

Practicing Dichotomy
*Middle Eastern and North African International Student Adherence to
Dichotomous Gender Roles in the United States*

BY

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Chairperson: Dr. Mary Banwart

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Abstract

Personal identity is a self-concept that pulls an individual to certain groups. For the better part of history, gender identity has been divided into the binary of female and male identities.

Corresponding to the female and male gender identities are female and male gender roles.

Though personal identities are self-created, gendered identities and gender roles have, up to recent times, been dictated by scientific categorization and cultural social norms, respectively.

Central to gender identities and subsequent gender roles is the wish to belong, to adhere to cultural values, and to follow religious beliefs which dictate the roles of males and females. This study directed attention to dichotomous gender role expectations in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) nations. It spotlighted international students from MENA nations currently studying at U.S. institutions of higher education. Through focus groups and surveys, this study analyzed 1) if gender roles exist in MENA nations, 2) their constructs, and 3) how gender roles are maintained in U.S. communities and on campus by MENA international students. This study has significance for both females and males in our local, national, and global communities.

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Chapter I: Introduction

“In some ways, globalization opens access and makes it easier for students and scholars to study and work anywhere. But in many respects, existing inequalities are only reinforced and new barriers erected.”
-Philip Altbach

Background

Equality of Genders Amongst International Students on U.S. Campuses

Equality of genders is at the heart of human rights. Laws prohibiting women from equal access to land, property and housing; economic and social discrimination leading to fewer opportunities for women; sex-based violence; denying women of sexual and reproductive rights; and ostracizing those who defend human and female rights, are but a few examples of the harmful effects that women face around the globe as a result of the denial of rights to women (“Women’s Human Rights and Gender Equality,” 2018). The advancement of globalization and internationalization of higher education gives students around the world the opportunity to gain an understanding of foreign cultures, languages, and societies while allowing them to continue their academic studies.

In 2017, the U.S. received more international students than any other nation in the world by a landslide, with 19% of the world’s population of international students attending U.S. universities; the next highest destination was the United Kingdom, hosting 10% of international students (“Countries Hosting the Most Foreign Students,” 2017). The 2016-17 school year hit a national and international record high of over one million international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities (Institute of International Education, 2018a). Of that number, 57.4% came from nations with the worst gender equality and human rights records in the world. Indeed, during the 2014-15 school year, over half of the international student population studying at U.S. universities came from the following four nations: Saudi Arabia (5%), South Korea (5%), India

(17%), and China (33%) (Institute of International Education, 2018b; Amnesty International, 2014). Included therein are three countries perceived as the “worst for gender equality”: Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and India (McPhillips, 2016). The question this raises for all involved in U.S. higher education is what effect do U.S. campuses and communities have on international students?

For any student the culture shock of leaving one’s nation and entering a new, entirely different, nation can be enormous. Orienting international students to their new campus, community, and national culture is a large-scale production at universities throughout the U.S. Sizable research exists concerning the cultural, social, and political complexities international students face when studying abroad, yet there is scant research inspecting the effect(s) that cultural, social, and political gender role expectations have on international students’ experience in the U.S. Further, little research exists surrounding the maintenance – if any – of enculturated expectations based on gender while studying in the U.S., “Western” gender role acculturation while living in the U.S, or the maintenance of any adopted “Western” expectations upon students’ when they return to their home nation. Considering the high number of students studying in the U.S. each year from countries reported to have such a significant lack of attention toward equality of sexes, this research was designed to address a very important gap in the current research.

Great preparation goes into the international education orientation process, with entire university departments organizing every detail of the students’ arrival from processing visas, to translating foreign insurance policies, to hiring orientation staff, and planning living arrangements for international students. Once the student has landed on the soil of the new nation and has been properly oriented, university international education offices take care to keep the

students engaged in a variety of campus and community-based activities. With new students arriving on a semester-by-semester basis, including during the summer, university international education offices are perpetually galvanized for the next wave of students. Within international education at the university level, great attention is given to recruiting students to the institution, placing students at the appropriate language level, making sure the students are adjusting to the different workloads and methods of education (i.e. doing research, citing sources, participating in class), ensuring students are understanding new subjects required of a general education, and last but certainly not least, securely integrating students into their new society (Hopkins, 2012). As globalization continues to increase in the 20th and 21st centuries, the impetus to study in a different culture is following a parallel projection. The creation and development of university offices, programs, and departments whose sole function is catering to the international student has become an imperative.

Statement of Problem

Construction & Maintenance of Inequality Based on Gender in MENA Nations

This study seeks to focus upon international students with citizenship in a MENA nation who are attending a U.S. university. This specific population of students is the focused upon for the following three reasons: 1) MENA nations have the fastest growing population of students enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education (O'Malley, 2014); 2) the highly patriarchal past and present societal structure of these nations (Charrad, 2011; Shiva, 2004); and, 3) 75% of MENA nations are developing nations (World Bank, 2018; International Statistical Institute, 2018). For these reasons, it is particularly important to study cultural gender role expectations of MENA nations, through the eyes and experiences of international university students studying in the U.S. Further, this current moment in time marks a pivotal point in human history – a time in

which sex-based norms, nationalism, and globalization are pushing new boundaries and exploring uncharted areas. As such there is an ideological division regarding the concept of culturally, politically, and socially prescribed gender roles in MENA nations. Cole (1994) states that “the increasingly industrialized countries of the Middle East have adopted a number of conflicting policies toward women; these policies are grounded in political philosophies that range from the neopatriarchy of Iran to the Kemalist liberalism of Turkey” (p. 24). Many women fight for equal rights in MENA nations through political activism, social involvement, and education, yet distinct gender roles continue to be enforced culturally, socially, and politically. Though the concept of encultured gender roles is largely viewed as negative and limiting in the U.S. and most Western cultures, enculturated dichotomous gender roles are viewed in a more positive light in MENA nations and in Eastern cultures. Females and males are held responsible for carrying out specific behaviors and actions associated with their sex. Despite the new, albeit sometimes blurred, boundaries of gender role expectations in many nations around the world, most MENA nations still continue to embrace and enforce dichotomous gender role expectations in their societies, governments, and religions.

It is well documented that MENA social, political, and cultural structures have a past and present steeped in patriarchy (Ennaji, 2011; Fisher, 2012). In terms of nation-building and nationalism, MENA developing nations are attempting to create a national identity that both unites a nation and also distinguishes itself from other nations on the global stage. As Chatterjee (1989) and many other scholars on the subject of gender and nation-building attest to, developing nations take a gendered approach to progress. Specifically, this is an approach through which men symbolize the exterior, the physical, the workplace, and worldly; whereas, women represent the interior, the spiritual, the home, and the national culture. As developing MENA nations

continue to delineate how their nation is different from other nations, gender structures will likely continue to be established along with economic, political, cultural, and religious structures. Gender role expectations have been present in the MENA area, and many areas around the world, throughout history. While some would propose that developed nations have, over time, begun to soften the defining lines of sex-based expectations, developing nations, on the other hand, exhibit a trend of establishing and defining gender role expectations for their citizens. For this reason, the project at hand examines developing MENA nations for the maintenance, construction, and definition of gender role expectations, which arguably parallels the construction of their national identities (Muller, 2008; Nagel, 2005). Drawing from in-depth, face-to-face focus group interviews with international students who call the Middle East and North African home, but who are studying in the U.S., the analysis presented here provides a rare glimpse of the “national-cultural intersection” as a driver of societal and political gender role expectations.

Though U.S. culture and politics have seen many changes in terms of equality and equity of sexes over the past 200 years with the Women’s Rights Movement (allowing women to vote, receive a higher education, practice a profession, own property), a study from the University of Maryland suggests that Millennials are less inclined to equally share power on the home front between sexes, compared to 20 years ago (Coontz, 2017; Pepin, 2017). As a set of reports by the Council on Contemporary Families reveals, “fewer of the youngest millennials – those aged 18 to 25 – support egalitarian family arrangements than did the same age group 20 years earlier” (Coontz, 2017, para. 2; Cotter, 2017). According to Pepin (2017) and Cotter (2017), the proportion of young people that held egalitarian views in the U.S. increased between 1977 and the mid-1990s but has since decreased. It is assumed that with each new generation a new level

of modernity, tolerance, and equality is reached; however, emerging research actually demonstrates that these trends can stop or even be reversed (Coontz, 2017; Corak, 2016; Cotter, 2017; Pepin, 2017). For that reason, it is essential to examine the past and present construction and maintenance of gender role expectations. In order to recognize advancements and/or decreases to equality and equity of sexes over periods of time, one must have a history of quantitative and qualitative measurements to situate present-day measurements. To understand the trajectory of gender equality and norms ten, twenty, or one hundred years from now, we must also understand present day gender equality and norms. Moving a step forward, by comprehending the historical trends of gendered inequality and prescribed gender roles, we gain awareness of what influences these changes to inequality, based on gender and gender role expectations. By examining the past and present construction and maintenance of gender role expectations, actors, actions, and trends regarding gender role expectations are identified. Therefore, this study investigated globalizations' effect on decreasing sex-based inequalities and oppressive gender role expectations, looking specifically at the internationalization of higher education. The following section explains the approach this study takes so as to investigate international higher education's effect on gender role expectations.

Approach

Mixing Methodologies to Paint a Clearer Picture

Does attendance at a U.S. university give MENA students the ability to test their encultured gender role expectations? Drawing on focus groups and surveys, this study analyzed three factors which give insight into a student's ability to test formerly held encultured gender roles while studying on a U.S. campus and living in a U.S. community. First, I assessed if MENA international students feel there are prescribed gender roles in their nation of origin. If

students did, indeed, feel there are prescribed gender roles in their nation of origin, I probed into how these gender roles are played out and enforced. Second, I examined if international students maintain the enculturated gender roles of their nation during their time in the U.S. Lastly, I used the information retrieved through surveys and in-depth focus groups to evaluate whether attendance at an U.S. university gives MENA students the ability to test their encultured gender roles, if so desired. Through focus group conversations and data provided in surveys, a better understanding of the creation, maintenance, and effects of prescribed gender role expectations in MENA nations was discovered. Additionally, this study gave a voice to MENA university students who are the future actors of change in both MENA nations and on the global stage. That said, this study did not aim to end gender role expectations of MENA students, but instead to discuss the causes, effects, limitations, benefits, and maintenance of expected gender roles amongst MENA student on U.S. campuses and communities.

The mixed methods design of this study allowed for a synthesis of both statistical data – obtained through surveys – and descriptive data – obtained through focus groups. A more expansive methodological approach was employed in order to collect basic biographical information of survey participants, while also diving below surface level data with in-depth focus groups. The focus groups aimed to illuminate ideas which cannot be said or are unrealized through a survey alone. The analysis of dichotomous gender role expectations within international programs of higher education adds to recent studies which track sex-based inequality within higher education. This interdisciplinary study speaks to the fields of Women's Studies, Sociology, Middle Eastern Studies, International Relations, and Higher Education, addressing the issue of forced dichotomous gender role expectations within communities of MENA international students studying in the U.S. Instead of focusing solely on the *perception* of

dichotomous gender roles, I questioned how gender roles are *practiced and enforced* by international students from developing nations.

Significance

Current Practices' Effect on Future Gender Trends

Primarily drawing on Chatterjee's (1986, 1989, 1993) concept of dichotomous gender roles, identity theory, and social capital theory, this study explored how dichotomous gender roles can be brought over from foreign nations and maintained on U.S. university campuses and communities. Institutions of higher education exert great effort to create a safe environment for students to delve into new cultures, embrace new ideas, and potentially experience non-dichotomous gender roles. The university campus and local community naturally fills the void of an international students' home community. It is essential to understand the level of freedom, comfort, and opportunity these students have on U.S. campuses and communities compared to their nation of origin's communities. Chatterjee's concept of dichotomous gender roles investigates how gender roles are prescribed upon the men and women of developing nations. I expand upon this concept by applying the theory to citizens who are outside of their nation and removed from their national identity, specifically, international students at U.S. universities.

The next chapter of this thesis will review books, scholarly articles, and collections of data relevant to the construction and maintenance of gender roles on the global stage. Chapter three will then explain the methods, research design, and analysis. Chapter four will detail the results, while chapter five will offer a discussion of the main findings, discuss the limitations of this study, propose future directions for ongoing research, and provide final conclusions.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This study has been informed by three areas of research, each of which touch upon dichotomous gender role expectations. Part one offers a brief overview of the theories applied in the study, including Chatterjee's (1986, 1989, 1993) concept of dichotomous gender roles, social identity theory, and social capital theory. Part two gives an overview of the research related to gender role expectations from various academic perspectives. Finally, part three presents how gender roles are portrayed according to three different geographic areas, each of which contain a majority of developing nations.

Theoretical Approaches

Concept of Dichotomous Gender Roles

For the purpose of defining gender roles, this study draws primarily from Chatterjee's (1986, 1989, 1993) identification of how the Women's question, or the role of women in society, is addressed by nationalists in developing countries. Chatterjee argues that the nationalists' resolution to the Women's question is to create a dichotomy in which the material, modern, worldly, external sphere is represented by men and the spiritual, traditional, home-based, internal sphere is represented by women. By creating this dichotomy, developing nations are able to justify their modernizing, national efforts, symbolized by man, without appearing to have conceded to Westernization. The dichotomy also allows nations to maintain their cultural traditions and spirituality, symbolized through women, without seeming oppressive to females. Essentially, dichotomous gender role expectations allow nationalistic, elite males to justify the oppression and abuse of women. Furthermore, this dichotomy is cemented through both nationalism and, frequently, religion. Men and women, thus, are told by their society, their nation, and their religious community how they should behave, as prescribed by nationalistic elite. As Moghisi (2008) asserts, those who fight for equality often become the point of both

verbal and physical abuse: “A rapidly growing body of work on gender and nationalism points to the use and abuse of issues of women’s rights and women activists in both national liberation movements and in nation-building and modernizing projects” (p. 541). As a nation develops, especially one with a history of patriarchy and fundamental religious practices, it will often use women’s rights issues as a way to win campaigns and gain power, only to discard women’s issues and progress toward gender equality once said power has been gained. An example of using women’s rights as a political tool was seen with the Ba’ath party of the 1970s (Fischer-Tahir, 2010). Spectacular claims of progress and equality in women’s rights were proclaimed by the Iraqi Ba’ath party, including improvement of women’s education, healthcare, ability to own property, and job opportunities. These claims of improvement and progress were not an attempt for state feminism or equal rights, they were a tool in the party’s modernization project. In other words, that which was advertised to a developing nation by the political elite as a move for women’s rights was in actuality a tool employed to control women (Farouk-Sluglett, 1991). This is not the first time that politicians have used the issues of women’s rights and female equality as a way to champion a political position; it will not be the last.

In addition to the concept of dichotomous gender roles and its application by nationalist elites, Chatterjee (1986, 1989, 1993) also argues that there is an essential cultural difference between the East and West. It is this difference in culture that creates a drive toward nationalism in post-colonial, developing Eastern nations (Chatterjee, 1986, 1989, 1993; Foster, 1991). “The concept of civilization is not a neutral, value-free concept; to the contrary, it specifies the superiority of the West and attributes universality to a specifically Western cultural model” (Gole, 1996, p. 13). To attain “civilization” is to, in short, “Westernize.” According to Chatterjee, nationalists from developing nations reject any association of Eastern inferiority, yet

strongly hold on to Eastern “tradition,” doing so through women. In doing so, Eastern cultures combine Western modernization and material culture with the “superior” Eastern traditional and spiritual culture (Chatterjee, 1986, 1989, 1993; Foster, 1991). This allows Eastern developing nations to create a national culture and identity that is perceived to be both superior to, and different from, Western culture while accepting Western modernizations.

When we apply Chatterjee’s (1986, 1989, 1993) concept of dichotomous gender roles to MENA nations, the link between women and tradition becomes glaringly obvious. This connection between MENA women and cultural traditions was established by nationalists “who in their fight for independence used women’s issues, e.g. the [woman’s] veil, as the embodiment of religious and national identity” (Lewin, 2009, p. 349). According to Leila Ahmed (1992), “Progress or regress in the position and rights of women has often directly depended on which side of the debates over nationalism and culture the men holding or gaining political power espoused” (p. 129). This example of political parties momentarily supporting the movement for increased women’s rights is, in all reality, merely a veil for increased party support. Though this situation arises from Middle Eastern nations, it has far more expansive application. It demonstrates the role of nationalists of a developing, post-colonial nation, conceding to Western superiority in the “outer” sphere of technology and modernization, while simultaneously claiming Eastern superiority in the “inner” sphere of domestication and tradition, associated with women (Chatterjee, 1989, 1993; Kandiyoti, 1991; Knaus, 1987; Lazreg, 1994; Walley, 1997). Thus, Eastern traditions, which were perceived by Western colonizers as backward, inferior practices were invented by the colonized Easterners “to epitomize a cultural integrity and worth that was defined in highly gendered ways” (Walley, 1997, p. 426). One goal of this study is to determine the traditions, or “highly” dichotomous gender roles, that are still practiced by Middle

Eastern and North African nations. Once these gender roles have been defined and explained, this study will next work to determine if they are maintained by international students studying in U.S. institutions of higher education, or changed, as an effect of studying and living in the U.S.

Drawing from the literature, specifically Chatterjee's (1986, 1989, 1993) concept of dichotomous gender roles, there is a clear link between women, tradition, the home, and the hidden. Gender roles have continued to be used as a tool to justify social, political, and cultural action while simultaneously holding females back. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to the understanding of how dichotomous gender roles function for students who have migrated from MENA nations to the Westernized U.S. for educational purposes. Two additional theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for the focus of this study, social identity theory and social capital theory, in order to better understand the ways in which gender roles may function for such MENA students.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was introduced by social psychologist Henri Tajfel, a Jewish-Polish survivor of World War II, in the mid-20th century. Through this theory, Tajfel (1974, 1978, 1981, 1982) claims that in society, people often associate themselves with a group rather than as a unique individual. It is one's social identity that dictates how intergroup relationships develop, with these intergroup relationships in turn affecting one's interpersonal relationships. Tajfel explains the role that social identities play in shaping relationships:

The major assumption is that even when there is no explicit or institutionalized conflict or competition between the groups, there is a tendency toward ingroup-favoring behavior. This is determined by the need to preserve or achieve a 'positive group distinctiveness'

which in turn serves to protect, enhance, preserve, or achieve a positive social identity for members of the group. (1982, p. 24)

Tajfel's (1974, 1978, 1981, 1982) personal experiences as a Jew in war-torn Poland, made him keenly perceptive of discrimination and intergroup conflict. He found that people created their own ideas of different groups based upon those into which they belonged. Those groups which were viewed with the highest esteem held the most power over an individual's opinions. It was through his social identity theory that Tajfel demonstrated how people who were long-time neighbors, co-workers, and friends could be driven to see one another as enemies without logic or rationale.

Specifically, Tajfel (1981) defines social identity theory as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 255). Tajfel derives three theoretical principles from his assumption of social identity (Tajfel, 1974, 1978, 1981, 1982). First, individuals realize that social identities are different from personal identities. Through this realization, individuals will focus on achieving a positive social identity. Second, individuals will distinguish strategies used to create a positive social identity. Positive social identity hinges upon favorable comparisons between in-groups and out-groups, where the in-group is held in higher esteem compared to the out-group. Lastly, individuals must decide which strategies to use so as to achieve a positive social identity, based upon characteristics of the social structure. Most often, if a social identity is less than satisfactory, individuals will leave their existing group for a more favorable group or attempt to make their current group more positively distinct. Accordingly, social identification creates groups through the categorization of individuals. Both those in and out of a group view a group a certain way, often stereotyping all

members of the group with general characteristics. These characteristics define not only the social identity of the group, but the personal identities of its members. Tajfel's aim in the creation of social identity theory was to understand and explain how people choose to embrace and prescribe to social identities rather than personal identities. In other words, why do people adopt "we" instead of "I" (Ellemers, 2011, p. 381)? And what drives us to categorize people into groups instead of seeing individual traits that define their personal uniqueness? Through the process of social identification, one must reflect upon the self and make the decision to either identify with a group through shared characteristics or distinguish oneself from the group. This process is based not only on cognitive awareness of connective attributes but also emotional ties.

A counterargument to social identity theory is the acknowledgement that people are naturally members of many groups in society. Tajfel's (1974, 1978, 1981, 1982) identity theory responds to this argument by agreeing that people are members of numerous different groups, but they select which groups are more meaningful, or important, in their life. Ellemers (2011) further adds, "To the extent that people care about the groups they belong to (i.e. ingroups), they will be motivated to emphasize the distinct identity of those groups, and to uphold, protect, or enhance the value afforded to those groups and their members" (p. 382). Therefore, with the creation of groups, an effort is naturally made by ingroup members to distinguish the group from outgroup individuals. Those in the group work to protect specific values afforded to members, and a continuous process of group maintenance and improvement is put into place so as to uphold and enhance both social and personal identities. Through the process of categorization, comparison, and identification, individuals define their position respective to others, as well delineate a social reality. Social identity theory further suggests that social structures such as laws, religious practices, and cultural traditions, play a large role on an individual's willingness

to remain loyal to a group. If social identity improvement cannot be achieved through a group based on the social structures in place, the individual is likely to replace the group with one higher in social prestige. Social identity theory argues that it is intrinsically human not just to “need to belong,” but the need to belong to a certain group. The need to belong to certain groups, along with ingroup bias, may well explain the cause of intergroup conflict.

Social Capital Theory

While social identity theory analyzes individual-social relationships, social capital theory proceeds a step further by explaining the trust-conflict nuances of social relationships. Social capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1986), is “made up of social obligations, connections, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital” (para. 4). It is important to realize that students are influenced not only by an emotional connection to a group, as seen with social identity theory, but also influenced by capitalistic connections to a group, as seen with social capital theory. For example, an individual could associate oneself with a group due to embedded personal qualities such as ethnicity, religion, family, and nationality, all qualities one was given at birth. Social capital theory would then suggest that through life experiences an individual will come to realize the advantages of associating with groups related to a highly-esteemed school, career, nation, or culture. In other words, individuals will change their social identity so as to conform to a new, more advantageous or highly desired identity. This change, or reformation, as it relates to one’s association with one social group over another, based on societal value, is an example of social capital theory. Certainly, each social group offers certain resources to its members, and the more resources a group offers – both liquid and physical – the more highly esteemed the group becomes in the eyes of individuals and society. Pierre Bourdieu (1986), the first to define social capital theory, stated that it was “the aggregate of the actual or potential

resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 248). Resources one could gain through social capital include economic resources (loans, advice, jobs), cultural resources (contact with experts, refinement, credentials, and institutional connections), and human capital (ideas, colleagues, workers). Bourdieu further concludes that social networks are not a natural given, but must be strategically produced, invested in, and institutionalized. Through this process of social network production, investment, and institutionalization, individuals are able to draw upon the group for a host of benefits (Bourdieu, 1986).

However, social networks, as social capital theory explains, can create both benefits and restrictions. Alejandro Portes (1998) argues, “Social ties can bring about greater control over wayward behavior and provide privileged access to resources; they can also restrict individual freedoms and bar outsiders from gaining access to the same resources through particularistic preferences” (p. 21). For this reason, Portes claims that it is essential to study the process and complexities of social networking instead of simply stating it as an added value or benefit. The works of sociologist James Coleman (1988) and economist Glen Loury (1977) argue that dense networks are a necessary condition of social capital theory, and that it is through these cumbersome, tight networks that all members of the social network are held accountable. In this light, certain social network benefits such as stability, resources, and solidarity are visible. Yet, this also highlights certain restrictions associated with dense social networks, such as loss of freedom, oppression, and the controlled allocation of resources. Sociologist Ronald Burt (1992) further views the emergence of social networks as occurring through loose, rather than dense, ties. It is through this relative absence of ties – or as he states, “structural holes,” – that mobility and benefits arise (p. 1). In this respect, the accountability and control of resources present with a

dense social network that are no longer viable, although a greater level of freedom and inclusion is present. Regardless of the type of social network system in place, Portes makes a strong argument that there are both benefits and restrictions to each system.

