

A PERSONAL CONSTRUCT APPROACH TO DISCOVERING THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCE OF STUDYING ABROAD

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The present study employs a mixed methods design within a Personal Construct Theory perspective to examine the individual ways in which a small sample of graduate students describe their experience of international education. Participants completed a repertory grid involving seventeen roles and a self-characterization task. Hierarchical cluster analysis of the grids showed a two-cluster structure that separated roles between students' home and host cultures, and the characterizations disclosed some of the individual problems faced by these international students while studying in the host culture. It is suggested that pairing new arrivals with the host culture peers would help international students adjust more successfully to their new experiences.

Keywords: acculturation, personal construct theory, repertory grid, self-characterization, Saudi Arabian international students

INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of university education has an important role in facilitating knowledge exchange and cultural collaboration between different countries (Wei et al., 2007). It affords a worldwide network of alumni, opportunities for internationalization of curricula, contacts for recruitment and educational projects, as well as cross-cultural relationships with local students whose future employment roles require a global perspective (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). However, the experience of studying abroad can be challenging for international students. Living and learning in a host country often involves reconciling one set of roles and expectations affiliated with the home country and a different, and sometimes contrasting set of roles and expectations associated with the host country. In many cases, students have to adapt the traditional roles of their home country to fit the host country. This process of adaptation and transition of roles complicates the already stressful

demands of university education (Pederson, 1991). As a result, international students may experience psychological and social issues, such as anxiety, isolation, sense of loss, fear, loneliness, and depression, during their transition to living and learning in a host country (Chen, 1999; Poyrazli, Thukral, & Duru, 2010; Sandhu, 1995; Wei et al., 2007; Westwood & Barker, 1990). Although universities provide orientation programs for international students, these programs tend to focus on practical issues, such as shopping, banking, and transportation; these programs are unlikely to address potential psychological issues (YoungMinds, 2006). A better understanding of the individual ways in which students experience the transition from home country to host country would provide an opportunity to enhance programs that universities provide to international students.

Acculturation research

A number of studies have illustrated the challenges faced by international students as they acculturate to living and learning in Western countries (e.g., Westwood & Barker, 1990; Sandhu, 1995; Chen, 1999; Wei et al., 2007; Poyrazli et al., 2010). The challenges involved in international education may be substantially different from one cultural group to another cultural group, as well as from one person to another person. As Popadiuk and Arthur (2004, p. 126) comment, "international students are a culturally heterogeneous group of people who cross cultures for the experience of living and learning in a foreign environment." Furthermore, Jacob and Greggo (2001) note that many issues experienced by international students are difficult to address in studies that focus on the general population of international students. In examining the acculturation process of international students, researchers have tended to compare specific ethnic groups such as European, African, and Asian students studying in North America as homogeneous continental groups. However, each of these geographic areas includes many countries, and each country has distinct cultural norms, beliefs, and educational systems. Thus, it should not be assumed that international students from the same continental area will experience the same issues in the transition from home country to host country.

In a philosophical and methodological review of 42 studies of acculturation published between 2001 and 2006, Chirkov (2009) reports that only one study used an interpretive framework in which the variables were based on cultural analysis of the home and host countries. Chirkov (2009) suggests that acculturation researchers should be open to research methodologies that enable them to explore and understand peoples' personal, social, and cultural constructs in the home culture and the host culture through a variety of methods, such as open-ended interviews, personal narratives, focus groups, and many other language-based methods. Furthermore, an individualized examination of student experience would afford an understanding of the process of reconciling roles and expectations affiliated with

the home and host country. This paper argues that Personal Construct Theory (PCT) (Kelly, 1955), with its methods and emphasis on contrastive ways of understanding experience, can make an important contribution to our understanding of the differing roles and expectations that international students fulfil while living and learning in a host country.

PCT and international education

From a PCT perspective, international students have personal constructs that they developed while living and learning in their home country. In transition to the host country, it is reasonable for international students to draw upon these constructs to anticipate events and experiences in the social and academic environments of the host country. In effect, they must "bet on them" behaviourally, observe the outcomes of their hypotheses, and often revise their constructs to better anticipate future events. A number of authors (e.g., Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Mori, 2000) maintain that most international students need some form of assistance in dealing with the numerous novel experiences, events, and procedures that they will encounter in the host country.

