DOCTORAL THESIS

The role of higher education in developing female students' social and cultural identities
a case study of one university in Saudi Arabia.

Al-Yousef, Maha

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The role of higher education in developing female students' social and cultural identities: A case study of one university in Saudi Arabia.

By

Maha M Al-Yousef [BA, MA]

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Abstract

This research is an interpretative qualitative study undertaken in a newly established public university in Saudi Arabia, referred to as The Regional University (TRU). The study employed 65 semi-structured interviews of students and lecturers, classroom observations and fieldnotes. The overarching aim was to explore and understand the role of this university in shaping and influencing female students' identities. Identity is recognised as not fixed and is a transformative process that can be influenced by the discourses and practices that surround an individual. Therefore, the research also examined the implicational aspects of pedagogical practices, focusing on the example of learning English.

The research broadly draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts (1973, 1976, 1977) of personal and institutional habitus and cultural capital in the context of higher education institutions and extends it to include gender issues. It has been found that being in a new environment and an 'unfamiliar field' requires the development of new forms of capital that emerge from habitus, which is not only based on class identity but also gender identity. Saudi Arabian women seek higher education for many reasons, this research examines whether TRU provides female students with a space for identity formation.

The research concludes by examining what the physical, transformative, cultural, social, and other spaces of the university signify to female students and their perception of the role of these spaces in their own change process. The findings show that when the level of motivation was high and the women students received support, it was possible for them to overcome their lack of capitals in some cases. Some students also saw higher education as an advantage to women's personal and professional lives.

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Glossary

*Abaya***:** is the name given to an over garment, usually black, that is worn by some Muslim women over their clothes to cover the shape of the body.

Aihtimam shakhsi: personal interests

Al Mu'jam Al Waseet: *Al Mu'jam means dictionary, is a* contemporary Arabic -Arabic dictionary.

Al-Thanawiya Al- Amma: The Secondary School.

Ar Rass: a city located in Al Qassim Province of Saudi Arabia.

Bedouin: nomadic Arabs that reside the desert.

Entsab: refers to distance learning, students are off campus with attendance for exams only.

*Hai'a***:** is the name given to the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in Saudi, which is sometimes referred to as "the religious police" (Sutcliff, 2019).

Hejaz: an Arabic word relating to the region in the western side of Saudi Arabia.

Hejab: in Arabic language means a barrier and is the word mainly known to refer to the headscarf worn by some Muslim women.

Jamaeah taejizih: *Taejizi*: is something incapable or infeasible; used to refer to a specific university as an unfeasible option.

Kuttabs: where girls used to go to learn the Qur'an and religion.

Mazayin alaibil: *Alaibil:* a word that, in general, includes both male and female camels as there are different words for each sex. The connotation relates to the camel beauty contests and racing festivals in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf cities.

Niqab: is the veil some Muslim women wear to cover their face, revealing the eyes only.

Qaba'ila: Tribe.

Qiyas: means to measure

Qudrat: A test to measure students' analytical and deductive skills, which was designed by The Qiyas National Centre for Assessments.

Sa'arfae ruwasahum: A phrase that means, to raise someone's head up by certain acts or activities.

Sharia: Islamic Law.

Slah: weapon (metaphor used by the female students when they refer to an educational qualification.)

Tahsili: an Achievement Test consisting of three tests taken in secondary school. There are two specific tests designed: one for science students and another for Art students who want to apply to humanities colleges. The Educational tests are followed by the Qiyas National Centre for Assessments -website-

http://www.qiyas.sa/Sites/English/Tests/EducationalTests/Pages/default.aspx

Tamkin al-marah: tamkin means giving power, the term refers to women, and in specific, giving women the power to be in leading positions in fulfilment of meeting the goals set for Saudi visions for 2030.

Talqeen: is related to the way learners receive information, mainly reciting what has been given and then memorising it.

Tueizu nafsiha: refers to the act of being dependent upon oneself, not others with concern to gain resources.

Wasta: means something in the middle or between two things.

Abbreviations

HE	Higher Education
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
PY	The preparatory year programme
TRU	The Regional University
TRC	The Regional City

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Saudi Arabian society can be full of modernity while juxtaposed with tradition (Gorney, 2016). The females are also living within these contradictions and in many instances exhibit polarisations of identity that must change between the public arena, the private arena, and the female only arena. The reasons for women to embark upon a higher education course are many and in the context of Saudi Arabia, I hope this research can shed some light on the experience and its influence on the formation of women's identities. Females in Saudi Arabia experience lots of challenges and obstacles to obtain an education and employment, and these can emanate from members of their family, their society, and the educational system itself (Doumatou, 2010). Although these have in recent years improved, females in Saudi, for a distinct period of time, were absent from the education and public social arena. This is due to women in Saudi Arabia having to live within a very rigid social and public gender-segregated framework for most of their lives, resulting in them creating a full life within a very limited life, their female only spaces. A private space, affording a life in which only females are allowed entry. Whereas in the other mixed-gender world, in the public social arena, restrictions in the form of modesty and dress are necessary in order to access, participate and contribute to this life. These converses are due to the cultural and religious distinctions between what constitutes acceptable women practices in public and in private areas. Thereby, dual identities are created, and two ways of life are lived; one in the public space and the other in private women only spaces, and this is could be a normal situation for many Muslim women all over the world.

Little attention has been given to women in the public sphere, and when given, mainly relates to the representation of women and practices associated with dressing and covering, and these are usually represented as a barrier from being active. Presently, much of the attention given to Saudi females usually entails three views: a negative narrative that includes the commentary on the female driving ban (Sutcliff, 2019); a sympathetic view that sees them as victims of oppression; or the stereotypical image of the "exotic and the erotic" (Hamdan, 2005: 61). Saudi Arabia is a deeply conservative society, but humans are also very complex with contradictions and disparities. These issues inform this study which is concerned with female students' experience of higher education and its influences on their identities formations.

This is an interpretative qualitative study undertaken in a newly established public university in Saudi Arabia, which was founded in June 2005 by royal decree, referred to as The Regional University (TRU). The study employs 65 semi-structured interviews of students and lecturers, classroom observations and fieldnotes. The Saudi government definitively understood that education is the foundation stone for national development. The overarching aim of the research is to explore and understand the role of this university in shaping and influencing female students' identities. Currently, no specific research has been undertaken into the impact of higher education on women's identities in Saudi Arabia and how these are changing because of their university education and experiences. Identity is recognised as a contested term, not fixed and is a transformative process, which the research explores. The research also examines the implications of pedagogical practices which includes the learning of English and instruction/teaching by foreign faculty on the identity formation of the students. The students come from various social class and tribal affiliations, cultural interests and different family backgrounds and thus have individual preferences, perspectives, and outlooks when they first enter university.

The question which this research seeks to answer is how identities might change within the university experience.

The overarching inquiry in this research is to explore how identities might be influenced through the university experience and broadly draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts (1973, 1976, 1977) of personal and institutional habitus and cultural capital in the context of higher education/educational institutions. Although Bourdieu's work on habitus and cultural capital focuses more on the differences across social classes it can be extended to include gender issues. It has been found that being in a new environment and an 'unfamiliar field', requires the development of new forms of capital that emerge from habitus which is not only based on class identity but also gender identity.

1.2 The research objectives and questions

In order to explore the research objectives and questions in the context of the female student participants, the study aimed to understand the role that higher education plays in shaping and influencing female students' identities. To do this, the project undertook a qualitative study, with a sample of 30 female students in the first year of their degree programme, in a newly established public university. This university is located in a rural city in Saudi that is in the process of development. Throughout the study, the city where The Regional University (TRU) is located will be referred to as The Regional City (TRC). The study sought to answer three key research questions:

1.   What are the implications of social class, gender, social status and tribal affiliation on female students' experience of higher education, especially with respect to social and cultural identity formation?

2.   What are the influences of institutional habitus in the formation of female students' identities, taking into account aspects of the social and cultural milieu, religion and community?

3.   To what extent do students and faculty feel that the pedagogic practices in the PY (Preparatory Year) programme, when English is the medium of teaching and communication, influence female students' social and cultural identities?

To answer these questions, research was carried out in two stages, first during the beginning of the academic year and just before the end of the first year, in the final semester.

1.3   The Nature and Purpose of the Study

The region that comprises present-day Saudi Arabia has a long history of venerating educational accomplishments. As a major centre of trade, it has benefitted from the advances in knowledge production in Asia and Europe. The most famous example of this is in the role of Arabic scholars in the diffusion of the modern numerical system. In the present day, the emphasis on education in Saudi society today can be determined from both the government's efforts to raise the level and standard of education in the country as well as the increasing demand from the general population for access to higher education (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

The most overt difference in access to education is the difference on the basis of gender. Gender-based segregation has played a significant role in the development of women's education in Saudi. Doumato suggests (2010) that the overall intention of female education in Saudi Arabia was primarily to develop good women who, in turn, become good wives (Doumato, 2010). This suggestion correlates with Hamdan's (2005) assertion as he clearly explains that the sole purpose of female education within the Saudi Arabian

society was, "to make women good wives and mothers, and to prepare them for 'acceptable' jobs such as teaching and nursing that were believed to suit their nature" (Hamdan, 2005: 44). However, in recent times developments have been recommended and made (Doumato, 2010) that prioritises women's education and increases their participation within the higher education provisions by the Saudi Arabian government as part of its efforts to transform the country by 2030 (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). This major policy document 'The National Transformation Plan' (NTP) for 2020 (Saudi Arabian National Transformation Program, 2016) envisions women's education as one of the means to empower females in general to be enabled into professional fields and leadership positions, and in specific, through 'training, reforms and legislation'(Alsubaie and Jones, 2017:10). All of which are part of the strategic plan to meet the 2030 vision document and reflected in the text as *"tamkin al-marah"*[1] (Al-Dawoud, 2019; Khan, 2016; Topal, 2019). Provision of educational resources, however, has not been uniform with factors such as class and region playing a significant role in the extent to which individuals could undertake higher education (Al-Rasheed, 2010).

Since the economic boom following the discovery of oil in the 1930s, Saudi Arabian society has also seen a rapid social and economic change (Doumato, 2010). It is likely that these developments have affected women's position in general and education in specific (Domato, 2010). These major changes in Saudi resulted in a paradigm shift in women's experiences of higher education in Saudi. Not only did they have greater access to higher education in the form of a larger number of institutions being opened across the country, but they also had a wider range of courses that were available to them (Alsubaie and Jones, 2017). This broader choice of some course was also accompanied by a choice

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[1] Tamkin al-marah: is an Arabic term meaning "*giving women the power*" or empowering women.

in language, as many universities offer studies in the English Language, particularly courses in medical and computer science colleges.

The Preparatory Year Programme (PY) offers a bridge year after secondary school education and before students choose their disciplinary course and is incorporated in almost all Saudi universities. The reason is that nowadays most undergraduate degree programmes operate in English, except for some courses that use Arabic as the medium of instruction. Having English as the medium of instruction in some courses has been a significant departure from the past, where Arabic was the medium of instruction. This has been due to the government's promotion of learning English, as proficiency in Arabic alone limits an individual's opportunities in a globalising world where English is the dominant language. While a few universities and schools in the large metropolitan cities of Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca and Medina have relatively long histories of foreign students and teaching in English, the last decade has been marked by the development of new universities and expansions of old colleges in smaller cities and in the more rural parts of the country.

1.4   The rationale: what motivated the study

I am a Saudi Arabian female who, due to my father serving as a diplomat, began her primary school education in Jordan. In 1994 we followed him to the UK, where I completed my secondary school and higher education. In 2009, I undertook a master's degree in Anthropology of Education. After which, I returned to Saudi Arabia to work. It was while undertaking a leadership position in a higher education institute (TRU) that questions began to arise regarding the experience of female students, their identities and how it transforms. This interest of this investigation developed after observing some social changes and development in some students. While I was working as a lecturer, I

noticed that students' habits change from when they first joined the university to the end of the study.

Additionally, based on the developments resulting in an increased access to higher education for women in Saudi, two of the key issues which motivated this research were, first, the potential of higher education to bring 'development' and 'transformation' to women and second, the view that higher education presents a means to transform women's lives. The thesis also seeks to explore how higher education opportunities provided to some students were seen as an adventure that was advantageous to women's personal and professional lives, particularly the emerging scholarship on women's experiences in education and the challenges they face.

Prior to embarking upon the study for this PhD, during my tenure as a lecturer at the university, I would often contemplate the university experience and its impact on female students. I was unsure whether it was the curriculum that was taught in English, the large number of international staff, the combination of both or other factors which influenced the students' experience. It was the curiosity to understand this process that primarily motivated my research. Additionally, the seed for my interest to conduct research on the role that this higher education institute plays in the formation of students' identities first began during my Masters, and this coalesced into the thesis for the MA. This research focused on the social constructions of Muslim schoolgirls in an international Islamic faith-based school in London. A key finding of that project was the existence and effects of demarcations on the lines of ethnicity. While the context of this research is dissimilar in many ways to the environment of the school in which I conducted the research, it is similar in that it looks at the social construction of female students within an Islamic environment. Also, during the time spent in Saudi, I saw that much like the school I had

studied in London, many of the Saudi university students were being taught by a very international body of staff. Based on my previous research, I thought this might have an impact on students' identities, particularly in relation to distinguishing themselves from those of cultural 'others'. It seemed even more compelling for this research as most of the students had studied at state schools, where the majority of students were taught in Arabic, and the majority of teachers and students shared the same culture and values as the surrounding community.

Existing work that draws on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, form of capitals and the field have focused on the experience of students' from 'non-traditional backgrounds' or 'working class' students in higher education that was conducted in the UK after the expansion of Widening Participation Policy and largely focus on areas in European, American and Canadian contexts (Archer et al., 2003; Bathmaker et al., Burke, 2012; 2013; Crozier et al. 2019; Leathwood and Read 2009, Lehmann, 2007, 2009; Lucey et al. 2003; Reay et al. 2011; Wong and Chiu 2019). The field of education has largely been welcoming to students from relatively privileged backgrounds. These studies generally reveal that students from underprivileged, working class backgrounds, marginalised groups, particularly those who are first-generation or mature women learners, have a dichotomous experience of higher education. For some students, on one hand, the completion of higher education is empowering. However, on the other hand, to do so often proves to be an insurmountable challenge. Such studies, however, largely focus on areas in European, American, and Canadian contexts, rendering this study useful as it would help to provide data on a different region and context.

Can such transformative processes such as education result in conflict and rejection of unacceptable cultural changes? Spindler and Spindler's (2000: 97) work on the use of an

education system to transform cultural values such as individualism and freedom in the United States indicates how this may "produce serious conflict" and rejection of specific cultural changes. It seems like the case of women's higher education in Saudi would also reveal such fissures. The question was what issues were causing conflict, how the university dealt with them and what this reflected on the manner in which the transformation of students and society could be 'functional in terms of the demands of the social and economic structure of a people' (Spindler and Spindler, 2000:108).

Such studies include the works of Archer and Leathwood (2003) and Ingram and Abrahams (2016); however, they largely focus on areas in the UK contexts while thus the present study would help to provide data on a different region, Saudi Arabia. It would also contribute to the literature on the ability of education to bring about social change. The urgent need for research in Saudi, in general, has even been highlighted by the former education minister, Ahmed Al-Issa, who emphasised the gap in knowledge about the importance of identity formation in Saudi universities and the acuteness of this problem in women's education (Al-Issa, 2010). This concern also formed the primary argument of his Arabic edition book; a translated title would be 'Higher education in Saudi Arabia; a journey to find an identity' in 2010, which has conducted critical monitoring of the process of higher education in Saudi Arabia. The importance of the book is that Al-Issa (2010) believes that higher education, despite some of its achievements and proper use of the recent economic boom in Saudi Arabia, has not yet succeeded in providing competitive scientific universities in today's world. Also, Saudi universities have not succeeded in influencing society, reaching development, and economic progress in the country.

This research will add to the limited literature written in English on higher education pedagogical practices and gendered identities formations in Saudi Arabia. After this research, I will be better able to conduct similar studies that trace the impact of higher education on women both within Saudi and outside it as it has developed an understanding of the university culture and the challenges and struggles that students face within such an environment. Finally, this research project will help to develop and might restructure the preparatory year programme in a way that helps students to identify their strengths and abilities. It will also aid female students with more resources that are needed to achieve success in higher education and its cultural environment.

1.5   Perspective of the researcher

An important aspect of any research endeavour is to identify and acknowledge the researcher's positionality. My professional background and experience in the chosen field of study, together with my personal positioning as a Saudi Arabian woman have all provided a lens on how I view and interpret the research. Moreover, research into the social phenomena requires *in depth* or *inside* understanding rather than an *outside* understanding of the constructed social world people inhabit. Being reflexive is a necessary component of the continuous process of producing unbiased knowledge and my positioning and reflexivity are discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

The experiences of students, when they finish their first year, have impacted their identity and they are, in many ways, different from what they were when they first started. This is not only in relation to the amount of educational knowledge out of the pedagogical learning environment but also in relation to the way they negotiate their individual identities and changes in their individual actions. Some know themselves better in relation to their strength, weakness, abilities, and motivations. The question begins with

whether higher education institutions have created the spaces for female students to change, or whether some women already have the desire to change and the university is only the apparent reason and step behind the changes to negotiate and find their rights? The university provides a new freedom; a relatively unrestricted space that female students had not experienced before in the secondary school system. This relates to the way they dress; no longer having to wear a uniform and the way they want to represent themselves; within the female spaces, they can dress modestly but without the veil or abaya; or the unique learning experience, they are accepted as independent learners with some degree of autonomy. I wanted to know what being an 'educated woman' means to these female students and I also wanted to know, what was the main motivational factors for them wanting to obtain a higher education?

I also recognised the way the higher education system at TRU treated the female students in comparison to the male students. In relation to rules and regulations that are applied to female students and must adhere to compared to the amount of freedom male university students have. There are religious aspects to consider and some of the interpretations and cultural traditions that have emanated from the religion have impacted and created social norms that have, in the past, caused girls' education to lag behind that of boys by as much as 30 years (Alisa, 2009; Al-Sadhan, 2010). Looking at the history of the delay could explain some aspects of women's education in Saudi Arabia now.

1.6   The structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters and a Conclusion chapter. Presently, we are in chapter one – the introduction. Chapter two discusses the broad subject area of the research, the Saudi Arabian higher educational context. It will explore Saudi Arabian education in general and specifically the intention and investment to educate women to a

level that achieves a higher education. Women's position within Saudi Arabia and in The Regional City (TRC) in particular, together with the role of the family and finally, the use of English language in higher education, both as a prerequisite and means to study. The chapter explores the features of Saudi society that help change women's position and education in general. The Saudi government has encouraged the female population to pursue higher education in many different ways. It highlights the ways in which women's education has benefited from the economic growth and socio-economic changes in Saudi Arabia and explores the role of cultural and traditional values and how they impeded the establishment of formal women' education for 30 years (Alisa, 2009; Al-Sadhan, 2010). These two aspects were key to understanding women's higher education and explained some of the reasons why female education is still unequal to male education in Saudi Arabia. The history of the delay in establishing elucidated some aspects of women's education in Saudi Arabia now. Chapter three is the review of the literature and highlights the theoretical framework that includes examination of key Bourdieusian concepts such as cultural capital, habitus and field. Presenting an overview of the literature on women in higher education and the field of study and the ways women negotiate identity after being in higher education. The literature also explored the formation of identity to provide an understanding of the influences.

Chapter four is the methodology chapter, which outlines the ontological, epistemological and methods used in the research, its process, and the practices that include gathering, analysing, and interpreting the data. As well as issues of ethical considerations and reflexivity. The research adopts the interpretivist approach to shed light on women's experience of higher education in the context being studied at TRC and attempts to understand this from these women's own meanings and interpretations (Creswell, 2007). Chapter five begins the data analysis chapters, and aims to understand and examine the

implications of social class, gender, and tribal affiliation on the women's higher education experiences and choices. The chapter begins by detailing the participants' backgrounds in terms of where they live, their socio-economic status and explores whether this depends on their parents' employment and qualifications. It looks at the tribes that the participant students belong to and how some families' connections privilege some students which is considered as a form of social capital. It does so to identify their class, status, and position in society. The main focus of the chapter is the implications of social class, gender, social status and tribal affiliation on female students' experience of higher education especially, with respect to social and cultural identity formation. Gender is another issue which might implicate or restrict students' choices, for example, students need to change a university choice or not taking a scholarship in a particular university as they need to be with their male guardian (lack of a male member to travel with), or restrictions due to family recommendations, or they may have responsibilities of their own, such as being a mother. Any of these restrictions can cause a woman student to choose a higher education study that suits her location, her family or is seen as an easier option to pass.

Gender is an important lens in the study because it structures women's actions in a particular way. It structures the way women students negotiate their identities in the new social environment of TRU. I argue that TRU as a social space, despite the restrictions and constraints, was an opportunity for female students to enhance their autonomy. It allows students to express themselves freely and explore the role of social media. Within TRU, students get to know and socialise with other students and members of society they would normally see as different, where ordinarily they would not be able to socialise with otherwise. However, some of the social controls and regulations associated with being women still frame the university's social space.

The second part of Chapter five considers students transition to TRU in relation to their ability to adapt to the process. The second part of this chapter goes into greater detail and discusses students' transition to TRU, its processes and how some student's backgrounds can influence these. The discussion and analysis take into account their decisions and the influences of the students' habitus, family support and the complexities of social connections and *wasta*. The root of some practices that connected with the identity of being a woman in the cultural and social structure of the Saudi society was extended to be part of the organisation's common habitus. This includes TRU's rules and regulations pertaining to notions of protection of female students. This is apparent in the rules relating to 'wearing the abaya' and the use of 'smart camera phones' within the university's space, and TRU accommodation guidance or issues around the system of guardianships.

Chapter six explores the social space of TRU and how it is designed to be a women-only zone and how some social practices of Saudi Arabian society and TRC have been reflected in the university space in relation to rules and regulations and extended to be part of the university space. It highlights the effects the new environment has on students' identities formation, taking into account aspects of the community, religious bodies, culture and social milieu and customary practices. It examines the university's social space and focuses on the way women students negotiate their identities after being immersed in the new social space of TRU. It considers if factors within the university's social space might have an impact on the formation of their identities, such as the cultural and economic diversities of these women students.

Chapter seven analyses the impact of the learning experience on students and their perspective of the process. It focuses on the impact of pedagogic practices of the university and the learning experience on students and their perspective of the process.

The primary language of teaching at TRU is English and the teaching staff consists of a large number of foreign nationals. Chapter seven considers the ways in which the academic content, in terms of the material and pedagogical delivery of the courses, in the prep year programme is experienced by students at TRU. It considered the practical value of the English language mainly as it is the medium of communication at TRU. It questions the identity of academic students and whether the English language became the academic language in TRU's higher education system. Chapter eight is the conclusion chapter, which states the contribution of the study and implications for further educational research.

Chapter 2: Understanding the context of Saudi Arabia

2.1 Introduction

In order to understand women's higher education in Saudi Arabia, it is necessary to explore changes in society and the impact on women's position and access to education. The literature indicates that the rapid social and economic change in Saudi society have had a substantial impact and consequent development in all social aspects that have affected women's position in general and women's education in particular (Hamdan, 2005; Al Alhareth et al, 2015; Yamani,1996). This chapter provides a broad overview of the many contexts which frame women's higher education in Saudi. It first considers some features of Saudi society, particularly the differences which arise due to tribal affiliation, urbanisation, and modernisation. There are key characteristics that might distinguish Saudi society from nearby societies in neighbouring countries and/or western societies which will be discussed in this chapter, and these are economic development, religion, tribal affiliations and the age and gender of the population. The next section highlights the social and economic development of Saudi and how this has affected society, educational aspirations, and the effects of globalisation. Then it considers the history of education in Saudi, particularly that of females. It also explores the nature of the PY programme at Saudi universities in general and at TRU in particular. Through these various sections, this chapter also examines the position of women in Saudi society.

2.1.1 Features of Saudi Society

Modern Saudi Arabia, officially known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came into existence as a kingdom in 1932 with the conquest of the present territories by the founder of the country King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud. Since then, the country has been an absolute

monarchy and all government affairs including education come under the mandate of the monarch. The country consists of 13 distinct provinces and each is divided into governorates (Provinces - Saudi Arabia Tourism Guide, 2015; Saudi Geological Survey, 2012; Rahman, De Giorgi, and Linjawi, 2018). The Regional City is one of these 13 geographical provinces located in the North of Saudi Arabia. It should be noted that Saudi regions are not uniformly developed and have different rates of growth depending upon two factors that influence development in general: the population density and geographical locations. The total population of Saudi Arabia is 34,218,169 and the gender ratios of the 2019 annual report estimates showed that this population consists of 19,739,056 males and 14,479,113 females (General Authority for Statistics Kingdom of Saudi Arabia KSA, 2019).

One of the features of the process of economic growth and globalisation has been the movement of Saudi culture away from a tribal society towards a more modern state. In the 1930s oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia and this provided a phenomenally large boost to economic growth, the development of metropolitan regions and the rapid increase in the standard of living for all Saudi citizens. Providing them with amenities such as social support in the form of education, housing, health care and more (Hamdan, 2005; Doumato, 2010). Most families enjoy a comfortable lifestyle with many amenities and poverty is almost unheard of; although vast inequalities do exist (Roelants and Aarts, 2015). This, however, finds expression in the differences in patterns and quantities of consumption. Though the country has had a long history of trade and religious tourism, the discovery of oil led to a sudden influx of foreign capital and workers. The discovery of oil also led to a unique process of globalisation in Saudi society. This is notable through the different global trademarks that became available. It also opened a vast number of investment and work opportunities for non-Saudis. This ultimately led to further

diversification in society seen vividly in the major regions that are mainly in the western and eastern provinces. It is here in the western province that the Islamic holy cities of Makkah and Medina are, welcoming Muslims from all backgrounds and countries. The eastern provinces, where foreign expertise was needed, house the largest oil reserve in the world (Roelants and Aarts, 2015). Out of this and in addition to the high demand for foreign workers the number of migrants to Saudi has increased to 12,645,033 in 2018 (The General Authority for Statistics KSA). This key fact of migrants residing in Saudi is enough to indicate changes in demographics in these large cities. According to the International Migration Report for the year 2017, Saudi Arabia hosted the second largest number of international migrants worldwide of around 12 million (United Nations, 2017:6). Furthermore, this increase led the government to aim to reduce the number of non-Saudi employees and increase the employment of Saudi nationals in mainly the private sector as part of both the Saudization plan and the 2030 vision. The Saudization plan was implemented by the Ministry of Labour in 2011, which aimed to reduce unemployment among Saudis by increasing their opportunities in private sectors and reduce the dependence on foreign labour (Al-Omran, 2007; Alshanbri, Khalfan, and Maqsood, 2014; Ramady, 2013). Saudi Vision 2030 seeks to reduce the overall national unemployment rate from 11.6 to 7 percent, which means providing more job opportunities for Saudis in the labour market (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016: 39).

The Vision 2030 is a major policy document that sets out the development aims of the country in the next decade. In general, the overall aim of the 2030 vision is to increase the development of human capital (Saudi individuals) as values worthy of investing upon, who, in turn, will bring wealth to the country. The following was stipulated when the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman announced the vision of Saudi Arabia in April 2016,

"Our country is rich in its natural resources. We are not dependent solely on oil for our energy needs. Gold, phosphate, uranium, and many other valuable minerals are found beneath our lands. But our real wealth lies in the ambition of our people and the potential of our younger generation… In line with his instructions [King Salman] we will work tirelessly from today to build a better tomorrow for you, your children, and your children's children… Together we will continue building a better country, fulfilling our dream of prosperity and unlocking the talent, potential, and dedication of our young men and women" (Al Arabiya, 26 April 2016).

In relation to the overall education system and women in particular, the plan aims to increase the female participation rate to the labour force from 22% to 30% (Al-Ghalayini, 2018; Saudi Vision 2030, 2016: 39). The empowerment of women or as it is referred to in Arabic, *"tamkin al-marah"* is a part of the 2030 vision (which is discussed in section 2.1.5 women and society). The contribution and status of women within the higher education arena is recognised in the vision as it states that Saudi women are a great asset to the country and that over 50 percent of university graduates are female (Saudi Vision, 2016).

On the whole, the Saudi population is also relatively young and highly urbanised. A study in 2012 showed that 51% of the Saudi population is at or under the age of 25 (Staff, 2012). While recent estimates by the General Authority for Statistics KSA (2019) state that 69% of the Saudi population is under the age of 39, consisting of approximately 12 million males and 10 million females (General Authority for Statistics KSA, 2019). Nearly 84% of the population lives in urban areas (World Bank, 2018). The major urban areas in Saudi Arabia include Riyadh, the capital, which is home to around 4.2 million inhabitants;

Jeddah, with over 2.8 million; Makkah, the Holy City with over 1.3 million; Medina, with 1.3 million. In comparison to these cities, TRC only has a population of around two hundred and sixty thousand (World Population Review 2019).

The facts discussed above indicate that there have been rapid social and economic changes in the Saudi society, and it is more likely that these changes have affected women's education. It also bears mentioning that Saudi regions have, to some extent, responded in divergent ways to the growth of liberalism in the country. Each of the characteristics of Saudi society discussed above is vital to understanding the context of women in higher education in Saudi. Religion, culture, tribal affiliations, class and gender are further factors which play a major role in women's education. These are discussed in the sections below.

2.1.2 Religion and culture

In Saudi society, it is difficult to distinguish in daily life between practices that are derived from Islamic law and those that are derived from Arabic tribal norms. Nevo (1998) argues that there are three collective identities of Saudi Arabians: Islam, Arabism, and nationalism, which together shape Saudi life (1998:34). Saudi Arabian society is identified as an Islamic state ruled by Islamic or *Sharia* Law. Thus, matters of government administration such as the justice system, public holidays, the working week etc. are all conducted in accordance with the tenets of Islam. The second identity is that of Arabism which is broadly defined as the identification of being a part of a broad culture where the Arabic language is used. The third identity is related to the national identity, that of being Saudi, which most students during interviews referred to as a sense of belonging that included their tribal affiliation, extended families or the geographical region they originally came from. As there are significant overlaps, it must be acknowledged that

there are differences and so they should not be conflated with each other. In other words, there is the need to indicate here that although Islam is considered 'a way of life', which to some extent impacts a Muslim's social manners, obligations and practices, there are still some social practices that are not derived directly from the religion of Islam but related to the culture and traditions of the society. Examples from the data will be discussed in relation to dress code and the way it is perceived by some women (chapter 6).

2.1.3 Tribal affiliation in Saudi

While delineating between these three identities, it is difficult to not include a description of Saudi Arabian tribes as they are one of the significant features of Saudi Arabian society, although there are some Saudis who identify as not being from non-tribal backgrounds. The tribe or *'Qaba'ila'* the term in Arabic, refers to a large group of people, who include aspects of kinship, where members of the same tribe belong to a specific lineage. The large majority of Saudis define their identity by either bloodlines or geographic location (Maisel, 2014). The tribe represents a form of social network, loyalty, political and economic power, and identity (Seymour-Smith,1986). However, it must be mentioned that between tribal members, there are some degrees of hierarchy which are based on factors such as wealth and social positioning. Although tribes can be powerful within the region they are from, the tribal solidarity in Saudi takes new patterns with the development of contemporary modern society. As members of the same tribe can no longer be located in a specific region, so the role and influence of a tribe are not as strong as they were before when people of the same tribe lived in close proximity. Even though it can no longer refer to the lifestyle of the *bedouin* due to the current modern society of Saudi Arabia in comparison to older definitions of tribe (Al-Fahad, 2004), it still remains

an identity that facilitates access to resources, a social network and a form of social capital which could privilege some over others (this will be discussed in chapter 5).

2.1.3.1 Importance of Tribal Affiliation and Family Connections to the study

Tribal affiliations play a pivotal role in Saudi Arabian society. The role of tribal affiliations is similar to that of the family unit due to its importance as a social institution in Saudi Arabia. Tribal membership is not limited to those born in a patrilineal line but also includes those who are related by blood or marriage and are recognised as being part of the extended family. The tribe represents a sense of belonging and loyalty, provides access to resources and acts as a social network. Tribal identity has a large influence on the daily life of its members in many ways. Members of the same tribe might never have made acquaintance but still feel connected and support each other in many different ways. Marriage, education, customs, and traditions are often strongly influenced by tribal identity. For many women, the tribal group is often the social circle that they are most familiar with and which they interact with on a regular basis.

In Saudi, last names are a function of tribal affiliation and so tribal identity also becomes a publicly known sign based upon which people can be located within a social network of connections. It thus has a considerable impact on the everyday experiences of individuals. The most overt way in which this occurs in Saudi, as in other Middle Eastern countries, is in the leveraging of influence through familial, tribal, or other forms of social connections. This practice is referred to as *'Wasta'* and is used by individuals to get favouritism or privilege in many administrative or business transactions.

'Wasta' is a practice used in many middle eastern countries, rather like the *Guanxi* in China, and can be translated generally as 'nepotism', a term which was used by some researchers to explicate the practice (Abdulcader and Anthony, 2014; AbdulCalder,

2015). However, for this research the term will be kept as *'Wasta'* to not associate it with only the negative aspects of nepotism, particularly as some students managed to advance by their connections. The term is derived from the word *'Wast'* in Arabic, which according to the contemporary Arabic dictionary *Al Mu'jam Al Waseet*, means something in the middle (Abdul Qadir et al., 2008:1031). It mainly refers to a person's action of guaranteeing a favour. So wasta, in essence, could refer to an individuals' 'connections', but being aware of middle eastern culture, it is apparent that there are many layers of meaning in the term and it can be understood within the social and cultural context of the country (Abalkhail and Allan, 2015). More description and examples of *wasta* are in chapter five, part 2.

2.1.4 Defining Class in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is divided along class lines. These class groups are delineated in groups comprising the royal family, the affluent super-rich, the middle classes and the poorer members of Saudi Arabia (Al-Khamri, 2019). Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country with Islam and the Quran representing the apex of societal norms and considerations. The following verse from the Holy Quran explains the Islamic perspective on social hierarchy:

> "It is We Who portion out between them their livelihood in the life of
> this world: and We raise some of them above others in ranks so that
> some may command work from others. But the Mercy of your Lord is
> better than the (wealth) which they amass (Qur'an, 43: 32)."

The Quranic verse above, which is part of a larger well-known section which lays out the key principles of justice in Islam, describes a commonly held religious perspective of the class system in Saudi and many other Muslim countries. Due to this, the class division

between rich and poor, strong and weak is often viewed as being part of a divine plan. Moreover, wealth and wellbeing are considered to be blessings which one must give thanks and praise for while poverty and tribulations are viewed as divine tests which must be borne with patience. The wealthy are also enjoined in the Qur'an to spend portions of their wealth on those who are less fortunate (Khan, 2009; Al-Jifri, 2011).

Defining and identifying class has always been a contentious issue (Rugh, 1973; AlNuaim, 1987, 2013; Savage, 2015). This issue is made even more difficult in Saudi Arabia by three factors. Firstly, Saudi society has undergone rapid economic and social changes in the last few decades. The impact of oil during the 1930s as the central part of social class changes and the role of a new class category. AlNuaim's study indicated the relationship between the nomadic (Bedouin) and the contributary (urban) mode of production and a new class emerged 'urban commercial class' (1987:6). Al-Sultan (1988) in his study of the class structure in Saudi Arabia, stated that most state employees are part of a new middle class and he referred to the group of educated male members that appeared out of governmental implementation of educational programme who *"initiated the development of new Saudi middle class"* (Al-Sultan, 1988:3). However, it must be noted here that within the government varying sections there are some distinguishing features of the class employee due to different incomes which might not have been so apparent during the 1980s as it is nowadays. The Saudi government is also still implementing different educational programmes for both genders that aim to ensure and facilitate social modernisation. To some extent, the existing social class features of modern Saudi society is still unstable and out of the continuous socio-economic structural changes, a new class categorisation will continue to occur (Al-Sultan, 1988; AlNuaim, 2013). For example, there is a group in the society, who recently became rich due to other subtle signs like social media influencers and the purchase of goods for non-conspicuous

consumption such as attractive "*mazayin alaibil*" or award winning camels. Therefore, the evaluation of class in Saudi requires one to be sensitive to both what is apparent and to what is not.

Secondly, much of the literature on the effects of class or the description of the class system are influenced by both Marxist, new Marxist and Weberian concepts of class, which reflected the western countries features and classifications and many of these do not provide an understanding of the nuances of the class system in modern Saudi society. It must also be kept in mind that class is not a static category but a dynamic one; families often move between classes. This was particularly obvious in women's lives as a result of marriage or the death of a family member where either could culminate in a change of class. The third factor which complicated the categorisation of respondents based on their class was that compared to most other countries, the relative wealth of Saudi Arabia as a nation allows the government to provide a large number of social welfare services and subsidies such as education, health care and housing for the needy within the country. Further exploration of class identity takes place in chapter four (section 4.2.1.1). Participants' class identity and the impact of their class will be analysed and explained in chapter five (part 1).

2.1.5 Women and society

In Saudi Arabia, gender-segregation is a common practice of everyday social activity. At the workplace or at schools, there are specific spaces for females which are separate from those for males. The focus of the study was around the female section only of the TRU. A component, which derives from the religious beliefs and cultural values of Saudi society, culminates in some social practices that create parameters, guidance and

restrictions upon women's actions and behaviours in Saudi society. An example of these would be the female attire and the social/cultural dress code in public spaces that requires females to wear an 'abaya[2]' - in specific ways with black as the main colour. The same values and social practices also influence other issues pertaining to guardianship and the importance of male family members *'mahram[3]'* that will be discussed later in (chapter 6). They are seen as related to both religious beliefs and traditional cultural values (Le Renard, 2014).

Women have a high role in maintaining the structure of the family, especially as a mother. Previously, until very recently, women did not have a specific identification card of their own; rather, she was added as an appendage to her father's family identity card or if she was married, to her husband's card. In the event of her father's death, she would come under the guardianship of other close male relatives such uncles or brothers. The fact that men at the age of 18 have their own identification exemplifies the complex nature of gender relations and inequality that is embedded in Saudi society (Alireza, 1987; Hamdan, 2005). However, nowadays, due to political directives and changes in Saudi society, women have their own identification cards.

Women's actions or contributions to Saudi political concerns and public relations between the 1950s to the late 1970s is yet to be indicated (Yamani 1996). There was a much greater degree of power over women by men and women's contributions were largely restricted to the domestic sphere (Yamani,1996; Hamdan, 2005). In the 1980s some educated women tried to challenge their position in society and Yamani refers to

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[2] Abaya is the name given to an over garment, usually black, that is worn by women over their clothes to cover their body.
[3] Mahram is the name given to male members of a female's family who can be considered her guardian.

them as "Islamic Feminists" (ibid). The chapter titled *"Some Observations on Women in Saudi Arabia"* examines some of the challenges to women's status in Saudi's patriarchal society and highlights the actions of these early feminists who sought to emphasise the rights that they were entitled to under *" Sharia"* or Islamic Law. (1996: 263).

One of the most important changes to the political structure of Saudi was the nomination in 2013 of thirty women to the *Shura* Council, which is the formal consultative body of Saudi Arabia. It was created to be "an apparatus to directly involve the citizen in the administration of the country's politics, planning for it and following up the performance of its institutions" (The Shura Council publications, a Brief History, 2015: 8). It has limited power as all authority is concentrated in the hands of the King. In 1992, however, during the reign of King Fahad, the Shura Council took on a new form. The council was given "freedom in conducting issues, constructive development, connection with issues related to the nation, and community" (ibid). Women's participation in the Shura Council was part of several actions taken to improve the rights of women in Saudi (About Her, 2018; The Shura Council: its Duties and Work Mechanisms, 2015).

Developments such as these have been the subject of different research studies, which have explored the challenges of the educational development plan and empowerment of women in Saudi (Hamdan, 2005; Almunajjed, 2010; Rajkhan, 2014). This kind of development provides financial independence and empowers women's position within society - working towards the 2030 vision of '*tamkin al-marah*', which aims at empowering females as it increases women's participation in the labour force and women's awareness of their rights within the Islamic Law. For example, in December 2015 women voted in elections for the very first time (*BBC News*, 2015). However, there has been no specific research into the effect of higher education on women's identities

and how these are changing as a result of their university education and experiences. Therefore, the focus of this study is highly relevant and original, and this will be demonstrated further on in this document.

2.2   Education in Saudi Arabia

Before considering the history of higher education in Saudi, there is a need to indicate that women's education was deferred to men, not only in relation to the segregated locations for each but also the feature of women education as a whole since it had started. Girls' formal education in Saudi lagged behind that for boys for more than 30 years and did not begin until the late 1950s (Al-Issa, 2009; Al-Sadhan, 2010). In addition, it is important to consider public resistance to the expansion of girls' education and the way that it led some cities to conflict with social and cultural values.

2.2.1 Segregated education system

Gender segregation is a common practice and a recognised feature in all Saudi educational institutions. At schools, there are specific schools for females which are separate from those for males. In relation to higher education institutions, men and women also study in separate sections in the same university. The implications of gender segregation of higher education on women was explored by some studies that will be discussed in chapter 3 section (3.3.3.1).

The segregated education for boys and girls, when it started, was supervised by separate government bodies. Boys' education was administered by the Ministry of Education while girls' and women's education were previously administered by 'The General Presidency for Girls' Education' (Al-Issa, 2009; Al-Sadhan, 2010; Ministry of Education website, 2016). According to Hamdan (2005), the latter has not enjoyed the same prestige as the former and girls' education was heavily influenced by religious conservative

scholars. Boys' and girls' education were only merged and administered together under the Ministry of Education after the dissolution of the General Presidency for Girls' Education in 2003 (Hamdan, 2005: 44).

2.2.2. Expansion of girls' education

It is quite impressive in many ways to consider that until 1959 no formal education was provided for females in Saudi Arabia (Alisa, 2009; Al-Sadhan,2010; Hamdan, 2005; Geel, 2016; Rather, 2016), yet now almost half of the graduates from higher education institutes are female (Hussain, 2016). The socio and economic changes in Saudi Arabia during that time led to the opening up of the first public school for girls in Riyadh, which was funded by the government under the rulership of King Saud (Alsuwaida, 2016). The continuation and expansion of female education was then undertaken by King Faisal and his wife, Iffat Al Thunayan (Hamdan, 2005) and subsequent rulers. Consequently, by the end of 1990s, female education facilities have been established throughout Saudi Arabia offering schools of education from primary through to higher education. However, that does not mean no education was provided for girls prior to that. Previously to the1950s, there had only been small study circles known as *'kuttabs'* where girls used to go to learn the Qur'an and religion (Al-Rasheed 2013: 93-97).

The formal establishment of education was delayed due to opposition to female education from conservatives and traditionalists and some local populations (Alisa, 2009; Al-Rasheed 2013; Al-Sadhan,2010; Hamdan, 2005; Rather, 2016). Although wealth encouraged and funded the expansion of education, few girls attended schools due to conflict with their parents' cultural values. The opposition emerged from the concept of a female leaving her home and how this might influence her future identity as a mother who raises children and future generations (Alisa, 2009; Al-Sadhan, 2010). Al-Sadhan

(2010) attempts to clarify the delay of formal education for females, and explains that it was due to the concerns that some religious scholars and conservative families raised at that time regarding the changes that education might bring, as particularly, in this period, there were lots of political changes in many of the Arab countries with feminist movements gaining momentum in Egypt. The authorities at the time and the general social consensus were conscious regarding notions of female liberation in neighbouring Arab countries and were worried that these notions would also take root in Saudi Arabia (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Therefore, when girls' formal education started, it was controlled and monitored by the religious authorities until the dissolution of The General Presidency for Girls' Education in 2003 (Al-Sadhan, 2010, Hamdan, 2005).

In some parts of Saudi Arabia, many parents resisted girls' education when it first started and only a small minority were in favour of sending their daughters to be educated. In more developed cities, which were more cosmopolitan due to the presence of many migrants who had come as labourers or as pilgrims, education for women found more acceptance. In Jeddah for instance, two female private schools were opened in 1957 (Rather, 2016). On the other hand, in Buraydah in 1963, a city which is well known for its conservative and fundamentalist religious tribes, many not only refused to send their daughters but wanted to close the girls' school down. At the time, King Faisal, who was in favour of female education, took action and sent official forces to keep the girls' school open (Al-Rasheed 2013; Hamdan 2005). The king asked the protesters if the education of women is forbidden in the holy Qur'an and whether they had any evidence or proof for it. As there were no verses or directives within the text that guides against women's education in the Holy Quran, he concluded 'Then we have no cause for argument' (Lacey, 1981: 368).

2.2.3. Historical Background of Higher Education

In Saudi, since the early 1970s and due to the economic growth, some wealthy families have been sending their sons and, for a few of them, their daughters for further education to boarding schools and universities in other Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt or Lebanon or further abroad to places in Europe or North America (Yamani, 1996). During the 1970s higher education and university studies were mainly offered to men. Meanwhile, women's higher education during the late 1970s was limited to the disciplines of education (such as school teaching) and the system of *"Entsab"* where some courses were offered through off campus distance learning with attendance only for exams.

In the span of a few decades, Saudi society has been introduced to tremendous wealth, the consequent development and large-scale changes have had a substantial impact on women's position in the country (Yamani, 1996; Hamdan, 2005; Al Alhareth et al., 2015). A number of publications further indicate that the link between the social and economic changes in Saudi's society along with the way it has affected women's education (chapter 3). At the national level also, there was an increased push to educate women to a higher level and to this aim, approximately 50 Women's Colleges of Education were established in many parts of Saudi Arabia to satisfy the demand under the management and financing of The General Presidency of Female Education (Mosa, 2000).

The Saudi government strongly supports the idea that economic development depends on investments in education. Educational infrastructure was supposed to progress alongside urban growth. Two major policy developments - the Seventh and Ninth Development Plans and the UNDP's Millennium Development Goals, have influenced the establishment of 'The Regional University' and the region in which it is located (Al-

Rushaid, 2010: 4-6, The Ministry of economy and planning report, 2005: 392). The city within which 'The Regional University' is located was selected in the government's eighth development plan for greater economic development and so is rapidly growing.

Over a period of 40 years between the 1960's-2000's, only a small number of universities (approximately eight) were established under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education (Alamri, 2011; Alkhazim, 2003). However, over the past decade the government has announced many plans, at the heart of which was the establishment of new public universities in different parts of Saudi Arabia, so the number of universities has increased from 8 in 2003 to 30 in 2019 (State Universities-The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia website, 2019).

Since the year 2000 onwards, and because of this increased desire to educate women, a statistical report by the Ministry of Education stated that more Saudi women were studying in universities than men. According to a report by the Central Department of Statistics and Information (2013) which was published by the Ministry of Economy and Planning in Saudi Arabia almost 48.3% of university graduates were women. The 2015 report of the Ministry revealed that 551,000 women were enrolled in bachelor's degree programmes against 513,000 men. It also stated that 24,498 Saudi women were completing their graduate studies, 16,221 were completing their master's degrees and 1,744 were completing their PhD (Al Arabiya English News, 2015).

According to Rather (2016) the government in Saudi Arabia has undertaken the responsibility to motivate the female population to pursue higher education both overseas and internally, in addition to providing a stipend for domestic students as an incentive for them to enrol. Women in higher education benefit from these initiatives as well as

from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Overseas Scholarship Programme, which was launched in 2005. It was initiated by King Abdullah and continues until now with all the different stages that it composed (Ministry of Education website). As a result of which, a large number of female Saudi students have studied abroad in different academic disciplines. In 2014, there were 35,537 Saudi women studying abroad. The year book statistics provide (Ahmad, 2015) a breakdown of Saudi students studying abroad (49,176 females and 150,109 males that represents an approximate 1:3 ratio), which is still low compared to male students, but for females up taking higher education, the statistics indicate a substantial increase.

This push for greater emphasis on education and the empowerment of women through education were also important aspects of the Vision 2030 plan as discussed earlier in this chapter. This includes the aim of creating a 'knowledge-based economy' through education and emphasising human capital development (Al-Ghalayini, 2018; Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). Most of the projects aim to assure the development and employment of the national workforce and that can only be achieved by, "providing the younger generation with the necessary skills during their education that will support them to become economically productive members of Saudi society" (Mitchell and Alfuraih, 2018: 43).

In relation to inside investment at TRU, the government has supported TRU policies that aim to encourage women's university participation among working class and village women in particular by a range of incentives. Other than grants, all Saudi students gain in the form of a monthly allowance, the university has recently established seven branches in different villages of TRC just for female students. Additionally, female students from villages are offered transportation from their home to the university's main campus in

case the course they want is not available at their local campus. This could be considered one of the advantages of being a woman in the higher education system.

2.3. The Preparatory Year Programme in Saudi

In the Saudi education system, there is no link between secondary school and university (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). One of the implications of secondary school in Saudi is seen as lacking in preparation for those looking to seek a university education, therefore, a bridge course for all first-year students known as the Preparatory Year Programme (PY) could be the solution. Another reason for the extra year (PY Programme) can be attributed to the difference in learning and teaching styles at university and schools. Schools in Saudi emphasise memorisation i.e., rote learning rather than learning based upon understanding the principles and application and the 'understanding of meanings' (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015: 39). At university, however, the expectations are the opposite, as university teaching emphasises the application of the principles. This however has resulted in an imbalance in terms of the difference in learning methods and expectations of students when they transfer from school to university.

This PY programme is offered at several universities in Saudi. The programme was the subject and focus for some research in Saudi, that has been referred to as the 'Foundation Year Programme' (Mansory, 2016) or 'Transition Year' (Shamim et al., 2017). It was felt that this bridge year programme was needed because it was perceived that there was a large gap between the lower expectations of student proficiency at school and the higher expectations of student proficiency for the first year of the courses (Ahmad & Shah, 2014; Alkahtany et al., 2015; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Shamim et al., 2017).

2.3.1 Use of the English language in Saudi Arabia

The use of English in Saudi Arabia is an indicator of the extent of globalisation in the country. Studies of attitudes towards learning English in the periods encompassing the 1970's and 1980's demonstrate that most of the Saudis had low motivation for learning English. According to Zaid (1993), the reasons for the failure in English language teaching/learning lay in students' lack of motivation. Zaid also states that most of Saudi students do not see the value in learning the language for communication or for the development of their career and many had misconceptions about the significance of learning English. Students thus thought that they did not need English in day to day life. This is also supported by Golam Faruk's finding that in Saudi, 'English is studied merely as a foreign language memorising certain words, passages, and rules just to pass the tests and examinations' (2014:174).

However, several studies show that since the 2000's, the motivation to learn English has increased and that there are several reasons for this change (AlMaiman, 2005; Al Jarf, 2008). A major reason is due to English gaining prominence in daily life in Saudi and this is owing to the need for communication between Saudis and the multi-ethnic and multilingual non-Arab expatriate community working in Saudi official and non-official establishments. The extent to which English speaking skills have become necessary is reflected in the number of expatriate workers in Saudi Arabia - there are approximately eleven million low-skilled workers, skilled workers, and skilled experts, from foreign countries (Rasooldeen, 2017).

Today, English is used as a medium of instruction in most Saudi universities and in different area subjects, particularly those related to medical and science subjects. Moreover, students now find that knowledge and resources are more available in English

than in Arabic (Golam Faruk, 2014: 177). Golam Farnuk thus found that "The Saudi people tend to believe that they have no other choice but English to get ahead in their career, to build up their nation, and to spread their religion" (ibid:179).

Learning the English language is seen as an important and valuable *'commodity'* (Saudi Gazette, 2012) or in Bourdieu's term, important to the development of human 'capital'. Al-Seghayer (2011) in his study, considered communication in English as a 'linguistic capital' and those who can speak the language "face a much brighter future in terms of securing a wide range of employment opportunities, seeking knowledge, enriching their understudying of other cultures, pursuing their studies abroad, especially higher ones, and widening their horizon and having a better understanding of the world, or even leisurely pursuits, such as traveling internationally for pleasure" (ibid: p14). Beside this, a study by Moskovsky & Alrabai also showed that 84.9% of Saudi students learn the English language to get better-paid jobs (2009:6). Fluency in English is thus considered, in the present day, a prestigious skill (Alkubaidi, 2014). Ability to speak the English language is a sign of belonging to the middle and upper classes as most of the educated families in the kingdom are keen to engage their children to learn English language skills (Elyas, 2008).

2.3.2 English in the PY programme

One of the main features of PY programmes in Saudi universities is the use of English as the language of instruction for scientific courses such as medicine and engineering (Mansory, 2016; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015), as these are taught in English. While for the humanities courses, Arabic was the language of instruction and English as a foreign language (EFL) was an additional compulsory unit that students are required to complete. However, in 2012 TRU introduced the PY programme also for the humanities courses as

a requirement to all students before starting their bachelor's degree. Since then the PY programme has been made compulsory for all courses at TRU. Students, from all paths and courses, know that they would be taught in English in the first year before embarking on the primary course of study. Participants of the present project had expressed and indicated views, opinions, and feelings of their experiences with respect to learning English differently according to their positionality within the social structure.

2.3.3 The Preparatory Year Programme at TRU

In the TRU- female section, the study focus was developed from two community colleges consisting of education and science, where the medium of teaching was Arabic. These were merged and massively expanded to the present state where TRU (both male and female sections) house fourteen colleges which provide education in several fields such as Humanities, Medicine and Science. In the welcoming note to the freshman students, the Dean of the preparatory year at TRU's expressed that the PY programme aims:

> "To provide our incoming students with a high level of basic mathematical skills, physical sciences knowledge, English language proficiency, professional skills, values and ethics to start and continue successfully on a program" (Preparatory Year programme Handbook to new students, October 2016).

Throughout the university degree programmes, the medium of teaching is English apart from the teaching of Arabic and Islamic Studies. In addition, there are some rules in TRU specifically directed to female students only, which could be interpreted as an exercise of power and control of women. This will be discussed and analysed further in (chapter 6). At the beginning of the research, some of these rules pertained to time restrictions on

leaving campus, no camera mobile phones inside the campus and further institutional rules and practices which will be discussed and analysed in (chapter 6).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a broad overview of the many contexts which frame women's higher education in Saudi Arabia. It considered religion and culture as two dominant features of Saudi society and briefly explored the ways in which culture is moving from being tribal based toward one more representative of a modern state, and a movement toward globalisation. The emphasis on women's rights and the influential role of the Saudi women activists, liberal tendencies, worldwide and media, taken together with the literature indicates that Saudi society is moving from a tribal, rural society to one which is shaped by a modern state and is influenced by the forces of globalisation. While they face many social, cultural, or religious constraints, Saudi women's role in society is also changing. To a large extent this has been due to the interventions of the government and the reality that more women are entering higher education. Ultimately, these factors have resulted in increasing numbers of newly educated women.