Social identity theory is informative to this study as it positions the importance of group membership on individual behavior. Social capital theory advances social identity theory by positing that it may be more than the need to belong to a group that influences an individual's behavior. There are complexities of group memberships which social identity theory alone cannot explain, and for that this study looks to social capital theory. Davis (2014) states that social networks are complex in two ways:

On the one hand, individuals vary in the degree to which they participate in social groups and also regularly change their group memberships. On the other hand, social groups vary in size and structure, and differ in the ways in which they establish trust and cooperation among their members. (p. 2)

Social capital theory helps to explain variances in participation, changes in group membership, and different forms of trust and cooperation. The theory further asserts that social networks can be created and maintained due to capitalistic advantages gained through the social networking. It is easy to understand why recipients aspire to gain social capital. As Portes (1998) proposes:

More complex are the motivations of donors, who are requested to make these assets available without any immediate return. Such motivations are plural and deserve analysis because they are the core processes that the concept of social capital seeks to capture.

(p. 6)

It is not just an embedded, in-born, or emotional connections that may bring about membership to a group. These memberships are also made on the grounds of what may be gained via social capital.

Social identity theory explains why individuals maintain social groups/connections. Tajfel (1974, 1978, 1981, 1982) makes clear the idea that people define themselves by the groups with which they associate. People find acceptance, security, status, and positive reinforcement through the social groups with which they associate. Social identity theory is employed in this study as a way to better understand why MENA international students maintain their enculturated gender role expectations while in the U.S. Following Chatterjee's (1986, 1989, 1993) concept, it is the nation, through laws, policies, and disciplinary action, that dictate gender role expectations. Why, then, do international students continue to follow these enculturated practices and beliefs once they have left their nation? Looking to Tajfel's social identity theory, it would make sense that international MENA students continue to follow enculturated gender role expectations after they have left their nation because they remain socially associated with groups they were previously connected to in their home nation. By maintaining former social identity groups, MENA international students are more likely to maintain the expected behaviors, ideologies, and expectations associated with these social associations. It is here that Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory commands attention. Social capital theory is used to shed light on the third research question of this study: do MENA students test their enculturated gender roles expectations? Are MENA students willing to let go of embedded, protective, self-affirming social groups established in their home nation? If so, what spurs this change or reformation of social identity? Bourdieu explains, through social capital theory, that emotional connection is not the only reason individuals associate with one social group over another,

individuals have capitalistic drive, as well. Individuals will change their social identity so as to conform to a new, more advantageous, identity. In other words, if a new social group is able to provide a higher quality of life for its members compared to one's current social group, individuals are willing to leave embedded social networks (i.e. national, religious, political affiliations) for capitalistic gain. This change, or reformation, concerning one social group for another based on societal value is an example of social capital theory. If international students from MENA nations are willing to let go of certain gender role expectations, or embrace new ideas regarding gender roles, it is social capital theory which explains why they do so.

Dichotomous Gender Role Expectations According to Academic Discipline

Recent studies within higher education have discussed the volatility, politicization, and contestation which the act of researching gender roles within Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) cultures can bring upon scholars. When researching sex-based inequality in MENA communities, conflict will most likely occur, along with resistance and opposition (Masika, 2014; Willemsen & van Lenning, 2002). The issue of how to best accommodate the political and cultural developments caused by the globalization of higher education is a topic rife with controversy and differing opinions. With the expansion of globalization, and thus the further growth of international programs in higher education, excitement and arguments will undoubtedly increase regarding the definition and maintenance of sex-based inequalities exhibited in many patriarchal societies. Altbach (2004) defines globalization as seen within universities as:

The broad economic, technological, and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable. Politics and culture are also part of the new global

realities. Academic systems and institutions may accommodate these developments in different ways, but they cannot ignore them. (p. 5)

The political and cultural norms of MENA nations, brought over from international students from these areas, cannot be ignored. The basis of peaceful cohabitation is an understanding of one another. By understanding the political, cultural, and societal influences upon MENA international students' lives, the seeds of strong international relationships will take root.

Higher Education

Many studies, from a wide range of disciplines, discuss the issue of dichotomous gender role expectations forced upon women by nations and maintained through associated educational, social, political, economic, and religious institutions. From the academic discipline of higher education, discussion is directed toward the economic growth nations lose by denying women equal rights. Beverly Metcalfe (2006) explains that sustainable economic growth requires countries to make full use of their human capital, involving both men and women in research and innovations. The United Nations Development Programme (2003) reported that Arab nations support "the development of human capabilities of women but not for their utilization" (p. 19). Specifically looking to the sex-based inequality found within institutions of higher education in developing countries, Golnar Mehran (2009) states "female higher education has been characterized by a complex and paradoxical combination of both discrimination and exclusion, and increasing equality and empowerment" (p. 1). It stands to reason, then, that women and men from patriarchal societies may be pulled to study in the U.S. so as to experience an educational system and society that is free from blatant sex-based inequality (Perna, 2014). The general intention of international programs at the university level is to enhance and expand students'

understanding of a new culture and language (Edelstein & Douglass, 2012; Varghese, 2008), build intercultural adaptability and awareness (Root & Ngampornchai, 2013; Williams, 2005), and create and nurture a safe space where open-mindedness, cooperation, tolerance, flexibility, and other interpersonal soft-skills and cross-cultural understandings take place (Bird & Stevens, 2008). As the population of students from patriarchal societies who pursue higher education abroad increases, it is important to understand if their experience in a new nation expands their current understanding of a new culture, builds intercultural adaptability, and nurtures open-mindedness and tolerance.

Several scholars within the academic discipline of higher education have recently directed their focus on the development of international higher education, specifically in regard to women's education (Kabeer, 2005; Stromquist, 2001; Unterhalter, 2003, 2007). However, historically, much of the attention has been given to females in *primary* education, leaving higher education out of the conversation. Further, few studies have focused on the direct effects of women's higher education on social development (Tjomsland, 2010). However, since the turn of the 21st century, an increased number of researchers within the academic, political, and financial spheres are beginning to turn their attention toward women's role in higher education.

Higher education theorists (Bradley, 2000; Bunyi, 2003; Delamon, 2006; Kjeldal, Rindfleish, & Sheridan, et al 2005; Kwesiga & Ssendiwala, 2006; Morley, 2005; Tjomsland, 2010) stress the importance of understanding sex-based inequality as a structural issue instead of an individual issue. Indeed, they discern the battle for sex-based equality within higher education as a fight against cultural norms and social practices that prove unjust to one sex – generally women – and which results in decreased advancement in higher education. They further argue for distinctions between equal rights *to* education, *in* education, and *through* education

(Subrahmanian, 2005; Tjomsland, 2010). Equal rights *to* education indicate access to education; equal rights *in* education implies equality in curriculum, teaching methods and peer relationships; equal rights *through* education entails educated women's equal opportunity to use their education as an avenue toward employment and political activism. It is in richer, patriarchic, developing countries that one sees women having access *to* education, but lacking in equal rights *in* and *through* education (Harding, 1986; Kjeldal, et al 2005; Tjomsland, 2010). For this reason, examining the perpetuation of dichotomous gender role expectations displayed by international students from patriarchic MENA nations is key to understanding sex-based inequality within international higher education.

Middle Eastern & North African Studies

For a different perspective of the perpetuation of dichotomous gender role expectations in international higher education, one can look to recent issues addressed by Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENAS) scholarly works. Whereas discussion within the discipline of higher education focused on the structural changes which need to take place in order for women to be treated equally within international education, current studies in the disciplines of Middle Eastern & North African studies have focused on the use and abuse of women's issues by developing, MENA countries. Patriarchal MENA countries have a pattern of focusing on women's rights issues as long as they fit within the national agenda. The demands for sex-based equality by Middle Eastern and North African women vary in their relationship to nationalism. For example, women's rights activists who focus on topics such as women's participation in the community, women's access to education, and women's ability to become employed will find an ally with Middle Eastern and North African nationalists, as these topics promote the sense of a "modernizing" nation. Yet, as soon as these same activists broach the topic of violence against

women, family laws, and a woman's right to her body, they will be met with hostility and contestation from most Middle Eastern and North African male nationalists (al-Ali & Pratt, 2011; Hasso, 1998). The cause for a struggle for some sex-based equality issues and not others harkens back to Chatterjee's (1986, 1989, 1993) concept of dichotomous gender roles and their application to a nation's identity. Chatterjee's approach highlights the connection of gender roles to national identity by demonstrating how the act of forcing women to represent the home, the interior, the traditions, and the past of a nation, places females in a position where they are deemed as traitors, loose women, and evil, should they not accept this position or follow gender role expectations. By using women to represent both the home and the nation, nationalist male leaders are able to maintain control over both their home life and their nation through the subjugation of females (Chatterjee, 1989). This project focuses on better understanding if, and how, these dichotomous gender role expectations, elaborated in Chatterjee's concept, might be perpetuated by international students studying at U.S. universities.

As would be expected, each MENA nation has a different interpretation of religious policies, a different level of fundamentalism, and a different level of patriarchy within their government. It is noteworthy, however, that six of the ten worst countries in the world for gender equality happen to be located in MENA nations and all ten are located in Eastern nations (U.S. News, 2018). Additionally, all MENA nations included in the *Global Gender Gap Report* were below global weighted average for gender equality (Hess, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2017). Examples of inequality range from restricting women from employment, political participation, education, and leadership roles in parliament, to more family-based issues such as permitting child marriages, sex-based separation, forced covering, and denial of basic human rights. Branisa & Klasen (2012) state:

Be it through internal or external forces, strengthening ‘female agency’ (Sen, 1999) by changing the institutional roots of gender inequality should be high on the policy agenda. Successful examples of changing family codes in Middle Eastern countries or changes in female access to land in Sub-Saharan Africa suggest that such institutional changes are, in principle, possible. (p. 262)

Gaining female equality within the family structure or the governmental structure is indeed, a successful step. Small steps should be celebrated, as they are indicative of larger steps to come. That said, female inequality is still a part of the culture, policies, and society of MENA nations, as shown through the *Global Gender Gap Report*. Regarding international students, a concern arises of whether these nationally-accepted cultural practices found in MENA nations are being performed in the U.S., where they are not culturally-accepted, by students hailing from the respective nations.

Gender Role Expectations from a Sociological Perspective

Sociology is a discipline which directs a great deal of scholarship toward the study of sex-based equality and the presence of dichotomous gender role expectations in society. Many studies discuss global gender inequality’s slow decline, stating that it is due to “the slow and halting change in gender inequality in some non-Western cultural traditions” (Dorius & Firebaugh, 2010, p. 1955). While women’s rights activists are seeing gains in some cultural regions, there are many regions of the world where sex-based equality gains are negligible, or worse, they are losses. Certain cultural traditions are more resistant to change regarding women’s rights. Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2003) write that “Cultural change is a necessary condition for gender equality: women first need to change themselves before they can hope to change society” (p. 9). In other words, women must be aware of the injustice imposed upon them

in patriarchic, developing nations in order to seek gender equality. The cultural practices to which women acquiesce are the cultural norms of the future. Studies comparing men's versus women's likeliness of endorsing gender transcendent behaviors show a significant difference between the two gendered stances, with men less likely to endorse gender transcendent behavior than women (Baber & Tucker, 2006). Additionally, women are significantly less traditional than men in their views regarding gender roles. This information supports the ideas of Inglehart and Norris by demonstrating that men are 1) more in favor of traditional, patriarchic gender roles and 2) less likely to endorse movement away from traditional male/female dichotomous gender role expectations. Thus, if change is to be made, it must be made by women, as men, arguably, are less likely to instigate these cultural developments.

Sociologist Barbara Risman (2004, 2009) asserts that gender is a societal structure similar to economic, political, and cultural structures. Risman (2009) explains:

Every society has a gender structure in the same way that every society has an economic structure. The gender structure has implications at the level of individual analysis, in shaping interactional expectations that are at the heart of doing gender, and at the institutional level in the organization and policing of social groups. (p. 83)

Two strong points Risman (2004, 2009) makes regarding gender and society are 1) gender structure privileges both men and women, and 2) gender structure is not static. Men who do not understand the meaning behind "feminism" often refuse to consider themselves a feminist, yet fully believe that women should have equal rights as men. Men and women, worldwide, often view the word "feminism" as a negative movement in society. Kathy Carpino (2017) points out that "Many people fear that feminism will mean that men will eventually lose out – of power, influence, impact, authority, and control, and economic opportunities. Many

people believe that feminists want to control the world and put men down” (para. 12). Risman, amongst many others, interjects that feminism and gender equality in society benefit both men and women. Furthermore, she argues that making gender roles static has the effect of caging everyone involved, leading society down a “blind intellectual alley.” Individuals in most societies today have more freedom to develop their potential beyond gender role expectations associated with masculinity and femininity (Risman, 2004, 2009). People are both “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and “undoing gender” (Risman, 2004, 2009) in a dynamic manner and on a daily basis. This recognition that gender roles are an ever-evolving societal structure contradicts the ideology of many MENA patriarchal societies who view gender roles as static societal structures.

Dichotomous Gender Role Expectations According to Geographic Area

Up to this point, the review of literature has highlighted the perspectives of a variety of disciplines regarding dichotomous gender role expectations and ways in which such gender roles are of particular importance to MENA women. To help place those perspectives in context, the next section examines how these roles are employed by developing nations outside of the Middle East. Specifically, the geographical areas of Eastern Asia, Eastern Europe, and West Africa are addressed in order to examine how gender (in)equality is practiced in areas outside of the Middle East and North Africa. In doing so, this next section seeks to better understand how dichotomous gender role expectations are shaped on the global stage.

Eastern Asia

Many Eastern Asian nations, specifically China and South Korea, receive harsh criticism for their treatment of women and lack of sex-based equality (Fincher, 2016; Steinfeld, 2014). Criticisms range from the gendered wage gap, for which East Asian countries are listed as one of

the highest gender wage gaps among Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development member nations, to minimal child care and female programs, a lack of economic opportunity and influence in society for women, gaps between men and women in basic education, high maternal mortality rates, high rates of female abortions, lower wage earnings of women compared to men, less ownership by women, and a general lack of access to decision-making roles in the home, politics, and in society (McPhillips, 2016; World Bank, 2014). The high incidence of maternal mortality, less pay for equal work, and lack of voice in the home, society, and politics all indicate that women living in Eastern Asia are subject to sex-based oppression and discrimination. This also indicates the need for promoting gender equality in endowments, closing the gendered gaps in economic opportunities, and strengthening women's voice and influence while protecting them from violence (World Bank, 2012). Closing the societal economic, and political gender gap in East Asia would have powerful implications for future growth and poverty reduction affecting men and women alike.

There has been recent progress in East Asia regarding gender gaps in access to education and the female labor force, with 70% of women in East Asia participating in economic activities (Brinton, 2001; World Bank, 2014). Economic, political, and demographic changes in East Asian societies have allowed for progress to be made regarding issues of sex-based equality. There has been a meaningful increase in women's education and employment opportunities, but there has also been a "gendered division of labor" and lack of support for women who are forced into unwanted marriages (Oshio, Nozaki, & Kobayashi, 2013; Qian & Sayer, 2016). Women in East Asian nations are symbolically linked to the home and the "inner," with their primary responsibilities perceived as being with house chores and the nurturing of children; if time permits, they may seek employment outside of the home. Yue Qian and Liana Sayer (2016) note

that “Women had about 2.4 times, 3.4 times, 4.6 times, and 10.8 times the share of housework as men in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan, respectively” (p. 43). Given these statistics, it is logical there would be severe sex-based inequality in employment. To add to the problem of women’s lack of opportunity in the workplace and relegation to the home, divorce in East Asian nations is said to have profoundly negative consequences for women’s well-being which limits wives’ bargaining power regarding control in her home and life (Raymo, Iwasawa, & Bumpass, 2005). In light of Chatterjee’s (1986, 1989, 1993) work, it is realistic to acknowledge that strong gender role expectations and gender role distinctions are present in the lives of East Asian women.

The level of restrictions placed upon the body and public appearance of women in East Asia is less than that of fundamental Middle Eastern nations, but the marked differences between men and women in the areas of education and employment attest to women’s symbolic placement in the home instead of in the public. East Asian women are not given the same employment opportunities as men due to East Asian traditional views that women should remain in the home. As seen with MENA nations, it might be a cultural or religious practice that creates gender dichotomy, but it is the nation that is using this dichotomy to create a national identity (Chang & England, 2011). Regardless of the cultural and national progress made toward gender equality and against oppressive gender role expectations, the struggle is far from over for East Asian women.

Eastern Europe

Eastern Europe is another geographic area worth examining in terms of dichotomous gender roles and potential causes of the roles. Developing nations of Eastern Europe include Bulgaria, Romania, Russian Federation, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine (International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics, 2015). A challenge to gender equality, as seen in the developing

nations of Eastern Europe, is the “feminization of poverty” due to the segregation of women into low-paid occupations and discrimination in hiring practices (Jurajda & Harmgart, 2007; Orazem & Vodopived, 2000; Perugini & Selezneva, 2014). One potential cause for the lack of employment opportunity or advancement for women in Eastern Europe is the evolution of national institutions. For example, Cristiano Perugini and Ekaterina Selezneva (2014) argue that “In the last decade, the evolution of institutional settings has been gaining importance as one of the main explanations of gender disparities” (p. 521). Another cause for markedly lower wages and participation in the job market by Eastern European women is socially accepted gender discrimination and unequal roles in the family (Popova, 2002). Similar to both developing MENA and East Asian nations, we see Chatterjee’s concept of dichotomous gender roles in practice. Many Eastern European nations continue to hold the belief that women belong in the home and are responsible for duties relating to the house and family. This linkage between the female sex and the home create a near-impossible situation for women. In addition to maintaining all aspects of home-life and family chores, women are also expected to find gainful employment.

Reviewing how different disciplines and geographic areas analyze and apply the concept of dichotomous gender roles helps to construct a more nuanced analysis of how these gender roles are created, expressed, and maintained (Littlefield, McLane-Davison & Vakalahi, 2015; Lopez-Claros & Zahidi, 2005; World Bank, 2012). Studies specifically regarding the theory and history of dichotomous gender role expectations and sex-based inequality provide a basic understanding and analysis of the concept. This study has expanded upon the theory and historical past examples of gender role expectations and their continuation beyond the national borders of their origin. The study is a narrative in action, using both empirical data, surveys, and

in-depth interviews to address how the concept of dichotomous gender roles is understood and expressed by international students in U.S. universities and communities.

West Africa

Recent years have shown a significant increase in girls' enrollment in primary school and retention in secondary schools in West African nations. Keeping recent improvements to gender inequality in mind, West African nations are still plagued by issues rooted in gender inequality due to cultural practices, societal acceptance, and national enforcement. In sub-Saharan Africa, gender inequality is expressed through a lack of education and employment of females compared to males, with an employment ratio of females to males being 57.6 to 70.4, respectively (Agbodji, Batana, & Ouedraogo, 2015). Tuwor and Sossou (2008) assert:

The root cause of low retention of girls in school as compared with boys is due to gender inequality and discrimination against women in general due to patriarchal systems of social organization and other socio-cultural practices of early marriage, child slavery, and fostering or trafficking of children, poverty, and multiple household duties, and a lack of economic and social opportunities. (p. 364)

Regarding decisions made in the home, community, work force, and academic stage, it is concerning that the voices of West African women are considered insignificant. In her study of Nigeria, Makama (2013) states that "patriarchal society sets the parameters for women's structurally unequal position in families and markets by condoning gender-differential terms in inheritance rights and legal adulthood, by tacitly condoning domestic sexual violence and sanctioning differential wages for equal or comparable work" (p. 116). Through patriarchy, the oppression of West African females in education, politics, family life, the labor market, and ownership is entrenched.

Like MENA nations, many West African nations are in a state of development. As Chatterjee's concept of dichotomous gender roles informs the literature, those nations in a state of development are the most likely to embrace distinct gender roles for men and women as the nation is being created. As Julia Wanjiru (2017) explains:

Respect of the fundamental rights of women and girls remains a serious, sometimes life-threatening, concern in many developing countries. [...] Ensuring equal opportunities for women and men, girls and boys in Africa will take time, massive educational efforts and profound changes to existing ways of thinking. (para. 1-5)

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2015) states that despite decades of debates, developmental goals, and public education, there has been small improvement to gender inequality in West Africa. Seven West African nations rank in the top 20 nations in the world for child marriage; though it varies from nation to nation, West Africa is home to some of the worst cases of female genital mutilation, with Guinea having 97% of its female citizens having been mutilated (UNICEF 2015); and West African nations have the lowest literacy rate for girls at 15% (Niger) and 34% (Mali), with a sub-Saharan average of 69% (UNICEF, 2015)¹. West African gender rights activists rely on exposure to external influences such as social media, television, online news sources, and movies to educate and change their citizens' way of thinking. Since the early part of the 21st century, policy changes have ushered in more gender-equal laws, but words and actions are two different things in practice. As evidenced across MENA nations, many West African patriarchal, national leaders verbally promote gender equality in order to gain power and acceptance, only to fail to live up to their words in actual progress attempted or made.

¹ Child marriage: Married before 18

Rationale

The purpose of this study was to examine dichotomous gender role expectations in Middle Eastern and North African nations. Focusing attention upon international students from MENA nations currently studying at U.S. institutions of higher education, this research aimed to shed light upon the creation, expectations, and maintenance of gender roles in MENA nations. As previously discussed with Chatterjee's concept of dichotomous gender roles, developing nations, specifically non-Western civilizations, often connect males with the material, modern, worldly, external sphere and females with the spiritual, traditional, home-based, internal sphere. Males are given the ability to change with modern advancements, pursue material goods, and leave the home, whereas women are expected to maintain cultural traditions of the past, safeguard spirituality, and remain in the home. Just as Chatterjee's (1986, 1989, 1993) concept of dichotomous gender roles lays out a theory of how and why gender roles are created, Tajfel's (1974, 1978, 1981, 1982) social identity theory dictates how these roles are maintained both within groups and interpersonally. Lastly, Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory sheds light on how prescribed gender norms can be changed or reformed. Social capital theory posits that an individual may be born with a specific social identity but is able to change this social identity through participation with other social groups. Going further, if participation in one social group or social norm seems more advantageous to an individual than another, the individual is willing to let go of groups and norms given at birth for new, more beneficial, social groups and norms.

Through a theoretical understanding of potential causes of sex-based inequality and oppressive gender role expectations, this study applies these theoretical concepts to the real-life experiences of MENA students in the U.S. The goal of this study was to expand awareness of what causes gender inequality, why gender roles expectations are created and maintained, and

how society on the global scale can work to eradicate these inequalities, oppressive actions, and stigmas. Now, more than ever, this study is crucial to all nations, cultures, and institutions: socially, politically, and spiritually. By understanding the creation and maintenance of gender role expectations found in MENA nations, one can better understand both the potentially sound reasoning and false logic behind these expectations. The first step to ending gender inequality and diminishing oppressive gender role expectations is to acknowledge how the inequality is perpetrated and why the expectations exist. The following research questions investigated the creation, expectations, and maintenance of gender roles, moving beyond theoretical assumptions to the true words of students who have lived these roles as an unwavering part of life. Based on the review of literature, these related research questions are proposed:

RQ1) Do international students from the Middle East and North Africa hold gender role expectations? If so, what are the constructs of said expected gender roles?

