January 2023

Building Personal Friendships In A Multicultural Society

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BUILDING PERSONAL FRIENDSHIPS IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

Grand Forks, North Dakota

May
2023

This dissertation submitted by Fatemah Almadani in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication from the University of North Dakota has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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Department   Communication

Degree   Doctor of Philosophy

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Fatemah Almadani
27th January 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, praise God, who honored me with His grace, surrounded me with His care, and granted me all success.

Pure souls naturally have affection for those who show them kindness and support during difficult times. The Holy Prophet Mohammed, may God bless him and grant him peace, who is fondly remembered by many, taught that gratitude to God and people go hand in hand. He says: "He who does not thank God does not thank people."

This accomplishment took much work to achieve. I faced many obstacles and setbacks, but I persisted, and with the help of compassionate people who supported me when I was feeling down, I finally made it to my goal. Today, I arrived. It's typical for parents to be the primary caregivers for their children, but alas, in the first days of my life, they left me on an unknown path. Although an orphan in a cradle, I was fortunate enough to be in Saudi Arabia, the country of glory. I was lucky to be in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a land of glory. My little soul was shown mercy and given everything necessary for complete humanity, including a name, official guidance, and exceptional care.

I am incredibly grateful to the country's rulers, princes, and state employees, particularly the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and his faithful Crown Prince, Muhammad bin Salman, for safeguarding me with the highest levels of care and well-being. Moreover, I owe a great deal to the merciful man who took me from the corner of the

mosque and made me a part of his heart. My father, Qalat, who adopted and supported me, is the most incredible man in the world to me. He worked with his mother, a woman who has since passed away, to care for me. I am convinced she is the kindest woman in the world, and I pray for her. Together, they helped me achieve this milestone, and I am forever grateful to them.

"I want to express my appreciation and thanks to those who give credit and recognition to my grandmother (Hamda), her children, and my respected uncles and aunts. To all my dear brothers and sisters that I grew up with, all the love and appreciation, thank you as well." I also extend my gratitude to all the people of the village of Al-Thamd, where kind-hearted and supportive individuals, such as my grandmother (Hadbaa) and her daughters, treated me like their own daughter and provided me with the inspiration to achieve success. They said that a friend is closer to the heart than a brother to a friend of a lifetime; Shaimah Alrashidi, thank you for every moment you were with me in making this dream come true. The distance or even the time difference didn't keep you away, and to my late grandmother's village and uncle Ben Hoon's family, all of whom, without exception, are kind-hearted, Thank you. I hold my pen in high regard for Professor Reem Al-Harbi, one of my professors at Taibah University. She has been like a sister and mother to me, offering her unwavering support and love every step of the way. I am grateful to Mrs. Lulwa AlHashedi and others who have demonstrated generosity and kindness toward me. My friend, my sister Zeinab Shehata, thanks, Doctor Ehsaan and Areej Alhabshi, for your support and prayers. Special thanks to Mr. Abdullah Al-Yami for his constant support. I also thank the Ministry and its various branches for supporting orphan affairs. I particularly acknowledge the late Undersecretary of the Ministry, Dr. Awaad AlRadadi, Mr.

Mohammad Alosailan, and the mother of orphans Dr. Nora Al-Sheikh for their invaluable support. The first supporter of my getting a scholarship are Dr. Mohamed Alharbi, Mr. Nasser Aleid, Mrs. Zinab Barmaoy, and Nawal Ayiussef, and I am grateful to you. Mr. Abdullah Aldryaihm, thank you for your supporting me in difficult times.

Many thanks to (Ikhaa) People of Support and Empowerment Organization, especially for mentioning: Dr. Ahmed Alzahrani and Mr. Adnan Dabour. I sincerely thank the Saudi Cultural Attaché in Washington for his material and social support. They were like parents and brothers to me. Dr. Mohammed Al-Essa, Dr. Ali AlFarihi, Dr. Abdel-Ghani Al-Harbi, Dr. Hessa Al-Fayez, Dr. Khairiya Al-Jahli, and Dr. Fawzi Bukhari. Goodness, and giving in attachment. Thanks to all.

In the first year of my Ph.D., when I moved from Virginia to North Dakota with my family. It was one of the most challenging stages for us and a new frozen area where I was alone with my children. Still, God honored me with blessings from the family that included us, the family of Dr. Abdulaziz Alsubaie and the spiritual sister Mashael Alshahrani. And thanks, in all its meanings, to my colleagues, the honorable brother Hamed Alghamdi and his wife, the kind sister Nawal, because they are my family and our second home in Grand Forks.
Thank you, doctoral researcher Brother Hussein; your appreciation is a must.

I have female friends whose hearts are white, Nouf Alajami. Ahlam Alayyaf, Nawal Alsaeedi, Nora been Bin Quwaid, Aisha Alomari, and Awatif Almuraikhi. All the loved.

To my friends in the USA of Native American and other cultures, religions, and languages, you were so helpful and best for me. You have supported me psychologically,

socially, and academically. You made this journey easy for me. Thank you all for your support and help.

Ones and the people everywhere, the surroundings and good people, and each in his name and growing, thank you.

On the academic level, I thank the University of North Dakota, which is represented in the Department of Communications. Special thanks and of high esteem to Dr. Kalbfleisch, Pamela, my advisor; it is a great honor for me that she is my advisor. She is Senior Partner in this achievement. With her support, patience, and guidance, I achieved this milestone and made my dream come true. She made a positive difference in my life. I appreciate my committee members Dr. Queen, Dr. Munski, and Dr. Petros, for their continued support and guidance.

At the end of the lines, I wrote their names to avoid overcrowding the words my family with my partner in life's journey, my beloved husband, Alaa, expresses my gratitude and appreciation to him. God has blessed me with five children in this land, and they are my flesh and blood. A mother's love for her children knows no limits. They are not just my children but also my family, tribe, and relatives. They are my loved ones, the light of my eyes, the source of happiness, and everything beautiful and beyond words.

Bashar, Abdullah, Mohamed, Baher, and Raouf. I am grateful to you all, Bashar, for expressing his pride in me one day. Mohammed, you told me I mean the world to you and Abdullah; I will never forget what you wrote in your note in 2018. I am proud that my mother started to be a Ph.D. She will be Dr. Almadani was a strong motivation for me. Baher, you said I look forward to hearing your voice daily, so I feel safe. My little son Raouf when you were born,

it was a hard time for us. I was busy preparing for my comprehensive exam during your early

months. Now that you are four, you stand by my side to share this achievement with me.

Finally, I am thankful to everyone who has supported and aided me on this journey, and I

pray that God will grant you all success.

DEDICATION

I wasn't satisfied with my loneliness and sadness in life. I had a dream of achieving my goals. I have challenged the grief on my shoulders and made myself proud. I would like to dedicate my efforts to the government and country, and people of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I also would like to save my actions to my children Bashar, Mohammed, Abdullah, Baher, and Raouf and to the chief Supervisor of Dr. Kalbfleisch, who supported me for the past five years.

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ABSTRACT

Friendship ranks highly among the social issues that develop and creates a stable and prosperous society. However, people tend to focus more on individuals who share social values while making friends. On the other hand, in a multicultural society, people work, leave, or learn together to share such values. The diversity of the origin of people living in the United States (US), especially in major cities, varies significantly regarding race, ethnicity, and religion, resulting in super-diverse urban setups. This study examined the multicultural friendship between international Arab students studying in the US and their American counterparts. The study was guided by identity management theory. The researcher employed desktop review to achieve research objectives. The researcher searched for stories in journal articles and dissertations published online. The data sources had interview stories on the experiences of Arab students in American universities. In this research study, inductive analysis of the texts was employed. Thematic content analysis was carried out.

Multicultural friendships result in increased linguistic competence and success in life. Language difficulties, inadequate time for socialization, and culture shock characterize the state of multicultural friendships in the US. Multicultural friendship has led to an understanding of other cultures, acceptance of people from diverse cultures, respect for different cultures, and adoption of other cultures. The researcher established that racial discrimination, avoidance, and kindness are thematic areas in the area of multicultural friendship between international Arab students studying in the US and their local counterparts. Multicultural friendship can be encouraged through a few initiatives such as support of teaching staff, participation in group

activities, negotiations during multicultural interactions, educational media, and the promotion of multicultural festivals and events in learning institutions. It is recommended that international students in the United States be supported to overcome language and culture shock challenges. Additionally, multicultural friendships should be encouraged to promote the appreciation of people from all cultures. Moreover, racial discrimination should be condemned in the US to enhance multicultural friendships.

CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

As the world becomes a global village, societies are becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse. Increasingly, people from different cultural backgrounds are coming together as co-workers, colleagues, neighbors, or classmates. As such, multicultural interactions are becoming more prominent and common with time. In other words, living, working, schooling, or socially interacting involves associating with people from various cultures in any normal society. The United States (US), for example, is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. According to studies by the *Washington Post*, the influx of immigrants into the country continues to make it even more multicultural (Keating & Karklis, 2016). Interacting with people from different cultures daily in the US can be a rewarding experience, allowing citizens to learn from others and build stronger relationships. From a social perspective, Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006) portended that multiculturalism and cultural diversity management are imperative to smooth coexistence among those with different backgrounds. Therefore, outgroup contacts have created a scenario where social connections remain essential despite these differences. Multicultural friendship has remained a significant social and psychological phenomenon that needs to be addressed and appreciated (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006).

