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**Transnational Saudi Arabian Youth and Facebook:
Enacting Privacy and Identity**

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Abstract

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Theories of privacy and identity in relationship to the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) have been a topic of research for decades. However, little attention has been paid to the perception of privacy and identity from the perspective of Muslim Arab technology users. Privacy and identity in the context of the Arab world is highly influenced by the Islamic religion and the deeply rooted Bedouin cultural traditions. I examined the use of social media, specifically, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, by 34 transnational Saudi Arabian young adults (ages 18-35). The aim was to understand how they conceptualize and enact privacy and self-presentation as transnationals, that is, during back-and-forth movement from Saudi Arabia to the United States. Specifically, I employed a qualitative cross-sectional approach from three different points in their transnational experience: before coming to the US, during their time in the US and after their return to Saudi Arabia upon graduation. Resisting the culturally hegemonic form of privacy, this study provided culturally-inclusive and expansive design insights from an understudied user group to address some of the questionable privacy models in current social media design. I also provided empirical data that revealed new findings regarding Saudis' sense

of privacy and identity, their concerns with the design of current digital media technologies, and how they appropriate these platforms to accomplish their own privacy and identity needs.

After experimenting with other methods, including standalone interviews, my study involved the development of what I called design sessions that included a combination of three qualitative methods: background questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and a collage construction activity. This method was powerful in eliciting value conceptualization, concerns, and emotions that I synthesized through a thematic analysis. I used this qualitative approach to provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of this understudied, and often misunderstood, population in design and research.

My dissertation addresses three research questions:

RQ1: How do transnational Saudi youth conceptualize privacy (and other relatedly important values) while using social media during their transnational experience?

- a) What are the daily privacy concerns associated with the use of Facebook – if any?
- b) Where concerns are present, what workarounds and privacy protection tactics do women and men employ, respectively, to the current privacy and security controls to serve their cultural-based needs?

RQ2: How do transnational Saudi youth use and imagine using social networking sites before, during, after their extended study abroad?

RQ3: What are the design insights and principles needed to guide the technical design of privacy aware and culturally-sensitive technologies?

My dissertation goals include:

- 1) Enrich and expand the understanding of the specific culturally grounded practices of privacy and identity with regards to social media in general, but with recourse to an Arab context, using the transnational analytical lens.

2) Demonstrate how privacy is required, demanded, and experienced by a Muslim population going through the transnational journey of privacy across two cultural contexts vis-à-vis social media. Furthermore, from my empirical data, I theorized the concept of *transnational privacy*; the idea that transnational young people/students engage in privacy practices that stretch their original understanding of privacy to include patterns adopted in the hosting society. In time, transnationals learn to deftly navigate and adapt to the different norms of their originating society (Saudi Arabia) and their host society (United States).

3) Extend the studies of human values and technology appropriation to include Arabs, and to clarify the bidirectional effects caused by the mix of technology, privacy, and culture: social shaping of technology and social impact created by it.

4) Reflect on the contextually-appropriate use of certain methods, such as semi-structured interviews and visual elicitation techniques in an investigation rooted in socio-technical practices occurring in two extremely different contexts, by the same population.

5) Offer technology designers, policy makers, and the industry in general, culturally-sensitive design principles that incorporate previously unexplored characteristics of privacy and identity.

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DEDICATION

To my mother, who never stopped encouraging me and praying for me.

To the original Dr. Abokhodair, my father and my role model.

To Yavor, who loved and believed in me.

To my generation and many more future generations of strong empowered Saudi women.

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are playing an increasingly important role in the everyday life of young adults around the world. This adoption is not without its challenges. This technology is bringing challenges in terms of the ways people experience their personal and online privacy, safety, and identity. Much research has already been done within the field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), which contributes research and interaction design to promote privacy and security, but open questions remain. One concern is that notions of privacy that are inscribed in technologies and services derive from a particular perspective – i.e., privileged, Western, and technologically-oriented (Alsheikh, Rode, & Lindley, 2011; Dourish & Anderson, 2006; Lindtner, Anderson, & Dourish, 2011; Palen & Dourish, 2003; Ur & Wang, 2013). In many cases, users who do not fit into this category—and even some who do—have been under represented by not having their privacy expectations met. Reports have discussed the different conceptions of privacy across cultures and the many unexpected ways SNS have undermined users’ desire for privacy by assuming that one setting fits all regions. In other words, a culturally hegemonic form of privacy is being inscribed in most of the technology people all over the world are using (Altman, 1977; Friedman, Kahn Jr, & Borning, 2006; Johnson, Egelman, & Bellovin, 2012; Nissenbaum, 1998, 2004; Solove, 2008).

One way to address this problem is through the inclusion of a wider spectrum of users who are from diverse cultures and employing methods that explore difference across cultures by keeping the users’ values and beliefs in mind during the design process, see, e.g., Alsheikh et al. (2011), Dourish and Anderson (2006), and Friedman et al. (2008). Another way is through a more

in-depth exploration of the relationship between privacy, identity and information disclosure across different age groups, marital statuses, religions, and cultural backgrounds. For many years, Western cultures have been the focal point of the vast majority of research on privacy expectations on SNS. This is due, first and foremost, to the fact that the headquarters of many of the SNS companies are in the USA or Europe, which enables easy access to Western users compared to participants from other countries. This comes with the big risk of a limited cultural and societal perspective resulting in biased views of users informing technology design (Jancke, Venolia, Grudin, Cadiz, & Gupta, 2001). Leading designers and the industry as a whole to assume that one size fits all regions. This practice of limited and culturally biased views of users is necessarily discriminatory as it renders other practices “not normal” and therefore marginalized. There is a big risk in allowing these misconceptions to guide our technology design and our understanding of other cultures. I strongly support that “*a first step towards designing for privacy (and other values) entails understanding what privacy means to those who will use and be affected by the use of technology*” (Friedman et al., 2008, p. 143).

Cross-cultural researchers have noted ways in which Arab social media users enact norms that dictate modesty and consider the importance of reputation, self-image and family honor, (Al Omoush, Yaseen, & Alma’Aitah, 2012; Alsheikh et al., 2011; Lindtner, Anderson, & Dourish, 2012; Ur & Wang, 2013), but a focus on privacy related to Arab social media use has yet to be theorized and investigated empirically. In my dissertation, I conducted a qualitative investigation to understand how transnational young adults conceptualized the values of privacy, safety and identity while using Facebook and other SNS. In this study, I maintain that the Hofstede model—which is commonly used in cross-cultural studies—is a simplistic way to define culture (Appadurai, 1996; Zhang, Gaskin, & Lowry, 2010), and move beyond the current notion of nation-

state as a unit of analysis to a transnational-state. My use of the term ‘transnational’ is associated with the definition provided in Transnationalism theory. Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc (1994), the pioneers of transnational studies, define transnationalism in their book *Nations Unbound: Transnational projects and the deterritorialized nation-state* as an alternative understanding of immigration:

“The process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders” (Basch et al., 1994, p. 7).

Such a concept of state, I argue, is more inclusive and accurate, and gives us greater purchase when explaining the modern state of affairs than focusing on the boundaries of a nation state. Further motivating the use of this theory is that the assumption that people will live their lives in one place, according to one set of national and cultural norms, in countries with impermeable national borders, no longer holds. Rather, more and more people will belong to two or more societies at the same time. This is what many researchers refer to as *transnational migration*. Transnational populations cross borders, to study or work, they socialize, practice their religious and political interests in several contexts rather than in a single nation-state. Some will put down roots in a host country, maintain strong homeland ties, and belong to religious and political movements that span the globe. These allegiances are not antithetical to one another.

In addition, my use of the term ‘values’ is associated with the definition provided in Value Sensitive Design (VSD) theory that is, “what a person or a group of people consider important in life” (Friedman & Kahn Jr, 2000, p. 2). During my research, region-specific values—other than privacy, safety, and identity—of equal importance emerged, such as *family honor* and *modesty*, and using the VSD approach allowed me to synthesize those (I provide a full description of these values in the Study Context). In conducting this research, I utilized my “insider” status being a

female Saudi living between Saudi Arabia and the US, leveraged my multilingual and cross-cultural background, and applied my expert knowledge of qualitative and visual methods to evaluate Facebook as a platform used by young adults who are going through the experience of moving between two radically different contexts and its impact on the values important to them.

My dissertation revealed three findings. First, it extended the studies of human values, technology appropriation and SNS to include Arab vs. Western cultures, and clarified the bi-directional effect of technology, privacy and Arab cultures, particularly the social shaping of technology and social impact. Second, resisting a culturally hegemonic form of privacy, this study provided culturally-sensitive design insights from an understudied user group to address some of the problematic privacy models in SNS design. Lastly, my use of the analytical lens of transnationalism (Basch et al., 1994; Burrell & Anderson, 2008; Faist, 1998; Levitt & Schiller, 2004) to study and understand privacy expanded the discussion on technology development and cross-cultural studies by providing a greater understanding of the cultural and religious values shared by Arab Muslim populations. Furthermore, from my empirical data, I theorized the concept of *transnational privacy*; the idea that transnational young people/students engage in privacy practices that stretch their original understanding of privacy to include patterns adopted in the hosting society. In time, transnationals learn to deftly navigate and adapt to the different norms of their originating society (Saudi Arabia) and their host society (United States). During their transnational experience, my participants discussed the influence of being in the United States on their privacy behaviors on social media. In one form of adaptation, participants opened a new account that represents their newly formed, or imagined, transnational identity. In another, participants felt at liberty to present their “true” selves quite openly by using real profile pictures and real names.

1.2 THE ARAB WORLD AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The Arab World consists of 22 countries stretched across two continents (Asia and Africa) making it one of the world's most strategic territories; it stretches across the area from the Atlantic coast of northern Africa in the west to the Arabian Sea in the east, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to Central Africa in the south (Figure 1.1 Map of the Arab World in Green.) Arab nationalism (i.e. nationalist ideology) initiated with the formation of the Arab League in 1945 to celebrate the Arabic-speaking civilizations and to centralize any form of needed help for members of the union to grow culturally and economically.



Figure 1.1 Map of the Arab World in Green

The Arab World is rich in diversity with various religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups sharing the same region. Besides sharing the same language, Arab countries share a strong history dominated by the early colonialism era. Another dominant feature of this region is symbolized in adherence to cultural values that vary from conservative (e.g. Saudi Arabia) to modern and more secular (e.g. Lebanon). Lastly, economic activities and growth influenced the rates and ratio of technology adoption in the region. Consider, for example, that Saudi Arabia ranks seventh in the world for per-capita social media accounts (News, 2015).

The Arab World faces a lot of challenges and restrictions when it comes to the right to freedom of speech and expression, democracy, religious practice, and gender roles. Many of these

challenges were revealed in recent research done to investigate the use of technology during the Egyptian, Tunisian, and Libyan revolutions, and the ongoing Syrian Civil War (the so-called Arab Spring), see, e.g., (Abokhodair, Yoo, & McDonald, 2015; Agarwal, Lim, & Wigand, 2012; Baron, Abokhodair, & Garrido, 2013; Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012; Khamis & Vaughn, 2011). In terms of technology, researchers paid enormous attention to the study of the innovative ways Arab youth utilized SNS (Baron et al., 2013; Mohamed, 2012). A variety of aspects were discussed in these studies, with some studies focused on the new opportunities offered by SNS for youth to break out of their silence and participate in collective action such as, creating Facebook events for physical demonstrations and live tweeting and blogging street action. Another portion of these studies focused on the critical roles of the electronic societies in organizing, coordinating, and publicizing the protests (Baron et al., 2013). Different platforms have been utilized as a medium to express opinion and to call for equal rights (Agarwal et al., 2012). As noted by Khamis and Vaughn (2011), Facebook enhanced the ability of activists and protestors to coordinate peaceful protests while allowing larger segments of the public to participate as citizen journalists documenting and sharing witness accounts and cell phone images and videos. The study by Baron et al. (2013) conforms with the common discourse that SNS had a crucial role in mobilizing youth, raising political awareness, and bridging the virtual world with the physical streets.

From these studies, it is clear that social media is increasingly providing the Arab World with a platform for freedom of speech and expression. A study by Diamond (2010) goes beyond that, rendering these technologies “liberation technologies,” that are shaping and changing the fate and the face of societies, especially in the Arab World. This attention to understand the ways social media and the Internet have influenced Arabs’ level of participation in the political discourse revealed a complex set of practices and tensions that are not reflected in the dominant discourse

around social media in the United States and Europe, i.e., the “Western world”. To better understand the tensions and appropriations of this population—who are engaging with social technologies designed for a different set of assumptions about the socio-political and cultural landscape of the imagined users— I argue for the need to take a few steps back to understand the ways technology is adopted and appropriated by Arabs in their everyday life and to offer a way to think about how we can push more deeply on other cultural forms and practices “below the surface”. Very little research has focused on studying Arabs’ daily use and experience with SNS, and the opportunities and challenges these technologies bring them in terms of managing privacy, safety, and identity.

For technology users from the Arab World, the Arabic language, religious affiliation, and cultural expectations are factors that play a critical role in technology adoption and use. In particular, understandings of privacy are tied to expectations and norms that have foundations in Muslim religious practice. The importance of privacy is borne of the responsibility to maintain the sanctity of one’s body and one’s home, in addition to upholding the honor and good name of one’s extended family. Much of the work on technology adoption in the context of Arab cultures (and other cultures outside Western contexts) has barely scratched the surface on the problem of undermining privacy and compromising users’ safety.

In my dissertation, I investigated one of the most traditionally and religiously conservative countries in the Arab World, Saudi Arabia. I conducted a study to understand the ways Saudi young adults used social media, conceptualized privacy and identity during their transnational experience, that is, as they move back and forth between Saudi Arabia and the US. Moreover, I investigated the associated privacy concerns, implications, and privacy protection tactics on their personal privacy and safety.

1.3 RESEARCHER STANCE

From the position of a Saudi Arabian native, a female Ph.D. student at UW, my main goal in conducting this research was to examine and communicate the values of my society. Since arriving to the USA in 2009, I have worked hard to not allow my environment (nor the one I came from) to limit the range of my thinking, and my commitment to my research has been unflinching. In my research, my intention is to empower and give voice to the voiceless. My own view is similar to Abu-Lughod (2002) who suggested that rather than using the term ‘saving’, a more productive approach is to ask ourselves “how might we contribute to making the world a more just place” (2002, p. 789).

As I approached this research, I quickly realized I was “stepping into a minefield” as my research revealed findings (especially related to women) that might either be challenged by my own population as overtly exposing, or on the other hand, by Western researchers and thinkers, who might assume a need for “saving” and liberating people from the ultraconservative practices of Saudi Arabia, based in large part on religion and cultural norms. In situating myself as a researcher of this topic, I find myself refusing to associate with any sorts of prejudice over my population. I take my cue from Mona Eltahawy (2015), an Egyptian-American journalist who expressed discomfort with the notion of “save my culture and faith” that is usually associated with research written from the standpoint of Western educated researchers. She says:

“Blind to the privilege and the paternalism that drive them, they give themselves the right to determine what is “authentic” to my culture and faith. If the right wing is driven by a covert racism, the left sometimes suffers from an implicit racism through which it usurps my right to determine what I can and cannot say. Culture evolves, but it will remain static if outsiders consistently silence criticism in a misguided attempt to save us from ourselves. Cultures evolve through dissent and robust criticism from their members” (2015, p. 24).

As a researcher, I worked from a design stance that sought both to understand the context as well as to create meaningful change. I produced rigorous research that, I hope, enabled my participants to voice and communicate their values, which I have translated into a meaningful contribution for system design. In the traditions of action research (Hayes, 2011) and participatory design (Muller, 2003), throughout my research timeframe, I created mutually beneficial feedback loops between my research, design, and involved parties (for example by working with Saudi students' advisors at the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program). I believe that my study approach and findings will touch not only the lives of people in Saudi, but also others, within and outside Saudi. Since the outset of my doctoral studies, I have sought to bring forward the views of stakeholders who are not typically considered in Western research, and I have sought to publish in the top research conferences, namely ACM CHI, ACM CSCW, and ACM DIS. Moving the field forward, I co-founded the *HCI across the Arab World* initiative to empower, bridge and connect HCI researchers and practitioners from the Arab world with those who are conducting/interested in research in this context.

I am inspired by feminist perspectives on knowledge creation. In particular, I drew from the “situated character of knowledge” by De La Bellacasa (2012), which allowed me to present my findings and subsequent conclusions as intersubjectively-created “layers of meaning” derived from my empirically-based data analysis. In reality, I am studying a population that is often under great scrutiny from a “Western” perspective (e.g. people from conservative Muslim societies are frequently viewed as oppressed, uneducated and/or hindered in any number of ways), I took it upon me to allow the data to “speak” without any preconceived notions of how this population should interact with, or perceive, privacy. Instead, my responsibility is to offer a window into the

practice as it is articulated and experienced by a lesser-studied population of users—in this case, transnational Saudis.

One of the values I hold dearly is my independence and freedom to be authentic and real. During my research, I faced challenges while conducting the study in Saudi that ranged on a spectrum from my appearance—mainly because I don’t wear hijab—to logistical—meeting female and male participants in a gender-segregated society. Nevertheless, my commitment to this research prevailed all obstacles, while in the same time, made sure I followed and respected Saudi cultural norms when interacting with my participants. Additionally, I acknowledge that politics and religion are two extremely sensitive topics in the Saudi culture, hence I strategically framed my questions in a language that doesn’t imply or suggest a subversive position. In conclusion, I borrow a statement from Cole (2012, p. 5) article in the Atlantic¹ to summarize my research stance: *“if we are going to interfere in the lives of others, a little due diligence is a minimum requirement.”*

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I conducted a study to report on the experience Saudi transmigrants undergo when interacting with Facebook and other social media platforms, especially, how they conceptualize privacy, safety and identity. In this dissertation, I aimed to make a first step towards filling the gap in research on understanding this unique user group. In addition, I build on existing cross-cultural research on privacy vis-a-vis social media use in non-Western contexts to enrich this discussion. I sought to theorize privacy based on the data I collected; in addition, I drew from work that had been inspired by various theoretical orientations. My dissertation research is guided by the following research questions:

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>

RQ1: How do transnational Saudi youth conceptualize privacy (and other relatedly important values) while using social media during their transnational experience?

- a) What are the daily privacy concerns associated with the use of Facebook– if any?
- b) Where concerns are present, what workarounds and privacy protection tactics do women and men employ, respectively, to the current privacy and security controls to serve their cultural-based needs?

RQ2: How do transnational Saudi youth use and imagine using social networking sites before, during, and after their extended study abroad?