It also discussed the way socioeconomic changes in the modern Saudi society developed female students' educational experience. Some of the social-cultural norms that patterned the female educational system are being seen less nowadays than before due to various factors. The impact of the 2030 vision that aims to reach 'Knowledge-based economy' through education has led to the rise in the number of newly educated women.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

3.1   Introduction

The previous chapter considered the different aspects of life in Saudi Arabia, the TRC and the context in which students were immersed. As was noted there, the history of Saudi Arabia as a country is relatively short and women's education, in its present form, is very recent. Consequently, compared to the large body of work on higher education in western countries, there are limited studies which have examined the Saudi context. One of the first steps in formulating and addressing the research questions of this thesis was to review the existing scholarship on students' experiences and women in particular, and higher education more broadly. This chapter considers three areas of theorisation and scholarship that this thesis engages with.

The first section lays out the Bourdieusian concepts and framework used in the research and on which, this research draws upon. The section primarily details the relevance and rationale for using the particular lenses of cultural capital, habitus and field in the research; it also examines the critiques of scholars who have used these. The purpose of this section is to highlight the advantages and limitations of the tools used to examine the social dimensions which affect students' experience at university.

The second body of scholarship which the chapter engages with pertains to the experiences of students in higher education more broadly. Drawing from Bourdieu's framework of habitus, cultural capital and field, a number of scholars and researchers in the UK and in North America have examined students' experiences in higher education. This section considers the issues students face with respect to the effects of class in the

transition to higher education and the effects of public policy such as widening of participation. These studies also indicate the relationship between symbols of social capital and the importance of social interactions in the process of identity formation for students at different stages in their education. The main approaches which are described in the literature are, first, an examination of the experiences of female students particularly those with non-traditional university identities, such as working class and mature students. This section details the existing literature on women's education and experience of higher education in general and in Saudi specifically. It also focuses on the dimensions which impact women students' decision and motivation both to undertake higher education as well as to enrol in a specific course. Some of these factors include family, tribe, class, gender, and their position in Saudi society.

The third body of literature considers the conceptualisation of identity formation and existing understandings of how an individual's identity might be formed. This literature is examined in four subsections. First, in terms of the 'symbols' individuals use and the identity that they convey through their use. The second subsection examines the literature on everyday social interactions with others and their societies and the effect of these social interactions on notions of identity. The relevance of theorisation of Bernstein on the relationship between pedagogy and social control of the process of constructing identity is discussed in this section. The third way of understanding identity formation, which is considered an important lens for the thesis, is the fluidity of becomingness of identity. It takes into account both the challenges and potential that individuals go through while being in a new field or that third space (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). Finally, the literature on the notions of crisis within certain identities is considered (Mercer, 1990). This is particularly relevant as Saudi women's identity came to be considered a contested

issue in the media (Sakr, 2008) as frequently the media is the most protrusive in showing

alternatives to common behavioural gender expectations and roles (Gauntlett, 2008).

3.2 Bourdieu's conceptual framework and theoretical debates:

The present research studies draw on Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and his notion of

habitus (1973, 1977). In order to better understand the factors that affect female students'

experience in higher education, especially in the first year, it is necessary to separate the

concepts of student's cultural capital and their habitus. Both play a large and overlapping

role in their experience and the difficulty or ease with which they adapt to the higher

education environment. More importantly, they influence the extent to which higher

education has a transformative effect on the student.

3.2.1 Cultural capital

Cultural capital refers to all forms of knowledge, skills, education and in general any

social assets that a person has, which could give him/her a higher status or a privilege in

society (Bourdieu, 1986). The three types of cultural capital, which Bourdieu identified

are: first, embodied states of capitals that are related to knowledge and skills which

become part of an individual's long lasting dispositions of the mind and body; second, is

the objectified state, which relates to resources and objects such as books and any

artefacts, and finally, the third, is what exists in the institutionalised state such as

educational qualifications. In this particular context, they could refer to familial support,

governmental support, a positive community, perceptions of women attaining higher

education and so forth. These factors provide female students with resources which are

not monetary but nonetheless, are quite crucial in the ease of access to higher education

and its subsequent study. The term 'capital' was extended by Bourdieu to be associated

with a different exchange and valuation system rather than the restricted material

economic exchange value. Thus, although it refers to non-economic forms of capital that

a person can draw upon, it still can be an economical exchange. This has been extended to include many other resources that might benefit individuals including different 'capitals' such as 'symbolic capital' which is more of what has been converted out of economics like valued objects like cars, brands etc. or cultural values. For example, 'science capital' and 'linguistic capital', both can be described as a form of cultural capital in the following quote: "...it defines as disinterested those forms of exchange which ensure the transubstantiation whereby the most material types of capital – those which are economic in the restricted sense – can present themselves in the immaterial form of cultural capital or social capital and vice versa" (Bourdieu 2006: 105–6).

While 'Social capital' for Bourdieu (1985) refers to the social network and communication within institutionalised relationship groups like an individual's relationship with his/her family or tribe. These kinds of benefits, services and 'profits' accumulated out of being a member of a group "are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible" (Bourdieu, 1986: 249).

According to Bourdieu's work in French higher education institutions (1964) and in specific Bourdieu and Passeron's famous studies in "*The Inheritors*" (1979), which analysed students' performance in higher education after the Second World War. His statistical data showed a problem of few 'working class' students entering university, his philosophical and sociological explanations were mainly related to the poor and disadvantages of the cultural capital of the working class group. Each family transmitted either directly or indirectly certain cultural capital and ethos. These, which were a result of belonging to a given social class, might privilege some upon others and influence what he referred to as 'Objective Chances' of being from middle class and 'Subjective Hopes' out of motivations and taking for granted habitus of entering universities (1976:110). His key idea and conclusion in relation to this is symbolised best by Robbins (1993) when he

argues that: "working class students were less successful than middle class students because the curriculum content was biased in favour of those things which middle class students were already familiar with" (Robbins,1993:153)**.**

It must be noted here that it is not just about the curriculum, but also about considering the importance of curriculum as this will be discussed further on in the chapter in relation to the interactional aspects of identity formation. Also, the curriculum will be discussed in greater depth in (chapter seven) as well as the interaction of the participants of this study, the female students and foreign faculty members.

3. 2. 2 Habitus

Habitus is a term referred to by Pierre Bourdieu as part of his Outline Theory of Practice in 1977, which he developed in order to understand the data that emerged from his fieldwork among the Kabyle peasants of Algeria in 1963 (Robbins, 1993; Grenfell, 2008**)**. Bourdieu (1977) in this particular work 'outline of a Theory of Practice' defines habitus as a system of "durable, transposable dispositions" that emerges out of a relation to wider objective structures of the social world (1977: 72). Habitus focuses on an individual's way of acting in a specific field or network. According to Bourdieu, habitus has the potential to influence our actions and to construct our social world as well as being influenced by the external environment. It is characterised by two opposing traditions: structuralism and existentialism. Bourdieu was influenced by Levi Strauss and the anthropological tradition of understanding social rules as factors which determined how individuals behaved (Grenfell, 2008: 43-47).

Key to the understanding of Bourdieu's concept of habitus and social theory practice is to consider the link between the objective structure and the subjective experience of individuals. The objective structure refers to the structure of a 'field' (which is discussed in the next section) while the subjective experience refers to agents' capitals and habitus.

There is a need to produce a critical understanding of the relations between the individuals under the study and the social space that they are belonging to in a particular 'field'. The field, which is another concept of Bourdieu's conceptual framework (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron1990) facilitates the understanding of the relationship between agents' (cultural capital and habitus) and the structure that govern agents' life. The following section discusses the concept of 'field' further, but it was important to introduce this concept within this section on 'habitus' as it helps in understanding. Social space as the field where individuals bring in and carry their values and embody habitus and capitals. So as habitus focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. According to Grenfell "...It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others" (2008: 51). Habitus thus refers mainly to human cognitive behaviours that are embedded within an individual's social actions and everyday practices. Habitus, as the subjective element of practice, explains how objective social structure and subjective individual personal experience can shape each other (Grenfell, 2008: 51; Barker, 2004: 81-82).

3.2.3 Field:

A Field describes the structural regulations of a specific social setting in which it reflects the social interactions of agents and their social position according to specific rules of that field (Bourdieu, 2000 [English edition 2005]; Reay et al., 2005, Grenfell, 2012). According to Bourdieu (1993) each field has its set of rules and for an agent to have access: "... one must possess the habitus which predisposes you to enter that field and not another, that game, not another. One must possess at least the minimum amount of knowledge, or skill or talent to be accepted as a legitimate player" (1993:8). Throughout

the research I will be using the term 'social space' to reflect the university fields, sub-fields, and its structure.

Bourdieu's explanation of French higher education is important to the study in relation to understanding the field of higher education and also to bring in issues of pedagogy which will be useful to link to the work of Bernstein (1973, 2000) of pedagogy practices. The nature of an individual's habitus often facilitates her/his experiences at higher education as students from middle class backgrounds were more prepared and enabled to navigate the transition of the university environment and felt like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu, 1977). While the working class students work harder to adapt to the cultural codes and practices of the higher education system that promoted the cultural capital of the dominant middle class. Similar to Bourdieu, Bernstein indicated that working class children of UK schools found that the content of the curriculum was more in favour of middle class children due to their awareness of the required codes (further discussion of these will follow).

3.2.3.1 Defining social space

The term "social space" has been drawn upon by several scholars. The most prominent of these are Bourdieu, 1985, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994). Both Massey and Bourdieu shared the notion that certain features of a specific social space are actually derived from the shifted position of the individual within that physical space. Some features of the social space are developed out of the physical or geographical space. In order to evaluate the similarities and differences in the conceptualisations of these scholars and consider their usefulness in the context of female students' experiences at TRU, it was necessary to categorise 'field', together with its sub-fields and structure as a social space.

According to Doreen Massey, human geographers use the concept of space to highlight the relationship between social relations and material practices and society (1994: 254). She links the subordination and limitations of women's mobility during the nineteenth century in European society to two aspects of control: spatial control and social control over identity which she relates to the cultural distinction between public and private and the restriction of women to the private space. Massey's work thus considers constructions and reconstructions of gender relations within a space, over time and based on these she finds that space is socially constructed, "The demonstration of geographical variation adds yet another element to the range of arguments that these things are in fact socially constructed" (1994:178). Massey also argues that space and place 'reflect and affect' the way in which gender might be understood and constructed (1994:179).

Bourdieu also recognised the links between social and geographic space in his statements that "People who are close together in social space tending to find themselves by choice or by necessity close to one another in geographic space" (1989: 16) and that "Social space tends to be translated, with more or less distortion, into physical space, in the form of a certain arrangement of agents and properties" (Bourdieu, 2000:134). The term social space used by Bourdieu is a way to describe social relations and an agent's position in that structure within a specific field or a physical space (Bourdieu 1985: 169). Bourdieu also clarifies the links between the concepts of social and physical space to that of habitus by stating that "Human beings are at once biological beings and social agents who are constituted as such in and through their relation to a social space" (1996:11).

Lefebvre on the other hand describes social space as the connections and correspondence between the specific use of a geographic space to "a spatial practice" that people express

and constitute within a social space (Lefebvre, 1991:16). This is a less specific understanding of social space as it only emphasises space as being produced by social relations. This differs from Bourdieu and Massey's emphasis on the effects that distribution of resources and gender have in terms of the actions of social agents and they emphasise power differentials as being an essential constituent of the generative nature of social and geographic space.

The work of Bourdieu, Massey and Lefebvre thus highlight the socially constructed nature of space and cyclical relationship between space and social relations i.e. social relations produce space and space in turn produces social relations. Bourdieu further underlines the role of social space in maintaining inequalities in his statement that "The social space is defined by the mutual exclusion, or distinction, of the positions which constitute it, that is, as a structure of juxtaposition of social positions" (Bourdieu, 1996:12).

3.2.4 Role of Habitus and Institutional habitus:

Research that focused on students' access to higher education (Reay 1998, Reay et al., 2001 and Reay et al., 2005) and academic success within universities (Thomas, 2001; Yorke and Thomas, 2003) were quite popular in sociology of education studies. It is here where both Reay (1998) and Thomas (2002a) argue that higher education institutions can play a role in supporting their students. The ability of the institution to provide this support depends on their institutional habitus. As the present thesis aims to explore the role of the universities in influencing female students' identities, it is important to consider the impact of institutional habitus. The concept of habitus as a dynamic (Reay et al., 2005) has been broadened to include institutional habitus as well (Reay 2001, Thomas 2002a). The concept of institutional habitus reflects the educational institution

culture and structure and indicates how this is similar to individual habitus having its history which has been established over time and also "capable of change but by dint [power] of their collective nature are less fluid than individual habitus" (Reay, 1998; Reay et al., 2005: 36).

In this thesis, I draw upon the concept of institutional habitus developed in Reay's (1998; Reay et al., 2005) work on choice in higher education. In this study, she analysed students' choices and preferences and demonstrated how this was influenced by the class of the family. The conventional understanding of the term habitus is in the context of individuals to capture the way in which individuals act within a certain boundary or set of conditions of their own accord due to social conditioning over the course of their life. This has been discussed earlier in (section 3.1.2). Drawing from this term and the work of McDonaugh (1996), Reay uses the term institutional habitus in order to capture the "impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organization" (Reay, 1998: 521). She argues that much individual habitus, and institutional habitus is an outcome of the dynamic interlacing of the past and present, of the individual and the collective which is interiorised and permeates every aspect of life. Some of the observable factors which Reay considers to direct institutional habitus are the curriculum offered, teaching practices, expectations, prejudices, biases, the hidden curriculum, and what children bring with them to the classroom. The term is therefore useful to denote the everyday practices within the educational institutions which have a considerable impact on the educational outcomes of the students. McDonough (1996), states that this "organisational habitus" is the reason why outcomes diverge so vastly between some institutions despite having similar access to resources and students from similar backgrounds. This term institutional habitus brings to mind the notion of a hidden curriculum, and upon reflection, they both seem very similar. Margolis et al., (2001: 1)

opine that we hide to 'conceal or protect'. Costello (2001: 44) suggests that teachers, lecturers, and professors in higher education have an effect on values and understandings of cultural norms and these are 'mirrored in the hidden curriculum' within the salience of pedagogy.

Liz Thomas (2002a) explains that the values and practices of higher education institutions impacts students' retention. The study addressed this question - 'In what ways can institutions support non-traditional students to succeed?'. It analyses some institutional values and practices and provides some factors that might have an impact on student retention. She defines institutional habitus as 'more than the culture of the educational institution; it refers to relational issues and priorities, which are deeply embedded, and sub-consciously inform practice' (2002b: 2). She says that in the context of higher education, a student's experience is affected by the interaction of their personal habitus and habitus of the institution of which they become a part. The student's habitus might be very different from the institutional habitus and depending on the degree of difference and their capacity to adapt, this can either be a transformative experience or a traumatic one. For example, the habitus of the elite or middle class student is usually not greatly in opposition to the institutional habitus. For such students, it is easy to adapt to the higher education environment and they feel at ease.

On the other hand, students who are the first in their families to enter higher education, mature students and other non-traditional students have significant problems adapting to the higher education environment due to unfamiliarity with it (Reay et al., 2009). This is worsened by universities which are not welcoming or understanding of such students - their institutional habitus then becomes an additional hurdle to overcome. Some studies (Archer et al., 2003; Thomas, 2002a) have focused on the most negative outcome of this situation which is the lack of student retention. These studies show that individual and

institutional habitus can contribute to student retention or can be detrimental to it. To sum up, it is possible to say after a close examination of the articles, that cultural capital and habitus of birth, the individual and the university are major factors in the retention of students. Yet the extent of the transformative aspect of education and the higher education experience also depend on the student's ability to cope and that the adjustment of students within the university culture is seen as a problem for non-traditional students or students from the working class.

The primary critique against the use of institutional habitus has come from Atkinson (2011). Atkinson's first concern is that the term unnecessarily flattens the notion of habitus which is supposed to capture the multiple qualities of individual behaviour. Applying it to institutions and families thus takes away from the term habitus without adding any new perspective to the analysis. A related critique is that the term habitus cannot be extended to collectives. Atkinson stated that this is because habitus can only be understood in relation to the concept of field and that essentially only individuals can be "plotted in a social space" (2011:336). By this he indicates that families and institutions cannot have a collective habitus as they cannot have the same positions and experience in a social field. Moreover, he observes that the term homogenised all the actors within institutions and so foreclosed the possibility of appreciating the actions of those who are considered to be outliers in the institution. This is apparent in his statement, in that "by rolling all members of the family, school or university together as one monolithic unit, completely steamrolls any internal heterogeneity or dissension' (2011: 338). Another critique that Atkinson levels at the use of the term leaves researchers unable to fully appreciate the nature of inequality as they anthropomorphism institutions and so attribute differences in educational outcomes to institutional habitus. Finally, Atkinson contends that the concept of doxa is an adequate tool by which to capture and analyse the influences

on an individual's educational choices that Reay (1997) for example, examines. Doxa is perhaps the least clarified of Bourdieu's conceptual terms/tools. Atkinson himself clarifies this to be the:

> " ...'family sense' or 'family feeling', perpetuated through the generations, that has the effect of integrating agents, says Bourdieu, of making them feel and act like an exclusive unit, and, being maintained through narratives, maxims, celebratory occasions and photographic displays (cf. Finch 2007), develops into a taken-for-granted sense of 'family tradition' or 'the family spirit'; that is to say, a family-specific doxa" (Atkinson, 2011: 340).

As can be noted from this quote from Atkinson, the concept was originally used to analyse familial relations; however, he later holds that families, like institutions, are social fictions and thus the tools used to examine the former can also be used to examine the latter.

Several concerns regarding the analytic power or capability of the concept of institutional habitus have been addressed in the responses of Burke et al*.,* (2012), for example. They are in favour of institutional habitus as an analytical tool. In support of this, they contend that institutions may be social fictions in a strict sense, however, in practice they are a socially realised phenomenon. By this they mean that institutions even though they do not have a corporeal existence like human beings, they are attributed with human qualities and have the ability to affect human lives. Burke et al*.,* (2012) highlight, for example, the fact that limited companies are considered to be legal persons and so it is possible to see that organisations are imputed with human qualities. They thus argue that the use of the term habitus to describe the "ways of being" of institutions does not take Bourdieu's term and stretch it far beyond what Bourdieu originally intended. They also argue that there is

considerable scope within the theoretical work of Bourdieu which indicates that he considered the term to be able to accommodate more than just application to individuals.

With respect to the usefulness of the term, Burke et al*.,* (2012) contend that recognising institutional habitus makes it possible to consider "social actors in relation to each other and as constitutive of fields, rather than as mere individuals plotted in social space". While they do not address Atkinson's approach of using doxa instead of the institutional habitus, it must be noted that the term doxa itself is not without challenges as Bourdieu never elaborated on the term as much as he did habitus and field. Thus, even the use of doxa would result in the similar difficulties encountered when using the term institutional habitus. In this thesis, I thus use the term institutional habitus within the narrow framing that Reay (1997, and Burke et al., (2012) used the term. Nonetheless, I do so with caution, whilst acknowledging its problematic nature.

3.3 Students' experiences within HE:

Most studies of first year students in higher education focus mainly on the aspects of their withdrawal and retention. Two earlier studies were carried out by Vincent Tinto and Pierre Bourdieu respectively. The first is known as 'Theory of College Student's Withdrawal' 1975 or Tinto's Interactionalist Theory 1993 (Braxton & Hirschy 2004, Longden, 2004). In this model of interactions, attention is paid to the student's ability to integrate within higher education institutions and the level of integration, whether formal or informal, into social or academic aspects (Longden, 2004: 5).

The other research studies were on Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and notion of habitus (1973,1977). For this study, it was important to explore the sample students' experiences that they carried with them to the university, to understand the social and cultural capital. There has been some research on students' experience from 'non-

traditional' backgrounds' or 'working class' students in higher education that was conducted in the UK **(**Archer et al., 2003; Leathwood and Read 2009, Bathmaker et al., 2013; Crozier et al., 2019; Reay et al., 2011; Wong and Chiu 2019) and in Canada, higher education students from non-traditional backgrounds trying to 'belong' and 'fit in' suffer a sense of "class betrayal" in Lehmann's terms (Lehmann, 2007, 2009: 632) and 'dis-identification' according to Lucey et al. (2003: 295). Differences in abilities and lack of the right cultural capital could reduce students' chances of reaching their future objectives. (Wong and Chiu, 2019 studies of students' academic success. In the US, this critical view of the influence of the lack of cultural capital in higher education has been covered in the work of Cipollone and Stich, 2017). Many of these studies covered issues of inequality in educational access, and focused on how students' previous experiences and their cultural and social capital or awareness of the rules of the game in higher education impacted their experience (Freie, 2010; Stich and Freie, 2016). The Cipollone and Stich (2017) studies indicated the way some schools provided its students from non-dominant cultural capital with more of an illusional 'shadow capital', which refers to the practice of educational institutions and their failure to implement professional development; similar to that of failure of many higher educational institutions to recognise the need of the non-dominant cultural capital group of students (Cipollone and Stich (2017**). **Nonetheless, as Morley (2001) highlights, much of the research on higher education disregards vital social factors such as gender, ethnicity etc. which permeate every aspect of students' lives. The following section discusses these areas of scholarship and their influence on students' identities together with their experience in higher education.

3.3.1 Experience of working class students in higher education:

Historically in the United Kingdom, working class students have been excluded from higher education (Robbins 1963; Rose 2003). A report by Robbins in October 1963 on enrolment in higher education, suggested that more access for specific groups such as women and those from the working class was needed in order to ensure that these groups were well represented in the classroom. Several studies which drew from Bourdieu's notions of field and habitus suggested that universities tended to be a middle class field, where students from other class backgrounds, particularly from the working class were less privileged (Lehmann, 2013, 2016). This was often a result of lack of information and advice about higher education (Hutchings, 2003). As much of the literature on access to higher education emerges from the context of the United Kingdom, it is pertinent to consider this body of work while keeping in mind the context in which it is based. The UK policy of widening access to education aims to open up entry to disadvantaged groups such as the working class, black students and those from ethnic minorities. The policy has been relatively successful (Archer et al., 2003; Crozier et al., 2008). However, studies of these efforts have also highlighted the high dropout rates in some universities which are not welcoming of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Crozier et al., 2008; Lehmann, 2009; Reay 2003). Several studies have also shown that students from higher classes also continue to benefit the most even after these increased efforts to provide opportunities for different social classes (Archer et al., 2003; Archer and Leathwood, 2003; Ross 2003). The research also highlights the fact that access alone does not guarantee the success of the policy and that the support disadvantaged students get at universities also plays a large role in their success (Thomas 2002a).

Two major studies from the UK examine effects of social capital on female students' experience, particularly those from the working class, of higher education and the

outcomes after their enrolment. The first by Crozier et al. (2008) and the second is by Bathmaker et al. (2013). Both are indicative of some of the key discussions in this body of scholarship. In terms of methodology, both used Bourdieu's conceptual framework and gathered qualitative data, mostly in the form of extensive interviews with students.

The project by Crozier et al. (2008 and 2011) showed the advantages that class conferred on white middle class students and the difficulties that working class and black and minority ethnic (BME) students faced while enrolled in higher education. They focused on a group of 27 working class students who they followed over two academic years in four higher education institutions: comprising of a post 1992; an elite; a civic and a college of further education, located in three different geographical areas. As most of the working class students in their field of study had limited experience of the culture of higher education on arrival at university, they argued that *"Success in the education system is predicated on having the right kinds of cultural and social capital and also habitus" (2010: 146).* The authors argued the need for students to 'recognise and realise rules' Bernstein (1996, 2000) and that this is necessary in order to make sense of the higher education learning experience and provide the knowledge of how to navigate through this system and make it work for them (Crozier and Reay 2011).

The study highlighted the role universities play in creating a higher education learning environment to ensure their students' success (2011: 149). The study also showed that learning, at one university, was structured through "weak framing and fairly slow pacing" with the intention of providing a supportive environment, and yet this compounded students' lack of cultural capital and confusion (2011:154). Most crucially, the authors argued that a challenging environment for students and a number of policies and practices which encouraged greater contact between teaching staff and students could help in

creating a transformative environment for the non-traditional students. They do, however, emphasise that it is necessary to have a greater understanding of students' different needs in order to ensure a greater degree of success in ensuring that certain groups of students enrol and complete degrees.

Reay (2003) also highlights the systemic nature of the challenges that mature female students faced in accessing higher education. Drawing on Beck's conceptualisation of risk, she argues that despite a policy of widening access and an awareness of lack of social care, the responsibility of transformation is still "seen to be the responsibility of the individual applicant" and that effectively the risk of undertaking higher education is shifted to students. (This will be discussed in the next section).

These findings are further developed in the work of Bathmaker et al. (2013) through their Paired Peers Project which traced the trajectories of middle class and working class students in the Universities of Bristol and West of England. The project is particularly notable for its scale and duration and the methodology. In this study, middle and working class respondents were selected from the same courses and their experiences in higher education were tracked over a three-year period. Their findings went further than those of Crozier et al. (2008) as they showed that due to an increasingly competitive job market, higher education alone is no longer enough to assure success in finding employment. In this environment, privileged students manage their social capital to secure their position by undertaking extracurricular activities to differentiate their CVs while working class students are unable to do so due to time, poverty, or a lack of awareness.

The most recent work of Crozier et al. (2019) also cautions that it is necessary to nuance the perspective that working class and BME students are passive victims as their findings

show that such students "work the marginal space and trouble the borders". Their work also reveals that habitus is not a static concept but one which is generative. Much of the focus is on the retention rates of students and while this is useful, it does not completely examine the extent of the transformation of higher education on students. Some of the data in Reay's (2003) work in particular, supports the thesis that retention rates are far from ideal indicators of the success of higher education initiatives as some of the respondents who did not complete their programmes stated that they found their experience of higher education to be enriching.

3.3.2 Experience of identity risk in higher education

An identity is an important aspect of a person's being and is a developed through a psychological process where understandings, meanings and experiences are organised (Duveen, 1993). It is this process that enables and facilitates a person to position themselves as a social actor and helps locate their own notions of the individual within their collective world. Additionally, it is these influences in their incremental form that add towards the definition of self and the personal concept of oneself.

> 'The desert left Lawrence neither Arab nor English, just as education has left these students uneasy in their new and old identities. They are leaving behind old identities and establishing new ones, losing the certainty of their old identities in this process of transition.' (Baxter & Britton, 2001: 89).

In the research from which the quote is extracted, mature students at a new British university were asked to narrate the effects that higher education had on their identity and its implications for relationships with their families and former friends. The following three studies, based on interviews, analysed how mature students (Baxter & Britton, 2001;

Reay, 2003) and even young working class students (Archer and Leathwood, 2003) all considered the idea of risks and drew on the theories of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991). The three studies illustrated two theoretical works, first, the theories of modernity and the concept of 'risk in society' by Beck (1992) and Giddens 1991. Risk in education is related to personal changes and the positive or negative effects that higher education may bring to the mature students. The second theoretical angle that is drawn upon is gender and class changes which was the central focus in Bourdieu's notion of habitus. Students when negotiating their new identity as a consequence of entering higher education and the development of new forms of cultural capital that were associated with class-based habitus. The final conclusions of Baxter and Britton are succinctly expressed in the quote above that started this discussion.

Higher education is a place that might allow students to construct new identities, which might conflict with other, existing 'prior' identities (Baxter and Britton 2001; Reay, 2003; Archer and Leathwood, 2003). This student experience of higher education, through its culture and practice, brings changes to identity and according to these studies (Baxter and Britton 2001; Reay 2003; Archer and Leathwood, 2003), the changes were riskier and challenging in relation to both gender and class identity. Archer and Leathwood (2003) drew also on the theories of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991), that the taking of a higher education level is much riskier for working class students, not only in relation to financial risks but also changes of working class social identity as a risk. Studies of women's experiences in higher education highlight the increase of women in these sectors, particularly since the 1990s. The experience of mature working class women in higher education was seen as a result of passion but the process of transition involved other aspects which were considered as risks and costs that mature working class women take and states, *"...ways in which the costs and risks of 'reinventing the self' compete with*

and, at times, overwhelm the advantages" (Reay, 2003: 314), and further opines that these are the circumstances which sometimes lead to an increased number of high dropout rates for mature working class women.

Baxter and Britton (2001) analysed the adjustment both women and men students discussed in their identity in order to adapt to the new situation of 'new forms of embodied cultural capital' (2001:91). Some of the students were found to be struggling with a kind of double or multiple identities where they found themselves acting differently according to the two different worlds or fields. This, according to them, is a result of an individual's struggle to manage the tension transitions between old and new identities. 'They could not yet achieve this physical and emotional separation, because they were still embedded in their old habitus' (2001:100).

Many of the studies discussed above, concluded that it was more difficult to manage transition for working class students than middle class students, with gender and being a mature student also contributing further to the challenges. The end result therefore is that working class women face the most difficult negotiations especially given the complications of maintaining family relations. The results of the studies indicate that it is likely that students in the proposed field might experience similar tensions of belonging in different locations and thus this is a useful theory with which to conduct the proposed research.

3.3.3 Experience of Women's Identity in Higher Education

Women's access to higher education has increased not only in the UK but also in many other parts of the world. As part of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals

(MDG) which was signed and championed in September 2000 by members of world leaders, women's rights were at the heart of global policy, as the MDGs aimed to promote 'gender equality and women's empowerment'. The target was to be achieved through the education of women, which was a key strategy for economic and social development (Heyzer 2005, Noureen 2015). Ghazala Noureen argues 'we live in a gendered world', where male /female identities are constructed in specific frameworks according to society and cultural backgrounds; gender identity is constructed under the sociocultural norms of a given society, which is therefore subject to change (Lawler 2014, Noureen 2015, Leathwood & Read 2009:4). A person can be associated with more than one social category such as gender, ethnicity, race, class etc and identity depends on the way she/he views her/himself and is identified by others. Being identified for example as women, or black, or middle class, educated women and so on intersectionality.

Nonetheless, Carole Leathwood and Barbara Read (2009) examined if higher education is becoming a 'feminised arena' by questioning whether women are seen as 'taking over the academy' (2009:2-3). However, through their book, they argue that 'this is only part of the story' – they included further inequalities to women within the higher education sector. Although, women were more likely to be in higher education than men in the UK, inequalities exist. There was uneven access to higher education and women patterns of participation in higher education are influenced by complex social, economic and cultural contexts. For example, from their poststructuralist analysis of virtual gendered image representations by which they explore different university websites, they find that authoritarian, knowledgeable and academic images are represented as being masculine while being a 'typical' good successful student was represented by a white female student (2009, 77-84).

An example of these contextual differences is expressed in Noureen's work. Most of the Pakistani women who were interviewed in her research study, 'considered education as the most important factor for enhancing women's confidence and awareness of their rights'. They wanted to become empowered and have access to resources and attain gender equality while keeping their Muslim identity and not losing the family structure. As Noureen notes, 'they do not want to follow the Western traditions of women's empowerment' (2015:19). It is useful here to draw upon the work of Lawler (2014). She examines the issue of 'the self' as a project that can raise self-awareness and help one gain new knowledge which in turn could help to achieve self-improvement or any other self-development project where the goal is "becoming ourselves". She focuses on the notion of 'autonomy', which has its roots in western society, and the implications of seeing power as something that is exercised rather than owned (2014: 69-77). Building on this, education could strengthen the position of women and could be seen as a project to be worked upon.

This angle of viewing the construction of identity is useful to the proposed research as it helps in creating a framework within which to view the role of educational institutions in the creation of identity and changes in roles and status. Thus it is possible to say for example, in the context of the current research, the experience of women in higher education in Western society is different than a woman in Saudi Arabia and the experience for women from a village in a small city in Saudi is also different than those from the capital city.

3.3.3.1 Experience of women in higher education in Saudi: The University as A 'Women-Only' Space for Learning.

The segregation of education in Saudi has already been discussed in Chapter two. When analysing this segregation of space, this restriction of women's space, and segregation according to gender generally, is seen as a cultural distinction between public and private spaces for women. Doreen Massey, a human geographer, used the concept of space to highlight the relationship between social relations and material practices in society (1994: 254). She argued that gender relations within a space are socially constructed and changeable; they become unstable over time. Different scholars refer to women's education as a source of human capital and a way to better women's position in Saudi Society and empower them (Yamani, 1996; Hamdan, 2005; Al-Fassi 2010; Al Alhareth et al., 2015; Yusuf et al., 2015) (Rather, 2012). As demonstrated in chapter two, the Saudi government has invested more heavily in women's education as a part of its development plans. There are several studies (Hamdan, 2005; Al-Fassi 2010) that explore the implications of this on women in the country. The discussion on gender segregation was largely seen as the primary issue affecting the status of Saudi women.

Gender segregation in education in general and higher education, in particular, have been part of some studies. (Hamdan, 2005; Al-Fassi, 2010). Both of these studies evaluated the implications of gender segregation on women's position in Saudi society. Neither however considers the possible effects of sudden desegregation in detail. In chapter six of this thesis, I take up this discussion further by analysing the women's habitus in the university field based on the data collected from the field. These kinds of studies are what might have highlighted the situation and let the Saudi government go through the recent discourse of women empowerment - *'tamkin al-marah'* - in contemporary Saudi Arabia (Quamar, 2016).

A review of the literature around women as students in higher education in Saudi Arabia reveals the connection between education and the empowerment of women (Rather, 2012; Al-bakr et al., 2017). These studies mainly document the historical changes and progress within women's education (Hamdan, 2005; Almunajjed, 2009, Alsuwaida, 2016). An exception to this is the work of Al-bakr et al. (2017) which was a quantitative research that sought to inform strategy and policy by distributing a questionnaire among 4,455 male and female students to indicate their confidence and optimism about the improvement of gender equity. The study examined the status of women's rights, their access to education, employment opportunities, daily public life and role in public office. It found that women's education in general was considered important as it empowers them, but still is not equal in terms of public policy emphasis as the education of males.

The study by Al-bakr et al. (2017) stands out as all other pieces of scholarship on the topic are based on secondary data and statistical reports that reflect the progress in women's education and indicates that the Saudi government has made efforts to increase women's access to education (Almunajjed, 2009: Rather, 2012). Hamdan (2005) based on her review of the reports of government and international bodies, emphasised the efforts to enhance the education system by intentionally widening women's scope for participation in it to ensure the economic survival of the country.

One consistent finding is that women's education, particularly higher education (Hamdan, 2005; AlMunajjed 2009), has a significant impact on the reduction of early marriage. Also, others (seem Almunajjed, 2009; Yusuf et al., 2015) show that women's social opportunities and well-being in relation to life expectancy have increased over the years as efforts to educate women have met with success. Furthermore, Al-Fassi (2010)

reports that women prefer pursuing education to develop their social status in contrast to men who favour working to achieve the same end.

To a greater or lesser degree, all the studies have also emphasised the need to differentiate between the tenets of Islamic teachings that relate to women's education and cultural practices associated with women's education in Saudi Arabia. Hamdan (2005) claims that in some cases, Islamic and religious texts that related to women's position in Saudi Arabia were being interpreted literally, which provided conservative religious scholars material with which 'to silence women's voices in the name of Islam' (2005:46). However, she does not illustrate how Islamic teachings could be interpreted in support of women's education though she alludes to the fact that it is possible to do so.

Al-Fassi (2010) a Saudi woman activist, has a similar view to Hamdan (2005) and argues that the main setback in women's education has been the conservative views held by The General Presidency for Girls' Education, which ran women's education affairs between 1961 and 2003. Men's education, on the other hand, was run by the Ministry of Education which has been more liberal. Hamdan has also indicated some of the challenges Saudi women have overcome to access education with respect to facilities, buildings, and libraries (Hamdan,2005:50-53).

Both Hamdan and Al-Fassi specifically address the issues of gender segregation in higher education. Both focus on the relationship between the economic development within Saudi Arabia in the last three decades and women's education. They argue that the sharp increase in women's literacy rates and higher education qualifications have resulted in women demanding workplaces outside the home. Al-Fassi (2010) has evaluated the

implications of gender segregation on women's position in Saudi society. Both studies have praised the use of technology like video conferencing in supporting education.

The two scholars however disagree in their view on gender segregation. Al-Fassi (2010) argues against the immediate desegregation of women in education. Referring to the use of technology aids like the use of video conference and closed-circuit television (CCTV) which have been used in courses where female instructors cannot be found, she states that these practices in higher education have advanced women's education as it encourages families which might otherwise never send their female members for education to do so. She emphasised however, that technology has also helped to support and preserve the invisibility and isolation of women. This is evident from the 1999 Ministry of Education reports, where of the 44% of women enrolled into college, only 1% of students were admitted into the medical field and none into engineering, and this was due to the lack of female students enrolling into subjects which would later have a mixed work environment like engineering, politics or journalism.

Hamdan (2005), conversely, believes that segregation creates a unique professional advantage for women (2005:58). Hamdan argued that in order for women to be segregated there is a need to create more "women-only spaces" (2005:59). She argues that gender segregation has created a professional advantage for women by allowing them access to more jobs without the two genders competing or without competing with their male counterparts in all the industries.

According to Hamdan the role of women in the development process is the most debated subject in Saudi society. She reports that economic difficulties can force a social shift, an example of this is that men would prefer educated women as wives as they can contribute to the household income. Her study portrays tradition and conservative views as the

largest obstacles for Saudi women in participating in nation-building. Hamdan believes that establishing a Ministry of Women's Affairs could ease the difficulties of executing changes for future development.

The comparative work of Al-Yousef (2006) on the level of parental involvement in their children's choices in courses in the UK and Saudi is another illuminating piece of scholarship. She explores the influences that the parents of young women in both Saudi and the UK might have had in the decision-making process about which university and subjects to choose (continuing their higher education). The research focused more on the level of parents' involvement in such decision-making and indicated the relationship of parents' education and their level of support for their daughters' choice. The aim was to look for similarities or differences between cross-cultural explorations of the narratives of 54 young women's perceptions of their parents' involvement in both the UK and Saudi Arabia. A key finding was the lack of knowledge and information about the subjects and institutional choices available for the young Saudi women. Al-Yousef (2009) compared this to the students in the UK and found that the latter group were easily able to access information. Even adjusting for the extent of parental education, Al-Yousef found that Saudi students did not rely much on their parents in gaining information about higher education options. A major drawback of the study was that it did not consider social class as an essential factor in the UK context which might explain the influences of students' higher education institutional choices. Although it indicated how students from private schools in the UK had more access to information about the requirements of applications and compared to the information available to those students who studied in state schools that have been described as "showed less autonomy among young women' (2009:788). The study of Al-Yousef (2009) argues that female students in Saudi were less advanced and did not have the access to knowledge as the students from the UK. Although, in the

Saudi context, social class does not exist in the same way that it fits in the western context, it still exists and is considered as an important aspect in any sociological research, in which influences cannot be denied (This will be discussed further in chapter five).

3.4 Identity as a Conceptual Framework

Understanding the way an individual's identity is formed is not straight forward and it is important to consider two aspects. First, the social structure that the individual lives in, as identities are shaped and formed through interaction with other people within a specific social structure (Goffman, 1959; Woodward 2004; Lawler 2018). This process sometimes might force the individual to develop identities in ways they cannot control. For example, gender, class, and ethnicity all influence individuals subconsciously, although there is a danger of removing individuals of any accountability or responsibility when we frame it just as a subconscious process. In relation to gender for instance, within specific societies there are certain roles, practices and behaviours that are associated with women or men. Although it could be argued that gender roles are changeable (Lawler 2018), which is indicated in the second aspect in understanding identity formation, and this is related to the choices and options a person might have to be who s/he is. The dramatic social economic changes individuals face, such as the rapid changes brought about by globalisation, also destabilize the structure of identity which becomes uncertain and diverse. For Anthony Giddens (1991) this is the new feature of contemporary life in the West, which is not unlike the changes in Saudi society after the discovery of oil.

3.4.1 Identity of the self

An individual understands his/her own identity in relation to others, who might be different from or share sameness. Lawler describes this as a 'paradoxical combination of sameness and difference' (2008:2). Burke on the other hand refers to this as a 'a relational process', where identities are constructed through difference (2012:54). "I understand

myself as a 'woman' in relation to seeing myself as different from 'being a man'… I understand who I am in relation to others- who I see myself as different from and who I identify with through narratives of sameness" (Burke, 2012:54).

An individual's identity is inherently unstable and open to interpretation as it is a constant process of 'becoming' through new experiences and practices (Burke 2012; Lawler, 2008, 2015). For the purpose of this research, it is useful to think of identity formation as what an individual 'gained' through experience while at the same time considering what s/he 'owned' i.e. what their experience and habitus were prior to enrolment as students, specifically, the position of women, who might be seen as marginalised due to their gender identity.

In order to understand the concept of identity, there is a need to consider several aspects of the notion of identity itself as used and defined in social sciences (Woodward, 2004; Lawler, 2008, 2013). The first is through the work of Mead (1934) and in particular his book Mind, Self and Society. Mead stated that social identity is formed and developed through a mixture of the 'I' and the 'me'. These two concepts constitute an individual's mind and self within a social context. The 'I' is the image individuals have about themselves in their minds and the 'me' the way individuals think others perceive them. According to Mead the way in which an individual's identity is produced in terms of the image they have of themselves and the image that they think others have of them is the link to the social world and the context. This process is constituted through the symbolism of language, images, and other forms of representation such as clothing and actions. These symbols of identity are used by individuals both to distinguish themselves from others as well as indicate their identification with a collective such as their families or communities or classes. Symbols and the meaning that they signify to individuals are important to the

formation of identity in general. In the context of the university setting, symbols are crucial to understanding the relationship between individual students or faculty members' perception of themselves and their own identity, as well as their perception of how others perceive them. Some key markers of identity in Saudi in general and at TRU in particular were related to aspects of identity based on gender, tribe, class and region.

3.4.2 Identity formed by social interaction:

The second aspect of understanding ways identity could be formed is through an individual's own understanding of his/her identity in relation to others and that could be achieved through everyday social interaction within a specific culture. Social/ cultural identity refers to "the identification of self with a specific social position" within a specific culture or a social group (Seymour-Smith, 1986: 145). The culture refers "to a system of values, ideas and behaviour that is associated with one or more than one social or national group" (Seymour-Smith, 1986:65). This definition assumes the common practice and values within a particular set.

Bourdieu's 'rules of the game' theorisation and the importance of adapting the culture of a field is taken forward and developed further in different ways out of Goffman's argument that individuals constitute themselves through their interactions with others. Goffman (1959) in his book, 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' argued that an individual's performance of self in social interactions is akin to an actor's performance in the theatre. He states that the metaphor of performativity is apt, as just as actors play their roles and conform to them, similarly, an individual's role in society limits their role in life as well. However, Bourdieu, using the metaphor of games and players rather than actors on a stage, argued that while there are a number of ways in which people can

respond to certain situations, their responses are limited to a certain set which is directed by their social contexts. The main distinction between the work of Goffman and Bourdieu is that the latter emphasises the role of habitus which he explains as a "feel for the game", which determines an individual's responses in a manner which is not fixed as lines in a play yet is still pre-determined or rooted in an individual's class background, and results in a response to actions in the same fluid way that a well-practiced tennis player bats a ball.

This is important to the analysis of an individuals' social interactions of everyday activities. However, in order to analyse students' interactional experiences and abilities to engage in the classroom, the work of Bernstein (1996, 2000) is relevant too. As has been discussed earlier, the theorisation of Bernstein (1996, 2000) has a considerable degree of overlap with Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field. The most significant aspect is Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the relationship between habitus and field being an awareness of the ''rules of the game'' (Bourdieu, 1972). Bernstein (1996, 2000), similarly argued that realisation rules help individuals to identify the context they are involved in and how to proceed or respond, 'the realization rule determines how we put meaning together and how we make them public' (1996:6). Much like habitus, Bernstein argued an individual's awareness of recognition and realisation rules were dependent upon factors such as class. It is thus clear that external forces such as class and social context play a considerable role in shaping identity which in turn shapes the way an individual experiences higher education. Bernstein's theorisation on the specific ways in which teaching practices affect students is discussed in the following section.

3.4.2.1 Interactional experience and Bernstein

The concept of pedagogy can be defined as the sum of all teaching practices. This includes the pedagogic relations and communications between teachers and learners and the ways in which learners and teachers relate to each other within the educational institutional environment (Bernstein, 2000).

In his influential book Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity, Basil Bernstein (1996, 2000), proposed that the process of communication in general and education in particular depends on "recognition" and "realisation" rules. Bernstein posited that the recognition rules were those which allowed individuals to recognise the context in which they were, and the realisation rules allowed them to respond appropriately. Familiarity with both the recognition and realisation rules was thus necessary for students to fully interact and engage in classroom pedagogical practices. Bernstein's theorisation of recognition and realisation rules are based in his broader work on classification and framing, which related to curriculum and teaching. The nature of classification and framing of "relevant" information, contexts and situations influenced by the nature of power relations.

Bernstein's theorisation of pedagogic discourse is mainly reflected in processes of transmission and acquisition and the recognition and realisation rules. Bernstein (1973, 2000) indicated the importance of educational knowledge to the structure of an individual's experience and identity formation in general. According to his theory, formal transmission of educational knowledge can be realised through the underlying structure of the three message systems: curriculum, which defines what counts as valid knowledge; pedagogy, that relates to a valid transmission of this knowledge; and evaluation which refers to the valid realisation of this knowledge being taught (1973: 363). According to Bernstein "classification' and 'framing' is used to analyse the underlying structure of these three message systems (2000, 5-13).

3.4.2.2 Bourdieu and Bernstein

Habitus and field are key sociological terms used by Bourdieu (1986, 1990) to indicate the dispositions that individuals acquire due to their particular social positioning and the arenas in which they conduct themselves respectively. According to Bourne (2008), Bernstein builds upon these concepts in the context of education to argue that pedagogic discourse is a social construction which is based upon the power structures which are seemingly outside the immediate educational context and seek to reproduce themselves. He shows that this process depends upon the inculcation of certain 'codes' in subjects based upon their positionality in power structures such as class.

These codes direct interactions between people, first, by helping them identify the context of the interaction and indicating to them with the communicative rules that are relevant to the context which has been identified (Bernstein, 2003: 14). The term code could be defined as a "set of organising principles behind the language employed by members of a social group" (Littlejohn, 2002: 278). Codes can be of two types - elaborated or restricted. The 'elaborated and restricted codes' refers to the type of language code people use in their everyday conversation and communication; the use of these ideas will be relevant to indicate and analyse a student's social class. The words and language used illustrate a form of cultural capital other students might not perceive as necessary. The research indicates the use of English as a language but does not refer to students' use of the Arabic language which in a way might identify class or status (further exploration of English language and social class is discussed in section 3.3). The aim here is to explore the link between Bourdieu's and Bernstein's two different ways of referring to class identity in relation to the study and to consider when analysing students' data)

According to Bernstein (1971) the code individuals use would symbolise and reflect their social identity, as the 'elaborated and restricted codes' draw a direct connection between the social class and the use of sociolinguistic and communication language. For example, the use of certain vocabulary to reflect a middle class identity.   He used this code theory to examine and analyse the way social class influences learning outcomes. According to Bernstein (1971) schools require the use of 'elaborated code', which is the dominant code of middle class students.

In several areas, especially the aspect of class, Bernstein's work overlaps with that of Bourdieu, in relation to culture, capital and habitus. While Bernstein's work focuses explicitly on the role of class in directing educational experience. Bourdieu's work addresses the larger issues of an individual's social practices, relationship, and position within a society. Thus, this would suggest that having a greater cultural capital automatically means that one has access to certain forms of elaborated codes of the higher/upper groups.

3.4.3 The process of becoming of identity

Another central concept for understanding identity formation is the fluidity in becoming or the idea of 'changing identity' (Archer and Leathwood, 2003). The respondents of that study, out of their interview data to the theme of 'change', were divided into participants and non- participants in the university middle class culture. According to the researchers of this study (Archer and Leathwood, 2003), when issues of leaving working class identity were explored, some participants aspired to become middle class, whilst some others, 'valued' their social class identity and resisted the changes. They tended to draw boundaries, as higher education institutions were considered a middle class place, between their self-identity and the middle class institution. It seems they wanted to 'benefit' from it but did not aspire to 'belonging' to it. In general, some young working

class men tended to regard higher education as threatening to their masculine identity, while women participants of the study tended to talk positively as it was seen as the best way to ' bettering oneself' (2003:184).

It is important for the study to consider the process of identity formation or the "becoming" of identity. Some individuals experience fluidity and demonstrate an ability to fit in both different milieus during the transitional process. However, some others might face a 'cleft habitus'.   Ingram and Abrahams (2016) extended Bourdieu's term (2000) to use to their advantage, rather than indicating a negative experience and feelings of 'anxiety and hysteresis' that affects individuals out of being involved in a contradictory field.

Also, where individuals who are situated simultaneously in two fields feel a sense of belonging to one and being out of place in the other. Ingram and Abrahams (2016) (in Bourdieu: the next Generation book) discuss the impact of the process of being in a new field and the individual's experience of being in a transitional position in the new social field. They describe the experience of being 'torn between two competing worlds' (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016:140). In the broader literature and in the work of Bourdieu, this position has often been described in largely negative terms which implies the traumatic nature of this transition. This body of work indicates that a person's habitus as structured by original social background retains prominence even when they experience life in a new social field. Ingram and Abrahams however also discuss the emancipatory potential that such experiences have for those who are able to adapt as well as the creation of a third space which is more welcoming of individuals from diverse backgrounds. They thus extend Bourdieu's concept of 'Cleft habitus' (2000, 2002) to include the positive empowering impact of this process of coping in a new field and altering the field through

engagement with it. They do so based on their reflections on their own experience of coming from working class backgrounds to unfamiliar academic environments which required that they adopt a new habitus. This is a considerably important lens for the present thesis as it considers both the challenges and potential for individuals in new fields.

3.4.4 Crisis within Identity

The final aspect in understanding identity is the idea of crisis within identity that Mercer (1990) describes in the statement that '…identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty' (Mercer, 1990: 259). Mercer uses the term 'crisis of identity' in relation to the changes to society which are portrayed in the media as being detrimental to the existing social relations. A few examples of this are the descriptions of the crisis of the family/gender/society or race. These claims, Mercer argues, depend on assumptions of an identity which is supposed to be stable, but which is increasingly unstable due to the effects of undesirable forces. While Mercer (1990) explores this in relation to black, ethnic identities and politics, it is possible to extend the use of the term (Woodward, 2004) to examine how any identity could become a point of conflict in times of social change.

In the context of higher education in the UK, the conflicts between the assumption that students are young, middle class and privileged and the realities of working class, unprivileged, non-traditional students have been highlighted in many research projects that consider class identity within the field of higher education (Archer et al., 2003; Crozier et al., 2019; Lehmann, 2013, 2016, Reay and Crozier, 2011; Reay 2003; Wong and Chiu, 2019). Woodward (2004) also highlights the fact that the use of the term

"crisis" is a double-edged sword as it flattens out, over-simplifies, and hides many nuances in social interactions.

This experience of identity being called into question during moments of crisis has also been felt in Saudi. As Saudi society changed rapidly due to economic and social development, the issues of Saudi women also began to gain attention and women's identity came to be a contested issue in the media between conservatives and liberals. Mercer's perspective helps to reveal the assumptions of a uniform and stable category of "Saudi womanhood" which is central to the media discourse of Saudi womanhood being in crisis. This hides the reality that there are many differences such as age, class, region, exposure etc. which made it difficult for one to assume a uniform and stable category of the "Saudi woman". Moreover, the discourse of crisis is often strong enough to convince individuals to label their experience as a crisis even if they had not considered it as one previously.

3.5 Conclusion

In order to understand the logic of everyday social practice of female students and the impact of higher education on women's position as students, it was necessary to examine the broader literature that highlighted students' experience within higher educational institutions and students with identities under spots and more in crisis in the higher education system in specific. This literature review has provided an overview of existing scholarship and identifies the gap in the literature and demonstrates the rationale and relevance of using Bourdieu's theory to analyse the data for this research. One of the key findings in the scholarship on student experience of higher education has been that education is often seen as a decision or a choice that is taken for granted by many middle

class students. Other classes, gender and students with ethnicity who joined the field of education, face the challenges, risks and sometimes inequalities.

The concept of 'institutional habitus' which is used to describe the unique aspects of the culture of the higher education institution is also detailed and despite certain concerns about the extent to which the term homogenised the dynamic nature of interaction in an institution, it remains an important aspect to consider as the scholarship indicates that there are distinct "ways of being" for institutions. To identity formation due to its impact on the students by just attending an institution upon another. Some institutions might be homogenising the practices of their students in one way or the other or may support their difference and diversity.

At first glance the context of Saudi Arabia seemed markedly different from the main research sites of the existing scholarship which focuses on the UK, Europe and North America. Students from working class backgrounds in Saudi are unlike students in other countries in a number of ways which includes being assured of a significant monthly allowance. Nonetheless, the concept of habitus and cultural capital, together with factors such as gender, class, social status and others which shape an identity or an experience remain relevant. Similarly, the concept of field as it applies to university is also a useful analytical tool.

Chapter 4: Methodology Chapter

This research involves a qualitative interpretive approach, and it aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the social context and lived experiences of the participant female students. This chapter outlines the methodological framework of the project. The first section provides an overview of the site of the research as well as the unique challenges of the field site. The next section details the various philosophies that underpin the selection of the methodology along with an explanation of the limitations thereof. The third section details the sample selection together with the methods of enquiry, while the fourth section explains the process and procedures of data collection. The fifth section involves the process of data analysis, largely drawn from the methodology of the project, which aims to interpret and capture meanings out of data. The final section considers the ethical aspects of the research and aspects of reflexivity before concluding.

