zealand people? (Please circle one number in each row)

مامدى تاثير العوامل التاليه في تكوين صداقات مع نيوزلنديين؟ رجاءا ضع دائره حول رقم واحد في كل صف

	Affects a lot تأثير بشكل كبير	Affect a little تأثير قليلا	Neither affects nor doesn't affect محايد	Doesn't Affect لا تاثير	Doesn't affect at all لا تاثير اطلاقا
English ability <small>القدره الانجليزيه</small>	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural differences <small>الاختلافات الثقافيه</small>	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to meet <small>الفرص المتاحه لملاقاتهم</small>	1	2	3	4	5

Religious differences الاختلافات الدينية	1	2	3	4	5
Other: (Please explain) اخرى:يرجى التوضيح	1	2	3	4	5

Q5) How much of your spare time do you usually spend with each of the following groups? (Please give a percentage % estimate of spare time for each group) Note: combined answers should add up to 100%

كم من مانه تقضي وقت فراغك 3 مع المجموعات الموضحة ادناة ؟ (الرجاء اختيار النسبه على ان يكون المجموع الكلي 100%)

	100 %	90%	80%	70%	60%	50%	40%	30%	20%	10%	None
Saudi friends اصدقاء سعوديين											
Saudi family عائله سعوديه											
Other Arabs عرب											
New Zealanders نيوزلنديين											
Non Arab / not from NZ غير عرب وغير نيوزلنديين											

Q6) How many friends of the following nationalities do you have in NZ? (Please put a tick in the correct box for each):

كم عدد اصدقائك في نيوزلند من الجنسيات التاليه؟
(رجاءا وضع علامه في المربع ادناة)

	More than 10	7 - 9	4 - 6	1 - 3	None
Saudi سعودي					
New Zealanders نيوزلندي					
Other Arabs عرب					
Non Arab / not from					

NZ

غير نيوزلنديين/غير عرب

--	--	--	--	--

Q7) Which of the following activities have you engaged in with each of these groups of people during your time in NZ? (Please tick each box that applies to you)

اي من الاثشطه التاليه قد مارستها مع المجموعات الموضحة ادناه خلال تواجدك في نيوزلاند؟

يرجى وضع علامة في المربع الذي ينطبق عليك مع العلم انه يمكنك اختيار اكثر من مربع من نفس الصف (

	Other Saudis	New Zealanders	Other Arabs	Non Arab / not from NZ
Working on homework عمل واجباتك المنزليه				
Playing sport ممارسة الرياضة				
Going to the cinema together الذهاب الى السينما معا				
Having a drink in a café together تناول مشروب في مقهى				
Visiting their home زيارتهم في منزلهم				
Inviting them to my home دعوتهم لزيارتك في منزلك				
Sharing accommodation مشاركتهم السكن				
Travelling overnight together السفر من غير تخطيط				
Eating a meal in a restaurant together تناول وجبه في مطعم معا				
Studying in the same class الدراسه في صف واحد				
Sightseeing together مشاهده معالم المدينه				
Attending a seminar together حضور ندوه				
A Saudi cultural event الندوات الثقافيه السعوديه				

Q8) If you could use 3 adjectives to describe NZ people what would these be?

إذا كان بإمكانك استخدام ثلاث صفات لوصف النيوزلنديين ماذا سوف تصفهم به؟

Adjective 1) _____ الصفه الاولى

Adjective 2) _____ الصفه الثانيه

Adjective 3) _____ الصفه الثالثه

Q9) If you could use 3 adjectives to describe Saudi people what would these be?

إذا كان بإمكانك استخدام ثلاث صفات لوصف السعوديين ماذا سوف تصفهم به؟

Adjective 1) _____ لصفه الاولى

Adjective 2) _____ الصفه الثانيه

Adjective 3) _____ الصفه الثالثه

Q10) How has your impression of NZ people changed during your time in NZ? (Please circle one appropriate number only)

كيف كان انطباعك عن النيوزلنديين خلال تواجدك في نيوزلند؟
(يرجى وضع دائرة حول الرقم المناسب واحده فقط)