Personal relationships remain a mighty pillar in any society. The one-to-one connections that people create among each other is the foundation for change and acceptance. Building friendly relationships with people from different cultures can make a diverse community a prerequisite for achieving significant societal goals. In other words, for one to work, live, or learn effectively with people from various cultural groups, developing a caring and sturdy relationship coupled with understanding, trust, and shared goals is imperative. Such a

relationship can only be founded on a multicultural friendship. According to Turner and Cameron (2016), positive interactions between multiple cultures are essential in an education setup where people track opportunities, thus engaging positively and developing cross-group friendships. However, the author appreciated that creating such relationships among children has remained a complex social problem, as these children often choose to spend time with those with whom they share culture.

This problem does not only occur among children but also adults. For example, Gunnarsson et al. (2015) posited that people of similar cultural backgrounds, more likely to have identical opinions, are likelier to bond in a friendship than those of different cultures. Ethnicity, race, and religion remain the most robust boundaries perpetuating cultural differences. However, several religions, races, and ethnicities have created these boundaries in a country like the US. As such, creating friendships in such a multicultural society remains a major social problem. On the other hand, "friendship is a form of relationship that we find in all types of cultures and societies, and friendship ties are ranked high among things that matter most in life" (Gunnarsson et al., 2015, p. 98). This study, therefore, sought to establish an adequate rationale and the subsequent benefits of building personal friendships in a multicultural society.

1.2 Problem Statement

Friendship ranks highly among the social issues that develop and create a stable and prosperous society. However, people tend to focus more on individuals who share similar social values while making friends. On the other hand, in a multicultural society, people work, live, or learn together to share such values. The diversity of the origin of people living in the US, especially in the major cities, varies significantly regarding race, ethnicity, and religion, resulting in super-diverse urban setups (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006). This, therefore, provides the

backdrop for this study among multicultural spaces such as the US. There is a need to recognize how small scales are used as parameters in negotiating multiculturalism. Friendship study within a multicultural society is akin to the micro-politics of every day and constitutes the daily habits of intercultural connections. Ordinarily, multicultural urban landscapes form a conflictual, dystopic, and segregated environment (Vertovec, 2007). However, through effective negotiation of multiculturalism, individuals can learn to recognize the mundanity of competency and conviviality (Hemming, 2015). In other words, those from different cultural backgrounds must appreciate and welcome differences while endeavoring to create mutual and trustworthy relationships.

However, regardless of the general knowledge that multicultural accommodation and friendship is the ultimate recipe for a stable and prosperous social environment, the convivial turn – where people start welcoming and forming a deep friendship with those from other cultures – has remained a mirage in many cases (Neal & Vincent, 2013). Multicultural encounters remain meaningless and have little potential to reshape the contested social relations amidst the differences (Vincent et al., 2017). For example, Lees (2008) mentioned that middle-class citizens often self-segregate in culture and race. The idea of diversity has always remained a notion in the minds of a gentrified society and has no real action. As Vincent et al. (2017) put it, "Everyday encounters may be simply shaped by socially accepted forms of public civility, and urban etiquette does not equate with an ethics of care and mutual respect for difference" (p. 1976). Such encounters have failed to demystify the embedded prejudice and stereotypes that have been the main barriers to multicultural friendships (Vertovec, 2015). Therefore, while diversity continues to expand in American society, deep multicultural friendships have remained minimal. Diversity has only made the interactions between people. It has enabled people to

transact and communicate socially, regardless of their cultural background. However, the trend is a necessary move in any multicultural society. It is still rare for a White person to have many friends from Hispanic communities. Subsequently, not so many African Americans have Arab Muslims for friends. Social relationships are often created on convenience but not based on an endeavor to demystify cultural lines and create trusting friendships among people from different ethnic groups, races, and religions (Vertovec, 2015).

Cross-group friendship is necessary for reducing prejudice and stereotypes while improving plurality and creating a solid social foundation. However, achieving this goal has been elusive, especially in American society. According to Turner et al. (2007), "we now know a great deal about the conditions under which intergroup contact best reduces prejudice and how the positive effect of contact on attitudes towards individual group members can be generalized towards entire outgroups" (p. 3). Through these generalizations, stereotypes are generated. Page-Gould et al. (2008) also found that multicultural differences and the lack of social cohesion result in intergroup anxiety. However, creating multicultural friendships is the best way to reduce this anxiety. In this study, Page-Gould et al. (2008) found that the more individuals become closer to others of different cultures, the more prejudices start to decline.

Therefore, it is evident that multicultural friendship is a necessary social move that should become part of culture in American society. Korol (2017) argued that those from different groups must develop friendships to enhance the positive effect of multicultural contact. The contact of such social experiences should be enough to provide friendship opportunities. "The positive impact of cross-group friendship is grounded in the idea that, in interpreting outgroup friends' intentions and behaviors, individuals tend to attribute to outgroups the same positive associations they usually have for members of their ingroup" (Korol, 2017, p. 266). However, as

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mentioned before, this has typically not been the case. A few people are willing to break cultural boundaries and create friendship ties with people they initially did not share values with. Therefore, this study focuses on the relationships between Arab students studying in the United States and their colleagues from other races during their studies in the United States.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

1.3.1 Research Questions

This study was premised on the following research questions*:*

- *What is multicultural friendship?*

- *What are the benefits of a multicultural friendship within a society?*

- *What is the state of multicultural friendship in the case of the US?*

- *How has multicultural friendship in the US affected cultural homogeneity and plurality within the country?*

- *What is the state of multicultural friendship between international Arab students studying in the US and their local counterparts?*

- *How can society create an environment that will inspire the building and establishment of multicultural friendships?*

1.3.2 Research Objectives

Against the backdrop of the above research questions, the objectives of the study were as follows:

- *To understand the concept of multicultural friendship*

- *To elucidate the benefits of a multicultural friendship within a society*

- *To understand the state of multicultural friendship in the case of the US*

- *To understand how multicultural friendship in the US has affected the cultural homogeneity and plurality of the country*

- *To examine the state of multicultural friendship between international Arab students studying in the US and their American counterparts*

- *To understand how a society can create an environment that will inspire the building and establishment of multicultural friendships.*

1.4 Scope of the Study

In terms of content, the study was limited to examining multicultural friendships in the context of the United States. While the literature review and other sections explored friendships among various races, the study focused on the relationships between American and Arab Students. Further, the kind of friendship studied was primarily among young and older adults.

1.5 The Study Rationale

This study aimed to understand the concept of multicultural friendship, its development, and its benefit to a multicultural society like the US. In the context of the growing number of immigrants, the government is becoming more polarized every day. Instances where an Arab is labeled a terrorist just because of race or religion, are becoming rampant. Police brutality is equally becoming rampant, especially among African Americans. The criminal justice system also profiles individuals based on race and religion, and those from minority groups such as African Americans, Latinos, and Arabs are often criminalized. All these social problems are manifestations of poor multicultural contact among US residents. When they do interact, the connection remains superficial, with each group having prejudice and superstitions about the other. However, this social breakdown can only be addressed by enhancing cohesion at the individual level. Based on the preliminary studies, developing multicultural friendships is a

fundamental step in mystifying implicit biases and prejudices that have resulted in racial injustices in the US. This study is essential as it will offer knowledge of how such friendships can be developed and nurtured to create a more cohesive society and country.

CHAPTER TWO : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter reviews theoretical and empirical literature in line with the study objectives. The summary of the literature and research gaps are presented too.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by identity management theory (IMT) as developed by Cupah and Imahori (1993), which explains how communication occurs among people of different cultural backgrounds and focuses on facework between actors of various cultures, including how interactions are described (Allison, 2016). Imahori and Cupach's (1993) theory borrowed from Goffman's (1967) idea on facework. How people interact during interactions shows their perceptions about themselves, their identities in society, and how they perceive their identity in society (Goffman, 1967). Competence and facework are vital aspects of IMT. Competence in the context of identity in culture and relations implies an ability to negotiate acceptable identities during the interaction process successfully. Competence is attained when people in relationships support each other's identity expression (Cupach & Imahori, 1993). The face is concerned with how individuals convey information regarding their identities culturally and relationally. While interacting in the social context, people support each other's face through suitable means (Goffman, 1967).

People can show negative or positive desires using their face (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Positive face expresses the urge to impress and be accepted. Such a cheerful face is demonstrated through attributes, appearance, accomplishment, and personality approval. Face described as unfavorable implies the urge to be autonomous. Keeping such a negative face means interacting

tactfully and avoiding intrusion into their matters. Face threats are actions that endanger a person's needs portraying a positive or negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

The transition phases identified in IMT are necessary for developing relationships among people of diverse cultures. The transition process starts with trial and error. People of various cultural identities search for similarities among themselves. The second phase is mixing up or enmeshment, whereby people come to terms and mutually understand their relational identities and downplay differences among themselves. This phase is characterized by threats against cheerful faces whereby people of diverse cultures ignore the cultural identities of others (Allison, 2016). Lastly, the renegotiation phase comes as the third. At this stage, people have attained distinct identities of cultures and mutual consent in understanding the cultures of others (Allison, 2016).

IMT is applicable in the context of relationships among people of diverse cultural backgrounds. The theory demonstrates that people of different cultural identities can overcome positive or negative threats. In contrast, they interact with others, strengthen their own cultural identities, and cope with other people's cultures (Allison, 2016). Renegotiating identities among people of diverse cultural backgrounds enables people to be competent culturally and manage face needs and tension (Cupach & Imahori, 1993).

2.3 The Meaning of Multicultural Friendship

Articles by Naseri (2019) and Maddux et al. (2019) featured the most relevant information about the conceptualization of multicultural friendship. Maddux et al. (2019) reviewed multiple publications to establish a consolidated definition of multiculturalism. Multicultural experiences refer to exposure to or interactions with elements or members of a different culture (Maddux et al., 2019). While this description resembles previous interpretations,

a few differences are noteworthy, such as using "different cultures" instead of "foreign cultures." Maddux et al. (2019) supported this decision by arguing that multiculturalism can be found within and outside national geographical boundaries; hence, it should not be perceived as foreign and should include multiple cultures.