RQ3: What are the design insights and principles needed to guide the technical design of privacy aware and culturally sensitive technologies?

1.5 DISSERTATION OUTLINE

This dissertation is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 2 – Introducing the study context: This chapter offers a deep view of the cultural context of Saudi Arabia, as it was very influential in shaping the views of my participants.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review: This chapter gives an overview of previous research on social media and key values, including privacy and self-presentation. An overview of transnationalism, privacy in Islam and Value Sensitive Design.

Chapter 4 – Methods and Data Analysis: This chapter discusses proposed research approach, methods used to recruit participants, data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5 – Privacy in Transition: In this chapter, I presented the privacy related findings of my empirical investigation. The findings are mainly organized in three categories based on the themes that emerged from the data: 1) privacy meaning and conceptualization, 2) privacy risks and concerns, 3) privacy protection tactics. I conclude this chapter with discussing and unpacking *transnational privacy*- my theoretical contribution.

Chapter 6 – Discussion: In this chapter, I summarize my research findings and provide a discussion of the implications of my findings for theory, method and design.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion: This chapter presents expected contributions of this study, limitations, as well as researcher stance.

Chapter 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY CONTEXT: SAUDI ARABIA

In this chapter, I provide a review of Saudi Arabia as the most under represented context for this study, as it is crucial for readers who are not familiar with Saudi culture to understand relevant aspects and some of the unique contextual concepts related to this population. Recognizing that this is a transnational study and more than on context is involved, much of the literature and familiarity as Human-Computer Interaction researchers and social scientists is with the US context and the general Western context. Whereas, Saudi Arabia, is one of the dominant and most influential cultural contexts of this transnational experience, and is commonly misunderstood or understudied. Following the Value Sensitive Design roadmap, this chapter, together with the Literature Review chapter, represents my conceptual investigation (Friedman et al., 2006) where I provide a thick description of the Saudi context in addition framing definitions of some of the key values I found. In this chapter, I provide to framing definitions of some of the key values I investigated that are central to my population. Overall, my objective is to continue discussing why this investigation matters and to justify the conceptual point-of-view anchoring this project while drawing out motivations for this study.

2.1 MAIN RESEARCH FIELD: SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia—officially known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—is the second



Figure 2.1 Map of Saudi Arabia and the General Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) area.

largest Arab state (the first is Algeria), the largest of The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Figure 2.1), and comprises much of the Arabian Peninsula. The majority of the Saudi population is Sunni Muslim and the Islamic faith is the driving factor that influences behavior, institutional policies, and social practices. The Quran (The Islamic holy book) and the Hadith (the sayings and example of the prophet Mohammad) are central sources from which citizens draw inspiration and knowledge regarding acceptable conduct and actions. Saudi Arabia practices a full-on version² of *Sharia—or Islamic—Law* that draws from the Quran and Hadith. In addition, to these sources, two secondary sources that are often used nowadays are: consensus (*Ijma* in Arabic)— “the consensus or agreement of the Muslim scholars basically on religious issues” (Shafaat, 1984), and analogical reasoning (*Qiyas* in Arabic)— “a method of deducing laws on matters not explicitly covered by the *Quran* or [Hadith] without relying on unsystematic opinion. According to this method, the ruling of the *Quran* or [Hadith] may be extended to a new problem provided that the precedent and the new problem share the same operative or effective cause” (The-Oxford-Dictionary-of-Islam).

Arabic is the official language and the language of the Quran; it is the primary language taught at public schools and used in official government processes. Nevertheless, English is considered an important lingua franca in Saudi, especially for educational and professional development; it is the second most common language among citizens and is used in many day-to-day interactions. In addition, English classes are compulsory in schools.

Saudi society is collectivistic in nature; leaning towards the *High-Context* end of Edward Hall’s (1989, p. 91) cultural spectrum and Geert and Hofstede (2005) collectivist measure, in which high-context cultures are described as “*societies or groups where people have close*

² As opposed to a hybrid version like other GCC countries (e.g., The United Arab Emirates that drives some elements from it). Saudi Arabia’s penal code is based strictly on Islamic Sharia.

connections over a long period of time” (Salmons, Wilson, Salmons, & Wilson, 2009, p. 41). In Saudi Arabia, patriarchal norms direct behavior; the reputation of one’s family and tribe are of the utmost importance and take precedence over individual status, needs or self-image. In collectivistic cultures, individuals identify as part of strong and cohesive long-term commitments to a whole (Geert & Hofstede, 2005). This can be seen in the relationship Saudis have with their immediate and extended family, the tribe, and their extended relationships.

While the cultural practices widely adopted in collectivist countries share many commonalities, these are relative tendencies and not absolute formulae for acting. Like any region of the world, Saudi Arabia is not a monolith. The practices described in this dissertation should not be taken as a homogenous representation of a static “culture” without internal variation. Nor should they be judged against some idealized—and all-too-often exoticized—notion of a “traditional culture” that can be cleanly separated from the “modern” world.

In the following, I delve deeper into the Saudi context to guide the reader and set the stage for the remaining chapters. I will first start by discussing important aspects of the populations, such as, demographics, technology adoption, and gender dynamics. After that, I explicate the common and related collectivist values that strongly influenced the discussion among my participants regarding privacy and identity in my study. These values include, and are not limited to, relationship to family (In Arabic: *silatur-rahim*), honor and reputation.

2.2 SAUDI ARABIA’S DEMOGRAPHICS

Saudi Arabia is experiencing an interesting demographic shift as the number of youth is increasing, compared to previous years (Murphy, 2011). As of 2015, the population count reached about 32.5M (with a ratio of 1.3 males/females). Approximately 27% of the Saudi population is 14 years old or younger, 46% are under 25, and 47% are between 25-54 years old (Mundi, 2016) with the

median age of 28.6 years (Worldometers, 2017)—For comparison, in the US, 19% of the population is 14 years and younger; and 40.7% is 29 and below. These numbers are important to highlight for this research as the youth in Saudi Arabia play a prominent role in the highly-anticipated reforms happening in the region due to their demographic prominence. This growth in the younger generations is expected to bring upon change and transform the ultra-conservative region (House, 2012; Hubbard, 2015; Murphy, 2013), especially among the youth who extensively use digital media.

2.2.1 Gender

When discussing the context of Saudi Arabia, we cannot escape discussing the commonly debated gender-related inequality issues and practices. Women represent about 45% of the national population (about 14M women.) While women in the West are rallying and fighting for equal pay and fair sexual and reproductive health laws, Saudi women are still at the early stages of a first wave movement, fighting for the basic human right of autonomy and freedom. For example, during the writing of this dissertation, Saudi women started a social media campaign calling to end the male guardianship system that prevents women from doing vital tasks (e.g., issuing a passport or a travel permit) without the permission of a male relative (HumanRightsWatch, 2016). These restrictions play a central role in systematically limiting women's freedoms, and affect their ability to secure employment outside of the home.

That said, many women in Saudi Arabia have shown resilience and creativity in dealing with these limitations. In particular, social media has offered a way for women to circumvent the social and religious constraints enforced on them. For example, the growth of “Instagram shops” is unprecedented (Almashabi & Nereim, 2015). These are businesses that are usually managed out of one's home, with very low overhead costs. Proprietors are mostly Saudi women who do not

have jobs outside the home. These women are taking advantage of the platform design to display photos of their products and services—ranging from food to clothing to hairstyling—to reach a wide customer base. Sellers provide a phone number in their Instagram bio, and when customers contact them, they typically communicate via WhatsApp to arrange for delivery and payment. This phenomenon is thriving in the region as it empowers women to run their own businesses without going through cumbersome government processes. The advent of Instagram shops allows women to have ownership over their professional lives, without the need for any involvement from a male guardian.

Gender segregation

The third important aspect of Saudi society, is gender segregation. This practice concerns the interaction between women and men who are not close blood relatives (non-mahram.) Gender segregation is actively enforced in Saudi Arabia and is a general rule that touches on virtually every aspect of public and social life in Saudi Arabia. According to Deaver (1980):

“[In Saudi Arabia] public space is male space. It is the area of business and political activity. Mosques are also in the public domain...Private space is associated with females, kinsmen, guardians, and intimate relationship...Women belong to the private domain. To protect this sanctuary of the private space is the duty of all males” (p. 32).

This segregation, which can be visible in physical spaces in the Kingdom, is in place "to regulate women [and to] prevent other men from encroaching on the male honor of the family" (AlMunajjed, 1997, p. 8). When in public, women must wear loose robes over their clothing called *abaya*, cover their hair with a *shayla* (and sometimes their faces with a *niqab*.) all to avoid the “unwanted gaze” of unrelated men. These traditional garments serve as *transportable privacy* for women. These are everyday practices borne of an adherence to modesty and respect. However,

women are not expected to wear the shayla and abaya when in the company of other women, nor around *mahrams*³.

2.3 TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Citizens of Saudi Arabia are also avid users of technology and especially social media. The Internet service was officially made available in the Kingdom⁴ in 1997 and since then it has become an essential part of the Saudi society and economy (Watch, 1999). In terms of Internet adoption, approximately 63% of the Saudi population use the Internet with an average daily use of 8 hours (Arab-News, 2014; Global-Media-Insight, 2016). In 2016, the kingdom also recorded a rate of over 11M active social media accounts putting it 7th globally in terms of individual accounts on social media, with an average of seven accounts on different platforms per person (Arab-News, 2014). As of recently, there are 7.9M active Facebook users in Saudi Arabia (Global-Media-Insight, 2016) and 6.3M active users on Twitter producing 150M tweets per month, making it the fastest-growing population on Twitter in 2015. In addition, Saudi Arabia is amongst the top ten countries using Snapchat worldwide. 26% of Saudi teens (age 13-18) use Snapchat and 33% of them allocate two hours daily on the application, while 29% use it for one hour each day. Instagram adoption and use is similarly high in the Kingdom, which ranks 5th on the list of highly active countries in the world. In 2013, it was the biggest user of YouTube per capita in the world with more than 90M video views per day.

It is highly likely that these large penetration numbers are due to the significant public restrictions enforced on Saudi society, which “created a uniquely captive audience for web-based

³ A *mahram* is a male relative that a Muslim woman cannot marry, or to whom she is already married, e.g. father, husband, brother, son.

⁴ The Internet is censored by an extremely centralized Internet infrastructure as Saudi Arabia has appeared in the “13 Internet Enemies” list of *Reporters without Borders*.

news and entertainment” (Smith, 2011). One example of the restrictions is the Islamic religious police that is responsible for patrolling public spaces (e.g., malls, restaurants) to enforce approved modes of behavior (e.g., attire, gender segregation) (Spencer, 2015).

It is assumed that the societal constraints imposed on women in Saudi impacts their access to the Internet and social media. This is a true assumption, if we only focused on the reported (quantitative) figures, like this report by the SocialClinic (2014) that revealed that out of the 7.8M Saudi Facebook users 74% are men and 26% are women. Another LinkedIn report showed that in Saudi Arabia women shaped only 13% of the 1M user base. However, it is entirely plausible that these figures do not accurately account for users’ gender. Based on my interactions with participants, I know that many women prefer not to identify their gender when they create social media accounts. Due to the stigma and potential for bringing shame onto one’s family associated with female visibility on public platforms, it is often the case that females either leave the “gender” field blank, or say they are male (Guta & Karolak, 2015). Therefore, knowing the gender breakdown of Saudi social media users is difficult, if not impossible, to determine automatically.

2.4 DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE SAUDI SOCIETY

To an outsider, Saudi Arabia may seem homogeneous; all adult women wear the black robe (*abayas* in Arabic) and men wear the traditional white ankle-length garment (*thobe* in Arabic.) Public and mainstream media represent Saudi Arabia and the Arab World as a monolith. However, to an insider there are clear differences between regions within each country, which affects the pervasiveness of conservative or liberal undercurrents. In this context, *conservative* implies the extent to which one adheres to and observes religious rules and national cultural traditions. On the other hand, *liberalism* (often used in conjunction with *modernity* or *open-mindedness*) is frequently associated with “the West,” in general, and specifically with the US (Yamani, 2000). It is

anticipated when visiting a Saudi household to discover that the individuals in this house often have different views. A husband may be more conservative than his wife, or a brother more liberal than his sister, while all living under the same roof. This is due to many reasons such as schooling, personal tendencies, and gender. The difference between family members play a role in the way individuals who are less conservative choose to manage privacy and identity online (and might be offline) to the more conservative family members, as this study revealed.

Part of the reason for regional differences across Saudi is that historically people of this region adhered strongly to tribal allegiances (more so than today) or immigrated from other countries (especially along the coasts) with different ideas and views. The tribal and clan bloodlines carry rich heritages (i.e., Bedouin cultural traditions) that differ greatly from each other when it comes to how strictly traditional norms and Sharia law is interpreted and enacted. For example, in Saudi Arabia, the city of Jeddah—which has a population of about three million people—is known to be a liberal, open-minded enclave in which people can openly express themselves. For instance, women have fewer wardrobe restrictions, and gender segregation is less strict by Saudi Arabian standards, which is largely due to the cosmopolitan nature of the city, being the main international gateway to the Muslim holy city of Mecca. Contrast this with Riyadh, the capital of Saudi and the center of the Arabian Peninsula, which is a highly conservative city where religious police regularly discipline people for slight infractions.

2.5 MANAGING TRANSCENDENCE

My dissertation and the literature supports that a key challenge for Saudi Arabian youth in this time and age, is negotiating modernity (e.g., globalization, associations with the US, being polyglots), while maintaining their authenticity and tradition (e.g., family and religion). In other words, Saudi Arabian youth face the challenge of *managing transcendence* and coherence in the

age of social media that advocates for openness. In using the notion of “transcendence”, I am concerned with the experience of change and transformation of the individual, the society, and the platform that occurs from the online/offline exchange. In that I take cue and inspiration from Ehn (2008) seminal essay on participatory design, where he suggests that designing platforms needs to offer “elasticity that makes it open to context, change and adaptability, to deliberate transcending without being distorted” (p. 96). In other words, to offer space and “*means for configuration*” (p. 96). As will become clear in this dissertation, for these transnationals, any potential shift from one side of the spectrum to the other side (e.g. conservative and liberal) would demonstrate the tension between identity, modernity, openness, and privacy. For example, a previously conservative student becomes (or appears to be) more liberal (or “Americanized”) by making their Facebook privacy settings more public. Or, they start sharing thoughts publicly on Twitter that previously they were sharing through more private channels. On the contrary, it might also be the case that a previously liberal student comes to recognize the merits of certain conservative aspects of Saudi Arabian society and as a result increases his privacy settings. All of these ideas and more will be further discussed and synthesized in the section entitled Transnational Privacy.

This challenge of managing transcendence—as I name it in my dissertation—is eloquently captured in a segment from an interview in (Murphy, 2013, p. 135):

“[Most young Saudis] want to open up to life, to reality, to the world. But at the same time, they want to keep their beliefs and what they think Allah has said is right to do...They are struggling to do both. They are trying to find the path that will lead them to be a good Muslim and at the same time to be a good human being able to communicate with others all over the world.” – Farouq Alzouman⁵

⁵ Farouq S. Alzouman is a 34-year-old male from Riyadh. He is a well-known Saudi motivational speaker who works with young people in Saudi Arabia. In addition, he is known to be the first Saudi Arabian male to challenge tradition assumptions about physical activity and summit Mount Everest. He studies abroad, and this is important and serves as an example of identity management, risk-taking and courage that this student gained from being exposed to a Western lifestyle.

2.6 COLLECTIVIST/TRADITIONAL/GUIDING VALUES

2.6.1 *Family relationships in the Muslim household*

In the Quran, the practice of maintaining a relationship with kin is referred to as ‘silatur-rahim’ (maintaining the bonds of kinship) meaning one must “deal properly with relatives, supporting them with whatever possible and warding off bad things” (Saleh, 2013, p. 13). It involves “visiting the relatives, asking about them, checking on them, giving them gifts when possible, helping their poor members, visiting their sick members, accepting their invitations, having them as guests, feeling proud of them and elevating them” (Saleh, 2013, p. 13). In Saudi Arabia, it is a regular practice to allocate some time during the weekend and the holidays for visits between relatives. This practice is highly encouraged in Islam and there are verses in the Quran that warns people against severing or abandoning these ties; it is considered sinful if they do. This value includes maintaining a good relationship with one’s relatives, to love, respect and help them. The importance of this value has generated a society that is highly collectivist in nature (Al-Saggaf & Williamson, 2004; Almakrami, 2015). In some cases, larger families (multiple siblings who have their own families) live in what is called a “family compound” if the father’s financial situation permits (Sobh & Belk, 2011).

Another Islamic value that guides family life is *bir al walidayn* (kindness and respect toward parents). Children are obligated to obey, respect and care for their parents as they grow old; one is never out from under the authority of one’s parents. Similarly, parents are obligated to take care of their children, to protect them from harm, and to provide them with a good life. Guarding children from harm to their reputation and honor ranks as highly as protecting them from physical harm (Almakrami, 2015).

These values are prevalent in the region and dictate familial relationships. The opinion of family members and relatives regarding how one interacts and presents oneself in digital environments is taken into account because of the reciprocal effect on both the individual and their family if any harm or shame should occur.

2.6.2 *Honor*

Honor—‘ird—is the single most important value that drives cultural norms and expectations in the GCC (Dodd, 1973). The ways in which honor manifest are subtle and nuanced, though it touches upon all aspects of daily life. It is the responsibility of each individual to uphold ‘ird. By doing so, they protect their family and maintain good societal standing. As Dodd (1973) explained: “much of the organization of the Arab family can be understood in terms of ‘ird as a controlling value, legitimating the family structure and the ‘modesty code’ required of both men and women” (p. 40).

‘ird is connected to the chastity of women, and has a sacred characteristic in GCC society. The connection of ‘ird to chastity is additionally highlighted by Metz (1993): “[C]hastity and sexual modesty [are] also very highly valued. Applied primarily to women, these values [are] not only tied to family honor but [are] held to be a religious obligation as well” (p. 67). In this sense, chastity refers to more than a woman’s sexuality; it implies the need for them to display chaste behavior in all situations. In face-to-face settings, chaste behavior is implied by wearing appropriate garments, not interacting with non-mahrams, and not calling attention to oneself. In digital environments, women invoke chastity by using privacy settings, in addition to other tactics, to protect hurma, awrah, and above all, family ‘ird. For example, if a woman is seen without a head cover “hijab” or is seen speaking in public with men who are not related to her, she is not only harming her own honor but harming her family honor as well.