1	2	3	4	5
Much more positive	A little more positive	No change	A little more negative	Much more negative
اكتر ايجابيه	ايجابيه قليله	لا تغير	قليل من السلبيه	اكتر سلبيه

Q11) To what extent do you feel each of the following groups / people either encourage or discourage you to make friends with local people in New Zealand? (Please circle one number in each row)

الى اي مدى تعتقد ان المجموعات الموضحة ادناه قد تؤثر ايجابيا او سلبييا في تكوين علاقاتك الاجتماعيه مع النيوزلاندين؟

	Encourage Strongly	Encourage a little	Neither encourage nor discourage	Discourage a little	Discourage strongly
	دعم ايجابي بشده	قليل من الدعم الايجابي	محايد	قليل من الدعم السلبي	دعم سلبي بشده
NZ education officials المسؤولين عن التعليم في نيوزلند	1	2	3	4	5
Local religious leaders in KSA القادة الدينيين المحليين في السعودية	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers in NZ المعلمون في نيوزلند	1	2	3	4	5
My parents والداك	1	2	3	4	5
Local religious leaders in NZ القادة الدينيين المحليين في نيوزلند	1	2	3	4	5
Saudi Ministry of Higher Education وزارة التعليم العالي السعودية	1	2	3	4	5

Other: (please name) 1 2 3 4 5

اخرى: (حدد الاسم)

Q12) Please consider to what extent the following experiences in NZ have been negative / positive. (Please circle one number in each row)

الرجاء التوضيح من خلال تجربتك الشخصية في نيوزلند من الناحية السلبية والناحية الايجابية (يرجى وضع دائرة حول الرقم واحد في كل صف)

	Extremel y positive اجابيه كثيرة	A little positiv e اجابيه قليلة	Neutral محايد	A little negativ e سلبيه قليلة	Extremel y negative كثير من السلبيات	No Experie nce لا توجد خبرات
Education (English) التعليم (الانجليزيه)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Education (Foundation Studies) التعليم (السنة التحضيريه)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Education (University) التعليم (جامعة)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Home stay السكن مع عائله	1	2	3	4	5	6
Friendships with NZ people صداقات مع نيوزلنديين	1	2	3	4	5	6
Friendships with Saudis صداقات مع سعوديين	1	2	3	4	5	6
Overall experience of NZ الخبره الحياتيه للنيوزلنديين	1	2	3	4	5	6

8. Section Three: Outcomes الباب الثالث : نتائج

A) Friendships علاقات

Q13) How strongly do you agree with each of the following sentences? (Please circle one number in each row) الى اي مدى تؤيد الجمل التاليه (يرجى وضع دائرة حول رقم واحد في كل صف)

(يرجى وضع دائرة حول رقم واحد في كل صف)

	Agree strongly موافق بشدة	Agree موافق	Neither agree nor disagree محايد	Disagre e معارض	Disagre e strongly معارض بشدة
I hope to maintain friendships with NZ people after I complete my studies in NZ اتمنى الحفاظ على صداقتي مع النيوزلنديين من بعد ان	1	2	3	4	5

اكمل دراستي في نيوزلند

I hope to maintain friendships with other international students after I complete my studies in NZ

اتمنى الحفاظ على صداقتي مع الطلبة الاخرين من بعد ان اكمل دراستي في نيوزلند

1 2 3 4 5

I hope to maintain friendships with other Saudi students after I complete my studies in NZ

اتمني الحفاظ علي اصدقائي السعوديين بعد انتهاء دراستي

1 2 3 4 5

9.

B) Ongoing links with New Zealand استمرار الصلة مع نيوزلند

Q14) How strongly do you agree with each of the following sentences? (Please circle one number in each row)

ما مدى قوة موافقتك على الجمل التاليه؟
(يرجى وضع دائرة حول رقم واحد في كل صف)

	Agree strongly موافق بشده	Agree موافق	Neither agree nor disagree محايد	Disagree معارض	Disagree strongly معارض بشده
I hope to live in NZ after I finish my studies in NZ اتمنى العيش في نيوزلند من بعد انتهاء دراستي فيها	1	2	3	4	5
I hope to work in NZ after I complete my studies in NZ اتمنى العمل في نيوزلند من بعد انتهاء دراستي فيها	1	2	3	4	5