Additionally, Maddux et al.'s (2019) updated definition avoided using "direct or indirect" in conceptualizing multicultural experiences. Arguably, Maddux et al. (2019) made this decision because they were unaware of any additional research differentiating multicultural interactions based on directness or indirectness. Furthermore, Maddux et al. (2019) omitted the term "internalization" when defining the concept of cultural friendship because, in their view, time could be conceived as an impact attribute instead of a connotation variable.

Naseri (2019) used a qualitative approach to study multicultural friendship and found three distinct group definitions among the study's participants. The study defined a multicultural relationship as an interaction between acquaintances, friends, and close friends. Participants described casual friends as those with whom they engage in various activities. More precisely, they thought of such buddies as being just mildly acquainted. In addition, respondents depicted their closest friends as those with whom they feel comfortable sharing private information, who love being nearby, and who provide emotional support when needed (Naseri, 2019). Close friends are presented as experts on one another in this regard. According to the participants, best friends are people they've known for a long time and are "the whole package." The interviewees' closest friendships in this study were with other Iranians, but cultural differences meant they befriended people from different countries superficially. According to the findings, linguistic differences are the primary obstacle to developing meaningful connections across cultural boundaries (Naseri, 2019).

Globalization has made it easier for individuals of various ethnicities, faiths, and socioeconomic statuses to travel and live with one another. People have the opportunity to meet new people and develop existing relationships via participation in events. Many diverse connotations may be attached to friendship (Naseri, 2019). According to Wright and Scanlon (1991), for example, friends are people who knowingly choose to spend time with one another. Moreover, he argued, partners in a partnership develop a habit of seeing one another as entire persons rather than just inmates of a specific prison. Doyle and Smith (2002) provided a different definition of friendship, positing that it depends on the circumstances of its genesis, including the availability of time, place, and monetary resources. Doyle and Smith (2002) implied a need for effort and time on the part of both parties to keep the bond alive. In addition, Peng (2011) emphasized that the characters and the rules are two essential components people expect to observe in a friendship. A few characteristics that make this possible include trust, openness, participation, and companionship. Rules include trusting a friend with your feelings and vice versa (Peng, 2011).

Peng (2011) defined culture as the accumulated wisdom and customs of a people who all hail from the same country, have lived through the same events, and acquired the same lessons from one another. Cultural similarities among group members result from socialization rather than genetic transmission (Peng, 2011). Gunnarsson et al. (2015) found that many individuals face obstacles despite widespread interest in making cross-cultural acquaintances. Language hurdles, reluctance on the part of international students to become friends with host students, differences in socioeconomic status, and a preference for the company of people of the same cultural background are all factors that might stand in the way of becoming friends with locals. It becomes troublesome for individuals to bond with one another. However, having friends from

other cultures is crucial since it opens opportunities for education, employment, and assistance in

other nations (Gunnarsson et al., 2015). The unique obstacles and pleasures of international

relationships were so outlined by Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006). Those involved are more

open to learning about other cultures, developing their social skills, and overcoming negative

prejudices because they accept differences in beliefs, ethics, stereotypes, and languages

(Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006).

2.4 Benefits of Multicultural Friendships

Multicultural friendship may be defined by combining the preceding notions of

friendship and culture. Vora et al. (2018) defined multiculturism at an individual level as the

extent to which a person knows about, identifies with, and internalizes several cultures of

different societies. At the personal level, multiculturism affects multinational organizations'

social networks and power dynamics (Vora et al., 2018). Peng (2011) included aspects and

norms in friendship, whereas Doyle and Smith (2002) expanded on investing in the connection,

and Wright and Scanlon (1991) emphasized voluntary interactions as the foundation of

friendship. For this study, the researcher will utilize a definition that draws from Doyle and

Smith's (2002) and Peng's (2011) definitions of culture. Thus, a multicultural friendship is

defined as a relationship in which two or more people from different cultural backgrounds,

religious traditions, or socioeconomic statuses voluntarily devote significant amounts of time,

energy, and other resources to cultivate a close and lasting friendship with one another (Doyle &

Smith, 2002; Peng, 2011). However, Turner and Cameron (2016) implied that such friendships

are difficult to create due to several obstacles. Since most students in the US only talk to people

like themselves, this research will highlight the advantages of making friends from other

cultures. However, little has been studied on foreign Arab students (Turner & Cameron, 2016); most studies focus on Hispanic, African, or African American students.

Lu et al. (2021) examined how differences in cultural norms and national contexts affect the positive correlation between close friendships and happiness. Company is shown to be more important to women, those with higher levels of education, and those from more economically developed nations. People's health and happiness are shown to improve when they put their friends first, but this is culturally variable (Lu et al., 2021). Dating among people of different cultures enhances creativity on tasks that entail thinking divergently and convergently, and the effect is mediated by cultural learning. The diversity of networks affects creativity depending on task types. The variety of cultures enhances creativity on tasks requiring resources whose use is enhanced by knowledge of various cultures. It was noted that people may get unique abilities through diverse networks, which affects creativity (Chua, 2018).

The structure-appraisal model of multicultural experiences postulates that more profound multicultural experiences result in a set of processes that leads to a transformation of individual cognitions. The model suggests that when individuals are exposed to several cultures, they undergo comparative processes shaping how they interact. The model indicates that these intra- and inter-personal impacts are most pronounced when exposure to other cultures is rewarding (Maddux et al., 2021). On effects within persons, Maddux et al.'s (2021) model suggests that exposure to diverse cultures stimulates innovation, modifies thought processes, alters self-perception, leads to skill acquisition, and improves overall performance. These effects are enhanced by flexibility in terms of cognition and behavior, such as improved learning and adaptation, increased integrative complexity levels, and enhanced executive functions (Maddux et al., 2021).

Maddux et al. (2021) noted that experiences with different cultures result in trusting others, being flexible morally, competence in communication, effective leadership, and decreasing biases between groups. Negative multicultural experiences may promote bigotry across groups. Maddux et al. (2021) found that experiences in diverse cultures affect the performance of firms. Individuals with various multicultural backgrounds and running organizations will likely perform better in cost minimization and output enhancement in environments requiring appropriate environmental adjustment. There is a need for future researchers to focus on outcomes of experiences in diverse cultures, such as making decisions, the ability of leaders, dynamics of groups and teams, and negotiations (Maddux et al., 2021). The more frequently participants interact with friends from America, the more innovative they are at the workplace and the more they also think of venturing into entrepreneurship (Lu et al., 2017). A diverse network culture-wise increases the chance of getting novel culture-based ideas from contacts with the same or different cultural identities.

Sousa et al. (2019) noted that Portuguese individuals with friends abroad registered higher cultural intelligence scores than those who lacked this experience. However, the cultural empathy dimension recorded the highest score. Individuals who possess this sympathize with the practices and beliefs of their culturally diverse counterparts (Sousa et al., 2019). Likewise, Turner and Cameron (2016) discovered that people who interact with people from other cultures are more likely to accept those from different backgrounds. Upon critically reviewing the extant literature, Turner and Cameron (2016) identified specific aspects that enable culturally diverse individuals, especially students, to accept others. A positive school climate can augment intercultural tolerance, respect, and cordial relationships. At the same time, similarity in

expectation is a strong predictor in intergroup friendships. Thus, individuals who share standard anticipations tend to form close bonds (Turner & Cameron, 2016).

Making friends from other ethnic backgrounds might expand horizons by exposing one to new languages and cultures. Foreigners should team up with the natives to learn the language more quickly. There is a need for building meaningful connections and using leverage to encourage conversation, particularly across cultural boundaries. Friendship and the pursuit of mutual understanding are the foundations for healthy interpersonal relationships (Kalbfleisch, 2013). As Korol (2017) further clarified, learning may be a two-way street. Learning the host country's language allows foreigners to speak with locals, meet new people, and go about their everyday lives, as Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006) noted more easily. Celik and Yildiz (2019) determined whether university students with friends with different cultural backgrounds are more likely to learn a second language. The findings revealed that interacting with culturally diverse students in school aids in acquiring a new language, in this case, English (Celik & Yildiz, 2019). Similarly, Izida et al. (2019) established that multicultural interaction enhances foreign language competence. Besides allowing students to adapt to culturally diverse situations, such friendships facilitate enhanced communication with colleagues from other parts of the world. Schools can improve learning by creating programs that introduce learners to foreign languages. Collectively, this evidence accentuates the role of multicultural friendship and enables foreign language learning (Izida et al., 2019).

Friendships across cultures might assist individuals from diverse backgrounds to accept and appreciate one another's beliefs and practices. Depending on the messages they get about a culture, children may develop a favorable or unfavorable impression of that society as adults. There might be disagreements about cultural norms if they are different from one another.

Intercultural friendship allows people to understand one another's cultures better. They learn to appreciate one others' unique qualities and adapt to their differences (Turner & Cameron, 2016). And as Heyn (2013) pointed out, when people of different cultures become friends, prejudice and discrimination against one another fade away.

Intercultural relationships enrich the lives of foreigners, mainly when one takes the time to learn about the customs of other societies. As people gain exposure to the perspectives of others, they become more tolerant and accepting of those with whom they interact (Lees, 2008). As a result of recognizing and taking one another's differences, communities may flourish. Learning about and appreciating other cultures makes living a happy and fulfilling life possible without constantly questioning your motives (Heyn, 2013). Exposure to foreign cultures increases the likelihood that individuals would adopt the norms and customs of the host country (Neal et al., 2013). Accepting the new way of life lessens the stress and tension that might arise from adjusting to it. As a result, having a companion from another culture is a great way to stay abreast of and adapt to modern life (Page-Gould et al., 2008).