According to Kelly (1955), personal constructs are bipolar dimensions of differentiations and similarities that allow a person to understand, organize, and anticipate events, people, or objects in the world. For Kelly (1955), the reality is always open to multiple interpretations, and, as a result, different persons are likely to construe the world somewhat differently. Thus, the examination of these individual constructs is an important part of understanding a person. To assess individual experiences, Kelly (1955) describes two methods of psychological assessment, the repertory grid and the self-characterization. Whereas the repertory grid involves both qualitative and quantitative measurement (words and numbers), the self-characterization is a purely qualitative method. Combining these two methods will enhance the picture we gain of a student experience, and by analysing them, we are not simply obtaining a description of how a student thinks about his or

her role as a student, but, rather, we are opening a window to his/her entire transition experience (how s/he sees the world, or part of it, using his or her own words).

An important component of an international student's personal identity is the language of his or her home country. In comparison, the language of the host country may simply be a tool for international education. In studying the experience of international students, there is potential benefit to allowing participants to respond in the language of their home country rather than the language of the host country. However, most studies involving international students have relied on a participants' command of the English language. In only a few studies did participants have the opportunity to choose the language used (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Wei et al., 2007). In the current study, participants were given the opportunity to use Arabic and all chose to complete the study in Arabic rather than in English.

The aim of the present study is to explore the experience of Saudi Arabian graduate students who live and learn in Canada in a way that reflects the diversity of their lived experiences. The theoretical framework of PCT has been selected for this analysis, as this approach lends itself to gaining access and interpreting private worlds (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004).

METHODS

Participants

In this study, a Saudi Arabian international student is an individual who has been sent from the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education to pursue university education in a foreign country. Saudi Arabian students enrolled in a graduate program at the University of Western Ontario received an email from the Office of Graduate Studies that described the study and invited interested students to contact the investigator by email. Six students (2 male and 4 female), aged 27 to 32 years old, responded to the email and indicated their willingness to participate in the study. These students had been living in Canada for up to four years. The study was approved by

the University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Health Sciences Research Involving Human Subjects (HSREB).

Procedure

The researcher met with each participant individually and asked him or her to complete a repertory grid and a self-characterization task. The elements of repertory grid were a set of 17 roles developed on the basis of a review of the literature on international education. As listed in Table 1, these elements consisted of Saudi roles, a corresponding set of Canadian roles, international roles, temporal roles, and a discovery role appropriate to our sample of graduate students. The bipolar constructs were generated for each participant using a dyadic procedure (Landfield, 1971, cited in Fransella et al., 2004). This involved asking how particular pairs of elements differed from each other; the same pairings were used for all six participants (see Appendix 1). Specifically, the participant was asked: "How are these two roles different or alike?" If a difference was reported, such as "this role has many responsibilities, but that role has few responsibilities," the construct was defined by the pair of contrasting phrases (that is, *many responsibilities* versus *few responsibilities*). If a similarity was reported, such as "these two roles have an academic orientation," the person was asked to name its opposite. There were no right or wrong responses when eliciting the constructs, and it was anticipated that these bipolar constructs would be highly individualized. This dyadic procedure was repeated, comparing different pairs of roles, until a set of 11 personal constructs had been generated. The participant rated each element (e.g., 'myself as a student in Saudi') on every construct (e.g., *many responsibilities* versus *few responsibilities*) using the poles of the construct as anchors of a 5-point rating scale (see Appendix 2).

Participants also completed a self-characterization task (Kelly, 1955). In this task, a person was asked to write a short description of himself or herself as an international student from the point of view of a sympathetic friend (a

third person). Participants were given the option to complete the two assessments in either English or Arabic (their native language) in an effort to obtain a rich description of their own experience and language. All six participants chose to use Arabic. English versions of the repertory grids and self-characterization were made following the interviews by the researcher (E. H.) whose first language was Arabic.

Analysis

The repertory grid and self-characterization of each participant was analysed separately. The repertory grid is a comparison task that emphasizes contrast among roles, whereas self-characterization is a story-telling task that emphasizes continuity and consequences. Grids were analysed through hierarchical cluster analysis to examine the extent to which Saudi roles were differentiated from Canadian roles. There are different methods of making clusters and measuring distances. Bell (1997) recommends the use of Ward's method with squared Euclidean distances for the analysis of grids. Ward's method uses an analysis of variance approach to evaluate the distances between clusters (Burns & Burns, 2008). The squared Euclidean distances are recommended by Bell (1997) because they are unaffected by the orientation of the constructs. That is, the same distance is obtained when a construct (such as, "productive versus unproductive") is expressed in the reverse order ("unproductive versus productive"). Ward's method and squared Euclidean distances were used within SPSS to analyse the grid elements (the 17 roles) into clusters. The self-characterizations were analysed qualitatively to uncover themes in the narratives that participants told about themselves.