C) Investment in New Zealand الاستثمار في نيوزلند

Q15) Have you or your family invested in any of the following?
(Please circle correct answer for each row)

هل سبق لك او لعائلتك الاستثمار في اي من الاتي؟

	Yes	No
A house in NZ منزل في نيوزلند	1	2
Land in NZ ارض في نيوزلند	1	2

A business in NZ	1	2
مشاريع في نيوزلند		
If you or your family have invested in a business in NZ please provide state what type of business, when this investment was made, and any further information you are happy to share		
لو استثمرت في نيوزلند انتة او احد افراد عائلتك ,مانوع الاستثمار وفي اي سنة تم الاستثمار ,الرجاء تزويدنا بمعلومات متقدمة للمشاركة .		

Q16) Are you or your family actively planning to invest in any of the following?
(Please circle correct answer for each row)

هل انت او اي فرد من عائلتك تخططون للاستثمار لاي من التالي؟

	Yes	No
A house in NZ	1	2
منزل في نيوزلند		
Land in NZ	1	2
ارض في نيوزلند		
A business in NZ	1	2
مشاريع في نيوزلند		
If you or your family are actively planning to invest in a business in NZ please state what type of business you are planning to invest in, when you are likely to invest in the business, and any further information you are happy to share		
كنت أنت أو عائلتك تخططون للاستثمار في الأعمال التجارية في نيوزيلند اذكر أي نوع من الاعمال كنت تخطط للاستثمار ،أي معلومات أخرى تريد تزويدنا بها؟		

Q17) Please write any comments on your experience in NZ which you would like to share with me. You can write in English or Arabic.

الرجاء كتابة اي تعليقات او خبرات سابقه في نيوزلند تود ان تشاركنا فيها تستطيع الكتابه بالغه العربيه او الانجليزيه

10. Section 4: Demographic Questions **الباب 4 : أسئلة الديموغرافية**

Your answers in this questionnaire are confidential. I will be utilizing a translator to translate sections of the questionnaire up to this section if necessary. However I will separate the demographic questions so that the translator is no way able to match your characteristics to the questions you have answered. الاستبيان تصل الى هذا القسم إذا لزم الأمر. ولكن أنا سوف منفصلة المسائل الديموغرافية بحيث مترجم توجد وسيلة قادرة على تطابق الخصائص على الأسئلة التي كنت قد أجبت.

1) Are you: هل انت:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male ذكر
<input type="checkbox"/>	Female انثى

(Please tick correct answer) (يرجى وضع علامة على الإجابة الصحيحة)

(2) What is your age group? (Please tick) ما هي فنتك العمرية؟ (يرجى وضع علامة)

تحت سن Under 17	18-21	22-25	26-30	31-34	35-39	40+
<input type="checkbox"/>						

3) Which city do you come from? _____ Region _____ (Please name city and area in English)? (الرجاء كتابة اسم المدينة والمنطقة بالانجليزية)؟

4) Are you studying on a Saudi government scholarship?
هل أنت مبتعث من الحكومة السعودية؟

Yes نعم
No لا

(Please tick correct answer) (يرجى وضع علامة الإجابة الصحيحة)

5) What course are you studying now in NZ? (Please tick one only) في اي دوره دراسيه
تدرس حاليا؟ رجاءا اختار واحده فقط

English لغه انجليزيه	
Foundation Studies سنه تحضيريه	
Certificate Course دورات	
Bachelor Degree بكالوريوس	
Graduate Diploma دبلوم	
Postgraduate Diploma دبلوم عالي	
Master Degree ماجستير	
PhD دكتوراه	

6) How long have you been in New Zealand? (Please tick one only) كم مدة اقامتك الماضيه في
نيوزلند

Less than 3 months اقل من 3 اشهر	
4 to 6 months	
7 to 12 months	
13 month to 2 years	
25 months to 3 years	
36 months to 4 years	
More than 4 years اكثر من 4 سنوات	

(7) What are your current living arrangements? (Please tick one only) ما هي الترتيبات
المعيشية الراهنة؟ (يرجى وضع علامة واحدة فقط)

Living in home stay سكن مع عائله	
Living alone سكن شخصي	
Living with Saudi family سكن مع عائله سعودي	
Living with Saudi friends سكن مع اصدقاء سعوديين	
Flatting with NZ people سكن مع نيوزلانديين	
Flatting with other international students السكن مع جنسيات مختلفه	

8) What is your religious background? (Please tick one only)

ماهي الفئة الدينية التي تنتمي اليها؟

<input type="checkbox"/>	Sunni سني
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shia شيعي
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please name):_____

Would you be available for an interview as a subsequent part of this research?