2.5 Multicultural Friendships in the United States

Students have been flocking to the US to pursue further studies. According to Schwietz (2006), the increase began after World War II, when the US Congress passed the Fulbright Act in 1946, enabling students worldwide to seek education in the US. The passing of the Act contributed to the significant influx of international students between 1950-2012. More than 700,000 students attended various schools from over 186 nations. The increase in international students has benefited the US in terms of cultural diversity, as recorded by the institute of international students (IIE, 2012). The international students come from various cultural

backgrounds that differ from the American culture. Due to the cultural difference, students strive to adapt to the cultural changes that will lead to smooth learning at new institutions (IIE, 2012).

Since international students encounter cultural differences, they face four significant challenges: personal concerns, academic difficulties, culture shock, and health issues. The intellectual challenges that the students face are majorly language differences. Not all students from other countries know English; thus, they have to learn the language for more accessible communication in learning (Heyn, 2013). Liang and Fassinger (2008) noted that personal concerns may cause students to be stressed or even depressed. The emotional challenges include financial issues, immigration rules, loneliness due to lack of friends, racial discrimination, and lack of social networks (Liang & Fassinger, 2008). Rahman and Rollock (2004) described how students face health challenges where they can quickly become sick due to weather or diet changes. Other causes of sicknesses can be anxiety, psychological distress, or depression. The last challenge is culture shock due to the differences in lifestyle, language, mode of communication, or food (Berry, 2003). International students may not know much about the American culture and may face culture shock. Society can learn about other cultures from a personal perspective, different from the superstitions one grew up knowing (Alharbi, 2020). Wilson (2013) encouraged social interactions by saying that when the community engages, they share their beliefs and norms and explain why they do them. Through the sharing, the parties will learn from each other and accept them, thereby encouraging harmonious living. Thirdly, the public can form systems that accommodate everyone regardless of their culture (Wilson, 2013).

According to Vertovec (2015), the government can create universal approaches such as education, health, and religion so that everyone has the freedom to practice their cultures. Alharbi (2020) explained that the government can enforce laws disregarding discrimination

against race, religion, and culture so that foreigners feel accepted in a new country. Keating and Karklis (2016) resolved that when society combines these factors, they will encourage multicultural friendships across all borders among students.

2.6 How Multicultural Friendships in the US Affect Cultural Homogeneity and Plurality

Hottaa and Ting-Toomey (2013) addressed the issue of how international students in the US adjust to the new environment in host countries and how they construct meaning regarding developing friendships. Cultural expectancy, sense of personal time in developing intercultural friendships, issue of identity shock, and friendship dialects were the themes that emerged from their study. The intercultural adjustment process and the pattern of developing friends are influenced by factors such as the degree to which communication is open or closed, the sense of being a guest or an alien, and the visibility or invisibility of the friendship (Hottaa & Ting-Toomey, 2013).

Possession of common interests, values, and perspectives helped first-year English as a Second Language (ESL) students and native English-speaking students from different backgrounds become friends at a university in Free State Province. Friendship among students of diverse cultures enables them to learn about other cultures' beliefs and values, as well as new languages. Higher learning institutions should emphasize the need for students of different cultures to mingle and develop friendships during in-class activities and outside class (Motlhaka, 2016).

Yeo et al. (2019) investigated the experiences of Asian students living in America who are thought to be foreigners. They revealed through their survey that cases of racism, discrimination, and hatred against Asian students living in America were rampant. Asian students are discriminated against based on skin color, English language competence, nationality,

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their home country's economic power, level of income, and religious affiliation. Ridicule over English language proficiency and attacks against Asian students residing in America, both verbally and non-verbally, are common. A lack of respect for the feelings of the students exists. Moreover, legal, financial, and cultural provisions do not support students from other nations. Homogenization can be demonstrated by the view that Asian students living in America are expected to be assimilated into White culture (Yeo et al., 2019).

People with experience in diverse cultures have improved interactions with people of various cultural identities. The five behaviors that help bridge gaps between multiple cultures are facilitation, translation, integration, mediation, and empathetically comforting. There is a direct relationship between a plurality of cultural identities and behaviors that bridge cultural gaps and cultural intelligence (Bachmann et al., 2020). Students' thinking capacity improves when they interact with people from different backgrounds. They can also interact freely in an environment where people have diverse attributes. A system of education that encourages people of diverse cultural backgrounds to study in a school is the best tool to promote multicultural friendships (Boukari & Goura, 2012).

A literature review by Sharma and Haldar (2021) noted that the adverse effects of multiculturism result in differences in happiness among groups. Homogeneity in culture and happiness exhibit a positive relationship. Determinants of happiness correlate with homogeneity in culture positively. Happiness scores differ across nations, implying various conceptualizations of happiness among different cultures. The mean happiness scores in America are due to low societal and political cohesion. At the same time, India had low happiness scores due to many immigrants and past conflicts between cultures. Japanese had high happiness scores due to high

levels of homogeneity in culture, resulting in reduced religious, ethnic, and linguistic conflicts (Sharma & Haldar, 2021).

2.7 Multicultural Friendships Between International Students in the US and their Local Counterparts

Naseri (2018) examined perceptions across people of different cultural backgrounds and the difficulties students from Iran encounter in forming new bi-cultural friendships at a University in Germany. Due to dissimilarities in the artistic conceptualization of friendship, forming friendships with German students is challenging. According to Iranians, friends can be close, best, or casual. Moreover, friends play different roles, such as caring, learning, supporting each other emotionally, and trusting. Additionally, Iranians view friendship from a perspective of quality in terms of academic status, status in society, and depth. German students consider the values, ideas, and norms they share with others in determining whether to accept new friends (Naseri, 2018).

Limitations in linguistic skills, prejudice, and the desire of native students in Germany to have in-group friendships impede Iranian students from forming friendships. Dissimilarities in culture, different perceptions of the company, the complexity of friendships, communication competence, limited contacts among local students, and prejudice make it hard for cross-cultural friendships to be formed. Cultural dissimilarities may lead to the creation and development of close intercultural friendships due to German students' urge to learn about different cultures. Moreover, the conceptual definition of an international student among individual German students could be different, implying that they interact differently with certain nationals outside German borders (Naseri, 2018).

Briscoe et al. (2021) noted that international students in the United States often feel unwelcome by domestic students, which affects relationships between them. A common language and culture promoted interaction with international students from other countries. Therefore, students from the same nations could identify with each other and advance their relationships. International students in their first year of the study revealed that they were generally disconnected from domestic students in the United States (Briscoe et al., 2021). They had negative perceptions regarding their local counterparts, even before they arrived in the US. International students described the unwelcoming nature of domestic students in terms of not being open to sharing ideas and talking, and lack of interest in close relationships. International students believe new beneficial relationships can be built through enabling factors such as linguistic skills, cultural values, and shared experiences (Briscoe et al., 2021). Developing relationships with students from the home country enables international students to feel part of the university community and boosts their morale (Briscoe et al., 2021).

Gareis (2012) examined the home and host regions of international students in the United States to determine how many American friends they had and how good these friendships were. Students from Northern and Central Europe whose native language is English were treated very well by American domestic students. In contrast, those international students from East Asia had minor positive experiences forming friendships. International students have better experiences in the South than in the Northeast region of America (Gareis, 2012). Zeynab (2015) examined the challenges that international students from 10 different countries in a university in Midwest encounter in the United States. They included misunderstanding of cultures, achievement in academics, acceptance by society, confusion of identities, and pressures from society.

International students find it hard to adapt to new environments and settle. They are pressured to think deeply before saying anything (Zeynab, 2015).

Li and Zizzi (2018) examined how international students in America adjust socially, develop friendships, and take part in physical activities. Linguistic and cultural impediments make it difficult for students from other countries to interact with local students living and studying in America. Participation in physical activities enabled students to learn about different cultures and develop new friendships (Li & Zizzi, 2018).

Leong (2015) found that Chinese students in American universities have the most difficulty coping socially and academically due to linguistic and cultural impediments, even when interacting with American students or students from their home countries. Chinese students described Americans as individualistic, overconfident, and unable to embrace other cultures quickly. Swedish students noted that the absence of students from their home countries made it difficult to form new friendships. It was established that non-European students had more difficulty forming friendships (Leong, 2015).

2.8 How Society Creates an Environment that Inspires Multicultural Friendship

Increased dialogue among persons of diverse backgrounds socially and belief-wise helps eliminate preconceived views about others, promotes diversity appreciation, and enhances relationships involving people of diverse backgrounds. The differences among individuals in appreciating diversity meaningfully predict diversity in relationships (Bahns et al., 2015). Possession of similar interests enhances intercultural friendships. Successful intercultural companies are ensured through negotiating expectations and the company's nature (Belford, 2017). To help international students transition successfully as they leave their countries to study in the United States, professionals in charge of student affairs should guide students by linking

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them with organizations that help in the socialization process within and outside learning institutions. Such efforts would make international students develop positive perceptions of studying and residing in the United States. They would also feel welcomed (Belle et al., 2022).

The development of friendship relations across cultures is influenced by factors such as similarity in culture, various conceptualizations of friendship across cultures, skills of different cultures in developing relationships, and communication skills across multiple cultures, such as linguistic expertise. Other factors affecting the formation of intercultural friendships related to the sojourners and hosts in foreign countries are their motivations, attitudes, identities, personalities, and intercultural competence (Gareis, 2017). Ahmad et al. (2018) examined friendships among students of different ethnic identities and teachers' role in enhancing cultural diversity. It was noted that schools with students of multiple ethnic groups had more cases of friendships across ethnicities. Teachers ought to play the role of unifying students by facilitating students in the acquisition of interaction skills in the context of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity (Ahmad et al., 2018).