RQ2) If Middle Eastern and North African encultured gender role expectations are recognized and defined, are these gender roles maintained on U.S. campuses and communities?

RQ3: Does attendance at a United States university give Middle Eastern and North African students the ability to test encultured gender roles expectations?

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the constructs of gender role expectations as seen through international MENA students, to analyze if these gender role expectations are maintained in the U.S., and to investigate if this population of students is able to test gender role expectations while abroad. This study adopts a mixed-method design. Four focus group sessions were held with MENA international students. Focus groups were divided into self-identified gendered groups of all-male or all-female participants. No participants claimed transgender or variant gender identity, thus the female focus groups were composed entirely of sex-based females and male focus groups were composed entirely of sex-based males. A supplementary mass survey was sent out to all MENA international university students at the three university locations included in this study. This mixed-method design was deemed most appropriate so as to avoid method errors, to open up dialogue concerning the issues discussed, and provide more insightful answers to the research questions posed (Behrens & Smith, 1996).

Participants

The sample population for this study consisted of MENA international university students in both degree and non-degree seeking programs at three universities located in the U.S.: The University of Kansas (KU), located in Lawrence, Kansas; Emporia State University (ESU), located in Emporia, Kansas; and Missouri Southern State University (MSSU), located in Joplin, Missouri. All universities included in this study are public institutions of higher education. The number of MENA international students at these universities reflects national trends in the U.S. In 2018, KU had 326 MENA students out of a total of 2,182 international students and 24,891 total KU students, with MENA students comprising 15% of the international students population; ESU had 64 MENA students out of a total of 406 international students and

5,887 total students, with MENA students comprising 16% of total international students; and MSSU had 48 MENA students out of a total of 190 international students and 6,175 total students, with MENA students comprising 25% of total international students. Recent research has shown that national trends of Middle Eastern and North African university students studying in the US. has steadily climbed since the early 21st century. See Figures 5-12 in Appendix B for a summary of MENA student enrollment patterns at the participating universities.

For this study, participants were defined as MENA undergraduate or graduate students with current enrollment at one of the three universities. The length of time spent on respective U.S. campuses and in U.S. communities ranged from three months to fifteen years, for the participants of this study. Demographic data collected included the participants' age, gender, nationality, academic level of study, length of time in the U.S., length of time on the university campus, preferred communication methods, description of personal identity, benefits and limitations of personal identity, and their opinion of university environment for international students. Age of participants ranged from 18 to 47, with the most common age being between 28 to 32 and the mean age being 29 years of age. All participants' gender were listed as male or female, despite being given a range of gender selections including gender variant, no answer, transgender female, and transgender male. Most participants identified were male, with a total of 34 (61%) males and 22 (39%) females. Academic standing of participants ranged from freshman to graduate, with the most common level being graduate standing, with 35 graduate students. Participants' length of time on campus ranged from less than one year to over nine years, with five to six years being the most common time spent on campus; the mean time spent on campus was three years. Participants' areas of study included computer science, engineering (mechanical and chemical), physics economics/business, geology/ecology/biology, communications,

English/linguistics, psychology, pharmacy/health sciences, law, and art. The majority of participants listed engineering as their area of study, with 16 engineering students. Most participants came from Saudi Arabia, with 21 Saudi Arabian students. Other nations of citizenship of participants included United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Syria, Kuwait, Kurdistan, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon. Living arrangements in the U.S. ranged from with family, alone, with a partner, with others, and with a partner and others. The most common living arrangement of MENA students was with a partner, with 17 students identifying that they live with a partner. Participants were asked the education level of their mother and father, with options ranging from no education to doctorate degree. Regarding MENA international students, the most common level of education of both their mothers and their fathers was completion of a bachelor's degree. See Tables 4-6 in Appendix A for the descriptive statistics of study participants.

Participant Selection

Members of this study were selected through coordination with the offices of International Education at KU, ESU, and MSSU. In the spring of 2018, University offices of International Education at KU, ESU, and MSSU were sent information and an invitation to participate in a focus group concerning gender role expectations to all MENA international students. The information and invitations were sent in English via an email message. Those interested in participating in the study responded by sending an email to the lead researcher, which included schedule availability. The lead researcher responded to interested participants via email within a week of initial contact. Within this initial email a time and location was set for the focus group meeting. Interested participants were given a physical copy of the International Review Board (IRB) Informed Consent form, in English, prior to the start of the focus group.

Names, pseudonyms, and email addresses were provided by participants on an initial focus group sign-in sheet. This information was maintained only for follow-up contact purposes. Names, pseudonyms and addresses were kept in a separate location from the focus group and survey data. In addition to focus groups, an anonymous survey was sent via email to all MENA international students studying at the four participant universities. A reminder email was sent one week following the mass survey email to all MENA students who had not yet completed the survey.

Methodology

Online mass surveys were used in this study so as to collect and analyze background data concerning gender role expectations among MENA international university students. The mass surveys provided quantitative data about the unique situations, experiences, and perspectives of participants. This background data is essential to the overall examination of research in the academic area of the social sciences (Trochim, 2001).

The design of the focus group and survey format was influenced by the need for both biographical background data as well as more in-depth accounts of experiences and sentiments concerning gender role expectations. Massive gaps exist in current research on MENA international student experiences and sentiments regarding gender role expectations which only the mixed method approach could bridge. Johnson (2004) states that “a key feature of mixed methods research is its methodological pluralism or eclecticism, which frequently results in superior research (compared to monomethod research)” (p. 14). Using a mixed methods approach of incorporating both quantitative data, through surveys, and qualitative data, through focus groups, gave hard facts concerning gender expectations amongst MENA students while also shedding light on the fact that multiple constructed realities exist among MENA students

and the nations and cultures they represent. Historically, scholarly studies have chosen one of two distinct paths: qualitative (a.k.a. constructivist, interpretivist) or quantitative (a.k.a. positivist). Johnson (2004) continues, by saying that academia and institutions of higher education have created such a divisive debate between the worth of qualitative versus quantitative research that many students are of the understanding that they must “pledge allegiance” to one school of thought or the other (p. 14). Much like assumed dichotomy of gender roles, the assumed dichotomy of schools of thought should be questioned. It is this studies’ sentiment that one school of thought is not superior to another but can be used to compliment the other using mixed methods research.

Focus groups, and surveys were employed to more fully understand gender role expectations of MENA international students studying on U.S. campuses. Each design type (survey and focus group) delivers a unique set of data that will aid in answering the research questions of this study. The initial method employed in this study was the use of surveys. Surveys were sent electronically (e-survey) through Universities’ office of International Student Services to MENA international students. Researchers overwhelmingly agree that faster response times, decreased costs, protection against loss of data, and easy transfer of data make e-surveys advantageous over hard-copy surveys (Jansen, 2007; Mertler, 2002; Schillewaert, Langerak, & Duhamel, 1998). “Survey design provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population, or tests for associations among variables of a population, by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2011, p. 147). A survey aids in answering three types of questions: 1) descriptive questions, 2) questions about the relationships between variables, and 3) questions about predictive relationships between variables over time (Creswell, 2011). Using a

survey to collect quantitative data assisted this study in making inferences about relationships among variables, and how the sample results are generalizable to a larger population.

Following the collection of surveys, focus group conversations were held. Many population researchers use qualitative methods due to the reciprocal process of research, as both parties (researcher and participant) learn from each other through the experience. The focus groups helped to tease out information and answer questions gathered in the initial survey. Skop (2006) states:

Focus groups are an ideal setting in which this give-and-take can occur; the method also encourages reflexive research practice [...] they provide researchers with surprising insights because conversations take on their own dynamic, and spontaneous group debates can reveal unexpected findings. (p. 121)

Thus, the addition of focus groups gives this study a more thorough, detailed understanding of the backgrounds and experiences of MENA international students than could be gained from data retrieved via the surveys alone.

Special attention was given to the communication of the IRB consent form and phrasing of focus group questions due to the fact that English was not the mother tongue of most study participants. The lead researcher took every precaution during the IRB verbal consent and focus group session to ensure that students fully understood what was asked of them and that questions were correctly interpreted in each stage of the process. Focus group questions and survey questions were crosschecked by the KU Vice-Provost of International Education and associated directors of each office of International Education prior to the delivery of the questions so as to guarantee accuracy and understanding. Participants were all able to speak and respond, both verbally and written, to all focus group and survey questions.

Survey

A survey was created via Qualtrics software and administered via email by the offices of International Student Services to MENA international students of three universities: KU, ESU, and MSSU. All international students received the same survey. The electronic surveys were administered in April of the spring 2018 semester. Two weeks following the distribution of the electronic survey, both female-inclusive and male-inclusive focus groups consisting of international MENA students were held at two of the participating campuses. Participation in the survey included 61 participants.

The results from the surveys were coded and combined into single datasets respectively, in order to analyze the quantitative data. For the surveys, participant background and demographic information was compared to stated sentiments and experiences of gender role expectations in their homeland, within the U.S., and on university campuses so as to determine connections. The means and percentages of survey data points were calculated and reported in the following chapter.

Focus Groups

The qualitative element of this study expanded upon the themes found within the quantitative data collected via survey responses. In-depth focus groups elicited a broader, more nuanced narrative about the participants' experiences and perceptions as MENA students in the U.S. Details regarding gender roles, past experiences in the nation of origin, and present situations in the U.S. were more fully analyzed through focus groups. These observations and contemplations are not generally expressed in surveys, but when combined with survey responses, can aid in enriching the knowledge obtained.

Focus Group

Twelve participants were interviewed through focus groups for this study. Six participants identified as female and five participants identified as male. The focus groups included six participants from the KU campus and six participants from the ESU campus. Focus group participants were selected based on demographics, survey answers, and snowball sampling. As a rule, diversity in age, study level, academic discipline, and nationality were sought. Participants were also selected based on two required categories: 1) those who held international student status at one of the three participating universities and 2) those who held citizenship from a MENA nation. See Table 7 and 8 in Appendix C for descriptive statistics of focus group participants.

Focus Group Structure and Format

Participants selected for the focus groups were contacted by email. It was made clear in the email that participation in the focus group was optional and that students could end participation in the study at any time. Guiding focus group questions were written to structure the interview (see Appendix E). Questions were altered, added and or removed as needed in response to the dialogue. Focus group questions were compiled based on information garnered in the literature review and through analysis of the survey responses. Focus group questions were divided into five parts: 1) introduction and oral consent to participate in the study, 2) icebreaker in the form of sharing a few pieces of information about oneself (pseudonym, home nation, area of study), 3) what the phrase “gender roles” means and if students have ever experienced gendered or gender role expectations in their home nation or the U.S., 4) what effects, if any, gender or gender role expectations have had on their lives, and 5) a concluding question that reflects upon the maintenance or changing of their behavior when they return to their home

nations after completion of studies in the U.S. Focus groups were conducted in English. Supplemental definitions and explanations were given if the participants did not fully understand the initial question.

Several actions were taken so as to guarantee focus group validity. All focus groups took place on campus in locations that were familiar to the participants and allowed for the privacy of group participants. Focus group sessions lasted approximately 60 minutes, so as not to be too exhaustive to the participants. Transcribed focus group sessions recorded the pseudonyms of all participants. Students were ensured that their true identities and personal information would not be filed with the transcriptions. They were also assured that all recordings would be deleted upon transcription. Participants were allowed to make edits, additions, and/or adjustments to their personal dialogue upon request.

Analysis of Interview Data

The purpose of qualitative analysis is to bring meaning to a situation, not search for a truth as is the purpose of quantitative research (Rabiee, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). “The first step in establishing a trail of evidence is a clear procedure of data analysis, so that the process is clearly documented and understood” (Rabiee, 2004, p. 657). So as to allow future researchers to verify the findings of this study, a “trail of evidence,” or process of analysis, will be made clear in this section. As Ritchie & Spencer (1994) emphasize, there are five key stages of an analytical process: familiarization; identifying a thematic framework; indexing; charting; mapping and interpretation. As the initial step of familiarization of the study had naturally already taken place, the next step of analysis was to identify a thematic framework. Prior to holding the focus groups, themes and categories had been established. Once the focus groups had finished, participant responses were then coded, or “indexed,” by these pre-established themes and categories.

Beyond the pre-established categories, data was examined for new and unexpected categories that may have arisen through the focus group responses (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). Next, participant responses were compared so as to uncover similarities and/or differences. Through the process of mapping, the qualitative findings were compared and contrasted with the findings of this study's quantitative data. Finally, interpretations of the data were made.

Measures

Dependent and independent variables were measured using responses from the surveys and focus groups. The major concepts of this study were measured as follows:

Perceived Participant Understanding of Gender Roles

Understanding of gender roles in this study was measured by participant responses to the surveys and focus group questions. The definition of the term "gender roles" is "the role or behavior learned by a person as appropriate to their gender, determined by the prevailing cultural norms" ("gender roles," *Oxford Living Dictionaries*, 2018, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/gender_role). Survey participants were given this definition of "gender roles" in case they were unaware or unsure of the phrase. Survey participants were then asked a set of questions which pertained specifically to their understanding of gender roles. Questions in this section asked if gender roles were present in their nation of citizenship, if students from their nation of citizenship who currently studied in the U.S. observed gender roles from their home nation, and if they believed gender roles were present in the U.S. The topic of gender roles was expanded upon during the focus groups. Focus group participants were also asked what the term "gender roles" meant to them. Each focus group question asked was followed up with prompts for examples from the participants. One way in which the focus group responses aided in elaborating upon survey responses was by

asking the group participants to discuss what influenced their understanding of the gender roles of females versus males.

Participant Gender Role Expectations

Types of gender role expectations were separated into four categories: 1) female gender role expectations in nation of citizenship, 2) male gender role expectations in nation of citizenship, 3) perceived female gender role expectations in the U.S., and 4) perceived male gender role expectations in the U.S. In the survey, once a clear definition of what the term “gender roles” meant, participants were then asked if gender roles were present 1) in their nation of citizenship and/or 2) in the U.S. If the students answered “yes,” the survey then prompted them to explain the gender role expectation in 1) their nation of origin and 2) in the U.S. for both males and females. Next, participants were asked if students from their nation of citizenship who were also studying in the U.S., followed the gender role expectations of their nation of citizenship or the expectations of the U.S. Lastly, the survey participants were asked to reflect upon the U.S. students they know. With U.S. students in mind, participants were asked if students from the U.S. behave according to U.S. gender role expectations. These last two questions asked students to rank the gender role expectation behaviors from “Never (1)” to “Always (5),” following a Likert scale. The enacted/behaved gender role expectations for both participants’ nation of citizenship and the U.S. were measured by the Likert scale, with “Never (1)” corresponding to no gender role expectation behaviors and “Always (5)” corresponding to an abundance of gender role expectations.

Similar to the survey, focus group participants were asked to explain what gender roles are expected of a man and expected of a woman in their nation of citizenship. Gender role expectations were listed for both females and males. Next, they were asked if people generally

follow gender role expectations in their home nation. Finally, they were asked if they had seen people follow gender role expectations while in the U.S. For each focus group question, the participants were asked to expand upon gender role expectations for both females and males, if they noted that gender role expectations were present. Attention was given to the number of role expectations for both females and males. Additionally, participants were asked to raise their hand if they agreed with each gender role expectation listed. Through this process the 1) number of participants who agree to a specific role expectation and 2) quantity of role expectations were measured.

Participant Gender Role Maintenance

Gender role maintenance was measured by asking participants in each of the surveys to rank from “Never (1)” to “Always (5),” using a Likert scale, if students from their nation of citizenship, who currently studied in the U.S., behaved according to gender roles expectations of their nation of citizenship. This exact question was posed, but the question was flipped, instead asking if students from their nation of citizenship, who currently studied in the U.S., behaved according to gender roles from the U.S. These two questions measured if gender role expectations were being maintained or changed during international MENA students’ time in the U.S., with varying responses of “Never (1)” signifying little change up to “Always (5)” signifying great change. Lastly, survey participants were asked if their experience in the U.S. challenged or changed their idea of expected gender roles. Participants could answer this question with either “Yes (1),” “No (2),” or “I do not know (3).” The response to this question measured the amount students changed their perception of role expectations due to their experience in the U.S.

Within the focus groups, participants were asked to describe what influenced their understanding of the gender roles of a man versus the roles of a woman. They were then asked if their time in the U.S. had changed their personal gender role expectations. If participants answered “yes,” they were asked to expand upon the changes made and if this change had been a good or bad experience. If the participants answered “no,” they were asked why they had maintained certain roles. Lastly, those participants who no longer followed expected gender role expectations typical of their home nation were asked to describe the biggest challenge and biggest reward in making the role expectation changes.

Participant Gender Role Testing and/or Removal

The testing and/or removal of gender role expectations by MENA students studying in the U.S. was measured in the survey by asking participants if their experience in the U.S. has caused them to 1) change or 2) embrace their gender role expectations. Participants could also select the response that 3) their expectations had not been altered by their experience in the U.S. Participants were asked to elaborate on how their gender role expectations had changed or been embraced, if they chose one of those responses on the survey. Next, participants were asked if, upon return to their nation of citizenship, their attitude toward expected gender roles would be different than when they left for the U.S. Response options followed a Likert scale ranging from “Yes, very different (1)” to “No, nothing has changed (5).” Focus group participants were asked if, while in the U.S., their gender role expectations had changed. For those students who no longer followed gender roles typical of their home nation, they were asked what the biggest challenges and rewards were of making changes to their expectations and behaviors.

Participant Understanding of Limits and/or Benefits of Gender Role Expectations

Participant understanding of the limits and/or benefits of gender role expectations was measured in the survey by asking if there was anything they wish their nation of citizenship's culture could change regarding gender role expectations. Students had the option of answering "Yes (1)" or "No (2)." Students were then asked if there was anything they wished their U.S. community/campus' culture could change regarding gender role expectations. Again, for this question, students were given the option of answering "Yes (1)" or "No (2)." In the focus group, participants were asked if they felt gender roles limit people. If students answered in the affirmative, they were then asked how role expectations could limit people and if they had ever been limited by their gender role in their 1) nation of citizenship and/or 2) the U.S.

Ethical Considerations

Student participation in this study was both voluntary and confidential. Information about the study was given prior to the survey and the focus group by email and as part of the survey/focus group introduction. Additionally, focus group participants received verbal information about the research topic. Survey and focus group participants were able to ask the lead researcher any questions that might arise at any time via a provided email address, phone number, and physical office location for face-to-face appointments. Participants were made aware of the study's voluntary nature, their choice in participation, and their capacity to withdraw from the study as needed.

The privacy of participants was of utmost importance. Names were immediately coded with a pseudonym so as to protect all focus group participants. Survey and focus group responses were kept separate from identifying information. Electronic survey documents and focus group transcripts were kept on password encoded devices. The primary researcher was the only

individual who had access to both the password-protected online data and the locked hard copied data. Focus group recordings were deleted upon transcription. Transcription files and surveys were kept on a password-protected device with the intent to delete these documents within two years, in the spring semester of 2020.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and explain the results of the quantitative analysis of the surveys, as well as the qualitative analysis of the data from the focus group conversations. The analysis is divided into five sections, which map the study's central themes: 1) MENA student awareness of enculturated gender role expectations, 2) description of enculturated gender role expectations, 3) maintaining enculturated gender role expectations in home nation, 4) maintaining enculturated gender role expectations while living in the U.S., and 5) ability to test enculturated gender role expectations of home nation while living in the U.S.

MENA Student Awareness of Enculturated Gender Role Expectations

Quantitative Analysis

The assumption of this study is that MENA students are aware that there are specific, set gender role expectations which they have been indoctrinated to accept and act upon. For the purpose of this study, these indoctrinated gender role expectations learned in one's home nation will be referred to as enculturated gender role expectations. The key measure is survey participants' stated awareness that gender role expectations exist in their home nation, located in the MENA geographical area. Eighty-four percent of survey participants responded that they were aware that gender role expectations existed in their MENA nation. According to the literature, MENA nations make up over half of those listed as the worst nations for female equality in the world. Additionally, all MENA nations included in the *Global Gender Gap Report* were below global weighted average for gender equality. With this type of gender inequality, we should expect to see heightened awareness of enculturated gender role expectations from international students originating from MENA nations.

Participants were asked in the survey if gender roles were present, in their opinion, in their MENA nation of origin. To this, 84% responded yes, 10% responded that they were unsure, and 4% responded no. Many factors were analyzed with awareness of gender roles in MENA home nations (see Table 1). Gender did connect with awareness of gender roles, as males were the only ones to state that gender roles were not present in their nation of origin. All females stated that gender roles existed or were unsure of their existence in society. Additionally, all participants who lived with a partner were aware of enculturated gender role expectations, whereas those who did not live with a partner (i.e. with family or friends) were more likely to believe that gender roles do not exist in MENA nations. Interestingly, participants who have a mother who has completed a degree (bachelor's, master's, or doctorate) at the university level generally believed there were gender role expectations, whereas those whose mother had not completed a degree at the university level were less likely to believe that gender role expectations existed. Likewise, those whose father had completed a masters or doctorate degree were more likely to believe that gender role expectations existed than those whose father had completed a bachelor's or less. It is apparent that the education level of parents was related to the students' awareness of enculturated gender role expectations.

Table 1
Awareness of Gender Roles in MENA Home Nation

Variable	Yes	Unsure	No
Gender			
Female	13 (76%)	4 (24%)	0
Male	29 (90%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)
Study Level			
Undergraduate	16 (80%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)
Graduate	26 (90%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)
Living Arrangement			
Alone	16 (94%)	1 (6%)	0
With Partner	6 (100%)	0	0
With Partner & Others	3 (100%)	0	0
With Others, not Partner	4 (80%)	0	1 (20%)
With Family	13 (72%)	4 (22%)	1 (6%)
Education of Mother			
No Education	6 (100%)	0	0
Elementary	8 (89%)	1 (11%)	0
High School	5 (71%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)
Technical School	2 (100%)	0	0
Some College, No Degree	2 (67%)	0	1 (33%)
Bachelor's Degree	17 (89%)	2 (11%)	0
Master's Degree	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	0
Doctoral Degree	0	0	0
Education of Father			
No Education	4 (100%)	0	0
Elementary	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	0
High School	4 (100%)	0	0
Technical School	3 (75%)	0	1 (25%)
Some College, No Degree	2 (100%)	0	0
Bachelor's Degree	16 (80%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)
Master's Degree	2 (100%)	0	0
Doctoral Degree	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	0

Note. 22 females and 34 males participated in this survey, but only 49 participants answered the questions regarding awareness of gender role expectations.

Note. Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Note. Graph data should be read by rows, not columns (Example: females had 13 "Yes," 4 "Unsure," and 0 "No.")

In terms of gender role expectations and gender, living arrangement, and education of parent of participants, male MENA international students reported being less aware of gender role expectations than did females. Additionally, MENA students who lived with a partner were more aware of gender role expectations than those who did not live with a partner (i.e. lived with

friends or family members). Lastly, those MENA students whose parents had reached a master's degree level of education or higher were more aware of gender role expectations than students whose parents had not reached a bachelor's degree level of education.