هل تمانع في استضافتك كجزء من البحث؟

If yes, please give me your email address and telephone:

إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، الرجاء أن تعطيني عنوانك البريدي ورقم الهاتف :

شكرا جزيلا Thank you very much for your time and for participating in this survey!
لك على وقتك وعلى المشاركة في هذا الاستطلاع!

Survey Demographics
Gender

	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Male	123	76
Female	38	23.5
Missing	7	
Total	168	

Age group

Age	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Under 17 years old	2	1.3
18-21	34	21.4
22-25	71	44.7
26-30	41	26.4
31-34	8	5
40 years +	2	1.3
Missing	10	
Total	168	

Length of Time in New Zealand

Time in NZ	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Less than 3 months	14	8.7
4 to 6 months	16	9.9
7 to 12 months	34	21.1
13 months to 2 years	65	41
25 months to 3 years	18	11.2
36 months to 4 years	4	2.5
More than 4 years	8	5

Missing	9	
Total	168	

Living arrangements

	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Living in homestay	47	30.6
Living alone	56	35.7
Living with Saudi family	20	12.7
Living with Saudi friends	16	10.2
Flatting with NZ people	11	7
Flatting with international students	5	3.2
Missing	13	
Total	168	

Studying on scholarship

Are you studying on a scholarship?	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Yes	130	81.9
No	28	17.5
Missing	8	
Total	168	

Course of study

	Frequency	Valid Percentage
English	87	55
Foundation studies	38	23.8
Certificate course	5	3.1

Bachelor Degree	13	8.1
Graduate Diploma	2	1.3
Postgraduate Diploma	3	1.9
Masters Degree	7	4.4
PhD	3	1.9
Missing	8	
Total	168	

Religious background

	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Sunni	135	93.8
Shia	7	4.8
Others	1	.7
Missing	23	
Total	168	

City of Origin

City	Frequency	City	Frequency
Jeddah	35	Dawadmi	1
Riyadh	24	Alajeq	1
Damman	11	Alvas	1
Qatif	7	Badaya	1
Alhasa	4	Sharqiah	1
Najran	3	Yanbu	1
Medina	3	Dhahran	1
Abha	3	Arar	1
Alkobar	3	Abqioq	1

Alabha	2	Siahat	1
Albaha	2	Aslan	1
Taif	2	Tarout	1
Alhasa	2	Qassim	1
Buraydah	2	Qurayyat	1
Sakaka	2	Jazan	1
Aljubail	2	Hail	1
Hafar Albatin	2	Alsharaei	1
Tabuk	2	Shifa	1
Makkah	11	TOTAL	129

Region of Origin

	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Central	32	19
East	32	19
North	10	6
South	8	4.8
Southwest	1	.6
West	57	33.9
Missing	29	
Total	168	

Appendix – from Chapter Seven -

Additional words used to describe New Zealand people: Other adjectives included; not friendly (4) not generous (4) open minded (4), sociable (4) boring (3), hardworking (3), quiet (3), ethical / strong morals (3), serious (3), beautiful (2), cooperative (2), curious (2), forgiving (2), happy (2), mean (2), patient (2), supportive (2), safe (2), disciplined (2), funny (2), drunkards (2), and once each for the following; active, big talkers, calm, conciliatory, dirty, friendly just when they drink, full of knowledge, generous, hospitable, know how to deal with people, laugh a lot, less experience and information about general information, not easy going, pitchy, sweet, uneducated about other cultures, untrustworthy, welcoming, always late, cautious, down to earth, ethnic, fast, good manners, healthy, have money, individualistic, lazy, look after others, not bad, not social with other nationalities, outgoing, peaceful, racist, routine, rude, selfish, smart, impolite (some), sporty, strange, they need to take advantage of our friendship, very bad, not violent, organized, partying, positive, practical, reserved, shy, smelly, straightforward, strict, successful, unfriendly, very formal, avoid strangers, busy, careful about money, cheerful, close to each other, disrespectful, humble, introverted, moody.