2.9 Summary of Literature Review

2.9.1 Benefits of Multicultural Friendship Within Society

Creativity results from multicultural relationships. For example, dating among people of different cultures enhances creativity in tasks that entail thinking divergently and convergently. People become more innovative at their places of work. However, the effect on creativity depends on the period people have been together (Boukari & Goura, 2012; Chua, 2018; Lu et al., 2017; Maddux et al., 2021). Multicultural experiences result in a change in the performance of people and organizations. People become more effective (Maddux et al., 2021). Friendships across various cultures promote good health and the general well-being of people (Lu et al.,

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2021). Entrepreneurship is also encouraged by interactions among people of diverse cultures (Lu et al., 2017). Behavioral changes also result from multicultural experiences (Maddux et al., 2021; Sousa et al., 2019; Turner & Cameron, 2016). Multicultural friendship contributes to competence in foreign languages (Celik & Yildiz, 2019; Izida et al., 2019; Kapukaya, 2020; Korol, 2017; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006).

2.9.2 Multicultural Friendship in the United States

The United States (US) encourages friendships among people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Students must adapt to new cultures in America to learn successfully; hence, forming friendships with local students is necessary (IIE, 2012). International students face intellectual challenges forming friendships in the US that arise from linguistic barriers and academic difficulties (Heyn, 2013). Students meeting new people may have personal concerns that cause stress or depression (Liang & Fassinger, 2008). Emotional challenges also exist for students forming new friendships, which include financial issues, immigration rules, loneliness due to lack of friends, racial discrimination, and lack of social networks (Liang & Fassinger, 2008). Students forming new friendships also encounter health challenges due to the weather or dietary changes, anxiety, psychological distress, or depression (Rahman & Rollock, 2004). Culture shock is another challenge in forming new friendships due to differences in lifestyle, linguistics, food, and communication mode (Berry, 2003; Zeynab, 2015).

2.9.3 How Multicultural Friendships in the US Affect Cultural Homogeneity and Plurality

Multicultural friendships mitigate racial discrimination. White students often feel that all foreigners need to learn American culture first, but this is overcome when friendships develop among students of diverse backgrounds (Yeo et al., 2019). Multicultural friendship catalyzes an individual's acceptance of others from various cultures (Heyen, 2013; Sousa et al., 2019; Turner

& Cameron, 2016; Turner et al., 2007). People who have stayed with diverse persons learn to accept and accommodate them (Lees, 2008; Neal et al., 2013). Commonalities among individuals in friendships affect cultural interactions. Sharing common likes, beliefs, and values enables people of different cultures to be friends, thus encouraging cultural diversity (Motlhaka, 2016; Naseri, 2018).

2.9.4 Multicultural Friendships Between International Students in the US and their Local Counterparts

Racial microaggressions characterize the experience of Asian students living in America. Asian students are discriminated against, and their feelings are not respected based on their skin color, linguistic competence, and religious affiliations. White students feel foreigners should be fully assimilated into their cultures first (Yeo et al., 2019). American students were not willing to interact, greet people, share ideas, and show interest in becoming close friends with international students. However, this does not apply to all domestic students (Briscoe et al., 2021; Gareis, 2012; Leong, 2015), and international students also have prejudices against domestic students. Chinese students describe Americans as individualistic and overconfident and hence unable to quickly embrace other cultures (Leong, 2015).

2.9.6 How Society Creates an Environment to Inspire Multicultural Friendship

Acceptance of other people is critical in strengthening intercultural friendships (Alharbi, 2020; Wilson, 2013). Non-discriminatory laws should also be developed and implemented by the government. The government should make legal provisions to ensure equal access to education, health, and religion (Alharbi, 2020: Vertovec, 2015). Administrative action in learning institutions can also facilitate the development of friendships among people with diverse cultural identities (Ahmad et al., 2018; Motlhaka, 2016). Administrators should call upon stakeholders to

openly discuss discrimination to find amicable solutions (Bahns et al., 2015; Naseri, 2018; Yeo et al., 2019). Academic policies on curriculum development and the provision of student services should be at the forefront in condemning discrimination (Boukari & Goura, 2012; Yeo et al., 2019). Participation in physical activities also enables students to learn about different cultures and develop new friendships (Li & Zizzi, 2018). Negotiations during multicultural interactions promote the company (Belford, 2017).

2.10 Research Gaps

The literature review has revealed that multicultural friendship in United States universities is significant. However, challenges exist in the realization of its benefits. A knowledge gap exists in the literature as little has been done to examine the state of multicultural friendship between international Arab students studying in the US and their American counterparts. Moreover, the methodologies adopted differ from the current study as they will be based on analysis of stories in academic publications. Further, the kind of friendship studied will be primarily among young and older adults.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The researcher employed a desktop literature review to achieve the research objectives. Desk research relies on already published data, such as those found on websites, publications, and previous survey results. This is a technique for conducting studies using already collected information. The inquiry may be made more efficient by compiling and summarizing this information. Because it uses already-acquired data rather than conducting new interviews or surveys, secondary research is far more cost-effective than primary research (Hoover & Cohen, 2021). Published online research articles on the experiences of Arab international students in American universities were reviewed.

3.2 Data Collection

The researcher searched for stories in dissertations that were published online. The data sources had interview stories on the experiences of Arab students in American universities. The search process then involved different keywords related to the topic: multicultural friendships among Arab students, intercultural companies applying Arab students in the US, benefits of multicultural friendships, state of multicultural friendships in US universities, and the role of society in building multicultural friendships. The search included topics such as multicultural friendship, developing intercultural friendship, the benefits of intercultural friendship, and intercultural friendship. The excluded data have Intercultural friendships outside America, friendships not of university level, and texts that discuss local friendships.

3.3 Data Analysis

In this research study, inductive thematic analysis of the texts was employed. Munn and Colleagues (2018) described textual analysis as a type of research synthesis conducted to identify

and retrieve evidence relevant to a particular question(s) and appraise and synthesize the results to inform practice, policy, and in some cases, further research. Hasanpoor et al. (2019) suggested that textual analysis is essential to evidence-based decision-making and provides the most substantial evidence to researchers and policymakers. Both definitions underscore that textual analysis plays a significant role in answering the research questions and providing evidence-based data. Therefore, this study used textual analysis since it allows for reliable and accurate data about multicultural friendships in the US. The details of the data analyzed are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Details of Textual Data Used for Inductive Analysis of Stories

Serial No.	Authors	Title	Paper type	Themes
1	Unruh and Obeidat (2015)	Adjusting to learning in the US: Saudi students speak out	Journal	Competence, participation in group activities, support of teaching staff
2	Alharbi (2018)	International student's difficulties in the host country	Master's thesis	Competence, language difficulties, inadequate time for socialization, culture shock
3	Heyn (2013)	Experiences of male Saudi Arabian international students in the United States	Doctoral thesis	Success in life, language difficulties, understanding other cultures, acceptance of people from diverse cultures, respect for different cultures, adoption of different cultures, racial discrimination, avoidance, negotiations during multicultural interactions, educative media
4	Rabia and Hazza (2017)	Undergraduate Arab international students' adjustment to US universities	Journal	Language difficulties, culture shock, adoption of other cultures,

5	Al-Romahe (2018)	Saudi international university students' perceptions of their relationships with American teachers at a large western research university	Doctoral thesis	Racial discrimination, support of teaching staff, negotiations during multicultural interactions
6	Aldawsari (2022)	International students' experience in US higher education. International students' knowledge in US higher education.	Journal	Promotion of multicultural festivals and events in learning institutions

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the analysis of thematic content analysis of stories of Arab students in American Universities. The results are shown in line with the study objectives.

4.2 Benefits of a Multicultural Friendship Within a Society

Multicultural friendships result in increased linguistic competence and success in life. Discussions are presented in this section.

4.2.1 Competence

Multicultural friendship contributes to competence in foreign languages. People learn other languages as they understand the importance of such languages when they interact with people in other countries. Atif (as quoted in Unruh & Obeidat, 2015) said,

> I feel embarrassed because, first, my language doesn't help me. Second, some teachers at the institute embarrass you when you ask because he responds to my question with another question. So, most of the students in the class ask their colleagues at the end of the course. (p. 49)

Learning in the home country just exposes students to one language. When they learn with others from different cultures, they end up learning new languages. Ali (as quoted in Unruh & Obeidat, 2015) said,

> Each class has 20 to 22 students and the majority are Saudis which makes it difficult to learn quickly. Some teachers ask us to complete our homework with a partner in the class and mostly he will be a Saudi. If he were a Chinese or any other student from a different nationality, I would use English to communicate with him. (p. 52)

It is usually difficult to comprehend a foreign language immediately. It is a gradual process that results in linguistic proficiency after some time. Khalid (as quoted in Alharbi, 2018) said,

> In the beginning, I had a hard time and it was hard to understand the accent and to get involved in long conversations or discussions; however, with more and more listening, I found myself very comfortable with speaking and interacting with the people in the house and on the street. (p. 27)

Interacting with friends from outside the learning institution promotes learning of foreign languages. Awad (as quoted in Unruh & Obeidat, 2015) expressed the opinion that students should go outside the institute to find opportunities to speak and read English, saying, "There are many things the student can gain outside the institute like speaking and making friendships with native English speakers because it enhances his language, in addition to much reading" (p. 52). The findings support identity management theory, which argues that competence enables people ability to carry out successful negotiation on identities that are acceptable during interaction process. By learning new languages, students are able to enhance their multicultural friendship networks.