In Saudi, this value is open to interpretation and is very much dependent on the family's level of conservativeness. So to speak, in more "open-minded" and liberal families both genders are responsible for the family honor; it is no longer dependent only on women's chastity. For example, if the brother committed a felony, he negatively affects the family honor as much as if the sister did. The felony in this case, is an act that brings shame such as stealing and dealing drugs.

2.7 TRANSNATIONAL SAUDI ARABIAN YOUNG ADULTS

This study is concerned with a special segment of the Saudi population that is the transnational population. Saudis studying abroad is not a small number of the youth population. Since 2005, the number of Saudi students studying in the US has increased rapidly. In 2015 alone, out of a total of 200K Saudi students abroad (Alhalyly, 2013), roughly half were studying in the US (Murphy, 2013). According to the Institute of International Education, Saudi Arabia is the fourth biggest group of foreign students in the US, behind students from China, India and South Korea. Fueling the growth in the numbers of these students has been the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program (KAFSP) – with a budget of \$6 billion (Kottasova, 2016)– and other smaller programs. The KAFSP, which started in 2005 as a result of a "gentlemen's agreement policy" led by President Bush and Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah (Schifferling, 2014), funds 12 months of language training (ELS), covers full tuition, medical insurance, a monthly stipend for living expenses, and an annual round-trip airfare for undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students (Redden, 2013). This international education initiative was established with multiple goals: 1) to promote academic and professional excellence amongst Saudis; 2) to exchange scientific, educational, and cultural expertise with various countries in the world; 3) to develop a national cadre of young people with the skill set necessary to match the needs of the globalized marketplace; 4) finally, and most

importantly, to enhance the cultural programs between the two countries by exposing more Saudi youth, who come from a homogenous culture (i.e., all Muslim country), to Western countries⁶.

This population is considered “*The Wild Card*”, as Murphy (2013) calls them due to the significance of their experience in influencing the highly anticipated impact on cultural norms, politics, and the job market upon their return to Saudi Arabia⁷. For this study, this particular population is significant to understand in terms of their exposure and experience, because during their transnational time, they use technology and social media applications in contextually-specific ways as I will uncover in the Transnational Privacy section. One example of their significance to user experience research can be witnessed in their use of social media applications in completely different contexts (the US and Saudi Arabia) while facing myriad daily challenges regarding managing identity and enacting privacy within each context.

During their time in the US, Saudi students utilize different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat to stay connected with family back home and to maintain new friendships in the ‘hosting’ new home. Not only is the use of these technologies high amongst the transnational population, but, in general, Saudis are avid Internet and social media users, as discussed earlier.

My population are transnationals who are not permanently settled in the hosting country (the US). They came to study for a certain amount of time and still maintain, by and large, the cultural and religious norms of the sending society—namely, Saudi Arabia and the Islamic religion – they intend to return to. By contrast, yet still relevant, is the current issue of forced displacement which

⁶ It is important to note that after 9/11 the number of Saudis studying abroad dropped tremendously due to security increase on Arabs and Muslims in general in the US. It is believed that these restrictions were decreased as a result of this educational agreement between the late King and George Bush (Taylor & Albasri, 2014).

⁷ Take for example the Women2Drive movement that was initiated by a group of women who returned from the US amongst many other examples.

is illustrated in the rapidly growing population of refugees fleeing the conflict zones in different Arab countries - such as, Libya and Syria - and settling in mostly Western countries that have limited understanding of their cultural backgrounds. Thus, transnationalism, as my framing theory, examines and contrasts these groups together to highlight the importance of their experience with technology in staying connected during the shifting face of the world.

As the number of the transnational population grows, some questions regarding their experience and its impact on their future and the future of impacts nations come to the fore:

- General
 - What kinds of norms are students exposed to? What norms do students encounter that they state are counter to the norms from their home country norms? What, if anything, is comfortable and/or uncomfortable?
 - Does their perspective change with time and how? What norms, if any, do they adopt during their temporary immersion? How does this experience change their perspective when they return?
- Specific to information practices
 - What kinds of information seeking and disclosure habits do they learn? What kinds of information seeking and disclosure habits do they observe in others? Which ones do they feel they need to mirror or adopt? What are they comfortable/uncomfortable about?
- Specific to privacy practices
 - What are scenarios of privacy violations? Moreover, what workarounds do they use to mitigate these invasions?
- Influencing factors and long-term shifts
 - What are the factors (e.g. duration of stay in the US, plan to return or stay, gender, previous exposure to the west) that affect my population's prioritization of privacy, security, and other values?
 - In what ways does the transnational experience change the way they interact with social media in their day-to-day life? How does the day-to-day habits change? How does being transnational change what an everyday life is?

Many questions revolve around the experience of transnationals as they engage in this process of stretching and cultural exchange. The broad challenge related to this inquiry: during the back and forth movement (i.e., transnational journey) what happens to individual values? In exploring this notion of transnational values, specifically transnational privacy, I borrow the notion of *stretching* that is the essence of transnationalism theory by Basch, Schiller, and Blanc (2005) that conceptualized migrants as *transnationals* who are “stretched across national borders...to describe this interconnected social experience” (p. 9). In addition, I’m influenced by Appadurai’s (1996) seminal work of the *social imaginary* that studies the relationship between processes of immigration, communication and information dynamics. In the remaining chapters, I delve deeper into the history and background of these theoretical constructs that provided the building foundations of my inquiry.

Chapter 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review common definitions of social media platforms and previous research within the Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW), Social Computing, and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) communities on social media. After that, I review the literature on the role of social media in the Arab World. The third section provides a comprehensive review of literature on online privacy that is followed by a review of the origins of privacy in Islam. The fourth section of this chapter focuses on the relevant literature to the framing theory of *transnationalism* with focus on its influence on information communication (ICTs) adoption and use. In the last section, I present Value Sensitive Design as the inspiring methodology and theory used in this study.

3.1 SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS ROLE IN THE ARAB WORLD

Social Networking sites (SNS) are no longer an emergent local phenomenon; they are now embedded in a pervasive, global way in everyday life. Users can now get a ride, find potential dates and partners, and stay in touch with high school friends on different social media platforms (e.g. Uber, Tender, and Instagram). Social Networking Sites, are defined as “sites primarily promote interpersonal contact, whether between individuals or groups; they forge personal, professional, or geographical connections and encourage weak ties” (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 8). In terms of youth and social media, much of the media coverage and research is focused on understanding the opportunities and drawbacks of these networks, (e.g., boyd and Ellison (2007); Burrell and Anderson (2008); Gardner and Davis (2013)). There is evidence to support the fact that youth and young adults in the US and worldwide maintain accounts and profiles in more than one social media platform (boyd, 2014), which is due to the different goals and purposes of each popular platform. For example, Snapchat is used for sharing ephemeral visual content, whereas

Instagram is mostly known for permanent photo albums and the sharing of instant images of fashion and food. What the majority of them share is the construction of a personal *profile* that offers users an opportunity to present themselves to others through selected pieces of information to enable use and interaction (Acquisti & Gross, 2006).

The use of technology in the Arab World has been investigated during the recent Egyptian, Tunisian, Yemen, and Libyan revolutions, and the ongoing Syrian Civil War (the so-called Arab Spring), e.g., (Agarwal et al., 2012; Baron et al., 2013; Eltahawy, 2015). While the results of these studies show the crucial role these technologies had on Arab youths' political awareness and engagement, they also revealed a complex set of practices and tensions, especially in how they experience privacy and manage identity.

This line of research in large lacked focus on studying individuals' daily interactions and experiences with digital technologies, and the opportunities and challenges these technologies bring in terms of managing privacy, honor, safety and identity. In one study by a group of researchers from a Jordanian university, Al Omoush et al. (2012) proposed a model to understand the relationship between cultural values, motivations, and usage patterns on Facebook in the Arab World. The study drew heavily from the Hofstede Cultural Model⁸ in developing their framework and used snowball sampling to gather approximately 750 responses from Arab Facebook users. The study results revealed a major influence of Arab values (e.g. cultural traditions, religion) on Arab Facebook users and their motivation to be members of social media. Although the study represents an ambitious undertaking, I take issue with its attempt to compartmentalize the whole

⁸ The Hofstede cultural model was developed in the 1970s by Geert and Hofstede (2005) through the distribution of a large survey about values and related sentiments of people in over 50 countries around the world. These people worked in the local subsidiaries of one large multinational corporation: IBM. Most parts of the organization had been surveyed twice over a four-year interval, and the database contained more than 100,000 questionnaires.

Arab World⁹ into one unit of analysis. Nevertheless, it is still one positive step forward in tackling the issue of lack of research in this context.

A study by Alsheikh et al. (2011) revealed the influence of Arab culture on technology used by Arabs. The study points to the influence of gender segregation (*ikhtilat* in Arabic) on adopting technologies with cameras; resulting in decreased female webcam use (as webcams can potentially enable men to see women unveiled). In another study that looked at one specific country in the Arab World, Kuwait, Faisal and Alsumait (2011) aimed at evaluating privacy behaviors, trust concerns, and attitudes of SNS users. The study drew its results from 222 surveys that were distributed at a university in Kuwait. The results showed that the high level of privacy awareness and trust are the major factors for Kuwaiti youth to participate and disclose information on SNS. In relation to this, they found that more than 50% of participants are aware of their privacy settings and explain: “when participants know the consequences of information disclosure, they can effectively manage SNS privacy settings.” In addition, the authors highlighted that the Kuwaiti culture “tend[s] to be conservative and favors collective over individual interests,” which contributes to the strong tendency of protecting personal information and privacy. To elaborate, privacy is a high-stake value in collectivist and honor-based societies, a privacy violation “leads to shame and loss of face” (Geert & Hofstede, 2005) comparable to individualist societies where shame, in most cases, affects the individual alone not his entire family. This is an important theme that I will investigate in my dissertation.

⁹ The Arab world consists of 22 countries. Most them are unified by language and religious beliefs, yet differentiated by many other aspects (e.g. political structures and cultural traditions).

3.2 ONLINE PRIVACY

The concept of privacy in the age of social media has been the focus of many studies in the past few years. Privacy experts have shared their concerns regarding the privacy implications of the recent global push towards a more open and social world through the use of social media. Accounts of privacy are mostly based on the *control-based* approach; like the one by Moore (2003) that emphasizes the *subsequent uses* of information and defines privacy as “A right to privacy is a right to control access to and uses of—places, bodies, and personal information” (p. 421). Altman offers his *Privacy Regulation Theory*, where he argues against the meaning of privacy as a total withdrawal¹⁰, and advocates for understanding it as a *process of optimization* (Altman, 1975), which is a better lens to understand the privacy behavior of SNS users. He also suggests that privacy is a dialectic and dynamic boundary regulation process where privacy is not static but “a selective control of access to the self or to one’s group” (p. 18). In other words, the ways users negotiate and find the right personal balance between withdrawal and disclosure (Tufekci, 2008).

Researchers have paid attention to studying the relationship between privacy concerns and the level of information disclosure and boundary regulation as a protective measure. One example is a study by Tufekci (2008) that examines the different mechanisms to maintain and negotiate privacy on Myspace and Facebook by college students. The survey study of 704 undergraduates focused on the relationship between disclosure behavior and the level of privacy concerns. Assuming that higher levels of concern will have an effect on levels of disclosure (say for example if a person is very concerned then they will not post at all), this study found little-to-no relationship between the two variables. Interestingly, they found that instead of not posting content on their profile, the students managed unwanted attention by boundary regulation, for example “adjusting

¹⁰ “The right to be let alone” (Warren & Brandeis, 1890)

their usage of nicknames on Myspace and through adjusting the visibility of their profiles on Facebook and Myspace” (Tufekci, 2008, p. 26)

Privacy is a “multifaceted notion” (Mohamed, 2011), because depending on the context, it is interwoven with notions of identity, seclusion and autonomy. Age, gender, education, and culture are the most important factors that affect online privacy concerns among individuals (Faisal & Alsumait, 2011). I also argue that other factors affect privacy concerns: family background; relationship status; exposure to Western values; and level of experience with technology. These are the factors I will address in this dissertation. A survey study by Mohamed (2010) states that respondents didn’t report any restrictions on sharing personal information, such as city, religion and gender. However, they don’t share family photos, cellphone numbers, and friends’ photos. In addition, she reports that the more respondents were concerned with their online privacy, the less likely they were to give accurate personal information, which is related to findings in the previous study by Tufekci (2008). In this dissertation, I delve deeper into these observations and behaviors, explicating the perceptions and considerations of privacy in the Saudi context.

3.3 IDENTITY AND SELF-PRESENTATION ON SNS

Having considered the effect of privacy concerns on controlling audience and boundary regulation on SNS, I now move to a discussion of identity and self-presentation. Presenting oneself, constructing identity, and communicating through social media is becoming a prominent means of socializing and connecting with others. However, there is little knowledge of the decision-making process behind sharing, the user and audience perceptions of the shared content, and how self-presentation is understood through the shared content. There has been work emerging from different social science communities with focus on the notion of identity, self-presentation

and impression management on SNS—many of these platforms are treated as “*online repositories of digital self-presentation*” (Litt et al., 2014, p. 449).

In this line of research, many studies offer insight into how users employ various methods aimed at impression management, or how they construct a “digital image.” Challenges in expressing identity surface in many online behaviors such as: the acquisition and management of multiple accounts that reflect different personas on Facebook or other SNS; maintaining accounts on different SNS for different audiences and purposes (maintaining an account on Twitter for work related posts only and on Facebook for socializing with friends); the use of pseudonyms on SNS; and managing boundaries between friends’ circles and the information they could see online. Some of these techniques I encountered in my study and are explained in chapter 5 as *privacy protection tactics*.

Identity formation undergoes constant change, experimentation and exploration (boyd, 2014; Donath, 1999; Gardner & Davis, 2013; Haimson, Bowser, Melcer, & Churchill, 2015). In terms of technological design and complexity of individual identity, I found that the notion of context collapse offers a useful means of analyzing the issues and tensions in forming online identity and managing privacy. Synthesizing literature on context collapse—first offered by boyd (2008) (See also (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Hogan, 2010; Marwick, 2011; Marwick & boyd, 2011))—Lingel and Naaman (2014) suggest that it is a result of “a multi-faceted social network being flattened into a single audience, such that users find it difficult to curate content intended for or legible to only part of their personal networks” (p. 1503). Where in reality, “offline, people have the option to modify behavior based on their immediate social surroundings or to encode messages and gestures for a select few” (p. 1503). Farnham and Churchill (2011) provide an in-depth discussion and investigation of the issues around “the singularity of identity” on SNS. They argue

that people's lives are faceted, meaning, "people maintain social boundaries and show different facets or sites of their character according to the demands of the current social situation" (p. 359). In accord with this, my study focused on understanding the role and influence of the family on privacy and identity decisions online.

On social media, safety and trust are among the values that can assure a successful experience. Scholarly research has investigated ways different social media users groups create and navigate identity through contemporary applications. A study by Haimson et al. (2015) focused on examining how people undergoing gender transition use Pinterest to construct a personal style and imagine a future self. The authors conclude that close friends and anonymous strangers are the two important groups who offer a safe and comfortable environment for identity exploration. Building on this point, Woelfer et al.'s (2011) study on homeless youth and SNS mention a scenario where a homeless young woman decided to maintain two Facebook profile for safety and to avoid family judgment. This behavior online is not limited to Arabs, transgender, or homeless youth; Palen and Dourish (2003) describe the "loss of control over the audience" to be one of the main challenges in negotiating the right balance among disclosure, publicity, and privacy.

For those who desire to explore and experiment with identity, whether online or offline, safety, trust, and anonymity are amongst the important values for a successful experience. For transnational Saudis, incidents caused by context collapse can stain one's reputation across geographic lines, where SNS users are confronted with posting content to friends in Saudi friends in the US, family, and acquaintances spread across the globe. My current research focuses on these issues as they relate to the challenges faced by transnational Saudi users. My goal is to understand the cultural dimensions of self-presentation and its relationship to privacy, and the affordances

Facebook (and other social media platforms) provide as this population manages and shapes identities.

As Hogan (2010) observes, much of the literature on social media builds on Goffman's theories of identity and self-presentation, "front stage" and "back stage" presentations, with a focus on contexts and audiences. A study by Charteris, Gregory, and Masters (2014) delves into the complexities of youth cultural practices and self-presentation on Snapchat, with a focus on Australia. The authors build on Goffman's notion of *underlife*— "[t]he range of activities people develop to distance themselves from expected norms." The authors conclude that young people are using social media "*to constitute agentic discursive identities*" and that studying this process might provide useful information about self-presentation. Yet little qualitative research has been done on the influence of religion, cultural traditions, and privacy on self-presentation online. My aim is to extend the discussion of self-presentation offered in (Charteris et al., 2014) by providing a nuanced discussion that focuses on transnational Saudis.

3.4 PRIVACY, RELIGION AND HCI

Researchers have long discussed, researched, and debated definitions of privacy and how it should be considered and incorporated into technology design. Recently, scholars have questioned the notion of a universal definition of privacy, suggesting instead that it is a socially constructed and culturally bounded concept (Altman, 1975, 1977; Nissenbaum, 1998; Palen & Dourish, 2003). Privacy is often viewed as a concept of the self as an individual, apart from a group (Altman, 1976), i.e. an individualistic perspective that considers social relationships "*either voluntary or barriers to individual independence*" (Yuan, Feng, & Danowski, 2013, p. 1022). So, in the Western sense, maintaining privacy is tightly linked to one's ability to flourish as an individual regardless of the group. While various outcomes and applications have arisen from the studies to date, limited

research approaches privacy from a point of view that does not focus on interpersonal boundaries (Altman, 1975), but allows for alternative interpretations of “privacy.”

For technology users from Saudi Arabia and other Arab Muslim countries, the Arabic language, religious affiliation, and cultural expectations are factors that play a critical role in technology adoption and use. In particular, understandings of privacy are tied to expectations and norms that have foundations in Muslim religious practice. The importance of privacy is borne of the responsibility to maintain the sanctity of one’s body and one’s home, in addition to upholding the honor and good name of one’s family and extended collective.