Qualitative Analysis

A more pronounced division was evident in the focus group responses between those who were aware of gender role expectations versus those who claimed gender role expectations did not exist. Males most oftentimes claimed there were no gender role expectations whereas females spent lengthy spans of the discussion elaborating on the gender role expectations they have seen and/or experienced. All participant names have been changed for the safety of the students. Female participants explained:

“There is definitely a difference in expectations of how should a woman behave and how should a guy, or a male, behave. The expectation is completely different.” (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

“In the Middle East, we usually have a manual or something on how a woman should act.” (Mai, female, Egypt)

“In Islam, they have more rules for women but in the Qu'ran it doesn't say this [women must have more rules] but the culture makes this... makes everything [gender roles] different.” (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

“Yes [there are expected gender roles in Saudi Arabia]. I am expected to know how to cook, clean, do everything that should be done in the house and for the house, which is kind of dumb. [...] We are expected to do everything for everyone. We are expected to do well in school but not have big interest in college because we are not really supposed to have a job.” (Eleanor, female, Saudi Arabia)

Whereas male participants explained:

“We do not have income inequality in Saudi, for example. Sometimes women get paid more than their male peers and they get longer vacation for maternity, so they get more vacations.” (Sal, male, Saudi Arabia)

“I can see the sharing of responsibility of raising the children, especially recently in Iran. [...] Man helps raising kids or babysitting, which is good.” (Ali, male, Iran)

“For me, for my society, no [gender roles do not exist], because the thing we are proud of is that we have the first woman to be a bus driver, doctor, pilot, and driver of train. So, the women and men back at home are not so much different because our first president, after we got independence, he put the first step into establishing equality between men and women. Abolished all rules holding women from getting their equality, getting their rights, jobs, education, everything.” (Ahmed, male, Tunisia)

“Both men and women should have rights, so no difference between men and women [regarding gender roles].” (Mohammad, male, Saudi Arabia)

Other female participants expressed that, though they were presently well aware of gender-roles, it was something they were not cognizant of until socialization with other students during their teenage years. They attributed their lack of awareness of gender roles to how their families handled these roles and acted upon expectations. Those who had been raised in more liberal-minded families were generally not aware of gender roles until after leaving the family setting and entering society.

“My parents raised me equal with my brother. We do not have a gender role. Of course, my mom, she did most of the cooking... but my dad used to help her in the house. He used to organize the closet. He used to, like, sometimes bake and do some stuff. I thought girls and guys were equal. I did not know what is gender roles until I went high school because I started to listen to what my friends would say, ‘Oh, I have to clean my house while my brother was playing outside.’ So then I knew maybe my parents were different.” (Luna, female, Syria)

“In Iran’s culture, there are expected gender roles but they vary from city to city and within those cities, from family to family. It is not as, um, it is not the same for everyone in a family. It is very diverse and it is changing. What is expected from me as a woman now is much different than what was expected for my mother.” (Sara, female, Iran)

Although the female participants stated that it was due to their liberal-minded families that they did not become aware of, or experience, gender role expectations, a common theme appeared.

While the female participants attributed their lack of gender role expectations to how their family raised them, they made clear that it was their fathers who made the ultimate decisions. It was because their father was less strict – not their mother – that they were allowed to be raised equal to the sons in their family. The female participants explained:

“My father really encouraged us [females] to further our education and to support us as a woman. I never felt that big of a difference from my brother, but I do not know about each family. I think it depends on each family.” (Mai, female, Egypt)

“They’re [men in family] basically morally correct all of the time and you are not supposed to be arguing with them... especially if they have a higher power than you. Like father, uncle, grandpa.” (Nancy, female, Egypt)

“Is your father flexible to change? Is, like, he capable of change? There is other family where father is very strict, they [fathers] will never change.” (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

Beyond family dynamics, participants also listed level of education of parents and exposure to different cultures as factors in their awareness, or lack of awareness, of gender role expectations:

“I think it [awareness and application of gender roles] is more of a consequence of the type of the education that they [parents] get and how often are they exposed to different cultures. Like if you live in Cairo, Giza, you are probably getting exposed to foreign people who come for tourism or something like that... you go to better public schools. But for me, I am from a kinda rural area so it is not the same. Like, everybody expects you to be done with your high school and that’s it.” (Nancy, female, Egypt)

“My family traveled a lot and that made a huge difference. [...] My father traveled all his life and then he trusted me to live in India, in a very small city and to teach for six months. So, this really made a huge contribution [to lack of gender role expectations]. Travel is important. Even for my brother, he saw different people, different cultures. He doesn’t have this mindset of how a woman should act.” (Mai, female, Egypt)

“I do not wish to drive in Saudi Arabia, no. A reason why? Because I know the people there. [It is] Not just harassment. The people, they are not educated. They are from Bedouin. Their mind does not have any knowledge, any respect, anything. They will be battering women in the street. It will be a lot of problem. When the woman faces a problem in the streets and she goes to the police, it’s man police. They will put them [women] in jail. [...] And with family, the rules against women, if women do this, it is shameful to our family. Blaming the women all of the time. (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

“I knew that the gender would be mixed before I came here. It wasn’t a big deal for me. I handled it very well but sometimes, some people, they are struggling when they go to a class, to the university. Sometimes they found many women in the class. Vice versa, sometimes women find many men in the class. Then, they are just trying to deal with them. As time goes on, it is going to be a smooth transaction between everything that happens inside the classroom at the university.” (Hasam, male, Saudi Arabia)

Another factor in awareness of gender role expectations was geographic location:

“Geography. People who live near water have access to ideas where it very much affects the way society reacts. Like where I am from, people away from water have a different culture. Whereas people near water are more open to new ideas. You can see it here in the United States, as well. East coast, west coast. I think in the Middle East, being the center of Islam, this [differences in geographic locations] leads to various interpretations of Islamic transcript. It also leads to people not understanding where a certain tradition, since we are talking about gender roles, these expectations of both genders are derived.

Are they derived from Islamic law versus are they tradition and culture have progressed through time.” (Ali, male, Saudi Arabia)

“Based on geography, at least in my city, absolutely, women have expectations to fulfill. They have expectations to do, to fulfill. A kind of obligation. You do not want to break this kind of responsibility and obligation in society. For example, schools, weddings, at least in my city, we have separate places for women.” (Hasam, male, Saudi Arabia)

Lastly, students listed the policies of their nation as influencing their awareness, and arguably the presence, of gender role expectations:

“For Tunisia, well let me start off by saying that we have a lot of womens’ rights and there is a lot of equality when it comes to equality in pay, equality in going to school, equality in getting a divorce. Also, we have the law protects women. The man cannot marry more than one woman. Other countries from my area, North African or Middle East, they do not really apply this rule. For them, it is according to Islam, you should have more than one wife. In my country, we put this law to work. Our society, the mindset is different. Men did not have the habitat to marry, or want to marry, more than one woman. So I think that was an advantage compared to other countries in the area or to the perspective in general.” (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

“In Syria, we have equality between men and women and we were the first Arab country to let women vote. We are basically equal in everything except small stuff like divorce. [...] Lately, we are now marriage from different religions, which is really a plus because in Islam, if a woman is Muslim, she cannot marry a guy who is Christian. Right now in Syria, most people are breaking this rule. They are marrying people from different religions. To me, this is really a good thing because now we have a really great mixture. You have a dad who is Muslim and a mom who is Christian and the kid has both influences. So, we are more open to people from different religions.” (Luna, female, Syria)

“Because of the revolution, we [Tunisians] have had a huge change in the course of our lives, the course of the whole country. We had a revolution, which led to the Arabic Spring. It opened up freedoms. Freedom of expression, everything. So, women pushed back on those habits and traditions that they had been cuffed on. They pushed back and we [men] pushed back with them, until if you have something to say, you can say it... if you have something you want to do, you do it... no one is going to judge you. If they judge you, it will not be by law.” (Ahmed, male, Tunisia)

Description of Enculturated Gender Role Expectations

Quantitative Analysis

International students from MENA nations were asked in the survey to explain any enculturated gender role expectations they were aware of in their nation of origin. Of the

seventeen responses to this question, eleven were directly connected to repressive expectations placed on women in these nations. All eleven of the responses regarding gender role expectations of women advocated the need for increased women's rights. Males, too, voiced limitations placed on them due to their male gender. A common thread among all responses was the need for increased freedom of speech, increased open-mindedness regarding gender roles, and increased conversations/interactions between males and females. The number of limitations due to gender role expectations was higher for females than for males, according to survey responses (see Figure 1 and 2).

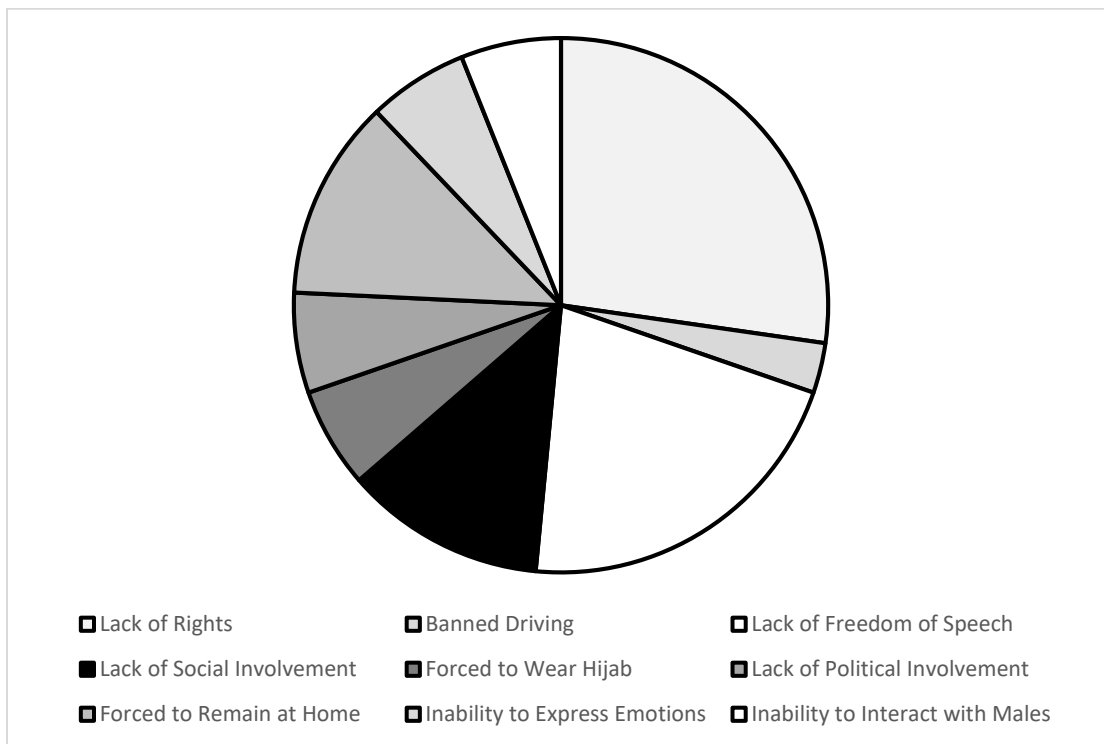


Figure 1
Female Specific Limitations Caused by Gender Role Expectations

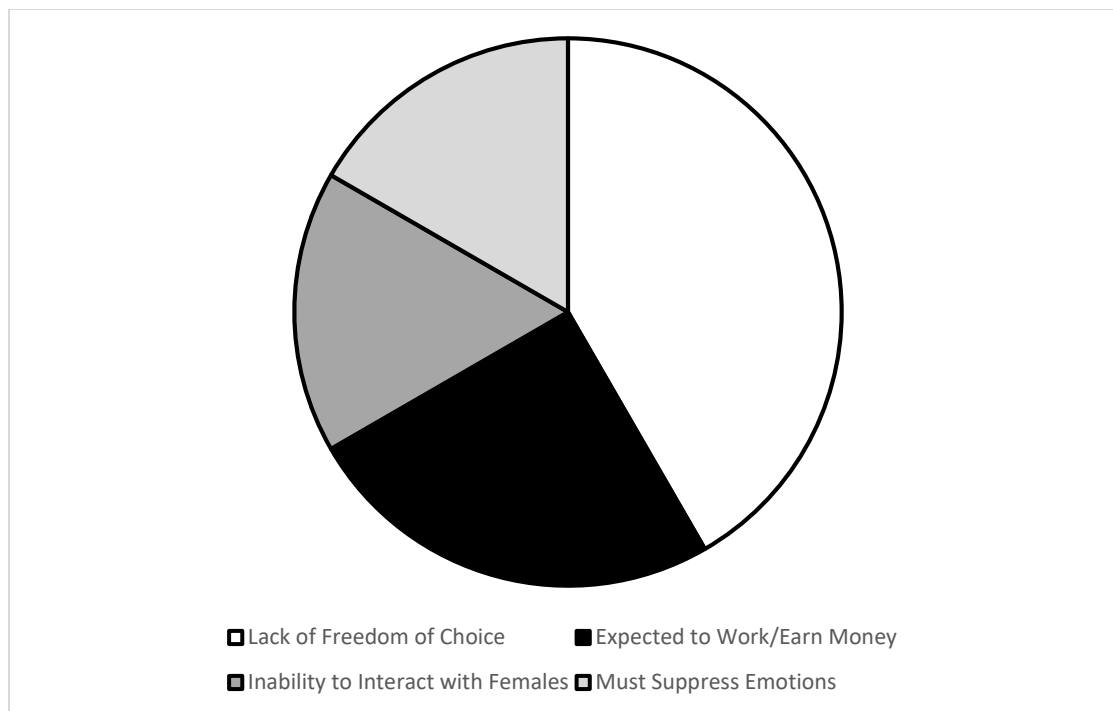


Figure 12
Male Specific Limitations Caused by Gender Role Expectations

The number of gender role expectations, and limitations caused by these expectations, as noted by female international students from MENA nations was compared to the number mentioned by male international students from MENA nations (see Table 2). The number of limitations due to gender role expectations connected to age of participant, governmental style of nation of origin of participant, and most importantly to this study, the level of development of the participant's nation of origin. Regarding age, older students were more likely to list more limitations due to gender. As seen on Table 2, as the age of the MENA student increases, the number of limitations also increases in a parallel fashion. Similarly, the data suggests there may be a relationship between the type of government in the nation of origin of MENA students and the number of limitations these students felt in their nation due to gender roles. Students of democratic MENA nations (Tunisia) listed no limitations due to gender role expectations. Students of partly-democratic MENA nations (Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Morocco, and

Kuwait) listed a low number of limitations due to gender roles. Finally, students of authoritarian MENA nations (all other MENA nations) listed a high number of limitations due to gender role expectations. An important discovery, given this study's theoretical basis in Chatterjee's (1986, 1989, 1993) concept of nationalism, development of nations, and dichotomous gender roles, was that the level of development of a nation had the strongest connection to the number of limitations experienced due to gender role expectations. Participants from developed nations reported no limitations whereas developing and undeveloped nations reported high numbers of limitations due to gender role expectations. Interestingly, the gender of survey participants did not differ in the number of expressed limitations due to gender role expectations.

Table 2

Limitations Due to Gender Role Expectations

Factor Compared	Number of Expectations
Age	
18-22 years	0
23-27 years	4
28+ years	15
Gender	
Female	10
Male	16
Development of Nation	
Developed	0
Developing	26
National Government	
Democratic	0
Partly Democratic	4
Authoritarian	22

Note. List of developed and developing nations obtained from "World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018," United Nations. List of national governments of MENA nations obtained from "Middle East and North Africa," Freedom House.

Qualitative Analysis

Survey participants were allowed the opportunity to verbalize gender role expectations, limitations caused by these expectations, and things they wished to change in their nation regarding gender role expectations. As previously mentioned in the quantitative analysis, most responses focused on changing the restrictive and oppressive expectations put upon MENA females, as suggested by the following responses:

“By trusting women's social vision, make hijab a voluntary choice rather than an imposed role so that any one whether in favor of it or not can freely select their appearance. Allowing much more socio-political involvement of women in society and politics.” (Participant 1)

“No to mandatory Hijab.” (Participant 3)

“Respect women's opinion and don't think of her as a 2nd class citizen.” (Participant 4)

Intriguingly, there were a number of survey responses that noted disadvantageous expectations placed upon MENA males:

“Equality between men and women exists in my country, but not at home. Most women at home, regardless of their marital status, act according to their gender roles. The men of the family expect that of them. Males are put in high regard in our society, and females are there to support them. Of course, there are many families who do not behave as such, but old and big families are adamant about their traditional beliefs. It is not about religion anymore. Tradition, tradition, tradition!” (Participant 9)

“Men have to be breadwinners and although so many women earn more than their partners, but still men are expected to support their family and my family expect the same thing from my husband and that bothers me or even if he feels like he wants to stay home for a while and take care of house duties and I work instead, my family will not receive it well and criticize my husband's masculinity.” (Participant 10)

There were also survey responses which did not point to expectations of one gender or another but rather collective expectations put upon all members of a nation:

“The ability for a person to be what they please and not what is expected of them.” (Participant 11)

“I wish they stop categorizing people into stamps and expecting that they don't deviate from what they define as the norm or appropriate. I hope they just live and let live without judging others for their behaviors.” (Participant 12)

“Some countries support certain opinions and prohibit others for political agenda. It should be replaced by freedom of expression and speech.” (Participant 13)

“I wish there is less suspicion between the genders.” (Participant 14)

“I wish that they could express their emotions and feelings.” (Participant 15)

Analyzing the survey responses, it was noted that males listed more limitations caused by gender role expectations than females. Many responses by male participants advocated the need for women's rights, women's participation in society, and women's involvement in politics:

“Women's right in many roles in their life. Driving. Freedom of speech.” (Participant 2)

“In Iran, there is some form of cultural hegemony that enforced and dictated by male genders. It is unfair to say that women are treated as a "second sex", but certainly there is an imbalance of power among the two genders in Iran. Hence, a male is expected to run the household and work and bring money to the table - while a traditional female is often perceived as a "shy and docile" person who willingly stays home and takes care of a household. I despise this perception. It may not be directly related to the "gender performance" issue, but at the end of the day, the roles of male and female are clearly articulated and dictated to the society. It has been a while since I left Iran, and I hear that things are changing rapidly - weak economy does not allow only one person of the household to work and other stay at home. Both the husband and wife should have a job to make ends meet! So perhaps that is one very marginal, unintentional benefit of weak economy, that breaks such barriers of gender performance. I hope this all makes sense!” (Participant 8)

In many MENA nations, males and females must remain physically separated in all aspects of life. Additionally, females are often not allowed to have a voice regarding social, spiritual, and/or political matters. Dialogue between MENA females and males regarding national laws, societal traditions, and religious practices are all but non-existent, making the results of these surveys and focus groups all the more interesting. Factoring in the lack of dialogue between genders in MENA nations, an important and clear conversation is woven together using the responses drawn from the surveys and focus groups. Though the genders remained separated for the online

survey responses and focus groups, similar viewpoints and identical insights create an allied, unified stance on the role of gender role expectations in MENA nations.

Having analyzed the responses of survey participants, the study next turns to the focus group conversations in order to elaborate, clarify, and expand upon the knowledge obtained in the survey. Despite recent advancements in educational and career opportunities for women living in a MENA nation, participants in this study confirmed the responses of the survey regarding lack of women's rights, little to no female involvement in societal or political affairs, and restriction of the woman to the home:

“You [females] are expected to go to school, finish high school, then you [females] get married and you live with your husband. He is supposed to be spending money on you and all you have to do is look pretty. Yes, marriage is seen as the final destination. [...] I do not disagree with this expectation if that is your sole purpose for people who want it, but do not expect everyone to be like this. My aunts and my mom keep telling me, ‘hey, she is the same as your age and she has two kids right now. What happened to you?’ I am like, ‘Two year and I am going to get my graduate degree.’ [...] Men are not expected to express emotion, be heartbroken. It is all about acting tough. Also, men are politically correct all of the time. You are not supposed to argue with that.” (Nancy, female, Egypt)

“Marriage, having kids, and taking care of them [is the goal of females in MENA nations].” (Sara, female, Iran)

“By Islam, you pay to marry the woman. For us [Tunisia], you do not do this, even though we are a Muslim country. You do not have to pay anything. We just pay one dollar, like a form. In other countries, they ask him [the husband] for \$50,000 or \$10,000. When you do that to the man, he's automatically going to feel like ‘I gave this money, so I am going to control her.’” (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

Regarding men being forced to pay women in the cases of divorce: “This can be a bad thing. The man will refuse to divorce the girl and will abuse her all the time just because they do not want to pay this money. They tell her, ‘I will divorce you only if you go to court and sign off the money.’ He asks her to give up all her rights.” (Luna, female, Syria)

“Some people focus on having an economy with just men. Let their wives stay at home to take care of the kids, to raise them. Men, they are busy with hectic times... traveling, jobs. They would like their wives to take care of their kids, to raise them in the proper way.” (Hasam, male, Saudi Arabia)

Yet, as noted in the surveys and expanded upon in the focus groups, men, too, have limitations caused by gender role expectations:

“You are expected, as a male, to protect your family and provide a living for them. Women are usually doing more work [than the male] but it is invisible. If [men] are feeling sad, they are expected to shout over cry. They are expected to be strong and never cry, so the only thing they can do is shout.” (Eleanor, female, Saudi Arabia)

“In some countries, when men get married, he needs to pay a certain amount just for the woman... like a dowry. [...] The man is expected to be the provider figure. I do not think there is anything wrong with that... I agree.” (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

“The job is number one. Men cannot marry without a job. He should pay the woman to become his wife. He should give her \$5,000 or \$6,000. He cannot do that unless he has a job. He must be good, must protect his family and future. [...] When a man comes to propose, the first they ask him about is his job. Does he have a job? Does he pray five times? This is expected from him.” (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

Regarding women working outside of the home: “There might be some social issues, ‘I do not want to tell people that my wife is as responsible as I am.’ In the beginning that was an issue. [...] From a religious perspective, an Islamic perspective, women are not responsible to bring money.” (Sal, male, Saudi Arabia)

“Man is still expected to earn the main budget for the family.” (Ali, male, Iran)

Beyond issues such as gender inequality in society and politics, the focus groups broached topics regarding gender role expectations concerning sexuality:

“In my country, virginity is a big deal... in all the Arab world. For men, they get a pass. It’s fine... ‘He is just a man. What is going to happen to him? He is not going to get pregnant.’ For women, it is not just about getting pregnant, it is about a woman not being a virgin. That is really a big deal. That can destroy the woman’s life... social life, career, future. It [a woman’s virginity] is a big determinant in our society. It’s just the way it is, I guess.” (Mai, female, Egypt)

“He [men] gets a pass for sleeping with other women, not being a virgin... a complete pass. Nothing happens. It is very different for the woman. [...] Some men, if they are engaged, will say let’s just have sex. Then he will blame the woman, saying ‘Oh, you did this with me, so you did it with a lot of other men before.’ (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

“If a guy is a virgin, back home... sometimes he is looked down on. They [society] say ‘Is something wrong with you? Are you asexual? Do you not have any sexual feelings?’ If a guy is known as a virgin, a girl will think ‘Is something wrong with him physically?’