4.1 Philosophical positions

There is no single reality that could explain women students' experience in higher education. The literature review detailed that there are many different perspectives involved, depending upon the social context of the social reality. The study considers the concepts of identity formation and aims to identify the social meanings being accomplished by the social actors (Bryman, 2012) in this case the experiences of female students in higher education within its social structure and cultural context. Therefore, my ontological position in relation to this research is that social reality, which is subjective ontology, is socially constructed in the context of the field where the research is conducted. A social constructivist position as Burr (2003:12) notes, does not have a specific means of identification. It instead is a manner of describing any research which is based on any of the following assumptions - that knowledge cannot be taken for granted

but must be critically evaluated, that all forms of knowledge are culturally and historically specific, that the production of knowledge is a social process and finally that knowledge and social action go hand in hand.

The epistemological position that is adopted for this study is the interpretivist paradigm. According to Blaikie (1993, 2007) interpretivism 'adopts some version of an idealist ontology and the epistemology of constructionism' (2007:179) thus rejecting the epistemology of empiricism. The interpretive paradigm was adopted as it provides an in-depth understanding of social behaviours of individuals' experiences from their own perspectives within their social contexts (Atkinson, 2007; Hennink et al., 2011; Halperin and Heath, 2012; Ormston et al., 2014) and to explore the participants' subjective meaningful experience' (Snape and Spencer, 2003: 7) that women students link to their practice of the social world and in this study, the experience of the female students.

While the researcher investigates the social world through social actors, it must also be kept in mind that 'social reality has to be discovered from the inside rather than being filtered or distorted through some outside expert's theory' (Blaikie, 2007: 180). According to Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977) social reality exists out of an individual's social structure of the social field or social context. Therefore, taking into account the subjective experience of a woman in Saudi is essential to the study, as it might be different depending upon the structure of the context she is embedded within. Also, consideration of the three Bourdieusian concepts (cultural capital, habitus and field) is crucial to the study.

The interpretivist paradigm provided an in depth interpreted understanding of human behaviours and lived experiences in relation to their own perspectives and social contexts (Atkinson, 2007; Hennink et al., 2011; Halperin and Heath, 2012; Ormston et al., 2014).

In the context of the research, the use of this paradigm would mean that rather than understanding female students' experience from my perspective as a researcher, this project seeks to understand it from the student's own perspective. It goes with the assumption that the method of natural science cannot be applied to social science, because the study of social phenomena requires *in depth* or *inside* understanding rather than an *outside* understanding of the constructed social world people inhabit.

The interpretivist paradigm will help to explore and understand the *'subjective meaningful experience'* people link to their practice of the social world (Snape and Spencer, 2003: 7). We cannot explain an individual's experience or behaviour without knowing the *'legitimate knowledge'* and structure that individuals are embedded into (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 39). Therefore, the social world is "what we experience it to be: it is subjectively created" (Ibid, 2012: 41) and in relation to this research it is also socially and culturally created.

Social phenomena are blurred within social contexts and as researchers give meaning and explanation of such a social context, it is imperative to understand social reality. Therefore, a key component of such research is the ability to recognise and understand the relationship between a researcher and the researched field. "The social researcher enters the everyday social world in order to grasp the socially constructed meanings, and then reconstructs these meanings in social scientific language" (Silverman 2011: 96).

This relationship between the researcher and the research field, however, is a complex one as it is impossible to overcome the researcher's own internalised point of view which in turn then influences the researcher's analysis. This was highlighted best by Edward Said (2003) who criticised the manner in which the Orient was studied as it was based on

drawing a fundamental distinction between the Orient and the Occident "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the orient and occident" (Said, 2003:2). In the context of this research for example, I as the researcher, although Saudi, have not experienced education outside a non-western framework. This in turn might influence my analysis even though I make a consistent effort to avoid imposing my views or influencing students' responses though this is a difficult if not impossible aim as all social interaction can have an impact on responses. Further explanation is given below in the reflexivity (section 4.5.2).

As mentioned, in this research, I have used a qualitative interpretive approach. The primary reason for choosing the qualitative research method was to provide an in-depth and rich understanding of the social context being studied, which in this case is the lived experience of female students. The qualitative research method also helps to uncover the manner in which these students construct their social and cultural identity. It enables researchers to go beneath the surface, and helps to explore 'the insider's view' (Flick, 2009; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Styles, 1979) which anthropologists refer to as people's *'emic'* understanding, perception, meaning and interpretation of terms that are involved in their everyday experience (Pike, 1954; Harris, 1976). In this sense, some of the key concepts to consider during the process of data analysis are 'identity', 'gender', and 'modernity'. From the interpretivist point of view, the methods of natural science are not appropriate for social investigation, so "it is important for social researchers to explore and understand the social world through the participants' and their own perspectives" (Ormston et al., 2014: 24).

This research study adopts the feminist perspective, which is around 'subjectivity', to explore and understand the development of women's identities through the higher

education experiences in patriarchal Saudi Arabian society. This project also shares with feminist scholarship the concerns about the construction of reality, truth, objectivity and subjectivity. It refers to a way of seeing the world from a feminist perspective rather than a feminist methodology, and, overall, its notion is contested as it is not seen as a method as such. There are different views on feminist methodology and the debate around the existence of a feminist method of research (Hamersley, 1992; Hussain & Asad, 2012). Hamersley (1992) has rejected the existence of a feminist research method because according to him, most of the feminist research followed the qualitative methods of research "Many of the ideas on which feminists methodologists draw are also to be found in the non-feminist literature" (1992: 202).

The primary reason for this research to reflect upon feminist epistemological assumptions is due to its focus on women's experience. According to Lengennann, Patricia and Niebmgge-Brantley, 1988: 400; and Blaikie, 1993: 124-125) any research for which the major 'object' for investigation is the 'experience of women in society, or which 'treat women as the central subject in the investigation process' or where 'feminist theory is critical and activist on behalf of women, seeking to produce a better world for women- and thus, they argue for mankind' automatically fit with feminist research (Lengennann, Patricia and Niebmgge-Brantley, 1988: 400). Gender, however, is not the only mediator for women's experiences as Blaikie notes "It is necessary to accept that there will always be many constructions of reality, which may be in conflict, and there may not be just one female reality" (Blaikie, 1993:124). According to Harding (1997), it is not possible to establish a 'feminist method' due to women's different experiences, which are influenced by culture, race, class and geographical location (Harding, 1997: 389). From the perspective of this project, Saudi women are not one uniform category but in fact very heterogeneous members of which often have more in common with the members of their

class, tribe or region and this project attempts to take differences into account and does not attempt to focus purely on gender even though it's respondents are only women.

4.2   From procedure to process: Methods of Enquiry

This section begins with the details of the sample of the study. Then followed by a description of the procedure and process. The data collection period was divided into two phases: the first, which took place between October and November 2016 and the second which was from mid-March to the beginning of May 2017. The fieldwork was divided into two stages - one at the beginning of the academic year and the second at the end of the academic year. By doing so, it became possible for students to first provide details of their expectations before beginning the course and then later for them to reflect more fully on their experiences during the course of the academic year.

As referred to in Chapter one, the study sought to answer three key research questions:

> 1 - What are the implications of social class, gender, social status and tribal affiliation on female students' experience of higher education especially, with respect to social and cultural identity formation?

> 2 - What are the influences of institutional habitus in the formation of female students' identities, taking into account aspects of the social and cultural milieu, religion and community?

> 3 - To what extent do students and faculty feel that the pedagogic practices in the PY (Preparatory Year) programme, when English is the medium of teaching and communication, influence female students' social and cultural identities?

In the first phase, I collected information about the university and programmes through its publications, distributed a questionnaire, conducted initial interviews and fieldnotes. All were in order to answer RQ1& 2. During the second phase, which extended from mid-

March to beginning of May 2017, ten members of staff were interviewed mainly to answer RQ3. I undertook participant observation of the university's female preparatory year campus. At periodic intervals, I attended classroom sessions and engaged with my respondents, to observe their actions, interactions, pedagogical practices they were exposed to as well as their responses in order to answer RQ2& 3. The work completed during these phases has been described in more detail following a description of the methods of enquiry.

4.2.1 Sample of the study

The research participants comprised 30 female students as the main sample of the study from the first year who joined the preparatory year programme. In addition, there were seven students for a focus group discussion from the third and final year from different colleges at TRU[4]. These students, who had attended the PY programme in the previous years, are volunteers at the Communication and Awareness Centre. Further details regarding the Communication and Awareness Centre and reasons to choose these students is discussed in the section (4.2.2.4 Focus group). A major challenge was keeping in touch with the students, as only a few provided email addresses and most of the communication was through phone calls or text messages which were time consuming for the researcher.

Many of the first-year students came from secondary schools where the medium of teaching was mainly Arabic. The number of respondents was decided based upon the need to balance the requirement of having as wide a cross section of backgrounds as possible, coupled with the difficulties of being able to collect in depth qualitative data with many respondents (Silverman, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2014). The cross section was

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[4] Appendix 1a & 1b: Simple two tables with the anonymised students' details.

comprised of class, status, tribal affiliation, age, as well as their parent's level of education, employment, and location and type (rented or owned) of residence. These respondents were largely between 18- 21 years old, and some students who had gap years were between the age group of 22- 35 years. The reason for choosing these first-year students over other students was because their progress could be followed over the period of their first year. It was also possible to see the impact and changes from their experiences prior to joining and their initial expectations from their years at the university.

The main focus of the data collection was around female students' experience within the higher education sector and to understand the role that higher education plays in shaping, influencing and constructing female students' identities. By following first year students it then became possible to chart the challenges that these students faced during the transition process. These students were chosen based on their responses to the questionnaire which helped to identify a diverse cross section of students who were willing to participate in the research twice throughout its duration. However, for various reasons it was not possible to complete the follow up interviews in person with eight of the students, and the following discusses the process and outcome for each. Upon contact, three students (Ahlam, Mona and Manal) agreed to be interviewed by telephone as this was more convenient for them. Ahlam, in particular, left TRC to return to her home and Manal moved on to her major course of study. This left a remaining five students (Ward, Hala, Nadia, Samya and Haya). I tried to contact all five but to no avail. Ward and Nadia had provided incorrect contact details, which were the same as those recorded in TRU registration system. Although they were not contactable, the system showed that they had both joined the major study required for their chosen course (as the table of students' data Appendix 1a shows). However, Hala, Samya and Haya might have dropped out of the course altogether as no further data was found relating to them within TRU's system

during the time of the second interview. However, the first interviews from all three students were used in Chapter Five as useful examples as they indicated the impact of their social background and family habitus on their university experience. Hala and Samya referred to in section 5.1.2.2 Gender, class identity and social status and Haya was referred to in section 5.2.3 - The complexities of students' habitus and family influence.

Ten members of staff[5] from different nationalities were also interviewed in order to get as broad an understanding as possible from their perspectives. The classes of five of these academic staff, who taught some of the student participants, were also observed for two hours on different dates. The primary language of teaching at The Regional University (TRU) is English and the teaching staff consists of eleven different nationalities[6]. This diversity of the university environment might influence the transformation of the identity of the students and so the research also seeks to examine if factors such as these have an impact on students.

Prior to beginning the fieldwork for the research, permission was obtained from both TRU and the University of Roehampton[7]. A consent form was sent to obtain approval for the research to be conducted[8]. Further details regarding the ethics of the interactions with the respondents has been included in the ethics (section 4.5).

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[5] Appendix 2: A simple table with the anonymised faculty members' details.

[6] Appendix 3: Nationalities of English Department member.

[7] Appendix 4: University Ethical approval.

[8] Appendix 5: Scanned A&B- Regional University consent form.

4.2.1.1 Participants' class identity

Identifying the class identity of the students participating in the study, taking into account the three factors discussed in Chapter two (section 2.1.4) in particular, was a challenge. This could be due to class being a dynamic category and most of the literature used on class were mainly western concepts of class. Consequently, it was very difficult to identify the students' social class backgrounds due to the rapid economic and social changes in the Saudi society since the impact of oil, the effects of which still reproduce today. As a result, social status has reshuffled and new middle classes have emerged (Al-Sultan, 1988). According to AlNuaim (2013) this regrouping and hierarchy adjustments of new class categorisations will continue to occur as changes in Saudi society are still going due to the emergence of the new group of social media influencers and their financial successes.

Additionally, another consideration are the social welfare services provided by the government, who as a wealthy nation and in line with its' 2030 vision, are intent on raising the status and living conditions of Saudi nationals in terms of education and housing. Higher education is highly incentivised in Saudi Arabia as not only is it free, but students attending public universities also receive a monthly allowance. Additionally, due to governmental state welfare, a person's class can mainly be defined and explained in terms of socio-economic privileges in relation to ease of access to resources. Consequently, evaluation of class in Saudi requires one to be sensitive to both what is presented and what is absent. However, there are many ambiguities and this breakdown of the cases is only meant to be indicative and not definitive particularly as different studies have attempted to explore and identify some of the complex socio-economic structures of Saudi society (Rugh, 1973; AlNuaim, 1987, 2013). Even though some

studies have been made, there is a dearth of studies to determine a clear boundary between them. AlNuaim (2013) contends, "the scarcity of sound studies of the Saudi class structure in general and the Middle Class in particular has, so far, left little room for determining demarcation lines separating the lower [working class], middle and higher classes, let alone sections of Middle Class" (2013:7). It was difficult to classify and draw the line between the students from "middle class" backgrounds and consequently, I have added sub-layers such as 'lower middle' and 'upper middle' in order to indicate differences in social and cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu (1986), where the term 'capital' was extended to include other resources that might benefit individuals including different capitals.

Class is a contested concept globally and always a debatable issue. In this research, class was used as an indicator to help understand the students' experience within a higher educational institutional setting. Therefore, the main aim of using class division of the respondents was to be able to analyse and understand students' habitus, capitals and access to resources. According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction (1977), there is a correlation between social class differences and cultural capitals. Within this Bourdieusian scheme, social inequalities could impact students' educational preferences, academic performances, and outcomes. Objective criteria were applied, inductively rather than deductively, to identify the social class identity of the participants and these included: the occupations and qualifications of the participant's parents and partner (if applicable); whether they were homeowners or renting; and location of accommodation, i.e. area within TRC. This data was gathered in addition to any other information out of interviews that could reflect class identity. For example, TRC consists of different areas: the old original town, where those who were affluent have moved out of and bought or built in new modern surrounding areas. So the old area becoming rundown, which

renders properties cheaper, therefore inhabited by those who are less affluent, resulting in a distinct divide between the poor old area and the rich modern areas.

Some significant points were considered while categorising the social class that pertained to gender inequality aspects emerging from the data and these were part of the consideration when categorising participants. For example, both Ahlam and Noor had mothers who had both achieved a bachelor's degree but were housewives, choosing not to work and to stay at home. Although both mothers were qualified, they were unemployed and would not be able to affect the socio-economic status of the family. However, employed fathers, either qualified or unqualified, were considered an indicator of the socio-economic status and class of the family. But it must be indicated here that there is the cultural capital influence from both Ahlam's and Noor's mothers that could have instilled within their daughters a value of higher education and also a motivation to achieve a degree like their mothers.

Another gender inequality aspect that became apparent was the disparities of income and how this both affected the status and the income of the family. For example, both Karema's and Reham's fathers were university professors with their mothers as housewives, and both were categorised as middle or upper middle class. Yet, when the father was unemployed and the mother was a government employee, this did not affect the status of the family's social class as the categorisations were mainly guided by the father's situation. This disparity could also be due to the reality of gender inequality in salary – the gender pay gap. According to the 2018 'Household income and expenditure survey', the national median monthly income per household in Saudi Arabia is 8,958 Riyals (General Authority for Statistics, 2018: 24). Whereas, in the TRC, the survey emphasized the gender pay gap, as the statistics show that the average monthly income

for males is 11,815 Riyals and for females it is 5,875 Riyals (General Authority for Statistics, 2018: 28) – which is less than half.

The absence of a father's income was also considered; including the missing source of an income in circumstances where the father is deceased. A few of the students had indicated this during interviews, for instance Soad shared that this was a hardship as although she received a monthly stipend, she still had to supplement her income by cooking for others as a by-line to improve her earnings particularly as her dead father's retirement salary was divided between her mother and her unmarried sister. Her case will be discussed in chapter Five section 5.1.2.3 Gender, class identity and symbolic capital. Also, it was worth considering how the husbands' status and income were affecting the students' social class. For example, the circumstances of Thakra who although both her parents were qualified employees, during the interview she indicated how the low income of her husband had impacted her financially; resulting in them both having to live in his family's house until they could own or rent a house of their own.

It became clear from almost the onset that asking for details of family income, even approximations thereof, was not possible as most students were completely unaware of what their parents earned. Students' socio economic status was indicated mainly in terms of the qualifications and occupation of the parents or the head of the family in cases of married women, the area and house they owned or lived in within TRC and any other information that reflected class identity which was revealed during interviews[9]. The above objective criteria were used to assess social class and to categorise students accordingly and there were some subjective factors that were considered to provide more

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[9] Appendix 1a: Student's Data and class identity analysis.

information about social class (these are listed in Appendix 1a- Student's Data and class identity analysis). For example, one of the participants (Abeer) was given the category of 'lower middle class' although she had explained that her father owned a business, and her mother was a civil servant (government employee). Owning a business according to Rose and O'Reilly (1998) could categorise a person as coming from the middle or upper middle class. However, Abeer's class could be more complicated as she referred to her father in the questionnaire as being a freelance analyst. Therefore, complications in identifying the income derived from a business due to fluctuations in salary complicates the clarification but my insider knowledge of the culture, social classes and social norms afforded further factors that could be considered when deciding social class.

One of those factors was that Abeer was residing at the university accommodation – usually only lower class students would reside on campus. Ordinarily, a student coming from a middle or upper class family would rent accommodation off campus and the student would most probably live with a maid or relatives. Furthermore, Abeer considered the food given at the accommodation as 'advantageous' and a positive feature, stating, "there is a good feature that we can have rice for only 7 Riyals and the rest is subsidised by the university" (Abeer 1ˢᵗ interview 13/10/2016- Appendix 18[10] -line 139). It has been attempted and the process of these classifications are explained and listed in the (Appendix 1a: Student's Data and class identity analysis) – which indicates the classification of class identity of each student.

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[10] Appendix 18- Sample of 1st interview -Abeer's 1st interview.

Based on these above classifications and the information given during interviews, the 30 students who participated in the study were classified into 4 groups shown below in (Figure 1).

Class identity

- Working Class — 14
- Lower Middle Class — 5
- Middle Class — 9
- Upper Middle Class — 2
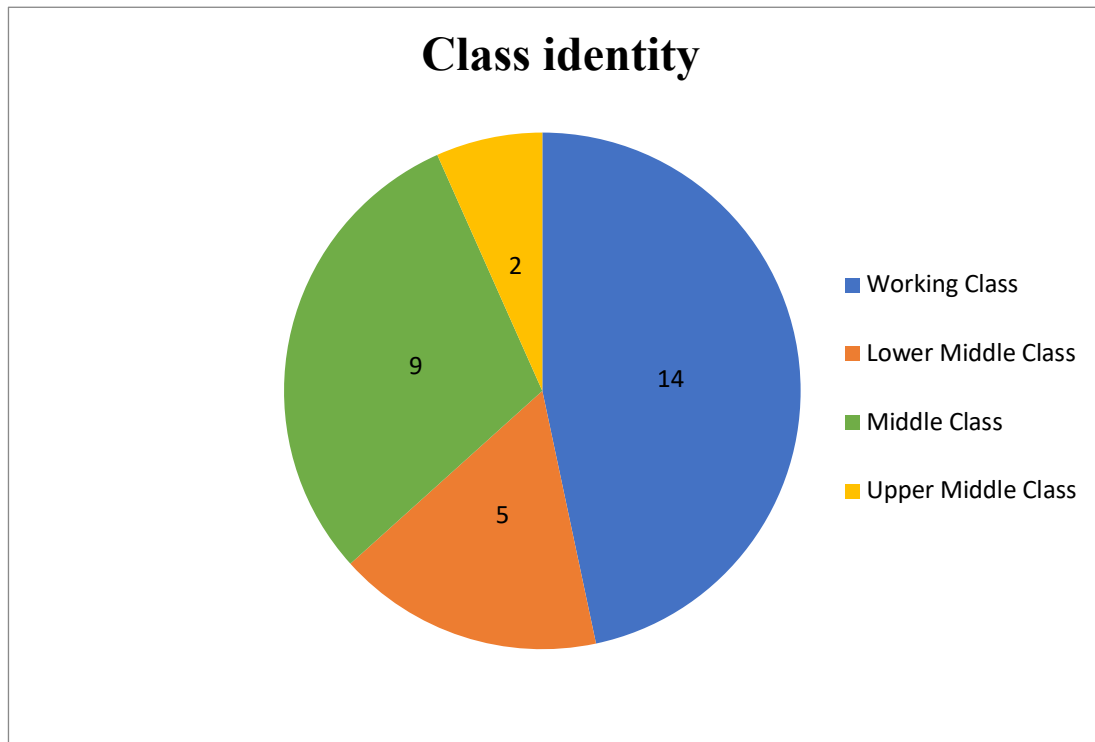
Figure 1: Pie chart showing the class of 30 students.

4.2.1.2 Participants' tribal identity

In the regional vicinity of TRC the main tribe is called 'Shammar' but there are other people of different tribes or from non-tribal backgrounds living in TRC. In this research tribal affiliation could relate to social class, but is not the main form of categorisation as some students came from the main tribe 'Shammar' but they were still categorised as working class due to other factors discussed above. However, it still remains an identity that facilitates access to resources, as will be discussed further in chapter 5 (section 5.2.2.1- Tribal identity). The chart below indicates the tribal affiliation of the main 30 students who participated in this study as is shown below in Figure 2.
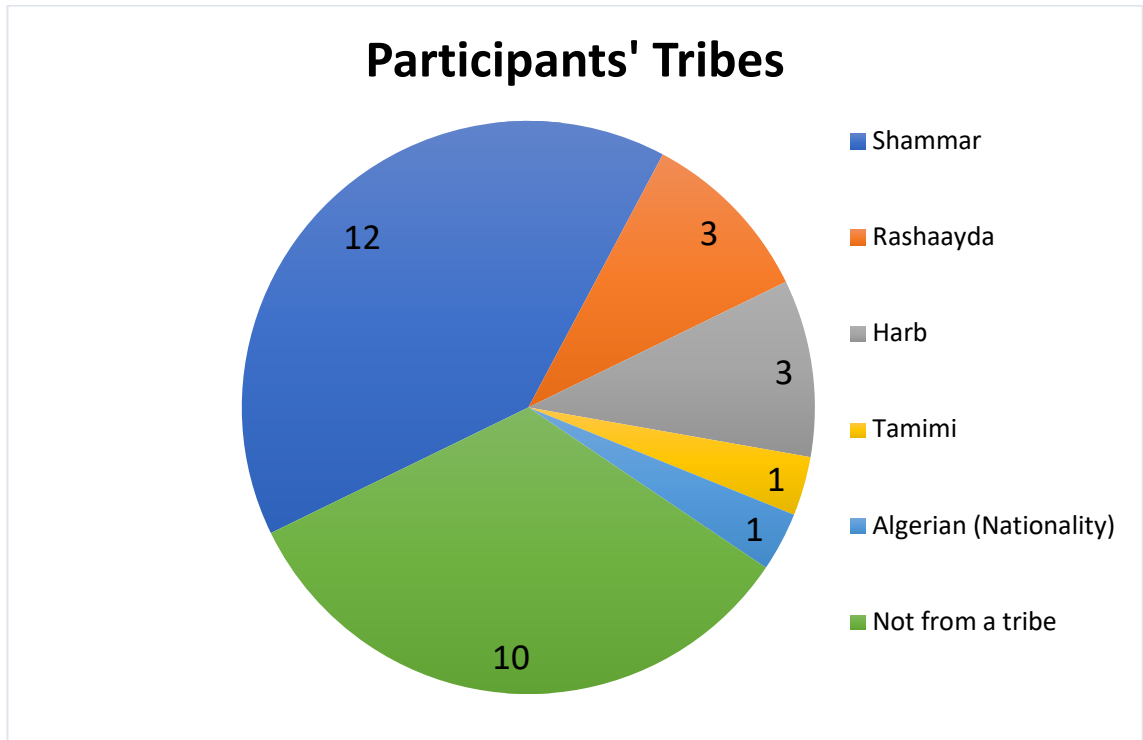
Figure 2: Pie chart showing students tribal identity.

4.2.1.3 Location and region

Of the 30 respondents who participated in the research, 17 students were residents of TRC. These students were a diverse group and represented a cross section of backgrounds, that included their class, marital status and tribal groups from the city. It should be noted here that not all the students were attending university for the first time, a few were repeating modules which they had failed in the previous year.

4.2.1.3.1 From larger cities than the TRC

A number of the students who participated were originally residents of cities such as Medina and other cities in the Eastern provinces of Saudi. While the TRC is relatively small and conservative, these cities are larger, more advanced in their development and more diverse due to historical and economic reasons. At the time of the interviews, 6 of

10 students from these cities were living in TRU accommodation while 4 had arranged to live in private accommodation.

4.2.1.3.2 From the villages surrounding TRC

Three of the respondents (Boshra, Reham and Hana) within this study were from villages nearby TRC. Boshra (20 years old) lived in the university accommodation, while the other two resided with their families in villages close by.

4.2.2 Methods of Enquiry:

The sections below provide a detailed review of the research methods of enquiry employed.

4.2.2.1 Collecting documents

There were multiple reasons for undertaking the analysis of documents. To enable my understanding of the context of the university, its courses and the initial information that the students get from the university, I collected the handouts and brochures that were made available to them during the induction week. Thus, one of the first steps in the process of data gathering was the collection and subsequent examination of the literature and publications issued by the university. This includes all manner of publications, from the university prospectus and admission packages to notices on the website or on the notice boards (Ritchie et al., 2014; Silverman, 2011, 2014).

The first reason for collecting the literature and publications disseminated by the university was because they are often used to communicate the vision of the university. Second, it may also communicate the university's strategic plan, mission and identity. The third reason for collecting and examining the publications of the university is to identify the concepts and issues which emerge from the material. The university website was also

considered (documents/ news).

4.2.2.2 Questionnaire[11]

A research questionnaire was used to identify willing participants. Ideally, the participants would be drawn from across a wide spectrum of backgrounds. Permission was sought from the relevant university authorities to speak to students who were taking the English proficiency test and then for a brief questionnaire to be administered for those who were willing to participate. The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions to solicit information about the students' families and socio-economic background.

The advantage of the questionnaire as a method was that it allowed for many respondents to be reached efficiently. However, it suffers from a major drawback in that it does not encourage respondents to answer in great detail and it is inadvisable for enquiries of a personal or possibly threatening nature (Bernard, 2011; McClure, 2002; Patten, 1998). Thus, the questionnaire method was mainly used to identify the sample of students. Questions were asked regarding the student's age, marital status, living arrangements, residential area, (English) language ability, reasons for choosing the degree and the university, parent's education and personal details in order to identify the socio-economic status and educational qualifications prior to joining the university. Names and family names were also some of the personal details sought in order to identify the respondent's tribe. The last question asked was if the students would be willing to continue to participate through interviews and if so, how they would like to be contacted (Burton et al., 2014). After collecting data, I then analysed the responses to ascertain the student's willingness to participate in the research. Based on the questionnaire, respondents were

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[11]Appendix 6: A sample of the questionnaire.

identified from as wide a cross section as possible based on criteria such as class, status, age, their parent's level of education and tribe.

4.2.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

During fieldwork, data was collected mainly through semi-structured interviews and participant observations which included focus groups, classroom observations.   In order to address the research questions, I carried out in total 65 semi-structured interviews with 10 members of staff, 30 first year female students (many were interviewed twice - resulting in a total of 55 interviews) and a group discussion interview with third and fourth year students (details of the group discussion will be discussed separately in the following section). These interviews were the process by which information was elicited from the participant students in conversation, mainly face-to-face; however, due to student circumstances (these were discussed in section 4.2.1), it was necessary to conduct the second interview with three of the students over the telephone. The format of interviews covered a whole range of control over the process.

During the semi-structured interviews the use of an interview checklist with questions to follow[12] was useful as these afforded more control over the interview than an unstructured interview, they also allowed me to use my own discretion to follow any leads (Bernard, 2011). These were facilitated by preparing a number of questions ahead of the interview in order to direct the flow of the interaction. Moreover, it also afforded the space needed for interesting themes, issues or concerns to be discussed at a greater length. The interviews also provided the greatest amount of control to the respondents over the data they wished to give, and this method ensured that the data analysis was also as

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[12]Appendices 7&8: Initial interview and follow up interview questions for students and questions for staff.

representative of the respondent's experience as much as possible (Ritchie et al., 2014; Miller and Glassner, 2011).

It was also noted in the research that semi-structured interviews were an important research tool as through them, it became possible to collect detailed descriptive information of students' and staff experiences and perspectives within higher education. Thus, it proved to be a powerful method to understand the experience from participants' own perspectives and point of view (Rubin & Rubin, 2013). For this purpose, the initial interviews with the respondents, a semi-structured interview format was chosen[13] and the topics discussed were a mixture of questions regarding the views of the students regarding their experience with the university as well as their reasons for choosing to study at TRU. The purpose of these interviews was to gain information relevant to answering all three of the research questions while opening channels of communication with the students.

The interview was conducted in Arabic, as this was the language which the respondents were most comfortable with. The 20-minute interviews were recorded and later transcribed and translated into English, although some key words were kept in the original term used as not all can be accurately translated. As with any method of enquiry that requires the recording of data, there is always a chance of mistakes. However, due to the recorded audio of the interviews, it was possible to verify various details. These interviews were then followed up with another interview after six months. The particular challenges which arose during interviews in a language different from that of the analysis as well as of transcribing interviews has been addressed in greater detail separately in the section titled 'Transcription and Translation' (see 4.4.4). Similarly, the ethical issues

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[13]Appendix 7: Initial interview and follow up interview questions for students.

which arise while conducting interviews and the reflexivity of the interviewer have been addressed in the sections titled 'Ethics' and 'Reflexivity' respectively (see 4.5).

One of the aims of the interview was to get to know the students at a personal level and establish a personal rapport. The discussion revolved around the student's personal backgrounds, their reasons for choosing this university, what they hoped to get from the university experience, reasons for being in such a subject course and what they felt about the new experience of learning in the medium of English as a new language. To this end, the questionnaire provided a starting point to understanding the students' situation.

Many of these examples will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5. For example, during an interview, a respondent I refer to as Boshra, 20 years, became emotional (her eyes filled with tears) when questioned about the importance of education in a woman's life, stated that she was unable to continue the interview on that arranged date. It became clear when her questionnaire was analysed again that she was probably reacting to her mother's situation. When the interview was arranged for the second time, she explained that she felt emotional when thinking of her mother's situation as an uneducated and divorced woman who was forced to work in a poorly paid, unstable job. Researchers need to "...explore, thinking about what hasn't been said and hearing the nuances in the participant's account… [be able]to be alert to what has not been said" (Yeo et al., 2014: 184-185). It was realised that during the interview it was very important to be attuned to the respondent's manner of communication and tailor the manner in which the interview was conducted accordingly. One of the key features of interview interactions between the researcher and interviewee is the ability to be an 'active listener' and 'good listener' and to take non-verbal communication into account (Hammersley and Aktinson, 2007; Silverman, 2011; Ritchie et al., 2014: 185).

After a few days of interviewing students, I introduced changes in the form of more questions in the interview in order to be more flexible and responsive to the greater or lesser articulation and comfort levels of different students. This was prompted by the realisation that some students, especially those who have begun living in the university accommodation or arranging their own living accommodation after moving to study, have already had several new experiences, which they wanted to talk about.

During the process of transcribing interviews, I realised that the silence of the interviewer can obtain important information (Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Silverman, 2000). At the beginning, I used to break the silence when I asked questions and found students unable to answer by giving meaning or further explanations to some of the interview questions. There were instances where I needed to be more sensitive to the responses of the students. For example, I realised that when I asked a question and the students did not answer immediately, it was necessary for me to wait for several minutes if necessary, to obtain an answer rather than rephrasing the question.

4.2.2.4 Focus group

In the initial period of the fieldwork in order to evaluate what was feasible (Hennink, 2013) a focus group discussion was convened necessary as it "offers an opportunity to see how ideas and language emerge in a more naturalistic setting than an in-depth interview" (Finch et al., 2014: 213). These focus group discussions offered the opportunity for informal group conversations around, and although I had in mind a particular topic, it also offered opportunities for conversations to flow (Hennink, 2013; Wilkinson, 2004).

It was important for the research to have a sense of the social construction of the first-year students and to understand the shared meanings that might appear during the research and before meeting the participants of the research (Finch et al., 2014). The focus group was thus organised with a group of seven final year student[14] volunteers who help students navigate various aspects of student life such as accommodation and logistics. From the initial observations, it came to my notice that there were tours of the university for newly inducted students. These were being conducted by the students from the communications and awareness centre. The centre exists solely to help the female students. It acts as a publicity arm for the university to communicate various kinds of information to the students such as events, rights, activities, where to obtain help etc. It was then that I decided to approach the centre and its volunteers in order to understand their role at the university. The student volunteers are highly social and very involved in the life of the university. They organise many interactions for the younger students to help them become more familiar with the university. Given the lack of a student's union, the student volunteers at the communication and awareness centre are also an informal conduit of information between the university and the students and vice versa.

It became clear that these students have a deep understanding not only from their own experiences at the university but also that of many others who they have been in contact with through the centre. The points for discussion were the experiences of these students in their first year at university and the extent of any transformative experiences during this period. The discussion helped to refine the manner in which to approach the final respondents and the design of the initial and follow up interview questions. Their

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[14] Name of students in Appendix 19.

responses were solicited on several issues around their experience of entering a PY programme, learning and communicating in a foreign language and how this experience might have influenced their identity.

Although the researcher has less influence during a focus group discussion, as compared to a one to one interview, these discussions are rarely analysed as stand-alone methods of data collection (Silverman, 2014: 208). The advantage of this tool as a data collection technique was that it allowed the focus group participants to relate to each other and thus have a conversation which would not be possible in a personal interview. In addition, it was a fast, and efficient method for obtaining data from multiple participants at one time (Krueger & Casey, 2000). However, the disadvantage noted was that some of the participants' views were sometimes influenced by what others said. For the purpose of this project, the focus group discussion was limited to an hour and ten minutes as it has been shown that discussion for a long period of time can be unproductive (Morgan, 1997; Finch et al., 2014; Vaughn et al., 1996).

4.2.2.5 Participant Observation

In addition to interviews, I also used participant observation (Spradley,1980) of the university's female preparatory year campus. Participant observation usually involves one of four roles for the researcher - complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant and complete observer. In this research, I used two forms of participant observation. In the first, I participated fully in the activities of the subjects. This technique of observation was used at several places in the university's campus such as the canteen, administrative offices and waiting rooms. These observations did not follow a predefined checklist, but all observations were recorded in the field notes which

extended to five notebooks. My field notes were different from my observation notes which were more structured.

In the second form of observation - observer as participant- was of the classrooms. I participated in the research environment only to the extent of being present in the room and did not attempt to become a member of the researched group (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007 & Bernard, 2011). This was specifically in relation to research question two and three. The aim of observing these preparatory year teaching sessions was to find out more about the learning process and whether students learn a culture while they are learning a context RQ2& 3. I periodically observed classroom sessions to note students' actions and interactions, as well as the pedagogical practices they are exposed and their responses. These sessions were the English classes for the female students of the different disciplines. While the subject was the same, the material as well as the manner of teaching was specific to the disciplines which the students belonged to. For example, the medical students had textbooks which aimed at introducing them to medical terminology. This form of participant observation was conducted in phase two of the fieldwork which is described below. Details of the preparatory year programme that first year students undertake can be found in the section on the practical context of the research as well as in the section describing Phase one of the fieldwork.

As a participant observer, I played the role of an observer at all times when present in the university even though I am not a student or staff member at the university. The advantage of this method was that it allowed the researcher to observe the participants in their daily environment directly without the disadvantage of becoming biased by 'going native'. These observations were then recorded in the field journal (fieldnote) to be compiled and analysed as a whole. The purpose was to keep track of the experiences of the students

and the influence of some of these practices in the formation of students' identities. The observation time was two hours for each of the five teachers, summing up to a combined ten hours

4.2.2.6 Fieldnotes- field journal

Fieldnotes is one of the data collecting methods used during the fieldwork observations and in ethnographic research (Bryman, 2012; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Arthur et al., 2014; Sanjek, 1990). A fieldnotes diary/journal is used as a "primary analytic material" in ethnographic research (Sanjek, 1990). Fieldnotes can consist of a variety of forms, such as jottings, a fieldwork diary, fieldwork log and fieldnotes proper (Bernard, 2011:389).

The purpose of fieldnotes in this research were many - a space to record events, thoughts, impressions from the insider perspective and point of view and so forth before they were forgotten. These details were then used during the process of data analysis and provided details of the everyday occurrences of the field which might not otherwise be captured through other research tools. For example, the fieldnotes gave the opportunity to record some of the body language, reactions, simple assumptions and feelings that were present during the interview, focus group and observations, thereby enriching the data collected (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

It is not possible to record everything and sometimes researchers find it difficult to distinguish what is and is not relevant. Hammersley and Atkinson refer to this as the researcher's "general sense of what is relevant to the foreshadowed research problems" (2007: 142). However, keeping a journal containing fieldnotes was, for most of the time, essential for recording many of the small details which do not always stand out

immediately but will be useful as it acts as a record of the many meanings that the researcher encounters. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that it can aid the understanding of other information that has been collected by alternative data methods, such as interviews or observations. However, Bloor and Wood (2006) caution against using them alone, as fieldnotes are considered subjective and thus in need of additional objective data points such as interviews in order to avoid biases.

4.3. Process and procedures of data collection.

4.3.1 Phase One

Phase one extended through October and November 2016. It began with the collection of documents from the university. The current preparatory year programme was initially compulsory only for the computer science and medical students. Each of the two colleges (College of Computer Science and Software Engineering and College of Medicine) were responsible for their own preparatory programmes. However, since 2012 this has become university wide and compulsory for all courses. So, all students before joining their major courses should attend the PY programme and thus spend five years in their undergraduate courses instead of four as is usual in other universities in Saudi Arabia. Students also chose one of the three disciplinary paths (Humanities, Medicine, and Science) depending on a combination of their interest and the competition for seats based on secondary school grades.

The sample for this study, discussed earlier, was narrowed down to the first-year students entering the university. The students belong to one of the three disciplinary paths previously mentioned. In order to identify the potential participants, the plan was to

distribute a questionnaire[15] to three different groups of 25-30 students from the three disciplinary paths. I intentionally organised a larger group of between 80-100 students, as it was likely that several may withdraw during the study. It was decided that the best time would be during their mandatory English test, which the English department held during the induction week to determine the student's proficiency when entering the university. However, on the day, I noticed that many of the students were already stressed out from being in the hall for two hours listening to the different heads of departments explaining their program and expectations which preceded the English proficiency test. It was felt that if the students were approached to answer the questionnaire in this environment, especially since the air conditioners had not been working, would not be advisable as it would add additional strain on the students unduly. This in turn would result in them rushing through the questionnaire or not completing it. Thus, after the students settled and started to attend their English classes, I approached the head of English department to help me reschedule a time to distribute the questionnaires during the first or last 10 minutes of every English class. There are 12 sections which comprise four levels from each of the three disciplines on offer -Humanities, Medicine, and Science. This new approach was useful as it gave me the right environment to have more interaction with the students directly. I could now engage on a personal level with the students to explain to them not only what the questionnaire was about but also the modalities of participating in the study. In this period, the students were also freely able to ask questions about the research and how their involvement would further the research.

The teachers were very supportive by voluntarily undertaking the task to distribute and collect the questionnaires. One hundred and twenty students were approached to

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[15]Appendix 6: A sample of the questionnaire.

participate in the questionnaire of these, eighteen did not complete the questionnaire or consent to participate whilst the remaining one hundred and two completed the questionnaire and indicated consent to participate in the research. Most of the students who consented to participating in the research were new students who were in the process of induction. A few though had completed enrolment in the previous year but had been held back for various reasons. After collecting the responses, I then analysed them to ascertain the student's willingness to participate in the research. From the questionnaire, respondents were identified from across a wide cross-section as much as possible based on a criterion (listed in 4.2.1). At this stage, 30 students were selected as the research sample for further interviews and observations.

The focus group was then undertaken though not initially part of the research design and was an important part of the process of data collection. I have provided details of this in the previous section (4.2.2.4). The final step of the data collection process in this phase was the initial interview with the students which consisted of a set of fifteen open-ended interview questions in Arabic[16]. A translation of these questions in English can be found in Appendix 7.

4.3.2 Phase Two

The second stage of the fieldwork took place from mid-March to the beginning of May 2017. During the first week of this research stage, students were busy with some exams, so a change to the plan was necessary to start with interviewing members of staff instead of conducting the second interview with students, which took place later during this phase. It was found that a significant percentage of faculty members in certain

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[16] Appendix 7: Students' interview questions.

departments were foreign nationals and thus when ten members were chosen[17], their nationalities were also taken into account in order to examine if there was a significant difference in pedagogic practices. In addition, it was also found that the faculty members were from different ethnic groups, a significant proportion were Muslim, and the majority were between the age of 40-60. The aim of the interviews with the staff was mainly to answer RQ3 and to find students' responses to some of their teaching methods and/or the way they draw examples and whether these examples reflected their own culture. The interviews were conducted in English and some of the themes considered during staff interviews arose from the analysis of the students' first interview. A few examples of these themes were: 'western way of teaching', 'traditional way of teaching' and 'to have fun while learning'.

At periodic intervals, I attended classroom sessions and engaged with my respondents, to observe their actions, interactions, pedagogical practices they were exposed to as well as their responses in order to answer RQ 2& 3. These observations were recorded in the field journal to be compiled and analysed as a whole. The purpose was to keep track of experiences of the students and the influence of some of these practices in the formation of students' identities. I also examined if there is a difference in the pedagogic practices and classroom and non-classroom interactions by non-Saudi faculty. Some other details, which were observed, were: Setting of the classroom, interaction between the students and faculty or between the students themselves especially with regards to corrections in language usage and the ways of doing attendance registration.

The aim of observing these sessions was to find out more about the learning process and

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[17]Appendix 2: A simple table with the anonymised staff details & Appendix 8: Faculty members interview questions.

whether students learn a culture while they are learning a context. One of the surprises encountered during the classroom observation was about the curriculum being used. The curriculum is directed at the native 'Arab students' with the idea of integrating them into their own cultural context and identity. During two English classes observed for level four of the humanity path, different famous people from the Muslim and Arab world were mentioned, such as *Ibn Battuta*[18]*, Ibn Sina*[19]*, Hatim al-Taai*[20]*, and Tawfiq al-Hakim*[21]*. Even the pictorial representation of the people were illustrations of persons with Arab features such as dark skin and hair and a woman wearing *Hejab*. The English curriculum, which has only been used since 2015, is edited by Richard Harrison and published by Longman English Learning Teaching is specifically designed for the Arab speaking countries. It explicitly states that it 'recognises learning styles favoured in the Arab world' (Harrison, 2015) and teaches English language free from its cultural context.

Towards the end of the fieldwork, I conducted a follow up interview, which was an '*in-depth, open-ended interview'* (Yeo et al., 2014), that involved only 25 students from an initial group of 30 first year students. The reasons for the disparity are that the remaining students dropped out of the studies, moved back to their home cities, or moved to another course, or simply did not provided the right contact details to communicate with them. The aim of the second interview, which lasted between 20-40 minutes, was to gather their perspectives at the end of the academic year. Questions were framed with a view to understanding the way in which students consider their experience and whether they had noticed any kind of changes after joining the university.

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[18] Famous Moroccan traveller and Muslim scholar during the medieval period.
[19] Famous polymath philosopher during the Islamic Golden Age.
[20] Poet with lots of myth stories around his generosity.
[21] Egyptian Novelist and playwright.

4.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

Although most of the female students at TRU are Saudi, they come from varied social classes and tribal affiliations, cultural interests and different family backgrounds and thus have equally varied individual habitus when they first enter the university. Through the various methods of enquiry, this data analysis seeks to answer the research questions by analysing the data around themes. To this aim, the research analysed the data thematically using MAXQDA, which is the approach for finding themes or patterns that emerge out of data. After familiarising with the data, a number of topics emerged that were represented in the data, these topics were later transformed to be themes and sub-themes (Daly et al., 1997; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Spencer et al., 2014). This is also referred to by Miles and Huberman (1994) under the terms of codes and categories. 'Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study' [that] 'attached to chunks of varying size- words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs' to a fieldwork setting (Miles and Huberman, 1994:56). The basis for contracting themes or codes is the link to the research questions and theoretical framework.

The framework of this research draws upon three theoretical strands. First, it draws upon the feminist concept of gender and identity as a socially and culturally produced concept within a patriarchal power relationship. The research also studies the experience of women in higher education from a feminist perspective (Lawler, 2014; Heyzer, 2005; Pereira, 2007; Leathwood & Read 2009; Noureen, 2015). This was particularly necessary in order to understand the development of women's identities through the higher education experiences in the patriarchal Saudi Arabian society. Therefore, drawing on feminist theorists will help to explore such tensions and their effects more fully.

Identity however is a contested term and an individual's experience, or behaviour cannot be explained without knowing the structure that s/he is embedded into (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 39). For this, the second aspect of my theoretical framework broadly draws on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and his notion of habitus and field (1973,1977). I also specifically build on the work of Crozier and Reay (2011) in order to analyse the female university students' experience. It has been found that being in a new environment, an 'unfamiliar field', requires the development of new forms of cultural capital that are associated with class-based habitus (Baxter and Britton 2001, Reay et al., 2009, Crozier & Reay 2011, Lehmann 2013). In other words, the development of new modes of 'taste' about a range of issues from 'culture' to 'taste' in politics, specifically in the context of education. For this purpose, I built upon the work of Baxter and Britton (2001), and others who have worked on institutional habitus and higher education (Thomas, 2002a, 2002b; Reay et al., 2001; Reay et al., 2009; Crozier & Reay, 2011; Lehmann 2013).

Finally, the research drew upon the work of Basil Bernstein (2003) in which pedagogic practices are structured to attain different outcomes for different groups of students. This is because the work illuminates the messages that can be delivered and transmitted to students over and above and over the content of the syllabus. As mentioned above, TRU uses English as the medium of instruction and employs both native and foreign faculty. Bernstein's work will help to understand the effects of such policies and experiences on the development of student identities.

4.4.1. Process of data analysis[22]

The research is based on a thematic analysis approach, themes that capture important meanings out of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2014). The process of research's data analysis could be divided into two stages. During the first part of stage one, I analysed questionnaires while I was at the field to choose participants. Then, I analysed the data out of the initial interviews, where I came up with a list of issues or themes that helped to frame the following up interviews. Throughout the first stage of the analysis, it consisted of mainly managing the data collected from phase one of the research, which included transcription and translation into English of the initial interviewed students. The aim was to find out some general background data about students, for example, to find out reasons for choosing TRU and what they hoped to get from the university experience, reasons for being in such a subject course and what they felt about the new experience of learning in the medium of English as a new language. It was during the second stage that all the data was merged. It was found that one of the advantages about applying thematic analysis was the flexibility in identifying and indicating patterns within the data as a whole (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Initially, a list of themes[23] was placed then reduced and refined to 17 and later to 4 main themes. The 4 themes that emerged were Transition into Higher Education, Learning strategies, Student Academic Identity, University Culture, plus 2 smaller

sub-themes, Social Media and Guardianship. This data-driven process was informed by the literature, theoretical framework and research questions that were employed to help understand the data. The following features more details of the analysis process.

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[22] Appendix 10: MAXQDA- list of initial themes/ Codes.
[23] Appendix 11: List of themes and sub themes.

4. 4. 2 Analysis of questionnaire

The questionnaire was an important step to identifying the research participants for further interviews and observations (as discussed earlier- section 4 and phase 1). The responses were analysed and categorised according to a criteria that included tribe, age, marital status, parents level of education, employment and socio-economic group in order to identify the respondent's background. Of one hundred and two students who responded to the questionnaire and indicated their willingness to participate in the research, thirty students were selected on the basis of the factors listed above in the different sections, and this was decided upon in order to include a wide cross section of backgrounds. The intention was to include participants from as wide a cross section as possible based on the aforementioned criteria.

4. 4. 3 Process of analysis

During the process of data management of the thematic analysis, I found it useful to write 'memos' and 'notes' which would attract my attention, which then helped familiarise with the individual data in the hope of identifying an individual theme or subtheme for each of the participants (Burnard,1991; Spencer et al., 2014). This process of familiarisation required a cautious selection of the data to be reviewed and Spencer et al., (2014: 297) recommends this as they state that the selection depends upon the size and level of complexity of the research study. After this, it was also possible to link a group based on a specific theme. For example, it was possible to gather data about student's mobility and accommodation and group together those who had similar patterns of mobility or similar forms of accommodation. The process of coding was important to refer to and be able to review a set of field notes, which is attached and connected to a specific setting. It is all about the way of differentiating and combining and reflecting upon the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 56). An example of coding using MAXQDA

analytic tool- Appendix 12, the theme was about students' 'changes' as a process some referred to.

4.4.4 Transcription and Translation

Nearly all of the data collected was in Arabic and this proved to be a major challenge in the data analysis process. Initially, the intention was that all data would be transcribed and translated into English before analysis. At the stage of translation and due to the possibility of interpreting meaning during the process rather than translation, an attempt was made to minimise this by having another translator verify the translations (Squires, 2009). However, it was quickly realised that some of the layers of meaning were lost in the translation. Language and regional culture were found to be so interconnected that translation before analysis resulted in a loss of key issues. For this reason, it was decided that the data analyses would also need to be completed in Arabic and only the direct quotations and the researcher's memo and fieldnotes would be translated and uploaded in MAXQDA to ensure a systematic and rigorous analysis. The challenges of translation and its effects on the results of research have been highlighted in many studies (Van Ness et al., 2010; Squires, 2009). For example, the literal translation of the word '*Altanaya'* is a state of being upset, however the word is used in the region to imply not just a particular tribe but an important event in their history and implications. Out of the data collected, for example, students referred to education as a *Slah* in Arabic means weapon*,* it is a metaphorical phrase to emphasise the importance of education for women in particular. However, sometimes the use of terms was not that straightforward such as "*tueizu nafsiha"* which cannot be translated word by word as it loses the deep meaning of women's position which requires a deep understanding of the context in which it was said and the culture (this term is referred to and discussed in section 5.2.2.3- Gender, class

identity and symbolic capital). In addition to this, to ensure my own translations were reflective of the participant's regional context of meaning, the transcribed and translated interviews were given to another native speaker in order to validate the translations and their process.

The process of data collection was a dynamic one which also informed subsequent data collections. For example, initially in the first phase, I would not transcribe interviews immediately; however, I came to realise that if I did so a lot of the information and context was still fresh in my mind and more details could be added. It was also shown to be important for the subsequent planning of the next stage of research, as analysing the first participant interviews helped create themes and subthemes for the second interviews. As a result, the second interviews become more specific either in order to help fill the gaps of either unexplained or unclarified information or to expand more on issues related to specific themes. For example, one of the students referred to a 'traditional way of teaching and modern way of teaching' and consequently, a follow up of this statement led to a fruitful investigation into what the students considered to be traditional and modern.

Data was uploaded into MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software which was accompanied with a webinar training session that helps to input data into the system. The software was used as a main tool of analysis as it does accept and support data in Arabic. It helped to create a file for each of the participants, dragging the Arabic transcription as a word document, with the English quotations and memos. 'well- labelled and sorted data provide a firm foundation on which researchers can then build their more interpretive analysis' (Spencer et al., 2014: 284). As a result, to conduct data analysis, researchers are responsible for defining the analytical issues that might be explored and the appropriate

modes of representation (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 187).

4. 4. 5 Documentary data

Analysing documents are important to the study of the organisation as they might illuminate the university's culture values or 'organisation's self-image' (Atkinson and Coffey 2004). I used two approaches to analyse documentary data. The first was the thematic approach, which helped to explore the message that the documents overtly conveyed and the way this meaning was actually assigned in the documents, particularly as social phenomena are constructed within an individual's culture and value systems (Bloor and Wood, 2006: 58). The second approach focused more on critical 'discourse analysis' as it focused on 'the relationship between the documents and aspects of social structure' such as gender and power relations (Bloor and Wood, 2006: 53-60). For example, a cursory look at the university website revealed that there were many activities for students, however most of these would be easily accessible only to male students which is not mentioned (The Regional University Website- Accessed on, 12th November, 2016). A close analysis of such documents also threw light upon the culture or specific identities that the university hopes to impress upon their female students, drawing on notions of a hidden curriculum (Margolis, 2001). More usually, the university publications present the academic and social aspirations of the university while illuminating the manner in which its administration is organised. The second analysis of the TRU website occurred after some changes to women's position in Saudi as a consequence of the government strategies to empower women in order to fulfil the 2030 vision of appointing women in leading positions. In most public higher education institutions, just like TRU, there was an appointment of a new position known as "The Vice Rector for Female Students affairs". The position aimed to fulfil the duties of a

university rector that was mainly held by men, for female students' affairs at the female campus. Subsequent checks of TRU's website after the position was created indicated that no progress had been made on the filling of this role as no details regarding the female appointed was found on the website. However, this was not the case the role had been fulfilled but no details, for whatever reasons, were placed on the website. While it was understandable that there might not be a photograph of the woman holding the position, the website should have, at the very least, indicated her duties, missions, set of goals and contact details. This glaring omission was even more apparent as the TRU website had a detailed description of the involvement of the other 4 male vice rectors with pictures and messages. (Appendix 14: Women's lack of representation in TRU website).

4.5. Ethics and Reflexivity

4.5.1 The Research Ethics

Before beginning the fieldwork, permission was obtained from both The Regional University (TRU) as well as University of Roehampton. A consent form was sent to obtain approval for the research to be conducted[24]. I anonymised all details, which could lead to the identification of the participants and the institution and I will ensure that all data is securely stored, and password protected on an electronic device.

As a native Arabic speaker, I did the translations myself; however in order to minimise bias during interpretation and in pursuit of validity, anonymised sections of interview transcriptions were also translated by a professional translator who was paid for their services.

Before proceeding with the participants and informers' interviews, who were all above the age of majority, I explained the research project and obtained the respondent's verbal

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[24] Appendix 4: A copy of Ethical Approval.

and written informed consent to participate[25]. I made it clear to respondents that they had the right to withdraw at any point. I also provided each participant with a hand-out with all the relevant information regarding the ethical approach of the study with a section on withdrawing from the study if they did not want to continue (Davies & Hughes, 2014: 82- 90 & 173- 175). A participant consent form is included in compliance with ethical guidelines and this can be found in Appendix 9.