Researchers have noted ways in which Muslim social media users enact norms that dictate modesty and consider the importance of reputation, self-image and family honor (Abokhodair & Vieweg, 2016; Al-Saggaf & Williamson, 2004; Al Omoush et al., 2012; Alsheikh et al., 2011; Vieweg & Hodges, 2016), but a focus on privacy vis-à-vis social media use has yet to be theorized. Looking at privacy through the lens of digital technology in an Arab Gulf setting raises provocative questions about the ways in which cultural norms and expectations that are rooted in tradition and religion come to pass when they are interpreted via modern media. Scholars have also noted how conceptions of privacy become inscribed in technology design (Alsheikh et al., 2011; Dourish & Anderson, 2006; Friedman, 1996; Friedman et al., 2008; Vieweg & Hodges, 2016) and the risk to users in continuing to omit alternative perspectives toward privacy by technology designers and developers. In my dissertation, I am inspired by the VSD approach and strongly support the idea that “A first step toward designing for privacy entails understanding what privacy means to those who will use and be affected by the use of the technology” (Friedman et al., 2008, p. 143).

Contributing to the body of research on privacy enactment via digital technology among users from different cultural backgrounds, and answering the call made by (Barkhuus, 2012) for “a more

nuanced treatment of the notion of privacy” in my dissertation, I add the interpretations of privacy from an Arab Muslim perspective. In addition to a description of privacy from the perspective of transnational Saudi citizens, I elucidate how the enactment of privacy affects their behavior in digital environments.

3.5 PRIVACY IN THE ARAB WORLD AND IN ISLAM

In most Arab countries, the need for, and expectation of, privacy plays a prominent role in daily life. To adequately grasp how privacy is viewed in Saudi Arabia, I first provide background on how privacy is viewed in this context, with focus on its Islamic roots. In my Findings section, I discuss how privacy enactment is synonymous to being a respectable (good) Muslim, as explained by my participants.

4.3.1 Privacy in the Contemporary Arab World

As I mentioned earlier, in Arab-Islamic culture, privacy revolves around the needs of the collective rather than the individual per se. In this way, the concept of privacy is not merely about protecting the identity of a discrete individual or navigating interpersonal boundaries in such a way as to maintain one’s “individual privacy” (in the way many US social media users may view it). Rather, privacy is more about maintaining modesty to uphold an acceptable group image and preserve family honor, accomplishments achieved with the help of the entire group. Presenting oneself as modest, in both dress and behavior, is of great importance to being a respectable member of Saudi society, and privacy plays an important role in how modesty and respect are maintained.

Research that focuses on Arab notions of privacy comes from fields including healthcare, marketing, and architecture. Drawing on experiences with the psychiatric care of Arab patients in the United States, Meleis and Fever (1984) note that privacy, in regard to the body or personal

information, is vigorously guarded, and medical personnel are often viewed as intrusive when asking questions that Western patients consider routine (e.g., questions about intercourse and sexually transmitted infections). Additionally, a study by Seeger (2015) on the challenges Muslim women face with the US healthcare system revealed that medical decisions “often includes the entire family...which stands in stark contrast to the centering of the US healthcare system on individual choices and strict doctor-patient confidentiality” (p. 6). Also certain topics are considered taboo and not to be discussed in public, such as, “sex education” and mental health ((Hammoud, White, & Fetters, 2005) in (Seeger, 2015)), which is mostly due to the strong influence of Muslim culture and Arab tradition on these practices.

From an architectural perspective, Sobh and Belk (2011) provide detail about traditional home design in the Gulf Arab countries, where houses are typically designed with an inward-facing center to protect the family from the public eye. The idea is to maintain the sanctity of the home, which is considered sacred and pure, and which must be guarded from the gaze or intrusion of non-family members. Both the healthcare and the architectural perspectives illustrate that privacy in this context is not sought from family members, on the contrary, openness and sharing with family members is often expected and is considered the norm.

4.3.2 Understanding Privacy In Islam

Islam distinguishes the significance of the fundamental human right to privacy (Hayat, 2007) as it is alluded to in many verses in Quran and hadith. In Islamic culture, “privacy” is concerned with the group interaction and often refers to a host of values that are foundational to both religious and cultural norms. The way in which privacy translates so as to be understood by a Western audience involves several concepts, discussed below:

“Hurma” (حرمة) is an Arabic word that symbolizes the concept closest to the notion of privacy in the English vocabulary. Depending on the context, hurma has two meanings: 1) anything that is unlawful to obtain or gaze at or 2) a woman, a sacred space (mosque or home) or a sacred time (holy month), as these are all considered pure, and should remain guarded; any intrusion on their sanctity by strangers is considered sinful. This expression is used up until now in daily conversations and in legal texts in many Arabic speaking countries. It emphasizes the sanctity and sacredness of privacy and how it is interwoven into the fabric of the Arab cultural identity.

In the Quran, privacy is first mentioned in the context of instructing people to seek permission before entering another’s home: *'Do not enter any houses except your own homes unless you are sure of their occupants' consent'* (24:27). The purpose is to protect the sanctity—or hurma—of the house and the body. One is required to knock on a door three times before accessing another’s space. This rule is in place to avoid walking in on another while in a state of undress, or while with one’s spouse/family. Entering without permission risks exposing one’s “awrah”(عورة) , which literally means the intimate parts of one’s body. Privacy is again mentioned in the Quran in relation to a law that promotes the respect of others by warning Muslims to refrain from bad manners that can lead to an invasion of others’ privacy: *'Do not spy on one another'* (49:12); as spying, gossiping, and mistrust can lead to the exposure of people’s private matters.

Another mention of privacy is related to modesty, that is often symbolized in dress and conduct between opposite genders. In terms of dress, men and women are instructed to cover certain body parts; what is covered and when depends on the specific situation, the space and who is occupying the space, in addition to the level of conservativeness. Men’s awrah is everything between the stomach and the knees. For women, awrah can extend beyond that to include the arms, the legs, and in some cases (and interpretations) the head. Awrah and hurma can be used together

to indicate the unlawfulness of obtaining or seeking access to others' sacred body parts and spaces. Thus, in this context the veil is considered a transportable privacy or shield. As El Guindi (1999) explains in her book, "it is not a reference to shame and oppression of women, but rather to privacy in the public arena, the identity of the group, and rank, respectability, and power" (Antoun, 2001, p. 212) In terms of inter-gender relations, it is mostly guided by the kinship and the distance. For example, unrelated men and women are advised to lower their gaze every now and then when interacting with each other as a sign of respect. Moreover, a significant outcome of the need for privacy is gender segregation that is actively enforced and practiced in Saudi Arabia, which entails the separation of boys and girls during their formative years, so as to prevent any inappropriate interactions or relationships that may harm their families' honor. Sobh and Belk (2011) study on gendered spaces in Qatar found that the need for segregation is not cause for the reduction of women's status like some might think— instead, it is empowering. The authors state that the "restricted domain" is often turned into a space "where vanity is indulged and consumer culture is celebrated...[it] is used to make statements about taste and status" as a form of "passive resistance to power" (p. 131).

In terms of legal texts, Saudi Arabia upholds the right to privacy in its Basic Law of Government (translated from Arabic): "Dwellings are inviolate. Access is prohibited without their owners' permission. No search may be made except in cases specified by the Law" (Rakad, 2005). In this context, the rule associated with privacy is "*haq al-khososyah*" (حق الخصوصية), which is defined as the "individual's right to protect some aspects of their private life and maintain confidentiality to safeguard his/her reputation and aspects of his/her life that are kept away from the interference of people" (Rakad, 2005). Thus, when citizens protect their *hurma* and/or *awrah*, they are enacting their right to *haq al-khososyah* or to privacy.

In Figure 3.1, I illustrate the layers of privacy as practiced in traditional Islamic cultures (e.g., Saudi Arabia), which involves three aspects; awrah, hurma, and haq al-khososyah. Awrah, which occupies the center of Figure 1, is like an object, something tangible that must be protected. Hurma is the extrinsic value, borne of Bedouin culture and Islamic teachings that asserts the sacredness of awrah. As shown, hurma encompasses awrah; it is the space that surrounds the awrah, protecting it. Haq al-khososyah is the written law that guards and protects one's right to invoke hurma in the interest of protecting awrah; it empowers people to legally protect their awrah.

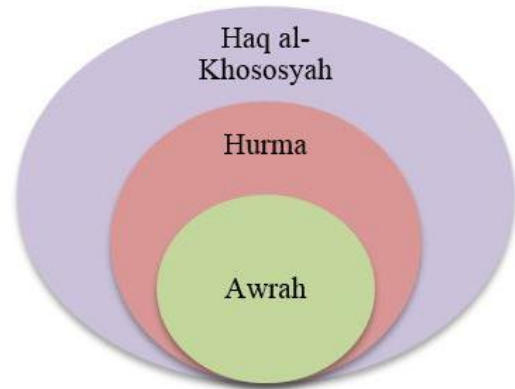


Figure 3.1 Islamic Interpretation of three aspects of “privacy”

In Islam, when a rule is introduced in the Qur'an or Hadith, Muslims are obligated to follow it; a failure to follow these rules is considered a sin. Therefore, respecting others' privacy, and maintaining one's own privacy, is a decree from God. GCC citizens' practice of and adherence to privacy as part of their daily lives stems from the pursuit of the blessings and “barakah” of God. This endeavor leads to the creation and maintenance of a respectful image.

4.3.3 *The Three Privacy Domains in Islam*

For Muslims, privacy should be sought or given in many domains. The three domains that are often mentioned vis-à-vis Islamic practice and privacy are: (1) privacy of the home, (2) privacy for gender exclusive spaces and gatherings, and (3) individual privacy.

Privacy of the Home

When dealing with privacy in the home, multiple layers are implied. At one end is the privacy of the entire property; a need to protect the home from outsiders. At the other end is the protection of privacy amongst the members of the home and guests (Hayat, 2007; Othman, Aird, & Buys, 2015; Sobh & Belk, 2011).

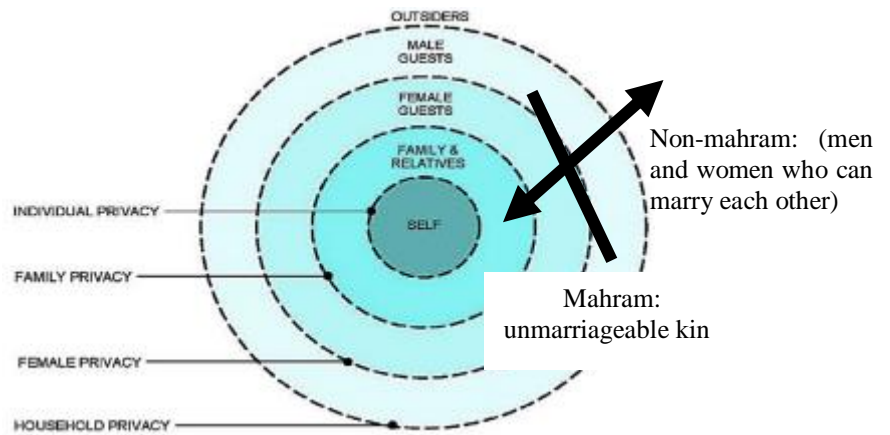


Figure 3.2 Hierarchy of home privacy domains (Bahammam, 1987)

Figure 3.2 depicts these in the form of illustrative layers of rooms and divisions within the house, in addition to the varying degrees of privacy within. The reader will see that the “self” or individual privacy is at the center of the hierarchy, illustrating the room or a space in the home where one can enact full privacy and *hurma* is guarded –i.e., bedroom or prayer space. In the second layer, comes family privacy, which is an important aspect of Islamic teachings and is achieved in the house where family members gather–i.e., family living room. After that comes females’ privacy that is of profound importance and thus they are afforded more privacy than males. Think of the last layer, the outsiders, as the high walls (fence) that guards the house from the intrusion of strangers and protects the *hurma* of the house–in a sense this aspect is guarded with *haq al-khososyah* that is similar to the notion of the property laws in the US.

Researchers who focus on privacy in Arab Gulf homes note how religious and cultural values manifest in architectural design. In their study, Othman et al. (2015) discuss the issue of privacy and design in Muslim homes by conducting an extensive literature review. They found that privacy in Muslim homes could be attained through the maintenance of three important types of privacy:

- 1) *Visual privacy*, which is concerned with the visual design of the home that provides safety and privacy to its members.
- 2) *Acoustical privacy*, which is concerned with the control of voice and sound transmission from the outside and within the home between the internal spaces of the home.
- 3) *Olfactory privacy*, which is concerned with the control of odors and smells within the home.

In sum, the results are in line with Sobh and Belk (2011) regarding privacy being of the utmost value in Muslim homes, as well as a major influencer regarding home design.

Privacy for Gender Exclusive Spaces

Privacy among single-gender gatherings inside the home as well as elsewhere is also of paramount importance. In Saudi Arabia, there is great emphasis on the need to respect the privacy of male or female-only spaces. There are two kinds of relationships that guide the interaction amongst opposite genders within the family and outside: *mahrms*, this group consists of unmarried kin (e.g., father, son, brother) and *non-mahrms*, men and women who can marry each other. There are clear rules that guide the interactions and socialization between opposite genders. For instance, women are not required to wear *hijab* (a veil that covers the head and chest) in the presence of mahram men.

Individual Privacy

The preservation of one's chastity is of great importance in Islam. Multiple verses in the Quran and Hadith describe the importance of individual privacy that is mainly concerned with the protection from the intrusion of others, particularly the protection of the intimate parts of one's body and in particular their *awra*. The protection and respect of one's *awra* is a personal responsibility, as well as that of society as a whole. For example, one must lower one's gaze when another's *awra* is exposed.

Thus far, I have reviewed the discourse of privacy from an Islamic view showing how the protection of privacy and the respect of others' privacy is tantamount to Islam. What this practice looks like and how it is enacted on social media platforms used in two different contexts suggests for new interpretations and implementations regarding privacy in design, which I delve deeper into in chapter 5: Findings.

3.6 TRANSNATIONALISM

Much of the earlier research on cross-cultural differences in technology use has extensively used outdated models that fall short in capturing the current complex global setting. For instance, the Hofstede Cultural Model was developed in 1991 based on a large international survey and depends on five cultural dimensions: Power-distance, Collectivism vs. individualism, Femininity vs. masculinity, Uncertainty avoidance, and Long- vs. short-term orientation. Hofstede's work on culture is the most widely cited in existence (Bond, 2002; Hofstede, 1997) and has been adopted in almost every empirical study in the field of collaborative software (Zhang et al., 2010).

The model, however, is a narrow and outdated analytical lens for studying the selected population, i.e. the model doesn't capture the process and consequences of moving and stretching country borders as the transnational framework does. In addition, the Hofstede model's unit of analysis is the nation-state, which is "a socially and politically defined unit" (Neuman, 1994). For convenience, cross-cultural researchers often use it as their unit of analysis and as a proxy for *culture*, which is harder to fit into a unit. Of equal importance, is that most of the cross-cultural privacy studies that depend on Hofstede's model only use one of the many dimensions offered by the model, namely individualism – collectivism, which is defined as "a measure of whether people prefer to work alone or in groups. It indicates the degree of social/community integration" (Geert & Hofstede, 2005; Jones, 2007). Although this dimension can conveniently explain many

particular differences in cultures that are far and harder to reach, I believe that there are problems with this approach. First, the model is based on five dimensions, and when one dimension is utilized and the others are dismissed it results in an unbalanced view of the culture. Moreover, there is an assumption that there is one homogeneous culture for each nation-state (Jones, 2007), when in reality “most nations are groups of ethnic units” (Nasif, Al-Daeaj, Ebrahimi, & Thibodeaux, 1991, p. 82).

In my dissertation, my population of interest are transnationals, who live between Saudi Arabia and the US. Instead of approaching this population as a dichotomy: Saudis in Saudi versus Saudis in the USA, I chose my analytical lens to include the entire transnational landscape of movement between the USA and Saudi. My extensive review of the related work on the Arab World with focus on Saudi and the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries resulted in very few studies that address the issue of technology adoption and use in the context of transnational Arabs. Amongst these, two studies (Al-Harby, Qahwaji, & Kamala, 2009; Alsheikh et al., 2011) address similar populations, however in both studies an approach to understanding this population using transnational theory is lacking.

I maintain that the Hofstede model is a simplistic way to define culture (Appadurai, 1996; Zhang et al., 2010), and move beyond the current notion of nation-state as a unit of analysis to a transnational-state. Basch et al. (1994) define transnationalism as an alternative understanding of immigration: “*the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement*” (p. 7). Such a concept of state, I argue, is more inclusive and accurate, and gives us greater purchase for explaining the modern state of affairs than focusing on the boundaries of a nation state.

Transnationalism is an established theory that has been the centerpiece in many different fields of research such as political science, sociology, psychology, media and communication studies, immigration studies, and most recently, in the HCI community (Aouragh, 2011; Basch et al., 2005; Burrell & Anderson, 2008; Faist, 1998; Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Lindtner et al., 2011, 2012; Shklovski, Lindtner, Vertesi, & Dourish, 2010). In the field of communications, scholars have discussed transnationalism as a framework to explore and evaluate the formation of new cultures and social movements influenced by rapidly evolving technologies, especially the Internet (Georgiou, 2006). In immigration studies, the introduction of transnational fields came as an effort to expand research on understanding the process of migration and diaspora, mainly answering questions around how immigrants are incorporated into new countries (Basch et al., 2005; Levitt & Schiller, 2004). In this section, I start by reviewing the transnational literature in light of the information science field. This approach allows me to build a stronger foundation for my investigation of Saudi Arabian youth and their use of social media applications. I then discuss the theoretical and methodological implications of the transnational framework for research design and on my choice of methodology, Value Sensitive Design.

3.6.1 Origins of Transnationalism

Earlier immigration studies, as early as the 70s, in Europe had suggested that foreigners would *assimilate* in their new country. That idea was important for public policy writers (Levitt & Schiller, 2004). In the USA, scholars had argued that immigrants need to “abandon their unique customs, language, values, and homeland ties and identities” (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, p. 1) in order to gain financial means. In a seminal work that analyze the cases of immigrants from Grenada, St. Vincent, the Philippines, and Haiti to the USA, Basch et al. (1994) define transnationalism as an alternative understanding of immigration: “the process by which

immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 7). Basch suggests that these immigrants and their families are now involved in a new form of nation-state building. This involvement takes different forms, in some cases it is through influencing public policy in the host country and in others it is through affecting the use of language and ideology in the sending country (Basch et al., 1994). Basch’s goal in presenting the different cases in depth is to call on all social scientists “to rethink our conceptions of the migration process, immigrant incorporation, and identity.”

Basch not only focuses on the immigrants who are immersed in the transnational process, but she also includes the research team who were conducting the research in two, sometimes more, nation-states. She describes the experience of both immigrants and researchers as being “stretched across national borders.” The authors use the terms “transnationalism” and “transnational social field” interchangeably to express this social experience and to stress that in a transnational experience, people “build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders” (Basch et al., 1994). This fundamental definition opens the door to explorations of immigrants’ cross-cultural experiences (stretching) and patterns of movement and identity development (nation-state building). As a researcher from Saudi Arabia conducting research on Saudis in the USA, I find myself similarly “stretched between” Saudi and the Western ideology, culture, and language.