4.2.2 Success in Life

Friends advise each other on how to be successful in life based on how things should be done. Fahed (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) said,

> My friends tell me how to be successful and they give me advice how to do it. Like they tell me to go to the gym, and you work out, you go cook, and I know it's always about time and following a schedule. My friends helped me when I fell from a balcony once. (p. 103)

Advice on best place to live and financial matters contribute to success of friends from diverse cultures. Ali (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) said,

> There was a guy who was here before like maybe he was here two years. After I came. So, I came, and I was like nervous and didn't know what to do. I ask him where I can live, what I should do, and how I can get a bank account because they ask for a bank account and address and there are so many things I have to do before I start school. I have to do them even if I didn't know English so I needed help you know. So, he took me there to the bank and he helped me to have an account and we went to the complex to have an apartment with the American people. (p. 103)

The findings are in agreement with Lu et al. (2017), who noted that multicultural friendship encourages people to pursue success even at work. Maddux et al. (2021) also argued that it results in improved performance by enabling learning of skills from friends of diverse cultures.

4.3 The State of Multicultural Friendship in the Case of the United States

Language difficulties, inadequate time for socialization, and culture shock characterize the state of multicultural friendships in the United States. These themes are discussed in this section based on analyzing stories in scholarly articles.

4.3.1 Language Difficulty

Language difficulties affect Arab students while they try to establish multicultural friendships. It is hard for Arab students to understand native students as they find their accent complex. Speaking in English with fellow international students is easier. Omar (as quoted in Alharbi, 2018), a student from Saudi Arabia, stated,

> I gave up trying to speak with native students because they have a very difficult accent, but I try to improve my English by speaking with international students or some of my

classmates who are Latinos whose first language is not English. I understand their accent and I found communicating with them easier than with native speakers of English. (pp. 26-27)

International students generally find it easier to understand one another although their English language may not be absolutely correct. Nasser (as quoted in Alharbi, 2018) said,

I live with two international students from China and I found that communicating in English is not as hard as conversing with native speakers. This happens even though their accent is just not very easy to understand, and their word order might be incorrect sometimes. (p. 27)

Arab international students find it hard to comprehend English statements due to failure to get the true meaning of a few words. Mansoor (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) said,

My first academic challenge is the language. It's like the biggest thing ever you know. Sometimes I studied too hard for a test and when I go there, I read the whole question and I understand everything except one word on it. This one word makes me pick the like wrong answer sometimes. I went to so many lectures without knowing what the teacher was talking about exactly and missing some of the words. (pp. 89-90)

Arab students find it hard to cope with the fast speech of native students. They have to seek clarification on certain matters. They are at times afraid as native speakers get shocked that they do not understand. Mohammad (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated,

Studying here is really hard because the professor will keep talking very very fast and it's hard to ask him to speak slowly you know and it's like hard also to ask him about everything he said. I need to ask maybe twenty questions or something, it's hard to raise my hand every one minute or every ten minutes. It is really hard. I need to ask sometimes

really to explain what he is saying. I don't want to ask because I feel like I'm a foreign student in the class. My accent is really different than the American students and sometimes when I start to speak I notice that some students start to like look at me and I don't like when they look at me like this. (p. 90)

Arab students find it hard to completely understand the English language even after enrolling in ESL programs to cope with academic and social life. A female student from Saudi Arabia (as quoted in Rabia & Hazza, 2017) said,

I can describe my first day of classes in the university like being [a deaf person in the club]. In Saudi Arabia, schools don't have good English language programs. Most of the English language teaching is conducted in Arabic. I was enrolled in the ESL program for 2 years. I was happy with it, but later I discovered that my English wasn't sufficient enough to be ready for regular classes. (p. 135)

Arab students find it hard to express themselves when interacting with their native friends. This brings a feeling of being left behind. Ali (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated,

The big challenge was how to learn English and to communicate. It was hard for me to go outside because I don't know how to communicate with people even like the pronunciation sometimes when I go to the store or to the restaurant and I told them something I want and they just say what do you mean? So that is just disappointing sometimes when they can't understand me. Without English I just feel like I am lost or like left behind. It was really hard to do it seriously I spent so many days so many nights to like memorize words and writing them down and trying to repeat them. (p. 90)

Arab students find it hard to speak in English even after high school. A first-year female student from Saudi Arabia (as quoted in Rabia & Hazza, 2017) stated, "As a Saudi student, I

wasn't equipped with English language skills. I start to learn English in middle school and don't have a good enough grasp of the language by the time I finished high school" (p. 135).

The findings on linguistic challenges are in agreement with study conducted by Heyn (2013), which pointed out difficulties in learning foreign languages as a barrier to friendship formation. Arab students have to learn more about their host country's languages in order to experience smooth friendship building with students of diverse cultural backgrounds.

4.3.2 Inadequate Time for Socialization

Arab students noted that people in America were so busy that they had limited time for socialization. Ali (as quoted in Alharbi, 2018), a student from Saudi Arabia, stated,

A number of people there also tend to speak English but life there is much more relaxed and also not very stressful and people there in Arabic Gulf countries have much more time to communicate, to gather and to build networks of humans relations. (p. 29)

People in America are so busy at work especially during weekdays. Time to meet friends is just available during weekends. Adam (as quoted in Alharbi, 2018) said,

The most different thing I have realized in the United States that life is very busy and full of pressure during the weekdays. There are so many deadlines that I have to meet almost every day. There are just so many different types of chores and things that I have to do here [in the United States] besides one's studies such as commuting, doing laundry, and buying groceries on a certain date. Social life here [in the United States] exists only in the weekends. (pp. 29-30)

4.3.3 Culture Shock

Culture shock is experienced by Arab students as they initially have a hard time coping with the new cultural practices of other students. Othman (as quoted in Alharbi, 2018), stated,

When I came to the United States, I found everything different. It took a while to adjust

to the different culture and sub-cultures. In the first month in this country [the United

States] I had a feeling of total confusion. (p. 30)

Arab students have to adjust their social lives to live with different people. They have to

adjust to a lifestyle where gatherings and meetings are not as frequent as at home. Fahd (as

quoted in Alharbi, 2018) said,

Back home in Kuwait, we gather almost every day after work and school. Friends meet at

malls, have dinner, and hang out for two or three hours every day. Relatives' families

usually buy houses in the same neighborhoods. When I walk outside my family's house,

usually I meet my cousins and our neighbors' children who have lived in the same

neighborhood for more than 15 years. However, after I arrived to California, I found

myself surrounded with unfamiliar people. It was an uncomfortable feeling and was

making me quite nervous. (p. 31)

Visiting each other frequently is not easy in America, since people are often very busy with little

time for socialization. Kadar (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) noted,

The other thing that I don't like is the social life [here] is not that strong as ours. Here, for

example, you have to make an appointment to go see people and arrange appointments

here. In our country, you can come and knock on the door and hang out as you want. We

go frequently to see each other. The total system, I mean, we feel comfortable going to

[see] each other without any appointment to hang out. (p. 92)

Eating alone is difficult for some Arab students. Mansoor (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated that,

"one of the negative things [that] affected me is [eating alone]. I used to eat with others but since

I came here I had to be alone because everyone is busy and this made me feel like I don't feel [like] eating anything" (p. 92).

Americans refer to their professors differently and it looks disrespectful to Arab students. Student Ahmad (as quoted in Alharbi, 2018) stated,

I was surprised the first time I heard students calling our professor by her first name, I was not sure they doing that in the first time; however, after one week I understand that is the way to call some professors. Of course, it depends on the professor's own wishes. In my country, if one did that, you would be disrespectful. I have never done that in my K-12 or in my college when I was studying for my Bachelor's degree. We call our professors by Dr. or Mr. followed by the last name. (p. 32)

Female Arab students find it hard initially to interact with male students. A female student from Saudi Arabia (as quoted in Rabia & Hazza, 2017) stated,

In the beginning, I faced problems like being with males in the same classroom. It is considered a sin in our society. I didn't really understand why, and maybe that is from Islamic teaching, but I think it is a strict interpretation by some Muslim scholars in Saudi Arabia. (p. 135)

The results on culture shock as an impediment to friendship formation align with the findings of Berry's (2003) and Zeynab's (2015) studies. It is implied that Arab students have to adjust their cultural traits to form good friendships.

4.4 How Multicultural Friendships in the US Affect Cultural Homogeneity and Plurality

Multicultural friendship promotes all cultures. Natives with Arab international students in their friendship network no longer see the need to have the Arab students assimilate into their

cultures. Multicultural friendships have led to the understanding of other cultures acceptance of people from diverse cultures, respect for different cultures, and adoption of other cultures.