At the beginning of the interview, it was clarified to the students in greater detail what the study entailed, and the frequency of our interactions. This stage of the study involved only audio and handwritten recordings of the interviewees as I understood that many might refuse to participate in a study which involves video recording (Caldwell and Atwal, 2005). The questions were designed in Arabic to facilitate ease of comprehension and response.

4.5.2 Reflexivity: my role as researcher

One of the major challenges in any qualitative research project is understanding the relationship between the researcher and the researched community (Haynes, 2012). Power relations are embedded in all interactions. In order to proceed with the research ethically, it is necessary for the researcher to be more self-aware of their own identity and position as well as the new role and the way they are perceived by the researched community (Flick, 2009; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Styles, 1979; Haynes, 2012). Thus, I found it useful to reflect and ask pertinent questions of myself prior to undertaking the research. Such as, who and where I am in relation to the research, what is my motivation and how do I affect the research process?

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[25] Appendix 9: Copy of the 4 main consent forms.

Prior to the PhD, I was a lecturer at TRU for five years. While I was in this position, I noticed that the University experience had a major impact on the female students. I was unsure whether it was the curriculum that was taught in English, the large number of international staff, the combination of both or other factors which influenced the students. It was the curiosity to understand this process that primarily motivated my research. My previous contact with the university was both an advantage and disadvantage. In fact, I was collecting data from a native point of view due to my identity as a Saudi female researcher, who is reasonably familiar with the university environment and setting, members and even some of the students. It is likely that a large number of participants were open and comfortable sharing their experiences, feelings and worries during interviews because of some semblance of familiarity with some and with others more. This in turn helped to enrich and validate the research on one hand, but it also left me with concerns about the responsibility I had towards my respondents on the other hand. For example, what questions and details provided by participants during the interactions were to be included and which ones were to be excluded as they were too personal.

Reflexivity requires a researcher to be sensitive about their own position and the position of others they interact with (Haynes, 2012). I was also aware of the potential problem of "going native", which is to become more familiar and too involved with the research group under study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Mauthner and Andrea, 2003; O'Reilly, 2008). I also understood the importance of recognising my "social location" as an observer and as a participant in relation to the interpretation of any emotional issues that might appear during the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Mauthner and Andrea, 2003). An example of my old role and its influence on the new role is contained in an incident recorded and noted under fieldnotes contained (dated 9th October 2016).

On the way to my office on my first few days, I noticed that some of the students were hiding a camera phone which, I realised could be due to my previous role where I would have been expected to confiscate it. However, in my new role as a researcher, I am not expected to do so. Furthermore, for many, I might be viewed as an outsider particularly as I have been educated outside the context of Saudi Arabian universities.

These factors put me in a peculiar "insider/outsider" position (Asselin, 2003; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Hellawell, 2006) in which both have its advantages and disadvantages. I must also acknowledge my relatively privileged position in terms of my class and accompanying access. A major challenge for a researcher is to know when to be an outsider or an insider during the research investigation. The key is to choose the right objective methods of enquiry that allow a researcher to step back and understand social phenomena as an outsider even if one is an insider. While being able to be an insider and use the personalised experience as the basis to really understand the social phenomena (Blaikie, 2007).

As the research seeks to understand the 'subject's view' in this case female students' experience in higher education, it becomes necessary to overcome the problem of subjectivity. This project attempted to do so by choosing methods of enquiry which could ensure that the participants' own interpretation and understanding is preserved as far as possible and which take into account the many contexts which the participants inhabit. As I have had a previous relationship with the university, I had to 'make the familiar unfamiliar', i.e. rather than depending on my own interpretation of the context, I would need to seek the subject's interpretation of the context. I knew that I had to make a deliberate effort to ensure that this does not influence my perspective or research. For example, I tried to be as neutral as possible, 'to achieve empathy without becoming over-

involved" (Yeo et al., 2014: 201), with one of the participants who expressed her resentment about the more conservative way of dressing at TRC compared to her own. Although I am familiar with the culture, I tried during interviews to not assume that I have understood (Shahad's interview- a way of dressing -20th October 2016). So, I asked the participants to explain what exactly they meant.

The example below reflects my role as a researcher who is aware of circumstances surrounding TRC. In the following example Thekra explained reasons to postpone the course (her example will be discussed in section 5.2.1).

> "As a mother, I have a little girl (4 months old). I can't leave her for long hours with my mother in law. So due to my 1st-semester schedule, most of my classes were in the afternoon, I couldn't change it, as I don't know anyone [*through wasta]* so I had to postpone and only start this semester" (Thekra, 2nd interview, 23/4/2017).

Many students use their connections and family network to change their schedules, whether to morning or afternoon classes. Thekra, however due to a lack of social capital, did not know anyone to aid her in that matter. Thus, as the only option, she ended up postponing the whole semester. Any other researcher, who may not be aware of the context of Saudi and the impact of having or not having 'connections' to use in everyday life, would only interpret Thekra's statement as merely a lack of flexibility and economic capital for childcare for the baby while she is at university.

From time to time, the fact that my higher education took place overseas could have presented some ethical ambiguity during the interviews was when some students asked

me about my experiences of being educated outside of Saudi Arabia. As a researcher, I must acknowledge that I am indebted to the individuals who took the time and effort to participate in the research (Ritchie et al., 2014). Thus, it behoves me to be empathetic and respond to their questions as well. I realised; however, this must be achieved whilst maintaining a fair amount of distance to ensure that undue emotional attachments which might not be in the best interest of the respondent are avoided. I was conscious of not wanting to impose my own experience of being educated in the west and by internationals as either good or bad because this might influence their answers about the experience of learning from an international staff body; resulting in them not divulging their full experience. In addition, as the topic was so closely intertwined with the topic of the current research, it was often felt that the discussion of my reasons for having a non-Saudi education would also influence the subsequent responses of the students particularly as there are some questions directly linked to learning in English as a foreign language - Interview questions included.

Finally, it must also be recognised that it is not possible to assume that all respondents had the same understanding of even key terms in the research such as gender or identity. Thus, one of the concerns was how female students understood the way identity was explained in the context of the research for these students.

4.6 Conclusion

From the discussions above, it is possible to trace the link between the research aim which was to explore and understand the role higher education plays in shaping and influencing female student's identities. The three strands of theory that the research relied upon, were utilised in narrowing down not only the research questions but also the methods of enquiry. Going forward, identifying the themes from the data is also strongly influenced

by the theoretical framework. Thus, it is clear that the theoretical framework is of the utmost importance to the research. However, reflecting upon the aspect of reflexivity in the research helped to identify the limitations of the research, especially the limitations which are due to the framework on which the research was built. For example, most, if not all, the concepts such as identity and habitus are terms which have been developed in a very specific European context and thus even an explanation of these to the respondents is extremely difficult. Further, correctly analysing or expressing responses from the participants is similarly limited. In summation, the focus of this chapter is the methodological framework, together with the methodological process of the research, as well as the limitations thereof and the ways in which these have been addressed. The following chapter, Chapter 5, is divided into two parts. Part one, uses the data to explore the backgrounds and beginnings of the research participants and Part two, explores through the data, the transitional experiences of the participant students at TRU.

Chapter 5: Part One

Backgrounds and Beginnings: what students bring to the university

This is the first of three chapters that pertain to the data analysis. This chapter encompasses the exploration of students' backgrounds and how these have influenced their initial university experience. The chapter aims to address the first research question, which seeks to examine the implications of gender, social class, social status, and tribal affiliation on female students' experience of higher education especially with respect to social and cultural identity formation.

The chapter begins by presenting and analysing students' stated reasons to obtain higher education and for joining TRU. The first section shows that the most common factors which students said informed their decision-making process are grades and choice of university courses. Analysing the decision-making process more deeply, the second section highlights the assumptions underpinning the student's rationale. The next section examines the role that student's backgrounds play in their new beginnings at university.

A number of issues are highlighted in this chapter as they dominate women's implicit and explicit actions and ultimately impact students' experiences of higher education. These include gender, class, the rural-urban divide, familial roles and tribal affiliations. A comprehensive analysis of participants' decision-making process, this chapter draws on Bourdieu's work on habitus and cultural capital. In order to understand the impact of students' demographic details, there is a need to illustrate students' choices of entering TRU and for joining specific subject courses. Some students referred to the academic reasons and their grades as the principal factor that influenced their decision-making

process and choice of one specific university over another, that is indicated in the following section.

5. 1. 1 The Multiple Reasons Why Female Students Valued Higher Education

Joining a university to obtain a degree was a major decision for most female students. How this decision was undertaken was examined by asking students why they chose to enter higher education. This was an initial step in the questionnaire. Students could respond either by selecting answers from a multiple-choice list or by writing others in the space provided. The chart below shows the frequency of certain answers in the students' responses. Later during the interview stage, students' reasons were discussed in greater detail.
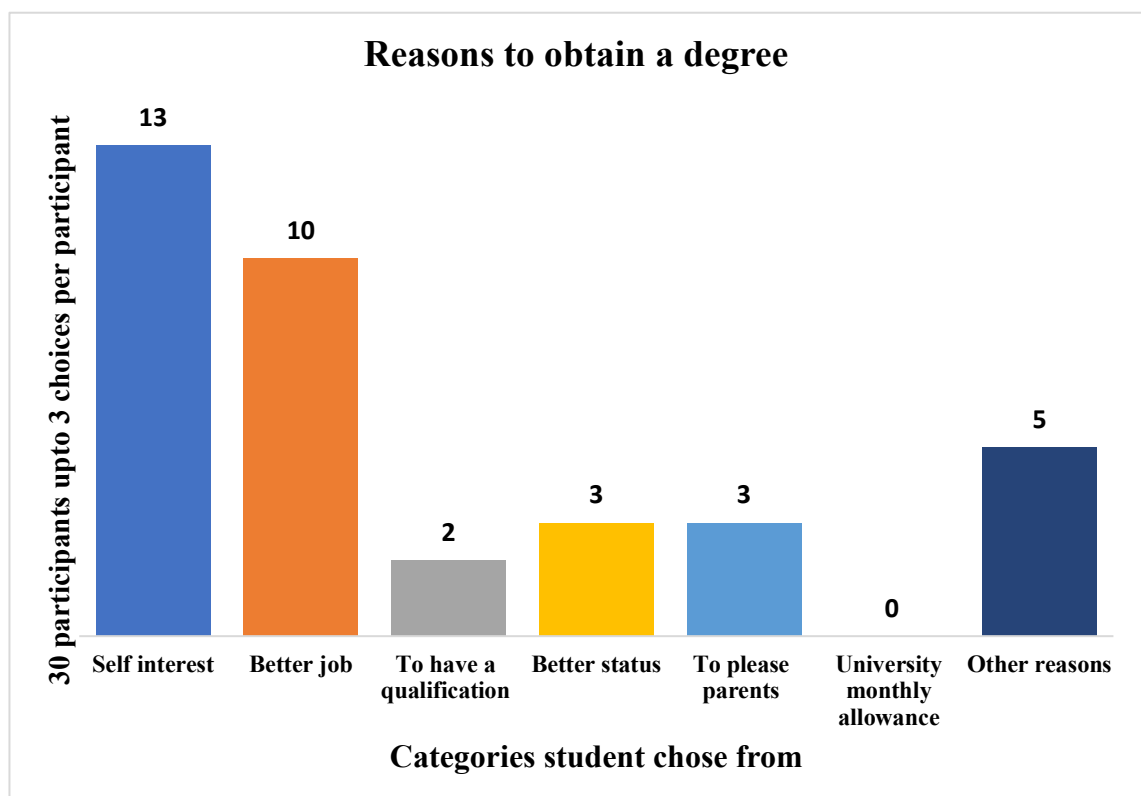
Figure 3: Students' responses to "Why did you choose to obtain a degree"

If you look at the above chart, you can note that Figure 3 shows that the most popular answer was that the students chose to obtain a degree due to 'self-interest' in higher education. The term self-interest is a literal translation of the Arabic term '*aihtimam shakhsi*' which was used in the questionnaire. In Arabic, the term does not mean the pursuit of one's personal interest at the cost of another, but is used to indicate personal interest, self-motivation or simply the value that one placed on higher education. This option was selected by most students along with another reason such as the view that the degree offered a path to a better job, a better status or pleasing one's parents. The multiplicity of reasons was elaborated upon with women during the interviews and were used and identified to represent the link between their class identities and motivation for pursuing a degree course in the first place.

5.1.1.2 The admission process in Saudi

As has been discussed in the literature review (see Chapter 3), women's participation in higher education and undergraduate courses, in particular, has increased at a higher rate than that for men (Leathwood and Read, 2009; Morley, 2011). This trend occurs in both national and global data - TRU is no exception. The admission and registration data of TRU in September 2016 shows that 5,161 female students registered whilst the corresponding figure for male students was 3,581. After 3 months, 412 female students dropped out of the course compared to 473 males. After the commencement of classes, several students dropped out and 4,749 female and 3,108 male students remained (Admission and registration enrol fieldwork data 2016). For this reason, analysing the decision-making process for female students is vital.

In the Saudi university admissions process, the two most important metrics which are used in the admissions process are those of the secondary school Grade Point Average

(GPA) which is referred to as *Al-Thanawiya Al- Amma* and the general secondary examination that all school students must take to graduate and the *Qiyas*[26]. This assessment consists of two exams, which are *Qudrat*[27] and *Tahsili*[28], administered by The *Qiyas* National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education in Saudi for students who wish to enter university. An average of the results of these three exams is the basis on which students are offered an admission to different universities. It must also be noted that before joining the university, whilst still in secondary school, students are offered options between science and liberal arts. Students on these courses are restricted in some ways. For example, liberal arts students can only apply to join courses in humanities, but science students can apply to any course of university. In this sense, students joined the university with a specific academic identity that allowed them to be on a specific course. The impact of this on students is further discussed in Chapter seven in the section entitled 'Students' Academic Identity' (7.4.2).

The process is a competitive one as universities which are considered to offer a higher quality of education also require students to have a high average in the three exams. The location of the university also has a role in this process as universities in large metropolitan cities are often more sought after than those in smaller cities or rural areas. Within universities as well, different courses have different requirements. The more popular courses such as medicine or science and engineering have higher requirements whereas the liberal arts courses usually accept lower average grades. TRU in this context,

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[26] Qiyas: a term in Arabic means to measure.

[27] The General Aptitude Test (GAT): to 'measures students' analytical and deductive skills'.

[28] Achievement Test: tests a student's achievement of the three secondary schools, a specific test designed for science students and another one for Art students who want to apply to a humanities college. (Educational tests in the Qiyas National Centre for Assessment website).http://www.qiyas.sa/Sites/English/Tests/EducationalTests/Pages/default.aspx

due to its status as a newly established university is not as sought after as some of the more well-established universities such as King Saud University in Riyadh and King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. Within TRU, the medical course has the highest entry requirements followed by science while humanities courses accept the lowest grade average. Due to this admissions process, depending on their grade average from the three exams, students usually then have to decide between three factors - which course they wish to take and they want to apply for, which university they wish to go to and finally which city they want to live in.

For these reasons, most students viewed grades as the most significant factor in their decision-making process. Students with high grade point averages had several options with respect to where and what they could reasonably assume to gain admission to whilst those students with lower grade point averages had fewer options in these respects. From this standpoint, they then begin to consider their decisions in terms of the prestige of the university and the availability of the course they wish to apply for. Across the globe, decisions on how and where to undertake higher education are considerably more complicated than applying to and accepting the best institution in terms of academic factors alone. Other factors such as mobility and financial ability also play a large role. The following sections highlight these primary and secondary reasons students identified as motivating their choice of TRU.

5.1.1.2.1 Best Academic Fit (grades and courses)

Of the 30 students who were interviewed, 11 said that they chose to study at TRU for academic reasons. These were primarily based on grades or choice of subjects. Some students stated that TRU was their "*only choice*" as they had such low grades that better universities were not willing to admit them. These students stated that had their grades

been higher they would have applied elsewhere. For example, nineteen-year-old Tahani who came from Medina and lives in the university accommodation, when asked why she joined this university, replied that she applied to TRU only because Taibah University which was her first choice, "Taibah [name of the university] only accepts high overall grades mine is only 74.65% and I wanted to do software engineering.....The lowest acceptance rate to join Taibah University is 84%, which will only be good enough for admission to the community college." This is considered a high cut off rate for admissions but Taibah University, according to what people say, is a university that works through *wasta*. She went on to add, *"You can only enter if you have the wasta"* (Tahani, lower middle class background, 1st interview 19/10/2016).

Tahani's statement, though short, is filled with implications. It shows that the decision was somewhat more complex than a mechanical process of picking the best university which would grant admission and that students would usually take into account a number of other factors including the course they wanted to be enrolled in. Her response indicates that her first choice was very specific - she wanted to undertake the engineering programme at Taibah University. She could have been admitted to Taibah University for another course but her grades were not high enough for her to be offered admission to the engineering programme. The response shows that in the large city of Medina, her grades would only be good enough for her to be accepted onto courses at a community college which is perceived as being very substandard. Tahani's statements also indicate that if a university in Medina offered an engineering programme, she might have considered it. Tahani's decision was thus made based upon TRU accepting a lower average grade for an engineering programme than the same course in Taibah. An interesting issue that emerges in Tahani's statements is the use of *wasta,* which means influence or use of social connections to secure admissions. Tahani does not provide a clear enough explanation of how it might have affected her acceptance, but she implies

that gaining admission into Taibah University was a factor of either extremely high grades or the ability to use connections. The term recurs in interviews with other students and is discussed further in this chapter (part two -The transition to TRU).

Ahlam, much like Tahani, was also from Medina, the choice of university was superficially based on the best academic fit given for her school grades. For Ahlam as well, the choice was between enrolling in TRU or enrolling in a community college where she would not be able to gain a degree but instead obtain a diploma after two years. At TRU, however, she was able to gain admission into a Science course which she was certain was out of her reach at Taibah. Ahlam stated that the grades required for admission at the university near her home was too high so she had to move to TRC and as a woman alone it was more convenient to live at the university accommodation.

> "Because of the system of the preparatory year programme here, for the science students, there are two options either the medical path or the science and engineering path. I chose the second one. In Taibah University only one combined path, 'I call it jamaeah taejizih [a university with an unfeasible option] it is impossible to join as they only accept students with 91%, students lower than 82% have only the community college as an option. My overall is 81%, that's why I applied to this university." (Ahlam, 19 years 1st interview 17/10/2016).

The statement effectively shows the students' grades were interpreted as high or low in relation to the hierarchy of top rate or old universities and courses, locations closer to home, and finally the importance of a university degree rather than a diploma.

This consequence is corroborated even in the interviews with students such as Shahad and Rahaf. Both students who were from lower middle and middle class backgrounds stated that they joined the university mainly to be on the medical path as the course was not available at the university in their hometown. Their statements show that their secondary school GPA and Qiyas assessments were high enough to allow them to be in any university in their cities of origin, but they were unable to find the course they wanted.

> "...a lot of people advised me to consider studying medicine at this university due to the good reputation of being better than Taibah University. Also the major I want to study is radiology, which is not at Taibah University... [TRU provides] the qualification...the major I want, then the future I want" (Shahad 1st interview- 20/10/2016).

Such statements affirm that students would have preferred to be in a university close to home which offered the courses they sought. In the light of the affinity to residing with family the aversion to a community college is heightened i.e for several students their acceptance of admission to TRU is driven by the comparison of the stark choice of failing to get a university degree or leaving home. A notable part of Shahad's response is the link she makes between the major she can take at the TRC and the future she envisions for herself. This underscores the linkages between choice of university and course and the aspirations for employment, lifestyles etc - what Shahad aptly summarised as *"the future I want'*.

The ambition and aspirations of students which drive their choices of university and course is prominent even in Noor's narrative of her choice. She had completed two years of her degree programme at Taibah University (the preparatory year and one year in Biology) but was actually interested in dentistry. She was able to pursue her ambitions at TRU in the course of dentistry, as not only was the university willing to accept her lower

grades, it was also willing to accept students with a two year gap since leaving their secondary school. Noor also believed that TRU would help her fulfil her ambitions. At the time of the interview, the 21-year-old was living in the university accommodation while she was at medical college (Noor, working class background, 1st interview 18/10/2016-from Medina- university accommodation).

The effect of contradictory forces in students' lives were also evident in the decision-making process of Reem and Abeer. Reem, from a middle class background, had received a scholarship to study abroad in 2015, a year before joining TRU. However, she felt that as a woman it was not possible for her to travel alone and had therefore, declined the offer. Finally, she had a gap in her education and only TRU accepts with a gap of up to two years and consequently felt forced to apply there. Abeer, who comes from a working class background, stated that she had not wanted to apply to TRU but had done so to live with her brother, as they both did not achieve the required grades for their local university at *AlKhobar*[29]. Her brother however missed the admissions deadline and was not admitted to TRU. As a result, Abeer stated that she had no other option since she was accepted onto the science and engineering path at TRU.

These narratives show that sometimes there is a clash between a desire for a better future for which it is necessary to choose good courses and good universities and the desire to remain with the family particularly as being a woman offers restrictions on mobility and choice. Crucially, they also highlight the limitations of women's choices when faced with competing and contradictory forces and desires.

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[29] *AlKhobar:* a Saudi city in the Eastern Province.

5.1.1.2.2 Economic reasons

Another group of students stated that they chose to obtain their degree at TRU due to financial constraints especially due to the costs associated with living on one's own. For example, when Karema, a student from a middle class family, was asked about her reason for joining TRU, she said:

> "as my family moved here that is the option I have, I can't afford to go back home to study alone [as a woman] it will be hard for me to be in one place and my family in another. Also, I heard that this university is developing, and it will become an international university after the international recognition".

Karema, who came from Algeria to the Regional city with her father who is a professor at TRU, saw this as an opportunity to know more about the Saudi Arabian culture and to learn: "another Arabic accent, as you may know our Arabic in Algeria is different" (Karema, 21 years 1st interview- 17/10/2016).

Economic reasons alone however did not seem to be a major reason for middle class students to apply to TRU. Instead it was mentioned as a supplementary factor along with others. Karema's reason for example is apparently economic as she starts by saying *'I cannot afford'* but she clarified in the second interview that a major factor was that she and her family did not think it was possible for her to live alone even in her own home country.

Life events such as marriages and births in combination with constraints were also reasons which students gave for applying to TRU. This is best highlighted by Thakra who was 19 and married. She wanted to join the medical path but her overall GPA was too low for her to be accepted at TRU, so science was her 2nd option and she would later state

that it was more convenient for her after having a new baby. It is thus possible to note that for a woman with multiple identities such as being a mother, wife, and a student sometimes limits her choices and leads her to take a course that is considered and known to be easier than others. The experience of women existing identities might collide with their new identity as 'a student' and how it might develop will be discussed further in the second part of this chapter on the transitional process (section 5.2.1).

5. 1.1.3 Stated and Implicit Rationalisations

This section analyses the assumptions that underpin students' decision-making processes. Examining the responses of the students to the question "why did you choose to join TRU?" was necessary to understand the aspects of their choices that were related to motivation, expectations and assessment of obstacles, which might be linked to students' habitus and embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977,1986). Of the 30 students interviewed, only 11 were not originally residents of TRC residential campus. The majority of the respondents lived with their families in the city. These students stated that they mostly applied to TRU as they did not want to move away from their family. Though this reason is seemingly uniform and indicative of the patriarchal hold over women by their families alone, there is in fact considerable diversity in the student's decision-making processes. It was not often that the patriarchal restraints on women were overtly enforced within the female arena of an all-female environment. More usually, it is relatively rare that women's habitus are shaped by familial, cultural, religious and patriarchal control. However, in the cohort of participants at TRU, many of the students' choices reflect the desire to maintain the social construction of a "good women" - that is one that will be accepted as honourable and ultimately viable for marriage according to the expectations of the Saudi Arabian society. This is highlighted in a frequent phrase

which students used during their interview when asked about their reasons for joining TRU, as opposed to another university elsewhere -"I had no other choice". The use of this oxymoron communicated their conflicting feelings of what they really wanted and what is possible as an option. Most of those who used this phrase were from TRC and emphasised their geographic constraints - they did not think it possible to move to a different city or region due to some social and cultural restrictions. The impact of these restrictions was seen as part of their identity – their position in society as someone controlled by the family and society. These restrictions were viewed as being part of their identity as women and their inability to travel and live alone, not due to personal abilities, rather because of the need to maintain a socially accepted reputation of being a 'good woman'. However, there were exceptions, not all students expressed this sentiment, several considered studying at the TRU to be a deliberate choice they had made. During interviews, these students would state that they had considered several options and eventually selected TRU out of these though their reasoning also indicated that though they had a choice they also had to negotiate with several limitations.

Most students who stated that TRU was their choice as there was 'no other choice', were mainly local to TRC. In contrast, the eleven students from outside the TRC locality, clearly considered themselves to have had a choice. Students were initially grouped based on these responses; specifically, those who stated that they had 'no other choice' and those who viewed themselves as having had a choice. I then attempted to identify why they felt so and how their circumstances differed or were similar to those who felt that they had choice.

Making the decision and choosing one university over another is a complex process which involves the students' evaluation of their own ability, mobility constraints, future

prospects and current access to resources. This is reflected in the literature on choice in education. Roberts (1993) states that "Choices are made within differently delimited 'opportunity structures'. Choices are also made in different 'horizons of action' (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). Ball et al. (2002), in their study of choice of higher education in London, argue that such horizons are social/perceptual but also spatial and temporal (Ball et al., 2002). David et al. (2005: 21) also highlight the difficulties in identifying what constitutes primary and secondary reasons in the process of making choices and decisions especially as responses often vary with time, the speaker's experience was different and their 'pragmatic rationality' of their decision making. However, the authors make it very clear that in the context of the UK, "gender is threaded through the processes of choosing higher education." According to Reay (2018) choice developed out of students' interactions with some factors within the structural, social and cultural context they were living in, "…religion, local community, immediate and extended family exerted just as important an influence as teachers, peers and career advisors. They emphasised that transitions were made on the basis of the historically-derived and socially-constructed common base of knowledge, values and norms for action with which young people had grown up" (Reay, 2018:529).

Many of the reasons discussed so far can be seen as the social reasons that are influenced by a student's identity of being a woman. It must also be stated that not all experiences that students were faced with due to their gender were necessarily limiting. In several instances, students reported that they were motivated, inspired, or privileged by some aspects of their gender. With the rise in awareness and directives to enhance women's development in Saudi Arabia, there has been an expansion in plans to empower women by opening-up new job opportunities. These jobs however seem to largely require a university education and jobs for women with only secondary school certifications are

few and far between. As a result, attending university is a financially prudent option for many women. This factor might also explain why there are more female students who enrol and stay in university compared to male students. The interviews with students revealed that there is an awareness of this.

Noor and Manal were both students from outside TRC. They joined TRU mainly to be in the medical path. Noor, who was very ambitious, was able to get enrolled onto her desired course of dentistry at TRU after spending two years in a course she did not like in her home city. During her interview she stated that:

> 'Educating women is important because not all women here [in Saudi] intend to be sitting at home raising children and cleaning, we have the right to learn like men, and we have the right to get the jobs that suit us' (Noor, working class, 1st interview 18/10/2016).

Manal also joined TRU largely for the purpose of finding good employment however unlike Noor, she said that it was based on her father's advice, as he thought enrolment in the medical course at TRU would ensure a better chance of finding a good job. Manal had originally wanted to enrol on the science path at a university in her home city but she accepted her father's recommendations and university choice. She saw this as good for her future.

A different aspect of parental advice and involvement also manifested in narratives such as those of Shahad who had joined TRU mainly to be in the Radiology course. Her professionally qualified parents supported her choice as they set a great store by women's education. They planned to move to TRC with her as they were not sure about how good the university accommodation was and how their daughter might find the experience. This is indicated in the following extract from her interview:

"I have read a lot about the university and especially about housing. I was so apprehensive to move alone to a degree that my parents thought of moving with me…they [her family] value education and at the end of this I will bring them honours, *[sa' arfae ruwasahum]* I'll raise their heads up" (Shahad, 1st interview-20/10/2016).

These statements show how it is not just students but also their immediate families who negotiate the contradictory pulls of sheltering their daughters and the desire for better education. It also highlights Shahad's immense desire to gain parental approval and the interlinkages between honour and monetary gains - showing that personal strive to be a 'good woman'. At the same time, as with the other students, there was a clear concern for her living on her own, as any compromise to her reputation could affect her status as a 'good woman' within her family and importantly, Saudi Arabian society.

Together the examples discussed above highlight aspects of the habitus of students and how this is shaped by a number of factors which includes their gender, the desire for improving or maintaining class status through remunerative employment and the desire to minimise the conflicts within patriarchal familial norms. This is referred to and analysed further in the following section.

5.1.2 Implications of class identity as another demographical factor

The majority of the students were aware of the value of women's higher education regardless of the location they came from or their social class identities. Social class is clearly an important aspect in students' experience of university. Based on the factors and issues discussed in Chapter 2 and due to governmental and state welfare, social class mainly can be defined and explained in terms of socio-economic privilege and access to resources, as discussed in chapter four section 4.2.1.1 Participants' class identity.

During the interviews, the cultural capital of students was explored through questions which sought to uncover students' access to activities, knowledge, and language. This in turn was used to discern of students' accumulated resources and access to a privileged class identity.

Further analysis of students' perspectives in relation to demographic details are indicative (see figure 3) and students' viewpoints on the value of higher education were identified within the reasons given by students on the importance of obtaining a degree. The following section will highlight and discuss the link between class identity and reasons to obtain a degree.

5.1.2.1 Gender, Class identity and Self-interest

As indicated in the chart above (Figure 3) a significant number of students had expressed that they were pursuing a degree in fulfilment of their "interest" though this was never the sole reason that students chose. During interviews, students elaborated further on their choices and reasons. In response to the question "Why did you choose to pursue higher education?" Rahaf and Aseel who were from lower middle and middle class families, respectively, indicated the value of higher education and specified how it is essential to a woman's autonomy in general. This was apparent in Rahaf's response that *'I want to be a doctor'*. This exemplified both fulfilment of an identity and self-motivation. Aseel, on the other hand, stated: "At this time, especially... a woman will have a broad prospect and extensive knowledge even if she is not economically in need… if the woman is married and financially stable, education is critical, and I aspire to complete medicine" (Aseel, middle class background, 1st interview, 17/10/2016).

The third student, Mona, a 20-year-old, who had not joined TRU immediately after school as several factors had interrupted or affected her studies. Initially, she started her studies at *Majmaah*[30] University, which was near the city in which she originated from. Following this, she then had to postpone her second year after she got married and moved to TRC. Mona, hailed from a working class background, preferring to choose 'self-interest' as she felt the value of higher education in general for women and for mothers in particular. She stated that '*educated women have more principles for raising children'*. She gave an example of her own experience with her mother who did not receive a university education. Mona felt that, consequently, her mother was not aware of the importance of certain skills that would come in useful, such as fluency in English. Mona believed that skills to study, including English, should have been inculcated in children throughout their early education, stating that

> "Unfortunately, we didn't have these opportunities, and perhaps if we had that chance, we would be different now". She asserted that when she had her own children, she would, "make sure they gain the language from a younger age, even if it costs private tuition. Also, I will try to help them to develop as many skills as possible to be talented and more creative."
> (Mona 1st interview 20/10/2016).

5.1.2.2 Gender, class identity and social status

Although none of the students selected the university's monthly allowance as an option in response to the question "Why did you choose to pursue higher education?" During the interviews it emerged that financial gain from gainful employment following the degree was a considerable motivation. Hala, a student from a working class background

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[30] *Majmaah*: is a city in Saudi Arabia close to the capital Riyadh.

who had chosen a better status as a reason for joining TRU, stated during the interview that she had considered financial constraints to be a reason behind her enrolment into TRU. During the first interview, Hala mentioned the difficulties of having two unemployed parents and indicated the university's monthly allowance as a short-term solution for the time being. Hala specified how education could be a chance for a better status in life to help live and be financially independent. Hala lived with her grandfather at the time of the interview and stated that he supported her parents financially as well. When asked to whom she turned to for advice, she said that she usually asked her grandfather, "...he is more educated and qualified to help me than my father" (Hala, working class background, 1st interview- 13/10/2016).

Nadia and Samya, both from bigger cities than TRC, were also from working class backgrounds. They arranged to live with their relatives rather than in university accommodation despite the fact that it might have been cheaper to do so. During their interviews, they mentioned that they had joined the university mainly for better status opportunities. Samya, a married woman, added that she mainly joined the university to develop and enhance her status as she wanted to:

> "rely on myself in all respects materially and morally.... I mean to have a sense that I'm responsible for myself / anything I need I can buy it just a matter of entering the credit card and the amount I need is coming out unlike those women who sit for one or two hours trying to convince their husbands. [I want] to be financially independent." (Samya 32 years old, 1st interview 19/10/2016).

Samya's words show that she wants higher education to gain what Archer (2003:125) refers to as a 'social status' particularly for working class women who value higher

education as it might provide chances and opportunities. They are also indicative of someone developing self-reliance. In summary, the students' statements highlight how women in particular are economically disadvantaged if they do not have independent sources of income. Consequently, financial independence is a significant motivating factor in both seeking higher education and the desire for it to be a means to 'improving and reshaping the self' (Burke, 2012:51).

5.1.2.3 Gender, class identity and symbolic capital

Several students began by stating that a major factor in their decision to undertake higher education was the perception that a qualification would help in finding suitable employment. As Figure 3 shows, ten of the thirty participants, who joined the university stated that they aimed to have a 'better job' in the future and saw the degree as a way to achieve that. On further inquiry however, it was possible to note that despite the common aim, the motivations were very different depending on the class background they came from and the individual's personal need.

This is best illustrated in the following examples of participants, who came from the surrounding locality of TRC, Leen, Wala, and Nawal. Despite being from the same city, were from different social classes and subsequently, their needs were shown to be different (Appendix 15: Charts indicated the class identity of participants in responded to the questionnaire). Leen, as a member of the middle class, emphasised the importance of having a higher education qualification saying that:

> "Nowadays it is the first thing people ask about "... we live in a society
>
> which is in the process of development, women education is part of this …
>
> no job opportunities for women without higher education" (Leen from
>
> TRC, 1st interview, 16/10/2016).

However, Wala, Nawal and Layla who were from working class and lower middle class backgrounds chose a better job as a reason to join higher education. Walla indicated the importance of work as the main source of income and a high awareness of the limitations of getting jobs without higher education qualifications. These understandings were borne out of her experience with her employed sisters and the requirements of the job market nowadays. She noted: "The education of a woman is important to increase her opportunity, also to obtain a job." (Walla, working class background, 1st interview, 18/10/2016).

Layla and Nawal who both came from two different class background indicated how their unqualified mothers pushed and motivated them to get the qualifications. When Layla was asked if she thought educating women is important, she said:

> "Surely in terms of money, she has to be self-sufficient and not need to ask anyone else. This is the point of view I took from my experience of women around me who have to ask their husband or father… My mother has only a secondary certificate and is unemployed who is always encouraging us [with her other sisters] to have a qualification and be financially independent and be better than her" (Layla, lower middle class background, 1st interview 18/10/2016).

Nawal spoke about the way her mother motivated and inspired her to continue higher education in order to get an academic job. Nawal had been determined to leave the course after her father's death but remained as it was her mother's wish that she continue. During the first interview, when asked about her mother's reasons for pushing her to join university despite having not attended it herself, Nawal said: "my mother always

motivated me and my other sisters to get academic jobs…Maybe she doesn't want us to go through some of the difficulties that she had experienced" (Nawal, working class background, 1st interview 20/10/2016).

All four students' responses show that in addition to their shared experience of being female, reasons for choosing higher education must be understood and analysed in the context of the different social classes and backgrounds of the students. The differences in students' needs to obtain a higher education qualification depended upon their social class background manifested in their habitus which was very different from each other. For example, while Leen, Nawal and Layla all valued higher education equally, their reasons for doing so differed based on their class identity. Leen's middle class identity led her to value education as a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998), such as prestige and status which according to (Marginson, 2011: 33) "...few in higher education are untouched by the power of status to secure assent". This can be evidenced in the statement *"it is the first thing people ask about".* In contrast, Nawal and Layla stated that women need the qualification to be independent and as an economic necessity to be "*tueizu nafsiha"*, which could be translated as 'financially independent'. This term is mainly used to describe a situation where a woman is self-reliant and does not need to have a male financially supporting her. These students, who shared different ambitions from their mothers, viewed themselves as being given chances and opportunities which their mothers or grandmothers did not have access to. A higher education qualification in this case and for many is symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998) which opens up many opportunities. It could also indicate that mothers' gendered experience is a significant formative influence and creates an aspiration for 'autonomy' in their daughters.

There was also evidence for the reverse; specifically mothers who sought higher education as a form of symbolic capital in order to enhance the experiences of their daughters. This was highlighted in Soad's responses during the interview. The 33 year old moved back to her family house in the locality of TRC after her divorce. She considered herself to be part of the working class and worked from home as a cook. In the questionnaire, she initially responded that she was motivated to obtain a degree as she thought that it would help her get a better job. During the first interview however, when she was asked about her reasons to obtain higher education, she said:

> 'I felt at crisis, my daughter's forms asked for the level of mother's education and I had to say secondary school. Now, even before qualifying my university degree, it is the first thing I put" (Soad, 1st interview, 13/10/2016).

Thus, we see the importance that Soad attached to higher education as a means to build up her self-esteem and status for both herself and her daughter, evidenced in her direct answer to the question. Soad's reasons for pursuing higher education are thus more complex than was initially stated. As a divorcee, education is seen as a solution and a source of income. It paves a way to be independent especially for a woman in a male dominated society. This was summarised by Soad in the following statement:

> "A man can serve himself, he has more opportunity to do any work with any certificate, but a woman is not able to get a job without a certificate… there is a time in which a woman realised the need to go back to study. I realised this because I was seeing signs of going through a divorce. It was my choice. I asked for it. He still thinks it is impossible for me to live without him, as he knows me and has raised me since younger [she was married young at the age of 16 and there was a 14 year gap] he thinks there

must be someone who is driving me, as this is not the usual actions that he

knows me for, I broke the ideas that he has" (Soad, 1st interview,

13/10/2016).

She would also state later that being at university was also a chance to get to know others

and establish social relationships. When she was asked about why she chose to apply and

accept admission into TRU, she responded that she applied to TRU based on her social

and geographical constraints - as a divorcee, she was financially and socially unable to

move away from her deceased father's house. In the final interview which was conducted

6 months later, Soad spoke about her experience at university, she replied that she had

always been under pressure from her close and extended family due to her status as a

divorced woman. However, when she became a university student, her new position as a

student gave her the strength and social freedom to go out and obtain items that she or

her child may need, as being a university student afforded her the status as being 'serious'

and the opportunity to go out and about independently.

'Those surrounding me view divorced women as shameful. Being at

university however eased so many things for me, I can get my necessities

from a water bottle to anything else using my needs as a university student

as an excuse' (Soad 33 years old 2nd interview 20/4/2017).

5.1.3 Student's Habitus at the Intersection of Class and Gender

Habitus, which relates to an individual's disposition, is largely analysed in this research

based on students' responses. These were evaluated to establish their ways of thinking

within their social system and culture of values, ideas and behaviour (Seymour-Smith,

1986). Students' statements reflected their ways of being, acting, feeling, thinking or even

reacting, or as Grenfell (2014) argues, how individuals carry their history and react

accordingly in the present circumstance in certain ways and not others (2014:51). Bourdieu stated that "And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself 'like a fish in water', it does not feel the weight of water and takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu, 1989: 43). A vital feature which was common to respondents in this study regardless of their financial, marital, geographic, or educational status, was their desire to maintain the image of being a 'good woman'. This was a major factor which underpinned their choices or even reasons to obtain a higher education degree. This can be understood as everyone "endeavours to reconcile their individual dispersions with their understanding of the constraints on their behaviour" (Robbins, 2019:163). Consequently, individuals often experienced conflict between what they actually have as part of their dispositions and with their understanding of the constraints on their behaviour in relation to the social structure. A prominent aspect of this research was the way these students acted and faced such parameters within the higher education system, what Bourdieu refers to as the operation of an individual's habitus within the structure of the field. While the previous sections detailed how students' reasons for undertaking HE differed on the basis of class, the following section considers how student's experience differed not just in relation to class but also due to factors such as tribes and location.

5.1.4 Conclusion of the first part:

The first sections discussed students' academic reasons and how choices were directed by implicit rather than overt boundaries which were linked to their gender. The respondents' experience which was discussed in this section reveals that student's views on their grades are mediated by their choices concerning the courses and universities they want to gain admission to. However, female students' grades were only discussed in relation to the relevance of their choice, which had shown and indicated more of students'

backgrounds, motivation and determination that are sometimes in the face of constraints. These choices, in turn, are made in the light of an extreme reluctance to either leave home or the alternative of joining community colleges in their home city. While students often focused on one reason such as economic factors in their narratives, when discussed in detail, it became apparent that there were several implicit supplementary reasons as well. Women students are determined in spite of the pressures they are under as mothers, wives, daughters in a highly patriarchal society, which might have opened up opportunities to reach changes such as the example of students who wanted to be independent and able to rely on their own selves.

Mainly to the identity of being women, students often used the phrase "no other choice" and this shows they refused to consider certain options due to their desire to conform to the construction of a "good woman" for instance (discussed in Chapter Two). The second section of the first part of the chapter (5.2), presented student's perspectives on the value of higher education. It indicated the link between their demographic details and reasons for undertaking higher education and discussed how some of the students' demographic details impact upon their choices. The second part of this chapter considers students' transitional processes to TRU in relation to their ability to adapt to those transitions and changes.

Chapter 5: Part Two

Students' Transition to TRU

The first part of Chapter five explored the implications of gender and social class in students' choices in either obtaining a higher education degree or choosing a specific institution. This second part considers students transition to TRU in relation to their ability to adapt to the process. The second part of this chapter goes into greater detail and discusses students' transition to TRU, its processes and how some students' backgrounds can influence these. The discussion and analysis take into account their decisions and the influences of the students' habitus, family support and the complexities of social connections and *wasta* (explained in Chapter two, section 2.1.3.1 and further on in this chapter).

Over the course of the interviews, some students showed a notably strong desire to achieve a professional qualification. These students who were obviously self-motivated and who were exceptionally focused with regards to education could be referred to as students with the educational or academic form of sources or the 'right' 'cultural capitals and habitus' to the university experience. It must be noted that almost all of these students benefited from their background habitus, cultural, social and economic capital in many ways, not only in relation to obtaining a higher education but also in regard to finding the preparation and transition process to higher education easier than others.

It was these specific dispositions and positionalities in the social structure and identities of the students which often defined the students' preference or attitude towards the transition at TRU. As was discussed earlier in Chapter 5 part 1- the implications of some of the students' demographic details affected their opportunities and choices. This was

illustrated through students' choices, academic decisions, and decision-making processes, which are considered and examined in light of the students' backgrounds. The aim of this part is to indicate how some of students' basic categorisations, dispositions and identities could help to define and understand their transition process.

5.2.1 The experience of transition for women with multiple identities:

Chapter 5 part 1 demonstrated how the issues of gender intersects with other factors that may place unique constraints on the ability of individual female students to achieve their goals. A straightforward example is the case of three participants between the ages of 19 and 20 years who joined the university with multi-identities: as a mother and a student. Roufe, Thekra and Aseel, from different class backgrounds, married at a younger age and continued studying with children and family responsibilities. During the first interviews, all indicated the difficulties and the number of workloads they had encountered. Aseel and Thekra from two different classes, had both committed priority to their role and responsibilities as women towards their family.   Aseel, at 20 years old, had to postpone her education for two years to be with her husband who travelled to Australia continue his studies. While Thekra, a 19-year-old, had to postpone the first semester to be able to take care of her new-born baby girl. Being a wife and a mother necessitated these students to choose a delayed education. Aseel, from a middle class background, never referred to the postponed experience as a problem, she pointed out that it was a chance to learn English that benefited her to skip all 4 English levels to be at the final.

Their social class might have helped these students to cope with transition after starting the course. During the second interview, Roufe and Thekra, both from working class backgrounds, explained that they had struggled so much to the point that it had led Thekra

to postpone the first semester due to her lack of *wasta* (this will be discussed later) and Roufe had to retake the English course for level 3 twice due to a lack of access to resources. Meanwhile Aseel, who was pregnant with her second child, was more able to adapt to the transition. She had shared that she had experienced some difficulties but had managed to move forward with the support of her family, who value higher education.

5.2.1.1 The transition process and ability to adapt the university culture:

Discussions of some students' backgrounds ensured that social 'class' was not only understood merely in terms of economic income but also in terms of students' access to various forms of capital, which Bourdieu (1986) notes as unevenly accumulated. For example, students from the middle class are more privileged when compared to those from the working class not just in terms of economic wealth but also in terms of having greater access to resources and capitals which might be of help. For example, having a better understanding of the transition to university and a greater ability or familiarity with spoken English. A consequence of having different forms of capitals, within the group of students who are residents of TRC, was the possibility to identify a number of smaller groups with different identities. It was these forms of capitals which often defined a student's preference or attitude towards the transition at TRU. Some students (see Appendix 1b Students Data: Analysis of participants' choices) did not report serious difficulties with the HE transition compared to other students from the working class. The following three examples are those of Shatha, Karema and Aseel, who are from the middle and upper middle class families. Unlike other students, the three women reported higher confidence levels and had greater exposure to the transition due to many factors that related to their high cultural and social capitals such as their family's mobility, the type of secondary education they received and other factors such as greater family support

for academic achievement. This was very apparent in the cases of Karema and Shatha who were both daughters of faculty members at TRU. Both these students were able to attend extra courses before enrolling at the university. Also, Karema was educated in Algeria where she learnt to confidently speak three languages. Aseel's husband was studying in Australia where she attended classes to improve her English. Thus, it is possible to see that certain forms of capitals contribute factors which make student transition into higher education easier and more adaptable in a new environment.

5.2.2 Demographic details of respondents

There are some other factors that might enhance students' experience, which need to be considered in order to understand the relationship between that experience and the process of integration. The following section details some additional demographic details of the student participants in the research, which differ to those that have been discussed earlier (Chapter 5, part one). Based on students' responses to the study, additional division could be considered in relation to locations and the region they come from and their tribal affiliation.

5.2.2.1 Tribal identity

The concept of tribe is a distinctive feature in Saudi society. Chapter two discussed the ways in which tribal and familial connections form a major component of life in Saudi (Yamani, 1996). The extent to which tribal group members can use *Wasta* is somewhat related to the prosperity or influence of the tribe as a whole, rather than the individual member. Members of powerful and wealthy tribes often have a considerable advantage; however, it does not automatically hold that those from smaller tribes have lesser ability to use *Wasta*. While tribal affiliation is a significant component, other factors such as

wealth, political influence, or just a wide social network also play an important role in ensuring that a person has access to *Wasta* (this is discussed further in section 5.2.4) . Wasta involves someone meditating on behalf of a family member to help an individual achieve his/her goal (Abalkhail and Allan, 2015).

5.2.2.2 The location and the region

In terms of the location, their origin is identified alongside the implication of this. Additionally, students were either marked as residents of larger cities than TRC, from rural communities outside TRC or as residents of TRC (as discussed in Chapter four section 4.2.1.3 Location and region). However, within these basic divisions and broad categorisations, it was possible to identify a number of smaller groups with different forms of capital and class identities. For example, in the TRC it was explained that there is the old town – which is predominantly inhabited by the working class and the new town – which is inhabited by the middle and upper classes.

An additional factor which affected students' university experience was that of their familial location. Students who were not from the TRC had a very different experience from those who were from the TRC. This could manifest not only in terms of practical details such as students from outside TRC having to live in university hostels or in private accommodation rather than with their families but also in terms of details such as exposure to other cultures. Students, who lived for periods outside TRC, for example in the Eastern Province, Riyadh or Medina, were more exposed to other cultures and seemed able to notice and accept an individuals' differences. This will be explored further in (Chapter six).

5.2.2.2.1 Village students' experience with the transition

During the first interview with two students from villages surrounding the TRC, Hana and Boshra, both from a working class background, indicated their exhaustion and stress due to their enrolment at the university. Boshra, a 20-year-old on the science path, when questioned about the importance of education in a woman's life stated that it is important particularly as she was referring to her mother's situation. When asked what her mother's situation was, the question left her emotional and unable to continue the interview. She later clarified that as a result of her being uneducated and divorced, her mother was forced to work in a poorly paid, unstable job and that this was one of the main motivators for Boshra to work hard and remain on the course. During the second interview she indicated that she had arranged to move to the university accommodation as she "couldn't handle the stress of studying and living alone [with her sister]" (Boshra, 2nd interview, 27/04/2017).

Hana, a 23-year-old, was very particular about not revealing to her classmates (who mainly came from Medina and lived at the accommodation) that she was married. When asked why she was unwilling to reveal her marital status to her classmates, Hana stated in her first interview that she is the oldest on the medical path and the only married woman amongst her friends and classmates so she preferred to hide this information. Revealing that doing this might help her to fit into a specific academic standard or avoid being identified as a mature student who was just starting university. Hana highlighted how difficult she found it initially to "cope between my studies and my other duties as a wife as well as the tiring journey to university". Hana was using the university public bus that took longer than three hours to arrive, these details indicate the social class she comes from.

In contrast, Reham, during the interview, mainly reported being concerned about the difficulties in relation to the learning aspects of the new language and the use of English as the medium of instruction, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter seven. She stated that she used a private tutor to cope with the difficult course work and also depended on the support of her family, especially her father who was a retired professor. Coming from a middle class background, she travelled with her private driver. Her cultural capital and class status thus enriched her university experience and left more opportunities open to her, so she found the transition easier than Hana and Boshra.

Both Hana and Boshra might not have had the resources the other students from the upper classes had, however, they tried hard to adapt to the transition. It was apparent that they were highly motivated and ambitious, and this resulted in them working harder than their peers. Their success as working class students could also be traced to a number of resources and spaces that they could access without which it would have been difficult for them to continue. Students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds or those who came from villages where they did not have access to resources or other forms of cultural capitals also found learning in English more difficult. This was because although learning the English language is part of the school curriculum in Saudi, those from more privileged groups with higher socioeconomic status had more opportunities to practice the language in day to day life. While the issue of learning in English is taken up in greater detail in Chapter seven, this finding that working class students had to work much harder than those from the middle or upper classes is similar to Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) studies *"The Inheritors"*. The study suggests that in France, working class students work harder at universities as they need to adapt to the cultural codes and practices of a higher education system that promote the cultural capital of the dominant middle class.

Nonetheless, due to the level of motivation and family support each had, the students' abilities to develop and adapt to some of the university's habitus was significant. Hana, in particular, worked very hard to cope with the university workload and thought that the experience had taught her a lot. This is indicated in her interview where she states:

> "since I've joined I realised it is good' ... being at university I have managed to organise my life around my studies … I leave home at 5 am and back at 4 pm... as a married woman I do all my homework on my way back home, I have no time to waste so I do not talk to any girls on the bus; only focus on the work I am doing for my studies." (Hana 1st interview, 18/10/2016).

Hana, in order to reach her goals within a new identity as a student, tried to make the balance that Reay (2001) referred to when describing the way working class students when engaging with difficult practices out of their comfort zone are seen to be, "trying to negotiate a difficult balance between investing in a new improved identity and holding onto a cohesive self" (2001:337). Hana tried to make the 'balance' between gaining the new habitus of working during her commuting journey to not conflict her original identity as a married woman with other responsibilities.

Different studies have drawn on the theoretical contribution of Bourdieu's work, as indicated in the literature review, to demonstrate that being in a new and 'unfamiliar' environment requires the development of new forms of cultural capital. For example, a research study by Crozier and Reay (2008, 2009) focuses on the concept of the habitus, cultural capital and the field to understand students' identities. For a working class student, studying at an elite university is a chance s/he might never have dreamt of, and

might be an opportunity to create the changes and accomplish goals, similar to Hana. Her experience *"...appeared to be an out of habitus"* or as Crozier and Reay (2009) refer to using Bourdieu's term ``*a fish out of water*'' (2009:1104-5). Being in such an unfamiliar 'field', Hana's motivations and strong desire to reach success push her to develop new abilities and habitus in order to cope in the new university environment and be able to achieve her ambition and goal. There might be unconsciously high self-realisation of the need to achieve academic success. Out of her comments from the first interview, Hana indicated habitus generation that she adapted some new strategies to help her succeed and reach her 'goal', like studying during her commuting hours from and to the university and also short sleeping hours she said about some of the changes:

> "At the beginning of the academic year, it was difficult to cope between my studies and my other duties as wife as well as the tiring journey to and from the university. But now I feel I am used to it and that's become part of my daily routine. I have organised my time and came up to an agreement with my husband on many issues… I am still studying and do some work during the 4 commuting hours, before it was easier because I don't know any one, now some of the girls - kept asking, why don't you work at home? Of course, till now I haven't told them that I am married. They have the whole time to study [as a single student] for me my time is limited, I have other responsibilities… Till now I don't have enough sleeping hours. If I have exams I only sleep for two hours but I am used to the less sleeping hours. During weekends, I do sleep longer...I do feel I want to succeed, I have a goal I want to reach" (Hana, from the village 2nd interview 20/4/2017)

Also, in order to reach this, she included her husband's support and emphasised the need for him to support her in achieving it. During the interviews she also highlighted the constant support she gained from her mother-in-law. In the following statement, Hana demonstrates how she developed new abilities and habitus when she indicated the short hours of sleep she had and the longer time she spent studying and how it was hard at the beginning but later "I feel I've become used to and that it has become part of my daily routine. I have organised my time and came up to an agreement with my husband on many issues" (Hana, 2nd interview, 20/4/2017).

5.2.3 The complexities of students' habitus and family influence

It cannot be generalised but most of the students, who came from bigger cities, were more open to travel to gain a degree outside their home university location. Those 11 students, who were interviewed and chose TRU for academic reasons (referred to in section 5.1.1.2.1 Best Academic Fit) and regardless of their complex reasons, they took the initiative to attempt another experience outside their home cities compared to the students who came from the regional city or villages close by. They do not have the challenge of travelling from their city to pursue higher education. These students came from more conservative backgrounds similar to TRC in comparison to those who came from bigger cities. Consequently, their reasons could be related to their cultural background and family habitus. The examples of Haya and Manal help to elaborate this further. It is an important consideration that the majority of the society who reside in the TRC and surrounding areas are more conservative in dress and behaviour than other larger cities in Saudi Arabia. This was shown in the example of students' ID photo cards, also interviews with some faculty members regarding their experiences and opinions of students from within the TRC region and other national areas within Saudi Arabia (these interviews are discussed in depth in Chapter six).