RESULTS

Each grid was analysed separately using hierarchical cluster analysis. A confirmatory approach was used to decide the number of clusters. A two cluster solution was chosen because it allowed us to directly examine the extent to which Saudi roles were differentiated from Canadian roles. As summarized in Table 1, it was found that Saudi roles and Canadian roles fall into separate clusters suggesting that these roles reflect contrasting sets of expectations. In addition, for Saudi Arabian graduate students who participated in this study, social relationships tend to play an important role in their adjustment to their new experience in Canada.

Students' grids

The repertory grids of four participants showed an identical pattern of clustering except for the roles of 'problem-solver/ advice-seeker' and 'friend in Canada.' The international roles tended to cluster with the Saudi roles; however, two participants were exceptions to this pattern for whom the international roles clustered with the Canadian roles. In terms of the temporal roles, the role of 'myself now' clustered with the Canadian roles; this pattern is not surprising given that all participants were living in Canada. The role of 'myself in the past' clustered with the Saudi roles for all participants except 1 participant, and the role of 'myself in the future' clustered with the Saudi roles for all participants except 1 participant.

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Table 1: *Two clusters of roles for six participants.*

	1 Eman	2 Hashim	3 Amal	4 Moayad	5 Manal	6 Lamia
<i>Saudi Roles</i>						
'Myself as a student in Saudi'	○	○	○	○	○	○
'Myself as a member of my previous university community'	○	○	○	✓	○	○
'Myself as a member of my family in Saudi'	○	○	○	○	○	○
'Myself as an effective member of Saudi culture'	○	○	○	○	○	○
'Myself as a friend in Saudi society'	○	○	○	○	○	○
<i>Canadian Roles</i>						
'Myself as a student in Canada'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
'Myself as a member of my current university community'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	○
'Myself as a member of my family in Canada'	○	○	○	✓	○	✓
'Myself as an effective member of Canadian culture'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	○
'Myself as a friend in Canadian society'	✓	✓	✓	✓	○	○
<i>International Roles</i>						
'Myself as a member of Saudi community in Canada'	○	○	✓	✓	○	○
'Myself as an ambassador of my country'	○	○	✓	✓	○	○
'Myself as a foreigner'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	○
<i>Temporal Roles</i>						
'Myself in the past'	○	○	○	✓	○	○
'Myself now'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
'Myself as I would like to be'	○	○	○	○	○	✓
<i>Discovery Role</i>						
'Myself as a problem-solver or advice-seeker'	○	✓	✓	○	✓	✓

Note: Two cluster solutions were obtained in a hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward's method). The cluster containing the majority of Saudi roles is marked with a circle (○) and the other cluster is marked with a check (✓).

Commonality can be shown in the shared and repeated constructs and synonyms used by the students to describe their roles and experiences (see Table 2). Some social roles, either in the university community (e.g., 'as a member of the university community/classmate') or in the social community in general (e.g., as 'a friend' and as a 'foreigner' vs. as an 'ambassador') elicited the most common constructs used in this study (commonality score of 5). This suggests that the participants have a more elaborated construct system in these areas, because these roles cause them particular difficulties. Although students in this study have been living in Canada for more than two years, it seems that they still experience some sense of social loss (Chen, 1999). Constructs related to students' social roles were positive when clustered with Saudi roles (e.g., social and confident 'classmate', chatty and relaxed 'friend', and 'ambassador' who respects others' differences) and were negative when clustered with Canadian roles (e.g., isolated and shy 'classmate', quiet and stressed 'friend', and 'foreigner' who faces racism). To identify each student's degree of sociability (as a 'classmate' and as a 'friend') in the host culture, common constructs of related roles in Canada can be used to draw a continuum. This continuum starts with the construct of being *less involved* (on the left side of the continuum) and ends with the construct of being *isolated* (on the other side of the continuum).

The rest of the roles (e.g., 'student', 'member of family', 'member of culture', 'self in past', 'ideal self', and 'problem-solver') elicited less common constructs (commonality score of 3). For example, as a student who works with a supervisor, it seems that students do not have many difficulties. All six participants agreed that they have different expectations about this role in both cultures. In Canada, three participants see themselves as *researchers* rather than *information receivers* (in Saudi). In addition, two participants indicated that they want to be *more active* with a *need for academic orientation*. One participant was the exception; she felt that she is a more *trustworthy* student in Canada (as opposed to her role in Saudi). Similarly, the role as a 'member of culture' varied among participants.