Influenced by Basch’s call, Levitt and Schiller (2004) study the implications and consequences of transnationalism on social theory and methodology. Levitt and Schiller’s goal is to correct the longstanding notion that society and the nation-state are one by presenting a case study of Turkish youth moving back and forth between Turkey and Germany. They suggest that one of the important implications of this new direction is the way our future research will interpret

societies, nation-states, families, and citizenship. “Our analytical lens must necessarily broaden and deepen because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind” (Levitt & Schiller, 2004). While these fields apply to the broader area of the transnational experience of Saudis living in the USA, I want to focus primarily on the effects on the individuals, not the reciprocal effects on the receiving and sending societies¹¹.

3.6.2 *Transnationalism and ICTs*

Transnationalism theory opens a new dimension to studying immigration by providing evidence and examining the consequence of many transmigrants maintenance of close relationships with their families and friends in the homeland, while simultaneously forming groups in the host country. These new dimensions in studying transmigrants, the rapidly increasing number of countries affected by migration, along with the changes in communication technologies, resulted in an increased interest amongst scholars in exploring transmigrants and their use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Gumpert & Drucker, 1998). Although earlier research suggested that the phenomenon of transnationalism might be an outcome of the communication and transportation technology revolution (such as airplanes and telecommunication) (Wakeman, 1988), it was not until the early 2000s when scholars and designers began to pay attention to the implications of transnationalism on ICTs and vice versa, as a response to the Internet.

In terms of the impact of transnationalism on the use and adoption of ICTs, two lines of research are the most relevant to my population: the first one “Return to Cyberia” by Panagakos

¹¹ Although I recognize the importance of the societal effects, they are not the focus of the study.

and Horst (2006), whose main research agenda was to explore transnational populations' use of ICTs. Their work builds on the earlier research by Escobar et al. (1994) who studied the impact of new technologies on people and what factors influence their decisions to accept or reject them. The second is the theory of New Global Cultures by Appadurai (1996).

In the first line of research, "Return to Cyberia," Panagakos and Horst (2006) observe:

"because it [the internet] raises provocative questions about, for example, the meaning of 'community', identity and public space; the decline of the nation-state; ownership of and access to information; and the creation of new types of inequality. The Internet is also an easy medium for scholars in the industrialized world to research because it is more accessible than many field sites." (p.110)

In the second line of research, the work by Appadurai (Appadurai, 1996) studies the relationship between processes of immigration, communication and information dynamics. Appadurai, a scholar born in India and currently working in the USA, writes about his experience and the impact of cultural instabilities and movement on his identity and career. He pays special attention to the relationship between electronic media and the contemporary tensions of the *work of the imagination* as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity. Appadurai (1996) suggests that imagination represents a "peculiar force in social life" because, like never before, many people in more parts of the world consider a much wider set of possible lives for themselves and others (Faist, 1998).

Following Appadurai, a vast amount of research and many case studies emerged that study, in-depth, the complex experiences of different transnational groups with ICTs. A study by Burrell and Anderson (2008) aimed at understanding the social landscapes and personal desires of Ghanaians living in the UK and how they are shaped by their use of ICTs, specifically, digital cameras, mobile phones, and the Internet. The study suggests that the use of ICTs by Ghanaians living in the UK has two main goals: maintaining *cultural continuity* and building *new ties* in the

host country. This can be seen in social gatherings, where Ghanaians record events on videotapes and send them (by mail or through people who are traveling) to the home country and vice versa in a process the authors describe as *synchronization* between the homeland and the host country. In social gatherings, Ghanaians were practicing looking homewards, by watching these videotapes and listening to recorded messages, and by that Ghanaians maintained cultural continuity (Burrell & Anderson, 2008). Meanwhile, the same technologies that were used to maintain cultural continuity were used to build new ties and new imaginations by looking outward, outside of the UK and around the world. Within my population of transnationals, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook (among others) become the tools of maintaining synchronization and cultural continuity with the sending country as well as for building new ties in the host country.

The computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW) and social computing communities started recently to examine the intersection between ubiquitous technology and transnationalism. Gaining momentum from the works of Burrell and Anderson (2008) and Appadurai's (1996) work on the *social imaginary*, a study by Lindtner et al. (2012), explored how online gaming systems are appropriated and used by transnational users from China. The study expands the view of appropriation to include not only the technical aspect of appropriation, but also cultural appropriation. In other words,

“How appropriation as a cultural process is not necessarily geographically bound, but often evolves across multiple sites, through practices of imagination... Cultural appropriation does not constitute a subcategory of technology appropriation nor does it describe a process that comes after a technology is modified. Rather, it emphasizes appropriation as process of meaning making that can occur through both technical means and processes of imagination” (p. 83).

Similarly, Bijker et al. (2012) argue that we cannot understand the ways a technology is used in isolation from how that technology is embedded in the social context. My dissertation continues on this line of research to expand the views of transnationalism, the social imaginary, cultural

appropriation, and the social shaping of technology to include the perspectives and practices of one transnational Arab population (i.e., transnational Saudis) online and offline.

3.7 VALUE SENSITIVE DESIGN

Value Sensitive Design is a “theoretically grounded approach to the design of technology that accounts for human values in a principled and comprehensive manner throughout the design process” (Friedman et al., 2006, p. 1). It focuses on values with moral import such as privacy and trust. Specifically, Friedman and Kahn Jr (2000) argue that the types of values they are concerned with “center on human wellbeing, human dignity, justice, welfare, and human rights” (p. 163). One key aspect of VSD is that it employs a tripartite approach by iterating on three types of investigations:

- *Conceptual investigations*: the focus in this investigation is to characterize who are the stakeholders affected by the design at hand, on discovering values, and “informed analyses of these values and potential value tensions.” (Friedman et al., 2006, p. 3)
- *Empirical investigations*: the focus in this investigation is to employ empirical methods to refine and expand values identified in the conceptual investigations and “to assess stakeholders’ experience of the value-oriented features of a system at various stages of the design, development, and deployment process.” (Friedman et al., 2006, p. 4)
- *Technical investigations*: the focus in this investigation is the technical design of the technology or system at hand. As an application for this method, (Friedman, Howe, & Felten, 2002) conducted a study to improve informed consent in Web-based interactions through the development of new technical mechanisms for cookie management. Observing the importance of the technical investigation Friedman, Howe, et al. (2002) states “Technical investigations identify how existing technical designs and mechanisms engender value suitabilities and, conversely, how the identification of specific values can lead to new technical designs and mechanisms to support better those values” (p.10-11).

Stakeholder Analysis. VSD authors assert that not only direct users of the technology are impacted by the technology; rather, there are two types of stakeholders: direct and indirect. The Stakeholders Analysis is one of the analyses that is commonly used during the conceptual investigation to aid the research team in differentiating between the stakeholders. Direct stakeholders are the users directly interacting with the technology. Indirect stakeholders are those who don't interact with the technology but somehow are affected by the use of the system (Friedman et al., 2006). VSD also takes into account the indirect stakeholders because the technological negative or positive implications could impact both types of stakeholders (Friedman, Kahn, & Borning, 2002). In my dissertation, I utilize the stakeholder analysis to identify the various stakeholders involved with the decision-making process of transnational Saudis regarding enacting privacy and identity online. An initial stakeholder analysis, revealed the strong influence of family and religious figures (i.e., God) on the daily interactions of this population online, a theme that will be much clearer in the findings section.

Overall, Value Sensitive Design methodology and theory serves as an inspirational road map and a toolkit guiding the development of improved technical design with attention to users' values. In my dissertation, I only focused on the first two types of investigation (conceptual and empirical) by employing an iterative process between them. The conceptual investigation (done mostly in the study context and the literature review sections) provided working definitions of the value of privacy. As a result of the empirical investigation (the data collection and analysis part of the study), I further expanded the definition of privacy (in the findings section) where region specific privacy-related-values emerged needing further conceptualization that were underexplored in previous research. Using this iterative process, I was able to synthesize and provide an expansive view of privacy that includes the region-specific values (e.g., family honor, reputation, modesty

and respect) that are of equal importance to the often written about privacy-related-values (i.e., safety, trust and identity). In the following chapter, I present the details of the empirical investigation, in other words the study design and data collection method followed by the study findings in chapter 5.

Chapter 4. METHOD AND DATA ANALYSIS

This project took a qualitative approach to identifying and analyzing online information privacy and identity practices and behaviors of transnational Saudi youth. Specifically, my goal was to offer working concepts, comprehensive theory, and key design insights on the way social media was used by this population along with their privacy and identity challenges. To achieve this goal, my study methods were inspired by the Value Sensitive Design (VSD) methodology, starting with the conceptual investigation (presented in the Study Context and Literature Review chapters) and then the empirical investigation (explained below in the Data Collection and Analysis sections).

In this chapter, I lay out the methodological contours of an investigation rooted in socio-technical practices occurring in two extremely different contexts, by the same population. I first provide details of the data-gathering process, describing recruitment strategies, research sites and participants. This is then followed by a discussion of the research tools used in this investigation: *design sessions* that involved a background questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and collage construction as my visual elicitation method. Lastly, I describe the data analysis phase. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of limitations inherent to this methodological approach, and opportunities and challenges faced in the fieldwork.

4.1 STUDY DESIGN OVERVIEW: EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

I conducted an interpretive cross-sectional study¹² with qualitative methods approach to investigate how Saudi men and women, aged 19-30, engage with Facebook, before, while, and after spending time in the US or Canada. The study intended to explore how Saudis engage with

¹² A type of observational studies that compares different population groups at a single point in time.

social media during their transnational experience and what challenges they face in terms of experiencing privacy and managing identity. Cognizant of the many other ways in which one can explore this topic, I conducted individual design sessions that included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and a collage construction activity with 34 participants (M=15, F=19) who are all Saudi students from three different groups (times in their transnational experience):

- 1) Group A: students who are planning to study in the US (8 participants; F=4, M=4);
- 2) Group B: students who are currently studying in the US (12 participants; F= 5, M=7);
- 3) Group C: students who finished studying in the US (14 participants; F=10, M=4).

My exploration of this understudied population allowed me to compare many different variables from the different sections at the same time (within groups and between groups). Facebook was the main social media platform under investigation, although you will note that I considered all other platforms mentioned throughout the interviews (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, along with others.)

In this section, I discuss in detail my research process, dissertation population, and the procedures used for the data collection and analysis.

4.2 RECRUITMENT, PARTICIPANTS AND SITES

4.2.1 *Participant Recruitment and Sampling*

To recruit my transnational sample, I deliberately sought out Saudi participants from different backgrounds, education levels, genders, as well as ages. The cross-sectional aspect of my study required me to recruit balanced gender samples in two field sites, Saudi Arabia and in the USA (all in the Seattle area.) In Seattle, participants were recruited primarily from the English as a Second Language (ESL) programs that are approved by the King Abdullah Scholarship (KAFSP) and are well attended by Saudis (e.g. Kaplan English Institute.) I also sent out flyers with male

friends to distribute at the mosque near the University of Washington (UW) campus, and at the Saudi Students Club (SSC) in Seattle, which is a recognized organization by the KAFSP for Saudi Students living in Seattle and other big cities in the US. Moreover, the president of SSC gladly agreed to help – due to my previous connection with him through the pilot work and volunteering with the club – and posted a call on the SSC different social media pages and shared the flyer with students during the club meetings. Finally, I posted a call on my website and my Twitter account (See figure 4.1). The flyer included a brief description of the project and the aim of the study, a brief explanation of the activity, along with my contact information.

Recruitment. Initially, I aimed at using random sampling from the larger group in both field sites (e.g., a date base of all students studying in the US or Canada under the Foreign Scholarship Program). However, I quickly realized the difficulty of this approach from my experience with the pilot studies due to the following obstacles: access to the whole group, time and cost, or willingness to participate. Consequently, I used snowballing and purposeful sampling techniques. I determined my research sample size following the protocol of saturation measure described in (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) that entails “adding new cases to the point of diminishing returns, when no new information emerges.” In addition, Creswell (1998) suggests, “in order to satisfy the saturation criterion, the most common sampling strategy used in qualitative research can be labeled as *purposeful sampling*” [emphases mine].



Figure 4.1 Social Network Call

In terms of recruitment in Saudi, it was not as straightforward. I had to depend heavily on my personal connections and snowball from there (i.e., *modified snowball sampling*). I reached out to the participants from my pilot work (Appendix F) who connected me to a couple of interested participants. I also used my social network to reach out to participants (see Figure 4.1). In many cases, participants from the pilot work who enjoyed talking with me offered to help me spread the word and recruit more participants. As Burrell (2009) has written in her paper on choosing sites for ethnographic research, “a well-selected entry point can generate a broad spatial mapping that maintains a concentrated engagement with the research topic” (p. 191).

Recruiting for face-to-face interviews in Saudi was a unique experience with two primary challenges: First, researchers in Saudi are “not readily accepted in a traditional milieu that frowns upon those enquiring into other peoples’ lives” (AlMunajjed, 1997, p. 8). In my personal experience snowballing my sample, the only noticeable difference between recruiting Saudis in Saudi and Saudis in the USA was regarding the types of information I needed to disclose about myself and the purpose of the research before I was offered connections. This is understandable as people in Saudi are more private about their personal lives and are not used to talking about themselves to strangers. This was especially the case when I started interviewing outside my personal connections (~20/34 of the sample was from outside my network). On the other hand, the participants who lived in the US for a while showed more interest in participating and did not inquire much about my confidentiality procedure, or whether I will publish the research with their names or not. This is largely due to the nature of the sample, who are all students and are eager to help each other and build connections with other students.

The second challenge concerned finding male participants who were willing to meet face-to-face, and finding a secure place to conduct the interviews with them. I mitigated for this issue by

reaching out to friends and family who worked at gender mixed companies, who in return were able to help me secure the majority of my male sample. The fact that there was a secure suggested location for them and for me (i.e., the meeting room at the work place) made it easier and eliminated any stress regarding meeting in public where risk can be on both parties.

Limitations. There are limitations of using a recruiting strategy that draws from my network, in that my pool of participants is skewed towards like-minded informants who are educated, open to speak in face-to-face settings about private subjects, and willing to be audio and/or video recorded (4 participants asked not be video recorded). This said, after carefully reviewing all the studies published on social media use in Saudi Arabia, this study is considered the first study reporting qualitatively generated empirical findings (through face-to-face interviews) from both genders in Saudi Arabia focusing on privacy and identity. While I realize that the results of this study could not be generalized to the entire Arab Gulf population¹³ nor the Saudi transnational population, I did reach a point at which I can responsibly and confidently say that I am able to apply my findings based on "...a thorough specification of the characteristics of the sample" (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). In other words, people who share the cultural and educational background of my participants. In addition, I aim with this study to motivate and inspire other Saudi and Arab HCI researchers to conducted future larger studies and raise awareness to the importance of these contextually grounded studies.

In terms of methodological ethics, although the rules for obtaining an IRB approval for the purpose of conducting research in Saudi Arabia are ambiguous¹⁴, I still went through the US version of the process and obtained an IRB from the University of Washington Human Subjects

¹³ Due to the shared cultural traditions and Islamic religion across the Arab Gulf, this study aims to reveal much of the nuance that is specific to this region.

¹⁴ There isn't an official center or an educational institution to obtain ethical approvals.

Division (please refer to Appendix A). My study was considered a low-risk study and I provided a consent form to all my participants (please refer to Appendix B). In it, I included a question asking the participants if they are comfortable being video recorded during their interview (without showing their face), and while 30/34 of my participants approved the recording a couple said no (2 females/2males). The consent form was written in English and I always explained the content in Arabic.

4.2.2 Participants

Over the course of 18 months, I successfully recruited 34 participants (M=15 F=19) from three different periods in their studies: before, during and after. I conducted interviews with participants in four different locations in the US and Saudi Arabia: Seattle, Dammam (third largest city in Saudi), Riyadh (The Capital of Saudi), Jeddah (second largest city in Saudi) shown in (Figure 4.2). Participants volunteered their time and were compensated with a small symbolic gift, namely, a small decorating box with chocolate inside at the end of the design session. A summary with basic statistics explicating the three groups is provided in Figure 4.2 and Tables 1 & 2.



Figure 4.2 Interviews in Saudi. The circles indicate the three major cities of Saudi and the number of interviews conducted in each city. The blue line indicates the distance from Damman to Jeddah for estimation.