Although Haya and Manal, who were both following the medical path, were from the Shamer tribe, their parents' educational levels were different. The cultural capital of the parents and ability to be more open to others was also different. Therefore, the advice, influence or involvement of family members was varied. Manal, (19 years old) was a good example of family expectations and how a degree is a way to improve social standing. Haya, a 20-year-old student from TRC, was the first female in her near and extended family to be educated at university level. Her extended family were particularly concerned about her joining university and the course she was taking and kept a close watch on her, looking for changes in her attitudes. In the first interview, Haya said that she had persuaded her father to accept her studying the medical route and when she was asked about his objections, reasons and disagreements she said:

> "He says, in the future [after graduating] the workplace will be in a mixed environment, a mixed place to work at hospitals, you know… he believes that our society/my extended family do not accept the idea... particularly from my father's side. They don't accept it... we don't have any females working at a hospital. It is something new for us" (Haya, working class background, interview date 27/09/2016).

Haya also responds to her extended families' concerns and their influences by saying:

> "with the influence from his uncles. They said to him, the university is not good for females, some girls at the university might influence and change your daughter's thinking, they might open her up to new ideas … umm mmm [time of quiet for a moment] e.g. a girl might be religious ...after being here she became less. Also, in relation to behaviour, she might be

modest and shy, after being at university she becomes less*" (*Haya, working class background interview date 27/09/2016).

When Haya was asked about her own response and opinion, she was able to express and reflect upon this; and this was unlike most participants. It is important to note that this was not her first term at the university as she was repeating some courses, resulting in a longer experience of being at the university. She thought that it was out of her community's concerns and part of their "fear from being affected by the diversity of different backgrounds students came from". Haya indicated the value of higher education as an empowering tool which she referred to as *'Slah'*, a weapon in Arabic.

> "In other cities it might be different and students joined universities out of motivation but here [at TRC] we have students who might not be here to study and obtain a degree. I mean, if a married woman faces problems with her husband, she has no choice but to continue studying because the situation is not safe, and studying can be a weapon in her hand." (Haya, 1st interview 27/09/2016).

Compared to Haya, Manal was from a more cosmopolitan city, from the Eastern Province of Saudi, which is known for its diverse population largely made up of employees from a diverse range of nationalities in the oil industry and companies. Both her parents were working and her mother has a postgraduate degree. As has been discussed in part 1 of this chapter (Section: Stated and Implicit Rationalisations), Manal's father plays a significant role in her decision making and of being in the medical path at TRU. Manal indicated her father's impact in her life since a younger age:

" I am the eldest and from a young age, my father used to encourage me to learn the language [refers to English] and even pay for extra private lessons" (Manal, middle class background interview date-16/10/2016).

During the first interview, she highlighted some of the difficulties that arose because of this choice such as the need to move to TRC and become independent. Her father, to facilitate and support the transition of a young girl to leave home and study away, had rented a flat close to the university, a driver to transport her to and from the university and a financial budget with the advice that she ought to be responsible. After the second semester of her enrolment in TRU, her younger sister had also joined the university as a student.

Comparing the two examples, we see that both Manal and Haya were from the same tribe but different social classes, as Haya was from a working class background with both parents unqualified. Both students' parents are involved and engaged in their daughters' higher education experience by providing information and norms out of their own context and experience, which might be seen in Haya's as limiting while Manal's was more motivating. This inherited information resources could be considered as part of their habitus (their way of thinking and being) or 'embodied cultural capital' in Bourdieu's (1986) term, will influence students' interactions with the others at the university (Apps and Christie, 2018: 60). Yet their individual experiences significantly differed due to the difference of their family's cultural capital.

It was not possible to meet Haya for the following interview as Haya had dropped out of the course. As it was not possible to contact her, I was left with my own considerations and assumptions of some possibilities. Such as, she may have been

influenced by her family who seemed to be against her going to university or her leaving could be due to the difficulties of the course and the use of English as the medium of communication, particularly as she was repeating some courses taught in English. Haya had previously reflected on her experience by saying:

> "It is good and bad. e.g. a new student who is not able to speak English and can't communicate with foreigners found it difficult to cope in class. Majority ended up dropping the course because of this, my cousin did so after only a week*" (Haya, 1st interview 27/09/2016).

Family fears and concerns for their daughters and relatives to join the course could be viewed as a reflection on their own habitus and culture. For example, a family or extended family may have a standpoint that the females within this family should not partake in studies that will result in working in a mixed-gender environment. This very scenario was shared by Mabruka, an older student who came from a village close to TRC. She talked in detail during the focus group discussion[31] about her experience at TRU and how she was unable to join the course she wanted due to family expectations, which sometimes clash with a student's own aspirations. When prompted to share her experience, she expanded:

> "I wanted to study in one of the medical courses, but my brother convinced me, during the time of my father's illness and after I moved to live in his house, to study the English language. The English language course was seen as a better alternative to medicine, as I wouldn't have to work after graduation in a mixed-gender environment. The situation sometimes

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[31] Appendix 19: Part of the focus group discussion- self-reliance.

imposes our choices; my initial option was contrary to the customs of my family and the community." (Mabruka, focus group discussion, 18/09/2016).

Mabruka described above how her brother had impeded her choices and stopped her from entering the course she had aspired to. Her brother imposed his own personal ideas, and those of the extended family, to ensure that Mabruka chose a course of study and future employment that would satisfy the expectations of the family and community customs. This imposition on Mabruka was also during a time of pressure due to her father's illness. This could be analysed as a matter of male domination but could be simply related to their cultural background as they came from villages which tend to be more conservative and traditional and his advice might reflect the familiar habitus of protecting women (this will be discussed in the next section) and chose such a course as a better alternative that suits, what they believe, a woman's nature (Hamdan, 2005). Although the situation was similar to Haya, Mabruka who was met during her final semester, referred to the university experience as a positive transformative process, which helped her to be more self-reliant about her own future choices. She said:

> "The university experience helped to change my personality somehow" and when asked if this choice hindered her in any way, she replied "Not at all, this position made me stronger, I felt I had to decide to like the course and succeed [in her final semester]. It made me feel I should be responsible and self-reliant about my own future decisions and always seek to be better." (Mabruka, focus group discussion, 18/09/2016).

The section above has looked at the complexities and obstacles that some students may face to continue and to overcome in order to partake and continue in a course of studies. The following section will explore further into a student's social class, family and the role that a *wasta* can play in facilitating or inhibiting a student in their academic endeavours.

5.2.4 Class, family and 'Wasta'

The impact of family support and extended family relationships has been noted by the columnist Bakheet (2013) who stated that the most successful students in Saudi universities had one member of the family who had completed a professional educational qualification and provided direct or indirect support. He also stated in relation to working class students, that they 'cannot aspire to something an individual does not know', (Bakheet, 2013: issue number 16296). The extent to which the influence of family members who play a role in social life and elevating class in Saudi is not fully explored by Bakheet (2013) who assumes that readers are familiar with the concept of '*Wasta*', which is a vital component of the social context of the country. He thus refers to it but does not elaborate. This may also be largely due to the fact that Bakheet is not writing in an academic framework. It is necessary however to analyse this more fully and this is considered in the following section.

With respect to *wasta*, (discussed in Chapter two) which involves someone as a mediator on behalf of a family member to help an individual achieve his/her goal (Abalkhail and Allan, 2015). It was a term that students referred to several times in various contexts. However, most discussions which referred to *wasta* were about the need for social connections to gain access to registration for courses where this was difficult as the dates for registration had passed, or where the demand for the course was in excess of its

capacity and changes in schedules where needed. Students participating in the research thus showed a heightened awareness of the importance of having a 'wasta' as a resource they had to use. Consequently, it is often referred to informally as ' Vitamin Waw' which clubs the letter *waw* (the Arabic letter which the word wasta begins with) with the term vitamin to indicate the beneficial properties of wasta. Samya, from Harb tribe, indicated how she successfully used wasta in the following narration:

> "As a mature student, according to the education system here, I can only enrol in the literature curriculum and continue my secondary school from a distance- meaning I only attend for exams. But I was interested in studying science and I wanted to do it in person and not from a distance. I tried hard but was unable to do so. Eventually, my aunt was hired in 'Alr Rass' [a city related to Al Qassim Province] as a faculty in a secondary school. I then asked her to mediate for me and use her connections with the headmaster of the school she worked at to allow me in the science stream. The headmaster accepted me with a condition of attending classes and registering as a regular student regardless of my age, which is what I was looking for anyway." (Samya, 33 years old 19/10/2016).

Not all students had such a positive experience, and a few shared their experience with the fact that their relative lack of access to a *wasta* hindered their ability to secure their desired change. This was apparent in the case of Thakra's situation (as indicated in the reflexivity section- Chapter four) whose account highlighted two issues: first, was the lack of economic capital, being from a working class background and it could be a matter of being able to afford a babysitter to take care of the baby. The second issue was in her statement, which brings attention to the fact that she considers it to be a lack of social capital in terms of her *wasta* connections. Her narrative indicates that while it was

possible for some students with enough *wasta* to change their schedules to suit their preferences, in her case, this was not possible and she was unable to find someone to approach someone who was working at the administration in order to change her schedule.

The possible detrimental effect of the use of *wasta* on the student experience in the process of allocation of scarce resources further emerged during a conversation in a staff waiting area with Majdah[32], who is the Head of one of the departments in a recently established college at TRU. Majdah narrated that there was a strict limitation on the number of seats the university allocated for courses. As a result, in the popular courses, demand far exceeded availability. In such circumstances, the students were supposed to be admitted onto the course based on their grades. Majdah said that she had once been approached by a student from a tribe who had high enough grades but who had failed to be admitted onto the course. The student alleged that admittance to the course was not just on the basis of grades but also on the ability to use a *Wasta* and as a result, students with considerable access to connections but with similar grades were able to secure a place on the course. She had come to complain that despite having high grades the reason she and others from her tribe had not been admitted was that they did not have the *wasta* to secure their entry. Majdah said that she had not initially believed the student but she looked at the list of students enrolled over the past three years and realised that the student's claim was genuine and that no one from her tribe had been enrolled in the class and that other students who had similar or slightly lower grades than she did had been enrolled.

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[32] Appendix 17: Field note - Majdah's Prospective of Wasta -translated part.

5.2.4.1 Analysing Wasta as a form of Social Capital

Going through the literature that has referred to the phenomenon of *Wasta* in relation to both theoretical information and empirical studies, it could be considered, as what Gold and Naufal (2012) noted as, 'significantly small and weak' (2012: 61). Their empirical studies were qualitative surveys that were conducted in several academic business institutions in the Gulf countries. The sample of the study, 59% of the students were from many Gulf and Middle Eastern countries and saw *Wasta* as a socially acceptable practice (2012:66). The students were mainly from private, elite American universities, and the majority originating from families who have a high income. The study might have ignored the large cross-section of other people in these societies, who might have dealt with *wasta*. However, the main finding of the study, which is relevant to the present thesis, is the positive relationship between family income and the use of wasta. Wealthier families have more connections and therefore are expected to have an advantage in accessing Wasta (2012:64).

It might be worth indicating that *Wasta* mostly benefits those with a high-class identity, students from wealthy families or who have a high tribal status like the way social capital is. However, it is not limited to those of high socio-economic status, like the example of Samya, who is from a working class background but is still advanced from her family's network of connections. Wasta is more linked to the level of communication. Being from a tribe and wealthy family with high communication could also be a privilege.

For these reasons, *Wasta* appears to be a form of capital. Analysing it using Bourdieu's work on capital reveals that Wasta seems to encompass elements of economic and cultural capital. Most of all, it seems to meet Bourdieu's description of social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a

durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition…These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them" (1986:248-9). The clear extent of peoples' ability to use *Wasta* based on the status of their tribe further confirms that Wasta meets Bourdieu's formulation of social capital as the cumulative power of a person's connections which he can effectively mobilise to achieve a particular end (1986:249). The ties which enable the use of Wasta thus constitute social and cultural capital which can and are called upon in ways that are similar to the mobilisation of social and cultural capital by middle and upper classes as described in the work of Bourdieu. While Wasta is perhaps not the only form of social capital, it is perhaps the most overt which is mobilised to attain advantages and having Wasta means having access to a specific form of power which one can bring to bear upon problems or requests (Hutchings et al., 2006; Barnett et al., 2013, Alwaten newspaper, 2016).

As stated earlier, this thesis considers the effect of various forms of capital on students' experience. As tribal affiliation and connections are a clearly identifiable form of social capital, it is important to consider the social implications of their tribal affiliation and familial connections on their experience of Higher Education.

5.2.5 Analysing the relationship of students' background and transition process

Emerging from Chapter five, part 1 analysis of the students' responses, it is possible to note that there is significant influence from students' backgrounds in terms of gender and family support class and tribal affiliations. This influence was not always helpful to the students and their higher education experience. In addition, it is possible to see a relationship between that experience and the transition process. Analysing the students' experiences, shows that there are advantages and disadvantages arising from certain backgrounds. For instance, family class background, extended family and the tribe

students belong to are factors that either privileges or constrains students. In the cases of many students from middle or upper middle class, their family's wealth, status and exposure ensured that they were not only encouraged to attain higher education, they were expected to attend university as almost everyone in their social circle had done so. Thus, they benefit from their social class and family backgrounds as they were already familiar with many aspects of the university experience through their social interactions and cultural capital and also received a lot of support from their families. The other students, such as those from working class backgrounds tended to be disadvantaged by their social class and family backgrounds; while they did have individual family members who supported them, they might also have motivational aspects which pushed them to reach success. However, they still had to struggle initially both to find the resources to pursue higher education and to "fit" into an environment which few in their families had experience of.

This however does not mean that all students with advantageous habitus or social class identities were certain to have an easy time transitioning into university. The above examples of respondents at TRU indicates that there is a strong relationship between students' class and their abilities to acclimatise to a university environment at the beginning. Most students' experience within TRU showed that a key determinant of habitus is the student's background and their social structure they inhabit which plays a role in mediating the student's attitudes and preferences. They also reveal how social class is a major contributing factor that makes the transition easier for students. The students at TRU had expressed and indicated their views and feelings of the transition experience differently according to their social structure and cultural background and according to this they either 'fit in or stand out' (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2010). However, social class is not the only factor that influences female students' higher

education experience. These are highlighted in the above sections which show the influence of other factors as well.

Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2010) initiated the concept 'fit in or stand out' with regards to social class, but I wish to expand this concept by explaining that in the context of this research, it relates not only to class but also the demographic and cultural background of the students, and includes their gender, tribe or family they came from. This idea of fitting in or standing out – depends on the cultural background these students came from which, in turn, depends upon the cultural capital and habitus they gained from their families and communities. This is particularly relevant as cultural capital refers to the knowledge these students gain out of their family and schools, while habitus refers to that knowledge after being adapted, inherited and became a habitus part of their mind and body (Bourdieu, 1984). It became part of their mind and body for example to maintain the ideal of a 'good woman' that matched the concept she was brought up with. It also became part of her habitus and might impact her choice of the course and even when they adapt the transition within the university environment. This also explains why some students find the transition easier and adaptable as with the three students discussed in (section 5.2.1.1).

5.2.6 Conclusion (part 2)

This chapter highlighted how certain students found it easier to adapt, transition and fit into the university due to their identity, experiences and backgrounds which had influenced their dispositions. Reviewing all the participants' experiences together it is possible to see that social class and positioning is a major determinant for the ease of the university experience for all the female students. As it has been discussed above, those from the middle or upper/ middle classes were broadly speaking better equipped and

prepared for university compared to those from lower classes and this could be due to previous experience in the English language, or the fact that they had access to *wasta* to facilitate their enrolment and schedule of studies. Conversely, it was also highlighted that some students were disadvantaged by their identity and backgrounds and needed to work extremely hard to transition to university. Moreover, students who came from the Eastern Province, Riyadh and Medina revealed that students' university experiences were enriched by their positionality, forms of capital and their broader life experiences. This issue is examined more fully in the next chapter (Chapter six). Some of the students, who tried hard to adapt to new habitus in order to bring success like Hana, Soad and Haya were aware of the difficulties they will face. They quite understood that to attain the fruits of life, one must face the rigors of challenge.

Chapter 6: The Experience Within TRU as a 'Social Space'

The previous chapter discussed the implications of a student's background, specifically choices, motivations and abilities to adapt, and explored the ways in which they may impact on their higher education experiences and ability to adjust to the transitions when they first join the university. However, it is also essential to acknowledge and consider the university environment together with the field they engaged in as both affect the social and learning setting. This chapter addresses RQ2 – what are the implications and influences of institutional habitus in the formation of female students' identities? It also examines if the university's social practices, especially those relating to regulations and norms enforced within the campus, influence students' identities. This chapter will also explore the social experience of individuals, or 'agents' as Bourdieu (1985) terms them, within the space of the TRU. It considers the responses of students and faculty from three main perspectives: the first perspective, considers the relationship between gender and space. The second perspective reflects the constructed logic of TRU as a social space. It indicates the way in which TRU as an institution could be viewed as a space enabling a transformative process, through the creation of possibilities and opportunities for the female students within this social space to change. The demands and constraints on the university space due to different social cultural reasons impact the expectations by students and university staff members. Finally, the chapter shows that despite the complexity and unevenness of the process, the university provides a space in which students can exercise their autonomy to some degree and develop aspects of their identity that they would not otherwise be able to outside of the university.

The spatial features of TRU, as with any institution, can be viewed in a multitude of ways. The most apparent of these are the physical spaces and structures of the university, such

as the site and buildings. It is, however, the social use of these spaces which has been referred to by several scholars as the "social space" (Bourdieu, 1985; Massey, 1994;) that characterises individuals' actions, interactions and disciplinary practices that are required (Burcar 2019; Le Renard, 2014) in relation to being both a 'female' and a 'university students'. For the purpose of this research, the term 'social spaces' refers to the different physical social areas and places where female students interact and socialise with each other within TRU's premises or (field) in Bourdieu's (1985) term. This includes locations such as canteens, the library, prayer rooms, waiting areas and open areas, where TRU rules are still enforceable. It is also important to reflect upon the cultural context of the study and consider that there are some parameters guiding women's actions as has been discussed in Chapter 2. Social space is an important facet of the institutional habitus (Chapter three). However, this chapter mainly focuses on the social aspects rather than the educational knowledge and the learning spaces within TRU. These issues are discussed in more detail in (Chapter seven).

The higher education institution could be understood as a field due to the 'social setting where class dynamics take place' (Reay et al., 2005: 27) also due to rules and regulations that structure the agents' positions within the university setting (Grenfell and James,1998). The social space of TRU would refer to the specific connection between the students, faculty and staff and the spatial practices within TRU. The university constitutes both a physical space as well as a social one which is populated by students, faculty and staff who as social agents lay claim to distinct places within the social space and hierarchy of the university. It is important to consider the conditioning relation between the way field and habitus operates, as "the field structure the habitus" and also the habitus "contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with values" (Bourduieu, 1989: 44). In the field, the conditions and

resources in the form of capitals that come to determine if an agent's experience of the system is either facilitated or hindered. This chapter will also consider both the rationale of some of the university regulations and the experience of the students with respect to these regulations in order to identify the manner in which the university, advertently - as has been expressed in the government and university's vision and aims[33]- or inadvertently, alter or reaffirm certain aspects of the students' habitus and the responses of the students to these procedures (see also Chapter two for further discussion). As discussed previously in the literature review (Chapter three), to understand individuals' actions, is 'to think in terms of field is to think relationally' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1996: 96). This must be read alongside both Bourdieusian concepts, which were also discussed in (Chapter 3) "field" and "habitus" which is a 'two way relationship between social fields as 'objective structures' and habitus as subjective experience of individuals (Bourdieu, 1998: vii). On one hand, the field is a system of relations that are characterised as 'constructivist structuralism' where each field has its 'specific logics' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1996:97) where agents structured their positions accordingly (Bourdieu, 1994: 122). On the other hand, Bourdieu's statement describing habitus as "generative and unifying principles which retranslate the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of persons, goods, practices" which he illustrates in the formula:

"Habitus = structured structures -> structuring structure" (1996:11)

Thus, habitus acts as a guide for an individual's strategy (stratégie), and is strongly connected to the field (Bourdieu, 1972) of the social space within which she is placed. Therefore, the habitus is related to the kind of norms or practices individuals, in this case

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[33] The aim, according to TRU vision, is to:
1. Provide quality education to students in the region in line with labour market needs.
2. Graduate qualified national cadres in scientific, and technical areas that are needed by the country.
3. Cooperate with government, and private agencies, and institutions to develop the region.

the female students, perform as part of their everyday activities within the university space. It must be noted here that the individual habitus that connects with this 'social space' might enable that individual to generate more effectively, powerfully further habitus and other forms of capitals. Chapter five referred to the way some of the students' background and their social structure helped them play a role in mediating the preparation and transition in the new space.

6.1 The dynamics of space and gender at TRU

It is apparent once students arrive at TRU, that they have different habitus due to differences in their social background, economic status, home, school and communities (see Chapter five- part 1). The nature of the students' habitus, as discussed in Chapter five - part 2, often facilitates or hinders students' experiences at the university as some students were more prepared and enabled than others to navigate the new environment and felt like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu 1977) whilst some felt uncomfortable with the unfamiliar environs. In order to analyse the structural logic of TRU culture, field or 'social space', this section draws from observations in the TRU and interviews with the female students. Considering TRU as a social space, it then maps students' positions within it and considers the factors which influence their positionality within the space.

What is considered as female practices and actions all gain from their familial environment and societal such as aspects of what is considered as part of the private space for women or 'women only space'. Women in Saudi mostly work in fields which are considered 'suitable to their nature', so within the higher education system there are courses which are considered to be suitable for males whilst others that are considered to be suitable for females. According to Alghamdi and Abdul-Aljawad (2010) the ultimate educational aims for females are to prepare them to be good mothers and wives, and that

education should not encourage females to deviate from these roles. At TRU for example, the study of architecture and law are not available in the female section and the interior design major for women was only recently introduced in September 2017. It is largely limited to medical science and even this is not entirely accepted all over Saudi. Female students are taught by male professors, public universities like TRU do so through the use of CCTV systems (as has been indicated in Chapter three - section 3.3.3.1) the part in which it considers the work of Al-Fassi (2010) and the only exception to this is the teaching of some medical courses. What is considered a natural job for women in one culture might not be the same in another. In Saudi Arabia, gender-segregation is a practice of everyday social activities, as has been discussed in the Chapter two and Chapter three, so for a woman to be segregated within the higher education system and facilities is a common practice and part of the social and cultural norms. The system is an indication of the extent to which gender influences student's experiences in higher education. It is possible to note that Bourdieu's (1989) hypothesis that relationships begin to underwrite the distribution within the physical space is apparent in the arrangement of physical space at TRU.

Using Massey's (1994) theorisation on the relationship between space and the gender lens, it is also possible to see the dynamic between the social and spatial control within TRU and how this is reflected in the identification of the university, which is a public space, to be an extension of female private space. The most overt manifestation of this is the extension of the university social space to be a private only woman space. One of the most obvious signs of this is the separation of the male and female sections of the university which is a clear indicator of the role of gender in the relationship between the university and its students. The building of the female students' campus is constructed with specific features such as outer walls which are tall enough to obstruct outside views

to enable more privacy, which differentiates it from the buildings meant for the male students. The TRU- female branch is mainly a woman only space, where men are denied access until the women leave the building. For example, at specific times, no female students can remain in the building as male maintenance crews enter it to carry out their work. Looking at the male building compared to the female buildings, there is a huge difference (bigger, newer and modern). From the first glance, the viewer might think that it is a sign of social exclusion that degrades women, or it is an indication of female position in such a society. Rather, it simply relates to the history of female education in Saudi and higher education in particular, which is a recent development as was discussed in the context chapter. When asked, some of the Saudi members at TRU went on to explain:

> "the female building is a building that used to belong to the male college
>
> of education… it is closer to the centre of the TRC compared to the new
>
> male campus. It is a matter of women involvement" (Mona Salah,
>
> Fieldnote - Manal's office, 20/ 04/ 2017).

It is important to emphasise the implication of 'women only' spaces in relation to the research. In a mixed workplace, women might not know how to act accordingly, simply because they have not been through the experience of working in a mixed environment. They might be unsure about their limits or boundaries. The following segment explains the nature of communication within the workplace environment of TRU. The example of one of the Vice-deans to one of the colleagues, Nourah Ali's views about the way female staff members in her deanship do not know the boundaries of 'acceptable' communication with other male workers from the male campus of the university. It must be noted here that the normal modes of communications at the TRC workplace is still via emails or over

the phone unlike, perhaps, other larger cities. The following extract from a conversation was recorded in the fieldnotes:

> 'In my deanship, I have a problem that some of the female admissions do not know how to communicate with men on the other side. I either have those women who totally refuse to have any kind of work communication with men or those who accept to communicate with men but do not know their boundaries". some you cannot control them. They are only able to communicate with their relatives (brothers/ father/ husband) but those are different. This is what we are suffering before we reach the stage of a mixed workplace" Nourah Ali, Vice-dean to one of the colleges, views of the gender-mixed workplace for women (18/04/2017).

One observation relates to an incident recorded in my fieldnotes "a member of staff responds to a female student who fainted" (25th April 2017) – out of the story note … the girl who collapsed and her friends called the ambulance but the female security took longer to allow the male paramedics to enter 'the only women zone as some women were not covered' a faculty member came and allowed them to enter under her responsibility in order to gain assistance for the girl. She was in the entrance and called for some girls to help the girl to be brought closer to the gate. She then shouted, *"girls men will come in. If you want to cover, please do so or go inside."* This incident only raised a concern when a similar incident happened at another university in another city, which was reported in Al-Arabiya newspaper about the death of the student at Hail University (Al-Jaber, 2019). Similarly, this ambulance arrived at the gate of the University within 7 minutes at 10:52, but the emergency paramedics were subjected to delays at the university gate for 17 minutes, which was too long in this particular case. Analysing the two incidents, leads me to surmise that by not involving women in gender mixed

environments, renders some women incapable of reacting or responding to certain incidents that require their involvement. Higher education systems might need to develop a habitus for these women to understand and know how to navigate within their boundaries, particularly as Saudi society is progressing to a more open society that involves more women in the workplace and the implication of "women's empowerment" as part of Saudi Vision 2030 that was discussed in (Chapter two).

The implication of 'women only' space as a social cultural system in Saudi Arabia within the university space needs to be explored. According to Bourdieu's (1967) 'system of education and system of thought', relates to work that was completed but has not been translated into English. However, it has been analysed by Robbins (2019:172-3) of which he explains that the university education system is a sub-system within the social system. Although the university has its own rules and regulations as part of its structure as a field (Robbins, 2019:173), it cannot be understood out of the whole social system of Saudi culture. Therefore, the idea of 'Women-Only' Space is a common practice, part of the general structure of Saudi Arabian society, which has an implication on women in general. The system is the embodiment of social and cultural norms, it links to the internalisation of gender norms and gender stereotypes which shapes women's experience and role. Female identity and women's positions are socially constructed concepts, which vary from one place to another depending on the lens and the context of society (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). For some Islamic feminists, this might be seen as part of the patriarchal system in general (Fluehr-Lobban, 1993). While women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia view this kind of legislation as discrimination against women and part of the patriarchal system that limits women's duties to be mainly centred on her role as a mother and wife within the domestic sphere, and limited in the public sphere

while men hold power in both spheres (Moghdam, 1992; Bhasin, 1993; Doumato, 2010; Al-Huwaider, 2009; Alwedinani, 2016).

6.2 Importance of the term social space in the project

Bourdieu also highlights another important phenomenon with respect to social space - the use of social space as a background against which identities are established and the struggles to control social spaces (1989:20). As noted earlier, identity is recognised as a contested term and an individual's experience or behaviour cannot be explained without knowing the structure that s/he is embedded in (Halperin and Heath, 2012:39). Given that individuals' identities are influenced by the context in which they live and are involved in, as discussed above in the section on the dynamics of university social space, the concepts of 'habitus' and 'cultural capital' become important factors by which to examine students' experience and their sense of belonging within TRU as a social space.

At TRU, as applies with most universities and in many public settings and establishments, the dynamic division of space is constituted by the relationships between faculty members, staff and students. Faculty members for example have designated spaces from which to teach in classrooms as well as offices or rooms which are completely or partially accessible to students. Similarly within classrooms, student seating faces that of the faculty and outside of the classroom, there exist some spaces such as corridors where students are under closer supervision by faculty and staff and other spaces such as common rooms or prayer rooms where they are not under such close supervision. Through these factors of access, lack of access and supervision which are performed differently in different spaces, it is possible to see how these spaces constitute and are constituted by the set of relationships - between faculties and students- students and other students.

There are several aspects of the student and university interactions which highlight the social control that the university exercises over female students. As has already been indicated, one of the most important divisions in the use of space is the separation of the male and female sections of the university. This indicates the nature of the relationships in the university and the unequal distribution of resources to the male sections, although the number of female students is more than male. This could be due to the leading positions of authority and subsequently, decision makers to be mainly held by men. Several of the regulations which the university placed upon women were premised on the existence of the guardianship system. The following section examines the restrictions upon the female students within the university which pertain to space and examines these in order to understand the nature of the relationship between the university and its female students.

6.2.1 Guardianship: Between Legal Mandate and University Experience

One of the most controversial issues with respect to gender in Saudi Arabia is the "guardianship" system (*mahram*). Under this, all females must have a legal male guardian whose approval is needed for decisions such as travel outside the country, enrolment in university or obtaining a passport. The guardianship laws affect the lives of women in Saudi Arabia in multiple ways. While some of these effects such as the restriction on travel were a direct result of the laws themselves, the symbolic power of these laws are also considerable. This system was partially rescinded in April 2017 in a royal proclamation which ordered that women be allowed to access any government service without first of all, obtaining a male guardian's consent - unless it was required by an existing regulation (Wald, 2017; Human Rights Watch 2018). Nonetheless, the proclamation also stated that government agencies were also supposed to provide a list

of such regulations which indicates that these are being reviewed. The proclamation was made mid-way through the fieldwork for this project. Thus, in the first half of the fieldwork (October 2016), the legal constraints of the system and its effect on the working of the university and female students was overt. During the second half of the fieldwork (April 2017), many changes had been implemented. The difference in students' views of these changes is illuminated by the following responses during interviews which took place after the removal of the system. Together, they highlight the complexity of the system's effect on Saudi women.

The first interview was with Aseel who is a mature, married student from a wealthy supportive family. When asked about her views on the guardianship system, she commented that she did not think the dismantling of the system will *'add anything new to my life'*. Aseel also added that she was concerned about the removal of the system as it might affect good relations with the guardians. For her: 'Having a father or a husband in a woman's life is an honour as it gives her power and prestige' (Aseel second interview, 25/4/2017).

The second interview was with Soad, who was divorced and therefore under the guardianship of her brothers. Unlike Aseel who did not face many restrictions from her family, Soad commented that the dismantling of the guardianship system meant that she would have fewer restrictions placed on her. Previously, as a divorcee, she had been forced to depend heavily on the co-operation of her brothers, who did not have either the inclination or the resources to support her. Moreover, unlike Aseel who was still married to an affectionate husband, Soad was also encumbered with an openly hostile ex-husband, who through the guardianship system, also hindered many vital administrative tasks such

as the renewal of Soad's passport. Under the new system however, Soad said she would be free to apply for a passport with no such hindrances.

The vast differences in the positionality of the two students is crucial in contextualising their views on the guardianship system and its impact on their lifestyle and opportunities. They also provide insights into the operation of the system itself. For Aseel, given her privileged background and her highly supportive family, the system had seemingly little impact on her day to day life. In the case of Soad, the vulnerabilities of her life as a divorced single woman, the guardianship system magnified her vulnerability as it ensured that she was at the mercy of her male relatives whose non-cooperation could have a direct and immediate detrimental effect on her life direction and chances. Soad was also affected by her social background, she came from a working class background and depended upon her father's retirement income. Perhaps if she came from a different background, such as a wealthy background, her experience might have been different in relation to more access to resources and other forms of capital. However, her status as a divorced woman would be seen as the same.

Thus, it is possible to see that the system ensured that males had a significant degree of control over the lives of women which they could potentially be used to penalise and hinder women who they did not have a good relationship with. However, women who were privileged both economically and socially did not face these restraints directly, but this was nonetheless contingent on ensuring a good relationship with the 'guardian'. Aseel's second concern however also indicates that she did feel that the removal of the system might affect her relationship with either her father or husband and that this made her feel vulnerable as earlier she felt that women were 'honoured'. This statement could be interpreted to mean that she was dependent upon her guardian in more ways than just

under the narrow auspices of the guardianship system, and might never have experienced this as a control over her simply because they never made her feel like this. She may have viewed it as an honour or privilege as she saw this as being part of the life that accompanied 'a good woman'. Unfortunately, this is only conjecture as the research process made it impossible to clarify the extent or to delve deeper.

However, social control can take multifarious forms and one of those forms is self-regulation. Foucault (1979) identifies the ways power is instituted in social relationships, with family and the wider social structure. Also these rules and expectations that surround us in university, also surround us within other social spheres and also the 'ideal' student can also be the 'ideal' woman, the 'ideal' wife to the extent that the proliferation of this identity and role is self-regulated or even self-policed by females themselves (Foucault, 1979).

The guardianship system also plays an important role in directing student's experiences at university and consequently the removal of the system also had a direct impact on the student experience. While the legal system of the guardianship system was in place, it ensured that the guardian had a significant degree of control over women in a specific number of instances. The system was then cited as the rationale for a number of the university's regulations over women's lives. One of those was the university's rule that female students once inside the university campus could not leave until 12.00 pm unless their guardian was present or they had a written authorisation from their guardian to do so and additionally show the ID card of their guardian. Two students, who were repeating some modules and did not have a full-time schedule stated during the interviews that they either had to wait two hours before the gates opened or continually ask their guardian to pick them up and provide the related national ID of the person picking them up. Female

students were also required to leave the classroom buildings by 6pm when the male maintenance and cleaning staff would enter the buildings.

Interviews with staff members however, also revealed that while several regulations could be traced to the guardianship system, in many instances it was not the system alone which was responsible for the regulation of female students. This became particularly apparent during an interview with a female guard who, when asked why there were several regulations which restricted female students' mobility, stated that: "If we leave the gates open all day, some girls go out with their friends without their parents knowing to meet boys".

The statement indicates an aspect of protection, not only for the students but also for their parents, in which the university is seen to take action. The following section highlights the experience of students within the university accommodation as part of the social space of TRU.

6.2.1.1 TRU Accommodation:

All of the seven students who lived in the TRU accommodation were either on the medical or science path; whilst none were from the humanities. Examining the social class of students who lived in the accommodation, it became evident that they were largely from lower middle or working class families. The five students (Abeer, Tahani, Ahlam, Noor and Boshra) were unable to secure admission to their first choice of university through their economic capitals or social connections '*wasta*'. Some of them chose to be at the university accommodation as it was affordable. According to the university accommodation supervisor, the fees for one term's accommodation was only ten percent of the rates outside the university. The two exceptions to this are Rahaf and Shahad, as women alone it was more convenient to live in the university accommodation.

Both represented a better economic status and considered their families to be from middle and lower-middle classes because they reported a high form of cultural capital. As explained earlier, the way cultural capital is examined is through access to resources and forms of capital. Both Rahaf and Shahad are able to speak English and the fluency in speaking the language in Saudi is a sign of being from the middle and upper classes (Elyas, 2008). Also, both students liked to read and write in English.

In general, students' experience of living in the accommodation was not pleasant. Some pointed to the level of hygiene, the small areas provided for rooms and that it was shared with other student(s). Others also drew on how they felt about living on campus and most saw it as a disadvantage and an unpleasant experience particularly as they are away from their family home. Abeer, for example, talked about her feelings when she first entered the compound without anyone noticing, during the summer break when she came with her mum to finalise some registration forms. She said:

> "I was horrified at first because there was this dark lighting and it was very dusty. It was as if it was abandoned ...so it didn't give me the impression of a study environment. Immediately I said (ya Allah) [oh my God]-what is this prison... but what can I do? Most importantly I am here to study. Later when they saw me leaving they were shocked and asked how did you get in and do you have a mobile phone?... I felt bad and scared. It was like a prison from all the dust but later, after having lived in it, I am now more satisfied with it" (Abeer's interview 13/10/2016).

An interview with Shahad revealed that the university social space had both advantages and disadvantages, and when asked about her experience, she stated that:

> "I don't feel I am the same. Being here with the girls, rather than my family's influence on me, they became important to me... Not all the

changes are positive, being here at the accommodation limited some of the activities I used to do. When I was in Medina I used to go to the gym, I was a member of a Quran memorisation group, now I don't have access to all this. I cannot make use of the long amount of spare time; all we do is talking… nothing else. We need some activities here, and we asked and got a small gym but maybe I should gather a group to share the same interest and ask the university to create some activities for us. I have joined 'ayamel' [a Volunteer workgroup]" (Shahad, 2nd interview, 25/04/2017).

Shahad thus illustrates that while she does have a wider group to socialise within the accommodation, the university environment is different than her home and so she is unable to engage in several activities which she would otherwise have been able to undertake. These examples reveal that the university accommodation is an important space which both produces certain ways of being for the female students in which the rules and restrictions set. It is also a generative space within which students socialise and represent themselves in the manner they want to be perceived. This is discussed further in the next section which considers how gender and space are constituted by each other.

An important aspect of these new experiences that the students had is that they often had difficulty in adjusting to the social space of the university. This is also addressed in the theoretical work of Bourdieu who states that when individuals move into a space in which structures and practices differ from those of their own habitus, the individual is likely to "incur negative sanctions" (Bourdieu, 1977:78). I have suggested that students' experience of living on compass, is not a pleasurable experience by drawing on how they feel about living on campus. It was mainly to do with the restrictions on students' mobility to leave the campus and also the limitations of what they could do within their free time.

These restrictions might exist to protect students and to keep them safe from outside experiences and encounters. It is also an extension of the protection of family honour and upholding family expectations. However, the atmosphere and restrictions did not give the students the space to be creative. The feeling of students 'not feeling the same' or the feeling that actually living on the campus was more inhibiting than living at home, must be to do with the background they came from, which is different to the university accommodation environment - it is a less of a family lifestyle. Previously they used to live in more of a close relationship than more of community environment, with much less individuality. Most of these students come from a protective family environment, in which everything is done for them. While at TRU campus the environment was different to this, students felt inhibited and also thwarted with some of the restrictions and regulations.

However, this experience over time did help students to become more assertive about what they wanted. For example, the first phase of data collections indicated that there were less activities for women compared to men, who, for example, were involved in many more sport activities than the female students. Three students who lived in the university accommodation and participated in the study (Shahad, Roufe and Noor), referred to a request form they had signed with other students asking for activity spaces inside the accommodation, such as a gym and an open garden. During my second phase of the fieldwork, I noticed that the university had funded and provided the requested areas.

6.2.1.2 The Restriction at TRU Accommodation

Students who live at the university campus might have faced the highest numbers of restrictions deriving from the guardianship system. One of the restrictions of TRU accommodation was that women cannot just come and go as they please. The students

implied during interviews that once a week they could be escorted to the mall, ATM and supermarket by supervisors and on a different day, they could go clothes shopping, but also with supervision. The most inconvenient restriction that female students at the university hostel reported though was that their guardian had to come personally to pick them up from the university if they wanted to go home or on vacation. Shahad stated during the second interview that she found this very difficult and expensive as her father, as her guardian, would have to travel to TRC from the city the family lived in which was a significant distance away (approximately 480 km). She felt this was an inconvenience to her guardian as he had to come all this way only to pick her up and later drop her back to the university. With the removal of the system however, this was made much simpler and resulted in the regulations being relaxed. This was to the extent that the university arranged for her to be dropped off at a nearby airport from where she was able to fly to her hometown and she was also able to take one of the new online transportation network companies like Uber or Careem back to the university when she returned to TRC airport. It is possible to thus see that expectations of the university, as the guardian of the female students began to change as the restraints of guardianship in general were being removed. Given the time constraints of the research - only six months had elapsed by the end of the field work when the guardianship system was removed, making it impossible to verify in a more detailed manner how women's identities would be impacted by this change.

6.2.2 The use of camera smartphones within TRU space

The clear if indirect link between the guardianship system and the TRU regulation of female students was also apparent in the use of smartphones. At the beginning of the fieldwork, students were not allowed to carry phones with cameras in accordance with the university regulations. Later however, these regulations were changed and students were allowed to carry smartphones and iPads, provided they did not have cameras. This

was rationalised as being necessary to protect the privacy of female students as they may unwittingly be photographed and have their photos circulated without their consent, particularly on social media. During these periods of restriction, students could often be seen still carrying such phones but doing so covertly. Once the guardianship system had been dismantled however, the Minister of Education during that time, Ahmed Al-Issa issued a letter in October 2017 stating that female students in all over Saudi in public or private universities were allowed to have their smartphones with cameras on campus. After this, students began to openly carry such devices. Coverage of this letter by the media carried articles with headlines and content which gave the impression that all phones had thus far been banned when actually the issue was with the phone's camera, not the phone (Okaz, 2017; Toumi, 2017). The Ministry of Education provided a report (Ministry of education, 2017). An interesting feature of the Minister's statement was that female students have attained a high level of awareness that allows them to rise up to their responsibilities and lead their lives normally, at the same time, they are subject to regulations and procedures to stop any individual behaviour that may cause offense (ibid). This is an indication of the increasing conferring of autonomy and responsibility to women students.

The fact that it was not just the guardianship system alone but also the local customs and traditions of TRC which resulted in the restrictions on female students became most prominent in the controversy surrounding the university plans to introduce ID cards with the student's photos on them in 2005. These restrictions had to be retracted due to the intense pressure placed on TRU by the conservative members of the populace belonging to the city who felt that such ID cards would violate the modesty of female students. It is also pertinent to note that these plans for an ID card were successfully reintroduced in 2016, after the Ministry of Interior for Civil Status confirmed in 2013 that women had to

have a national identity card within a period of 7 years and that this ID card would have a picture of the face of the holder (Al Riyadh News, 2013).

Using Lefebvre's (1991) understanding of social space as being constituted by the connections between the use of the space, it is possible to note that the physical space of TRU is constituted by its status as a learning environment. Within this understanding of the space of TRU, it is also possible to see that it is further constituted by its function as a distinct part of the social fabric of the TRC and as a part of the larger university or educational system of Saudi Arabia. Another important aspect of the university environment is that in many ways it is a transitional phase between school and employment - experiences which in themselves are vastly different. To a certain degree, at a university, students enjoy considerably greater degrees of autonomy compared to school students. However, the rules and regulations of the university constrain them in ways which those outside the learning environment are not. The perception that a university is "responsible" for students' well-being in the broadest sense of the term is however not limited to TRU but is in fact a major concern for most universities. In the UK this manifests itself in the emphasis on the pastoral care that the university is supposed to provide for its students (Bamber, 2016). This is best expressed by Reay et al., 2005 as *"The transition to higher education is a process of developing some autonomy"* (2005: 69).

It is important to note that often the university experience is highly complex and spans multiple levels. The changing stances of the TRU and the conservative groups in TRC show that the university itself has to play a balancing act as on one hand it must both align with legal stipulations and reassure parents and other groups that it is "responsible" for ensuring that students comply with social practices while on the other hand it must also

appear to provide students with the same opportunities and experience of universities outside of Saudi Arabia.

6.2.3 The Duty to Protect Women

In Saudi Arabia, there is a sharp distinction between the public and domestic spaces with men perceived to be concerned with matters in the public realm and women with the domestic. Saudi society is thus structured around the protection of women, which is mainly seen as the duty of their male relatives (Prokop, 2003; Al Washmi, 2009; Al Lily, 2011). This form of "protection" might be burdensome and terrifying for men and overwhelming and restrictive for the women. Several faculty members noted that there were major differences between a TRU student's experience of higher education when contrasted with their own or with other non-Saudi students' experience of it. One of the main contentions that might be linked to the guardians' protection was that the students were not taught to "think for themselves", "they are being protected". During an interview with one of the foreign members of staff, Amina talked about the life experiences of Saudi girls being more limited and protected as compared to a similarly aged girl from another part of the world. Amina stated that:

> "Here the level is different. I take it from their lifestyle. The Saudi girls are very protected compared to our lifestyle in western countries…if the students are aged 18, 19, 20, 21... in the process I will relate to them as a 16 or 17-year-old child in my country because that's the level, that's their mind-set at the moment. They are like little school kids. Because of the environment that they come from, they are so protected, in a way… they have that privilege to have that protection. In western countries, students at a young age develop anxiety, depression. You go out into the world and

you have to stand on your own feet at a very young age. [here] they are

lucky to be under that umbrella… even those who are married they are still

under that protection. Remember, the Arab culture girls move from their

family home to their next [the husband] home [from one protection to the

next protection]. While in the western culture, I moved out of the house I

lived on my own for a while. Some may have boyfriends for a couple of

years then they may decide to get married so they are much more

advanced" (Amina interview, Muslim South African, 30th April 2017).

Based on this system of protection, students are subjected to regulations which claim to

have been created to protect them but which often hinders them substantially. The

complex nature of this duty to care and the restraining nature of university regulations are

explored in greater detail in the following sections.

Despite being rescinded, the effect of the guardianship system significantly has

considerable implications on the female student's identity and development. This is

clearly illustrated in the choices of Haya and Reem who due to their views on the

necessity of guardianship delayed or cancelled their plans to study abroad. Haya said:

"I'd like to study English outside but this idea might be delayed till I have

the available mahram [male guardian] who might be able to go with me"

(Haya, 1st interview, 27/09/2016).

This was also similar to Reem's experience. She joined TRU only after she cancelled her

scholarship to Turkey as it didn't meet her eventual intention to be enrolled in a university

in Germany to allow her to study close to her male relative (guardian) who studied there.

The female students thus viewed the existence of a male guardian as an important factor

and often considered it normal to shift their dreams and plans based on this. It is a practice that they have adapted to and grown up with; thereby becoming part of their identity. Many Muslim women are chaperoned by men when they travel as this practice has its root in the Islamic teachings (Naseef, 1999). However, there are some exclusions, there are circumstances and situations that some females would find that the doors are closed, there is no entry or access because not all women have the support of a guardian, they may not even have a guardian. Some people might also use this requirement as leverage against the interest of a woman in order to limit her ambitions or even to control her movements.

Education institutions can play an important role in the development of identity, as can religion (Oppong, 2013). Within the space of a university, what emerges from the data is the interrelationship of protection for females between the formal legal guardianship system, the informal social controls on women in general and female university students in particular and the effects of these on identity formation.

6.2.4 Perspectives on the Social Practices of Wearing the Abaya at TRU

In TRC as in all Saudi Arabia, the wearing of the abaya in public social spaces is necessary for all women as part of their religious practices to ensure that they are considered respectable. In addition, some wear the abaya in specific ways to avoid coming to the attention of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (Hai'a) in public spaces. An abaya is a loose black garment- worn by women over their clothes. It is often worn in combination with a hijab which is the headscarf and a *niqab*, the veil covering over the face. The term hijab however, also has a broader meaning of "boundary". There are several contentions about the translation and meanings of these terms however, for the purpose of this research, I use the term abaya. One of the

most notable changes that takes place for female students when entering TRU, is the wearing of the abaya outside the university and the immediate removal once inside. The following section analyses the observations of the practice and regulations of wearing and removing the abaya more closely.

There are several social conventions associated with the wearing of the abaya in Saudi. When the fieldwork for this thesis initially began in 2016, some members of the Hai'a would stand outside the university gates, checking students' attire prior to entering. However, by the time the second part of the fieldwork was undertaken, they no longer did so. While it is difficult to ascertain what exactly led to the secession of this overt monitoring of students by the Hai'a, the year 2016 was marked by several simultaneous moves to curtail the power of the Hai'a and increase women's access to public life (Arabnews, 2016).

While the media outside of Saudi Arabia often focuses on the issue of the regulation of Saudi women's appearance in the country, it bears noting that in Saudi, it is not just women's appearance but also men's which has been subjected to close scrutiny. Social and legal regulations for both sexes emphasise the need for "decency" or "formality" in public spaces and students of both genders are subjected to even greater amounts of regulation than adults. The tweet by Ministry Deputy for Parallel Education, Haya Alawad - a screenshot of the original tweet in the appendix 16 (Alawad, 2018) denying that the Ministry of Education was 'imposing a specific form of hijab in Saudi schools' is illuminating in this respect as it shows, first, the differences between expectations between females and males, and second, the vast differences between the perceptions of decency. Within TRU, the experiences highlighted through interviews with those who are originally from other regions indicates that there is a lack of acceptance of these different

perceptions of decency which manifest in ways such as not wearing the hijab as is usual in the TRC, choosing not to cover the face or choosing to wear a non-black abaya. This results in very rigid expectations in terms of what is deemed decent for women's attire.

For most women there are many "common sense" social norms connected to the abaya which are thrown into relief only when there are divergences from these norms. This is the case with the regulation pertaining to the abaya in TRU. Some aspects of the internalisation and role of the abaya in integration and adaptation to the Saudi culture is reflected in the statement by Louisa, a white South African lecturer, who said that when she first joined, TRU, Mrs Bowles, who was the head of the English department at the time advised new members that:

> "wearing the abaya and niqab like the way women of TRC is better and more safe for you - as foreigners [it will help] you will blend with the people" (Louisa interview date 20th October 2016).

In addition, some of the traditional tribal activities such as specific veiling practices are not related to Islam. During the fieldwork, I observed that Umm Abdula, a security guard at TRU gate who was in her late 50s, covered her face all the time even when there were no men inside the university campus. When I asked why she did so, she replied that 'this is a tradition that only a few women observe these days". Three tribes are known for this activity are the Mutair, the tribe I belong to, and two others, Otaibah and Rashaayda. Although, even within these tribes, not all women observe this practice (fieldnote 14th October 2016). I was surprised when she also said that she covered her face even when she was at home and when only her husband and children were present. Upon later investigation, I found several articles which described this practice as a 'tribal tradition' (Al Arabiya Arab News 26 May 2004; Alsaddawi, 22 Dec 2015).

By and large, an abaya is an essential part of women's apparel when stepping out of the home in Saudi Arabia. It is usually taken off when one is in a private women's space and in most gender specific private spaces there is the expectation that women will take off the abaya if they plan to stay for a length of time - though there is no stipulation that it must be taken off immediately or even at all. Outside the university, the majority of women at TRC, due to their religious and cultural beliefs, also cover their face with *'niqab'*. TRC has thus attracted a reputation as being more conservative than other cities in Saudi Arabia (as indicated by Raza, a British Muslim member). There is almost no variation in the way women wear the abaya especially when compared to larger cities in Saudi, where it is possible to see a woman only wearing Hijab on her head or shoulders or different colours of the Abaya rather than only black. Even the foreign faculty members, after joining TRU, I observed them covering their faces and wearing abayas in the same way as women of TRC. The effects of diverging from the norms of the TRC in terms of the style of the abaya was highlighted by Tahani, a student, who came from Medina to study at TRU. When she was asked about her present experience at TRU, she replied that:

> "[it is] definitely hard to be here [TRU accommodation] alone without my
> parents or anyone else … I came here to study in a different environment
> and a completely different community than the one I came from. Here [The
> Regional City] is a very conservative community in comparison to Medina
> we are more open.
>
> M: How, what do you mean?
>
> T: For example, in relation to 'Hejab', although I am not Mohajaba' [she
> covers her face as well as her head] but here they look at a 'Mohajaba' girl
> [who only covers her head] differently- it is not nice and they stereotype
> her..... Here they stereotype people and judge them a lot compared to

......ummm I don't know....yeah.. they do care who you are, from where you come from, what is your background, which tribe you originate from…

M: Do you mean to stick to religion?

T: Not really religion, it is more of tradition and customs.

From Tahani's interview, it emerged that there is a fair degree of criticism faced by those who do not conform to the style of "dressing modestly" according to the expectations of female attire in the TRC, together with the stereotypical assumptions by society and that these are more than what is usual in other parts of Saudi Arabia. This reaffirms Bourdieu's argument that:

"we can compare social space to a geographic space within which regions are divided up. But this space is constructed in such a way that the closer the agents, groups or institutions which are situated within this space, the more common properties they have; and the more distant, the fewer" (Bourdieu,1989: 16).

It must be noted that not all views on the abaya wearing practices at TRC or TRU were negative. Karema who came from Algeria stated during an interview that

"I used to see the wearing of Abaya as backwards and not fashionable at all. When I first came I had to wear the niqab... here you noticed people look at you and you feel as if you are recognised if you don't wear it the same way as the majority. So, I chose to be the same as them and wear it. Now I've started to like wearing it, I like the fashion style around Abaya. I also have lots of friends from different tribes, I like to know more about their culture, getting to know them more is interesting".

Her views here indicate the complex nature of women's choices and compulsions in the context of wearing the abaya. Besides this, the cultural hegemony of TRC, where for females it is one look. The aim of these two examples is to illustrate the lived experiences of students from outside TRC and their capabilities to fit in. Both show how TRC as a community, places strong restraints on outsiders and the effects of homogenising aspects of the culture through disapproval of wearing the Abaya and Hijab in different ways and the perception of the societal view, that if people who do not do so, are not 'fitting in'. Some students such as Karema were flexible. They accepted the idea of wearing the Abaya in the same way as the women of TRC and chose to 'fit in'. Others such as Tahani found it more difficult to adapt or conform.

Within the university, however, female students have no uniform and are free to some degree to wear whatever they like and can wear makeup, hairstyles, and hair colours in ways that they choose. However, there does exist several restrictions which ensure that students do not wear clothes which are considered to be "too" revealing. For instance, students are not permitted to wear trousers, short skirts, or short sleeved tops - with the exception of the medical students who are permitted to wear medical uniform scrubs. Given this and TRU's stated commitment to allow students to "express themselves" and have flexibility in their choice of clothes, the rule that the abaya *must* be taken off after passing the university's female security stands out for being contradictory on a number of levels. For the students though, this practice was not considered to be unusual as within most educational institutions in Saudi, for safety reasons and for comfort, abayas are usually taken off when entering the institution if the environment is completely female only. Therefore, most students found this rule unremarkable, as part of their norm, as it was also enforced in schools, however, a few did comment that this rule was not always convenient for everyone all of the time, they commented "[some] poor girls were not

allowed to keep it on" or "[perhaps it is] that I want to keep it on when I pop in for a short time" etc.