Does he need to see a doctor?’ But if a girl has had some experience... sometimes they will except her... only if it is with the guy she is marrying. If she made out with some other guy or she went to the beach with a guy, he will not accept her. For the man, he will be given a pass. [...] They blame the woman for consenting to sex but they do not blame the guy for asking for it. If I ask you, ‘Do you want to go to a party?’ and you said ‘yes,’ and I am a guy and you are a girl, it is your fault... because you said yes. Back at home, if a woman shows her desire, people will look down on her. If a man is sexually active and shows desire, then he is manly. We respect him. He’s a man’s man. If a girl shows interest, she is dirty because women should be like angels. We should not show lust or desire. [...] They say it is a woman’s responsibility to say ‘no’ to protect her honor and virginity but it is not a man’s responsibility. The second you [a female] says ‘yes,’ he can do anything. If you say ‘yes,’ your consent is until the end of the process. You cannot say ‘no’ in the middle. To him, it is not rape because she said yes. [...] Some people, some men, say it is normal if he forced her [his wife] to have sex because they say he paid for the house. If he is paying the bills and everything, he is the controlling part.” (Luna, female, Syria)

Throughout the various focus groups sessions, the topic of placing harsh judgement on females, specifically, was discussed. Interestingly, participants verbalized that sometimes the harshest judgement of females can come from other females:

“There is more judgement on the woman. Who really made the rules? Who said ‘This is right. This is wrong. Women should act like this...’? Men. Why are women listening to men?” [...] In my country, women can do whatever they want. They can drink, they can go out. That actually makes other [MENA] countries have a bad perception of Tunisian women. This is not true... it’s just that we are free to do what we want.” (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

“If you do something good, people will still look for the bad, small things. [...] People say ‘Why does her mother let her stay (in the U.S.)? She is doing bad things.’ They don’t look at all the good things I do. Even if you do good things, still they will look for the bad. (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

“My neighbor, she used to sit in the balcony with her coffee and watch people in the street. She would say, ‘Oh, she bought a new jacket her husband is really good with her,’ or ‘Oh, she has worn the same jacket twice. I think her husband is beating her.’” (Mai, female, Egypt)

“When women break out of the stereotypes, it is really hard for others to accept it... because you are different. If you are unique, there is something wrong with you. If a woman is controlled by her husband, she wants to feel normal... so she makes it seem like you are the abnormal one. No one wants to feel like the victim or abused. It is easier to feel like she is perfect and you are wrong. For her to find everything wrong in you is the only way she can feel good about herself. The missing holes within ourselves we

sometimes fill with the mistakes of others. We think my hands are clean, yours are dirty.”
(Luna, female, Syria)

In many MENA nations, Islam is the religion most heavily practiced, with more than nine out of ten individuals claiming to be practicing Muslims (“Middle East North Africa,” Pew Research Center). Islam dictates that men are responsible for the financial aspect of life. Men hold authority in politics, society, and within the family. As previously mentioned in Chatterjee’s concept of dichotomous gender roles, within developing nations, where men create and control national policies and laws, they will strongly influence women to follow certain traditional norms, as dictated by male nationalistic elite. Those women who follow the traditional norms established by male nationalistic elite will be revered; those women who do not strictly follow national guidelines for women’s behavior will be considered different, troublesome, evil, dirty, and lower class. The women who live within their own rules, not those set by nationalistic men, will be shamed and outcasted by men and women alike. This factor of Chatterjee’s (1986, 1989, 1993) concept argues that it is, indeed, nationalism’s establishment and enforcement of dichotomous gender roles which lead women to be oppressed, abused, and ostracized due to being different from that which has been dictated to her by male nationalistic elite.

Maintaining Enculturated Gender Role Expectations in Home Nation

Quantitative Analysis

Through the online survey, participants were asked if, when they return home to their MENA nation after living in the U.S., they felt their attitudes regarding gender roles will have changed. Participants were given the response options of “Yes, very different,” “Yes, different,” “I do not know,” “No, not very different,” and “No, nothing has changed.” Of these options, 14.6% of the participants responded “No, nothing has changed” and 46.3% of the respondents answered “No, not very different.” Overall, 60.9% of the participants stated that upon their return

home to a MENA nation after living and studying in the U.S., their attitude toward gender roles will not have changed. Of the survey response options, 19.5% selected “I do not know.” Finally, 17% of participants answered “Yes, different” and 2.4% selected “Yes, very different.” There is a majority of students who felt that their attitudes toward gender roles would not change when returning to their MENA nation. In other words, they plan to maintain the same views regarding gender roles regardless of their experience in the U.S. It is noteworthy that 39.1% of the participants stated that they were unsure, or they were certain that their views of gender roles had changed due to living and studying in the U.S. The gender, age, time in the U.S., level of education of their mother, and awareness of the presence of gender roles in their nation all suggest there may be a relationship between a change in attitude regarding gender role expectations and living and studying in the U.S. (See Table 3)

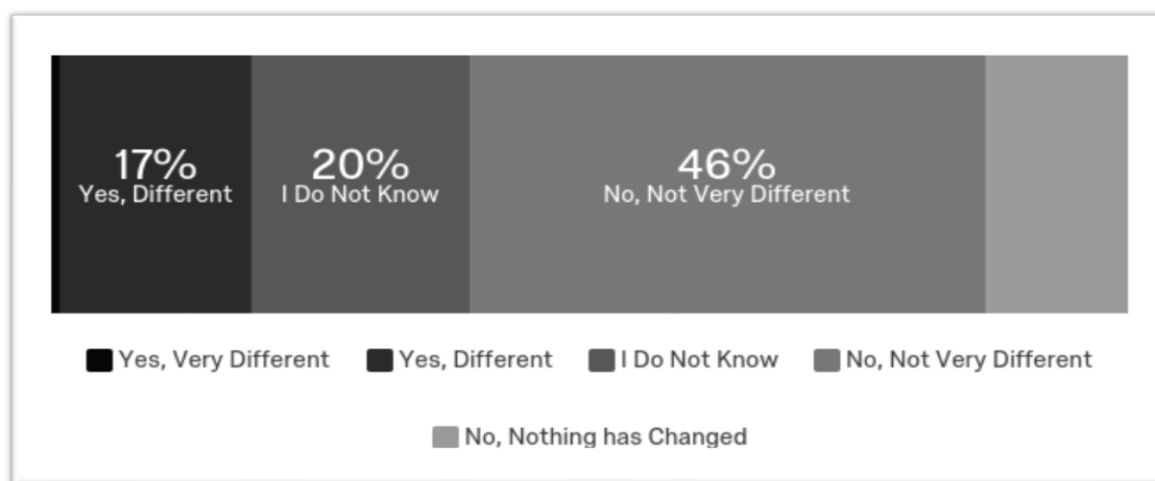


Figure 3

Q: When you return to your nation of citizenship, will your attitude toward expected gender roles be different than when you left for the U.S.?

Note. United States (U.S.)

Participants who were female, below the age of 22, and were aware of gender roles in their nation responded that their attitudes toward gender roles in their MENA nation of origin had changed after living/studying in the U.S. Those students who were male, over the age of 22,

and were unaware of gender role expectations were more likely to maintain their views regarding gender roles upon return to their home nation. Few differences were evident between the participants' nation of origin, the level of education of their father, and the level of education of their mother reflected in their change in attitude toward gender roles upon return to their MENA nation of origin.

Table 3

Attitude Toward Gender Role Expectations has Changed After Living/Studying in the U.S.

Factor Compared	Yes: It has changed	I do not know	No: It is hasn't changed
Age			
18-22	13%	37%	50%
23-27	29%	14%	57%
28-32	7%	27%	66%
33-37	0	0	100%
Gender			
Female	21%	43%	36%
Male	19%	7%	74%
Education of Father			
No Education	33%	0	67%
High School Completed	22%	33%	45%
Bachelor's Degree	5%	33%	62%
Master's Degree	0	50%	50%
Doctorate Degree	33%	0	67%
Education of Mother			
No Education	20%	20%	60%
High School Completed	15%	31%	54%
Bachelor's Degree	24%	14%	62%
Master's Degree	0	0	100%
Doctorate Degree	N/A	N/A	N/A
Awareness of Gender Roles in MENA Nation			
Yes, they exist	22%	16%	62%
I do not know	0	100%	0
No, they don't exist	0	0	100%

Note. Middle East and North Africa (MENA); United States (U.S.)

Qualitative Analysis

Within the online survey, participants were asked if, upon return to their home in a MENA nation after living/studying in the U.S., they had changed their previous, enculturated

gender role expectations. Participants were then asked to expand upon why they would, or would not, change their views and behaviors, given their experience in the U.S. The more common responses were examples of how they wished to change their behavior upon return to their MENA nation, regarding gender role expectations. That said, two participants expressed that their time in the U.S. had caused them to more strongly embrace their enculturated views of gender role expectations:

“I think the way of life here [in the U.S.] is (to) encourage people from different societies to reform their way of life than their social rules.” (Participant 1)

“I am thankful for the gender roles of my nation. I am satisfied and do not like the US gender roles because the nature of men and women’s bodies are different. They are only fit to their roles biologically. I am with women but I am not with them when it comes to becoming a man just to prove we [men] are superior and stronger. We were made differently for a reason, if God wanted us to be equal, we would have been exactly the same!” (Participant 2)

Many survey participants expressed that their time in the U.S. had changed how they view gender role expectations. In the survey they were given the opportunity to expand upon gender role expectations they wish to see changed upon their return to their home in a MENA nation:

“Support for women in the work place.” (Participant 3)

“Provide a safe environment for females to take their role much broadly in the society. Encourage females to involve in all the sectors.” (Survey Participant 4)

“Having more freedom for women.” (Participant 5)

When discussing how gender role expectations are maintained in MENA nations, the participants listed a range of areas in life in which women are still restricted, banned, ostracized, and ignored. Interestingly, both females and males alike mentioned ways in which their nation is working to improve current gender role expectations. A range of examples of how MENA nations are moving forward were given in the focus group discussions, from men increasingly trusting women to breaking traditional sexual stereotypes:

“When I think about family, or how to raise my kids I want them to be exactly like me... how my parents raise me. Treating you kids equal. Me and my brother both came to the United States. My dad didn’t even say ‘Oh, I will just send the boy. The girl will stay in Syria because girls need to stay in their family house.’ My brother left the country and stayed in a different city [than me]. I live alone. I live with no one watching. In the Middle East, most people say that a girl should not live alone because people will talk bad about her. Maybe she is doing something bad, meeting guys... but they [parents] trusted me to live alone. A lot of people questioned my parents about letting me live alone. They trust me more than my brother.” (Luna, female, Syria)

“Single men who are looking for their significant other ask, ‘Is she a working woman?’ That is an advantage. They know that she can help around the household.” (Saul, male, Saudi Arabia)

“I saw a really empowered woman in Egypt. I talked to a lot of women. I was shocked to see that they are stronger than men. I saw a woman hitting her husband with shoes because he tried to flirt with another girl. It is true. She was really empowered.” (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

“Women must not show they have lust or a desire for sex. This is why some women do not even tell their husband what they want, what they like in the bedroom. They might give hints but do not directly say it. If like you are married, why are you afraid he will think of you like a bad girl. You are married. He knew you were a virgin when you first got married. So, why are you hiding your desire from your husband? The new generation, they are trying to break this stereotype. (Mai, female, Egypt)

Beyond gender role expectations for females, there were also discussions of altered role expectations for males in MENA nations:

“Sometimes I feel like men feel like ‘I don’t have to work hard to chase a girl because if she has a job, it is easy for me to marry her. They say, ‘My salary and her salary will make enough.’ Sometimes, I feel like men are not working hard enough that state of ‘Oh, I am ready to get married.’ Instead it is, ‘If I am half ready and she is half ready, we are all ready.’ In the old days, the men had to provide everything. Everything in details. Even for the family of the bride. Now they provide half or less than half.” (Luna, female, Syria)

“For us, in my country, we do not have this concept [of a dowry]. You do not pay anything. It is different. For us, you get married because you want to live together, not because you owe her parents this... like you are buying a woman. This tradition [dowry] is by Islam. For us [Tunisians], we do not do this, even though we are Muslim country.” (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

“For men, it has been okay to have sex because nobody knows and nobody blames him. Now, I think we have the internet... people know when this bad stuff happens. The women, they will know. Nobody will marry him.” (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

“In the beginning, men were against females/wife working because then she will be like ‘Well, that’s my money.’ These issues are going away. When you are facing the reality of making it at the end of the month, the reality is it has changed the way people think. You want to send kids to good schools and things are expensive. They see this, they see how other people live not just in a 50-mile radius but across the world.” (Saul, male, Saudi Arabia)

Maintaining Enculturated Gender Role Expectations While Living in the U.S.

Quantitative Analysis

Survey participants were asked to reflect upon other students they know from their nation of citizenship who are currently studying in the U.S. They were then asked if these other students behaved according to enculturated gender roles from their home MENA nation while living in the U.S. Participants could select one of the following responses: never, rarely, sometimes, frequently, or all of the time. Of these options, 19.6% of the participants reported that they saw other students from their nation behave according to enculturated gender roles from their MENA nation “All of the Time” while living/studying in the U.S; 34.8% “Frequently” saw other students behave according to enculturated gender roles; 26% “Sometimes” followed enculturated gender roles; 8.7% “Rarely” followed enculturated gender roles; and finally, 10.9% “Never” followed enculturated gender roles from their MENA nation while living/studying in the U.S. Common variables for those who stated that other students from their home MENA nation “Always” and “Frequently” followed the gender role expectations of their nation while in the U.S. include the male gender, the age range of 28 to 32 years, and those who had spent between two to four years in the U.S. Common variables for those participants who stated that students from their nation “Never” or “Rarely” followed enculturated gender role expectations while living in the U.S. include females, those in the age range of 33 to 37 years of age, those who had lived in the U.S. for one year or less.

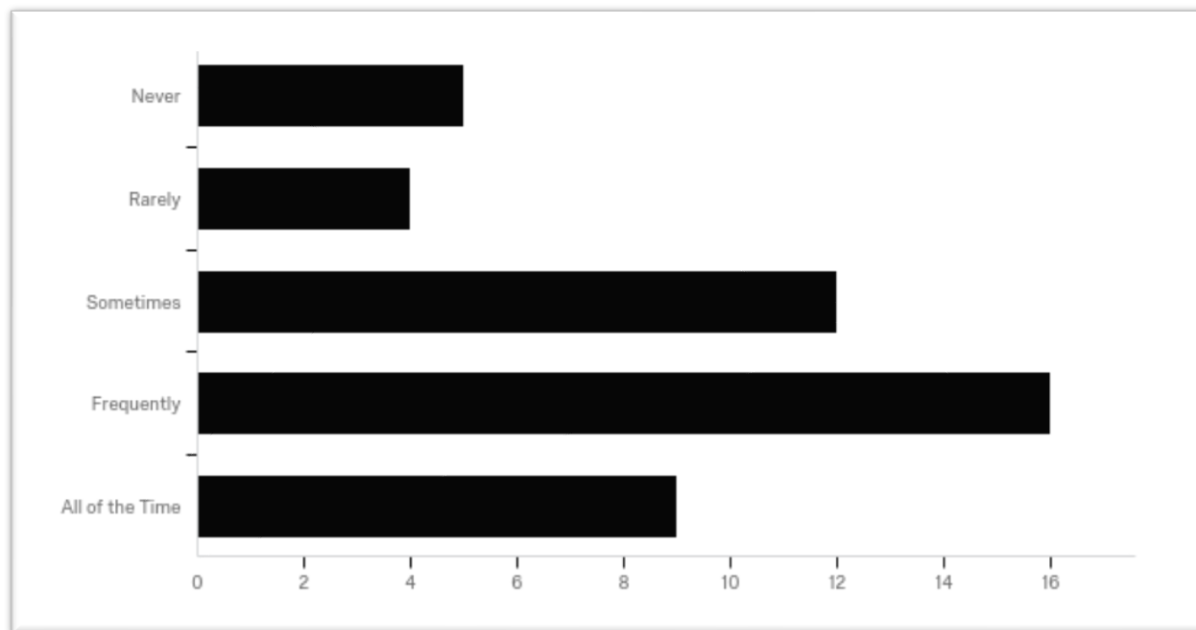


Figure 4

Q: When you think about the other students you know from your nation of citizenship who are currently living in the U.S., do you observe that they behave according to gender roles from your nation of citizenship?

Note. United States (U.S.)

Participants were also asked if there was anything they wished their U.S. community and/or campus' culture would change in regard to gender role expectations. The result of this question was rather evenly split, with 43.9% stating, "Yes," there were issues regarding gender role expectations they wish they could change in/on their U.S. community/campus and 56.1% stating, "No," there was nothing they wished to change. The largest percentage of participants who wished to make changes to current U.S. gender role expectations were between the ages of 23 to 32, with an increased percentage between the ages of 28 to 32. Additionally, a larger percentage of participants who wished current U.S. gender role expectations would be changed were female. Lastly, students who originated from authoritarian nations were overwhelmingly responded that they wished to see changes to U.S. gender role expectations. Participants from democratic MENA nations responded that they wished to see no changes made to current gender

role expectations in the U.S. No linkage was found connecting the time participants had spent in the U.S. to their views on gender role expectation changes in the U.S.

Qualitative Analysis

Online survey participants who wished to see changes in U.S. gender role expectations expressed discontent with the portrayal of women in media, with women doing men's jobs, and with a common U.S. view that men and women should be treated the same. Participants stated:

“The use of women in advertising and other things in a humiliating way. Does not fit with the women's capacity. Women here wearing [clothes] in a bad way. They bring problem for their self.” (Participant 1)

“Each gender should do what belongs to him. I do not prefer women to do men jobs.” (Participant 2)

“The idea the women and men are exactly the same! They are not.” (Participant 3)

Regarding maintaining gender role expectations found in MENA nations on U.S.

campus'/communities, some focus group participants expressed that it was a struggle to maintain their nation's gender role expectations while in the U.S. but it was something they attempted to do on a continual basis:

“I am far away from my family. I forget sometimes the culture, the rules. I forget. My sister, she tells me, ‘Oh, you forgot this... you cannot do this...’ I tell her, ‘Oh, okay, yeah.’ [...] My mom tells me ‘Put your scarf on the correct way. Cover your hair.’ She tries.” (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

“I am taken an interest in martial arts recently [while in the U.S.]. It is not a male thing, as far as I know but to my mom it is very, very ‘male.’ She is like, ‘You should learn how to cook or sew. It will be better.’ I am like, ‘Mom, I am physically fit. It helps me to cope with my studies.’ She is like, ‘You can sit down or read. It will help you cope, too.’” (Nancy, female, Egypt)

“When I came here for the first time in 2014, I met a teacher and she greeted me. She shook my hand. I was like, ‘okay.’ There was a guy who said, ‘Oh, wait, is it okay to shake a woman's hand?’ I said, ‘Yeah.’ He said, ‘I thought that would be prohibited in Islam.’ I said, ‘It depends on the school of thought.’” (Hasam, male, Saudi Arabia)

Ability to Test Enculturated Gender Role Expectations While in the U.S.

Quantitative Analysis

Online survey participants were again asked to reflect upon other students from their MENA nation who currently study in the U.S. This time, they were asked if these students behaved, in general, according to gender roles from the U.S. Given the options of “Never,” “Rarely,” “Sometimes,” “Frequently,” and “Always,” 9.5% of student participants from MENA nations responded that they “Always” see students from their nation behave according to U.S. gender roles; 28.6% reported that they “Frequently” see students from the nation behave according to U.S. gender roles; 42.9% stated they “Sometimes” see students from their nation follow U.S. gender roles; 11.9% responded that they “Rarely” see students from their MENA nation follow U.S. gender roles; lastly, 7.1% stated that they “Never” see students from their home nation follow U.S. gender roles. A strong connection was found between students witnessing their colleagues test gender role expectations while in the U.S. and the variables of gender, age, time spent in the U.S., and nation of origin. As participants’ age increased, so did the likelihood that they had colleagues from their MENA nation who behaved according to gender roles found in the U.S. The age range of 28 to 32 years old had the highest percentage, with 47% of participants’ MENA colleagues behaving according to gender role expectations in the U.S. Gender also connected to likelihood of colleagues behaving according to gender role expectations in the U.S., with half of all MENA male participants responding that they have a colleague who follows U.S. gender role expectations. Another variable connected to MENA students’ likeliness to follow the gender role expectations of the U.S. was the time they spent in the U.S. A parallel relationship was noted: the more time MENA students spent in the U.S., the higher likelihood their MENA colleagues were to behave according to U.S. gender role

expectations Those who had spent five years or longer in the U.S. responded, with an overwhelming majority of 67%, that their colleagues followed gender roles from the U.S., not their home MENA nation. Lastly, participants' nation of origin connected to willingness to behave according to gender roles in the U.S. Interestingly, the more authoritarian nations (Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Syria) saw a higher percentage of students willing to accept gender role expectations of the U.S. over their own enculturated MENA gender roles.

The next question survey participants were asked was if their experience in the U.S. had challenged or changed their idea of expected gender roles. Participants could choose one of the following responses: I do not know, no, or yes. Of the participant responses, 23.8% responded with "I do not know," 47.6% responded with "No," and 28.6% responded with "Yes." Age, nationality, and education of parents of MENA international students suggest a tie to a change in perspective of students' gender role expectations after living/studying in the U.S. Regarding age, survey results show that older participants were more likely to change their ideas of gender role expectations than young participants. According to the survey, 75 % of those participants over the age of 38 responded that their time living/studying in the U.S. had caused them to challenge and/or change their former ideas of gender role expectations. The nation of origin for survey participants also had a strong connection to how their experience in the U.S. had changed their views regarding gender role expectations. No participants from democratic nations responded that their time in the U.S. had changed their ideas of gender role expectations. However, as the nations or origin became less democratic and more authoritarian, students from these nations responded more strongly that their time in the U.S. had change their views on expectations, with 21% of the participants from partly-democratic nations and 33% of the participants from authoritarian nations stating that their views had been altered since living/studying in the U.S.

Lastly, the education level of both the mother and father impacted the students' likelihood to challenge/change their ideas of gender role expectations due to living in the U.S. Participants who had a father with no education were the most likely to change their MENA enculturated views of gender role expectations after living/studying in the U.S. Similarly, the lower the education level of the mother, the more likely students expressed that their time in the U.S. had caused them to change their ideas on gender role expectations. No connection was found between the participants' gender or time spent in the U.S. and their change in ideas of gender role expectations after living/studying in the U.S.

Going one step further, MENA student survey participants were asked if their experience in the U.S. had caused the actually change their gender role expectations. Participants were asked to complete the following sentence "Your experience in the U.S., both in the community and on campus, has caused you to..." Participants were given the response options of "Change your gender role expectations," "Embrace your gender role expectations," and "My gender role expectations have not been altered by this experience." Of these response options, 17% stated that their time in the U.S. had caused them to change their gender role expectations; 12% embraced their gender role expectations; and 71% had no change to their gender role expectations. A connection was show between the age, gender, and time spent in the U.S. of the survey participants and if their time in the U.S. had changed their gender role expectations. Regarding age, a parallel relationship existed as the younger age ranges had a higher tendency to change the gender role expectations. Analysis shows that 38% of participants between the ages of 18-22 had changed the gender role expectations due to living in the U.S., 17% between the ages of 23-27 had changed their gender role expectations, 7% between the ages if 28-32, and no one between the ages of 33 to 37 had changed their gender role expectations due to living in the

U.S. The variable of gender also seemed to be associated to participants' decision to change their gender role expectations. A higher percentage of females (23%) compared to males (14%) had experienced a change in gender role expectations due to living in the U.S. Lastly, time spent in the U.S. association with a change in gender role expectations. Those who spent a longer period in the U.S. were more likely to change their gender role expectations. Of the participant responses, no one who had spent a year or less in the U.S. reported a change in gender role expectations; 20% of those who had spent two to four years in the U.S. reported a change in gender role expectations, and 46% of those who had spent five to seven years in the U.S. reported a change in gender role expectations.