Table 1. Details of participants and interview locations

Group ID	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Interview Date	Interview location
Group A	PM1	Male	28	11/10/15	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PM2	Male	26	11/10/15	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PF11	Female	18	11/9/15	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PM3	Male	21	11/13/15	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PF12	Female	18	11/9/15	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PF13	Female	18	11/12/15	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PM10	Male	24	4/5/16	Saudi Arabia/Riyadh
	PF16	Female	20	4/12/16	Saudi Arabia/Riyadh
Group B	PM12	Male	29	2014	United States/ Seattle
	PM13	Male	29	2014	United States/ Seattle
	PM14	Male	30	2014	United States/ Seattle
	PM15	Male	19	2014	United States/ Seattle
	PF17	Female	22	2014	United States/ Seattle
	PF18	Female	22	2014	United States/ Seattle
	PM4	Male	18	12/4/16	United States/ Seattle
	PF14	Female	27	5/4/16	United States/ Seattle
	PM5	Male	24	13/4/16	United States/ Seattle
	PF15	Female	31	9/29/15	United States/ Qatar
	PM11	Male	25	4/15/15	United States/ Seattle
PF17	Female	33	4/15/15	United States/ Seattle	
Group C	PF1	Female	25	8/12/14	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PF2	Female	24	8/14/14	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PF3	Female	29	8/21/14	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PF4	Female	22	8/18/14	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PF5	Female	24	8/12/14	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PF6	Female	24	8/21/14	Saudi Arabia / Dhahran
	PF7	Female	31	9/20/15	Saudi Arabia / Jeddah
	PF8	Female	26	9/20/15	Saudi Arabia / Jeddah
	PF9	Female	32	9/19/15	Saudi Arabia / Jeddah
	PF10	Female	27	9/19/15	Saudi Arabia / Jeddah
	PM6	Male	30	9/21/15	Saudi Arabia / Jeddah
	PM7	Male	28	9/21/15	Saudi Arabia / Jeddah
	PM8	Male	28	9/21/15	Saudi Arabia / Jeddah
	PM9	Male	31	9/22/15	Saudi Arabia / Jeddah

Table 2. Summary of basic stats of the three groups

	Group A (Count 8)	Group B (Count 12)	Group C (Count 14)	Total=34
<u>Age</u>				
18-22	5	4	0	9
23-26	3	2	6	11
27-32	0	6	8	14
<u>Gender</u>				
Men	4	7	4	15
Women	4	5	10	19
<u>Marital status</u>				
Married	2	2	5	9
Unmarried	6	10	9	25
<u>Degrees pursuing</u>				
Bachelors	4	8	7	19
Masters	3	2	7	12
Doctorate	1	2	0	3
<u>Lived abroad before</u>				
Yes	0	3	2	5
No	8	9	12	29
<u>Major pursuing</u>				
Computer science	1	1	2	4
Business	2	5	5	12
Engineering	3	4	5	12
Law	1	0	0	1
Economic	1	0	0	1
Art, journalism	0	1	0	1
Medicine	0	1	0	1
Other	0	0	2	2

4.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

To identify the privacy and identity management issues associated with transnational Saudi youth, I designed a data collection procedure that relied on in-depth interactions with participants in order to understand their everyday lives. The data collection procedure with the direct stakeholders was conducted in individual sessions. I refer to these individual sessions as *design sessions* and they consisted of three qualitative methods (instruments) combined:

- 1) Background questionnaire (See [Appendix D](#))
- 2) Design activity: constructing collages (See [Appendix E](#))
- 3) Semi-structured interviews (See [Appendix F](#))

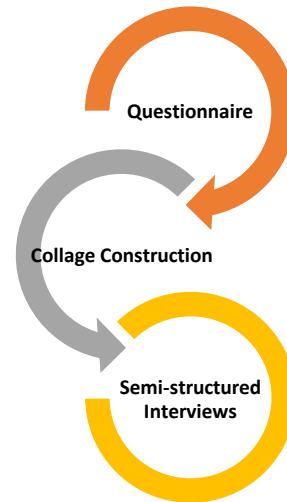


Figure 4.3 Data Collection Tools

The design sessions with each participant took around 2 hours (AVG=1.5) and were conducted in the following order as illustrated in Figure 4.3 with each stage informing the next.

4.3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire instrument, which was sent to participants prior to our scheduled meeting, served the following goals: 1) to give me a brief context and some knowledge of the participant's background before the interview; and 2) to be analyzed qualitatively and descriptively together with the transcripts and collages from design sessions. Therefore, open-ended and closed questions were used. The questionnaire instrument went through multiple versions, based on literature regarding cross-cultural privacy concerns and value tensions with Arab users, iterative testing in the two pilot studies, and assumptions about Saudi students' experiences with SNS. Some

questions in the questionnaire were presented in three different versions to match the different groups I worked with (students before, during, and after their transnational experience). To assure validity, the demographic questions and questions related to attitudes towards SNS were largely drawn from (Alanazy, 2013)¹⁵ in addition to (Schlosser & Pirolli, 1998) WWW User Survey, both used and validated by their authors, with minor modifications that reflect the different groups (A,B,C). As a final step, I reviewed the instrument with my advisor to evaluate it. Based on the results and feedback I developed a final version of the instrument.

The questionnaire consists of 60 questions divided into six sections (see Appendix D: Background Questionnaire):

1. *Personal information.* This section contained 5 questions covering age, gender, marital status, and whether a family member is accompanying the student in the US.
2. *Information on studying abroad.* This section contained 10 questions regarding the student's experience during their time studying in the US/Canada covering arrival year, time spent in the West before starting college (e.g. English program), major of study, current academic level, and previous experience in living abroad.
3. *Conservativeness level.* This section contained 3 questions regarding the participant's personal level of conservativeness along with questions regarding their family members and friends. By conservative, I meant the extent to which the student observes Islamic religious rules and Saudi cultural traditions. The question was motivated, in large part, by my belief that this variable affects the level of information disclosure and participation on SNS. This is not a common approach and is unique to this study. Responses use a 5-point Likert scale (from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*) where 3 indicates a neutral state. The pilot version of the questionnaire included two questions related to the participant's personal and family level of conservativeness. The majority of participants indicated low levels of conservativeness by choosing the *disagree* option and further elaborated in the semi-structured interviews that this

¹⁵ Alanazy (2013) conducted a survey study to investigate the ways Saudi women studying in the US perceived online and face-to-face discussions in the classroom.

selection was a result of their experience in the US, what I will call the *Western lifestyle*¹⁶ going forward in my dissertation. As a result, to gauge this variable I decided to ask this question to each participant in terms of the current and the past state. There are other ways to measure this variable indirectly, some might argue that asking participants some religion-related questions such as, “if they pray five times a day?” or “if they fast Ramadhan?” would be an indicator. I decided against these questions because they are very direct for my population, which might cause the participant to become more reserved when interacting with me.

4. *Attitude towards Internet use.* This section contained 7 questions regarding the student’s general information on using the Internet. I included this section to serve as an introduction to the next section and to learn about the behavior of the participant with using the Internet. Specifically, I asked questions regarding the time they spend online on a daily and weekly basis, purpose of use (whether it is for personal or professional needs), and on email use. Responses use a checkbox type with multiple options.
5. *Attitude towards Facebook.* This section contained 3 questions to indicate their attitudes towards Facebook specifically. The questions here were very similar to the questions regarding email use in the previous section; I only changed the platform to Facebook. The goal is to compare and contrast the media for different activities. Similar to section 4, responses use a checkbox type with multiple options.
6. *Attitudes towards specific activities on Facebook and general SNS.* This section contained 30 questions divided into 6 subsections divided as follows:
 - a. Participant’s comfort level with Facebook as a tool for communicating with family and friends
 - b. Participant’s comfort level with Facebook as a tool for making new friends
 - c. Participant’s privacy concerns with Facebook and other SNS
 - d. Participant’s family (indirect stakeholders) perceptions of using Facebook and other SNS.
 - e. Participant’s preferred platform
 - f. Open-ended questions

¹⁶ I recognize that there is no one unified lifestyle in the Western world and my use of this term is to refer to the exposure to the West as a culture that is different than the Arab (in some cases it is exactly the opposite, for example, freedom of expression, gender roles, and political accountability)

These 60 questions were important in guiding my design sessions and the semi-structured questions I asked participants. Responses to the questions in the first 4 subsections use a 5-point Likert-scale (from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*) where 3 indicates a neutral state. Lastly, I ended the questionnaire with open-ended questions to elicit comments related to the pros and cons of using SNS during the transnational experience (please refer to Appendix D: Background Questionnaire for the full list of questions.)

Overall, participants (~30 participants) shared their completed questionnaires a couple of days before the interviews were conducted and some had them ready the morning of the interview. The questionnaire was written in English except for the section on *Conservativeness level*. Since I took a risk¹⁷ by including this question, which was a unique approach to this study, I took extra care in presenting the motives behind it so I don't discourage participants from participating in the study. In doing so, I included an explanation in Arabic to the meaning of "life outlook," "open minded/liberal" and "conservative" to eliminate confusion. In addition, I added a follow up question with a text box asking participants to share any additional information or comments they had about this question allowing for engagement and to create a feedback loop, which offered me insight early on¹⁸.

Questionnaires were created via Google Forms and a unique link was included in the recruitment email for each participant to avoid any mix-ups. After participants completed their questionnaires, I received an email notification, then reviewed participants' answers, extracted

¹⁷ This question can risk discouraging participants from participating as discussing religious matters or questioning religious belief isn't usually acceptable.

¹⁸ No participants indicated that they were not comfortable with the question. However, I had an alternative plan to ask the question in a different way if needed. For example, I could've asked this in an indirect way by proposing scenarios and eliciting participant's answers to get an idea regarding their conservativeness level.

their background information into the major sheet with all the other answers from the same group, and read the remaining answers.

In terms of analysis, the questionnaires served mainly as an interview guide, meaning, that I used the participants' answers to better prepare me for the design sessions. It offered me a brief introduction and an early impression of my participant, which was important in this case to avoid any issues, especially with opposite gender interviews. In addition, in cases where the questionnaire was incomplete or contained ambiguous answers, I was able to modify the semi-structure interview protocol to include clarifying questions. Accordingly, all answers from group 'A,' 'B,' and 'C' were compiled under one major sheet, which allowed me to see the overall similarities and differences.

Limitations. Overall, participants did not indicate any issue with the questionnaires. However, four participants did not submit their questionnaires on time despite following up with them during and after the interviews to do so. I mitigated for that by asking most of the questionnaires questions in the design session. Moreover, a couple of participants indicated that the length of the questionnaire discouraged them in the beginning, but after they started filling it out they found the questions straightforward and fast to answer. This is considered a common critique to the questionnaire method as they usually cause *respondent fatigue*, especially if they were long, where the “quality of the data they provide begins to deteriorate” (Lavrakas, 2008)

4.3.2 *Semi-structured Interviews*

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of my participants' use of Facebook, I used semi-structured conversational interviews that were ethnographically informed (Lazar, 2010; Neuman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Interviews, in general, are considered a social science method, which involves a collaborative process between the participants and the researcher and are intended to be iterative,

freeform and even somewhat improvised (Neuman, 1994). The goal of the study was to provide an in-depth, “multifaceted account” of my populations’ values and needs; hence, the interviews, combined with the other tools (i.e., questionnaire and collage construction,) proved powerful, as they offered flexibility in the flow of questions, and provided a space for the participants to feel free to share in-depth accounts of their experiences.

After participants handed me their signed consent forms, the design sessions began with a semi-structured interview. After a few questions, I introduced the design activity to the participant (i.e., collage construction.) Interview questions were asked throughout the sessions: in the beginning to build rapport and to clarify answers in the questionnaire, during the construction of the collages and after for additional information. Mainly, the goal was to allow for a rich conversation, in addition to form connections between the questionnaire answers and collage construction. On average, interviews lasted for 1.5 hours and were conducted in English and Arabic. Using both English and Arabic in answering my questions (i.e., code switching¹⁹) did occur, but English remained for most the language that was primarily spoken. Due to the nature of my sample, most of my participants were bilingual in Arabic and English. Specially, ELS students who indicated that they wanted to benefit from this opportunity and practice conversational English through these interviews. Specific to the transnational population, I note that code switching occurred more frequently when topics were sensitive (culturally or religiously). For example, a participant would be explaining a situation in Arabic and when referencing a culturally controversial practice (e.g., drinking or going to the club) the participant would switch to explain those in English, a theme I found fascinating from a linguistic point of view. In terms of sample representation to the whole population, it is worth noting that being bilingual in Saudi Arabia is

¹⁹ Code switching is a concept based on linguistic theory and refers to the transition between languages (Arabic and English in the case of this study) in a conversation among bi-lingual speakers (Peter Auer, 2013).

not uncommon, as English is considered an important lingua franca, mainly for educational and professional development. For testing the validity of my interview questions, I conducted two pilot studies using them (please refer to Appendix G) and further revised them with my dissertation committee.

While the interviews I conducted in the US were mostly conducted in a meeting room on the University of Washington campus, the interviews I conducted in Saudi had their own unique locational challenges as I mentioned earlier. As I learned from the pilot work, the interview location was determined mostly based on the preference of the participant, which in a couple of cases was not convenient nor safe for me. The interview locations changed based on each participant, some offered to have me over at their homes, others offered to meet at a coffee shop, a few invited me to their workplace, and some offered to come to my home. Each location offered a different experience, which is an important aspect of this study to be reported on due to the limited knowledge available on conducting field work in this context—which I anticipate will be of value to future researchers aiming to conduct field work in Saudi Arabia. Regarding interviews conducted at the participants' workplace (mostly male participants) or homes (mostly female participants), in general, they went as planned because we (the participant and myself) were in a safe²⁰, quiet, and spacious location to conduct the interviews. Participants were very generous with their time and hospitality, which reflects Arab norms. One of the difficulties was finding the location of the houses, especially, in a large city like Jeddah where Google maps is not always accurate. With regard to the interviews conducted at a coffee shop, they also went as planned, except for the background noise (i.e., music) that was caught in the recording, and the availability of tables that were big enough to conduct the collage construction.

²⁰ Safety was mostly important for opposite gender interviews as conducting them might put both parties under the scrutiny and investigation of the religious police.

During interviews, I focused on several themes related to becoming familiar with social media. As I mentioned earlier, often by the time I had arranged an interview, I already knew at least a little about the participant's use of social media from the questionnaire. I typically began interviews by asking participants to describe their daily habits on Facebook and other social media platforms. In particular, I focused on asking questions regarding Facebook use purposes, the time they spent daily, how it compares to other platforms, incidents that led to private information being exposed, moments of surprise, negative and positive experiences. I also asked participants to share scenarios and accounts of discomfort or challenge when posting content on Facebook or other platforms. These threads of conversation were useful in identifying privacy concerns, degree of privacy awareness, privacy protection practices, and other information practices that are related to managing identity and self-presentation online.

Limitations. There are limitations to interviews as a technique such as the enormous amount of data they generate, which makes the analysis phase burdensome (Lazar, 2010). While interviews are considered better than any other method in providing the researcher with detailed responses (Lazar, 2010) as they allow subjects to talk, open up, discuss their concerns, and reflect on the asked questions, still, researchers suggest that interviews could suffer from interaction effects, i.e., the interviewer effect. Smagorinsky (2008) calls attention to this fact and suggests, "Making some effort to account for these phenomena helps to explain the social construction of data in studies involving researcher-participant interactions" (p. 395). Moreover, in the case of my interviews, and due to the importance of reputation in this context, I took into account that my interviews might suffer from "social desirability bias," which is defined by Fisher (1993) as "systematic error in self-report measures resulting from the desire of respondents to avoid embarrassment and project a favorable image to others" (p. 303). I addressed these challenges by being careful in

following protocols from Fisher (1993), to mitigate for self-reporting bias, and from Smagorinsky (2008), to reduce interviewer effect by documenting details in my field-notes and account for them in the data analysis stages.

4.3.3 Collage Construction

Privacy and intimacy are personal, complex, and therefore, uncomfortable subjects to discuss. Considering these challenges, I included a visual technique that was based on constructing *collages* to my data collection procedure:

“As inspiration for design teams, collage allows participants to visually express their thoughts, feelings, desires, and other aspects of their life that are difficult to articulate using traditional means...When prompted by traditional research methods such as questionnaires and interviews, people often find it challenging or uncomfortable to articulate and express their innermost feelings, thoughts, and desires. Collage can help mitigate this challenge, by providing an opportunity for research participants to project personal information onto visual artifacts, then using these results as a tangible reference point for conversation”

- (Martin & Hanington, 2012).

By combining this technique with interviewing for data collection, I follow other qualitative researchers who are shifting away from the focus on textual data or ‘monomodality’ towards multimodality in data collection. Multimodality, explained in Gourlay (2010) is a “mixed set of semiotic resources – or modes used for meaning making” (2010, p. 80). This is however not a new move per se, since many studies used different types of digital technologies and visual modes (e.g. visual ethnography or as aids in interviewing participants) in their study design. In one study, a group of researchers in Germany used a similar method to the *collage* method but named differently, ‘poster making and photo evaluation’ (Schratz & Steiner-Löffler, 1998). Aiming to evaluate new construction in a school, the researcher requested students to use a camera to take photos of places they liked and disliked in the school (e.g. classroom, cafeteria). After that, students were asked to construct a poster that reflects their favorite and least favorite places in the school,

and the reasons for choosing these places using the developed images and some other material. The study revealed the “power” of the students’ visual productions: “photography gives pupils the chance to research into the inner world of school life without a lot of verbal argumentation” (Prosser, 1998, p. 209-210).

A study by Loads (2009) investigated the experience of lecturers in the nursing school. Participants were asked to construct collages that reflect the meaning of teaching to them, aiming to uncover the complex and hidden aspects of their experiences. Later, the researcher used the produced collages in the interview sessions as ‘triggers’ to engage the interviewees with complex notions from their experiences. Commenting on the advantages of this approach Gourlay (2010) states,

“An approach such as this offers researchers a means to facilitate the exploration of subtle, abstract and difficult themes in a creative way, which may reveal more depth than traditional interviewing techniques. Another advantage of the image is in the representation of *metaphor*, and the relative ease with which a visual representation can be made to stand for an important concept or difficult-to-express aspect of experience” (Emphasis mine) (p. 83).

The Assemblage and the Process

I provided participants with a carefully selected collection of materials that included a large poster paper, color sharpies, scissors, glue stick, and cellulose tape (see Figure 4.4), in addition to a preset of images, words, and



Figure 4.4 Collage Activity Material

expressions (in Arabic and English). The collage assemblage was initially inspired to represent subjects that are commonly discussed over social media by this population, e.g., main landmarks of both the US and Saudi, food items, fashion, religious sites. Participants were encouraged to be

free to express whatever they wanted in the way they wanted. The collage construction method went through iteration based on the feedback I got in the pilot studies. The conversational interviews led smoothly to the collage construction prompt, where I asked participants the following:

“Using the provided collection of images, words, and materials please produce a collage that shows what you would consider private and public information on Facebook? How do you express yourself on Facebook? If you use other platforms, please share them here and show us how are they different for you than Facebook?”

Participants were given around one hour to complete the construction of their collage, during this time I continued engaging the participants in semi-structured interviews. When the participants indicated they were done, I asked them to present their collage while I videotaped their presentation, which was usually for around 5-10 minutes. The goal of this step was to provide additional clarity about the image choices and meaning. The output of the design activity in most cases was the collage, the collection of photos they decided they don't like, and the video, which was qualitatively analyzed with the transcripts, as I explain in the following section.

In the case of my population, transnational Saudis, the inclusion of visual methods benefited my data collection in many ways: first, *visuals served as provocation and projective techniques*. The assemblage of photos, paper, and pins was used to elicit comments and engagement from the participants. When language, cultural and other barriers curtail individuals' ability to express themselves, images can scaffold creative and communication processes (Pink, 2013). Gourlay (2010) states, “the use of visual data may be a powerful mode for the reflexive investigation of identities or subjectivities.” She continues: “A focus on images may provide research participants with means by which to express complex experiences in an indirect, metaphorical or less threatening manner.” In many cases, participants had the large white paper and pens in front of

them during the interview time, even before they started the collage construction, they used these tools to explain and communicate complex ideas and practices through drawings, doodles and sketches. Hand-drawings are considered important in qualitative research to “articulate deep-seated and often paradoxical emotions” (Comi, Bischof, & Eppler, 2014). In addition, due to the nature of interviews with their great dependence on remembrance (Lazar, 2010), the visual stimuli “reduce[ed] the cognitive demands to respondents” and “increase[d] participants’ recall and memories of past experiences” (Comi et al., 2014). Participants exemplified creativity in different ways during their interaction with the collage assemblage. An illustration of their creativity can be

seen in Figure 4.5, where the participant decided to go through all the images and label them based on whether he would share them or not and on what platform. This opened up an opportunity to delve deeper into specific examples of information types that can and cannot be shared and to the consequences and risks of sharing them.