One perspective of TRU's mandate that females must remove the abaya upon entry is that it is not only 'liberating' but also presents an opportunity for female students to 'represent themselves the way they want to be seen' particularly as the space is extended as a women's private space. This is especially pertinent as universities' social space are often the only space which is routinely frequented for several hours of the week by students and a place where they can socialise and create social relations outside of the family and community network. However, this is not a sufficiently robust explanation as removing the abaya once within the university premises is not optional but a mandate and this indicates a restriction rather than an expansion of freedom. In order to understand the university's reasoning for this mandate, I also brought up the question with faculty members and staff. One female security guard stated that:

> "it is one of the university rules which we follow. It occurred before I even started working here, I heard it [is] due to past experience when a man entered the university campus wearing an abaya (and therefore the rule is there to ensure that only women enter) (I am) not sure why (he did that) but maybe to see that space."

Another respondent stated that the rule was in place to ensure that students and staff do not come in wearing "inappropriate" clothes to the university underneath their abaya. The term inappropriate in this context was not being used to indicate only indecent clothes such as short skirts etc. but clothes such as pyjamas, which were inappropriate due to their informality and the recognition that these types of attire, are designated for use in the 'private' spaces only.

6.3 A space to learn how to be

The university as a space for students to develop an identity/collective consciousness. While students did not find the regulations pertaining to the abaya remarkable or unusual they often referred to the issue of how "they appeared" - more narrowly in the sense of clothing and the more broadly in the sense of projecting a particular identity through their physical appearance. The linkages between appearance, class and educational aspirations has been highlighted in the context of higher education in the UK. Archer et al. (2007) for example, found a relationship between working class identity and higher education and the strategies that young working class people engage in to establish class identities and ways of 'creating self-worth, status and value' (2007:224). In this context, the students' linking of certain forms of apparel and appearance to these characteristics of modern or backward as not following high western fashion trends, is significant and is explored in greater detail in the section below which considers the implications of student and faculty perspectives on appearances in university. The findings of Archer, et al (2007), in relation to the way students referred to clothes as an important feature in which to reflect their identity and class, is similar to some of the findings in this study. Also, in the context of what is "appropriate" for university resonated with the findings from the fieldwork at TRU. The following section details the responses of students and observations from the field with respect to class and appearance. The primary focus of this section however, is the role of TRU as a space in which first year students develop both a sense of individual identity as well as adapting to the institutional habitus to the collective identity of the students. Chapter five explored the diversity in students' habitus when they first enrolled at TRU, and this chapter has considered how students, through their ability to socialise and interact with those of different backgrounds and access to social media and global trends, developed different viewpoints and habitus, especially once at the university.

In Chapter five, the vastly different backgrounds from which students come when they join TRU was highlighted. In addition to class, students' backgrounds also differed in terms of age, family backgrounds, urban and rural experience, tribal affiliations, exposure to foreign cultures and fluency in English. In the first set of interviews with the students and staff, these differences were highlighted in many ways. Students from outside TRC had many complaints about the conservatism of the environment and society in TRC compared to their home cities. Students who were the first in their families to take up higher education indicated how they were initially unsure of how to conduct themselves in the university. Faculty members also stated how students initially did not know how to dress or behave appropriately for the university setting. It was apparent that students' habitus when they first joined university thus affected their initial experience. Over subsequent interactions and interviews, however, it became clear that during their time at the university, some students had begun to "fit in" as their habitus began to alter in relation to the field of university. This process of fitting in was twofold. On one hand, the women in the first-year prep program began to develop a different habitus as students. with their experience of the different settings - their lives outside of university and their lives within the university, the students also began to gain a greater perspective into how they could develop their own agency and choose how they represented themselves.

In the context of appearance and the development of habitus and identity, TRU as a space, where they can practice different forms of social capital, is unlike any other space that students have access to as within it, students regularly encounter others from different social classes and backgrounds which would otherwise not be possible. Furthermore, the university is also a space in which students face fewer restrictions on their appearance and have greater freedom and opportunity to present themselves in ways which would

not be possible at home or in other public/private spaces for example. Additionally, for most young students, university is also a space and time during which they develop through their education and life continuum childhood - school – university - adulthood.

Finally, at TRU, it became apparent during the observations, that knowledge and consumption of fashion trends and wearing of certain brands or accessories was a strategy to be placed in a class-defining category or to express a desire to belong to a particular subculture. During several interviews, students revealed that adopting fashionable trends was vital to their desire to appear "modern" and not "backward". This latter term was rooted in the impression students often held about those from non-urbanised tribes who were unfamiliar with global trends such as English speaking, the latest technology and so on. Backwardness, which manifested in these ways, therefore, was viewed as a particularly undesirable characteristic which had to be avoided at all costs. Modernity on the other hand, which was manifested by one's urbanity, awareness of technology and ability to speak English was a much-desired characteristic. These desires and anxieties are clearly similar to Bourdieu's description of the development of taste being a necessary part of the process of acquiring a certain class. To sum up, TRU emerges as a safe, semi-private, semi-public space, where female students can socialise. It promotes and facilitates students to try western or modern fashions and learn and exchange ideas from each other. The following sections will discuss these concepts in more detail.

6.3.1 Belonging and fitting in TRU Social Space

The understanding of how women students use the TRU social space is important for the study of the formation of identities. As is the attention that needs to be given to the link between 'self' and 'identity' in relation to different presentations of self and students'

different choices of self-expression. Marranci (2008) explains identity as "a process with two functions. On the one hand, it allows human beings to make sense of their autobiographical self, while on the other it allows them to express the autobiographical self through symbols" (2008, 97). This includes students' own feelings of belonging and the ways they categorise themselves according to others. The following examples consider the different presentations of self and the way it is used by students to either to make friends, create that sense of belonging or to make sense of their own self.

TRU is not only a space for learning; it is also a space where female students both communicate, socialise and, are socialised in particular ways. For many students, university was also considered to be the option for them to socialise and engage in social relations. Students pointed out the socialisation aspect as an outcome of what the university might have provided them with, for example "an opportunity to establish and create a communication network*" (Soad, 1st interview, 13/10/2016).

Students have a greater sense of belonging to those they have more in common with in terms of class, community and the region they originally came from. This is apparent in the observation that highlighted that some of the students who came from outside the city often stayed together and when Rahaf, Noor and Tahani were asked, they indicated the sense of belonging to the region they came from:

> *'we are all from 'Hejaz[34]', share the 'same accent' 'practices' and 'food'.*

They feel they understood each other better. Besides this, Aseel also noted the way girls who came from the same region tended to be: "they don't want to socialise with others, I usually see them together as one group*" (Aseel first interview, 19th Oct 2016). Being

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[34] Hejaz: an Arabic word reflects the region in the western side of Saudi Arabia.

together could help them to be linked emotionally to their' town of origin and this might provide a feeling of being safe (Yuval- Davies, 2006).

The expression of students' sense of belonging and fitting in was also illustrated during the interview with Hana who stated that she did not want to reveal to her fellow students that she was not only the solitary married student in her class but also the oldest (her case is also discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.1.4.3). Hana is a good example of how some students use the space of the university to represent themselves in the manner that they want to be seen or perceived. It is also likely that Hana felt that she had to represent herself in this way so she did not deviate from a particular perception of students as being "young" and unmarried and also to avoid being identified as a mature student who was just starting university.

However, for others the social space was unfamiliar and somewhat intimidating, it became hard to socialise and make friends. Considering the background Layla came from was important to understand her expression. For example, during the first interview, Layla stated that when she first joined the university she had not been able to easily make friends especially with those outside her community, i.e. her pre-university friends from the Qur'anic secondary school. This was made even more difficult by the many warnings that she had received from people within her community and family about their notions of the dangers posed by outsiders, such as the drivers of other students at the university, in relation to situations that might compromise religious values and practices. The nature of a Qur'anic school is different to a normal public school or the university environment, as the number of students is limited with most sharing a common aim, which is learning and memorising the Qur'an. The nature of the study also encourages them to work as a group. In this regard, she was also told by her community and family that she should be

very careful about who she interacted with especially as she had always led a very sheltered existence which included being taught only in a small religious Qur'anic school (Layla's 1st interview, 24/ 10/ 2016). However, during the second interview when she was asked if she had noticed any changes since joining the university she said:

> "Before I used to be so shy and couldn't talk to any girls that I don't know, only my old [pre-university] friends. Now it is normal to socialise and to have a conversation with some students from the same section. I even noticed changes in the way I dress, before I used to wear whatever I like, now I choose specific things for specific places. We look around and learn from each other… mmm also, now whenever I hear about something new, I read more about it not like before" (Layla's 2nd interview- 27th April 2017).

From this, we note that her experiences within TRU have helped Layla overcome her anxiety and begin to explore different forms of interaction and expression. It is also important to note that TRU, as a space, which contains students from different social classes and walks of life, provides an opportunity for students to exchange ideas by socialising and mixing with each other. Within this space, they communicate and socialise with other students outside of their community group. The data collected shows that at TRU there are students from different backgrounds such as those from urban or rural backgrounds, with or without tribal entitlements, marital status, from higher, middle or lower classes. Layla's interview also draws attention to the manner in which the interaction and ways in which students socialise in the university space reflects the nature of the social relations between those within the university as a social space.

The above discussions explored the many ways that students use the TRU social space, the students they interact with, and the ways in which students are influenced by social media (there is a deeper discussion on this in section 6.3.3) and international trends to find an expression and a connection with others that provides that sense of belonging. It is that understanding of the 'self' and realisations of what their strengths or weaknesses are in relation to others and the social group that they want to 'fit in' with. It is from this stance of agency, that identities can be formed, enhanced and adapted to form groups with others and give that sense of belonging with others that you share similarities with. The following sections discuss some of these influences.

6.3.2 "Appearing" like a student

During the first set of interviews, students were asked about the preparation for joining TRU. Several indicated that they had begun to attend English courses but the most commonly cited act of preparation that students said they made before joining university was the purchase of clothes. This could be for two possible reasons. First, as has been discussed earlier, this might have been due to fact that despite having a degree of freedom and flexibility in dressing, in addition to having a set of regulations which specified what definitely could not be worn, students were still expected to dress "decently" and so many students might have needed to get new clothes which suited these stipulations. A second reason could be that for many students, clothes are an important way in which to reflect their identity, personality and social class (Archer et al., 2007). For some students, physical appearance was specifically highlighted as a significant aspect of representing themselves in a way in which they wanted to be perceived by others. This included wearing makeup and styling their hair in certain ways.

The multiple concerns with respect to clothing and appearance were best highlighted during an interview with Ghada, an 18 year old student, who when asked about her own preparation for the university said:

> "On the personal level I bought clothes and shoes because the place has many walking distances so I needed to be comfortable. I am sure the way of dressing gives an impression about us. Some girls wear inappropriate clothes for the university… In my opinion, I think if the university has a unified dress code it will be much better. By this, I mean, the poor girls, who cannot afford to rival others with luxurious clothes, wouldn't be identified if we all wear shirts and skirts" (Ghada -Lower-middle class, 1st interview 18/10/2016).

Through her statements, Ghada indicated several concerns. First, she identified the fact that the university had no dress code and, consequently, most students could wear what they like (within reason). She also identified that clothes send out a wide range of signals and can identify a student's class, choices, intentions and circumstances. She then specifically identifies the role of clothes and their effect in the creation of barriers which prevent those from the lower classes or even those from upper classes from "fitting" into groups within the university. The former interview with Ghada implied that students from a lower class could not fit into the university setting easily as they could not afford to keep up with "fashion" while the students, perhaps from more affluent families, wore such expensive clothes that they were also considered to be inappropriate for the university setting. Ghada's statements also illuminate her view that students ought to constitute a group with a collective identity and thus proposes uniforms as a mechanism by which students can be made to let go of other identities which interfere with this process of identity formation.

Another aspect of development of student's habitus and identity in relation to "appropriate" clothing which pertained to how students should appear was highlighted by Cathy, a faculty member from the US. When she was asked about her seven years' experience with the Preparatory Year (PY) programme students and whether she noticed any changes in relation to students' attitudes and behaviour she replied that:

> "Before when I first came here, [refers to PY students during her 7 years experience] some students used to wear high heels, not appropriate at all. Now they are real students, training shoes. I think they tell each other what is appropriate to wear" (Cathy's interview 30th April 2017).

Here, Cathy refers to a picture in her head that she has internalised based on her experience with students from different parts of the world about what constitutes a 'real student' in relation to the way they dress and look. When the university first opened, students' responses to the identity of being 'student' may have been that they used to wear their best clothes, which is why they might have worn high heels but with time, the idea of being a 'student' developed through interaction with others and having a sense of what was appropriate, or even comfortable, or not. The response also shows that over time it was not just class and gender concerns which were directing student's sense of belonging, but also the factor of developing an identity as "students" in higher education.

To explore what being a 'real student' means it is important to reflect on some of the student's perspectives. Following fashion trends and wearing brands could be linked to symbolic capital or what Mountford refers to as 'symbolic markers' (2017:145). The way students are identified from their looks or image as a 'student' who want to be seen as

'serious' for instance, about their studies or having an identity as a 'real student' and according to Noor and Cathy's statements, this can be achieved by not tending to wear 'makeup' and to 'wearing flat' shoes. It also reflects the way students from either the medical or science pathway were characterised as 'looking serious about their studies' by having the tendency to choose this type of understated look.

Tahani, from the science pathway explains: "I can't wear full makeup and lashes to university… I have heard that some TRC girls overdress to get engaged". (Tahani from Medina, live in the university accommodation, 19/10/2016).

On the other hand, Walla, a student on the humanity course, expressed her experience at TRU and the ways she categorised and identified intentions of students solely from how they dressed at university. The following extract explains:

> "…those who wear makeup and high heels' I think they want the attention to be engaged and get married soon" (Walla, 1st interview, 18/10/2016).

She added:

> "I can even identify 'Boyat' [a term used out of English word boy that refers to girls who act too masculine] who have short haircuts and no makeup; but for those students who wear a real brand, they are often referred to as 'velvet class'[upper class]".

Walla's statement above reveals that she does not consider herself to belong to any of the categorisations she has given to other students, which implies that she does not consider herself as belonging to any of these groups.

As has been discussed earlier, the question of backwardness and modernity also framed student's perspectives of appearance and identities in the university very strongly. This

is evident from the following statements by Noor, a student who came from Medina and lived in the accommodation, when asked about her experience at TRU stated that:

"They are still backwards and resist changes. For example, using smartphones is allowed in other universities in different cities, but here still not. [During the 2nd phase of the fieldwork, the ban was removed and female students were using their phones]... Also, in relation to wearing the abaya same as their way [women of TRC]. Even though I do cover my face my own way, security ladies warned me. why it is not a choice, I don't want to wear the niqab the same way as women here wear it.....Frankly speaking, I managed to make friends with three girls from the region. The people of this region are very nice and kind. But I have noticed the people of this region have a **backward** [undeveloped] ideas compared to us in Medina. They have many tribal ideas that mean sitting in the family house for a woman is normal and not receiving a degree is not a problem. I mean, the majority of girls in my city care more about studying than their looks. They might come to the university with no makeup and only wash their face. But the girls here pay more attention to their looks, clothes, makeup and meeting friends" (Noor, 1st interview date 18/10/2016).

The extracts of the interviews above indicate that appearances play an important role in communicating various aspects of female student's choices and lives. They also show that there exist preconceived notions in the minds of both students and staff about how students in particular ought to look. What exactly constitutes an ideal look for a student or for a "modern" student in particular however changes from person to person. On the one hand, some students clearly saw apparel to express themselves and experiment with

presentation yet others such as Noor or Ghada saw these as being indications of a lack of commitment to being students.

6.3.3 Social Media and Expression

In addition to the physical space of the university, social media also emerged during the fieldwork as an important site of social space for students. This broadens the horizons for any kind of influence on developing identities, as the realm is no longer restricted to what students may be accustomed to and neither is the demographics restricted to the TRC or in fact, Saudi Arabia. Social media can tap into cultures and social spaces from countries and societies around the world.

As with the physical space of the university, the social media space also served multiple purposes and was perceived by students to be a major space in which they could watch others, learn new trends and express themselves. All of the 30 students who participated in the research had social media accounts. They had different levels of interest in social media and this correlated to some degree with the course they were enrolled in. Those from the Humanities pathways were involved more in the use of social media than the students embarking on medical studies. The students identified that the most popular apps used were the visual-based apps like Instagram, Snapchat, Text-centric, twitter and WhatsApp. Additionally, those students studying medical subjects clarified that they had to spend more time studying and could not spend time using social media, including the use of different networks and messaging apps.

Given the importance that students placed on appearance, social media emerged as a major source of perspective for students about what was trending. Based on this, they could then form their own ideas about appropriate forms of self-presentation. Several

students indicated during interviews that their presence on social media allowed them to have a better insight into the appearance and lifestyles they aspired to. This in turn helped them to find ways in which to infuse these into their own lives. Bloggers and Instagram celebrities in particular, predominantly western and from other middle eastern countries, were identified as being significant influences on female students' experience as they could get a glimpse of what those outside their social circle were doing. This was referred to particularly by students from non-urban areas and those who did not have the chance to travel outside their country who saw it as a new way to keep track of "current" trends which they would otherwise be unaware of and unable to keep up with. In this respect, the use of social media and the following of 'fashion bloggers' might be seen as the transformative tools as they allow students to express themselves in ways they could not do before. In the literature also, the impact of media goes far beyond changing attitudes. Firouzeh (2004) argues that "It is not only the spread of new attitudes but also of visions of life that are completely unfamiliar and even alienating" (Firouzeh, 2004:235). This may be referring to a point made 16 years ago. Nonetheless, his argument still resonates today and is relevant to the point that I would like to make. There are also others who take a more negative view of it and consider social media to be a cultural and intellectual invasion, which promotes "poisonous ideas that could arouse suspicions, excite lusts and influence national customs, values and traditions" (research study in Arabica faculty members opinion in Teitelbaum, 2002).

It was not just fashion that students turned to social media to express. They also used these platforms to raise awareness in two different ways. First, they used social media to inform each other about activities and initiatives at TRU. This was most clearly the case when the medical students undertook a campaign to raise awareness of certain conditions such as breast cancer. Another manifestation of the use of social media was the use of

'Hessa Hero', the mascot used by the university's communication and awareness centre, to raise awareness and to send a message and information about certain issues to students. During the breast cancer awareness month, they used the icon and dressed in colours to draw attention to their messaging and cause.

A second way in which students used social media was to make themselves heard by the university administration. During the field work in their second interview, students who lived in the accommodation talked about some of the difficulties that they faced and how they had utilised social media to ensure that the university responded and acted upon the complaints. Two of the major issues which students successfully mobilised via social media was through popular twitter hashtags. One was the improvement of university accommodation and two, was changing the rules that mandated the guardians needed to be present when students residing in the accommodation left the university to travel home.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter first considered the effects of the social space of university then considered the issue of guardianship system on the lives of different students and highlighted how their circumstances directed their views of the system to a large degree. The chapter then considered the contradictions of the university experience for female students through the issue of the practice of wearing the abaya. Based on many markers such as healthcare, economic wealth or even educational access, Saudi women today enjoy a greater quality of life compared to the decades before. However, they still face a large degree of social control and regulation in their lives which is evident in the regulation of various aspects of their lives such as going outside the house or the dress practices.

While many legal restraints on women have been removed, there is still a considerable degree of social censure, of which women are still obligated and even forced to conform

to. Women are expected to behave in a manner which is considered to be 'appropriate'. Much of this social control is focused on deflecting aspersions of being disreputable or irreligious and in the case of women, respectability is directly correlated with both piety and morality, especially in relation to what they wear. Despite recent moves such as the removal of the guardianship system and other changes, these constraints on women's lives continue to frame the social space of the university and female students are placed and ensconced within it to a large degree voluntarily, and many practise what Foucault (1979) terms, self- regulation and self-policing.

Most of these students come from an environment that is protected by the family and the university feels obligated to continue this role. This is to honour the family, but it is also to honour themselves as the repercussions of students getting into trouble or being involved in activities that their family or the surrounding conservative TRC residents would approve of would be catastrophic for the university and for the faculty. Consequently, the students end up not having new experiences as it is much simpler to restrict their movements and involvement in projects in order for all to be protected. This expectation of protection, which was not requested by the parents of these students, but the supervisor of the accommodation indirectly implied their expectations and said: "if we don't be that strict, no family would trust us to bring in their daughters". If there are not these levels of restrictions, would their families allow them to stay on campus? From knowing the Saudi culture this could vary from family to family; it depends on their background and the level of liberation given to their daughters.

The third section of the chapter highlighted the role of TRU as a social space within which students from different backgrounds and habitus eventually adapted to the institutional habitus of the university and began to develop identities both as individuals and as students. The section also detailed the role of social media in creating a virtual space in

which students could express themselves freely. The primary finding in section three was that it was the relationship between the students' personal habitus and the institutional habitus which predicted how female students would adapt to the university environment. In this context, during the second set of interviews, students talked about the ways they have adapted to some of TRU's habitus. Many students referred to the way the experience raised their 'self-esteem' and independence, particularly those students who lived in the university accommodation. The most important feature is that all the students indicated that the social space of the university enabled them to expand and increase their network and abilities to make new friends and helped them to develop their identities as individuals and a collective identity as students. The following chapter builds on these findings and considers the ways in which the academic content in terms of the material and delivery of the courses in the prep year programme is experienced by students at TRU.

Chapter 7: The Influence of Pedagogical Practices

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the students' social experiences within the university environment. This chapter focuses on the learning experience for the students in terms of their pedagogical perceptions and the way that the students adapt to the teacher's pedagogical practices inside the [English] classroom. During the fieldwork and data collection, it became apparent that first year students were having difficulties with both the material and the teaching practices of the PY Programme as a whole and the use of English as the medium of instruction in particular. This chapter analyses the pedagogic practices of the English course and how these were experienced by the students, with the aim of answering RQ3. To do this, the chapter draws from Bernstein's theorisation of pedagogic discourse. It draws mainly on the processes of transmission and acquisition and the recognition and realisation rules are important for the analysis of the data in this chapter as his theory (1973, 2000) indicates the importance of educational knowledge to the structure of an individual's experience and identity formation in general. According to his theory, formal transmission of educational knowledge can be realised through the underlying structure of the three message systems: curriculum, which defines what counts as valid knowledge; pedagogy, that relates to a valid transmission of this knowledge, and evaluation, which refers to the valid realisation of this knowledge being taught (1973: 363).

This chapter discusses, mainly, the learning in English experience within TRU and the interaction that evolves between students' and foreign faculty members. It examines the pedagogic practices that underpin the teaching of English at TRU and considers the patterns of social relations between faculty members and students within the context of

learning and the impact of these practices on the students' identity formation. The chapter posits that every stage from the secondary schools' students attended, the textbooks and teaching practices of the English course and the government's vision 2030 programme that prompted the development of a more "global" curriculum, there are different recognition and realisation rules. As a result of this, students are expected to be familiar with classificatory principles that most of them have not even been exposed to prior to their enrolment at TRU. The chapter draws upon interviews with students, faculty, classroom observations and analysis of the textbooks and the vision of the 2030 mission statements. The National Transformation Program (NTP) launched on the 7th June 2016 and approved by the Saudi Council of Ministers sets out the goals and targets to be achieved by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by 2020, together with the Saudi Vision 2030 which aims to enhance and support a 'Saudized' knowledge-based economy' (this is elaborated upon further in Chapter 2), where education is seen to be a means by which this imperative is to be fostered (Mitchell and Alfuraih, 2018: 36).

The following section briefly details the student's statements about their experiences of secondary school education and the student-faculty relations. It then proceeds to examine the teaching materials and methods which are used in the English courses and analyses interviews with the instructors to identify distinct characteristics in the way students are taught English. I briefly contrast these with the pedagogic practices that students would have been exposed to in school to identify the differences between the two. After this, I analyse and detail the TRU prep programme faculty expectations of students and experiences of individual students in order to identify if there are particular features which influence their expectations and experiences of learning English. Finally, the last section details the student's experiences of the PY English course. I examine to what extent do

students and faculty feel that the pedagogic practices in the PY English course influence female students' social and cultural identities.

7.2 Recognition and Realisation Rules

Bernstein (2000) proposed that the process of communication in general and education in particular depends upon the "recognition" and "realisation" rules. Familiarity with both the recognition and realisation rules was thus necessary for a person to fully interact in a situation. Bernstein suggests that the recognition rules were those which accommodated individuals to recognize the context in which they were, and the realisation rules allowed them to make relevant responses. A simple example of the rules is that during a class, an awareness of the recognition rules helps a person identify the dynamics of the classroom and their place in it as students or faculty whilst an awareness of the realisation rules helps them to respond and interact with others in the classroom in an appropriate manner - by waiting their turn to speak, using a particular tone, and making notes. It was noted during classroom observations in all 10 sessions, that the setting was organised in a way that would be found in a secondary school - desks and tables are lined in separate rows and there are no opportunities for group work or discussion. The photograph - Figure 4 classroom setting- showed classroom layout, which was taken after an observation session, would perhaps lead you to consider that the environment is more suitable for an exam. It would be understandable if it were a lecture, but in an English acquisition lesson, interaction would be beneficial and indeed important (Zwiers and Crawford, 2011). This demonstrates an absence of impact on pedagogic practice of objectives (Cornbleth, 1990).

Figure 4: Preparatory Year classroom setting.

The layout and plan of the classroom denotes students with the main focus of learning to emanate from a teacher who is the one demarcating the knowledge and information. Singh (2002) explains that the realisation of how categories of meaning are demarcated, the students will, *"constitute rules for distinguishing the meanings that are legitimate in a specific context"* (Singh, 2002: 579). Recognition rules are in many ways about recognising the legitimate power structure in which one is embedded. Bernstein's theorisation of recognition and realisation rules as indicated in (Chapter 3) are based in his broader work on classification and framing which held that the nature of classification and framing of "relevant" information, contexts and situations depended on the nature of power relations.

While Bernstein's (2000) own work and much of the scholarship which draws on it is largely concerned with the power structure of class, the concepts are applicable to a wide range of power structures apparent within faculty and student interactions. The students enrolled in the PY programme at TRU are situated in a number of such power structures

and their experiences of the course are directed in many ways by their awareness of the recognition and realisation rules that they adopt. These are discussed further in the following section which begins by examining the recognition and realisation rules that students are exposed to in their learning environment prior to their enrolment at TRU. The purpose of the PY programme at TRU is to prepare students for academic study at the university level. It was felt that the programme was needed as students were finding the shift from school to university to be extremely difficult. (This was indicated by students out of the need for the PY programme - discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3).

On the surface, the primary cause of this, for many students, was the difference in the teaching medium, English. For Saudi students attending public schools, Arabic is the medium of instruction while in the PY programme, English is mainly the medium of instruction. Consequently, the primary thrust of the PY programme was to ensure students learn English to a sufficient level to cope with their course work in the following years. During the fieldwork phase of the research, several distinct features of these English courses became apparent. First, the majority of the lecturers were international. Second, this was a subject which a large majority of the students reported as very difficult. Third, despite their feelings that the subject was difficult, most considered the subject to be the most necessary beyond their immediate academic needs. These features indicated that there was some disparity in recognition and realisation rules that the students were exposed to and the recognition rules that were expected of them by faculty.

7.3 Pedagogical practices and students' teacher relations

The concept of pedagogy is not only defining the teaching practices and styles; it also relates to what is involved within the interactions experienced between teachers and learners (Correia and Navarrete, 2018). It is important to indicate the ways learners and

teachers relate to each other within the institutional environment (Correia and Navarrete, 2018). Before introducing the topic of the relation between students and teachers at TRU, it is important to contextualise the different learning and teaching cultures in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi, generally, teachers are given a great deal of respect as all students are considered to be immeasurably indebted to teachers. The student-teacher relationship in Saudi, in general, is categorised by hierarchy of authority, teachers have greater status than students due to their hold on power and control in the classroom. Saudi students are considered passive recipients of information (Alkaeid, 2004; Asiri, 2013; Hamdan, 2014). There is a saying which is traditionally used in Saudi society and other Arab countries that communicates the value and status of a teacher as the transmitter of knowledge - *'Who taught me a letter became my master'*. Also, an Arabic poem which is taught in primary school indicates the appreciation and high status granted to teachers:

'qum lilmuelim wafah altabjila kad almuelim 'an yakun rsula'

(Shawqi, 1987:136-140). The translation of this:

"Rise up to the teacher and pay him his dues of respect and reverence;

he [the teacher] could almost have been a prophet" (Qattous, 2014:70).

The saying and the poem reveal the estimation of teachers to be on par with religious and social leaders. In Saudi culture and society, teachers have historically been accorded considerable respect and are invested with power over students. The poem also reveals the faith-based nature that is assumed to underlie the relationship between students and teachers. The quality of students' and faculty members' form of interaction and communication is an important aspect to the higher education learning processes (Clarkberg and Einarson, 2004; Cotton and Wilson, 2006). Additionally, in contemporary Saudi schools, teachers are viewed as dispensers of knowledge and students are viewed as recipients of knowledge. In this model of teaching and learning, there is little room for

questioning from students. Furthermore, questioning a teacher rather than being viewed as a legitimate learning methodology, is often viewed as undermining his or her expertise of the subject or even insubordination. Due to this, students are strongly discouraged from asking questions or forming their own opinion or even deriving a conclusion on their own. Instead, they are encouraged and indeed expected to accept their teachers' interpretations or conclusions as their own.

An overview of the research on formal teaching in Saudi schools thus shows two distinct characteristics (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). First, the focus of learning outcomes tends to be on memorisation of the subject material over the student's application of the subject. Second, teachers are considered to be in a position of considerable authority over students. These have been attributed to the history of education in Saudi Arabia being rooted in religious instruction (Naseef, 1999). Alrashidi and Phan argue that the secondary schools teaching is more "teacher-centred rather than student-centred" (2015: 38). The state of teacher-centred practices include the emphasis on rote learning as well extended illustrations by the teacher and the use of the white board which results in students only being required to engage passively with the material being taught and to later memorise the material rather than actively engage with it (Alkeaid, 2004; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013; Alrashidi and Phan, 2015; Alamri, 2016).

With English in particular, Alrashidi and Phan (2015) state that *"In English classes, most students employ memorisation as their sole strategy for learning; they memorise things (e.g., paragraphs, grammar rules or vocabulary) without understanding their meanings and the way in which they are formed"* (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015: 39). Studies have also shown that in secondary schools, native teachers, when faced with incomprehension by students when teaching English are more likely to use Arabic in their explanations and

thus cannot immerse the students fully in the language. These practices they find have been somewhat detrimental to the student's learning process (Alkubaidi, 2014; Rajab, 2013). It is also relative to note that most of a Saudi Arabian student's education throughout primary and secondary will have been taught by other Saudi's or Arab nationals who share the same learning expectations and practices. Therefore, it is not until students reach the PY programme prior to university that they will encounter a different teaching approach which is taught by teachers from a wider international range than what they were previously used to.

Emerging from the learning cultural differences, researchers have indicated the teaching practices in Saudi education system to be focusing upon *'talgeen'* which translates literally to inculcation or indoctrination but does not carry the same implications as the English terms (Al Surati, 2009; Ahmed, 2014; Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rajab 2013; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). In this approach, the student's role is limited to receiving information and memorisation without a deep understanding of the content (Al Surati, 2009; Hamdan, 2014). Al Surati (2009) critiques this 'recipient mentality', where students listen to teachers without being able to go into any kind of debate or discussion. This is similar to Freire's (2004) critique of the 'banking model' which he argues is a pedagogy which 'transforms students into receiving objects' or empty accounts that teachers fill with information (2009:15). Freire's argument is that practices as such, have a detrimental effect on student's critical thinking abilities and that instead, faculty must adopt a teaching pedagogy which gives students the chance to express their opinion and think for themselves rather than being passive recipients. In the case of students at TRU, this banking approach to learning, which they were exposed to in school, appeared to have become imbedded and part of their learning attitude, which then followed them when they joined higher education. Viewed in terms of 'recognition and

realisation rules' (Bernstein, 2000), as these were the learning practices that most students were exposed to and used throughout their educational experiences to this point. It was apparent that they were also used by students in the first year of university. When Manal, a middle class student, was asked during the second interview to evaluate her experience at the PY programme, She said:

> "I did not express my opinion at all. As a new student, I was a recipient of everything we have been taught because at the end, I need the high grades to attend the major and college I wanted" (Manal, 2nd interview 5/5/2017).

Students use memorisation and the whole way of learning approach of '*talgeen*' as their learning technique and attitude to learn and believe it the best way to gain high grades. Paradoxically, this technique is criticised by the foreign members of staff and the following extracts were taken from interviews with faculty during the research:

> "students asked for handouts to revise from" … "students want to learn what might come for the exam, no extra knowledge" (out of the waiting room discussion fieldnote, 20th April 2017).
>
> "they just want to memorise what is coming for the exam, if you give them more than that they wouldn't like you. They want to study for the exam, at least that's what I think, very few want to learn and know more. Majority they ask, will this come in the exam? While the way I studied was different, we studied to get knowledge not only for the exam" (Zobyda, Muslim South African, 7 years at TRU).

Faculty also made statements to refer to the way the course is designed, structured and implemented. They indicated how they were restricted with the time scale, and the remit of the course and its objective to prepare students for the course of study to follow. Also,

the realisation of the students that the point of the course is to gain acceptance to the following course pressurises the students to view only this end goal rather than learn the language. Consequently, they find themselves using memorisation in order to pass the exams, and in doing so, the course. Two of the English course faculty members stated comments such as:

> "we have to follow a time scale if you get behind then you have the midterm and quizzes all these exams… mainly we make sure they understand the concepts" (Emily, white American, 4 years at TRU-29/03/17).

> "The department puts you in a frame, we have a template to follow for the exam… this helps the students to memorise". In Sudan we teach students free writing" (Soraya, Sudanese Muslim Arab, 4 years at TRU- 19/04/17).

This year of study is a preparatory year, and to fully access the course study that follows, it is imperative that students acquire a good knowledge of the English language, which has the breadth to draw in discussion and student centredness. However, there is a paradox. On one hand, it is recognised that the students need to develop skills in analysis and open discussion. However, this then brings into context the previous experience and pedagogy of the students' *habitus*. Habitus is *"about the embodiment of previous social fields ... It is about how past social structures get into present action and how current actions confirm or reshape current structures"* (James, 2011: 3). Moreover, perhaps they would fail to realise the importance of the course of study if there are no exams to pass at the end. It was also revealed that in certain instances, the university administration also assumes and prefers this teacher/institutional-centred banking approach as the norm as this fulfils their requirements for internal and external scrutiny. When students pass exams, the course is seen as a success and this validates the course.

I observed a lesson where a member of staff was preparing the students for the forthcoming exam (observation of Ala classroom, English level 4 science path 13/04/17 12.30 noon). The exam content was spoon fed to the students; there was total concentration by the students as they recognised the importance of the lesson, demonstrating Bernstein's (2000) recognition and realisation of rules theory. However, practice as such is in contrast with both the curriculum the university prescribes and the faculty's pedagogy which are discussed in the section below.

7.4. Pedagogical practices in TRU in the PY English course

As is the case with most universities, the teaching methodology in the many courses offered at TRU differs vastly from the methodology that most students would have been familiar with in secondary school. The English course, in particular, is considerably different both in material and in teaching practice as it emphasises the application and usage of the language rather than focusing on the content of the texts alone. It must be mentioned that while the bulk of the students - those who are taking the humanities and science path are taught a general English course, the medical students follow a slightly different course which focuses more on medical terminology. As a result, though the teaching methodology remained the same, they used an additional textbook titled "*Understanding and Using Medical Terms*" by Suleiman Saleem Mazyad and publication year was 2009.

An examination of the non-medical student's textbooks revealed that there are a number of unique features. The first and most striking feature of the textbook prescribed for the non-medical students is that it states specifically that it is designed for the Arabic speaking

countries. Titled '*Keep Writing 1 or 2: A writing course for Arab students'*, it is part of a series authored/edited by Richard Harrison and published by Longman English Learning Teaching. The text has only been used at TRU since 2015. Prior to its introduction at TRU, a textbook which was not specifically designed for Arabic speaking countries was used. The faculty members who used the old content indicated that the previous teaching material caused various difficulties as it was completely based on the western culture, habits or customs, which they felt were alien to Saudi culture and which in turn made it difficult for students to relate to. Raza, a British Muslim course coordinator who was responsible for the revision of the old material prior to it being taught particularly highlighted the fact that some of the content was culturally unacceptable as it relayed scenarios depicting alcohol, which is culturally and socially taboo in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 5: New Headway Plus (Soars & Soars, 2000: 40)
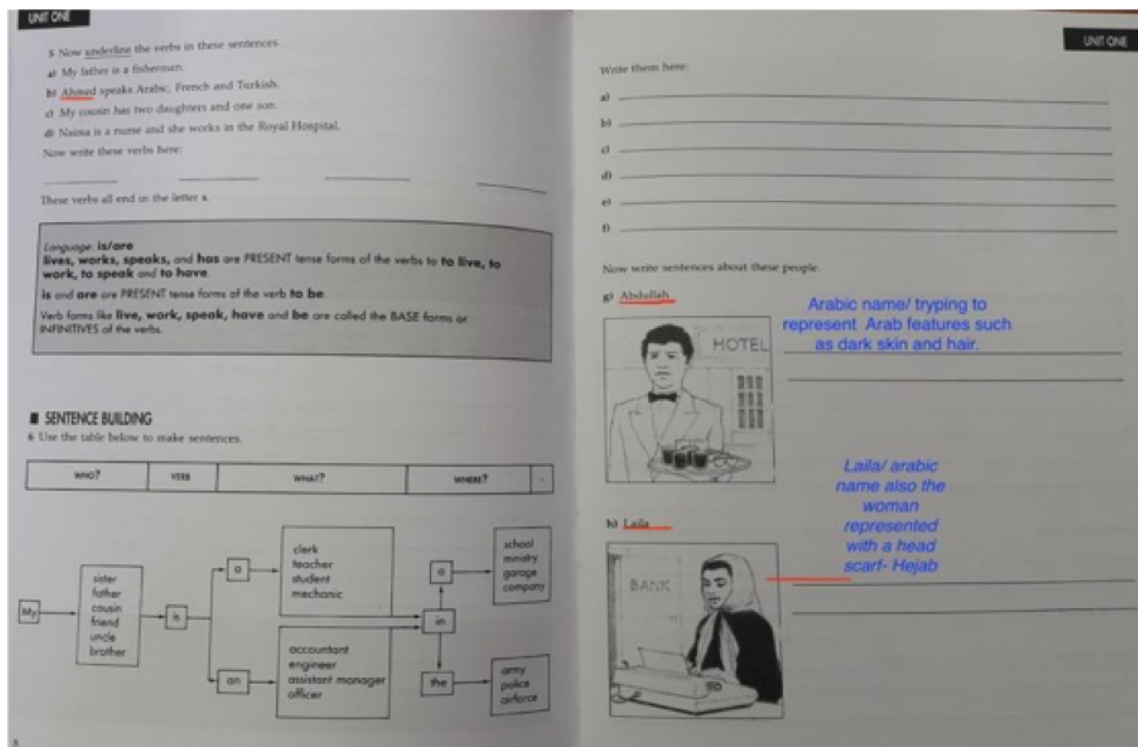
Figure 6: A page from an English writing book (Harrison, 1992: 9).

This course coordinator complained that learning material as such took more of their time and effort as a focused effort was needed to cover "inappropriate" pictures and "dispose of any kind of words which reflect socio cultural practices that might cause confusion or a clash such as drinking alcohol, dating or being in the disco and so on" (Raza interviewed on 17th April 2017). This is also, in many ways rectified, by the fact that the Middle East edition of the additional textbook *New Headway Plus* is not the primary text which is used as it contains illustrations which are considered to be inappropriate such as a waiter serving champagne as can be seen in Figure 5 above. In contrast, *Writing English* not only avoids the use or mention of "inappropriate" pictures and socio-cultural practices but aims to incorporate "cultural" specificities of the Arab speaking world. This begins with detailed explanations about spacing and where text is to appear in relation to the lines of a notebook for students who are not used to the writing formats in English. Other features include illustrations of people with dark hair and eyes, women wearing *hijab* (see

Figure 6) and names such as Abdul and Laila which are common in the region. They also make specific reference to historical figures from the Muslim and Arab world such as Ibn Battuta (a famous Moroccan traveller and Muslim scholar during the medieval period), Ibn Sinan (a famous polymath philosopher during the Islamic Golden Age), Hatim al-Tai (a popular Saudi poet with lots of mythical stories about his generosity) and Tawfiq al-Hakim (an Egyptian Novelist and playwright). Faculty members at the TRU stated that they thought that these measures encourage students to feel a greater connection and relevance to the subject and consequently a greater degree of motivation to learn it. It must also be noted that Figure 5 and 6, much like the remaining exercises in the text, show that there is little scope for memorisation and that the exercises require that the students understand the principles they have learned in the preceding chapter and develop their ability to apply these in order to come to the correct answer to questions they have not directly come across earlier in the text.

7.4.1 Perspectives of International Faculty

The second major feature of the PY English course at TRU is that it was taught solely by foreign members of staff, from a range of international countries who had been educated and worked abroad. For many students, this was their first experience of being taught by non-Saudi faculty. This aspect affected the way in which the PY English course was taught as these non-Saudi members with international perspectives brought different experiences, teaching practices and expectations to the classroom. This became apparent during the interviews with faculty members when they were asked about their teaching philosophy and experiences in TRU. Many of the comments of the faculty members focused on the "academic identity" of the students and how they had to inculcate these in the students in order for them to succeed.

7.4.2 Students' academic identity

Students' choices of such disciplinary subjects as science or art is to provide them a 'specific educational identity', which Bernstein (1973) refers to as a term that indicates the clear-cut boundaries of students' choices based on subjects. This is a very strong element in the Saudi educational system and at an early stage, students gain a particular social status depending upon their enrolment in a programme as this is taken to be indicative of their abilities i.e. 'academically able' and more 'competent'. Also, many students take science or medicine-based studies while it is often perceived that the arts are chosen by those who are deemed 'less academic'. Thus, when students enter university, they have a clear sense of belonging to a specific educational identity, either the medical or science or humanities. According to Bernstein, this is considered a strong classification. Classification refers and examines *'the relationships between categories'* such as power relations (Bernstein, 1996: 6). For example, within the medical path, it is only considered to be a challenging course when compared to the humanities and so indicates the identity and the relationship that exists between the two specialised subjects.

As stated earlier, a frequent theme which emerged during interviews was the faculty member's perceptions and expectations of 'academic students. Those students who have the characterisation and identification to be as Burke (2012) refers to, as those, 'who can be recognised as a university students' (2012:53). As the faculty members of TRU come from different cultural backgrounds they have preconceived ideas of 'the university academic identity' students should have, or what Burke et al. (2017) refer to as a 'taken for granted assumptions' and stereotyping of how students should perform within the university (2017:77).

Several faculty members recalled having higher expectations of the student's familiarity with the language and being surprised by how low it was initially. This was especially expressed by faculty members who have joined recently or who had been at the university for more than 5 years and taught cohorts of students earlier when the university was first established. A more common comment about the students regardless of which cohort they were a part of was that students did not seem to be aware of how *"to be a student"* and lacked a number of basic skills such as confidence, time management, ability to ask questions when in doubt or participate in classroom discussions (Jessica, a black American recently worked at TRU, interviewed on 29/03/2017). Faculty members therefore felt that they needed to "teach" students how to be 'academic'. This is reflected in statements such as:

> "Well for me because I am teaching lower levels, I feel my mission is to teach them how to be a student. So, I set some examples. I try to show them how to be an academic student, for example, to be on time, how to be prepared. Then, how I teach them the materials. This comes [at the] next [stage]" (Cathy, white American, interviewed on 30th April 2017).

Both Jessica and Cathy had a predominant perception and a preconceived expectation of the way 'academic students' should be. Both carried a 'mission' to bring in changes to these students at TRU in their valued ways of gaining knowledge which related back to their own context of common beliefs and structure. However, other faculty members might end up with a shared disregard of the world-wide values of higher education. They might find the structural difference between female students at TRU and students in their home country unrecognisable, which is mainly linked to previous understanding and common values that are related to higher education (James, 2015; Burke et al. (2017).

Those faculty members have identified that some of the students' lack of commitment to their status as 'academic' or "seriousness" was due to the fact that in Saudi, students' education was not only paid for through government scholarship, but also that students receive a monthly stipend. As a result, some faculty members felt that Saudi students (both male and female) were less motivated than if they had to pay for their own studies. This is illustrated in the following extract from the interview with Tesaka a faculty member who when asked about students at TRU stated that:

> "Well compared to home [back to South Africa], students here get paid to study. They get the monthly allowance. So, you can tell that not all students are motivated to study. I think the motivation level is less here. It makes a difference compared to South Africa when you pay for your education you realise the value of your education but when you get it for free, I think you don't realise the importance of it. This also depends upon different colleges, I find the Humanities students are less serious about their study than the Medical students, who really want to learn. Some of the humanities students you can tell they want to learn but some only joined to be with their friends, to socialise etc." (Tesaka interviewed 21st April 2017).

Tesaka's words reveal that not only, in her opinion, are Saudi students less motivated compared to South African students. This is due to the fact that they do not need to pay for education, her statement also shows, as stated above, that there exists a commonly held belief that certain student identities - humanities vs medicine, are seen to be and believed to be more "serious" than others. This conceptualisation of "seriousness" also implies that certain students are good in specific disciplinary subjects. Such as students

with the 'medical' identity are, therefore, more serious and others like those in 'humanities' are not motivated enough, *'less serious about their studies'* mainly joined TRU to socialise not for the university learning experience.

The relatively protected lifestyles and material wealth of Saudi students in general and females in particular was also mentioned by some faculty members as obstacles to the students' realisation of their identity as 'academic students'. Faculty members mentioned that Saudi students on average were rarely denied any material desires such as phones or other electronics and thus did not "appreciate" or understand responsibility or the notion of having to work to achieve a desire. This point also came up as a feature of the cultural differences between the faculty member's home country or experience of other countries and Saudi. Faculty members also linked the lack of discipline to the lack of independence of young women in Saudi compared to the independence and the consequent responsibility of young women in other countries they had experienced. These views are general and refer to all female Saudi students, regardless of their discipline, including medicine.

The assumption is out of Tesaka's experience of teaching English of different disciplines. However, it is too general to signify academic success with specific criteria or pathways to reach 'success' (Wong and Chiu, 2019). It is important here to consider two points: Firstly, are student's abilities and adaptabilities through an understanding of their background and access to resources? Particularly if they faced any of the struggles and challenges 'non-traditional students' in the UK for example might have faced (Lowe and Cook 2003; Reay et al., 2010; Bathmaker et al., 2013). Or, as some of the women who participated in this research from TRU, had underprivileged background identities such as being the first in the family to pursue higher education, or were mature with

responsibilities or divorced. Secondly, which is central to the understanding and might not be referred to by members of faculties at TRU, is to consider the implications of pedagogical practices in relation to policy practices (Burke et al., 2017), that could include course outcomes and ways these courses in each discipline is structured and run.

Wong and Chiu (2018) explain that in the higher education arena, those who teach or even design courses that follow a university standards and expectations will invariably expect students to produce work that is appropriate for such, "which means that lecturers will inevitably form ideas and expectations of university students" (ibid, 2018: 1). The conceptualisation of an academic identity and the identification of some students as "serious students" and others as not is thus complex and dependent upon a number of factors. Of these factors, a student's choice of subject is one factor but this identification also, as Cathy's interview reveals, depends upon the students' awareness of behaviour such as being on time, being prepared, and being independent. These latter factors seem to be more related to the students exposure or lack of exposure to recognition and realisation rules of the university and the faculty and as the interviews indicate, a lack of the awareness of either one or both is interpreted by some faculty as being not "serious" or not aware of how to assume the identity of a student.

During a different part of the interview, Tesaka and Cathy were also asked about their years of experience and whether they had noticed any changes in students over the years. They indicated that several changes had occurred and said that this was due to more awareness of the university environment and rules:

> "Being here for seven years I can tell that students have changed over time,
>
> the way they dress, their behaviour …. Being exposed to more foreigners
>
> for sure helped a lot" (Tesaka's interview 21sth April 2017).

"Every year things change. Every year is more delightful. Every year I am so happy to meet them. Before when I first came, students used to wear high heels, which was not appropriate at all. Now they are real students. Training shoes. I think they tell each other what is appropriate to wear". (Cathy interview 30ᵗʰ April 2017).

This notion of some students being 'real students' and the categorisation of what might be perceived as appropriate attire and footwear was also referred to by one of the female students. Rana, in the following quote, talked about her auntie's experience of the university a few years ago and related it to her own.

"My aunt told me once about the way university used to be, she said: [you are more comfortable in what you are wearing. I used to wake up early and spend long hours blow-drying my hair, and for the elegant look, we used to wear high heels. As if we are going to a wedding. You are real university students, if the time comes, I would do like you, but during our time the majority were doing this, and we didn't know the requirements…] Personally, I care about the essential things, ironing my clothes, and my hygiene. It is unacceptable what I saw from some girls!! The make-up and applying eyelashes and false nails!!." (Rana, middle class- 12/10/2016).

Definitely the students at TRU benefited from having international staff members and also from having students from different backgrounds from outside TRC, who might be exposed to the culture of other universities in more developed cities. Resulting in a broader spectrum of norms that these students initially experienced prior to joining TRU. The staff members brought these ideas and also expectations of a 'real student' to the

university. The parting statement from Rana also demonstrates that there are still some students who do not fit the categorisation of a 'real student' according to Rana's criterion.

As discussed previously in this chapter, the students' expectation of memorisation was an issue that was discussed by faculty members. Some teachers stated that they assumed that during the exam students knew they were going to test the student's understanding of the concept and its application. Students on the other hand assumed that the exam meant revising the material in the textbook and recommended reading. For some students' exam preparation thus meant 'memorisation'. This is due to their 'recognition' experience at the public secondary schools in Saudi Arabia as is discussed further in the statements by students contained in the sections below. Whereas for the teachers, exam preparation meant understanding the concept and how it is to be applied. This shows the lack of full realisation of students' abilities and the university standard teaching practices. This was highlighted in an interview with Zobyda, a Muslim Canadian who had been teaching at the university since 2010. Zobyda noticed that the students used memorisation methods of learning instead of understanding and processing the information, and this was done in order to pass the exam. In her opinion, this was due to the memorisation method of learning the Holy Quran, which is not a suitable way to learn a language or new medical phenomenology. Zobyda suggests that students need to understand the usage of such terms through the use of stories or by providing videos, this was also indicated by two of her students, Ghada and Reem, who participated in this research. Ghada stated that:

> "I have a successful experience with 'professor' Zobyda. Everything is clear.
> She tells us what is required; you find yourself prepared and ready from the
> beginning for exams. I can remember everything for the test. She goes over
> and reminds us of what we took yesterday. She provides videos to watch
> that explains meanings of terms, also bringing in stories that link to the

topic. She gave us a chance to express our opinions and asks us what we think " (Ghada, Lower-middle class- 2nd interview 26/04/2017).

Reem, also talked about her experience:

> *"I like to be taught by native English speakers. I like Dr. Zobyda's classes; she allows me to speak my opinion, so I feel it is a good chance to practice my English. She provides the information easy"* (Reem, Middle class- 2nd interview (20/ 4/2017).

Significantly, it was worth pointing out that both students showed a high level of respect to their teacher by referring to her as 'professor' and 'Dr' although Zobyda revealed during the interview that her highest qualification was a master's degree. This was indicative of the majority of students when they refer to members of staff regardless of their qualifications. This could be explained as part of the respect given to teachers, which was discussed earlier in (section 7.3).

When Zobyda was asked if she had noticed any difference between students in TRU and others she might have taught elsewhere, she stated that:

> "I noticed that the students here, maybe because English is not their first language, are memorising more than they understand, there is a big difference. While in Africa and America, students are taught how to think and express themselves. Here they just want to memorise what is coming for the exam, if you give them more than that they wouldn't like you. They want to study for the exam, at least that's what I think, very few want to learn and know more… It is the way they were brought up, in fact, one student told me - teacher, this is a lot, I cannot memorise six paragraphs, and I said: you're not supposed to memorise, only Quran can be

memorised and this is not Quran so you will forget it" (Zobyda English for

the medical path 28/03/17).

It is possible to note that the expectations that faculty members have of the students reveals the rules which they have internalised. In addition, their expressions of these expectations not being met by the students reveals that the students do not share or understand these. This is due to the fact that female Saudi students were not exposed to these recognition and realisation rules that TRU expects, the habitus here belongs to a new institutional habitus. Institutional habitus is indicative in both primary and secondary school education as well as through the other experiences outside of the classroom. However, each institution has its own rules and expectations; of which some are overtly transferred; whilst others are covertly expected and are part of the hidden curriculum (Margolis, 2001). Some faculty members' responses indicate that most of them realised that the students do not share their identifications and expectations and consequently began to articulate themselves more clearly so as to ensure that they are understood.

Extending his theorisation of rules, Bernstein (2000) argued that while realisation rules help individuals to identify the context they are involved in and how to proceed or respond, 'the realization rule determines how we put meaning together and how we make them public' (ibid). This is similar to Bourdieu's concept ''rules of the game'' in which he indicated and highlighted certain rules an agent applies as part of being familiar with the field or the playground (Bourdieu, 1972; Walther, 2014). In the context of Higher Education, knowing the 'recognition rules' helps students understand what is going on within a university lecture or classroom setting but it is the realisation rules which helps them to become active communicators whose responses are legitimised in the university or classroom setting. Recognition and realisation rules are thus crucial in the university

setting as they determine the student's chance at succeeding. During interviews, some foreign faculty members stated that students needed to be told that they must be ready and committed to learn, being on time and to listen carefully. From this perspective we see through the interviews with the faculty that very often, students lack the recognition and realisation skills. Some faculty members then try to help them gain these skills. However it is not an easy or consistent process since faculty members themselves are often unaware of the extent to which their assumption of the student's mastery of these skills colours their own opinions of some students being better or more deserving while others are considered to be less serious or deserving of the university experience. This could also be linked to learning the rules of the game (Bourdieu, 1972) which go towards building the academic dispositions of students, with a stronger academic identity and habitus.