Three participants construed their roles as a 'member of culture' as *self-oriented*, and they reported having more *freedom of individual opinion* in Canada, whereas the other three found their roles to be similar in both cultures.

Although temporal roles ('myself in the past', 'myself now', and 'myself as I would like to be/ideal self') had less common constructs among participants as well, participants' past and ideal selves were construed in relation to their Saudi roles, while their present selves were construed in relation to their Canadian roles, with the exception of two participants. One participant was the only student with no family members in Canada, which could explain why his self in the past was construed in relation to his Canadian roles. This could be seen as a reason for having his past self associated with these roles. One participant's ideal self was construed in relation to her Canadian roles. This suggests that she prefers her current view of self. The content of the participants' self-construing, as considered based on the construct poles of the repertory grids, indicate that three participants tend to construe themselves in a more positive view and see themselves as having had a better life in the past (e.g., lives that were *calm, more successful, and less challenging*). Negative views of selves were related to selves in the present (e.g., lives that are *anxious, less successful, and more challenging*). In contrast, the other three participants seemed to view their present selves positively (e.g., *planning for the future, being outgoing, and adopting more religious commitment*), compared to their past selves (e.g., *real-time thinking, being reserved, having less religious commitment*).

Students' self-characterizations

In this study, individuality can be seen in the unique system of constructs that each student used in his or her grid to describe the transition experience of living and learning in both cultures, and more specifically, in the way that he or she defined his or her world through the use of self-characterizations. Self-characterizations are construed differently across participants, but

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their characterizations are focused on their present or current orientation to life. Past or future (where they see themselves going) is not included in narratives except for that of Lamia (participant 6), whose characterization has a focus on the future. Most participants begin their characterization with information about themselves, centring on issues of *anxiety, fear of failure, feeling of isolation, stress of having many responsibilities, and ability to overcome obstacles*. In most cases, these issues were related to either the university community [e.g., Eman (participant 1), Hashim (participant 2) and Amal (participant 3)] or to Canadian society outside the university [e.g., Moayad (participant 4)]. In many cases, the characterizations tended to express a sense of *isolation*, similar to that seen in the grids, related to either the university community or to Canadian society outside the university.

The first self-characterization is by Eman, who is a 30-year-old, married woman who has been living in Canada for four years. Before coming to study in Canada, she worked in Saudi Arabia as an instructor.

Eman is a very hard worker who takes responsibility for her own learning/working. She spends most of her time at university (as a student) or at home (as a mother), but she does not spend enough time having fun with her friends. She wants everything to be perfect (family, studying, and working); therefore, she always has irrational fears of making mistakes, of embarrassment, of criticism, and of loss. She sometimes hears voices say "You can't! It won't work! You are going to look like a fool! What if they laugh at you" Living this way makes her very anxious and she feels under pressure most of the time.

The second self-characterization is by Hashim, who is a 32-year-old who has been living in Canada for four years. In his first two years in Canada, he was single and lived with a Canadian homestay. Hashim got married one year ago and graduated from his master's degree in the same year. Before coming to study in Canada, he

worked in Saudi Arabia as an engineer for a foreign company.

Hashim is a diligent student, but he is not an organized person. He has tried very hard to succeed in his graduate studies, but making the wrong choices at the beginning of his master's degree has impacted his overall grade and level of study. He was not brave enough to make the right decision to change his field of study. After all, he completed his degree and graduated. He had wished to be more courageous as it is not right to allow others to inhibit his ability to determine and control his own destiny.

The third self-characterization is by Amal, who is (like Eman) a 30-year-old, married woman who has been living in Canada for four years. Before coming to study in Canada, she worked in Saudi Arabia as an instructor.

Amal is always anxious and very nervous and has a concern about her graduate studies because of a fear of failure. Despite all her efforts to succeed and her perseverance to do well in her courses, the fear of failure continues and is ongoing. She has a feeling that to achieve academic success in a country with an excellent academic society, you need to make a lot of effort to succeed, and there is a lot of external pressure on your shoulders.

The fourth self-characterization is by Moayad, who is a 27-year-old, single man who has been living in Canada for two years with a Canadian homestay. He obtained his bachelor's degree from Saudi Arabia before coming to Canada to pursue his master's degree.

Socially, Moayad is very shy, and because of this he sometimes feels that he is isolated and aloof in Canadian society. Regarding his personality, he is a very cheerful and brave person when he is with his close co-national friends. Academically,

he is a very diligent and ambitious student.