Qualitative Analysis

Survey participant were given the opportunity to expand upon how living/studying in the U.S. had caused them to change or embrace their enculturated gender role expectations. Many participants noted an increased desire for women's rights and awareness that just because gender role expectations exist does not mean that they must be followed:

“Women drive, more responsibility on the shoulder of women. Traveling alone, more trust.” (Participant 1)

“They [gender role expectations] have not changed drastically, rather I have learned that gender roles and expectations of society are not guidelines or rules needed to be followed.” (Participant 2)

“The way that women are supposed to dress, walk, and interact with other people, especially having male friends. I think that everybody should be comfortable with the level of interactions they have every day without paying any attention to their gender.” (Participant 3)

“My gender role [expectations] changed by doing everything by myself. In my country I have to ask my father to do it but here I can do everything by myself.” (Participant 4)

“I never thought of something like gender roles, because, where I'm from, they are a given. I always felt like an outsider if I speak out about how unfair most women in my

country work two jobs; daytime job and at home. When I came to the U.S. I felt like there are more people who do not conform with gender roles, unlike my country. Of course, my country is more progressive, some people, mostly traditionalists, feel like gender roles are important in society. If a man is seen doing something that is a 'woman's job' then he will be stigmatized." (Participant 5)

Through focus group conversations, students expressed that their time in the U.S. has allowed them to be their true selves and has changed their former expectations of gendered roles:

"One of my friends, when she first arrived [to the U.S.], she was covering her face. She was wearing the long abaya. Now, she is changing. She took off her cover. She wears jeans. Normal stuff. I will cover myself when I go back. I cannot walk without the abaya. I can walk without the scarf. Here [in the U.S.], I wear my scarf this way [showing more skin]. In Saudi Arabia, I wear it like this [showing no skin]. I create myself. I want to be this... this is myself. I am here [in the U.S.] by myself. Nobody controls me. [...] Because I am far away from my family, I forget sometimes the culture. The rules." (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

"Everyone [international students] has their own culture, their own expectations. They need to adapt to the U.S. society. So whatever expectation you have, you will not apply it here because it is not the same thing. You change your expectations." (Ahmed, male, Tunisia)

"Some people [Saudi Arabians] when they first came [to the U.S.], they went to a class or to the university. They found many women in the class. Vice versa, sometimes women find many men in the class. They are just trying to deal with them in the beginning. As time goes on, it is going to be a smooth transaction between them. More talking. It happens within the classroom at a university [in the U.S.]. [...] The more you have multiculturalism, the more you will be open-minded. The expectations, as a result, will be lower than the expectations [from less multicultural areas of a nation]. (Hasam, male, Saudi Arabia)

"It is part of the life experience. They live somewhere else, they see how other people live. They say, 'This kind of makes more sense.' (Saul, male, Saudi Arabia)

Also mentioned during the focus group conversations were changes in gender role expectations for a husband and wife and changes in how women perceive marriage after living/studying in the U.S.:

"She [mom] says I look too skinny. I am like, 'Mom, I am not even in Egypt anymore. Like, that is not what I want marriage to be like. If it happens, it happens... but I am not waiting for it...' (Nancy, female, Egypt)

“I have seen significant change in some people who have come here [KU]. This is based on religion and culture. [...] For example, a girl who came here said she did not want to stay [be in a relationship] with a man, she wanted to stay with a woman.” (Ali, male, Iran)

“Yes, I have changed since coming to the U.S. For example, my friends were recently married. Both of them are studying [in the U.S.]. Sometimes the husband will cook and take care of the house because his wife is studying or at school.” (Mohammad, male, Saudi Arabia)

Additionally, participants discussed how living/studying in the U.S., or in the West, has resulted in increased rights for females in MENA nations:

“Driving. They [women] cannot do it back home but here women can do it [...] Some of my friends’ wives, they are driving here. We [males and females] study together [in the U.S.]. Back home yes [we must separate].” (Mohammad, male, Saudi Arabia)

“I have heard one of my cousins, from my dad’s side [of the family]... she is a girl, she is two years younger than me... she is like, ‘Yeah, I am not really interested in anything. I will finish high school. Go to college just to get a degree and then do nothing.’ One of her aunts was like, ‘Yep, that’s my girl.’ I was like, ‘Really? I need to take you to the U.S. for a week and you are going to change your mind.’” (Eleanor, female, Saudi Arabia)

“Globalization. You have access to all kinds of ideas. You have access to pop culture in most places of the world. International culture is becoming homogenized into one way of living. It will be interesting to observe how this changes [MENA gender roles] in the next ten to twenty years.” (Saul, male, Saudi Arabia)

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine dichotomous gender role expectations in Middle Eastern and North African nations. This examination was performed on the foundation of three research questions which investigated 1) if MENA international students are aware of gender role expectations in their nation of citizenship, 2) if these enculturated gender role expectations are maintained on U.S. campuses and communities, and 3) if these students were given the ability, and were willing, to test enculturated gender role expectations while in the U.S. This study used a mixed methods approach, employing both surveys and focus groups. The major findings from the data gathered include heightened awareness of gender role expectations by females and lack of awareness of gender role expectations by males, as discussed in the focus groups; an increased number of gender role expectations placed upon MENA females, compared to MENA males; a reported change in how MENA students view and plan to maintain gender role expectations upon return to their nation of citizenship, with 37% stating that their time in the U.S. has caused them to completely change or at least question their previous views and behaviors regarding gender role expectations; an emergent theme that MENA students report “feeling more like their true self” in the U.S., as they are away from imposed, MENA enculturated gender role expectations; and lastly, the confirmation that international students report testing gender role expectations, at their discretion, while living in the U.S.

This chapter will discuss the findings presented in Chapter IV as they connect to the research questions, address limitations of the study, and propose areas for future research and policy changes. This chapter is divided into three sections that each connect with one of the research questions.

Research Question 1

Do international students from the Middle East and North Africa hold gender role expectations?

If so, what are the constructs of said expected gender roles? The explanation is that most Middle Eastern and North African students do hold gender role expectations, though some are unaware of holding these expectations, as they have been indoctrinated as part of one's society, culture, and/or religion. The constructs of these expectations vary, depending on the nation's culture, politics, and societal norms.

Participants in this study showed high levels of gender role expectations from their MENA nation of origin. When asked if gender role expectations exist in their nation of origin, 84% responded "yes" and 10% responded they were "unsure." For my first research question, I found that students from MENA nations do, indeed, have gender role expectations and their constructs depend upon the nation's culture, politics, and societal norms. I found that gender, co-habitation with a partner (not a family member), mother's and father's education level all corresponded with MENA students' awareness of gender role expectations in their nation of origin. I also found that the constructs of these gender role expectations were linked to nationality, culture, religion, societal norms, politics, and family.

Participants who were male were found to be more likely than females to report that gender role expectations did not exist in their nation. When asked if gender role expectations existed in their nation of origin, males were the only participants to state they were unaware of gender role expectations in their nation. All female participants stated that gender role expectations existed, or they were unsure of their existence. This indicates that of the female and male gendered students living in MENA nations, males are less likely to incur or be exposed to oppressions, limitations, or abuses caused by gender role expectations.

Additionally, all participants who lived with a partner were aware that gender role expectations existed in their nation of origin. Participants who lived with family members or “others” with whom they were not in a relationship were less likely to be aware of the existence gender role expectations compared to those who lived with their partner or lived alone (31% vs. 0%). This suggests that students from MENA nations who live with family members or others with whom they are not in a relationship are more likely to be unaware of gender role expectations. Those who have moved outside of the family dynamic are more aware of gender role differences in MENA nations.

Education level of parents also deemed to be a factor in students’ awareness of gender role expectations in their MENA nation of origin. Survey participants whose mother had less than a college degree were more likely to be unaware of gender role expectations compared to participants whose mother had attained a bachelor’s degree or above (47% vs. 0%). Similarly, participants whose father had completed a bachelor’s degree or less were more unaware of gender role expectations than those whose father had completed a master’s degree or more (30% vs. 0%). It appears, from participant responses, that father’s must attain a higher level of education, compared to mothers, in order to affect the gender role awareness of their children. This could be attributed to the traditional role of the father being out in the world, i.e. obtaining an education, and the mother being at home.

The responses of focus group participants demonstrated a trend similar to that found in responses of survey participants with regard to males being less aware of gender role expectations compared to females. Males would often express that there were no gender role expectations in their MENA nation. At times, male participants would note that in the past there had been gendered expectations, but that it was a thing of the past. Females, however, were very

clear and detailed about how gender role expectations had limited the lives of their mothers as well as their present-day lives. This data suggests a lack of awareness of gender role expectations on the part of males, along with the hyperawareness of females. As such, this finding further suggests a lack of gendered limitations on males in MENA nations compared to increased gendered limitations for females, and thus their awareness of these inequalities and abuses of power. Through focus group conversations, MENA females were able to open up and more fully expand upon their awareness of gender role expectations. Though males were more likely to be aware of gender role expectations in the survey responses, females were considerably more aware and vocal about gender role expectations, compared to males, in focus group conversations. It is possible that the focus group approach offered the females a sense of support and comradery, in turn, allowing them to feel safe to open up about their past experiences and viewpoints.

Overall, female focus group participants noted an increased awareness, and personal experience with, gender role expectations in their MENA nation. When asked if gender role expectations existed in their home nation, females remarked that there were “definite differences in how a women should behave and how a guy should behave,” (Farrah, Tunisia) that women in the Middle East have a “manual on how to act,” (Mai, Egypt) and that they [females] were expected to “cook, clean do everything that should be done in the house and for the house” (Eleanor, Saudi Arabia). Males, however, described their MENA nations as having little to no gender role expectations. In the males’ point of view, if gender role expectations existed in the past, they were quickly changing and on the point of extinction. In focus group conversations, male participants stated that “we do not have income inequality in Saudi,” (Saul, Saudi Arabia), “for my society, no gender roles exist,” (Ahmed, Tunisia), and there is “no difference between

men and women regarding gender roles” (Mohammad, Saudi Arabia). This clear difference in the reported awareness of gender role expectations between females and males suggests that MENA males are unaware of the gender role constraints and abuses still placed upon MENA females. It further suggests that females are hyperaware of these constraints/abuses; however, they are not as willing to discuss these issues unless in a safe zone and with the support of others in similar situations, as seen with anonymous surveys and the all-female focus groups.

Family dynamics also played a role in participants’ awareness of gender role expectations in their MENA nation of origin. How participants were raised, the open-mindedness of parents, and the level of control of the father, specifically, played a large role in how both sons and daughters viewed gender role expectations. Female participants, when talking about the influence of family dynamics on role awareness, stated, “my parents raised me equal with my brother... we do not have gender roles,” (Luna, Syria), and “what is expected from me as a woman now is much different than what was expected from my mother,” (Sara, Iran). Regarding the father’s effect on gender role expectations of his children, participants stated that “my father really encouraged us [females] to further our education and supported us as women,” (Mai, Egypt), “they’re [men in family] basically morally correct all of the time and you are not supposed to be arguing with them,” (Nancy, Egypt), and “is your father flexible to change? Is he capable of change? There are other families where the father is very strict, they [father] will never change” (Farrah, Tunisia). The idea that family dynamics, specifically the stance of the patriarch in the family, has great sway on how children view gender role expectations is further supported by survey responses which suggest that those participants who live with their family are less aware of gender role expectations (72% claimed awareness) than those who live alone (94% claimed awareness) or with a partner (100% claimed awareness).

An overall lack of awareness of gender role expectations of focus group participants from MENA nations may also be linked to the education level of their parents and the geographical location in which they were raised. Regarding education level of parents, participants noted that “awareness and application of gender roles is more of a consequence of the type of education that they [parents] got and how often they are exposed to different cultures,” (Nancy, Egypt), “my family traveled a lot and that made a huge difference... my father traveled all his life and then he trusted me to live in India,” (Mai, Egypt), and “I do not wish to drive in Saudi Arabia, no... because I know the people there... they are not educated... their mind does not have any knowledge, any respect, anything... they will be battering women in the street” (Betty, Saudi Arabia).

Geographic location also emerged as a factor which caused MENA citizens to be more open-minded and understanding of different ideas and cultures. During focus groups, participants stated that “people who live near water have access to ideas where it very much affects the way society reacts... where I am from, people away from water have different culture... whereas people near water are more open to new ideas,” (Ali, Saudi Arabia), and “based on geography, at least in my city, absolutely, women have expectations to fulfill... you do not want to break this kind of responsibility and obligation in society” (Hasam, Saudi Arabia).

Finally, the role of the nation also appeared to have an influence on gender role expectations of citizens within its society. Farrah, a focus group participant from Tunisia, described the nation’s role:

“For Tunisia, well let me start off by saying that we have a lot of women’s’ rights and there is a lot of equality when it comes to equality in pay, equality in going to school, equality in getting a divorce... we have the law that protects women.”

Luna, a focus group participant from Syria, said that “in Syria, we have equality between men and women and we were the first Arab country to let women vote... we are basically equal in everything except small stuff like divorce.” Ahmed, an international student from Tunisia stated:

“Because of the revolution, we [Tunisians] have had a large change in the course of our lives, the course of the whole country... it opened up freedoms... freedom of expression, everything... so, women pushed back on those habits and traditions that they had been cuffed on.”

These comments support Chatterjee’s (1986, 1989, 1993) concept that nations, and nationalism, play a part in creating dichotomous gender roles and gender role expectations.

The constructs of gender role expectations found in MENA nations was defined by survey participants and then elaborated upon and supported by focus group participants in this study. The online survey asked participants to explain enculturated gender role expectations they were aware of in their nation of origin. Of the survey responses, eleven out of seventeen participants listed a need for increased women’s rights. A common theme amongst all responses was the need for increased freedom of speech, open-mindedness regarding gender roles, and increased conversations/interactions between females and males. The reported number of limitations caused by gender placed upon MENA females was higher than the reported number of limitations placed upon males, according to the survey responses. Female specific limitations caused by gender role expectations, as stated by survey participants, included lack of rights, lack of social involvement, forced to remain at home, unable to drive, forced to wear hijab, inability to express emotions, lack of freedom of speech, lack of political involvement, and inability to interact with males. Of these limitations lack of rights, lack of freedom of speech, and lack of social involvement were the most often cited limitations caused by gender. Male specific

limitations caused by gender role expectations included lack of freedom of choice, inability to interact with females, high expectations to work/earn money, and forced to suppress emotions. Of these limitations, lack of freedom of choice and high expectations to work/earn money were the most cited limitations due to gender. Survey participants in this study demonstrated a mutual understanding that gender role expectations resulted in a lack of freedom and gendered limitations to either the home, for females, or in the work place, for males. Age of the MENA student participant and governmental style of participants' nation of origin both strongly connected to the number of gender role expectations listed by participants. As the age of the participant increased, so did the number of listed gender role expectations. Additionally, survey participants from democratic nations did not list any national gender role expectations, whereas participants from authoritarian nations listed a large number of national gender role expectations.

Through focus group conversations, this study had the opportunity to ask students to expand upon the constructs of gender role expectations in their MENA nation of origin. Both female and male role expectations were discussed. In terms of female gender role expectations, participants stated that females “are expected to go to school, finish high school, then get married and live with your husband... he is supposed to be spending money on you and all you have to do is look pretty” (Nancy, Egypt). They also said that female expectations include “marriage, having kids, and taking care of them,” (Sara, Iran) and “people focus on having an economy with just men... let women stay home to take care of the kids, raise them in the proper way” (Hasam, Saudi Arabia). These focus group conversations also found a number of gender role expectations for males. Participants stated that “you are expected, as a male, to protect your family and provide a living for them... they [men] are expected to be strong and never cry, so the only thing they can do is shout,” (Eleanor, Saudi Arabia). Participants also established that “when men get

married, he needs to pay a certain amount just for the woman... like a dowry... the man is expected to be the provider figure,” (Farrah, Tunisia) and “men cannot marry without a job... he should pay the woman to become his wife” (Betty, Saudi Arabia). Qualitative analysis demonstrates that both female and male focus group participants believe that gender role expectations exist in MENA nation for both females and males.

These expectations, expressed by focus group participants, extended beyond the social, political, and spiritual spheres and into the emotional sphere of expressing ones' sexuality. Focus group participants noted:

“In my country, virginity is a big deal... in all the Arab world. For men, they get a pass. It's fine... ‘He is just a man. What is going to happen to him? He is not going to get pregnant.’ For women, it not just about getting pregnant, it is about a woman not being a virgin. That is really a big deal. That can destroy the woman's life... social life, career, future. It [a woman's virginity] is a big determinant in our society. It's just the way it is, I guess.” (Mai, female, Egypt)

“He [men] gets a pass for sleeping with other women, not being a virgin... a complete pass. Nothing happens. It is very different for the woman. [...] Some men, if they are engaged, will say let's just have sex. Then he will blame the woman, saying ‘Oh, you did this with me, so you did it with a lot of other men before.’” (Farrah, female, Tunisia)

“If a guy is a virgin, back home... sometimes he is looked down on. They [society] say ‘Is something wrong with you? Are you asexual? Do you not have any sexual feelings?’ If a guy is known as a virgin, a girl will think ‘Is something wrong with him physically? Does he need to see a doctor?’ But if a girl has had some experience... sometimes they will except her... only if it is with the guy she is marrying. If she made out with some other guy or she went to the beach with a guy, he will not accept her. For the man, he will be given a pass.” (Luna, female, Syria)

Lastly, focus group participants noted that gender role expectations are often constructed and maintained by members of one's own gender. Females, specifically, will judge one another harshly. Participants noted that this method of shaming other females is acted out so as to make one feel better about one's current situation in life. If a female feels oppressed, abused, or limited, bringing down the honor of other females will make her feel normal:

“If you do something good, people will still look for the bad, small things. [...] People say ‘Why does her mother let her stay (in the U.S.)? She is doing bad things.’ They don’t look at all the good things I do. Even if you do good things, still they will look for the bad. (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

“My neighbor, she used to sit in the balcony with her coffee and watch people in the street. She would say, ‘Oh, she bought a new jacket her husband is really good with her,’ or ‘Oh, she has worn the same jacket twice. I think her husband is beating her.’” (Mai, female, Egypt)

“When women break out of the stereotypes, it is really hard for others to accept it... because you are different. If you are unique, there is something wrong with you. If a woman is controlled by her husband, she wants to feel normal... so she makes it seem like you are the abnormal one. No one wants to feel like the victim or abused. It is easier to feel like she is perfect and you are wrong. For her to find everything wrong in you is the only way she can feel good about herself. The missing holes within ourselves we sometimes fill with the mistakes of others. We think my hands are clean, yours are dirty.” (Luna, female, Syria)

More research on females shaming females and males shaming males into enacting traditional gender role expectations is recommended in order to explore whether these factors are connected to gender role expectation construction and maintenance with MENA nations.

One critique of this study’s data supporting the MENA students’ awareness, construction, and maintenance of enculturated MENA gender role expectations while in the U.S. is their wish to not speak poorly of their MENA nation of origin, nor the traditions practiced in said nation. It is understandable that participants felt uncomfortable speaking out against traditional MENA practices and policies regarding gender role expectations, therefore biasing their responses. That said, many students demonstrated great comfort in vocalizing their negative experiences and opinions of gender role expectations in their MENA nation of origin. The honest answers which gave unfavorable viewpoints of MENA gender role expectations given in the survey responses and focus group conversations allow this study to assume that all data involving participant

awareness and maintenance of gender role expectations while in the U.S. can be trusted and is true.

Research Question 2

If Middle Eastern and North African encultured gender role expectations are recognized and defined, are these gender roles maintained on U.S. campuses and communities? Once MENA encultured gender role expectations amongst MENA students studying/living in the U.S. were recognized and defined, it was established that some MENA enculturated gender roles were maintained on U.S. campuses and communities.

For the first research question, it was discovered that enculturated gender role expectations which are deemed most intrinsic to MENA international students' cultural, political and/or personal identity were often maintained on U.S. campuses and communities. The study found that encultured gender role expectations which are no longer intrinsic to MENA international students' cultural, political, and/or personal identity are not maintained on U.S. campuses and communities. For this reason, both hypotheses were shown to be true.

Scant research has been performed on MENA gender roles being maintained on U.S. campuses and communities. For this reason, both quantitative and qualitative information from MENA international students living/studying in the U.S. was collected for this study. The information collected through surveys and focus group conversations demonstrated that the majority of MENA students followed enculturated gender role expectations while in the U.S. When survey participants were asked if they see fellow students from their nation of origin follow enculturated gender role expectations, 19.6% of the participants reported that they saw other students from their nation behave according to enculturated gender roles from their MENA nation "All of the Time;" 34.8% "Frequently" saw other students behave according to

enculturated gender roles; 26% “Sometimes” followed enculturated gender roles; 8.7% “Rarely” followed enculturated gender roles; and finally, 10.9% “Never” followed enculturated gender roles from their MENA nation while living/studying in the U.S. Analysis of the quantitative data shows that MENA students are most likely to maintain their gender role expectations while in the U.S. However, it is worth noting that 26% of MENA students only follow expectations “Sometimes,” roughly 9% “Rarely” follow expectations, and roughly 11% “Never” follow MENA gender role expectations. This shows that 46% of MENA students are no longer strictly following enculturated gender role expectations from the MENA nation of origin. Though the majority of MENA students are maintaining gender role expectations, it is by a margin of less than 5%.

Looking specifically at participants who answered that their colleagues followed MENA enculturated gender role expectations “All of the Time” or “Frequently,” the majority of participants were male, between the ages of 28 to 32 years, and had spent between two to four years in the U.S. One explanation for males being more prone to follow MENA enculturated gender role expectations is that males from MENA nations, as this study discovered, have less enculturated gender role expectations and limitations due to their gender compared to females. It follows that if one has less expectations to maintain in their nation of origin, one has less expectations to maintain in the U.S. Consequently, for a male MENA student, maintaining gender role expectations would require less effort and less restrictions than for a female student studying/living in the U.S. Additionally, following Chatterjee’s concept of dichotomous gender roles, males are relegated to the outside, the world, their careers, their education, and the exterior. The mere act of pursuing an education in a foreign land is to be expected of males. Likewise, females are relegated to the inside, the home, raising a family, maintaining tradition

and spirituality. Pursuing an education or a career, especially one away from home, would be instantly breaking gender role expectations, as conceived by Chatterjee's concept.

Qualitative analysis supports the idea that females are less willing than males to maintain gender role expectations while in the U.S. Female focus group participants had the following to say regarding maintaining MENA enculturated gender role expectations while in the U.S.:

"I am far away from my family. I forget sometimes the culture, the rules. I forget. My sister, she tells me, 'Oh, you forgot this... you cannot do this...' I tell her, 'Oh, okay, yeah.' [...] My mom tells me 'Put your scarf on the correct way. Cover your hair.' She tries." (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

"I am taken an interest in martial arts recently [while in the U.S.]. It is not a male thing, as far as I know but to my mom it is very, very 'male.' She is like, 'You should learn how to cook or sew. It will be better.' I am like, 'Mom, I am physically fit. It helps me to cope with my studies.' She is like, 'You can sit down or read. It will help you cope, too.'" (Nancy, female, Egypt)

Additionally, male focus group participants demonstrated the lack of male limitations caused by gender role expectations, compared with females, within their society:

"When I came here for the first time in 2014, I met a teacher and she greeted me. She shook my hand. I was like, 'okay.' There was a guy who said, 'Oh, wait, is it okay to shake a woman's hand?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'I thought that would be prohibited in Islam.' I said, 'It depends on the school of thought.'" (Hasam, male, Saudi Arabia)

Quantitative analysis also demonstrated that students, both male and female, between the ages of 28 to 32 were more likely to maintain MENA enculturated gender role expectations while in the U.S. Many factors could be used to justify why this range of ages maintains gender role expectations in U.S. such as more conservative values, more time spent in the MENA nation before coming to the U.S. or being set in one's ways regarding viewpoints of gender role expectations. That said, it is notable that at the time of the Arab Spring in 2010, this age group would have been between the ages of 20 to 24 years. They would have already graduated high school and spent two years in the college or professional setting, if not more. Many from this age

range would have graduated from a university, had a career, or would have been raising a family at the time of the Arab Spring. MENA students who became established, were educated, started a career, and started a family prior to the Arab Spring arguably have a different viewpoint of gender role expectations that those who entered the educational, occupational, and familial institutions post-Arab Spring. Survey comments such as “each gender should do what belongs to him I do not prefer women to do men jobs,” (Participant 1) or “The idea the women and men are exactly the same! They are not!” (Participant 2) give credence to the idea that those who formed gender role expectations prior to the Arab Spring may not be as willing, or able, to change these expectations once living in the U.S.