Bernstein in his work, The Structuring of Pedagogic Practice, also states that in "this analysis I shall distinguish between pedagogic practice as a cultural relay and pedagogic practice in terms of what that practice relays- in other words, pedagogic practice as a social form and as a specific content" (Bernstein, 2003: 63). He thus asserts that the transmission of culture through teaching practices can take place in two ways - one, by the teaching practices themselves and two through the content, which is being taught. He elaborates here that it is the relationship between three rules: the hierarchical, sequencing and critical as well as the pacing of teaching which determine the logic of the pedagogic practice. Bernstein argues that the manner in which the hierarchical, critical, sequencing and pacing rules are applied can result in a differentiated student experience depending on their existing social class and experience. Some faculty members gave examples from their own and other cultures, which could be seen as an opportunity for the students to meet the 'other', those who are different from what they have been exposed to so far in

terms of language, culture, religion and beliefs. For example, out of the English class's observations for level 3, Cathy refers to the way the word 'iron' is pronounced differently and said:

> " I'm an American and we don't talk like this, this is British English we don't call it like that, where I come from we pronounced the word like this"
>
> (English class for science path Cathy level 3, on 26th April 2017).

Some members of staff also said that other aspects of their lives also increased students' awareness of different ways of life. For example, Cathy, said that her choice of not having children often resulted in students feeling sorry for her till she explained that it was a choice (from Cathy's interview 30th April 2017). In the same context, Amina another faculty member said:

> "If I say Sara had 3 children or Sara had no children. They immediately assume that Sara with the children must be married, they think within their culture as Muslims, which I can understand". She also added "I talk about the specific privilege that we have for example as women we can drive. Stuff like that which I know that they might get excited about" (Amina 's interview, South African 30th April 2017).

According to Bernstein (2003) pedagogic practices are structured to attain different outcomes for different groups of students. This is because the work illuminates the messages that can be delivered and transmitted to students over and above the content of the curriculum and syllabus. In his own work on education in the UK, he showed that the course material was designed in a manner which encouraged the reproduction of class. To evaluate the transmission of culture through the teaching practices at TRU, it is necessary to analyse the course material as well as the teaching methodologies that the

faculty members adopt. In the course textbooks, we see in the claims that the material is "designed for the Middle East" or the "Arab world" that the overt efforts that authors make to claim that while they are introducing students to a new "non-Middle Eastern" or "non-Arab" language, by using 'safe topics' they are deliberately avoiding transmission of a foreign culture. Yet the next claim that the examples in the textbook are "realistic topics" which are "useful in real life situations" does indicate that some transmission of culture is taking place.

Analysing the faculty's interviews, reveals that in explaining and enforcing their notions of appropriate "academic" attitudes and methods such as how students should "learn", faculty members show, first, how different their culture of learning is from that of the students and, second, how through their teaching practices, they are transmitting their culture of learning. The previous interviews showed primarily the faculty's expectations in relation to the curriculum and students' interaction with it. However, they also transmitted their perspectives of other broader areas such as dress and behaviour. For example, faculty members expressed their preference that students refrain from wearing expensive or showy items of clothing such as high heels and instead wear "sensible, appropriate" clothing such as trainers (The students' perspectives on these matters of appropriate appearance was discussed in Chapter 6).

The examples above reveal that faculty members engage in a complex and often contradictory process regarding the transmission of "culture" which can also be read as the transmission of recognition and realisation rules. Contradictorily, they do try to expose students to different cultures, but they also designated that in several respects they were trying not to transmit a culture different from that of the students. A closer examination of the faculty's responses shows that while they expect or expose students

to "appropriate" recognition and realisation in terms of "student-like behaviour", they are also trying to avoid transmitting awareness of "inappropriate" recognition and realisation rules such as alcohol consumption. Through the choice of emphasising the role of the father or usefulness of English for mothers bringing up children, we also see that faculty members are in fact transmitting and reinforcing aspects of Saudi culture (Raza English Class observation on 30th April 2017; Jessica interviewed on 29th March 2017). This recalls that there is a hidden curriculum that Margolis (2001) suggests, we hide to 'conceal or protect'. Costello (2001: 44) argues that teachers, lecturers and professors in higher education have an influence on values and notions of cultural norms and this is 'mirrored in the hidden curriculum' with a focus on pedagogy. Lawler (2014) suggests that the formation of an identity is fluid. Perhaps the socially and culturally constructed 'ideal' of what a Saudi student is or should be in a given society is an imagined one by the significant others (such as teachers or lecturers) in a student's life. Wong and Chiu (2018: 2) refer to this and state that an, "imagined identity can also be formed through the ideals and expectations of others" and this will most definitely include the surrounding society and environment. The following section considers the perspectives of students with respect to this transmission of culture through the learning of English and the simultaneous experience of the recognition and realisation rules of the course.

7.4.3 Student's responses to learning the English language at TRU

How the strategies in teaching and teaching methodology discussed above are received can only be evaluated by considering the student's experiences of the PY programme and the English course. The course was clearly important to them as the successful completion of the course was necessary for them to proceed to the next year of their degree. As has been stated earlier, the English course due to its content, the method of teaching and the presence of the international faculty members, was a major component of first year

students' experiences at TRU. Their feelings about the course ranged from enthusiastic to worried or even unhappy and were often mixed.

During the first interview with the students which was taken at the start of their year, most stated that they felt that having English language skills was important to them stating that it is a language that is used globally and indicated the importance of English to the new knowledge-based economy. Based on this, several students from different backgrounds felt that learning English was therefore a "good opportunity" for development (Adapted from students' responses). These positive responses indicate that students expect that through the PY English programme, there will be some transmission of culture and that this is a global culture. Through the course of study, the content of learning resources and the life and pedagogical experiences of the international faculty, students could be developing identities as part of the learning English process.

There is some acceptance amongst the students of the medical and science courses for the need to learn English in the PY programme because it was viewed as the language that will be used at the workplace later. For some students, the PY English course was also an opportunity to expand their knowledge and cultural insights. For example, Ghada welcomed the experience stating that "[it is] perfect, lovely to speak English'… '[learning English] 'will benefit me in the future with the major I am planning to study" (Ghada, 1st interview-TRC -Medical path). Karema, a respondent from the science path also attributed higher confidence levels in English to a greater 'feel' for the university environment. Karema found the experience 'boosted my self-esteem'. These responses demonstrate that students are aware of an environment outside of what they are currently embedded in and that this new environment requires English language skills. Based on this recognition, they express their hope that the PY English programme will help them

to learn the language so that they may be prepared to step into the new environment after their university experience. Not all students had such a positive approach. Some students also stated that they were interested in learning English only as it was required to proceed to the next year and some students from the humanities courses, where subjects were not taught in English, expressed the feeling that using English as the medium of communication was unnecessary to their course. This was phrased in statements such as "this is extra" and "there is no need for it if we are going to use Arabic in our chosen course" (Nawal, 1st interview- From TRC). Faculty members were also aware of these students' unwillingness to learn the language. Louisa, white South African faculty member who worked at TRU for eight years and taught humanities students English at level 3, during the interview said:

> "It seems that some of the girls don't want to learn English, that's what gets in the way… They want a degree I supposed but they don't want the English part of it. [in a quiet tone] if I am allowed to say I don't blame them. It is very frustrating to do, personally, I did my university education in my mother tongue. I didn't have to learn another language to do that. I can imagine it is frustrating to learn another language, especially if you are not interested in that language" (Louisa, interview 4th April 2017).

Even amongst the students who looked forward to learning English, several considered it to be difficult as they had not studied the subject extensively in school. For example, Reham a student from the medical course stated that:

> 'To learn English is a good idea, but we should not learn all the subjects in English. We were [she referred to schools] studying all subjects in Arabic then suddenly before we specialise in majors everything changed to be in

English. We were not prepared for this" (Reham, Medical path, 10th October 2016).

Reham's later responses during the interview also highlighted that the major reason that she found the course difficult was because she found that the course material was too much to memorise. This concern was one which was shared by a number of students who claimed that the English course was difficult as they were unable to rely on memorisation of the curriculum which was the primary study tool they used in school. These findings suggest that while students recognise the importance of learning English, initially, they are unfamiliar with how to respond in class and how to prepare themselves for it. This shows that they lack an awareness of the realisation rules. Reham's second interview confirms this conclusion as she stated that she was aware that the course required a different approach to memorisation alone; however:

"I do memorise hard terms", … in medical English we have lots of new medical terminology to memorise".

This is further evidenced by the interview with Shahad, another student from the medical course.

S: I get support from a private teacher with the other girls and I understand the topic then I memorise the English terms.

Me: Is there a difference between memorising the holy book and memorising the subjects you are learning.

S: Yes, it is different when you memorize the Quran, I feel that it is the Word of Allah.

Maybe my brain is used to the technique of memorisation, so I am able to remember things quickly.

> I do memorisation and I do understand. Maybe with memorising the Quran
>
> I have to memorise it word by word but with the subject, I understand the
>
> meaning but because it's in English and as a second language I have also
>
> to memorise the words, the medical terms specially.

Shahad and Reham's interviews show that while students do become familiar with the recognition rules, their awareness of the realisation rules in terms of how to prepare and respond in the English class develops more slowly.

For a few students, difficulty with the course and the language was lessened due to factors such as foreign travel or living abroad. Soad, for example, stated that she had been worried about the university experience in general and the PY English course in particular. However, she later realised that her previous exposure to the language helped her to make the transition to university, as it was referred to in Chapter 5. A similar feeling was also reported by Aseel, a student who had spent time abroad in Australia with her husband and Rahaf who was from the city of Medina which is more cosmopolitan and had many foreigners living in and visiting it. In contrast, less experienced students from working class or rural backgrounds reported finding English more difficult to study. The level of recognition between those students who only wanted to gain the degree and not valuing the knowledge.

The students' perspectives on their experiences of the PY English course indicates a number of issues. The first is that the recognition and realisation rules that they are familiar with in school are very different from those they are expected to be familiar with in the English course. Due to experiences at TRU however, they do begin to have an awareness of the recognition rules of the course, but the awareness of the realisation rules

is less, and many students seem to struggle to gain this. Factors such as help from faculty and more cultural capital in terms of more opportunities to travel abroad or living in more cosmopolitan cities also help students find it easier to learn English in the class. However, it is hard to verify if they were more aware of the realisation rules that the course expected. It is also possible to note that students do develop a distinct identity at university. First in terms of themselves as students, then in terms of the course they undertake i.e. they see themselves as "medical students" or "humanities students". This is strengthened further by the influence of faculty and others who also differentiate between students based on their choice of course. Finally, students also develop a sense of identity which is based on their learning of English as is evidenced by Karema's statement that it boosted her self-esteem.

With respect to the teaching material and methodology, 28 of 30 students reported that having foreign members of staff was an advantage in the English PY course. One reason for this preference was explained by Leen, one of the students from science, as being due to the forced immersion into the language. This can be seen in her statement that despite the initial difficulty.

> "It is the best because if they [faculty members] were Arabs or Saudi like the secondary education teachers then we will end up speaking in Arabic and use Arabic meaning to explain new vocabulary. I personally suffered a lot in the intermediate and secondary schools from this problem. Here it is different with the existence of non-Arabic speakers, we have the benefit of practising English as we try as much as possible to understand each other and apply words to practice" (Leen, interview date 16/10/2016).

A different explanation was provided by Walla who stated that the foreign faculty members played a crucial role as their outlook towards students differed from those of the native faculty members. This, she related to foreign faculty members having a more respectful but hands-off approach in terms of allowing students to make their own decisions in terms of the course. She clarified with an example stating that:

> "In the lecture room, if I asked a foreign member to allow me to leave and answer an urgent phone call, she will allow me but if she is from the Arab countries... she wouldn't let me. The foreign members trust the students ...but the locals and Arabs know some of the ways students use to escape classes. To be honest, sometimes we say the truth, and sometimes it is not"
> (Walla from Humanity, 1st interview, 19th October 2016).

Walla and Leen's statements further emphasise the differences in the realisation rules that students were exposed to at school and at university. Unlike the other interviews though, these extracts also highlight that the difference is not just due to the curriculum or university but due to the expectations of the foreign faculty members. They also draw attention to how depending on the students' approach, these can be beneficial in terms of helping students by forcing them to learn the language as mentioned by Leen and become more responsible for their actions as mentioned by Walla.

7.5 Conclusion

These findings show that many students are unfamiliar with either the recognition and/or the realisation rules that the course and the foreign faculty members expect them to be familiar with. Those students who were familiar to some degree with the realisation and recognition rules due to previous experiences and exposure, such as in the case of Soad

and Karema, do find it easier to make the transition to university. Conversely, students who have little to no familiarity with the realisation and recognition rules find it considerably harder to transition to university until such a time as they become familiar. This confirms the findings from the previous section which considered the faculty members perspectives of the students. Thus, to conclude, the PY English Programme from the perspective of the textbooks, faculty members and the students' experiences, demonstrates clear evidence of the recognition and realisation skills that are expected as well as a culture which is transmitted, and this can be implied through a hidden curriculum which mirrors the societal expectations. While it is difficult to identify exactly the nature and features of this culture, there are clear components which emphasise a particular way of learning that is different from what students had been exposed to at the secondary school level.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This concluding chapter identifies the key issues that draw the central argument of this thesis through presenting a summary of the main findings in light of the following research questions.

- What are the implications of social class, gender, social status and tribal affiliation on female students' experience of higher education especially, with respect to social and cultural identity formation?

- What are the influences of institutional habitus in the formation of female students' identities, taking into account aspects of the social and cultural milieu, religion and community?

- To what extent do students and faculty feel that the pedagogic practices in the PY (Preparatory Year) programme, when English is the medium of teaching and communication, influence female students' social and cultural identities?

The thesis is based around four central aspects arising from the findings; the transitory process/experience, the social experience, the pedagogic experience and the learning of English. This thesis explored some of the challenges, expectations, and experiences of first year female students at a Saudi Arabian university. Analysing women's descriptions and perspectives expressed during interviews as well as details gleaned through extensive field observations at The Regional University (TRU), the thesis provided insights into the experiences of female students within the university environment, whilst drawing upon their personal experiences and their unique social contexts that exist beyond the confines of university. Attentive to female students' subjective experiences, expectations, awareness and behaviour within the social context of the university, the thesis highlighted its role in developing female students' identities.

The research attempted to be reflexive and in doing so, highlighted the complex relationship between me as the researcher and the researched community (Chapter four). A number of qualitative methods of enquiry were identified and employed for the study, which was discussed in chapter four. The data was collected through a two stage process of interviews and observations of both teaching in classrooms as well as non-teaching activities held on the university premises and campus. The first phase was the beginning of the academic year October 2016, moving onto the second stage, which was between mid-March to the beginning of May 2017 and was just before the final assessment took place. The first, 30 respondents were identified through a questionnaire distributed to students who had recently enrolled at TRU. The questionnaire solicited their participation and asked questions about their basic demographic details. This was followed up by interviews for each of the research participants, throughout the two durations with the exception of the 5 students who could not be contacted, together with faculty members and staff.

In Saudi Arabia there is considerable interest in attaining a university degree. This is evidenced by the large number of students who compete for enrolment. Yet the data reveals that a significant percentage of students who enrolled in university discontinued their education over the course of the preparatory year and the trend was not reflected in the subsequent years of the degree. This indicates that the preparatory year was a key period for students. This research project was motivated by the desire to examine the role of this first-year programme on students' identity formation. It sought to understand why the preparatory year proved to be so problematic for so many female students. There was the need to understand students' expectations and reasons why some adapt to this first-year habitus while others found it difficult.

As discussed in Chapter 2, The Preparatory Year Programme (PY) was the solution for first year students to reduce the gap in the necessary academic requirements between secondary school and university higher education. In schools, there is a preference for methods such as memorisation while university instructions and requirements increasingly stress the importance of knowledge application. Also, Arabic is the medium of instruction in most schools in Saudi Arabia while most universities aspire to use English as the primary medium of instruction. In order to bridge these differences a "preparatory year (PY)" is included in most undergraduate degree programmes. During this year, depending on their degree programme and course, students are enrolled in intensive English language courses and other technical English courses. This is a relatively unique feature of higher education in Saudi, together with gender segregation of male and female education (discussed in Chapter two and Chapter three).

The thesis mainly drew upon Bourdieu's theorisation on practice, cultural capital, habitus and field to frame the analysis of the female students' experiences and to consider their experiences in relation to the multiplicity of their identities - as women, mothers, and as members of their socio-economic class and tribe. It also drew upon the work of Bernstein in order to analyse teaching pedagogy (chapter seven). However, the study, in general, considered the gender dimension, and this was due to the participants of the study being only female. In particular, the participant female's identities, which is subject to change over time, as it is constructed in Saudi Arabia, within a specific, rigid gender framework, ordered and planned by the cultural backgrounds of the given society (Lawler 2014, Noureen 2015, Leathwood & Read 2009).

The study was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm to explore and understand the subjective experience of female students, and their prospective and meaningful experience which were reflected from their social cultural and religious practice of the social world. Bourdieu best explains the existence of "Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). Objective reality within the sub-field of TRU space with all the rules, regulations and culture that is influenced by the main field of the Saudi social cultural system, which could change overtime. The following sections present the main findings of the research in relation to the research questions.

8.1 Summary of Main Findings

The research has attempted to explore the influences on students' developing identities in a university in Saudi Arabia. Through the process of the research, themes emerged which highlighted issues that required further exploration. Below are the main findings that were indicated within the research.

8.1.1 Implications of students' demographics on their identities formations

The educational resources, that were provided by the Saudi government to all universities, have not been uniform with factors such as students' backgrounds and the implications of some demographic details of students. This study explored this in a western context, but the findings of this study found that in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government provides equal educational resources (free books, monthly allowance, free transport, subsidised accommodation for students, etc). However, even with all of these, the study found that although the students benefited from such resources; their abilities to adapt to the transition to higher education were unequally met. It was found that the students' backgrounds were an important factor in adapting to the transition: such as the social class background of the students; the tribe they originated from; the familiarity with modern

living (being from less or more developed cities); the support of family and also the life experiences that can occur during the transition (the example of three students who experienced the loss of their father during their studies exemplifies this).

The interviews with students discussed in Chapter 5 demonstrated that students seemed to have quite different experiences of the PY. These differences were apparent from the very beginning when students were asked what motivated them to enrol for their courses. Most students stated that obtaining a higher education was important to them. Their reasons for doing so however varied significantly. Some sought specific courses based on their aspirations while a significant number of students from working class backgrounds, viewed higher education as a pathway to financial independence. Whereas others (from a middle class background), viewed a university degree as a necessity to fit into their social group or learn the cultural codes for class mobility.

The choice of where to undertake higher education and which course to enrol on was also mediated by several factors. The most cited factor which influenced students' choices was the academic grade required. Students were aware that extremely high grades were required to gain admission into sought after courses, particularly those located in large cities such as Jeddah, Riyadh, Eastern Province, and Medina. Gaining admission to such courses was a challenge that several students mentioned. During in-depth interviews, however, students' statements revealed that their decision-making processes were more than the mechanical process of picking the best university which would grant them admission. The interviews with students in the university accommodation showed that they were not happy to leave home but did so as they were compelled by other factors. The interviews with students from TRC also showed that there are a number of factors that influenced students', and many were grounded in the perceived patriarchal controlled

gender norms and expectations their immediate and extended family and of the society as a whole. These were expressed in terms of 'responsibility' towards family and revealed that in many instances, higher education was not the first priority. This was particularly highlighted in the experiences of the students who were married with children who viewed their families as their first responsibility. Even amongst the unmarried students, mobility was highly constrained as students did not feel confident to live apart from their families and the majority of students applied to TRU due to its proximity to their immediate family or extended family's residence. Once at the university, a key factor in the ability of students to thrive in their new setting environment was their access to economic, cultural, and social capital prior to and during their university experience. Gender, social class, tribal affiliation, and the location of students' familial homes were all factors that affected how students adapted and made the transition at TRU.

The starting point for the study was not just the specific forms of socialisation/oppression that women faced by virtue of their gender but also their specific experiences as members of a particular group in relation to both class and tribe. The locations of students' familial homes also played a role as those from larger cities were exposed to a wider range of perspectives. The thesis has drawn on Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice and the concepts of habitus, cultural capital, social capital and field to analyse individual student's access to resources. This theory helped to frame the data, facilitated themes to emerge and in doing so, assisted the analysis of the interaction of students' habitus within the university. Gender played a significant role as many aspects of students' lives were governed by it. While many of the students' experiences of gender norms are specific to Saudi Arabia, the relationship between experiences of higher education and gendered identity formations is global in nature and is demonstrated by others (Heyzer, 2005;

Lawler, 2014; Leathwood & Read 2009; Morley, 2010; Noureen, 2015; Pereira, 2007), and these are referred to chapter three.

The study also showed that when students joined the university, they entered not just as women but as individuals with different characteristics, abilities and access to resources. The gender implications for women in Higher Education in Saudi Arabia was then analysed in relation to other factors which affected their lives. The data from the field shows that students' backgrounds often either privileged or restricted their experience. Students, who came from a middle class background, experienced the university very differently from those who came from villages or working class backgrounds. Thus while all of the students were female, it was the gender issues in relation to their social class, status and tribal affiliations that determined how easy or difficult the experience of higher education was, because ultimately, their own attitudes were affected by all. This was apparent at a number of junctures which included students' ability to access tangible resources as well as intangible resources such as advice, exposure to spoken English or the use of connections through *wasta* (explained in glossary and discussed in Chapter two).

In this context, students from rural areas and tribes and those who were married with children were found to have the most difficult experiences at university. They faced multiple demands on their time and considerable logistical challenges. The university classes were also structured and based on a number of assumptions such as students being unmarried or enrolling in university immediately following completion of secondary school. As a result, those students whose lives differed, found themselves needing to make considerable adjustments to their daily routines. Whereas, in contrast, those students from more developed cities and who had experienced a more mobile lifestyle

were able to adapt to changes in the university more than students who come from modest, rural areas or villages. This was best highlighted in the cases of Manal and Haya who were from the same tribe and at the same medical course but each resided in a different part of the country and received different levels of support from their families. Manal, whose parents were more qualified professionals and who grew up in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia (a more developed area) reported that she had to face the transition process and be more self-dependent which she succeeded to achieve and found it relatively important to motivate her younger sister. Whereas Haya, who reported that she had difficulty but managed to persuade her father to let her study medicine, as she was the first in her family to enrol in higher education. However, she reported that her progress, and decorum, was anxiously watched by her conservative extended family at TRC. It wasn't possible to meet Haya for the follow up interview as Haya dropped out of the course and, possibly, left through being influenced by her family as pointed out in section (5.2 The complexities of students' habitus and family influence).

The implications of students' identity as females within Saudi Arabian society can limit their choices. Reem chose TRU, due to adherence to family expectations, restrictions, and direction, and felt that, as a woman, she could not study abroad alone without a male guardian (mahram) to accompany her. There are ramifications and sacrifices involved in maintaining and adhering to concepts of 'a good woman' and the proverbial responsibilities that this concept implies. In Chapter five, different class identities were discussed and women with dual identities would often sacrifice their first choice of study, which would usually become secondary in order for them to maintain their status as 'good women'. For example, three of the women with multiple identities were identified as mothers and wives first then students secondary - Roufe, Thekra and Aseel, were discussed in section (5.2. The experience of women with multiple identities.) However,

due to their different class identities, the same three women students found the experience of transition at TRU difficult but the transition seemed more adaptable for Aseel, who was from a middle class background. Whilst some others ended up repeating some modules or had to postpone a semester because they lacked the cultural capital or in the case of Thekra, *wasta* capital.

The impact of *wasta* was also discussed in Chapter five as a form of social capital. The little amount of research that has been done about *wasta* mainly indicates the benefits of such connections and networks (Gold and Naufal, 2012). At TRU, it was shown that some 'family connections' benefited their daughters to attend courses which would not be possible without such a network. This kind of *wasta* opened up new opportunities. This was demonstrated in the new course that was established at TRU, where most of the students attending were from families who enjoy high social status, and consequently can network with influential people who have authority to intervene. Whilst, those students who come from a less affluent or influential tribe, with less status and less opportunities to network with influential connections, demonstrated a lack of *wasta* capital and this was confirmed by the claims raised by the student from a prominent tribe (the name of the tribe has been removed for participant anonymity), that no one from her tribe had been enrolled in the new course established at TRU. The location students came from was also highlighted as an implication, and students who were from metropolitan or more developed cities demonstrated that their experience at TRU was better.

8.1.2 Influences of institutional habitus on the formation of female students' identities

The research project investigated what TRU provides students in addition to education in terms of the subject matter and direct material benefits such as the monthly allowance and free transportation. It also explored how students navigated the advantages and disadvantages they faced within the institutional habitus or culture of TRU. It analysed the structural logic of TRU as a field or as a social space as it is referred to in Chapter six. The term 'social spaces' was used to refer to the different physical social areas and places where female students interacted and socialised with each other within TRU's fields (Bourdieu, 1985). The case studies examined in Chapters six and seven showed that understanding the cultural aspects of Saudi Arabian women's lives is fundamental to analysing their experiences within the university's social and learning spaces. This thesis, therefore, investigated if women students in Saudi Arabia were bound by certain rules that govern their social practices and experience in general in Higher Education.

The social space of TRU was an extension of the social structure outside the university, that is Saudi Arabian society. During the time of the fieldwork, there were restrictions on women students due to the local customs on guardianship, dress codes inside the university, the manner of wearing the Abaya when leaving the university and restrictions on the time of opening the gates for students to enter and exit the facilities. These social, cultural and religious practices were shaped by the Saudi Arabian society and affected the institutional habitus and its social space accordingly.

To consider the social practices of the university which constitute a social space, I drew from observations, interviews with the female participants and members of staff. Analysing the effects on female students of designating the university as a 'women-only

space', shows that there are several advantages as well as disadvantages. It was advantageous as women had their own private space to communicate and interact freely, where for example they do not have to wear their Abayas. Students' responses evidenced their perception of the university, a space in which they engaged in learning but also a safe social space for them to interact with each other with a degree of comfort and freedom that they did not feel in mixed or non-segregated spaces. Thus, as discussed in (Chapter six), there was a dichotomy in the university experience as there was strict gender segregation on the one hand and equally strict rules on the removal of abayas on the other. Consequently, the university was viewed by the female students as an unusually public space in which they could express their creativity and sensibilities through their attire.

There were also several disadvantages to the practice of having a 'women-only space'. The first was that it limited the women's experiences of different situations and did not provide them with the skills or practice needed to interact in a mixed gender environment. This is described by Nourah Ali in a statement that women 'do not know how to communicate' (Nourah Ali, Vice-dean to one of the colleagues, views of the gender-mixed workplace). The observations at the university, described in section 6.1, also showed that under certain circumstances such as medical emergencies, students could not act or react quickly and effectively. This was an important aspect to consider and pay particular attention to by TRU with vision 2030 and the involvement of women more at workplaces. It would be useful if the university could organise, periodically, workshops or shared learning situations where both males and females, who are on the same course, could work and converse together. This would enable the confidence and skills needed for communicating in the mixed gender environments that will occur further on in their

courses and when they commence employment in establishments that employ both males and females together.

The idea of 'fitting in' and 'belonging' was another important aspect of the participants at TRU, a social space which influenced the formation of female students' identities. Students spoke about their ability to 'fit in' by conforming to a specific set of group characteristics. Some referred these characteristics as markers which delineated the "serious" students from frivolous students from the 'velvet class'. These references discussed in section 6.2 show how specific identities are characterised and how these affect students' experiences. Some biases and prejudices constrained how students interacted at university. This was evidenced by students' responses that they felt they had more in common with those from the region they belonged to. Nevertheless, the university was still noted by students as a unique social space which allowed them to communicate, socialise and make friends with a wider spectrum of people than usual. (6.2 Importance of the term social space in the project: Sense of belonging).

This thesis argued that female students' experiences in higher education were closely tied to the social structure and women's position in the Saudi Arabian social systems. The interaction of students' personal habitus and the culture of the institution was key to understanding students' capacity to adapt to the institutional habitus (Thomas, 2002b; Reay et al., 2009; Crozier & Reay, 2011). A significant factor in a student's chances of success in the university was their ability to recognise and capitalise on what the university provides to the students. Concurrently, the university also played a role in helping students to realise this and take advantage of the opportunities made available to them.

This thesis was informed by scholarship on students' unequal experiences in higher education in specific (Archer et al, 2003; Bathmaker et al, 2013; Burke, 2012, Burke et al., 2017 ; Crozier et al 2019; Leathwood and Read 2009; Reay et al., 2011; Wong and Chiu 2019). It was influenced by the feminist perspectives, but the thesis does not engage with feminist theories or issues such as gender-based violence. Instead, the thesis highlights social practices that are embedded within the structure of society and charts how changes to the social pattern are being made by both the Saudi Arabian government as well as by women themselves. In Saudi Arabia, gender also intersects with other social aspects such as social class and tribal identity and so there is no ubiquitous student experience and the thesis is attentive to the unique positionalities of students (Collins and Bilge, 2016).

The findings of this thesis on student's ability to integrate within educational institutions, the level of integration whether formal or informal (Longden, 2004) and the ways higher education institutions support disadvantaged students to succeed and complete university resonate with existing research (Reay, 2001; Thomas, 2002a). A major difference in Saudi Arabia is that women's education is viewed by both the state and the larger population as a means to empower them and that there is a symbiotic relationship between state pull and the push from below.

The term social space was also useful to understand the dynamic relationship between the university as a space and the construction of gender in the social system of Saudi Arabia as can be seen in the discussion on the changing use of abaya and issues such as guardianship and ID tags.

The findings show that within the university culture and space and when a student's level of motivation was high and the students received support – from family or financial governmental support, it was possible for them to overcome their lack of some capital in some cases. Such experiences though were extremely difficult; however, the students felt that the difficulties were worth overcoming. Some students also saw higher education as an advantage to women's personal and professional lives. This is best highlighted in Chapter five which discussed the experiences of students from working class backgrounds coupled with other social aspects, such as being divorced or originating from rural villages was expressed and referred to as contributing difficulties. However, these were only expressed as relating to fuelling students' high motivation and notions to succeed. The examples of the divorced women Soad and Hana, who came from rural villages, both demonstrated a high motivation to succeed as they wanted to change their lives and they both believed that this could be accomplished only by gaining a degree and were determined that this should occur as soon as possible.

Ultimately the findings of the thesis discussed in (chapter six) showed that the university is a social space which gives its students the potential to adapt to the changes and this was demonstrated by the experiences of students at the university's accommodation and the abilities they showed in order to cope with what TRU provided.

8.1.3 Pedagogic practices, including use of English, influence female students' social and cultural identities

This section addresses research question three and focuses on students' learning experiences in terms of pedagogic practices of faculty and having to use the English language. A key feature of the education provided at TRU was the curriculum, which was

delivered using the English language as the medium of communications- that included learning the English language and also other subjects taught in English- by a large number of international staff who made up the faculty members, and largely came from backgrounds which differed from those of the students. Consequently, many of the foreign staff members had expectations of the students that were not met, and these differences were primarily rooted in cultural differences.

The intersection of students' backgrounds (discussed in Chapter five) with the Regional university's environment (Chapter six) and teaching practices (Chapter seven) produced several crucial aspects of the individual student's experiences at the university. The thesis shows that some of the female students, with specific demographic backgrounds, are prepared for a greater or lesser degree in navigating the practices and the culture of the new and unfamiliar space of TRU. Interviews with students and faculty also revealed that both student backgrounds and university teaching practices played a significant role in building students' identities. Chapter seven showed the importance of learners and teachers' relationship and how students related to teachers within the institutional environment. Section 7.3 showed that female students, at TRU like other Saudi Arabian students, join a university with a socially embedded cultural habitus. This has developed their learning habitus resulting in a socially embedded expectation of practice of what a student should be (that is receptive and passive) and also on how the 'transmitters of knowledge' (the faculty members) should be addressed and adhered to. In Saudi Arabia, teachers have traditionally been held in great respect and reverence. This elevated status is part of students' learning practice and manifests in their reluctance to question or critically engage with faculty members or the curriculum they are faced with.

The findings discussed in section 7.3 showed that many of the female students found a major difference between the expectations of them in secondary school and that of higher education. They indicated that the resultant difficulties that students face could be because of the considerable variation in teaching practices and a lack of cultural capital. Most of the students at TRU were exposed in secondary schools to some learning practices and attitudes that mainly focused on '*talqeen*', which pertains to the way students receive information by memorisation without a thorough understanding of the concepts; and the practice is to receive the knowledge without questioning or discussion of the contents. This practice has been embedded in students' learning abilities and has become part of their learning habitus. It has been criticised (Ahmed, 2014; Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rajab 2013; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015) as it considers students to be receptacles of knowledge rather than engaging them as active learners (Freire, 2004; Al Surati, 2009). In terms of understanding of habitus and its effects, as was discussed in section 7.3 these findings reflect those of James (2011:3) who showed that past experiences in different fields inform habitus which, in turn, directs responses to situations which arise in the future (This will be discussed in 8.2.2). The implications for policy and practice, as schools and higher education institutes need to consider this in their curriculum and expectations of students.

This research also offers insights into how institutions can better serve non-traditional students or students who lack the cultural capital to excel in higher education settings. For example, the results of the research indicate that it would be beneficial to offer several levels of English beginning with basic English and a curriculum which is designed to reflect students' own experiences and abilities. These changes would help students, such as those who had studied in schools where standards of English instruction were low, cope better rather than giving them, from the onset, a feeling of being overwhelmed. Even

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with such changes, however, the research indicates that there are likely to be students for whom the experience will be challenging as they would still be new to higher education. In some instances, a students' academic identities were also a factor in their ability to cope at university. For example, students from the humanities pathways were often compared as being less important and having less status, both academically and in commitment, to those students who were pursuing degrees through medical pathways. The latter were provided with higher social status with clear cut boundaries, what Bernstein (1973) referred to as 'educational identity'. Importantly, the status that was accorded to students who were perceived to have 'academic' ability or lack was highlighted during interviews with staff members. This was reflected in the perceptions of members of staff such as Tesaka who stated that students on the humanities path were '*less serious'*. Additionally, the English language courses offered to the medical students was taught within the specialisation of medicine, where students were taught the necessary vocabulary for their chosen field. This would be useful for non-medical students too, as they would view the course as having more meaning and purpose.

One of the issues which was uncovered during the fieldwork was the inability of students to understand how to participate in higher education, what was required of them to do so and how to activate the tools of higher education to benefit them. The question which arose was whether students were familiar with ''rules of the game'' (Bourdieu, 1972) and if they had a 'feel for the game'. Some members of staff had several assumptions and stereotypes of how students should perform within the university (Burke, Crozier and Misiaszek, 2017:77). Universities also have their own 'institutional habitus' and several faculty members such as Jessica and Cathy took the initiative to clarify some of these "rules of the game" to students and taught them how to be 'a student'. Such actions

seemed to have a positive and immediate effect on students' experiences of higher education.

The work of Bernstein (1996, 2000) on recognition and realisation rules also helps analyse classroom experiences of students and faculty. Using this framework, the data shows that it is important for students to know what is expected from them and how they could respond better to the university environment. As the interview with a staff member discussed in Chapter seven shows, over the last five or more years there has been an increase in students' awareness of what is required to carry to university as well as a development of their own identity of being "a student". Some of the faculty when focusing on the learning practices of the students drew in the students' use of make-up, particularly in the earlier days of joining. The faculty members brought attention to the fact that students were more aware of the context further on in the year than when the university first opened to begin the term - demonstrating institutional habitus and their expectations of students attending. Stating that some students wanted to look good but were unable to find appropriate ways to express themselves as this was a new cultural space for them. It was a public space for adulthood that was gender segregated. Previously, these spaces were only available for occasions such as weddings or celebratory events. It was not a one-event space, it was a continuous space that they could inhabit for several years. However, in the first year, it took some students time to adjust and find suitable expressions of dress and in some ways, behaviour.

8.2 Contribution to knowledge

This thesis focused upon the university experience and the relationship between higher education and the formation of women's identities in Saudi Arabia. It also provides vital

insights into the nature of changes in women's position which have recently appeared in developing cities such as TRC which are still making the transition from rural to metropolitan regions. The thesis sought to explore how higher education opportunities provided to some students were seen as an adventure that was advantageous to women's personal and professional lives. A better understanding of these issues may contribute to the academic literature in the field of HE, particularly the emerging scholarship on women's experiences in education and the challenges they face.

In general, the research is important and offers two different types of contribution which will be discussed in the following section. Firstly, is the contribution to knowledge in relation to the perspective and the context of Saudi Arabia, in particular the experience of female students in the context of rural cities in the process of development. Secondly, is the relevance and contribution that this study can share with neighbouring countries that have a similar social structure that is guided by similar traditions and culture, where higher education was viewed as less important for females. However, attitudes are changing and the issues that have been identified and discussed in this research should be relevant for those countries, as they will similarly be developing the access and support necessary for women to fulfil their aspirations.

Secondly, an important contribution within the research was the role of new concepts such as 'social space' and the use of 'wasta' in the analysis of family connections and the link to Bourdieu's social capital concept. This study considered the implications of social class and access to resources on learning outcomes. In relation to identity, of being women, being from a middle class background or having a specific social capital which was rooted in their tribe or family connections and manifested as '*wasta*'. Bourdieu's work also helped in analysing how students' socioeconomic status benefited and

privileged some to find the transition into the institutional culture easier and seemed more adaptable to the university and independent way of life than those who came from rural villages.

8.2.1 Western perspective and Saudi perspective

The literature discussed in Chapter three showed that while there has been some recent work on Higher Education in Saudi Arabia (Yamani, 1996; Hamdan, 2005; Al-Fassi 2010; Al Alhareth et al, 2015; Yusuf et al, 2015; Rather, 2012), the studies mostly referred to women's education as a source of human capital and a way to empower women and better their position in Saudi Arabian society. These previous studies on women in higher education in Saudi Arabia had not focused on the impact of social aspects of individuals' identities on their experiences. This study sought to address these issues.

Due to its grounding in the European context, Bourdieu's work (1964, 1979) that analysed students' performance in higher education after the Second World War, was useful as it provided another lens or dimension to understand higher education in the Saudi Arabian context. Moreover, the 'field' of higher education institutions are increasingly focusing on gaining international recognition and certifications. This in turn has led to an increase in uniformity in the taught higher education curriculum and reflects the influence of globalisation in higher education. These were recent phenomena that had not yet been studied.

Most of the studies from the UK (for example, Archer et al, 2003; Leathwood and Read 2009, Bathmaker et al, 2013; Burke, 2012; Crozier et al., 2019; Reay et al., 2011; Wong and Chiu 2019) which draw on Bourdieu's work of cultural capital, habitus and field were

conducted when changes within the higher education field were being brought about. These include policies to widen participation in higher education in the UK and the increasing participation of students from different class and ethnic groups. The studies therefore highlight the experiences of less privileged, non-traditional students in the UK.

My research also took place during a period when several changes were being brought about in Saudi Arabia and TRC in particular. My research can contribute an understanding of some of these changes and their influences on student's identities; including self-reliance within a much more accessible world where gender segregation is much less apparent; or at least developing in that direction. Saudi Arabian society and culture is moving from being one which is tribal based towards a more modern state (Al-Sultan, 1988; Al-Fahad, 200; AlNuaim, 2013). Movement towards globalisation and the significant socioeconomic changes in modern Saudi Arabian society has affected female students' educational experience. This thesis documents and shows the impact of these changes in women's higher education experiences. It not only highlights how students experience the formation of and changes to identities after being in higher education but also shows how some are privileged more than others due to their access to capital. The data reveals that students who lacked access to capital needed to make extremely difficult changes, and often great effort, in order to stay in higher education. A particularly significant finding was the experience of divorced women and the extent to which higher education helped to empower them by granting them the elevated status of a "university student", akin to symbolic capital (Bourdieu), and cultural capital (institutionalised forms of cultural capital through credentials) and gave them the hope of financial independence. Different research in the West might have considered financial independence, but in relation to women of this research it was more of a self-reliance upon themselves through obtaining education. The idea of being self-reliant was mentioned by many students

during the research, either directly or indirectly. They referred to being self-reliant in a whole array of situations, such as: in relation to accessing and having resources; in finding and securing the future job; to be economically independent; and to be relatively autonomous. All the students made the link of obtaining a higher education degree with the aim for a better job or a status. Also this was more noticeable on those students who were living away from their family, who were living at the university accommodation or relying on their own living arrangements, and these new experiences were developing a reliance on their own self to govern and lead their life as students.

Finally, in addition to these contributions explained above, the research will also provide an important contribution to the development of future practice and policy of the university focused upon in this research, TRU and in particular, the PY programmes offered to help students transition to a university degree. The research provided more immediate and practical contributions through its findings on the effects of institutional habitus on students' experiences.

8.2.2 The implications for policy and practice

The study provides data to inform and guide policy and practice for the university with regards to students' diversity and differences particularly in relation to access to resources. Such as the different ways students experience the transition to university due to class background, or those who come from less developed cities and villages or simply due to their multiple identities as women students with responsibilities. Through this, the findings of this research could contribute to the development of future programmes to support the students who lack resources or life skills that would enable them to thrive in university.

Based on the findings, the PY programme for women in higher education in Saudi Arabia can also consider new ways of engaging with students in order to build on their pre-existing learning abilities while encouraging the development of new skill sets. One of those new skills would be the skills of communication in a mixed gender environment for both staff and students. The research contributions will also be relevant and useful to other universities using similar systems. It is important that students know the expectations of a student and requirements of the study styles and attitudes that the TRU envisage students to be and have. The university could have a collaboratively conceived idea of this, which was contributed to and agreed by all faculty. This must be shared at the onset with students and they should also be given the encouragement to add to these 'expectations of a TRU student', making this a collaborative agreement. TRU must ensure that its curriculum and validation processes are aligned with this vision. There is no point in insisting that students become more inquiry oriented, or more proficient in English language if they are overwhelmed with exams and quizzes to test and validate their success on the course.

In relation to pedagogy, the thesis considered the different styles and approaches to teaching between school and university with the existence of an international staff body. Students came with socially embedded cultural habitus and practices such as the use of rote learning and memorisation, whilst faculty members demonstrated that they came with different expectations of learning attitudes and of the academic skills required from university students. The importance of *'talgeen'* and memorisation are embedded within students' learning styles and attitudes. However, if this PY could be used to encourage and develop additional skills and attitudes such as a love of inquiry, of gaining knowledge and of being lifelong learners, then this would better equip students for the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes that they intend to complete. The PY programme could

implement a structure which helps students find the transition into university learning more practical that is based more on the process of language acquisition rather than the product of results from exams. Perhaps less assessments would support this.

The university could do more to help students transition into university learning by becoming more process driven where instruction is defined and aimed at teaching thinking strategies and domain-specific knowledge in coherence. It was noted that the PY students who went on to major in subjects pertaining to medicine, were less likely to fail or drop out. This could be related to the fact that their English acquisition classes within the PY programme are domain specific to medicine. Thereby they are learning the language within the context of their interest of study. If all of the English language courses could follow this example, students may become more motivated to learn the language and more process driven, rather than product driven where their emphasis is on achieving certain ends like passing exams and gaining certificates.

This research explored women students and some of the tensions of their everyday life, contentions in their hopes of advancing in both education and career, and obstacles that society and family members might place, including religion, to usurp their advancement. Saudi Arabia is a patriarchal society, but the vision 2030 and the preceding policies and mandates to reach these goals, has empowered females and gives them strength and support to continue their ambitions. Once the wheel of female emancipation began; females felt empowered with the knowledge that their government was and still is supporting them. This leads to a perpetual motion of advancement and participation in education, employment in key positions for women and an impetus to use their voice to talk and demand their needs.

Although this research pertains to a particular context, that is a university in a developing urban area in Saudi Arabia, the implications can contribute to the policy and practice of similar universities in neighbouring countries that share similar social structures in both society and university as those that the students' in this research have encountered in TRU, Saudi Arabia. Expectations of females, very similar to Saudi Arabia, were more of the domestic contributions they could provide and understandings of female roles and identities were mainly based on tradition and culture. The positioning of women historically and traditionally has meant that higher education was viewed as less important for females. However, in most of these neighbouring counties, like Saudi Arabia, this attitude is changing and a university education as well as a career are considered important paths for women. Therefore, the issues that have been identified and discussed in this research should be relevant for those countries, as they will similarly be developing the access and support necessary for women to fulfil their aspirations.

8.3 Areas for improvement/limitations and future research.

A major limitation of this research is that it was only possible to follow students' progress over one academic year. However, most students who were interviewed for this research felt that they were able to identify the changes they experienced and gave definite answers particularly during the follow up interviews. For a few, the changes were clarified only through longer conversations and by comparing these responses to the first and second interviews. Responding to the interview questions required the students to identify the changes they underwent during the first year and reflect on them. Due to the constraints of time dedicated for fieldwork, some students stated that they were unable to fully identify the changes that they had experienced. This could be because the period was too

short for students to experience change or because they did not feel they had sufficient time to reflect on the changes that might have occurred.

8.4 Implications for further research

This research has indicated that some of the female students and their family share concerns regarding the future employment of a student's chosen study. Some student's felt pressured by family members to choose a study course that would enable them to continue functioning within a gender segregated environment. It would be beneficial to female career paths if research could be conducted that explores the impact of these restrictions on career paths and whether these impediments develop into regrets and resentment in women later.

Also, research around the impact of the guardianship system, how women's identities would be impacted by the changes after the removal of some regulations related to the guardianship system in Saudi.

While a few universities and schools in the large metropolitan cities of Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca and Medina have relatively long histories of foreign students and teaching in English, the last decade has been marked by the development of new universities and expansions of old colleges in smaller cities and in the more rural parts of the country.

Women's position in Saudi is *in flux* due to rapid social change in Saudi society. This research happened during the time of changes to women position. Significant changes to women's position in Saudi society have happened during the time of conducting this research -straight after the fieldwork data- most changes occurred during the last two years. For instance, women driving, increased access and opportunities for women to more employment, empowerment for women to be in leading positions, an introduction

of a new anti-harassment law to protect women after driving and lone mobility without a maharam. All of these social changes would be interesting topics to carry out research around the impact of all these issues on women students' experience would be an excellent topic for further study.

Appendices

Appendix 1a: Anonymised Student's Data and class identity analysis

Pseudonym	Age	Path	Type of family home and location	Saudi Tribe/ Nationality	Marital status	Mother's occupation	Father's occupation	Mother's qualification	Father's qualification	Class defined according to several criteria	Subjective factors to provide more information about social class.	Duration of participation in the research	Major joined after PY Programme if known
Abeer	20	S	Lives in a rented house in the Eastern provinces.	Not from a tribe	Single	Gov. employee (school teacher)	Owns a Business-freelance analyst	Bachelor degree	Undeclared	Lower middle class	The income out of the Business is not clear as the father has a fluctuated salary. However her status could be defined out of her 1st interview appendix 18 (line 139).	Interviewed twice	Software Engineering
Soad	33	H	Family own house in the centre of TRC	Shammar	Divorced	House wife	Passed away	No qualification	No qualification	Working class	Her status was indicated clearly out of interviews as a divorced woman, father deceased, working to supplement her income.	Interviewed twice	Special Education
Ahlam	19	S	Family own house in Medina	Not from a tribe	Single	House wife	Private sector	Bachelor degree	No qualification	Working class	Unqualified father working in the private sector, lower income due to lack of qualification/ unemployed mother.	The 2nd interview was conducted over the phone after she left TRU	Dropped the course at TRU, back home

Name	Age		Accommodation	Tribe	Marital status	Father occupation	Mother occupation	Father education	Mother education	Class	Notes	Interview	Course
Shahad	18	M	Family own house in Medina	Not from a tribe	Single	Private Business	Gov. employee	Bachelor degree	Masters degree	Middle class	Lives at TRU Accom/ qualified father and working mother/ able to travel once a month back home. joined the university mainly to be in the specific course. And joined the accommodation as a female alone at TRC.	Interviewed twice	Diagnostic Radiology
Karema	21	S	Algerian lives at TRC-Parents rented house	Could be from an Algerian tribe	Single	House wife	Professional/ prof. at TRU	Secondary education	Postgraduate degree	Middle class	Class clear from questionnaire and interview. As a woman she couldn't live in Algeria alone without her family, she plans to go back when she gets married.	Interviewed twice	Interior design
Noor	21	M	Rented house in Medina	Not from a tribe	Single	House wife	Gov. employee	Bachelor degree	Secondary education	working class	Unqualified working father/ unemployed qualified mother. living at the accom. as cheaper than renting a flat with other students.	Interviewed twice	Medicine & General Surgery
Tahani	19	S	Rented house in Medina	Rashaayda	Single	Gov. employee	Unqualified position as Gov. employee	Bachelor degree	No qualification	Lower middle class	The mother is qualified while father has no qualification but both parents are working as Gov employees (the income was not clear to specify the class out of questionnaire) but from the conversation it states that she only can afford to travel back home	Interviewed twice	Undeclared

Name	Age		Residence	Tribe	Marital	Father	Mother	Father edu	Mother edu	Class	Notes	Interview	TRU system
											at the end of the semester when accommodation closes.		
Ward	19	H	Owns house at a new residential area-Alshifa in TRC	Shammar	Single	Private business	Gov. work	Bachelor degree	Bachelor degree	Middle class	Not indicating any difficulties. Born and lived previously in the capital Riyadh.	No 2nd interview not providing the right details to contact her.	TRU system showed that she joined the major of " Social Work'
Hala	20	S	Lives in her grandfather's house in a new residential area on the outskirts of TRC.	Shammar	Single	Unemployed	Unemployed	No qualification	No qualification	Working class	She indicated that the aim of studying is to develop her economic status particularly due to her unemployed parents.	No 2nd interview/ not providing the right details to contact her.	Undeclared - No information on TRU system
Boshra	20	S	Father's home in a village close to Medina	Not from a tribe	single	Unemployed	Unemployed	No qualification	No qualification	Working class	She indicated her status in interview data and referred to her mother's struggles as a divorced unqualified woman).	Interviewed twice	Repeating some courses

Name	Age		House	Tribe	Marital status			Father qual.	Mother qual.	Class	Notes		Course
Roufe	19	S	Husband rented a small flat at TRC	Shammar	Married	House wife	Retired	No qualification	No qualification	Working class	Unqualified parents/ clear during interview she indicated her socioeconomic status as not able to have private tuition. She said: "cannot afford privet tuitions. Found it difficult to specialise and will repeat some modules / low GPA might change to the humanity courses.	Interviewed twice	Repeating some courses
Leen	19	S	Family home in new residential areas (Sababa) in TRC	Not from a tribe	Single	Teacher for 18 years	Military sector	Bachelor degree	Diploma military school	Middle class	Class clear out of questionnaire. The mother is a teacher so both parents' income are high.	Interviewed twice	Finance
Hana	23	M	A small flat close to the husband's family's village house.	Harb	Married	House wife	Passed away	No qualification	Undeclared	Working class	Good example of W/C students trying hard to adapt to the HE culture as married and living in the village..	Interviewed twice	Clinical Laboratories Sciences
Rahaf	18	M	Rented house in (Medina)	Not indicated a tribe but she put Hejaz from Medina	Single	Gov. employee (school teacher)	Passed away (Primary school teacher)	Bachelor degree	Bachelor degree	Lower middle class	Living at the TRU accom, her mother is a school teacher and the father was too before he passed away a few months ago. Clarified as lower middle class due to absence of father's income.	Interviewed twice	Medicine & General Surgery

| Samya | 32 | S | Rents flat in Riyadh originally from Qaseem before getting married | Harb | Married | Retired | House wife | No qualification | No qualification | Working class | She lives with her aunt/ she wanted the degree to develop her status and be economically independent (out of the interview) . Indicated that she can't afford to rent a flat and bring her children to TRC. Family separation after joining university. Her children with her mother in Qaseem and her husband is in Riyadh as he works in a low income job with secondary school qualification. | No 2nd interview/ not providing the right details to contact her. | Undeclared – No information on TRU system |
| Rana | 19 | S | Family home in new residential area (Alnuqrah) | known family name at TRC | Single | Arabic school teacher about to retire | Retired - was director of a shipping company | Bachelor degree | Undeclared | Middle class | Qualified parents, employed in good positions with high incomes. She indicated her economic status during the interview. Used to live in the capital/ Lives in a rich area/ can afford to travel abroad/ socially recognised family name. Her mother pays for private tuition. | Interviewed twice | Finance |

Thekra	19	S	Lives in husband's family house	Shammar	Married	Gov. employee	Gov. employee	Diploma	Bachelor degree	Working class	Although she might come from an MC family, she indicated her husband's low income and how they had to live in his family's house so there was a change in her status after marriage.	Interviewed twice	Repeating some courses
Mona	21	S	Rented flat with her husband at TRC	Rashaayda	Married	House wife	Gov. work	Secondary education	Secondary education	Working class	Unqualified parents/ rented house with her husband. Her husband's family is from village. During the interview she indicated how they depend upon the monthly income of her husband which is SR5000, which is below the national average.. According to "Household Income and Expenditure Survey" done in 2018 by The General Authority for Statistics in Saudi Arabia showed that the median monthly income per household reached (SR8,958)	The 2nd interview was conducted over the phone/ as it wasn't possible to schedule a suitable time.	Software engineering

Name	Age	Sex	Housing	Tribe	Marital status	Father occupation	Mother occupation	Father education	Mother education	Social class	Notes	Interview	Major
Manal	19	M	Family own house in Eastern provinces	Shammar	Single	Gov. employee	Private sector in an oil company (high income)	Master degree	Bachelor degree	Middle class	Qualified parents/ high income- came specially to study and can afford her own living arrangement – with her sister)	The 2nd interview was conducted over the phone as Manal moved to her major of study.	Applied medical science
Reem	20	M	Family owns a house in the Eastern provinces.	Not from a tribe	Single	Gov. employee	Gov. employee	Bachelor degree	Bachelor degree	Middle class	Affords her own living arrangements/ her family rented a flat and driver with other female students at TRC.	Interviewed twice	Medicine & General Surgery
Haya	20	M	Extended Family house in an old residential area of TRC	Shammar	Single	House wife	Gov. employee - secondary degree	No qualification	Secondary education	Working class	Unqualified parents/ 1st in family to enter HE/ no 2nd interview- might have dropped the course as there was no info on the system about her.	No 2nd interview/ not providing the right details to contact her.	Undeclared - No information at TRU system
Ghada	18	M	Family rented house in new area (Sababa) at TRC	Temim	Single	Gov. employee	Passed away	Bachelor degree	Undeclared	Lower middle class	Qualified mother, working as school teacher for more than 20 years), From interview indicated rented house/ missing sources of income as father deceased.	Interviewed twice	Diagnostic Radiology
Aseel	20	M	Own rented house with her husband in TRC	Rashaayda	Married to qualified husband	Gov. employee	Gov. work	Bachelor degree	Bachelor degree	Middle class	Qualified husband (masters from Australia) No difficulties/ family support/ even with being	Interviewed twice	Accounting

											married she can cope and finds the transition easier.		
Reham	20	M	Village-family's own house	Shammar	Divorced	House wife	Professional Prof. at KSU in Riyadh/ before retired	Undeclared	Postgraduate degree	Upper Middle class	Class clear from questionnaire responses and interviews.	Interviewed twice	Arabic Language - Humanities due to her low GPA as student start at 2015
Walla	20	H	Family house at TRC	Not from tribe	Single	Not working	Gov. work as a technician	No qualification	Diploma	Working class	Indicated out of interview the limitations of getting jobs without higher education qualifications She gave the example of her father and sisters.	Interviewed twice	Repeating some courses
Nadia	22	H	Family home in (Medina)	Harb	Single	House wife	Private sector	Secondary education	Secondary education	Working class	She lives with her brother/ Unqualified parents/ the aim of studying at TRU is for a better Job. When asked about traveling, indicated a lack of affordability.	No 2nd interview/ not providing the right details to contact her.	Arabic Language
Layla	19	H	The family's old house in an old area (Alzubarah) at TRC	Shammar	Single	House wife	Gov. employee	Secondary education	Bachelor degree	Lower middle class	Joined the university for better job prospects also out of the interview she wanted to get the qualification to be financially independent and be better than her [mother]".	Interviewed twice	Arabic Language

Name	Age				Marital status								
Nawal	19	H	Family's own house at TRC	Shammar	Single	House wife	Passed away	No qualification	Bachelor degree	Working class	The father's actual job title before he passed away is not provided but there will be absence of father's income. During interviews she highlighted the importance of being financially independent and how it is hard for a woman to find a job without qualifications.	Interviewed twice	Geography
Shroog	18	H	Parents have a new house after the retirement of the father in TRC	Shammar	Single	House wife	Gov. employee, held a high income position in the military.	No qualification	Secondary education	middle class	She moved from the Eastern Province to TRC after father's retirement. They have their own house in a new area in TRC.	Interviewed twice	English Language
Shereen	18	S	Family owns house at TRC close to their extended family	Shammar	Single	Gov. employee	Gov. employ Prof at TRU	Bachelor degree	Postgraduate degree	Upper middle class	No difficulties/ Qualified parents family support.(known as Talented at TRU)	Interviewed twice	Physics at TRU

Appendix 1b: Students' data and their university choices

Pseudonym	Age	Path	Students' living arrangements	Saudi - Tribe/ Nationality	Marital status	Qiyas Assessment (General Aptitude Test-GAT) (%)	Class	Reasons behind pursuing HE (up to 3 choices)
Abeer	20	S	Uni. Accom	Not from a tribe	Single	77 which is low for AlKhobar universities.	Lower middle class	**Other**: "To create better future".
Soad	33	H	Home at TRC	Shammar	Divorced	Only available option was Humanities, as mature student. 67.496	Working class	Self-interest, Better job
Ahlam	19	S	Uni. Accom (Medina)	Not from a tribe	Single	79.272	working class	**Other**: "Self-development and better Future"
Shahad	18	M	Uni. Accom (Medina)	Not from a tribe	Single	82	Middle class	Self interest
Karema	21	S	Algerian live at TRC- Parents house	Algerian	Single	88.112	Middle class	**Other** 'I like studying and to be in a high position of knowledge, thoughts and culture'
Noor	21	M	Uni. Accom (Medina)	Not from a tribe	Single	88	working class	Self interest

Tahani	19	S	Uni. Accom (Medina)	Rashaayda	Single	74,65 Taibah, the university in Medina, does not accept this low level, for the course she wants	Lower middle class	other: "Self-development and gaining a status in society".
Ward	19	H	TRC	Shammar	Single	76.312	Middle class	Self interest
Hala	20	S	TRC	Shammar	Single	65.768	Working class	Better status
Boshra	20	S	Accom/ came from a village close to Medina	Not from a tribe	single	is law to be accepted at any university in Medina 69	Working class	To please parents
Roufe	19	S	Own house	Shammar	Married	73	Working class	Self interest
Leen	19	S	TRC	Not from a tribe	Single	74	Middle class	Self interest
Hana	23	M	Village close to TRC	Harb	Married	77	Working class	Self interest
Rahaf	18	M	Accom (Medina)	Hejaz/ from Medina	Single	92	Lower middle class	Self interest
Samya	32	S	Own living arrangement-with her aunt. (Qaseem)	Harb	Married	70.1	Working class	Better status
Rana	19	S	TRC	known family name	Single	75	Middle class	Better Job

Thekra	19	S	TRC	Shammar	Married	Wanted to join the medical path but her **GPA (82)** was too low to be accepted. Science was 2nd option and more convenient to her after having new baby.	Working class	Self interest, Better job & To please parents
Mona	21	S	TRC	Rashaayda	Married	67	Working class	Self interest
Manal	19	M	With her sister flat close to TRU	Shammar	Single	78	Middle class	To please parents
Reem	20	M	With group of women students close to TRU	Not from a tribe	Single	94	Middle class	Better Job
Haya	20	M	TRC Family house	Shammar	Single	Allow her to be at the medical path/ 75	Working class	Self interest
Ghada	18	M	TRC Family house	Tamimi	Single	75	Lower middle class	Better Job & To have a qualification
Aseel	20	M	TRC Own house	Rashaayda	Married	81	Middle class	Self interest
Reham	20	M	Village-Parents house	Shammar	Divorced	77	Upper Middle class	Better Job
Walla	20	H	TRC Family house	Not from tribe	Single	67	Working class	Better Job
Nadia	22	H	Own living arrangement (Medina)	Harb	Single	72	Working class	Better Job

Layla	19	H	TRC Family house	Shammar	Single	76	Lower middle class	Better Job
Nawal	19	H	TRC Family house	Shammar	Single	76	Working class	Better Job
Shroog	18	H	TRC Parents house	Shammar	Single	82	Middle class	**other:** "Better Future"
Shereen	18	S	TRC Family house	Shammar	Single	97.3 (Talented)	Upper middle class	Self interest
TRU accom				Own living arrangements			Residents in TRC	

Appendix 2: A simple table with the anonymised faculty members' details.