Additional words used to describe Saudi people, listed by gender since students seemed to be describing their own genders;

Adjectives given predominantly by females to describe Saudis include: safe (2), respectful (2), humour (2), trouble maker (2), together (2) beautiful, naughty, unsocial, unsuitable for women, cocky, perfect, strict, very loud, welcoming, honest, white/pure hearted

Adjectives given predominantly by males are: flexible (2), cool (2), talkative (2), don't care about anything (2), strong morals (2), best (1), clever (2), understanding (2) then one response each for the following; careless, changeable in morals and values, different culture, diverse, equal, hospitable, looking for future, Muslim, my proud nation, needy, not nice, proud, more friendly than others, very different, boring, crazy, dependent, don't care so much about their future, don't respect law, enjoyable, good in relationships, hardworking, helpless, ignore everything, indecisive, jealous, like to gather, negative, open minded, serious, sharing, young, advise people, aggressive, close together, easy to convince, fucker, good manners, like everything in a hurry, mode, not serious, reasonable, selfish sometimes, sensitive, some are bad, strong opinion, strugglers, sweet, love making friends, waste money

Adjectives given by both are: loyal (2), honest (2), cooperative / collaborative (2), trustful (2), irresponsible (2) look after each other (2)

References

- Abdalla, A. M. (2003). Causes of anti-Americanism in the Arab world: A socio-political perspective. *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 7(4), 62-73.
- Al-Abed Al Haq, F., & Smadi, O. (1996). Spread of English and Westernization in Saudi Arabia. *World Englishes*, 15(3), 307-317.
- Al-Faisal, P. T. (2006). *Saudi education in the global economy*. Paper presented at the Vital Speeches of the Day.
- Al-Zaydi, M. (2008a, June 9). The century of religions, *Asharq Alawsat*. Retrieved from <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=2&id=13033>
- Al-Zaydi, M. (2008b, April 6). For the sake of humanity, *Asharq Alawsat*. Retrieved from <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=2&id=12328>
- Al Shemary, A. (2008). Saudi Arabia: US preferred destination for students Retrieved February 2, 2012, from <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?id=11331>
- Alkhazim, M. (2003). Higher education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges, solutions, and opportunities missed. *Higher Education Policy*, 16, 479-486.
- Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing.
- Allport, G. (1962). Prejudice: Is it societal or personal? *The Journal of Social Issues*, 18(2), 120-134.
- Allport, G. (1966). The religious context of prejudice. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 5(3), 447-457.
- Alreshoud, A., & Koeske, G. (1997). Arab students' attitudes toward and amount of social contact with Americans: A causal process analysis of cross-sectional data. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 137(2), 235-245.
- Anonymous. (2006). Saudi Arabia country conditions. *Political Risk Yearbook*.
- Anonymous. (2007, September 22). Australian universities become a mecca with their call to prayer, *The Age*. Retrieved from <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/australian-universities-become-a-mecca-with-their-call-to-prayer/2007/09/21/1189881777596.html>
- Anonymous. (2008). Mind wealth, the New Oil. *Foreign Affairs*, 87(3).
- Antal, C. (2008). Reflections on religious nationalism, conflict and schooling in developing democracies: India and Israel in comparative perspective. *Compare*, 38(1), 87-102.
- Argyle, M. (1969). *Social interaction*. London, UK: Methuen.
- Argyle, M., & Kendon, A. (1967). The experimental analysis of social performance. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 3, pp. 55-98). New York, NY: Academic Press.