4.4.1 Understanding Other Cultures

Multicultural friendships enable people understand other cultures. Negative perceptions about other cultures are eroded through friendships among people of diverse cultures. Hussein (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated,

> You know let me say it. I don't want to hide it or something. A lot of people here they think in my culture like women are like under men always or something. Now I feel like I want to change this thing. I want to show the world like we are equal. We are men and women in Arab cultures are equal. I want to because that thing affects my culture or something. Absolutely I think women should be able to drive. I would like to see that changed. (p. 109)

Abdullah (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) noted that friends had "lot of misconceptions about [Saudi people] and [their] culture and wanted to know more" (p. 177). Mansoor (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) noted,

> After spending all this time here, I met people from all different countries. I learned about American people and learned about others. I met international students and I learned about Saudis. I spoke with Saudis from different parts of Saudi and from different families. It made me realize different cultures and like styles of life. I think more about things and think from others' perspectives. It makes me more aware of the differences and there are people from different cultures and that some people did not get a chance to see a different culture, to see a different people. (p. 111)

4.4.2 Acceptance of People from Diverse Cultures

Multicultural friendship is a catalyst for an individual's acceptance of others from diverse cultures. Ahmed (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated, "I thought Chicago and Detroit and some other cities were going to be more dangerous and because of what people said, but I went there and it's not as dangerous as people said it was" (pp. 105-106). Mohammad (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated that: "I find that people are more friendly and most of them smile all of the time . . . right now I change my mind . . . the people [here] are good" (p. 107). Abdullah (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) indicated that "I see what my dad was talking about now . . . there are good people here . . . friendly people . . . and it is not hard to live here and make friendships" (p. 107). Ali (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated that: "at least I now know the people in the Midwest part of the United States are friendly from living here and being around them" (p. 107). Hussein noted that,

I do know and really think the people here are good people. Like one time an American girl who I had just met from school on the campus. She is a really sweet girl took me with her on spring break to her family's house. She took me to her house with her family and I met them and she did not have to do that. She said I could come with her because I did not have anywhere to go at that time. She took me to her house and her family was really friendly and nice. She was very nice to do that. It was a really good experience and I will always remember it that week. (p. 108)

4.4.3 Respect for Other Cultures

Friendships among diverse groups leads to respect for the culture of others. Kadar (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) indicated, "I can say the main thing for me is to be open to others, more open, and to accept any other ideas, opinions, without fighting, without working hard to convince

people about my culture and beliefs" (p. 110). Abdullah (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) noted that a respect for other people's beliefs "is all about respecting other cultures not judging people about their country or about their beliefs. It is about sharing ideas with people and learning about their ideas and society" (p. 111). Multicultural friendships help Arab students to understand the cultures of their diverse friends. Ahmed (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) said, "I've gained some experience about other cultures. I know more about different cultures like Korean people and other Asian cultures and I know more about the Western way like in the United States" (p. 110). Hussein (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated that,

> When I came to the United States I interacted a lot with people from Japan, China, American, Russian, Italy, around the world … I look at people as equal and learn about different ways of doing things … I want others to look at Saudis as equal. (pp. 110-111)

4.4.4 Adoption of Other Cultures

Interaction with friends from diverse backgrounds leads to adoption of new cultural practices. Some Arab students admit that it is hard to revert back to their old lifestyle when they get back home. Hussein (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated,

> I don't know how to live the rest of my life back home. It is going to be hard because I have made a lot of friends here. I came when I am young. I came like before technology, before Facebook. I mean we have technology back home, but it was not like that big deal, but now it's big deal and I don't know who is my friend. You know when I go back like I went back last year and I just saw my family. I get a lot bored and I just want to come back here because all of my friends are here. (p. 112)

Multicultural friendships result in realization of the benefits of interacting with people from diverse cultures. Ali (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) also said that,

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We think as human beings. We get benefit from all types of cultures. We learn from them

and like gain experience of how to work with all people and get a more open mind and

open being in this world. (p. 111)

Arab female students have learnt that interacting with males is normal in many places.

Another female student from Saudi Arabia (as quoted in Rabia & Hazza, 2017) said,

Arab women don't mix with men. My school back home is all females; we don't have a

mix of gender schools. It is against the law in our country. Even my teachers were

females. Male teachers don't teach females, and the opposite is true. Here, in the

beginning, it was difficult for me to be with males in the same class and to be taught by

male professors. But I got used to it later on. Now I don't see it as a problem. It was very

helpful to be in group of males and females in class discussions. (p. 136)

4.5 Multicultural Friendship Between International Arab Students in the US and their Local Counterparts

Some Arab students find it challenging to make friends with local students. Participant #3

(as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said, "I don't know why it is difficult to make friends with

American classmates" (p. 58). However, some Arab students recognize the positive aspects of

their local friends. Racial discrimination, avoidance, and kindness are areas identified by the

researcher on multicultural friendships between international Arab students studying in the US

and their local counterparts.

4.5.1 Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination makes it hard for Arab students to get American friends. Arab

international students are avoided as they are not native English speakers. Participant #2 (as

quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said, "My domestic classmates want to be with each other and

might not want me to join them because, maybe I am not a native English-speaking person" (p. 59). However, Black and White people have minimal interactions. Jamel (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) needed anything "from a Black person like right away they give it to [him] more than a White person like in the street or something. Black people talk to me more than White people" (p. 93).

Racism can be discerned from the nature of social interactions as people from diverse backgrounds conduct their daily activities. Abdullah (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) noted,

You see sometimes like in the public places. Racism you see here sometimes while we are at the mall or doing a grocery at Walmart or Meijer especially from old people. They start giving you a weird look like what is this foreign guy doing here. They look nervous and they look uncomfortable for you being around them. They don't want you to be around since you are not white like them. They don't like it. Mostly older people and sometimes at any store when you want to buy something they will like if you give them the money they will throw back the change to you. Just throw it like that. You see from their eyes how they are thinking about you. It's kind of humiliating. Sometimes you have to let it go. Just take your money and leave because you don't want to get into any trouble. I sometimes feel bad. I feel like why am I here now? If I knew it would be like this, I would just stay home. (p. 93)

It was noted that racism is both implicit and explicit. Arab students have the feeling that they are discriminated against. Kadar (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) noted,

There is sometimes . . . real . . . or hidden racism . . . it is there . . . I cannot give examples . . . but there is racism. . . You cannot see it but you know it . . .[professors] and others do not pay attention to [me and my Saudi friends] when we say [our] ideas. (p. 94)

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These findings are same as those of Yeo et al. (2019).

4.5.2 Avoidance

Local American students often avoid Arab international students and they feel that they should not carry out tasks with them. Ahmed (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated,

> Well, sometimes in the classroom when the professor divides us into groups and stuff like that and sometimes some students don't want to be in the [Saudi students'] group … Or even if they are in [my friends and my] group the [American students] try to work alone and avoid talking to [me and my friends]. (p. 93)

Arab students are viewed negatively. They are thought to be drug dealers and domestic students interact with them on the basis of getting drugs. The native students that don't take drugs avoid them. Jamel (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) said,

> I look like a bad person. So the good American people they do not try to come and stop me because I'm a bad person and the bad American people like some of them come ask me for weed. They think I'm dealer because of the way I look. Seriously. But like then they realize I don't drink, I don't smoke and stuff like that and they just run away. (p. 94)

Also, racism leads to discrimination and avoidance. Ali (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated,

> Once I meet people when I walk to the bar, people look at me like I'm weird just I'm a different color maybe or different style or something like that so they just look at me like just wondering who is this guy and what's he doing here. (p. 94)

These findings are the same as those of studies by Briscoe et al. (2021), Gareis (2012), and Leong (2015) about the consequences of racial discrimination.

4.5.3 Kindness

Arab students note that over time, they came to realize that not all Americans are unfair to Arab students. Kadar (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated,

> When I came here in 2005 I believed that [Americans] will take [Saudi people] to jail and everyone who goes to United States is jeopardizing himself with time [Americans] got used to [Middle Eastern people] and it was fine [Americans]are actually friendly. (p. 105)

4.6 How Society Creates an Environment to Inspire Multicultural Friendships

Multicultural friendship can be encouraged through several initiatives, such as the support of teaching staff, participation in group activities, negotiations during multicultural interactions, educative media, and the promotion of multicultural festivals and events in learning institutions.

4.6.1 Support for Teaching Staff

Teachers should practically implement the values of diversity in the classrooms. They ought to be agents of transformation of mindsets of students. Participant #1 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said,

> I think most American teachers value diversity in their classroom, but some of them didn't show it or didn't talk about it. I think the American teacher should do more in making diversity be appreciated and welcome rather than judged in their classrooms. (p. 48)

Teachers ought to play an active role in encouraging multicultural friendships. Teachers should show interest in diversity. Participant #4 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said, "Sometimes I feel the American teacher has no interest in diversity. His or her concern is academic issues, which is good, but it is even better if they express some interest in the ethnic background of their

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students." (p. 49). Teachers should encourage appreciation of people from diverse cultures in and outside of the classroom. Khalil (as quoted in Unruh & Obeidat, 2015) agreed,

> Students are coming from different backgrounds and the teachers make generalizations about the class. So, he supposes that all understand (the content), or all don't understand without taking into consideration the individual differences. Sometimes, when you ask him a question, he alienates you from studying. The student has fear of the teacher. It happened to me twice during my study, but with the passage of time, I get used to it. (p. 53)

Teachers should show that they appreciate cultural diversity of students so that they get motivation to form multicultural friendships. Participant #3 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said, "Some teachers have limited knowledge when it comes to understanding international students. I don't know why, but it seems that some don't have an interest in who I am" (p. 48).

Some teachers do not incorporate activities that encourage diversity in their lessons. Participant #2 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said, "Most of the teachers I know, don't have activities that value diversity in their classes" (p. 59). Participant #5 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) stated,

> Yes, teachers who recognize and accept racial and cultural diversity in their classrooms can help Saudi students succeed in their classrooms. I have been in a class where the teacher valued racial and cultural diversity, and I did very well and enjoyed the class. It was an excellent experience, and I have been in a class where I felt the teacher did not appreciate racial and cultural diversity, and I didn't do well, and I hated the class. (p. 47)

Some students felt that teachers do not know them. Participant #4 said, "It's not only the teacher who doesn't know who I am, but also, my classmates, some of my classmates don't

understand why I come here to study. One of my classmates asked me 'don't you have colleges?" (p. 57).

4.6.2 Participation in Group Activities

Teachers should form groups which involve students from diverse cultures. Participant #2 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said, "They don't pay attention, or they think it is the student's role to join a group. I prefer the teacher to be the one who assigns students to the groups" (p.59) Participant #1 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) agreed, "Teacher should be the one who signs up the groups, so I can be with the group without permission" (p. 59). Participant #4 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018), said "Teacher should check each group and see if all students fit in each group to make sure no one is left" (p. 59).