Figure 4.5 A male participant labeling through the collection of images before he started adding them to the white paper.

Second, the collage served as a “*systems for creating meanings*” (Meyer, 1991). In addition to being a tool that supported remembrance and reflection, the produced visuals revealed the strength of this method in the co-creation of knowledge that resulted from my interactions with the participants (Pink, 2013). A study by Slutskaya, Simpson, and Hughes (2012) that explores class-based and gendered habitus through photo elicitation, found that photos didn’t only evoke memory and “nostalgic themes about the past,” it also supported the creation of a *collaboration*

space between the participants and the researcher. In this space, the researcher and the participants discussed and unpacked complex and unusual themes that could've been dismissed otherwise due to the tendency to adhere “to identity affirming norms” (Slutskaya et al., 2012). During the design sessions, participants and I engaged in similar collaboration spaces to generate and discuss themes around privacy and self-presentation that are deeply rooted in cultural norms and religion, which might have been otherwise concealed if only interviews were employed. That is in addition to the generation of meaningful “cognitive maps” of stakeholders, which as a result aided in identifying complex relationships and multi-layered dynamics.

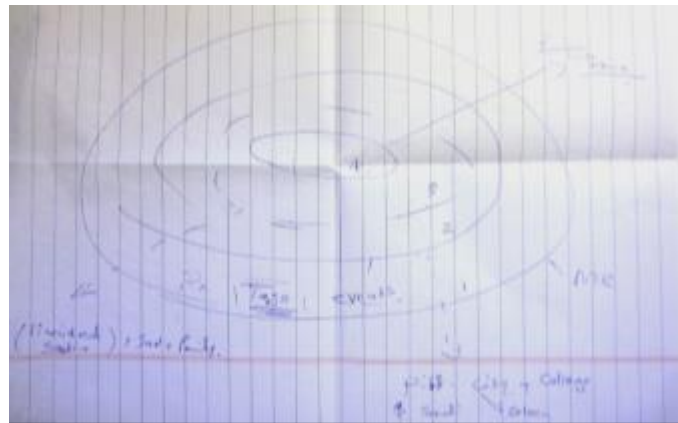


Figure 4.6 Stakeholders “cognitive maps” by one of the male participants explaining the multi-layered viewing permissions on his Facebook profile.

An illustration of this is shown in Figure 4.6 where the participant discussed his Facebook privacy settings and his way of managing information disclosure, and drew on a paper a multi-layered graph of circles inside each other then transferred this cognitive map to his collage shown in Figure 4.6. In his example, each circle reflected a customized group of family members and friends and their associated viewing settings. In this case, the visual aid was key in making the participant realize how much effort and time he put into managing his privacy settings. This was disentangled when the participant spent time with me explaining the different groups of stakeholders, their relationship to the participant, which relates to perceived level of risk, in

addition to their viewing ability of the content shared by him or by his friends (e.g., through tagging) based on privacy settings. It was also quite instrumental in explaining the inclusion criteria for each group and the associated scenarios, which largely depended on proximity in terms of distance and kinship. In this case, all content, including sensitive content, could only be viewed by him (this is expressed by the bigger outer circle in Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7). The innermost circle reflects the content that is considered benign and viewable by the public that contains only his name, profile photo, and other non-harming content.



Figure 4.7 The same participant constructed his collage using the same multilayered system he doodled earlier.

Third, collages *mitigated for the lack of real Facebook information*. One possible way for future studies could include asking participants to show their real profiles and engage with interviews using the real data on their Facebook. I opted not to take this approach, because this is one of the early qualitative studies on the use of Facebook in Saudi Arabia (and the Arab World) and that little is known about participants' reactions to a direct request to show their profiles for reasons of personal privacy and fear of judgment. Thus, I decided to recreate the Facebook

experience as much as possible with the collage method. I encouraged my participants to narrate real-life situations and information sharing practices, which resulted in several cases where participants ended up showing me their personal Facebook page to elaborate further on their anecdotes. In Figure 4.8, a female



Figure 4.8 A female participant discussing the content she considers inappropriate to share on Facebook

participant revealed the type of content she considers inappropriate to share on her Facebook. Although this type of content might not be on her actual Facebook (considering that she would not share it,) we were still able through the images to have this conversation and unpack the nuance related to unshared content.

Finally, collages served well in *reducing interviewer effect*. The fact that the researcher, myself, is Saudi - an insider to the population – might make the participants worry I will judge them based on their answers, which as a result can influence their answers (i.e., interviewer effect). This issue is not only unique to insider members of the population; it can be generalized to all types of interviewing (Paul Lavrakas, 2008). Therefore, the collage construction technique eased the process, as the participants engaged with the assemblage and the creation of the “visual template” rather than being tense or worried (Comi et al., 2014). This was especially the case when I directed questions about what might be considered a sensitive topic (e.g., intimacy and religiously-controversial topics.) This was also a conclusion from the pilot work, where participants shared feedback regarding the use of this method, and indicated that they didn’t feel

confronted by me and instead felt that the visual stimuli contributed to building rapport and keeping them focused.

Limitations. Just like all other methods, visual methods have their own drawbacks. One of the most prominent disadvantages of this method (for this study) was the need to find collaboration spaces that are equipped with the right material in order to conduct the activity. As I mentioned earlier, office spaces and homes worked very well for this method, however, public places, such as cafes, reduced the flexibility and the comfort level of the participant. Moreover, while this technique's major advantage is the production of rich data, relatedly, a disadvantage is the "complexity of the analysis of the data" (Comi et al., 2014). Further, the incorporation of the verbal data was key in developing a coherent system for analysis to avoid misinterpretation. Given this, there were cases where participants did not feel comfortable to present their collages while being video recorded or in front of other people – like the case in the café – consequently to balance these constraining situations, I depended on my reflection memos²¹. I wrote memos during the interviews and a summary note immediately after each interview. The memos included timestamps (for reviewing the audio recording,) the general feel of the interview, and pictures that provoked participants or rather upset them. Consulting these notes prior to upcoming interviews was useful in preparing for future ones, as well as in the analysis stage. Overall, my effort in documenting and reflecting paid off in the final steps of this project as it offered consistency across all interviews. An additional limitation, was regarding the refusal of some participants to follow the collage construction prompt. This resulted in 3 male participants who opted for browsing, labeling,

²¹ I documented **field notes**, following general guidelines on taking notes from Neuman (1994, p. 383) and my personal experience in regularly and carefully taking notes during the pilot studies. Elliott and Timulak (2005) recommend, "The notes are usually interwoven with the transcripts, often using different fonts, so that the researcher's voice can be clearly distinguished from the informant's voice in the data."

and reflecting on the photos instead. In these cases, I comforted the participant by clarifying that I am not judging their arts and crafts skills and re-explained the purpose of the visual method. In the cases where they still refused, I asked them to do what they were comfortable doing with the assemblage material and did not force them to follow instructions. Finally, this method is also time consuming along with the interview in terms of preparations, conduction and analysis.

4.3.4 Dataset Overview

The design sessions with 32 participants generated a large amount of data. A chart summarizing the design session tools, purpose, and outcome is presented in Table 3. Answering macro-level questions with micro-level research methods is an endeavor that involves careful, thoughtful data sampling. A discussion of the data focus and data analysis is presented in the next two sections respectively.

Table 3. The Three Data Collection Tools and Their Associated Outcome

Design Session Tools	Purpose	Outcome
Background Questionnaire	For self-reported information	30 Completed questionnaires
Collage Construction	Reflective exercise + collect behavioral data	30 completed collages and a few videos
Semi-Structured Interviews	Get more in-depth information	34 Interview Transcripts

4.4 DATA FOCUS AND ANALYSIS

As presented in Table 3, my data collection stage produced a large corpus of raw data. Informed by the pilot work, a decision I made early regraded the way I intended to analyze the collection of rich data as *whole* for each participant. Namely, each date source informed the other, so, for example, the questionnaire informed the preparation for the design session, and the collage activity offered depth into the interview answers. I divided participants into the 3 sections based

on the participant group (A, B, C) and location (USA or Saudi) and for each participant I created a folder labeled with the participant's pseudonym that included their questionnaire, a photo of their completed collage, and the interview transcript.

After most design sessions, I simultaneously transcribed and did the high-level analysis of the data focusing on privacy and identity related mentions in the recordings. The high-level analysis entailed concepts maps with some initial themes, for example, privacy concerns, privacy invasion scenarios, privacy protection tactics, identity management. The main focus was the design session audio recording and transcripts. As mentioned earlier, the collage was largely used as an artifact to derive deeper meaning to the interviews. The collages were complementary in the analysis stage when they included important details and explanations, for example, see Figure 4.9.

The analyzed data was the result of the 34 design sessions I conducted between August 2014 and April 2016 with 34 Saudi Arabian Facebook users during different times in their



Figure 4.9 Example of a completed collage

transnational experience (see Figure 4.10). In addition to these interactions, I frequently drew on design sessions, discussions, analysis conducted in my two pilot studies (Abokhodair & Yoo, 2013), and the results of my earlier published papers (Abokhodair, Abbar, Vieweg, & Mejova, 2016; Abokhodair, Hodges, & Vieweg, 2017; Abokhodair & Vieweg, 2016). All through the analysis, I sought insights from the earlier

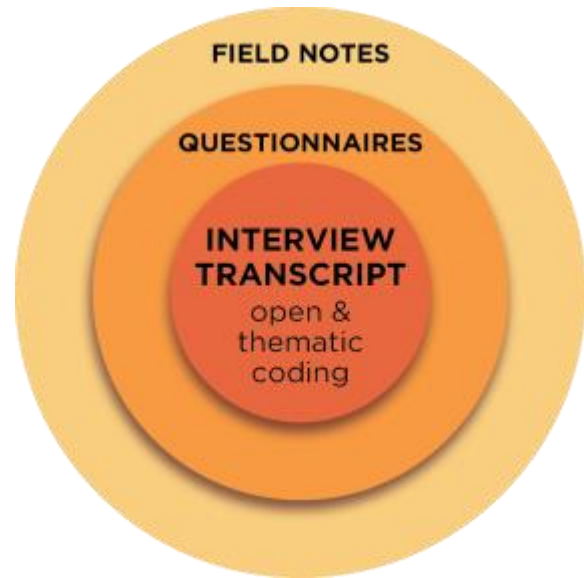


Figure 4.10 Analysis of the collected data.

collaborative research that contributed to the reliability and validity of this study. In addition, it inspired the interpretive lens through which I viewed the data. In the following section, I provide my theoretical foundation and inspiration for choosing the method for analyzing my data, which comes before the detailed accounts of the steps I took to analyze my data structured around my research questions.

4.4.1 Data Analysis Theoretical Perspectives

In approaching this research, I drew on Simon (1996), Schön (1987), and Krippendorff (2007) critical perspectives on scientific analysis of design that design is synthesis in its essence as opposed to analysis. Specifically, I conducted an exploratory research posing a broad, open question of “What is here?” (Berry, 1987); and sought to answer this question with *insights* as opposed to findings. According to Simon (1996), “Artificial things are synthesized (though not always or usually with full forethought) by human beings”:

“[S]ynthetic” is often used in the broader sense of “designed” or “composed.” We speak of engineering as concerned with “synthesis,” while science is concerned with “analysis.” Synthetic or artificial objects – and more specifically prospective artificial

objects having desired properties – are the central objective of engineering activity and skill. The engineer, and more generally designer, is concerned with how things ought to be – how they ought to be in order to attain goals, and to function (Simon, 1996, pp. 17-18).

In a similar vein, Schön claims, “...I see designing as a kind of making”:

Architects, landscape architects, interior or industrial or engineering designers, makes physical objects that occupy space and have plastic and visual form. In a more general sense, a designer makes an image—a representation—of something to be brought to reality, whether conceived primarily in visual, spatial, plastic terms or not. Designing in its broader sense involves complexity and synthesis. In contrast to analysts or critics, designers put things together and bring new things into being, dealing in the process with many variables and constraints, some initially known and some discovered through designing (Schön, 1987, pp. 41-42).

Defying scientific and analytic approaches to design, Krippendorff argued, “Designers must be non-dogmatic and anti-authoritarian in order to *question the ‘findings’ of scientific re-search*”:

...[C]laiming that data were discovered, found, collected, or sampled entails that they were there to begin with and that the researchers merely picked them up to look at them. This metaphorical description of how data came into hands of the researcher, and only that, is what makes critical assessments of their representativeness unnecessary, assures researchers of having nothing to do with the data they are analyzing, and justifies describing research results as findings – as if they were merely uncovered in or extracted from available data (Krippendorff, 2007, p. 68).

Synthetic approach to research is not uncommon in design. For example, each of the IDEO Method Cards describes one design research method with an image and a brief story about how and when to use it. However, there is no description about how to analyze the data. Instead, in the product manual they wrote “Key to our success as a design and innovation firm are the insights we derive from understanding people and their experiences, behaviors, perceptions, and needs. ...You can use them to prove a point and challenge your colleagues to seek insights in new ways²²” (IDEO, 2003). This echoes Feinberg’s emphasis on originality of humanities research:

...[W]hereas, in the social sciences, a study that provides data to support a commonly held assumption may be quite valuable, in the humanities, an original take is prized. In the

²² <http://www.gillianhayes.com/Inf231F12/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/IDEOMethodCards.pdf>

humanities, if impartial observers were to consider the artifact under analysis and come to the same conclusions as the researcher, there would be no research. ...And instead of data to construct true answers, a humanist selects and synthesizes sources to provide the scholarly rigor and analytic subtlety that makes one account of an artifact or event (or set of artifacts and events) more compelling than another. ...There aren't standard processes for determining this selection and synthesis (Feinberg, 2012, p. 19).

Feinberg points out that humanities research tends to coalesce around themes, interpretations, and examples. Likewise, in my selection and synthesis, the insights coalesced into themes, interpretations, and compelling examples of transnational Saudi youth's perception of privacy and identity on Facebook.

4.4.2 *Transcribing and Translating*

I began with transcribing my interviews verbatim in the original spoken language (Arabic and English,) focusing on participants' conversational cues (e.g. laughter, hesitation, and pauses). The goal was to preserve meaning in context to situate research findings, and not only the syntax and semantics of the interviews. I made this decision based on my experience conducting the pilot studies. In those studies, I noticed that participants used Arabic and English interchangeably when discussing their ideas and experiences with me even though I was conducting the interview in Arabic.

4.4.3 *Open Coding*

My data analysis process followed the framework for *descriptive/interpretive qualitative* research offered by Elliott and Timulak (2005) which is largely influenced by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) combined with *thematic analysis* following guidelines from (Boyatzis, 1998). I began my analysis with an iterative process of reading the transcripts and generating high-level concepts by identifying parts of the data that are similar in meaning to formulate themes. I read the transcripts with focus on mentions of information practices related to privacy, personhood,

self-presentation, and identity, in addition to concerns, confusions, risks and threats, all to gain insight into the participants' experiences with social media and their association to privacy awareness and identity construction.

Generating and validating themes was conducted using two perspectives: *emic* and *etic*. Developing codes *emically* means, "The researcher records information from the viewpoint of the people engaged in the social behavior under investigation," i.e., the emic themes will emerge inductively from the captured perspectives (P. E. Sandstrom, 2004, p. 14). In contrast, for the *etic* themes, I drew from my contextual knowledge, i.e., experience living in the region, in addition to my readings of the literature to develop some themes, such as the themes Fear of Hasad, and Fear of Audience, in doing so I followed guidelines from (A. R. Sandstrom & Sandstrom, 1995). Following this, I created a series of additional high-level codes corresponding to themes identified in the open coding (e.g., privacy concerns, identity management, privacy practices) and then nested subcategories underneath that emerged in participants' own terms. For example, one theme that frequently appeared in the data collected from female participants was concerning the use of profile photos, or rather the lack thereof²³. Consequently, data was coded by creating an overarching category titled *strategies for boundary regulation* that contains all the different strategies that participants reported on (e.g., profile photo, pseudonyms, access control through privacy settings, the acquisition and management of multiple accounts on the same platform that reflect different personas, maintaining accounts on different social media platforms for different audiences and purposes.) Another theme is concerned with *privacy invasion concerns* that contains all the different reasons participants reported on which is divided into three main categories (religious,

²³ They tend to use scenes from nature or pictures of babies instead of their real photos as an interpersonal way of managing disclosure on Facebook (and other social media platforms).

social, practical.) Under social, for example, I included subcategories such as, honor, reputation, fear of shame.

Analyzing the Collages

During the analysis phase, I mainly focused on the transcribed audio recordings and my field notes. In some cases, when the participant had referred to their collage, I went back to their collages to extract more nuance and meaning. In other cases, where I was able to video record the collage construction activity, I watched the video recording of some design sessions to find the relationship and complement the visual with the verbal. For example, when a participant would say, “this image reminds me of...” I went back to the recording to find the image they were referencing. In analyzing my collages, I followed guidelines from Pink (2013) who suggests that the “purpose of visual ethnographic analysis is not to translate visual evidence into verbal knowledge” (De Valck, Rokka, & Hietanen, 2009, p. 90). Instead it is “an analytical process of making meaningful links between different research experiences and materials such as photography, video, field diaries...These different media represent different types of knowledge that may be understood in relation to one another” (Pink, 2013, p. 96). She asserts that:

“Each medium evokes different elements...the photography does not simply illustrate the field notes, and the video is not simply evidence of conversation, interviews or actions. Rather, images and words contextualize each other, forming not a complete record of the research but a set of different representations and strands of it” (p. 120).

4.4.4 Collaborative Coding and Reliability

In my dissertation, I intended to report on the data by bringing forward some of the nuance, tensions, and ambiguity that arose from the use of technology developed with Western values (i.e., Facebook and other social media platforms) in non-Western contexts (i.e., the Arab World). Traditionally, qualitative researchers are expected to demonstrate the reliability and validity of

their investigation method by coding their own data, then train a second rater on their coding system and ask him/her to code a percentage of the data with an “agreement level of at least 80%” (Smagorinsky, 2008) – i.e., conducting an *inter-coder reliability* check. I decided to employ a different measure, namely – collaborative coding. One of the main reasons for that decision was concerning the rater contextual knowledge (whilst I can train someone on a coding manual, I cannot give them cultural and contextual training.)