- Ayoob, M. (2006). The Middle East in 2025: Implications for U.S policy. *Middle East Policy*, 13(2), 148-161.
- Bahgat, G. (1999). Education in the Gulf monarchies: Retrospect and prospect. *International Review of Education*, 45(2), 127-136.
- Bangura, A. K. (2004, November). *Tirbyi in the muslim world, with a focus on Saudi Arabia*. Paper presented at the United States Agency for International Development Conference on Education in Islamic Countries: The Development Agenda, Washington, DC.
- Bashir, S. (2007). Trends in international trade in higher education: Implications and options for developing countries. *The World Bank Education Working Paper Series*, 6. Retrieved from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079956815/WPS6_Intl_trade_higherEdu.pdf
- Bellamy, C., & Weinberg, A. (2006). Creating global citizens through study abroad. *The Journal of the New England Board of Higher Education*, 21(2), 20-21.
- Berry, J. W. (1994). Acculturation and psychological adaptation. In A.-M. Bouvy, F. J. R. van de Vijver, P. Boski & P. Schmitz (Eds.), *Journeys into cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 129-141). Lisse: Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46, 5-34.
- Blau, P. (1977). *Inequality and heterogeneity: A primitive theory of social structure*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Blumer, H. (1958). Prejudice as a sense of group position. *Pacific Sociological Review*(1), 3-7.
- Bochner, s., McLeod, B., & Lin, A. (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. *International Journal of Psychology*, 12, 277-297.
- Bollag, B. (2006). American colleges see more Saudi students on scholarships. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 52(29), A53.
- Bremmer, I. (2004). The Saudi paradox. *World Policy Journal*, 21(3).
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(5), 475-482.
- Brewer, M. B., & Miller, N. (1984). Beyond the contact hypothesis: Theoretical perspectives on desegregation. In N. Miller & M. B. Brewer (Eds.), *Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation* (pp. 281-302). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Bronson, R., & Coleman, R. (2006). The kingdom's clock. *Foreign Policy*, (156). Retrieved from http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2006/08/08/the_kingdoms_clock
- Byrne, D. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

- Central Intelligence Agency. (2012). Saudia Arabia Retrieved January 4, 2012, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html>
- Comp, D. (2004). International education as an agent of democratization. Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16515091/International-Education-as-an-Agent-of-Democratization-by-Comp-2004>
- Cook, S. (1962). The systematic analysis of socially significant events: A strategy for social research. *Journal of Social Issues*, 18, 66-84.
- Crawford, D. (2004). West's relations with Saudi face growing strains: German hosts are furious as militant Islam is taught at Saudi diplomatic school. *The Wall Street Journal (Eastern edition)*.
- Creswell, J., & Clark, P. (2010). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research (2nd ed.)*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Deaux, K. (1996). Social identification. In E. T. Higgins & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psycology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 777-798). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Dekmejian, R. (2003). The liberal impulse in Saudi Arabia. *The Middle East Journal*, Summer 2003; 57(3).
- Department of Labour. (2011). Migration trends key indicators report: March 2011 Retrieved February 12, 2012, from <http://dol.govt.nz/publications/general/monthly-migration-trends/11mar/index.asp>
- Dixon, J. (2006). The ties that bind and those that don't: Toward reconciling group threat and contact theories of prejudice. *Social Forces*, 84(4), 2179-2204. doi: 10.1353/sof.2006.0085
- Dong, L., & Chapman, D. (2008). The Chinese government scholarship program: An effective form of foreign assistance? *International Review of Education*, 54, 155-173.
- Donnelly, C., & Hughes, J. (2006). Contact, culture and context: Evidence from mixed faith schools in Northern Ireland and Israel. *Comparative Education*, 42(4), 493-516.
- Doran, M. S. (2004). The Saudi Paradox. *Foreign Affairs*, 83(1), 35-51.
- Economic Intelligence Unit. (2003a, January 9). International: Praying to make their kingdom nicer, *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/1525180>
- Economic Intelligence Unit. (2003b, August 5). Saudi Arabia politics: No tolerance for intolerance, *The Economist*. Retrieved from http://www.eiu.com/index.asp?layout=VWArticleVW3&article_id=976318297®ion_id=1510000351&country_id=470000047&channel_id=210004021&category_id=500004050&refm=vwCat&page_title=Article&rf=0
- Economic Intelligence Unit. (2006, January 7). Survey: Keeping the faith, *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/5350692>