Pseudonym	Approx. age	Highest qualification	Nationality	Ethnicity	Duration of employment (Years)	Level/path taught
Zobyda	35-45	Master in education Kenya & TESOL-university of Toronto	Canadian	Muslim South African	7	Level 4/ Medical
Raza	45-55	Master in software engineering	British	Muslim Afghani	5	Level 4/ Humanity
Louisa	55- 65	BA in literature and (LL.B.) Bachelor of Law	South African	White	8	level 3/ Humanity
Cathy	55-65	Bachelor in Art	American	White-Hungarian father	7	Level 3/ Science
Jessica	35-45	Master in Business and administration Bachelor in English and public relations & TESOL	American	Black American	5 months	Level 3/ science

Teseka	25-35	Law degree	South African	Asian- Muslim South African	7.5	Level 4/ Humanity
Emily	45-55	BA Art and design & CELTA	American	White American	4	Level2&3/ Medical
Soraya	35-45	Master degree in English language	Sudanese	Muslim Arab	4	Level4/ science
Ala	35-45	Master in English and Literature	Jordanian	Muslim Arab	6	Level 1,2&4 /science
Amina	45-55	Bachelor in psychology	South African	Muslim Asian	2	Level 2&3 Medical Level 3 Humanity

Appendix 3: Nationalities of English Department members.

Nationalities of English Teachers at Prep Year	
Nationalities (Sorted according to particpants preference)	**Number of English Teachers From This Nationality at TRU**
American	20
Canadian	5
British	5
Jordanian	14
Tunisian	5
Sudanese	13
Egyptian	1
Latvian	1
Pakistan	3
Indian	2
South African	36
Total	105

Nationalities of English Teachers in the PY Programme at TRU
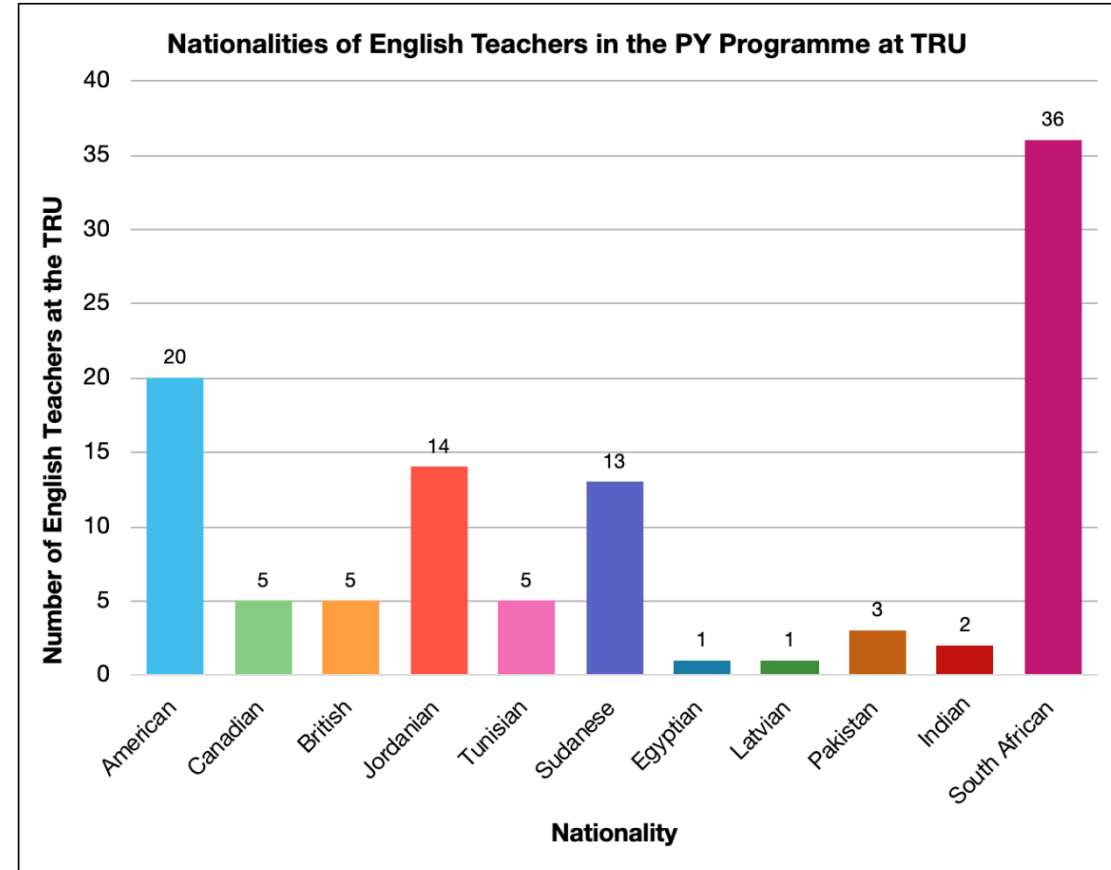
Appendix 4: University Ethical approval

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference EDU 16/ 108 in the School of Education and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on 06.09.16.

Ethics Application

Applicant: Maha Al-Yousef

Title: The role of higher education in developing female students' identities in the context of one university in Saudi Arabia.

Reference: EDU 16/ 108

Department: Education

Appendix 5: Regional University consent form -Redacted

University of Roehampton
London

THE UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:
The role of higher education in developing female students' identities in the context of one University in Saudi Arabia.

Brief Description of Research Project, and What It Involves:
The research focuses on the role of the university in shaping, transforming and constructing women students' identities with a reference to The University `Redacted` in Saudi Arabia. Throughout the study I will refer to The University `Redacted` as 'The Regional University'. The diversity of the university environment might bring about a transformation in the identities of the students and so it seeks to examine if factors such as these have an impact on female students. I want to examine whether social class, tribal affiliation etc. might influence identities formation. I want to understand to what extent pedagogic practices influence student identities, including what impact the use of English as the medium of communication might have on students' identities. The research will be conducted inside the university `Redacted` female campus, which will involve the following aspects:

1. **Documents collections:** I intend to collect initial documents to analyse, some of which are publicly available. The aim is to understand the university's strategic plan, mission and identity.

2. **Questionnaire:** The plan is to ask between 70-80 students to respond to a questionnaire, which will be completed in hard copy, it should take no longer than ten minutes to complete.
3. **Focus group** discussions between 4-5 students from final year courses, it will last for a maximum of 45 minutes.

4. **Observations:** Classrooms observation in collaboration with faculty members for the identified respondents. Observation of classroom sessions will last for a period of three weeks with the option of an extension if required, and will be limited to focus on 6-10 students as more in-depth case studies.

5. **Interviews with both students and staff:**
i- students: An interview will be conducted with 30 selected students in advance, for about 15- 20 minutes at a location within the university campus. Then at a later stage of the research I will conduct a follow-up interview with each of the 30 students for about 40 minutes.

ii. Staff: I will choose 6 members for the interviews, which will last for about 40 minutes in their own offices.

Staff interviews will take place in members' own offices. While students Interviews will take place in Building 17 room No and time (will be confirmed beforehand). All

interviews and focus group discussions will be audio recorded with the permission of the interviewee and a transcript copy will be sent to the interviewees to be approved. The interview data will be kept confidential and any use of the data will be anonymised.

Investigator Contact Details:
Maha Al-Yousef
Department of Education
University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ
alyousem@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone in UK: +█████████████
Telephone in Saudi Arabia: +█████████████

The university Consent Statement:
The university agrees to the above project to take place at the university's female campus and is aware that our students/staff are free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. We understand that the information provided and collected will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that any identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 in UK and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name ....

Signature

Redacted

Date *19/9/2016*

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.) However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Deputy Director for Research.

Director of Studies Contact Details:
Professor Gill Crozier
School of Education-Cedar 108
University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ
g.crozier@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3321

The Deputy Director for Research Details:
Professor Andrew Stables
School of Education- Lulham 021
University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ
andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3865

Appendix 6: A sample of the questionnaire

University of Roehampton
London

Questionnaire

Many thanks for taking the time to answer this questionnaire. In total this should take you a maximum of 10 minutes. Please tick or fill in the correct answers where needed. Please be aware that the completion of this questionnaire may lead to a request to participate in a further research.

Students Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this questionnaire, which is part of a research project about: The role of higher education in developing female students' identities in the context of one University in Saudi Arabia. I am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 of UK and with the University of Roehampton Data Protection Policy.

Full Name (Patronymic**) _____**

Date____/_____/_____

Student signature: _____

☐ I **agree** to participate in a further research.

☐ I **don't** agree to be part of the research.

Investigator Contact Details:
Maha Al-Yousef
Department of Education
University of Roehampton, London, SW15 5PJ
alyousem@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone in UK: +4

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.) However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Deputy Director for Research.

Director of Studies Contact Details:
Professor Gill Crozier
School of Education-Cedar 108
University of Roehampton, London, SW15 5PJ
g.crozier@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3321

The Deputy Director for Research Details:
Professor Andrew Stables
School of Education- Lulham 021
University of Roehampton, London, SW15 5PJ
andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3865

1. I live in this city at?

☐ My own home

☐ My parents' house

☐ My relative house

☐ University housing

☐ Rental accommodation

2. I live with?

☐ My Parents

☐ My husband

☐ My in-laws

☐ Roommates

☐ Extended family

☐ Other (please specify)
_____

3. I am a resident of the following locations:

☐ Aja

☐ Alnuqrah

☐ Aljamaeen

☐ Alzubarah

☐ Sadeyan

☐ Alkhamashiya

☐ Albadeyah

☐ Almatar

☐ Alwady

☐ Alwaseta

☐ Almamlakah

☐ Sababah

☐ Altelphezyon

☐ Meshar

☐ Sharaf

☐ Alshifa

☐ Alaziziyah

☐ Alzahra

☐ King Abdulla

☐ Alsenayeah

☐ Barzan

☐ Other
(please specify)
_____

4. I am _____speaking and reading English

☐ Very Comfortable

☐ Comfortable

☐ Slightly Uncomfortable

☐ Very Uncomfortable

5. This University _____ my first choice when I planned to apply for a higher degree?

☐ Was

☐ Was not

6. Which of the following path you joined?

☐ Medical

☐ Science

☐ Humanity

7. The reason behind pursuing higher education?

☐ Self interest

☐ Better job

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Why? (Please be specific)

_____

8. The reason behind your enrolment into this university?

- ☐ Recommended by friends
- ☐ Recommended by parents
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Financial constraints
- ☐ Academic constraints
- ☐ Social or geographical constraints

- ☐ To have a qualification
- ☐ Better status
- ☐ To please parents
- ☐ For University monthly allowance
- ☐ Other (please specify)

_____

Parents and Family

9. Fathers highest qualification?

- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Undergraduate degree
- ☐ Postgraduate degree
- ☐ Other (please specify)

_____

11. Mothers highest qualification?

- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Undergraduate degree
- ☐ Postgraduate degree
- ☐ Other (please specify)

_____

10. Fathers occupation

- ☐ Employee in a private sector
- ☐ Employee in a governmental sector
- ☐ Business owner
- ☐ Other (please specify)

_____

12. Mothers occupation

- ☐ Employee in a private sector
- ☐ Employee in a governmental sector
- ☐ Business owner
- ☐ Other (please specify)

_____

13. Personal Information

- **Age_____**
- **Place of Birth_____**
- **Home city/region_____**

14. Marital Status?

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

Additional Comments

_____

_____

_____

Please read the following statements carefully and tick the most appropriate one.

☐ **I would be open to participating further in this research and understand that I would be free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. I understand that the information I may provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 UK and with the University of Roehampton Data Protection Policy.**

☐ **I am not willing to participate further in this research and do not wish to be contacted. However the details provided above can be used in the project.**

☐ **I am not willing to participate further in this research and wish to have the information provided above removed**

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix 7: Initial interview and follow up questions for students.

Interview questions for Students:

1. Why did you choose to study at this university?

<div dir="rtl">

١. لماذا اخترت الدراسة في هذه الجامعة؟

</div>

2. In your opinion what will this university provide you with?

<div dir="rtl">

٢. في رأيك ما الذي ممكن ان توفره هذه الجامعة لك؟

</div>

3. Before you joined this university, did you have an idea of how its look like?

<div dir="rtl">

٣. قبل انضمامك للجامعة هل كان لديك فكرة او تصور عن وضع الجامعة وكيف تبدو؟

</div>

4. Do you have an idea of how other universities might look like?

<div dir="rtl">

٤. هل لديك فكرة عن كيف تبدو الجامعات الأخرى؟

</div>

5. Do you think educating woman is important? If yes, why?

<div dir="rtl">

٥. هل تعتقدين ان تعليم المرأة له أهمية؟ اذا كان الجواب بعم، لماذا؟

</div>

6. How do you find the experience of having foreign teachers?

<div dir="rtl">

٦. كيف تجدين تجربة وجود المدرسين الأجانب؟

</div>

7. What do you think of the experience of learning in English?

8. How do you find it?

<div dir="rtl">

٧. ما رأيك في تجربة التعلم باللغه الإنجليزية؟ ٨. كيف وجدتها؟

</div>

9. What is your easy subject? What is your hardest subject?

Why in your opinion its hard/ Or easy?

<div dir="rtl">

٩. ما هي المواد السهلة بالنسبة لك؟ وما هي المواد الصعبة؟ ومن وجهة نظرك لماذا هي سهلة او صعبة؟

</div>

10. What have you done in preparation for university?

<div dir="rtl">

١٠. ما هي التحضيرات التي فعلتها قبل الالتحاق بالجامعة؟

</div>

11. What is your hobby?

<div dir="rtl">

١١. ما هي هواياتك؟

</div>

12. Do you like traveling? Do you travel out side Saudi?

13. Where? How often?

١٢. هل تحبين السفر؟ هل تسافرين خارج السعودية؟ إذا كان الجواب نعم، الي اين؟ وكم مره؟

14. Do you know about other cultures?

١٣. هل تعرفت على الثقافات الأخرى؟

15. Do you use any of the social media?

١٥. هل تستخدمين أي من وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟

Follow up interviews:

1. Have you noticed any **changes** since you joined the university?

(Do you feel the way you (…………) has changed since you have joined the university?) Changes to include: (consumption/ tone/ communication, social media network, politics/ family/ relationship friends and peers/ taste)

2. What has changed in you since you joined the university?

3. How do you consider your experience of being at the university? (living in the accommodation/ or alone away from your family).

4. How do you find the study in English?

5. What makes some subjects easy to learn and others harder?

6. To what extent are you free to express your opinion during class sessions?

7. What is your opinion of women's education in Saudi Arabia?

8. Do you think the university provided you as students with a particular identity?

Appendix 8: Faculty members interview questions.

Foreign members of staff

Please tell me your

1. Name

2. Highest achieved qualification /

3. Nationality

4. Department /5 years

5. The courses you have taught over the period of a year

6. How long have you been working at this university?

7. How has your experience of working in The Regional university been so far?

8. Have you previously worked elsewhere?

9. Why you did you choose to work in this university?

10. How different has living in this region been from other places you have lived at?

11. How different is teaching in this university from others you have worked or studied in?

12. What teaching methods do you use in the classroom? Why?

13. How have the students responded to this?

14. As you come from (the nationality), do you incorporate/ draw examples from your own culture?

15. How do the students respond to this? Do they like it/ reject it/ do you feel you have to adjust it to suit their culture?

16. Do you feel more sensitive using your own cultural examples?

17. Have you noticed any changes in the way students' dress, behave/ their attitude/ look after joining the university?

18. What kind of impact do you think the university experiences is having on the students?

19. **To what extend can you express your own opinion about specific cultural /social or religious issues during your lecture/ sessions?**

20. **Are there any restrictions from the university**?

21. **If members have noticed development – (to think of a way to ask)**

For Saudi staff:

Please tell me your

1 Name with patronymic

2 Highest achieved qualification.

3 Where do you originally come from?

4 Department

1. The courses you have taught over the period of a year

2. How long you have been working at this university?

3. How has your experience of working in The Regional university been so far?

4. Have you previously worked or studied elsewhere?

5. Why you did you choose to work in this university?

6. How different has living in this region been from other places you have lived at?

7. How different is teaching in this university from others you have worked or studied in?

8. What teaching methods do you use in the classroom?

9. How have the students responded to this?

10. Do you think students might learn a culture while engaged in the process of studying at the university? If so, could you throw some light upon what such a culture is?

11. Do you think HE might provide a higher level of social status for students?

12. What do you think the role of HE institutions might be in influencing a student's identity?

13. What has your experience with teaching students here been like?

14. Do you think education could develop and strengthen women's position?

15. Have you noticed any changes in students' way of dressing, speaking and general behaviour and attitudes after joining the university?

Appendix 9: Copy of the 4 main Ethical Consent Forms-Redacted

University of Roehampton London

THE UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:
The role of higher education in developing female students' identities in the context of one University in Saudi Arabia.

Brief Description of Research Project, and What It Involves:
The research focuses on the role of the university in shaping, transforming and constructing women students' identities with a reference to The University of ███ in Saudi Arabia. Throughout the study I will refer to The University ███ as 'The Regional University'. The diversity of the university environment might bring about a transformation in the identities of the students and so it seeks to examine if factors such as these have an impact on female students. I want to examine whether social class, tribal affiliation etc. might influence identities formation. I want to understand to what extent pedagogic practices influence student identities, including what impact the use of English as the medium of communication might have on students' identities. The research will be conducted inside the university ███ - female campus, which will involve the following aspects:

1. **Documents collections:** I intend to collect initial documents to analyse, some of which are publicly available. The aim is to understand the university's strategic plan, mission and identity.

2. **Questionnaire:** The plan is to ask between 70-80 students to respond to a questionnaire, which will be completed in hard copy, it should take no longer than ten minutes to complete.

3. **Focus group** discussions between 4-5 students from final year courses, it will last for a maximum of 45 minutes.

4. **Observations:** Classrooms observation in collaboration with faculty members for the identified respondents. Observation of classroom sessions will last for a period of three weeks with the option of an extension if required, and will be limited to focus on 6-10 students as more in-depth case studies.

5. **Interviews with both students and staff:**
i- students: An interview will be conducted with 30 selected students in advance, for about 15- 20 minutes at a location within the university campus. Then at a later stage of the research I will conduct a follow-up interview with each of the 30 students for about 40 minutes.

ii. Staff: I will choose 6 members for the interviews, which will last for about 40 minutes in their own offices.

Staff interviews will take place in members' own offices. While students Interviews will take place in Building 17 room No and time (will be confirmed beforehand). All interviews and focus group discussions will be audio recorded with the permission of the interviewee and a transcript copy will be sent to the interviewees to be approved. The interview data will be kept confidential and any use of the data will be anonymised.

Investigator Contact Details:
Maha Al-Yousef
Department of Education
University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ
alyousem@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone in UK: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Telephone in Saudi Arabia: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Consent Statement:
The university agrees to the above project to take place at the university's female campus and is aware that our students/staff are free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. We understand that the information provided and collected will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that any identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 in UK and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name ………………………………….

Signature ………………………………

Date …………………………………….

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.) However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Deputy Director for Research.

Director of Studies Contact Details:	**The Deputy Director for Research Details:**
Professor Gill Crozier	Professor Andrew Stables
School of Education-Cedar 108	School of Education- Lulham 021
University of Roehampton, London	University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ	SW15 5PJ
g.crozier@roehampton.ac.uk	andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3321	+44 (0)20 8392 3865

University of Roehampton
London

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (students)

Title of Research Project:
The role of higher education in developing female students' identities in the context of one University in Saudi Arabia.

Brief Description of Research Project, and What Participation Involves:
The research focuses on the role of the university in shaping, transforming and constructing women students' identities with a reference to the Regional University in Saudi Arabia. The diversity of the university environment might bring about a transformation in the identities of the students and so it seeks to examine if factors such as these have an impact on female students. I want to examine whether social class, tribal affiliation etc. might influence identities formation. I want to understand to what extent pedagogic practices influence student identities, including what impact the use of English as the medium of communication might have on students' identities. The research, which will involve students and staff participation, will be conducted inside the University of Ha'il- female campus. Student's participation will involve a minimum of one from the following aspects:

1. **Questionnaire:** Between 70-80 students to respond to a hard copy questionnaire, which can be completed in ten minutes.
2. **Focus group:** discussions between 4-5 students from final year courses will last for a maximum of 45 minutes.
3. **Observations:** Classrooms observation in collaboration with faculty members for the identified respondents. It will be limited to focus on 6-10 students as more in-depth case studies. Observation of classroom sessions will last for a period of three weeks with the option of an extension if required**.**
4. **Interviews:** An interview will be conducted with 30 selected students in advance, for about 15- 20 minutes at a location within the university campus. Then at a later stage of the research I will conduct a follow-up interview with each of the 30 students for about 40 minutes. Interviews will take place in Building 17, room number and time (will be confirmed beforehand). All interviews and focus group discussions will be audio recorded with the permission of the interviewee and a transcript copy will be sent to the interviewees to be approved. The interview data will be kept confidential and any use of the data will be anonymised.

Investigator Contact Details:
Maha Al-Yousef
Department of Education
University of Roehampton, London, SW15 5PJ
alyousem@roehampton.ac.uk

Telephone in UK: +███████████████

Telephone in Saudi Arabia: ███████████

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name ………………………………….

Signature ………………………………

Date …………………………………

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.) However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Deputy Director for Research.

<table>
<tr><td>

Director of Studies Contact Details:
Professor Gill Crozier
School of Education-Cedar 108
University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ
g.crozier@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3321

</td><td>

The Deputy Director for Research Details:
Professor Andrew Stables
School of Education- Lulham 021
University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ
andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3865

</td></tr>
</table>

University of Roehampton
London

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (staff)

Title of Research Project:
The role of higher education in developing female students' identities in the context of one University in Saudi Arabia.

Brief Description of Research Project, and What Participation Involves:
The research focuses on the role of the university in shaping, transforming and constructing women students' identities with a reference to the Regional University in Saudi Arabia. The diversity of the university environment might bring about a transformation in the identities of the students and so it seeks to examine if factors such as these have an impact on female students. I want to examine whether social class, tribal affiliation etc. might influence identities formation. I want to understand to what extent pedagogic practices influence student identities, including what impact the use of English as the medium of communication might have on students' identities. The research will be conducted inside the university of Ha'il- female campus. Students will participate in different aspects of this research and about 6 members of staff will be chosen for the interviews. Interviews with member of staff will take place in the university building in their own offices, which will last for about 40 minutes, and time (will be confirmed beforehand). All interviews will be audio recorded with the permission of the interviewee and a transcript copy will be sent to the interviewees to be approved. The interview data will be kept confidential and any use of the data will be anonymised.

Investigator Contact Details:
Maha Al-yousef
Department of Education
University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ
alyousem@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone in UK: +
Telephone in Saudi Arabia: +

Consent Statement:
I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name …………………………………
Signature ………………………………
Date ……………………………………

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.) However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Deputy Director for Research.

Director of Studies Contact Details:
Professor Gill Crozier
School of Education-Cedar 108
University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ
g.crozier@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3321

The Deputy Director for Research Details:
Professor Andrew Stables
School of Education- Lulham 021
University of Roehampton, London
SW15 5PJ
andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3865

University of Roehampton
London

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (Questionnaire)

Questionnaire

Many thanks for taking the time to answer this questionnaire. In total this should take you a maximum of 10 minutes. Please tick or fill in the correct answers where needed. Please be aware that the completion of this questionnaire may lead to a request to participate in a further research.

Students Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this questionnaire, which is part of a research project about: The role of higher education in developing female students' identities in the context of one University in Saudi Arabia. I am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 of UK and with the University of Roehampton Data Protection Policy.

Name_____

Date____/_____/_____

Student signature: _____

☐   I **agree** to participate in a further research.

☐   I **don't** agree to be part of the research.

Investigator Contact Details:
Maha Al-Yousef
Department of Education
University of Roehampton, London, SW15 5PJ
alyousem@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone in UK: ███████████████

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.) However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Deputy Director for Research.

Director of Studies Contact Details:
Professor Gill Crozier
School of Education-Cedar 108
University of Roehampton, London, SW15 5PJ
g.crozier@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3321

The Deputy Director for Research Details:
Professor Andrew Stables
School of Education- Lulham 021
University of Roehampton, London, SW15 5PJ
andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3865

Appendix 10: MAXQDA- list of initial themes/ Codes.

Data editor - All codes

Appendix10-MAXQDA- list of initial themes/ Codes.

	Parent code	**First groups out of the initial themes**	Code	**List of initial themes**	Coded segments o...	Coded segme...	Author	Creation date	Code alias
●			'Safe space'		5	0	maha_alyousef	08/11/2017 14:47	
●	University accommodation		activities		2	0	maha_alyousef	02/02/2018 19:...	
●			arab/saudi members ways of teaching		1	0	maha_alyousef	16/10/2018 21:38	
●	Transition		Being first to join university		3	0	Fieldwork part1	01/11/2017 12:22	
●			class		2	0	maha_alyousef	16/10/2018 00:...	
●			Dress constrain		1	0	maha_alyousef	16/10/2018 22:...	
●			education & freedom		1	0	maha_alyousef	16/10/2018 02:...	
●	University accommodation		experience at the accommodation		1	0	maha_alyousef	16/10/2018 01:18	
●	Transition		Expreience when first joined university		1	0	Fieldwork part1	01/11/2017 13:00	
●			FamilySupport (Husband/ grandfather/ Grandmother/ mother in Law		10	0	maha_alyousef	08/11/2017 14:07	
●	University accommodation		Feelings toword the accommodation		2	0	maha_alyousef	16/10/2018 00:19	
●			Foreign members		20	0	maha_alyousef	08/11/2017 14:10	
●			Foriegners		1	0	maha_alyousef	16/10/2018 00:...	
●			Giyas level		2	0	maha_alyousef	08/11/2017 14:20	
●			Imp of female Education		4	0	Fieldwork part1	01/11/2017 12:32	
●			key to success		1	0	Fieldwork part1	01/11/2017 14:05	
●			knowing rules of the game		2	0	maha_alyousef	17/07/2018 11:41	
●			learning in English		19	0	maha_alyousef	08/11/2017 14:29	
●			learning Practices-Good teacher		1	0	Fieldwork part1	02/11/2017 11:45	
●			Mature students' transition		4	0	Fieldwork part1	01/11/2017 13:32	
●	Transition		More Independent		3	0	Fieldwork part1	02/11/2017 11:32	
●			Preparation		13	0	maha_alyousef	09/03/2018 15:...	
●			Quran memorisation school		1	0	Fieldwork part1	01/11/2017 12:30	
●			Resons to joined TRU		36	0	maha_alyousef	08/11/2017 14:03	
●			Resources students have when first joined Uni		2	0	maha_alyousef	07/11/2017 14:47	
●			Skills of memorising		3	0	Fieldwork part1	02/11/2017 11:38	
●			students' social relations to each other		1	0	maha_alyousef	21/02/2018 02:...	
●			studying HE		2	0	maha_alyousef	30/11/2017 10:48	
●			Teaching Philosophy		17	0	maha_alyousef	02/08/2018 13:...	
●			To raise a student's confident		1	0	maha_alyousef	22/05/2018 16:...	
●			Transition		3	0	Fieldwork part1	27/10/2017 23:01	
●			University accommodation		2	0	maha_alyousef	16/10/2018 01:05	
●			university as a space of practices		3	0	maha_alyousef	30/01/2018 17:41	

Appendix 11: List of themes/ sub themes.

List of Themes:
1. Moving from secondary school to higher education. (experience)
2. New environment students immersed in.
3. Tribal city. (fieldnotes - students' comments- teachers' view)
4. Issues of Wealth- 'Spoiled' – 'ability to get what they want'- Staff views- the opinion of Saudi members and reasons.
5. Free education/ free books.
6. Not growing quickly compared to others (Hazara- comparison to Japanese students and her own experience in the UK).
7. Issues of explaining 'How to study' from the teachers' point of views.
8. 'Skills of memorising'
9. learning in another language.
10. Issues of responsibility (Hazara-Aisha).
11. Lifestyle and the rise of a new culture - Dramatic changes - Transition to modernity.
12. Influence of social media- snappers- blogs
13. Students constraints of being at the accommodation- issues of guardianship.
14. Criteria students ought to fulfil while at university – 'Good students'
15. Student Perspectives on a 'good' university experience.
16. Markers of 'success' in university- seeking autonomy –finding themselves.
17. Curriculum and individuals need- Learn to pass exams.

The themes grouped further as:

1. Transition into HE (1, 2, 3, 11)

2. Learning strategies (7, 8, 9, 17)

3. Student identity (4, 6, 10, 14, 15, 16)

Smaller themes:

Social media (12)

Guardianship (13)

Data editor - All codes

Parent code	Code
	'Safe space'
University accommodation	activities
	arab/saudi members ways of teaching
Transition	Being first to join university
	class
	Dress constrain
	education & freedom
University accommodation	experience at the accommodation
Transition	Expreience when first joined university
	FamilySupport (Husband/ grandfather/ Grandmother/ mother in Law
University accommodation	Feelings toword the accommodation
	Foreign members
	Foriegners
	Giyas level
	Imp of female Education
	key to success
	knowing rules of the game
	learning in English
	learning Practices-Good teacher
	Mature students' transition
Transition	More Independent
	Preparation
	Quran memorisation school
	Resons to joined TRU
	Resources students have when first joined Uni
	Skills of memorising
	students' social relations to each other
	studying HE
	Teaching Philosophy
	To raise a student's confident
	Transition
	University accommodation
	university as a space of practices
	university protection

Appendix 12: MAXQDA- Data analysis- 'changes' as a code.

Appendix 13: MAXQDA Data analysis system- upload of interviews showed translation parts.

Appendix 14: Women's lack of representation in TRU website.

Confidential / Agencies

Main Menu

- E-Library
- General Services
- Help And Support
- HU Administration
- HU Council
- Rector
- Media Center
- Policies
- Resources Services
- Subgates
- Departments
- Recent
- About the university
- Agencies
- Research
- Research Secretariat

Agencies

Vice Rector for Acade…

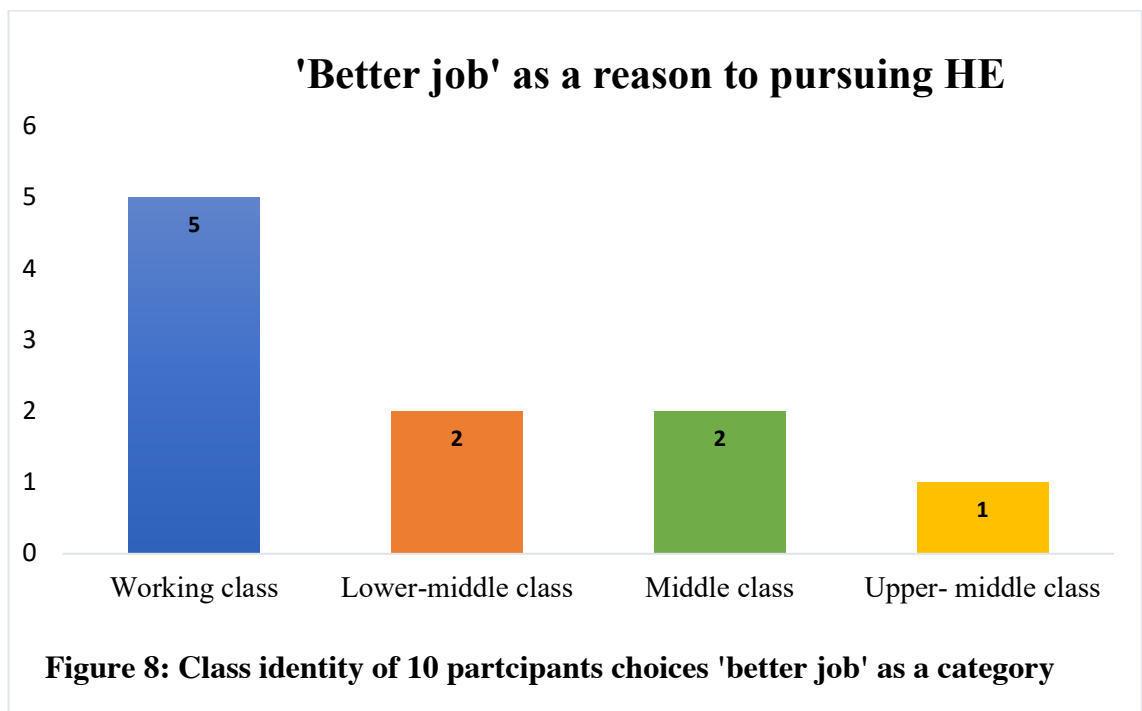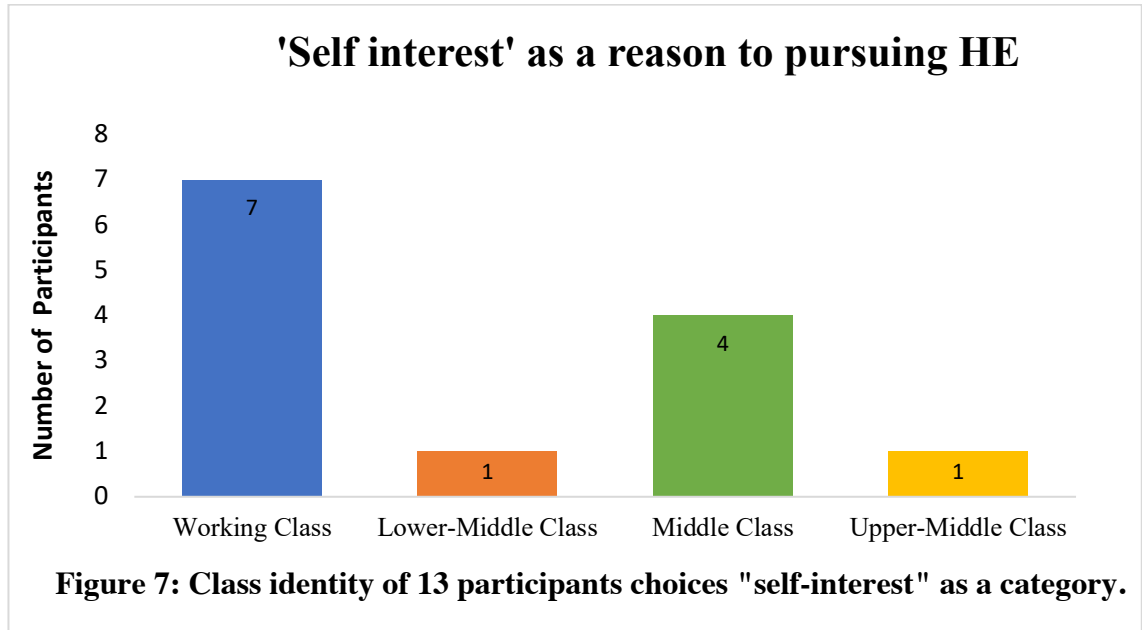Vice Rector For Acade…

Vice Rector

Vice Rector For Gradu…

There is still a lack of representation for the fifth vice rector, which is a position held by a woman at The Regional University.
Date of the website screenshot 2019-12-13 at 22.11.40

'Self interest' as a reason to pursuing HE

Figure 7: Class identity of 13 partcipants choices "self-interest" as a category.

'Better job' as a reason to pursuing HE

Figure 8: Class identity of 10 partcipants choices 'better job' as a category

Appendix 16: A screenshot of Haya AlAWAD Tweet about Hijab inquiries

Translation of the tweet

"Due to what is being raised about the *hejab*, we receive inquiries about the validity of some old circulars sending out by the Ministry, which impose a certain form of wearing the *hejab*. To clarify the following: The two circulars below [picture included] are new that nullify or (set aside) the old and do not impose any kind of form to the hijab.

These issues are left to student's guardian to choose the appropriate way in compliance with these two circulars (Alawad, 2018).

Appendix 17: Field note - Perspective of Wasta

Date: Wednesday 3rd May 2017

Location: Staff waiting area then moved to (Meeting room- near Majdah's office).

Info: Majdah, Head of one of the new departments established.

Students experience of Wasta and the limitations of seats available at the new college.

Only have 25 places available for students at the new department.

The following parts was translated from the conversation I had with Majdah.

This part is about the way students' have been accepted at the new college, she indicated the influence of students' family connections.

Majdah translated parts:

"We are a small and newly established college... that is seen as hard to gain acceptance into. Only student's with high enough grades and have (Wasta) connections are admitted, this is what is being said about our college, I am not sure if this is true but bear in your mind seats are limited.

The truth is only 25 students are accepted a year, and the required overall grade must be no less than a GPA of 3.25 (from a total of 4.00). This year was an exception, 30 students were accepted. A student who descends from Al ----- [35][the tribe name] caught my attention to how connections are powerful, specifically that we have no relations over enrolment. Norah Al ----- is a student who made a complaint with regards to this matter, her complaint was that she was not accepted despite having a higher grade than many of those that were accepted, she went on to say that connections were the reason behind this as she knew no one at registration or in a leading position; otherwise she would have

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[35] The name of the tribe has been removed as to refer to any tribe as having less status might be offensive so the name will be dismissed and not mentioned- all over the thesis and will be referred to as a 'prominent tribe'.

been accepted. I replied saying that "we had no say on female students' acceptance", she went on to say "then why haven't they accepted any female students for the past 3 years from the same tribe I belong to". I responded "who told you this? You are creating tribal discrimination by saying this. We are all equal". She said, "No not equal, look at the students at the department". After she left, I went on the system to check whether what she relayed was true and unfortunately it was. No members of this tribe were admitted during that period. I then questioned myself as to whether it is planned or simply coincidental? Majority of the female students come from the upper and middle class status, fortunate and have connections to important people in the university or TRC. Meaning that what she said could be true, but sadly this is reality…"

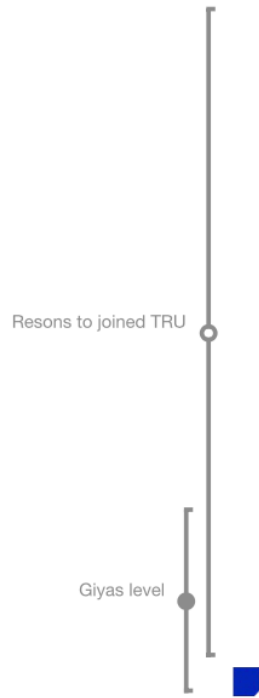|	
1	Redacted = Abeer
2	Duration: 20.00
3	M: Why did you choose this university?
4	A: To be honest I didn't want this university, but my brother applied to this university and I applied with him.
5	M: So your brother applied initially?
6	A: Yes and I applied after him
7	A: I was enrolled and he didn't.
8	M: what is your pathway?
9	A: science and engineering
10	M: Now is your brother with you?
11	A: No his in Alhafar(another city at the North of Saudi). He missed the enrolment deadline but I joined
12	M: So you didn't choose this university
13	A: no originally I didn't
14	M: Why didn't you apply in alkhobar?
15	A: They didn't accept me. Because of my high school overall, they require a high overall.
16	M: What is their required overall?
17	A: I'm not sure I think its in the 90s
18	M: What is your overall
19	A: My Overall is 77
20	M: Is this for 'Qiyas'
21	A: Yes the overall (alkolley o altahsely التراكمي والتحصيلي-
22	M: In your opinion what will this university provide you with?
23	A: a degree
24	M: Before you joined the university, did you have an idea of how it looks like?
25	A: quite....
26	M: Meaning did you have an image of how this university look like?
27	A: no, I was going to see it.
28	M: so you don't know how this university looks or what university is a like?
29	M Your coming from secondary school right?
30	A: Yes
31	A: I know about university
32	M: What do you know about a university?
33	A: I know that everyone go to her lectures unlike school that's what I expected. Also there are different colleges and majors, for example, an engineering college a medical college.
34	M Do you have older sisters that have graduated university?
35	A No I am the oldest daughter; I have an older brother but he went to study in America.
36	M: Did you have an image of what your going to find in this university, as you being alone?
37	A: Yes alone.
38	M You live in the university compound?

Resons to joined TRU

Giyas level

	39	A: Yes
	40	**M: How did you find it? (to check 3.08)**
	41	A: Firstly, no matter what the circumstances are, I am here to study, I don't want my concentration to be wasted on negative things.
..experience at the accon	42	M: What are the negative things you are talking about?
	43	A: To be honest I wasn't hearing nice things about the university compound.
	44	M: Oh ok. what were you hearing about it? I am asking because I know that it's new.
	45	A, I heard that the water pipes are not working properly and they had search for some things I'm uncomfortable sharing.
	46	M: I don't understand; can you give me some more details.
	47	A: I don't know the most important part is that I don't care and I am here to study.
	48	M: Why did you choose to study in TRC do you have any relatives in this city?
	49	A: No I don't have any relatives I'm here alone.
	50	M: So why did you choose this university, why not any other university?
Resons to joined TRU	51	A: I was going to register in HafarAlbatin but the admissions didn't open and TRU was open up so I registered and left the rest to God. Then I got the good news and felt very happy.
	52	M: ok did have a desire in another pathway
	53	A No. They gave me an option of engineering and life sciences (كلية العلوم). I choose science and engineering.
	54	M: Do you think educating woman is important? If yes, why
education & freedom	55	A: Certainly so she builds her career and plans her future.
	56	M: why is it essential some believe that a woman will get married and stay home.
	57	A: no that has nothing to with this, the more you r educated the more knowledge you have, the more freedom you have.
Foreign members	58	M: How do you find the experience of having foreign teachers?
	59	A: its nice to meet foreigners and learn about other cultures especially it hard sometimes to travel.
learning in English	60	M: What do you think of the experience of learning in English?
	61	A: Its good but I have to work harder,
	62	M Have you studied English before
	63	A: I have taken an English course and when I came to this university they put me at the level I stopped at.
	64	M: Which level?
	65	A: Level 2

	66	M: What is your easy subject and hardest subject? Why in your opinion its hard/ Or easy?
	67	A : Maths is easy because I like maths
arab/saudi members way	68	M: How is maths taught in English or Arabic
	69	A: She gives us the words in both English and Arabic but she explains in Arabic.
	70	A: luckly the teacher is an Arab.
	71	M Where she comes from?
	72	A: I m keeping her name confidential, she is Saudi.
	73	A So she explains in Arabic to understand some of the words.
	74	M Do you find this beneficial?
	75	A: I do
Preparation	76	M What have you done in preparation for university?
	77	A Firstly I have prepared myself and plan that I have to work hard. I will be living alone then I prepared the clothes I will be taking, finally, my mother bought me some essentials and some things to let time go.
	78	M What did you take for example
	79	A: Example my mother bought me an umbrella to protect me from the sun heat. After we came for the levelling exam, my mother came along with me and while she was waiting she saw another student using umbrella and then she thought it was a nice idea so she bought it
	80	M What were your first impressions when you came for the levelling exam
	81	A: The first day I never had an exam but I went to ask about the compound i'll be living in, but I never thought they would let me in.
	82	M Did you come alone?
	83	A: No I came with my mother
Dress constrain	84	But I had an issue- I came without wearing a skirt but luckily my mother was wearing one so they let her in. Then my family got me a skirt and I entered. We were separated because we entered at different times.
University accommod ..Feelings toword the	85	I was horrified at first because there was dark lighting and it was very dusty it was as if it was abandoned so it didn't give me the study environment, immediately I said (ya Allah) oh my god -what is this prison but most importantly im here to study.
	86	Later when I was leaving they were shocked and asked how did you get in and do you have a mobile phone.
	87	I gave them my details and they said oh your mother is there.
	88	M: So your mum registered you in the compound and did they offer to show you the inside.
	89	A: No I didn't ask because I saw it without them knowing.
	90	When you saw it, how was your feeling?

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91 I felt bad and scared. It was like a prison from all the dusty but later when I lived in I am more satisfied with it.
92 So you liked it now?
93 I wouldn't say I liked it but I felt it is better than before.

94 M What are your hobbies?
95 A : like to draw.
96 M: Describe the equipment you use or you need?
97 A I like to use pencils.
98 M: Do you like traveling?
99 A: Yes
100 M: Have you ever travelled outside of Saudi Arabia?
101 A: Yes. I've been to Kuwait, Bahrain, Emirates and Oman.

102 M: Have you been to Europe or US?
103 A: I cant

104 M:Is there much of a difference between the Gulf countries and Saudi?
105 A: Yes, they are more open and also lots of foreigners.
106 M: What about in Alkhober, isnt there some?
107 A: There are but I wouldn't call them many, maybe in ARAMCO are.
108 M:Would you like to learn about other cultures.
109 A:Its fine its not my hobby
110 M: What about your foreign teachers, would you like to know them more?

111 A: If they say I don't mind. honestly, I enjoy when they talk about themselves and their lives
112 M: Do you use any of the social media?
113 A: I have a mobile phone and an iPad
114 M: I mean do you use facebook, twitter or Instagram?
115 A: I use snapchat and Instagram
116 M: Is there anyone famous that you follow?
117 A: I follow them but I don't pay much attention to them. (to check this)
118 M: Do you socialise with the other girls?
119 quite....
120 M: You meet any friends in the living area?
121 A: Yes all girls
122 M: Do you have any roommates?
123 A: Yes
124 M: How do you find her?
125 A: Nice.
126 M: Where does she come from?
127 A: Most of the people in the living compound are from Medina.

128 M:What do you do during the weekends?
129 A: We have one day a week that they take us to the mall for shopping and supermarket

university protection	130	M:Who takes you?
	131	A:The supervisors.
	132	A:They do take us once a week either Tuesdays or Thursdays
	133	They take us to the supermarket and the ATM. That's what most needed.
..activities	134	There's another bus that we can take for clothes shopping but I haven't been yet.
	135	M: How do you spend your day?
	136	A: From 10 to 4 I am having lectures, I wake up around 9 am and try to leave by 9.15am.
	137	M: Is there a cafeteria in the compound?
	138	A: No. there's a restaurant outside we can order from. Most of the girls don't like the restaurant.
class	139	But there s a good feature that we can have rice for only 7 Riyals the rest is paid for us by the university.
University accommod	140	There is an agreement between the restaurant and the compound?
	141	We have one or two days where we can order whatever we want.
	142	Oh is their rules
	143	How are the supervisors are they nice to you?
	144	Some are nice some aren't I try to keep a distance.
	145	…The end…

Appendix 19: Part of the focus group discussion- Self-reliance

(18th September 2016)

A group of seven final year students (Meshail, Nourah, Shema, Johara, Mabruka, Ibtsam, Amal).

Out of the focus group, discussion data with the final year' students.

They indicated areas of **self-reliance** that had been borne out of their experience at TRU.

For example, some of the data revealed:

"Now I manage my own time, in the beginning we used to wait for the school bell to tell us when to start or end lessons." (Amal- final semester -English department)

"Since I got the monthly allowance, I stopped asking my father for money" (Shema, final year- Psychology department).

"I wake up myself now in the morning" (Meshail, final semester- Management Information System).

"I wash my own clothes" (Ibtsam- final year -Primary Teaching course).

"Things became more familiar" (Johara final semester- Computer Science). Mbruka, who came from a village close to TRC, talked in detail about how her experience at TRU changed her, she said: *"The university experience helped to change my personality somehow, especially as I faced some circumstances and could not enter the course I aspired to join. This experience gave me the feeling that I always needed to fill this deficiency, that it was somehow lacking." When prompted to share her experience, she expanded: "I wanted to study in one of the medical courses, but my brother convinced me, during the time of my father's illness and after I moved to live in his house, to study the English language. The English language course was a better alternative to medicine, as I wouldn't have*

work after graduation in a mixed-gender environment. The situation sometimes imposes our choices; my initial option was contrary to the customs of my family and the community."

When asked if this choice hindered her in any way, she replied: *"Not at all, this position made me stronger, I felt I had to decide to like the course and succeed [in her final semester]. It made me feel I should be responsible and self-reliant about my own future decisions and always seek to be better".*

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