The fifth self-characterization is by Manal, who is a 28-year-old, married woman who has been living in Canada for two years. Before coming to study in Canada, she worked in Saudi Arabia as a manager with individuals of both sexes. Like other participants' characterizations, Manal's characterization is focused on the present time of life; however, the characterization is more about her positive and negative qualities of her personality.

Like anyone, Manal has positive and negative qualities. I have known her for more than a year now. One of her positive characteristics is that she does not like to ask anybody for help. One of her negative characteristics is that she always tries to solve her problems at home by herself, and doesn't let anybody help her with those problems. She is hotheaded and is impatient. She doesn't give people a chance or enough time to do their work; therefore, she always finds herself doing other peoples' work.

The sixth and last self-characterization is by Lamia, who is a 31-year-old, married woman who has been living in Canada for four years. Before coming to study in Canada, she obtained her master's degree from Saudi Arabia.

Lamia is independent and is a very hard worker. She used to be very sensitive towards any failures or unhappy events in her life, since three main events happened and changed her life path while she was studying abroad. Over three years, she

has started to build her future and has learned to accept unexpected surprises, challenges, and obstacles.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to explore the experience of a small sample of Saudi Arabian international students, using Personal Construct Theory and its tools of assessment (Kelly, 1955) to examine the roles and expectations of living and learning in a host country. The analysis of the repertory grids showed a two-cluster structure that differentiated Saudi roles from Canadian roles, and the self-characterizations disclosed some of the individual problems faced by these international students while studying in a host country. In general, the results of this study have some parallels with the literature that defines social isolation as a common stressor among international students (Oropeza, Fitzgibbon, & Baron, 1991; Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000; Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006). This is understood to be a result of cultural differences between Eastern and Western societies (Poyrazli et al., 2010). Such cultural differences in this study were found in the constructs (with a commonality score of three out of six participants) with the respect to the role of 'member of culture' as being group-oriented in Saudi Arabia, in contrast to individual/self-oriented person in Canada. Moreover, findings in the literature suggesting that students experience racial discrimination and prejudice (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000) may have some connection with the participants' common constructs (with a commonality score of four) faces racism in their roles a 'foreigner'.

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Table 2: *The participants' common constructs*

	<i>Role</i>	<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Commonality score</i>
<i>Saudi Constructs</i>	'Student'	<i>Information-receiver</i>	3
	'Classmate'	<i>Social/More involved /Confident/Acceptable</i>	5
	'Member of family'	<i>Few responsibilities/Organized & independent</i>	3
	'Member of culture'	<i>Male-oriented /Group-oriented/Less freedom of individual opinion</i>	3
	'Friend'	<i>Chatty/Social/More involved/Relaxed</i>	4
	'Ambassador'	<i>Respects others' differences</i>	4
	'Self in the past'	<i>Calm/More successful/Less challenging life</i>	3
	'Problem-solver/advice-seeker'	<i>Capable/Giving help/Less embarrassed to ask for help</i>	3
<i>Canadian constructs</i>	'Student'	<i>Researcher</i>	3
	'Classmate'	<i>Isolated/Less involved/Shy/ Unacceptable</i>	5
	'Member of family'	<i>More responsibilities/Disorganized & needs assistance</i>	3
	'Member of culture'	<i>Self-oriented/More freedom of individual opinion</i>	3
	'Friend'	<i>Quiet/Isolated/Less involved/Stressed</i>	4
	'Foreigner'	<i>Faces racism</i>	4
	'Self now'	<i>Anxious/Less successful/More challenging</i>	3
	'Problem-solver/advice-seeker'	<i>Tense/Asking for help/More embarrassed to ask for help</i>	3

Note: Commonality score is the number of participants who used the same constructs on their grids.

As mentioned earlier, PCT (Kelly, 1955) is concerned with the ways in which individuals make sense of life experiences. Both the repertory grid and the self-characterization task allowed participants in this study an opportunity to describe their experiences in a highly individualized way. A level of individuality was demonstrated in the structure of the repertory grids by the different patterns in which roles were distributed between clusters and in the self-characterization task through the specific attributes and events that participants used to describe themselves. Yet, in more general terms, a high degree of commonality is evident in the participants' constructions of international education. In general, the reper-

tory grids showed a structure that separated home roles from host roles, and the self-characterizations reveal stresses that parallel to those identified in the population of international students in previous studies. For instance, in line with other studies (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000; Oropeza et al., 1991), social isolation was a common theme in the self-characterizations. Kelly (1955) conceived of a culture in terms of constructions of experience. As members of a culture, the participants in this study shared a general set of beliefs and expectations that served to frame their experience of international education. In this respect the repertory grids of Eman, Hashim, Amal, and Manal

are especially noteworthy because they show a near identical pattern of clustering. In addition, two of the three international roles were found to cluster with the Saudi roles in four of the repertory grids.