- Economic Intelligence Unit. (2007, November 1). Saudi Arabia: Education, *EIU ViewsWire*.
- El-Rashidi, Y. (2007). Saudi Arabia continues expanding higher education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 53(24), A51.
- Eller, A., & Abrams, D. (2004). Come together: Longitudinal comparisons of Pettigrew's reformulated intergroup contact model and the common ingroup identity model in Anglo-French and Mexican-American contexts. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 34, 229-256.
- Elliott, M. (2001, 19 Nov). Time for an honest talk. *Time South Pacific (Australia/New Zealand edition)*.
- Fuchs, E. (2004). Educational sciences, morality and politics: International educational congresses in the early twentieth century. *Paedagogica Historica*, 40(5), 757-784.
- Fuchs, E. (2007). The creation of new international networks in education: The league of nations and Educational organizations in the 1920's. *Paedagogica Historica* 43(2), 199-209.
- Furia, P., & Lucas, R. E. (2006). Determinants of Arab public opinion on foreign relations. *International Studies Quarterly*, 50, 585-605.
- Gardner, D. (2005, July 8). The west's role in Islam's war of ideas, *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/1ca3e8b6-efda-11d9-bd3b-00000e2511c8.html#axzz1mP6PJ2Jk>
- Global Trade Information Services. (2012). World Trade Atlas Retrieved February 2, 2012, from <http://www.gtis.com/english/>
- Goldsmith, P. A. (2004). Schools role in shaping race relations: Evidence on friendliness and conflict. *Social Problems*, 51(4), 587-612.
- Gribbles, C. (2008). Policy options for managing international student migration: The sending country's perspective. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 30(1), 25-39.
- Hanley, D. (2007). Saudi Ambassador Prince Turki, students in U.S rebuild bridges of understanding. *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 36-37.
- Hayes, B., McAllister, I., & Dowds, L. (2007). Integrated education, intergroup relations, and political identities in Northern Ireland. *Social Problems*, 54(4), 454-482.
- Hickson, D., & Pugh, D. (1995). *Management worldwide*. London, UK: Penquin Books.
- Hofstede, G. (n.d.). National Culture: Countries Retrieved February 12, 2012, from <http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>
- Hull, R. (1978). *Foreign students in the United States of America: Coping behavior within the educational environment*. New York, NY: Praeger.

- Huntington, S. (1997). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Hyland, A. (2006). The Shari'ah wave. *Asiamoney*, 17(4), 42-44.
- Immigration New Zealand. (2011). Immigration New Zealand statistics Retrieved February 12, 2012, from <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/general/generalinformation/statistics/>
- Kapiszewski, A. (2000, April). *Population, labour and education dilemmas facing GCC states at the turn of the century*. Paper presented at the Crossroads of the New Millenium. Proceedings of the Technological Education and National Development Conference, Abu Dhabi, UAE.
- Kehm, B. (2005). The contribution of international student mobility to human development and global understanding. *US-China Education Review*, 2(1), 18-24.
- King Abdullah University of Science and Technology. (2009). The inauguration: Speeches Retrieved 11 January, 2012, from <http://inauguration.kaust.edu.sa/inauguration/speeches/>
- Krieger, Z. (2007, 14 September). Saudi Arabia puts its billions behind Western-style higher education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, from <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i03/03a00101.htm>
- Larsen, K., & Vincent-Lancrin. (2002). International trade in educational services: Good or bad? *Higher Education and Management Policy*, 14(3), 9-45.
- Laubscher, M. (1994). *Encounters with difference: Student perceptions of the role of out-of-class experiences in education abroad*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Martens, K., & Starke, P. (2008). Small country, big business? New Zealand as education exporter. *Comparative Education*, 44(1), 3-19.
- McCormack, E. (2007a). Number of foreign students bounces back to near-record high. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54(12), A1.
- McCormack, E. (2007b). Worldwide competition for international students heats up. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54(12), 34.
- Merton, R. (1938). Social structure and anomie. *American Sociological Review*, 3(5), 672-682.
- Moaddel, M. (2006). The Saudi public speaks: Religion, gender, and politics. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38, 79-108.
- Molina, L., & Wittig, M. (2006). Relative importance of contact conditions in explaining prejudice reduction in a classroom context: Separate and equal? *Journal of Social Issues*, 62(3), 489-509.