Lastly, participants who had spent two to four years in the U.S. were more likely to maintain gender role expectations than those who had spent one year or less, or those who had spent five years or more. There is not sufficient information or research available to lend an answer as to why this period of time would cause MENA students to more strongly maintain their gender role expectations. It might best be explained by understanding why students who have lived either one year or less or five years or more in the U.S. are less willing to maintain gender role expectations. Those MENA students who have not lived in the U.S. for longer than a year might be more willing to try out new cultures other than their own. Likewise, students who have lived away from their MENA nation for more than five years might now feel more comfortable with the gender role expectations found in the U.S. compared to those they were raised with in their MENA nation.

Research Question 3

Does attendance at a United States university give Middle Eastern and North African students the ability to test encultured gender roles expectations? This study found that attendance at a U.S. university does give MENA students the ability to test encultured gender role expectations.

Responding to the first research question, I found that MENA international students' heightened awareness of encultured gender role expectations has a positive association to attendance at a U.S. university. Additionally, MENA international students' willingness to test encultured gender role expectations connects positively to attendance at a U.S. university.

The literature suggests that developing nations, i.e. the current state of all MENA nations outside of Israel, take a gendered approach to national progress (Chatterjee 1989; Muller, 2008; Nagel, 2005). Students who are raised in a developing nation, and thus indoctrinated with strict viewpoints regarding dichotomous gender role expectations for said nation, are most likely unaware of this indoctrination until they step outside of their developing nation and into a developed nation with loose gender role expectations. This scenario can be witnessed with students who come from a MENA nation with strict gender role expectations, to the U.S., a developed nation with looser gender role expectations. The experience of living in a different nation, with a different culture, opens students' eyes to differences in gender role expectations between the nations and cultures. Literature also points out that exposure to new ideas can considerably enhance one's opportunities and quality of life, as seen with social capital theory (Bourdieu 1986; Portes 1998). By studying/living in the U.S., MENA students are exposed to new ideas, mannerisms, and social norms. This exposure to groups of people who lead successful lives yet think and behave differently, can lead MENA students to question their own enculturated practices. As mentioned in both the surveys and focus groups, many MENA

students have adopted certain U.S. gender role expectations that prove more beneficial than role expectations they learned in their MENA nation of origin. Exposure to different ideas, policies, and social norms while living/studying in the U.S. has led to increased awareness of gender role expectations, as well as the opportunity to test enculturated gender role expectations, for MENA students.

Survey participants were asked to reflect upon other students from their MENA nation who currently study in the U.S. This time, they were asked if these students behaved according to gender roles from the U.S. Given the options of “Never,” “Rarely,” “Sometimes,” “Frequently,” and “Always,” 9.5% of student participants from MENA nations responded that they “Always” see students from their nation behave according to U.S. gender roles; 28.6% reported that they “Frequently” see students from the nation behave according to U.S. gender roles; 42.9% stated they “Sometimes” see students from their nation follow U.S. gender roles; 11.9% responded that they “Rarely” see students from their MENA nation follow U.S. gender roles; lastly, 7.1% stated that they “Never” see students from their home nation follow U.S. gender roles. Quantitative analysis shows that 81% of MENA students studying/living in the U.S. behave according to U.S. gender role expectations “Always,” “Frequently,” or “Sometimes.” Only 19% of MENA students “Rarely” or “Never” behave according to U.S. gender role expectations.

Student participants were given the opportunity on the survey to expand upon how living/studying in the U.S. had caused them to change their enculturated gender role expectations:

“Women drive, more responsibility on the shoulder of women. Traveling alone, more trust.” (Participant 1)

“They [gender role expectations] have not changed drastically, rather I have learned that gender roles and expectations of society are not guidelines or rules needed to be followed.” (Participant 2)

“The way that women are supposed to dress, walk, and interact with other people, especially having male friends. I think that everybody should be comfortable with the level of interactions they have every day without paying any attention to their gender.” (Participant 3)

“My gender role [expectations] changed by doing everything by myself. In my country I have to ask my father to do it but here I can do everything by myself.” (Participant 4)

“I never thought of something like gender roles, because, where I'm from, they are a given. I always felt like an outsider if I speak out about how unfair most women in my country work two jobs; daytime job and at home. When I came to the U.S. I felt like there are more people who do not conform with gender roles, unlike my country. Of course, my country is more progressive, some people, mostly traditionalists, feel like gender roles are important in society. If a man is seen doing something that is a ‘woman's job’ then he will be stigmatized.” (Participant 5)

These responses highlight the idea that by studying/living in a different nation, a nation which has looser gender role expectations, students become aware of indoctrinated gender role expectations from their MENA nation and are given the opportunity to test their gender role expectations, if they so choose. Through focus group conversations, participants were able to expand more fully upon how living/studying in the U.S. has given them the ability to become their “true self” and test enculturated gender role expectations:

“One of my friends, when she first arrived [to the U.S.], she was covering her face. She was wearing the long abaya. Now, she is changing. She took off her cover. She wears jeans. Normal stuff. I will cover myself when I go back. I cannot walk without the abaya. I can walk without the scarf. Here [in the U.S.], I wear my scarf this way [showing more skin]. In Saudi Arabia, I wear it like this [showing no skin]. I create myself. I want to be this... this is myself. I am here [in the U.S.] by myself. Nobody controls me. [...] Because I am far away from my family, I forget sometimes the culture. The rules.” (Betty, female, Saudi Arabia)

“Some people [Saudi Arabians] when they first came [to the U.S.], they went to a class or to the university. They found many women in the class. Vice versa, sometimes women find many men in the class. They are just trying to deal with them in the beginning. As time goes on, it is going to be a smooth transaction between them. More talking. It happens within the classroom at a university [in the U.S.]. [...] The more you have

multiculturalism, the more you will be open-minded. The expectations, as a result, will be lower than the expectations [from less multicultural areas of a nation]. (Hasam, male, Saudi Arabia)

“It is part of the life experience. They live somewhere else, they see how other people live. They say, ‘This kind of makes more sense.’ (Saul, male, Saudi Arabia)

MENA international students are becoming more aware of MENA gender role expectations through their experiences of living/studying in the U.S. and interacting with diverse groups of people in the U.S. Additionally, MENA international students are willing to test their enculturated gender role expectations, with an overwhelming majority choosing to behave according to U.S. gender role expectations en lieu of MENA role expectations. Current literature focuses on changes in gender role expectations being caused by religion or culture. However, this study points to developing nations’ use of gender role expectations as a tool for “progress,” and the subsequent governmental policies and practices enacted upon its citizens to maintain these gender role expectations as the root of this oppressive dichotomy. Another explanation for the maintenance of oppressive and limiting gender role expectations in developing nations and the removal of these role expectations in developed nations, as expressed by MENA international students, is increased awareness of different ways of thinking and freedom to test out new gender roles while living in the U.S., which is not afforded to MENA students in their nation of origin. As mentioned in focus group discussions, it is not necessarily a student’s ability to test out new gender roles that makes the most impact on their life or the lives they touch. Instead, it is the awareness of new ideas and the flexibility to be open-minded which has the most impact on students’ lives and the future lives they touch upon return to their MENA nation of origin. By being exposed to new ideas, practices, and groups of people, MENA students have an increased awareness of which ideas, practices, and policies will be most beneficial to incorporate into their life and the future of their nation. Additionally, MENA students have a source of support for

these new ideas, which they would otherwise not have had they not studied/lived in the U.S., through the contacts made with other U.S. and international students. MENA international students gain an awareness of the existence of gender role expectations, as well as limitations, inequalities, and abuses incurred by gender role expectations, through their experience of living and studying in the U.S. Increased awareness and open-mindedness due to exposure to new nations, cultures, and people is a sentiment supported by current literature. This study demonstrates the need for further research on the impact living/studying abroad has on increased awareness and open-mindedness regarding gender role expectations.

Limitations of the Study

This study encountered the following limitations:

- *Sample size limitations:* A larger number of student participants in each focus group session would have strengthened this study and expanded upon the collection of data in the analysis. Each focus group session had an average of three to four participants. Though this enabled a comfortable conversation in which all members were able to voice their experiences, it limited the diversity of experiences that could have been discussed. The small-sized focus groups also hindered supportive dialogue, which is an advantage of this methodology. Had the focus groups included more participants, trends would have been more easily identified and discussed in detail.
- *Focus group limitations:* Group conversations were held in English, which could have limited the depth and accuracy of the conversations with Arabic-speaking participants. Also, international student participants could have been uncomfortable admitting dissatisfaction with their U.S. university or community. Many MENA international students are supported financially by their national government. There is reason to believe they would not show

their nation, or its policies, in a negative light. Another limitation to focus group sessions was the limited time frame of one hour. Many participants were not able to stay for longer than one hour, due to their school schedule. Often times, a conversation would begin to reach new depths and give much-needed clarity just as the one-hour mark arrived.

- *Lack of prior research studies on the topic:* The basis of a literature review and the foundation for understanding the research question explored is formed by prior research on the topic. Though gender role dichotomies and expectations have been explored in India, little to no studies exist for MENA nations on this subject matter. Gender role expectations in MENA nations is a current issue that lacks prior research. Due to this lack of research, the study took an exploratory rather than explanatory research design. The limitation caused by scant research on the topic also serves as an opportunity for further investigations.

Suggestions for Future Research

Many areas for further research were identified through this study. They include:

- *Intergender and intragender shaming:* Focus group conversations held throughout this study often fell upon the topic of individuals shaming other individuals in MENA nations. Some instances discussed were of males shaming females or of females ridiculing males for not following expected gender role expectations. However, most experiences discussed involved intragender shaming, in which males shamed other males and females shamed other females for not following societal norms regarding gender role expectations. Literature on the subjects of intergender shaming and, specifically, intragender shaming in MENA nations is weak, at best. Expanded research on this topic is recommended, along with how shaming affects not only the individual, but the gender and the social capital of groups. Further

research is also needed to explore the various reasons which cause individuals to shame others.

- *MENA gender role expectations maintained on U.S. campuses and communities:* Data in this study indicates that many MENA international students come to the U.S. to study/live with a firm mindset that they will not change any of their gender role expectations nor behave according to expectations seen in the U.S. In fact, when asked in the survey, a number of participants remarked on ways they wish to change the current U.S. stance regarding gender role expectations so as to be more in line with their personal MENA gender role mindset. More research is needed on how firm mindsets and expectations of MENA international students who live and study in the U.S. may influence the future mindsets of U.S. citizens and students. The U.S. hosts 1.1 million international students scattered throughout the U.S. each year (Zong & Batalova, 2018). A group this size is undoubtedly able to reshape and affect the viewpoints of their friends, colleagues, and co-workers.
- *Effects of time spent in U.S. on change in viewpoints of international students:* Quantitative information collected in this study showed that students who spent one year or less in the U.S. or who had spent over five years in the U.S. were more likely to change their gender role expectations to a more U.S. mindset regarding the issue. Ways in which institutional entities, i.e. universities, workplaces, social organization, re-form ideas and viewpoints of international students deserves further research. Additional research over both the influence institutions have, as well as the timeframe it takes to create a change in mindset, over international students is needed.
- *Effect of living/studying abroad on level of awareness and open-mindedness:* This study demonstrates the need to further research how increased awareness and open-mindedness

gained through living/studying abroad can affect a change in social norms and viewpoints, specifically regarding gender role expectations. Data gained through both the surveys and the focus group conversations suggests that there exists a parallel relationship between time spent living and studying abroad and the level of open-mindedness and flexibility regarding a host of social, political, and religious issues. The alteration of how an individual regards gender role expectations after living abroad requires further research.

- *Educational effects on gender role expectations in MENA nations:* Data obtained through this study demonstrated that the education level of parents is strongly tied to the awareness, maintenance, and testing of gender role expectations of MENA international students. More nation-specific and degree-specific research regarding the education levels of MENA parents and its effect on how children view gender role expectations is needed.
- *Role of MENA national policies on gendered inequality:* More nation-specific research regarding how national policies, specifically, shape gender expectations, inequalities, and abuses is suggested. This study could be replicated looking at a specific nation, in lieu of all MENA nations combined, so as to better understand the role national policies play in citizens' awareness, construction, and maintenance of gender role expectations.

Policy Recommendations

The following policy considerations are suggested to aid the expansion and enhancement of international education between developing and developed nations, with special attention given to growth of international education opportunities between MENA nations and the U.S.:

- *Importance of multiple group memberships:* Two key aspects, mentioned in focus group discussions, in respect to MENA international students' willingness to listen to new ideas or test new experiences while in the U.S. were: 1) the amount of opportunities they had to

engage in new ideas and experiences and 2) the amount of diversity in the people and groups they associated with while in the U.S. This study demonstrated that the more diverse of an experience international MENA student were able to have while in the U.S., the better able they were to accept different ideas and test previous ways of life. A struggle to fully engaging in new ideas and practices while in the U.S., as discussed by MENA students, was the inability to connect with U.S. students. According to many MENA students, U.S. students were seen as cold, unwelcoming, and not willing to spend the time it takes to foster a relationship with international students. It is understandable that U.S. students do not make an effort to create a relationship with international students. Factors such as little “free” time, language-translation difficulties, pre-formed friendships already in place, and misunderstandings about international cultures can all play into explanations for lack of connections between U.S. and international students on college campuses. One way to bridge this disconnection is university and community organizations. Universities should consider requiring international students to join one or more organization(s) while living in the U.S. These organizations could be based on school, work, special-interests, politics, religion, health, or volunteer work. The one caveat would be that they could not be associated with the students’ nation, as many international students expressed often sinking into a rut of only building relationships with fellow students from their nation of origin. This act of joining a campus or community organization will encourage MENA students to engage and interact with U.S. citizens from a diverse array of stations in life, promote further understanding of different cultures, and build a circle of support with other like-minded individuals. The more organizations in which a MENA international student is able to participate, the more fruitful the experience abroad will be.

- *One-on-one interaction with U.S. citizens:* One-on-one experiences with U.S. citizens allow MENA students to cultivate a more sincere, stable relationship with local students/citizens. Though loosely-based group memberships with local students/citizens is a great way to meet new people and try new practices, one-on-one interactions foster a deeper level of communication and trust. Unfortunately, these types of relationships are most often the hardest to create for MENA international students. When designing social programming for MENA international students, international education administrators should pay special attention to creating opportunities for one-on-one interactions with local students on the college campus. Additionally, local students should be educated upon the cultural differences of students from MENA nations.
- *Instruction on the history of Western civilization:* MENA international students would benefit from learning why Western civilization behaves the way it does today. Often times, in international student orientations, cultural, societal, and political differences are discussed. However, it would be advantageous for international students to understand why the differences exist, how they originated, and what spurred these changes. Many international students come from developing nations. They are experiencing the same national growing pains that U.S. citizens experienced one hundred years ago. These students will eventually return home, only to become the future leaders of their nation. It would be beneficial to understand the issues Western civilization, or the U.S. specifically, faced on the path to development, as well as how the issues were handled. Awareness of the issues and possible solutions encountered in Western civilization will give MENA international students a better understanding of the U.S., of possible challenges their nation might face, and ways to

overcome these challenges. Universities should consider requiring international students to enroll in one semester of a Western civilization-themed course.

- *Stronger relationships with developing nations:* University offices of International Education should make it a priority to recruit, enroll, and foster relationships with students from developing nations. University Development offices should be included in the conversation for securing funding for this special group of international students, as they often are subject to less financial funding and support to study/live abroad. Outside of the International Education office, most university administrators do not fully grasp the difficulty, and importance, involved in bringing students from developing nations to the U.S. to live and study. Educating not only International Education administrators but all university administrators on the significance of International Education on the campus, in the community, and in the nation is key to creating a space of understanding and a future of open-minds.

Conclusion

This study focused upon understanding the gender role expectations of MENA international students, as well as explaining how and why these expectations are maintained, tested and/or abandoned on U.S. campuses and communities. Conclusions from this study find that MENA international students are aware of gender role expectations from their nation of origin and that, while many maintain enculturated gender role expectations, most MENA students test out different gender role expectations, specifically those found in the U.S. Factors such as gender, age, time spent in the U.S., nation of origin, and education level of parents all present strong connections to the study participants' level of awareness, maintenance, and testing of gender role expectations from their MENA nation. The gender of the participant and their

nation of origin strongly connect to their awareness of gender role expectations, their wish to continue to embrace these expectations while in the U.S., and their willingness to test enculturated gender role expectations. This study notes that the education level of parents is strongly tied to awareness, maintenance, and testing of gender role expectations in MENA international students. More research on this topic is recommended in order to better support MENA international students in their pursuit for gender equality and increased freedoms within their MENA nations of origin.

Although many MENA participants expressed the desire to maintain their enculturated gender role expectations, they continued to show respect for the gender role expectations found in the U.S., or in any foreign nation outside of their own. The findings of this study enhance the current literature regarding gender role expectations, inequalities based on gender found in MENA nations, and the benefits of international education. Current literature on gender roles, inequalities based upon gender, and international education take on a general scope regarding issues related to gender roles. This study not only concentrates on MENA students, but also takes an interdisciplinary approach, demonstrating the connection different areas of academia share, so as to analyze how each has an effect on the other. Results of this study indicate that more attention should be given to the benefits of international education, social capital, and female involvement in politics, society, and education for MENA international students, as well as any group of international students' originating from a developing nation. MENA international student responses in this study illustrate that studying and living in a different nation, specifically one with a different level of development, can have a profound effect on one's understanding of gender role expectations. This study recommends that additional analysis be given to the role

international education and the national policies play on the inequalities maintained or abandoned on a global scale.

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Appendix A:

Tables 4-6

Descriptive Statistics of Participants

Table 4

Age, Gender, Academic Standing, and Length of time on Campus of Participants

Variable	Number	%
Age of Participants		
18-22	11	24%
23-27	8	18%
28-32	17	38%
33-37	4	9%
38-42	4	9%
43-47	1	2%
Gender		
Gender Variant	0	0
Female	22	39%
Male	34	61%
No Answer	0	0
Transgender Female	0	0
Transgender Male	0	0
Academic Standing		
Freshman	4	7%
Sophomore	4	7%
Junior	4	7%
Senior	7	13%
Senior (5th year +)	2	4%
Graduate	35	63%
Length of Time on Campus		
> 1 year	5	9%
1-2 years	3	6%
3-4 years	17	31%
5-6 years	20	37%
7-8 years	5	9%
9 years +	4	7%

Table 5
Area of Study and Nation of Citizenship of Participants

Variable	Number	%
Area of Study of Participants		
Computer Science	1	2%
Engineering	16	38%
Physics	1	2%
Economics & Business	7	17%
Geology, Ecology & Biology	4	10%
Communications	1	2%
English & Linguistics	2	5%
Psychology	2	5%
Pharmacy & Health Sciences	3	7%
Law	2	5%
Arts	3	7%
Nation of Citizenship of Participants		
UAE	2	4%
Tunisia	3	6%
Syria	1	2%
Kuwait	3	6%
Kurdistan	2	4%
Jordan	2	4%
Iraq	4	8%
Iran	9	17%
Egypt	4	8%
Saudi Arabia	21	40%
Libya	1	2%
Lebanon	1	2%

Table 6

Living Arrangements in the U.S., Education Level of Father, and Education Level of Mother of Participants

Variable	Number	%
Living Arrangements in U.S.		
With family	11	25%
Alone	8	18%
With a partner	17	39%
With others, not partner	4	9%
With a partner & others	4	9%
Education Level of Father		
No education	4	6%
Elementary	7	11%
High School	5	8%
Technical/Vocational	5	8%
Some college, no degree	2	3%
Bachelor's	21	32%
Master's	2	3%
Doctorate	9	14%
Education Level of Mother		
No education	7	13%
Elementary	11	20%
High School	7	13%
Technical/Vocational	2	4%
Some college, no degree	3	5%
Bachelor's	21	38%
Master's	4	7%
Doctorate	0	0

Note. United States (U.S.)

Appendix B:

Figures 5-13

MENA Student Enrollment Patterns in U.S. Universities

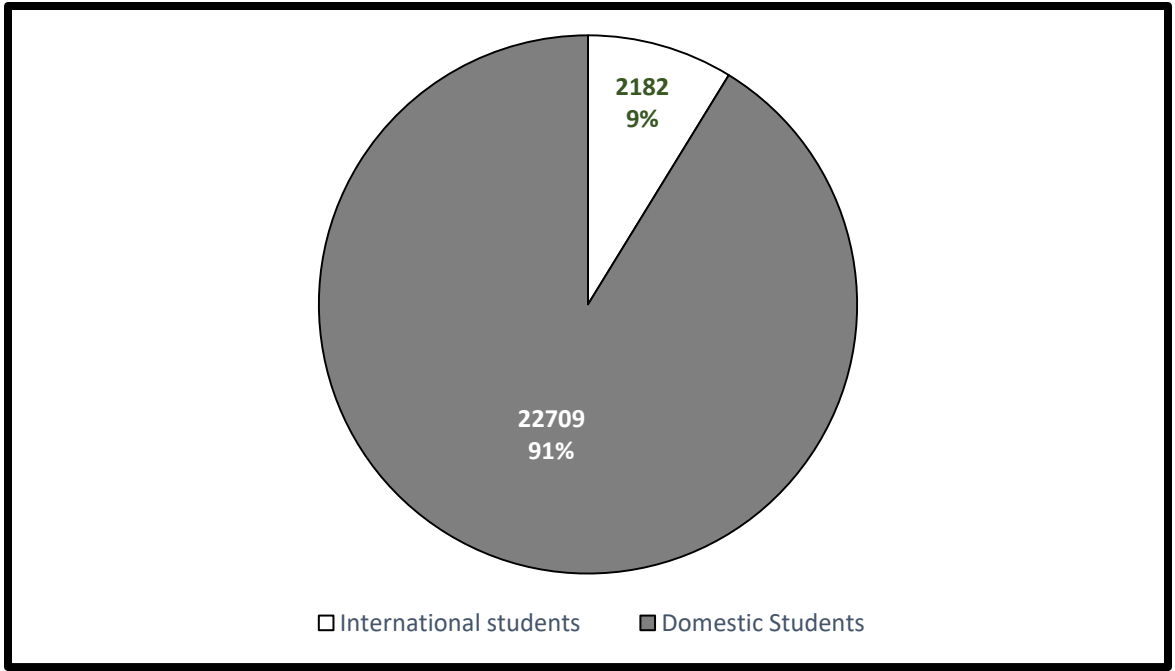


Figure 5
University of Kansas International Student Enrollment, Fall 2017

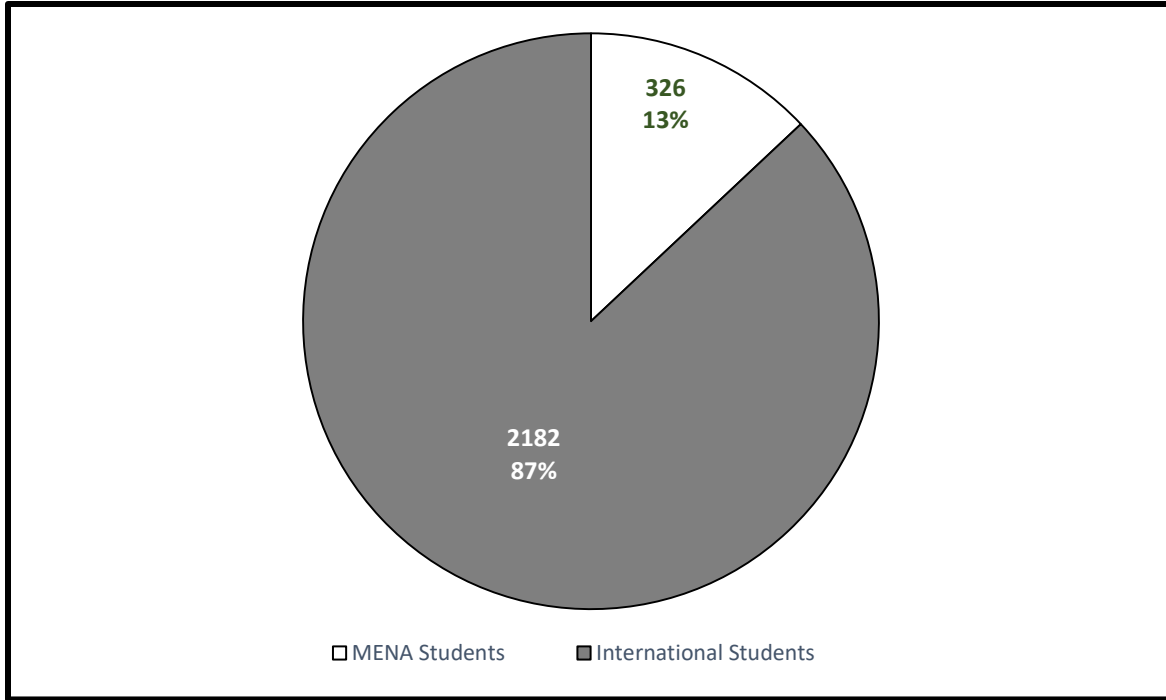


Figure 6
University of Kansas Middle Eastern and North African Student Enrollment, Fall 2017