In line with their previous experiences and cultural backgrounds, students anticipated having a social lifestyle in Canada similar to the one they had in Saudi Arabia. When they failed to establish social relationships with Canadian students, they experienced stress. Mori (2000) maintains that international students can be assisted by companions of similar cultural backgrounds who have been trained in fundamental communication skills by staff members of counselling centres. However, it is not clear from this study that co-nationals helped these students to become socialized in their university community, to establish social relationships with Canadians, or to improve their academic achievement. Further research in this area is needed.

The participants in this study were a sample of six graduate students. The small size of this sample is both a limitation and a strength. It is a limitation because a small convenience sample, such as the present one, does not readily generalize to other international students from different cultural backgrounds. Yet, the small size of this sample is a strength because it allows a description of individual experience and, in future studies, this analysis could be used to understand the individual experience of students from other cultural backgrounds. The repertory grid and the self-characterization are methods that complement and enhance each other. As noted by Hardison and Neimeyer (2007), the self-characterization task is less widely used than the repertory grid, and the two methods are rarely used in combination. It is also a strength of the study that participants could elect to complete the repertory grid and self-characterization task in Arabic rather than English.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The findings of the present study have several education and counselling implications for working with Saudi Arabian graduate students and,

potentially, other students who come from the Arabic Gulf States or Middle Eastern countries in which collectivism (vs. individualism in Western countries) has a value in their societies (McCarthy, 2005). University programs and counselling services in higher education may need to be more proactive in reaching out to these international students by incorporating culturally sensitive and meaningful approaches into the helping process. There is a need to build a supportive and facilitative atmosphere that assists international students in connecting more effectively with their new academic and social environments (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1991; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). Studies have reported that social interaction between Arab students and host nationals has had positive effects on the international students' well-being (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006). It has been suggested that pairing new arrivals with the host culture peers may assist international students adjust successfully to the transition experience (Westwood & Barker, 1990). The peer would play the role of classmate, friend, information provider, consultant, or facilitator-helper in assisting the international student to build relationships with other people around him or her. Repertory grids and self-characterizations could be used before and after this pairing program to provide useful information on progress and improvements in the transition to living and learning in a host country.

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Appendix 1

Pairs of elements used to generate an individual set of bipolar constructs

1. 'Myself as a student in Saudi'; 'Myself as a student in Canada.'
2. 'Myself as a member of my current university community'; 'Myself as a member of my previous university community.'
3. 'Myself as a member of my family in Saudi'; 'Myself as a member of my family in Canada.'
4. 'Myself as an effective member (male or female) of Saudi culture'; 'Myself as an effective member (male or female) of Canadian culture.'
5. 'Myself as a friend in Saudi society'; 'Myself as a friend in Canadian society.'
6. 'Myself as an ambassador of my country'; 'Myself as a foreigner.'
7. 'Myself in the past'; 'Myself now.'
8. 'Myself now'; 'Myself as I would like to be in the future (ideal-self).'
9. 'Myself as I would like to be in the future (ideal-self)'; 'Myself as an ambassador of my country.'
10. 'Myself as a problem-solver or advice-seeker'; 'Myself as a member of Saudi community in Canada.'
11. 'Myself as a problem-solver or advice-seeker'; 'Myself as a member of my current university community.'

Appendix 2

A blank 17 (roles) × 11(constructs) repertory grid

		Elements																
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Constructs		Myself as a student in Saudi	Myself as a student in Canada	Myself as a member of my current university community	Myself as a member of my previous university community	Myself as a member of Saudi community in Canada	Myself as a member of my family in Saudi	Myself as a member of my family in Canada	Myself as an effective member (male or female) of Saudi culture	Myself as an effective member (male or female) of Canadian culture	Myself as a friend in Saudi society	Myself as a friend in Saudi society	Myself as an ambassador of my country	Myself as a foreigner	Myself in the past	Myself now	Myself as I would like to be	Myself as a problem-solver or advice-seeker
	①②③④⑤																	
1																		
2																		
3																		
4																		
5																		
6																		
7																		
8																		
9																		
10																		
11																		

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