- Mostafa, M. M., & Al-Hamdi, M. T. (2007). Political Islam, clash of civilisations, U.S. dominance and Arab support of attacks on America: A test of a hierarchical model. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30(8), 723-736.
- Murphy, M. (2007). Experiences in the internationalisation of education: Strategies to promote equality of opportunity at Monterrey Tech. *Higher Education* 53, 167-208.
- Noddings, N. (2005). *Educating citizens for global awareness*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Peterson, R. (2000). *Constructing effective questionnaires*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pettigrew, T. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 65-85.
- Pettigrew, T. (2006). A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5), 751-783.
- Pettigrew, T., & Tropp, L. (2008). How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 922-934.
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 499-514.
- Phinney, J. S. (1992). The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 7, 156-176.
- Prokop, M. (2003). Saudi Arabia: The politics of education. *International Affairs*, 79(1), 77-89.
- Ratnesar, R., Calabresi, M., Thompson, M., MacLeod, S., & McAllister, J. F. (2002, August 5). Does the U.S Need the Saudis? *Time South Pacific (Australia/New Zealand edition)*, 28.
- Rice, G. (1999). Islamic ethics and the implications for business. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 18, 345-358.
- Rice, G. (2004). Doing business in Saudi Arabia. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 46(1), 59-84.
- Riek, B., Mania, E., & Gaertner. (2006). Intergroup threat and outgroup attitudes: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10(4), 336-353.
- Robertson, C. J., Al-Khatib, J. A., Al-Habib, M., & Lanoue, D. (2001). Beliefs about work in the Middle East and the convergence versus divergence of values. *Journal of World Business*, 36(3), 223-244.
- Sadi, M. A., & Henderson, J. C. (2005). A Saudi Arabian perspective: Local versus foreign workers in the hospitality and tourism industry. *Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 46(2), 247-257.

- Said, E. (2007). *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Saris, W., & Gallhoffer, I. (2007). *Design, evaluation and analysis of questionnaires for survey research*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- SaudiAramco. (2012). Our vision Retrieved December 15, 2011, from www.saudiaramco.com
- Seznec, J.-F. (2005). Business as usual. *Harvard International Review*, 26(4), 56-60.
- Shibata, M. (2006). Assumptions and implications of cross-national attraction in education: the case of 'learning from Japan'. *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(5), 649-663.
- SPA/Saudi Gazette. (2011). Saudi students abroad are Kingdom's ambassadors: Minister Retrieved February 2, 2012, from <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=20110513100554>
- Stangor, C., Jonas, K., Stroebe, W., & Hewstone, M. (1996). Influence of student exchange on national stereotypes, attitudes and perceived group variability. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26, 663-675.
- Stewart, V. (2005). A world transformed: How other countries are preparing students for the interconnected world of the 21st century. *Phi Delta Kappan International*, 87(3), 229-232.
- Taifel, H., & Turner, J. (1987). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In W. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7-24). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press.
- Thibaut, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Triandis, H. (1996). The psychological measurement of cultural syndromes. *American Psychologist*, 51(4), 407-415.
- Triandis, H. (2001). Individualism-Collectivism. *Journal of Personality*, 69(6), 907-924.
- Triandis, H., & Suh, E. M. (2002). Cultural influences on personality. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 133-160.
- Tsvetkova, N. (2008). International education during the Cold War: Soviet social transformation and American social reproduction. *Comparative Education Review*, 52(2), 199-217.
- Uriya, S. (2006). Al Qaeda's Saudi origins. *Middle East Quarterly*, 13(4), 3-13.
- Weston, M. (2008). *Prophets and princes. Saudi Arabia from Muhammad to the present*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

- White, S. (2008). Multicultural visions of globalisation: Constructing educational perspectives from the East and the West. *Interchange*, 39(1), 95-117.
- Williams, R. (1947). *The reduction of intergroup tensions: A survey of research on problems of ethnic, racial, and religious group relations*. New York, NY: Social Science Research Council.
- Woo, S. (2006, October 27). Competition increases for foreign students, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A43.
- Zhou, Y., Jindal-Snape, D., Topping, K., & Todman, J. (2008). Theoretical models of culture shock and adaptation in international students in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(1), 63-75.