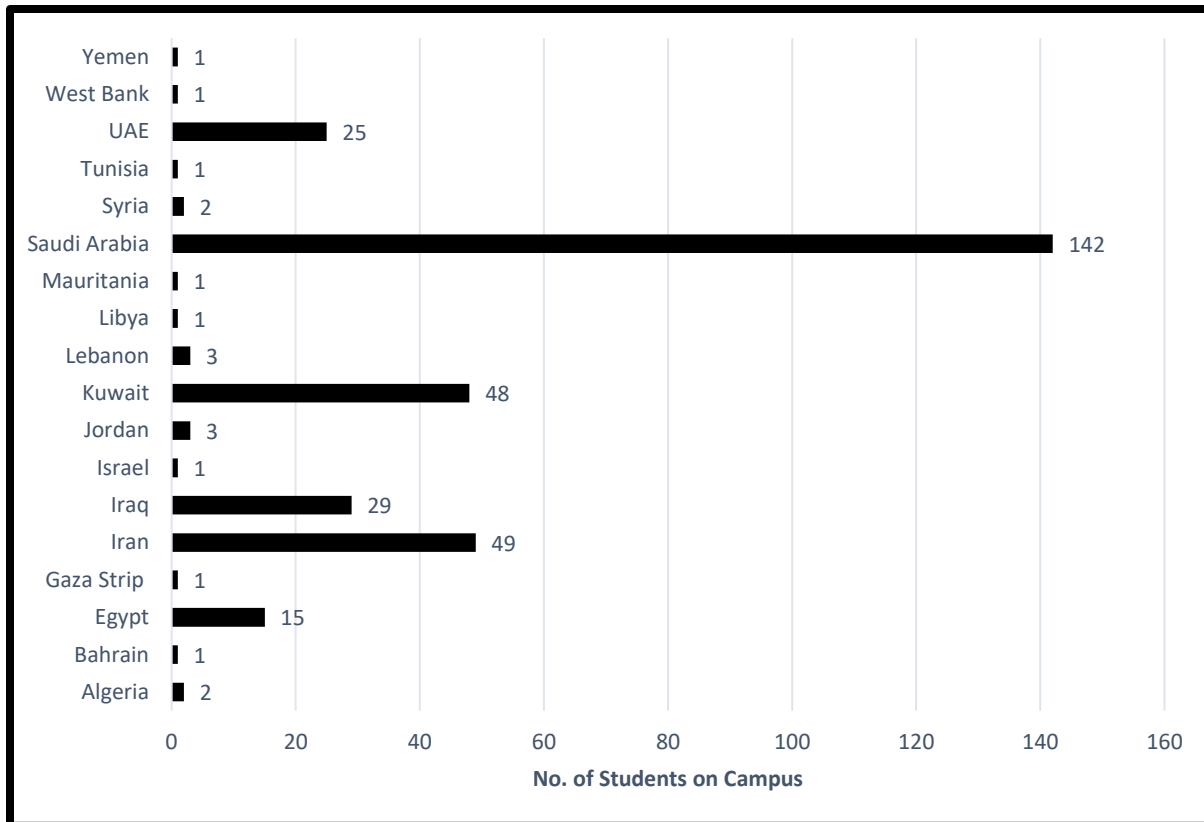


Figure 7

University of Kansas Middle Eastern and North African Nations on Campus, Fall 2017

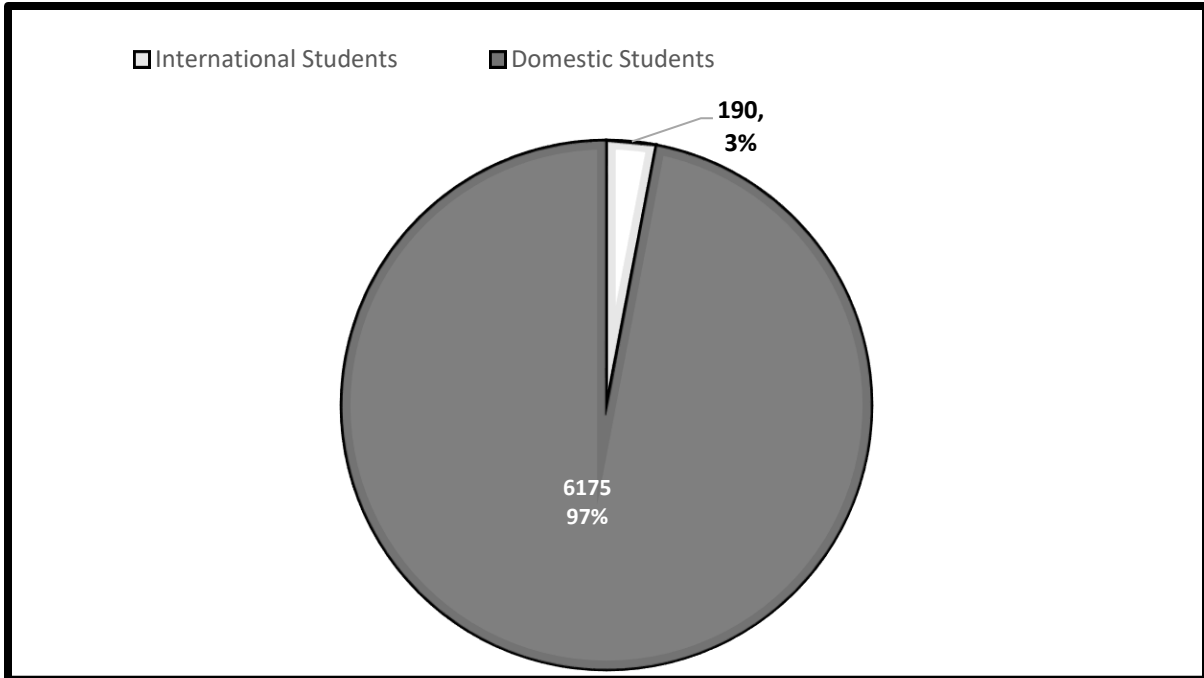


Figure 8
Missouri Southern State University International Student Enrollment, Fall 2017

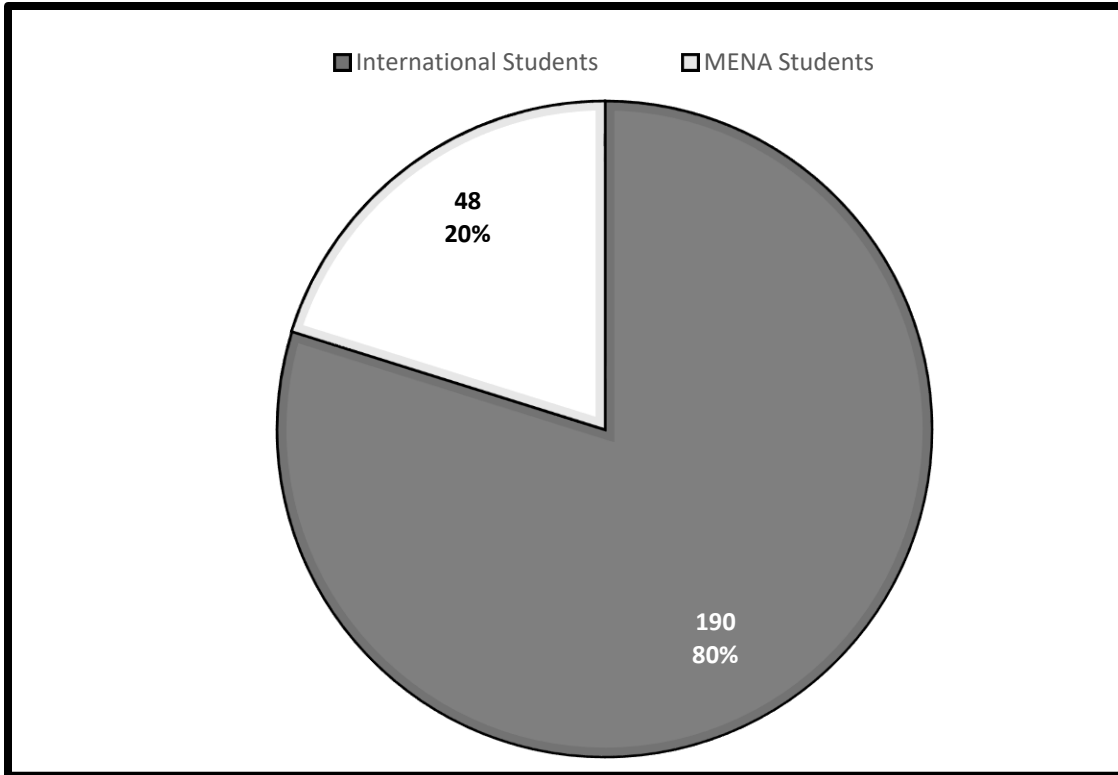


Figure 9
Missouri Southern State University Middle Eastern and North African Student Enrollment, Fall 2017

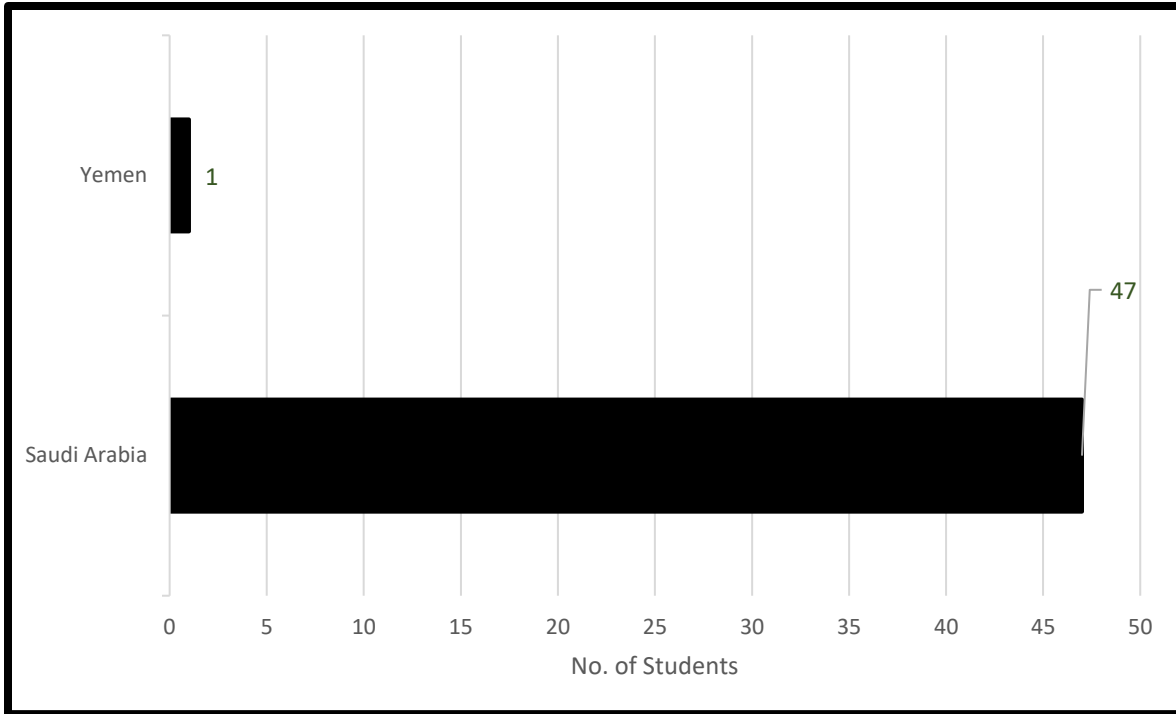


Figure 10
Missouri Southern State University Middle Eastern and North African Nations on Campus, Fall 2017

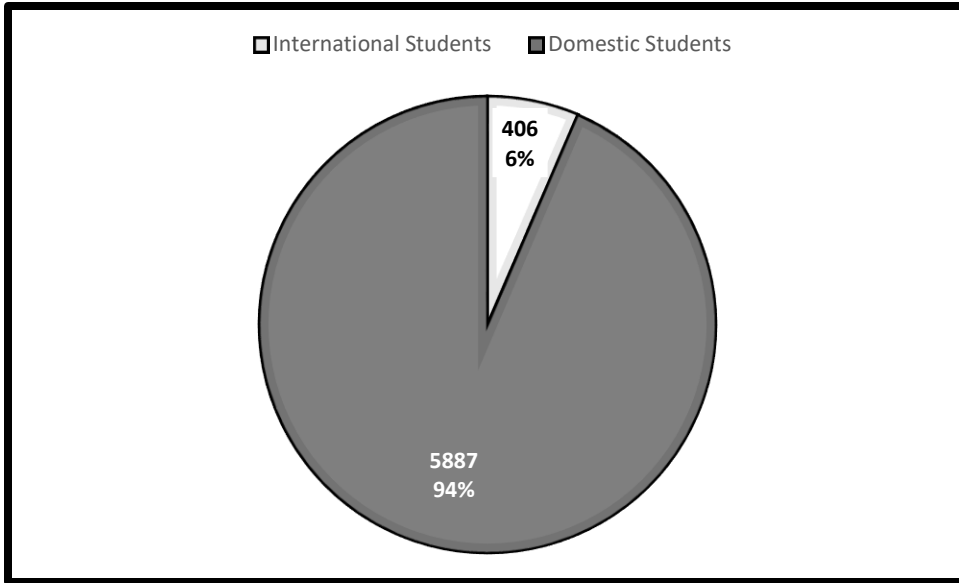


Figure 11
Emporia State University International Student Enrollment, Fall 2017

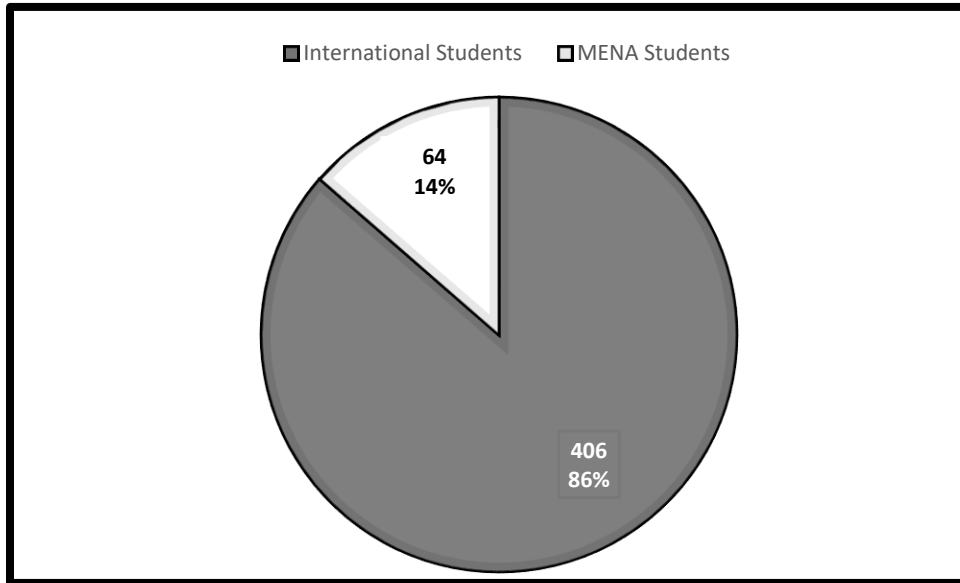


Figure 12
Emporia State University Middle Eastern and North African Student Enrollment, Fall 2017

Appendix C:

Table 7 & 8

Descriptive Statistics of Focus Group Participants

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Female Focus Group Participants

Variable	%
Age	
18-21 years	20%
22-25 years	40%
26-29 years	20%
30-33 years	20%
Study Level	
Undergraduate	50%
Graduate	50%
MENA Nation of Citizenship	
Egypt	50%
Saudi Arabia	25%
Tunisia	25%
Time in the U.S.	
2-3 years	60%
4-5 years	20%
6-7 years	20%
Living Arrangement	
Alone	67%
With Others, not Partner	33%

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Male Focus Group Participants

Variable	%
Age	
30-33 years	67%
34-37 years	33%
Study Level	
Graduate	100%
MENA Nation of Citizenship	
Iran	33%
Saudi Arabia	67%
Time in the U.S.	
2-3 years	33%
4-5 years	67%
Living Arrangement	
Alone	33%
With Family	67%

Appendix D:

Survey Questions

Name
 Age
 M F Trans Un-identified
 Year at KU
 Area of Study at KU
 Home Nation (Nation of Citizenship)
 Nation of Birth

Lives: Alone
 With Partner Partner is: M F
 With Partner & Others M F Both
 With Others, not Partner M F Both
 With Family M F Both

Level of Education of Father
 No Education
 Elementary Level
 High School
 Technical/Vocational School
 Some College, No Degree
 College Bachelor Degree
 Master's Degree
 Doctoral Degree

Level of Education of Mother
 No Education
 Elementary Level
 High School
 Technical/Vocational School
 Some College, No Degree
 College Bachelor Degree
 Master's Degree
 Doctoral Degree

Employment Status in home nation (nation of citizenship): Employed Non Employed

Employment Title in home nation (nation of citizenship):

Employment Status in U.S.: Employed Non Employed

Employment Title in U.S.:

Extracurricular activities (organizations, associations, clubs) in home nation:

Extracurricular (organizations, associations, clubs) activities in the U.S.:

The next set of questions will address gender roles both in your home nation and in the United States.

Gender Roles: The role or behavior learned by a person as appropriate to their gender, determined by the prevailing cultural norms. A social role encompassing a range of behaviors and attitudes that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived gender or sexuality.

Are gender roles present, in your opinion, in your home nation?

Yes, they are definitely present

Yes, they are present but not everyone is expected to conform/obey

Yes, they are present but people rarely conform/obey

I do not know

No there are no gender roles

If so, please list typical “Male” gender roles in your home nation:

If so, please list typical “Female” gender roles in your home nation:

When you think about the other students you know from your home nation who are also currently studying in the United States do you observe that they behave according to gender roles from your home nation?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Frequently

All of the Time

Based on what you know about the United States, do you believe that gender roles are present in the United States? In other words, do you believe that men and women in the United States behave according to gender roles?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Frequently

All of the Time

If so, please list typical “Male” gender roles seen in the United States:

If so, please list typical “Female” gender roles seen in the United States:

When you think about students you know who are from the United States, do you observe that they behave, in general, according to gender roles in the United States?

When you think about other students you know from your home nation who are currently studying in the United States, do you observe that they behave, in general, according to gender roles in the United States?

Has your experience in the U.S., both in the community and on campus, challenged or changed your idea of expected gender roles? Yes No

If so, how?

Research shows that when students study abroad they often embrace the cultural and social behaviors of the new nation in which they are living. Your experience in the U.S., both in the community and on campus, has caused you to:

Change your gender role expectations

Embrace your gender role expectations

My gender role expectations have not been altered by this experience

If your experience has caused you to change your encultured gender role expectations, how have your gender role expectations changed?

If your experience has caused you to more strongly embrace encultured gender role expectations, how have you more strongly embraced these roles?

When you return to your country of origin, will your attitude toward expected gender roles be different than we you left for the U.S.?:

Very Different
Different

Different

I Do Not Know

Not Very Different

Not
Different

If yes, how has your view of expected gender roles changed while living in the U.S.?

If yes, how will you put these changed ideas regarding expected gender roles into practice in your home nation?

Regarding gender role expectations, is there anything you wish your home nation's culture could change?

If so, what?

Regarding gender role expectations, is there anything you wish your U.S. community/campus could change?

If so, what?

Appendix E:

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Protocol

Introduction (3 min):

Hi! My name is Amber. I'm a graduate student at the University of Kansas (KU). I'm working on a research project for my Master's thesis in Global and International Studies. I would like to have a conversation with you because you're an international university student at KU.

In this conversation, there are no right or wrong answers to the questions I ask. The more information you can share with me the better. Specific examples and stories are a fantastic way to help me understand your views and experiences. Please feel free to skip questions if you are uncomfortable by anything I ask. Everything in this interview is voluntary. Also, we can stop this interview at any time.

This interview will last approximately 60 minutes. It is now ____, so we should be finished at about ____. Please take a look at the consent form. If you do not wish to consent to the study, you're free to go. I'm going to start the recorder. Can each person consent to being recorded and participating in the focus group?

Do you have any questions before we begin? Note: It is important to remember that I will use pseudonyms for all research participants meaning that this is confidential and any identifying information you share will be omitted when I report the findings of the study.

Background (7 min):

- Let's go around the room. Each person, please tell us in a few sentences your "fake" name, your home nation (nation of citizenship), and why you chose to study in the United States (U.S.)?
- Why did you wish to come to KU, specifically?

Gender Roles (18 min):

- What does the phrase "gender roles" mean to you?
 - What are the expected gender roles of a woman?
 - Of a man?
- In your home nation, do people generally follow the gender roles expectations?
 - If so, what are these expected gender roles?
 - Do you feel these gender roles from your home nation are maintained on U.S. campuses (KU) and communities (Lawrence)?
- Have you seen people follow gender roles expectations while in the U.S.?
 - If so, what are these expected gender roles?
 - Were they by U.S. natives or international students?

- What influenced your understanding of the gender roles a man versus the roles of a woman?
- Do gender roles have a positive, neutral, or negative effect on people?
 - What are some of these effects?

Effects of Gender Roles (15 min):

- Can expected gender roles limit people?
 - If yes, how so?
 - Have you ever been limited by your gender in the U.S.?
 - Have you ever been limited by your gender in your home nation?
- Do you interact with U.S. (local) students on regular basis? Daily? Weekly?
 - What do these interactions look like? Close friends? Members of an organization? Classmates? Co-workers?
- While in the U.S./at KU, have your gender role expectations changed?
 - If yes, do you still maintain (follow/keep up) the expected gender roles practiced in your home nation or have your practices changed at all?
 - If your practices in the U.S. have changed compared to that of your home nation, has this change been a good or bad experience? Explain.
- If you no longer follow the expected gender roles typical of your home nation, what has been the biggest challenge as you made these changes? Biggest reward (best feeling)?

Concluding Question (5 min):

- What do you anticipate upon return to your home nation? If your gender role expectations and practices have changed while in the U.S., will you keep those changes or will you go back to the gender role expectations you held before?

Conclusion:

Thank you for answering these questions.

If you have any questions or concerns, my contact information is on your copy of the consent form.