Participation in group activities also enables students to learn different cultures and develop new friendships. Ahmed (as quoted in Unruh & Obeidat, 2015) said, "On the weekdays, I study on my own and on the weekends, I study with a group mostly. It is very useful to exchange ideas, information, and experiences, and I encourage it" (p. 51). This recommendation is in line with the propositions of a study by Li and Zizzi (2018).

4.6.3 Negotiations during Multicultural Interactions

Negotiations during multicultural interactions promotes friendship as noted by Belford (2017). Arab students should make their fellow students understand their cultural background. Participant #5 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said, "Some of my classmates don't understand my background or why I am here" (pp. 59-60).

Students should be free to reveal their identities to their friends. Such opportunities include classroom participation activities. Participant #3 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said, "Some teachers give a student the chance to introduce themselves in front of the class at the

beginning of the semester which helps me to let them know who I am." (p. 60). Participant #2 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) suggested that "teachers whenever they have a chance, should provide international students with the opportunity to share stories of their home culture, such as holidays, customs, and cultural practices" (p. 60). Negotiation during the process of forming multicultural friendships enables people to view themselves as one despite the diversities in their backgrounds. Participant #3 (as quoted in Al-Romahe, 2018) said, "I like to see a world map in most of the American classrooms, to show that we all belong to one place" (p. 60).

Students ought to explain the positive aspects of their cultures so that their friends can learn to appreciate them. By so doing, more and more multicultural friendships will be formed as students coexist smoothly. Ali (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) reported that he has told classmates about the "good things in Saudi Arabia" in his classes (p. 109). Mansoor (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) stated that "[he] is like a messenger for his country. [He] has to leave a positive view of Saudi to Americans" (p. 109). Mansoor (as quoted in Heyn, 2013, p. 110) further added that that he feels obligated to "correct the negative picture here and [responsible] to correct the negative picture of [Americans] in Saudi Arabia" Ahmed (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) felt "responsible being a Muslim, to give a positive idea about [Saudi people] to [help] change the ideas that some Americans still have about [Saudi people]" (p. 110). Hussein (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) said, "I am from Saudi Arabia and this makes me a Saudi Ambassador in [America] when I go back to Saudi I will be a United States Ambassador; both are important" (p. 110).

4.6.4 Educational Media

The media ought to educate people about the importance of appreciating diversity. Ahmed, Mohammad, Abdullah, Kadar, Ali, and Hussein (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) noted that, "America is safer than [we] thought it would be" (p. 105). Jamel (as quoted in Heyn, 2013) noted

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that he expected the United States "to be more dangerous because of the media" he observed in

his country prior to coming to the United States (p. 105). Abdullah (as quoted in Heyn, 2013)

also said, "I thought everyone is bad here because of the media," (p. 105). Mohammad (as

quoted in Heyn, 2013) further stated,

> Getting out in the midnight is more safe right now you can go wherever you want to go
>
> no matter what time. [Americans] are not dangerous like I thought because [Americans]
>
> respect and follow the laws so yeah they follow the laws. (p. 105)

The practical experience of Arab students reveal that the negative perception students have about

America, due to perception shaped by the media, is finally eroded over time. Hussein (as quoted

in Heyn, 2013) stated,

> It is safer than I thought. Maybe they won't like me here, but they won't hurt me. I feel
>
> safe living here and walking the campus and I thought the United States and the people
>
> were going to be like more dangerous before I came. The media makes the people afraid
>
> of anything because it is a business. (p. 106)

4.6.5 Promotion of Multicultural Festivals and Events in Learning Institutions

Festivals and events that promote interaction between people of diverse cultures promote

multi-cultural friendships. One interviewee (as quoted in Aldawsari, 2022) stated that the

university should

> celebrate all festivals of all countries. The only lack I feel compared to other schools that
>
> my friends are in. They have big, huge festival celebrations such as Eid or Diwali, or any
>
> festival around the world which is quietly celebrated. That's lacking in my university, so
>
> there is less interaction among international students. (p. 118)

CHAPTER FIVE : SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations arising from the study. They are in line with the findings from the analysis of stories as well as the study objectives.

5.2 Summary

5.2.1 The Meaning of Multicultural Friendship

Various authors have defined multicultural friendships, and several aspects have emerged clearly. First is the idea that multicultural friendships are part of people's many multicultural experiences due to interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds within or outside a given nation. The aspects of causal allies, sharing, and period are also helpful in defining multicultural friendship. Multicultural friendship has also been recognized as a process that is an investment. that relies on voluntariness as the critical component. Friendly treatment for each other is also included in defining friendship.

5.2.2 Benefits of Multicultural Friendship Within Society

Having acquaintances from different cultural backgrounds helps with learning a new language. People study foreign languages because they value the ability to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds. It is not easy to pick up a new language right away. Language proficiency is attained via a slow and steady procedure.

Friends also help each other by offering advice and suggestions on improving processes. Friends from different cultural backgrounds are more likely to succeed when they seek and share advice on the best location to live and financial problems.

5.2.3 Multicultural Friendship in the United States

Arab students struggle to communicate with their domestic peers because of language barriers. Arab students sometimes struggle to understand their American peers because of the complexity of the American accent. Speaking in English with other international students is a great asset. Even if their English is not perfect, it is often simpler for international students to communicate with one another. The inability to grasp the genuine meaning of a few phrases makes it difficult for Arab international students to understand English remarks or explain themselves. They experience a sense of isolation because of this.

The students' primary gripe about their lives in the United States was how hectic everything is. Arab students said they saw Americans as having little time for friends and family because of their hectic schedules. The average American spends most of their workday at work. Only on weekends do they have the time to get out with their friends.

The difficulty of adjusting to a new culture further complicates making new acquaintances. At first, Arab students may struggle to adapt to the different cultural norms of their peers. Arab students must learn to navigate new social environments with unfamiliar individuals. They need to get used to a new way of life in which get-togethers and conferences are less common than back home. It might be difficult to pay each other regular visits in the United States. Some Arab college students have trouble eating alone. Arab female students have difficulty making friends with male pupils at first.

5.2.4 How Multicultural Friendship in the US Affects Cultural Homogeneity and Plurality

Friendships between Arab students and native pupils are uncommon. Asian American students in the US often face racism and sexism. However, multicultural friendship was shown as a driving force behind the protagonists' eventual openness to people of other backgrounds

because people get the opportunity to explain the various aspects of their culture to their friends. Friendships between people of different backgrounds foster an acceptance of other traditions as they identify the positive aspects of other people's cultures.

Intercultural friendships often encourage one another to broaden their horizons. Some Arab students have had difficulty readjusting to life back home after college. Upon returning home, several Arab students find it challenging to resume their previous ways of living. The advantages of mixing with individuals of different backgrounds become clearer when people from different backgrounds become friends. Making acquaintances from various ethnic backgrounds helps one know the value of expanding one's social circle. Women in the Arab world have learned that mingling with men is a natural part of life in modern society. Today, male company is seen as usual among Arab women in academics.

5.2.5 Multicultural Friendships Between International Students and their Local Counterparts

When starting school, some Arab students have trouble connecting with the local student body. Arab students may have trouble making friends in America due to prejudice. Americans tend to steer clear of overseas students from Arab countries. Students of Arab descent are looked down upon. They have been labeled as possible narcotics traffickers. Their interactions with drug users are predicated on the assumption that those users would get such advantages. Those indigenous people who choose not to partake in drug use often stay away from them. People tend to shun Arab international students since they are not fluent in English. Still, some Arab students appreciate the excellent qualities their American friends possess. Eventually, Arab students said, they realized that Americans are kind.

5.2.6 How Society Creates an Environment that Inspires Multicultural Friendship

Instructors need assistance in their efforts to form intercultural connections with their students. Teachers should foster respect for others' cultural backgrounds in and out of the classroom. Teachers should clarify that they value their students' many backgrounds and traditions to encourage their pupils to seek out and value intercultural friendships. Educators need to promote intercultural friendships among their students. Educators should demonstrate an appreciation for and celebration of cultural variety. Students may get an understanding of other cultures and make new acquaintances by   taking part in group activities. These activities provide a basis for engagement and conversation, which encourage multicultural friendship.

Friendship is fostered via negotiations in cross-cultural contacts. Arab students help their peers better comprehend their culture by explaining its nuances. It is unacceptable for the media to promote racial stereotypes. They need to teach individuals about the value of accepting and celebrating differences. Intercultural friendships would benefit from more opportunities for individuals of various backgrounds to get together, such as during festivals. These events provide an avenue for people to interact.

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5.3 Conclusions

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The study made the following conclusions:

1. Multicultural friendship involves interaction among people of diverse cultural backgrounds within or outside a nation who share information and spend time together. People also try to overcome challenges that may impede their friendship.

2. Multicultural friendships result in increased linguistic competence and success in life.

3. Language difficulties, inadequate time for socialization, and culture shock characterize multicultural friendships in the US.

4. Multicultural friendship has led to an understanding of other cultures, acceptance of people from diverse cultures, respect for different cultures, and adoption of other cultures.

5. Racial discrimination, avoidance, and kindness characterize the multicultural friendship between international Arab students studying in the US and their local counterparts.

6. Multicultural friendship can be encouraged through initiatives such as the support of teaching staff, participation in group activities, negotiations during multicultural interactions, educative media, and the promotion of multicultural festivals and events in learning institutions.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Student friendships ought to be monitored and managed since they result in a significant change in a person, whether positive or negative.

2. International students in the US face hurdles that should be supported to overcome language and culture shock challenges.

3. Multicultural friendship should be encouraged to promote appreciation of people from all cultures.

4. Racial discrimination should be condemned in the US to enhance multicultural friendship.

5. Support of teaching staff, participation in group activities, negotiations in friendship formation, positive media education, and promotion of multicultural festivals and events in learning institutions should be enhanced to promote multicultural friendship.

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