My current approach was inspired by the sociocultural practice identified by Smagorinsky (2008). That is, considering the collaborator, or the collaborative research environment as a measure for reliability by treating the agreement that is achieved amongst collaborators as a step towards reliability and validity starting with the collaborative research I conducted during my internship time. Since my collaborator had her own data from interviews, and I had my own data, we both labored through our own data and exchanged notes to identify and validate overarching themes with an emphasis on the experiences of the entire Arab Gulf participant population. i.e., “we reach agreement on each theme through collaborative discussion rather than independent corroboration” (Smagorinsky, 2008). Bearing in mind that although my collaborator is considered an *outsider*²⁴ to the population, we had complementary areas of expertise, and her perspective and knowledge combined with mine offered depth in the conversations and the analysis.

Moreover, the collection and analysis of multiple data sources during the design sessions served as a form of evidence triangulation to overcome problems and shortcomings of bias and validity (Blaikie, 1991). For example, the answers of the questionnaire questions were confirmed and further elaborated on through the interviews and collage construction. Finally, in constructing my interview and questionnaire questions I looked up validated instruments to increase validity

²⁴ She neither speaks Arabic nor is she from the region and she identifies as American who has lived and worked in Qatar for several years

and reliability, in addition to consistent advising from my committee members who shared their feedback on the study design (Neuman, 1994). These feedback loops aided me to reflect on the validity of my study design, my conclusions, and the potential influence of my biases and assumptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

4.4.5 Limitations and Scope

By choosing to include multiple layers of inquiry (interviews, collages, questionnaires, field notes) I anticipated gathering a rich set of data, and by recruiting a diverse group of participants, I intentionally drew together a wide range of experiences and viewpoints. This richness and breadth does not, however, mean that my data allow me to make claims about the whole Saudi population, in the US or elsewhere.

I draw on work related to globalization, transnationalism and immigration studies because they speak to participants' experiences moving to the US from Saudi Arabia, and because transnationalism has important consequences for how everyday life is experienced in terms of information and technology. As whole, the primary objective of this investigation centers on experiences of using technology in movement rather than transnationalism, and the accounts of everyday life gathered in this study are intended to open up inquiry into the information practices and flows in transition across social, geographic and technological borders.

4.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I presented the research design, including the details of recruitment and sampling methods, information about conducting qualitative research in the context of Saudi Arabia, the design sessions and the tools I used with a clarification of the reliability techniques and limitations. In the following chapter, I discuss the themes that emerged from the design sessions

that led to discussions regarding privacy and Islam, the identification of specific privacy practices and concerns, all regarding social media use.

Chapter 5. TRANSNATIONAL PRIVACY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Layla is a 23-year-old Saudi Arabian girl. After finishing her undergraduate degree at King Saud University in Riyadh, she started working at a multinational consulting firm in her hometown. When Layla heard about an open opportunity through the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program to study abroad, she got very excited and shared the news with her family. Her father expressed many reservations towards the idea that his daughter might travel abroad and live by herself. His initial response to Layla was, "I'll ask about the program and discuss this with your uncles." A week later, right before the deadline he got back to her with a conditional approval. His conditions mostly concerned her appearance and social interactions abroad. A few months later, with a few interviews in between, Layla received the scholarship and started packing her bags in preparation for her trip. Her first stop was Chicago, where she started her English as a Second Language (ESL) program at a reputable institute to prepare her for a masters level application. Layla is friendly and outgoing, and after she began the ESL program she made new friends from all over the world. Her new friends asked to add her on Facebook to stay in touch. Previously, Layla used her Facebook account to keep in touch with female friends and family. Maintaining a small group of friends on Facebook was culturally acceptable and safe. However, if she wanted to immerse herself in the culture of her new context, she would have to expand her social media friend group to include men and non-Saudi friends. Layla had to take on the task of managing her social media presence in ways that satisfied both the traditional expectations placed on her by her family, and the new social context she had become part of.

The story of Layla is the story of many men and women whom I interviewed for this dissertation. I conducted 34 interviews with transnational Saudi Arabian young adults (ages 18–35) at three different points in their transnational experience: before coming to the US, during their time studying abroad in the US, and after their return to Saudi Arabia upon graduation. Layla's story illustrates some of the main themes and challenges I discuss in this chapter, which are based

on the most relevant findings of the interpretive analysis of my interviews²⁵. I start this chapter with a summary of the main theories and concepts that I use in discussing my findings. In addition, I introduce my analytical device, *transnational privacy*: a concept that emerged from my data that aims to explain and capture the transnational journey of privacy across two cultural contexts vis-à-vis social media. I purposefully included this section before presenting the data to provide the reader of additional information of how the transnational privacy dimensions and my data worked together in shaping this concept.

After that, drawing from my interviews, I present the three dimensions of privacy in three sections, together with their related themes: the meaning of privacy; privacy concerns; and lastly, privacy protection tactics, including the culturally-specific practices this transnational population employs to protect their privacy online. In closing this chapter, I follow the chronological footsteps of the participants' transnational privacy experiences and flesh out the relevant dimensions of privacy, supported by examples from the interviews of participants before (Group A), during (Group B), and after (Group C) their time in the US. My aim in following the chronological order is to bring forward the nuances, highlight the changing notions of privacy as it travels across context, and demonstrate the unique elements of each stage of the transnational experience. Chapter 6 then explores the importance of understanding transnational privacy and the consequences this concept has on design.

²⁵ This chapter draws on my work published at the ACM SIGCHI Conference on Designing Interactive Systems (DIS'16) in Brisbane, Australia, and the ACM Web Science conference in Hannover, Germany (Abokhodair et al., 2016; Abokhodair et al., 2017; Abokhodair & Vieweg, 2016).

5.2 THEORETICAL FRAMES: TRANSNATIONAL PRIVACY

The need for and practice of privacy, or *khososyah* in Arabic, evolved during the transnational experience of my participants, online and offline, as they expressed in interviews. To analyze my participants' privacy experience on social media during their transnational time, I propose the concept of *transnational privacy* as a guiding/theoretical framework. In developing this concept, I draw on literature from transnational studies, social media privacy, identity and self-presentation, and cross-cultural studies.

5.2.1 *Contextual Integrity*

I treat privacy as an ever-evolving, locally-constructed phenomenon. Thus, my approach to framing transnational privacy stems from Nissenbaum's framework of *contextual integrity*, which concerns the norms that regulate the flow of certain types of information (Nissenbaum, 2004) and rejects "the broadly-defined public/private dichotomy" (Zimmer, 2005). I rely upon contextual integrity as the *benchmark* for understanding privacy in the context of my user group. This framing suits my findings because contextual integrity suggests that people engage in activities that take place in a "plurality of distinct realms... Each of these spheres, realms, or contexts involves, indeed may even be defined by, a distinct set of norms, which governs its various aspects such as roles, expectations, actions, and practices" (Nissenbaum, 2004, p. 137).

5.2.2 *Privacy Regulation Theory*

For the participants I interviewed, privacy was about more than managing personal boundaries. This aligns with Solove's (2002) argument: "privacy involves one's relationship to society; in a world without others, claiming that one has privacy does not make much sense" (p. 1104). In the collectivist milieu the participants live in, notions of privacy are formed through a

negotiation between individuals and society. When asked about their views of privacy, the participants I interviewed often referred to societal expectations rather than personal limits or beliefs. In his writing on *privacy regulation theory*, Altman argues against a definition of privacy that relies upon the idea of the withdrawal of an individual from the group. Instead, Altman (1977) advocates for an understanding of privacy as a *process of optimization*; in other words, the ways users negotiate and find the right personal balance between withdrawal and disclosure. This interpretation offers a nuanced way to understand the privacy behaviors of my population.

In addition, participants spoke of an ongoing boundary negotiation and testing that encompassed not only themselves, but also their entire families and others from their collectives (i.e., their society and community) as they acted as representatives to meet societal expectations. This boundary negotiation, or optimization, correlates with proximity to society and family (e.g., students studying abroad in the US must negotiate and work around more boundaries than those studying in their home communities). The ways participants found the right balance between withdrawal and disclosure is very much tied to the idea of optimization: figuring out how, within the expectations of their culture, they can successfully use social media to share, communicate, and have fun, while at the same time stay true to their home societal norms.

5.2.3 *Identity and Self-Presentation In Transition*

My data revealed a strong relationship between privacy and identity; in many cases, the management of identity or self-presentation online was built on the functionality of privacy, and vice versa. As Farnham and Churchill (2011) emphasize, “people’s lives are ‘faceted’; that is, people maintain social boundaries and show different “facets” depending on the situation. For example, transnational participants managed privacy through creating new profiles on the same platform (or different platforms entirely) as a protection tactic. The issue manifests even more

prominently and complicated with the participants actively studying abroad (group B) or having returned home to Saudi Arabia (group C), who dealt with navigating impression building with their newly-acquired friendships and impression management with their old connections. For this reason, I warn against assuming a singular identity for any given user of social media.

Research on identity and social networking sites has helped explain the motives and behaviors of sharing, and also resulted in various conceptual models of identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000) in (Carter, 2015)). However, this body of literature has been mainly limited to two dimensions of identity: 1) identity through self-ascription (i.e., the content individuals share about themselves) (boyd, 2014; Gardner & Davis, 2013; Goffman, 1959); and 2) identity through other-ascription (i.e., what others share about the individual) (boyd, 2014; Litt et al., 2014; Marwick, 2011). Importantly, constant across both dimensions is a view of the individual as a discrete and autonomous agent that can be cleanly separated from other individuals who are themselves discrete and autonomous agents. Although these individuals may aggregate into groups and share a group identity, it is typically assumed that they act with egocentric motivations.

Drawing from my dissertation interviews, in an earlier published article (Abokhodair et al., 2017), my co-authors and I explored how this notion of identity, in relation to what we called the *autonomous self*, rests on ideologies of the individual that are far from universal. Rather, the focus on the autonomous self as the central organizing unit for understanding “the presentation of the self in everyday life” (Goffman, 1959) fails to understand the way those with collectivist cultural orientations understand the self and the self’s relation to the larger collective. When expressing their views and values, participants referred to their values and identities in terms of two pillars: “me” or “I” (*autonomous self*) and “us” or “them” (*collective self*).

In Abokhodair et al. (2017), we used these pillars to develop two contrasting and useful (though imperfect) analytic devices for teasing out the major facets of the self that participants often referred to when discussing privacy on social media: *the autonomous self (me)*, and *the collective self (us)*. The autonomous self is the “facet of the self that is primarily concerned with egocentric representation — that is, where the individual is concerned with merely representing oneself as a discrete subject conceived of and positioned as separate and independent of a larger collective unit” (Abokhodair et al. (2017). Revealing the autonomous self can be challenging, and in many cases puts the individuals at risk with their religion, society, and state (i.e., the collective). In contrast, the collective self is the “facet of the self where the individual is but an appendage of a larger collective and must act with that collective’s representational needs at the forefront of concern” (Abokhodair et al., 2017). This level of the self is heavily relied upon when making judgments, and it plays a fundamental role in shaping perceptions and evaluations.

In this study (Abokhodair et al., 2017), we found that the collective self overpowers the autonomous self, due to being shaped by three powerful, interconnected entities: religion, state, and society. For many of the interviewees, the presentation of the autonomous self, to use Goffman’s terms, feels more like a backstage performance, whereas the presentation of the collective self feels more like a front stage performance for a wider audience that holds a different set of expectations for how to be and act (Goffman, 1959).

5.2.4 *Summary of Theoretical Frames*

Inspired by findings and the above-mentioned theories and constructs, I define *transnational privacy* as the process where transmigrants stretch their conceptualization of privacy as practiced in their “societies of origin,” similar to how Islam conceptualizes privacy, to include new patterns and norms of privacy practiced in the “hosting society.” This process of “stretching” (illustrated

in Figure 5.1) is like a rubber band: one can pull away to the length of the rubber band to include the transnational social field of both the sending and hosting societies. This can specifically be seen with the students currently studying in the US — mostly alone without their collective, but still connected to their collective through social media — as they learn new concepts and ways of engaging and disengaging with the sending and hosting societies through different forms of cultural code switching. Moreover, among both the participants currently studying abroad and those who had returned home, participants expressed that towards the end of their transnational experience, part of preparing to go home is learning how to spring back to the norms and patterns of life at home to refit with the collective; they needed to switch to the original form of privacy. This process of stretching, experimenting, and testing is not limited to the individual, but to their collective as well, as I illustrate later in this chapter. The strength of *transnational privacy* and the use of the *elastic band* metaphor (see Figure 5.1) lies in its ability to capture the changing journey and experience of privacy during back and forth movement from one context (i.e., Saudi Arabia) to another different context (i.e., the US).

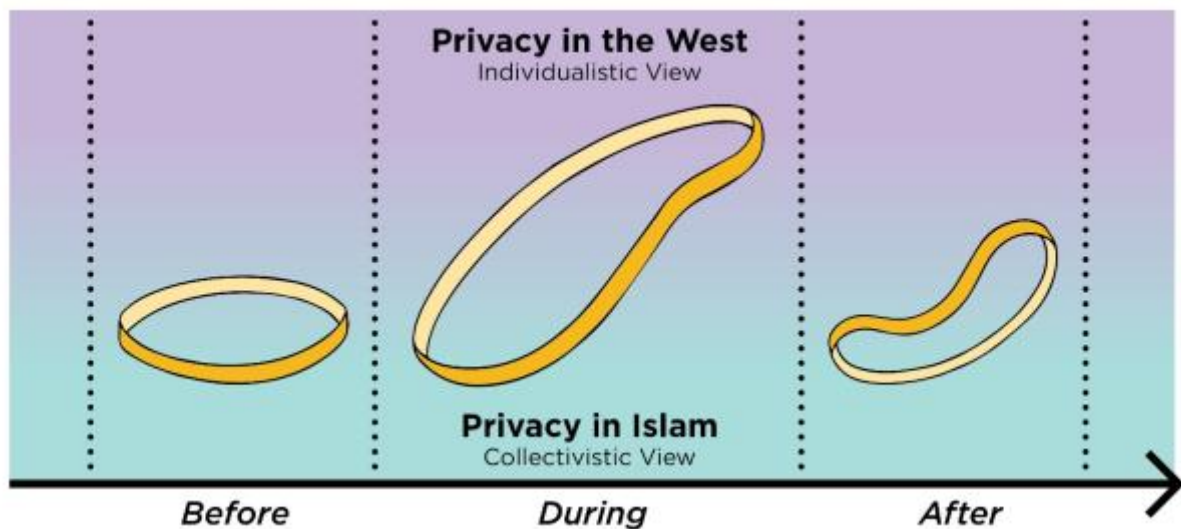


Figure 5.1 Transnational privacy as a process of stretching the concept and practice of privacy to encompass the hosting and the sending societies.

Interweaving Altman's *privacy regulation theory* and Nissenbaum's *contextual integrity* together with the identity constructs developed in (Abokhodair et al., 2017), I suggest that transnational privacy involves a process of learning how to optimize between the different facets of the self (the autonomous self and the collective-self). In other words, I argue that these transnational travelers engage in a type of cultural "code switching" that allows them to deftly navigate and adjust to the different norms of each region. In the United States, transnational social media users lean towards a more individualistic stance regarding their online actions and behaviors. Once they return to Saudi Arabia, however, they return — sometimes with resistance — to a more collectivist orientation as they engage with social media in ways that adhere to traditional Arab Islamic values. These different orientations not only hold implications for the way these social media users conceptualize privacy but also how they perform culturally-specific identities across the two contexts. Towards the end of this chapter, I delve deeper into the concept transnational privacy and further discuss its strength and limitations (please refer to section 5.4 Transnational Privacy in Action).

5.3 TRANSNATIONAL PRIVACY DIMENSIONS

Drawing on all the data sources used in my research — the background questionnaire, collage construction, and semi-structured interview — I found that three main dimensions of transnational privacy emerged: 1) privacy meaning and conceptualization; 2) privacy risks and concerns; and 3) privacy protection tactics. I provide a discussion of each major theme and its subthemes below. The themes suggest that privacy as practiced by transnational Saudi Arabian youth vis-à-vis social media is mostly influenced by cultural and religious expectations of the sending society (e.g., Saudi Arabia.) I further explore the themes and subthemes in the following section to clarify the concept of *transnational privacy*.

5.3.1 *Privacy Meaning and Conceptualization*

As we spoke about privacy, participants provided interesting and varying interpretations of privacy from their transnational perspective. This theme emerged from analyzing the answers to the questions I asked my participants in all groups: “Explain to me what privacy means to you?” or “What is privacy?” As illustrated in the following section, answers varied between the groups and within the groups. To be clear, these subthemes are not easily separated from one another, nor are they mutually exclusive. Rather, these subthemes are wholly interconnected, and in some cases even complete each other.

Privacy Is a Communal Value

In the interviews, privacy was discussed in reference to the collective rather than the individual. Participants in all groups conceptualized privacy in light of its *communal* value; one is responsible for protecting their own privacy and at the same time respecting others’ privacy. In addition, participants provided insight into the fact that privacy is not only the responsibility of the individual but that of the group too, and is often negotiated and agreed upon by all members of society in an unspoken way. This is illustrated in Aziz’s (group C, age 28) response to my question: “What is privacy?” He said: “[Privacy] is not about me and my beliefs; it is about the audience and what they believe in and their objective.”

Aziz, who was 28 years old at the time of the interview and had already returned to Saudi Arabia after living in the US for five years, was very clear in his assertion that the maintenance of privacy is not related to what he believes is permissible to share or not, but is instead driven by societal expectations (i.e., the audience in Goffman’s theory).

Another Saudi view of privacy is expanded upon by Hanan (group C, age 32), a female who spent a year abroad studying for her master’s degree, and who had since returned to Saudi Arabia:

“Privacy is a lot more of a right over here [in Saudi Arabia] than anywhere else. People respect your privacy here, where in the West you will be asked too many details. Generally speaking, the idea of privacy in the West is hard to achieve... sometimes it is something you have to stand up for. Like if you want to buy something at the pharmacy there they ask you for a photo ID. They don’t ask for one over here unless it is something super serious.”

To Hanan, the benign request for ID at a pharmacy to purchase over-the-counter medication, not a common practice in Saudi Arabia, was seen as a violation of her privacy as her ID includes a photo of her face, which could be considered *awra* (a private body part) for her. Hana explained that in Saudi Arabia privacy is not something that must be actively pursued, because it is a given, communal, expected value that is enacted through lifestyle, local norms, expectations, and laws.

This idea of privacy as a communal effort is further elucidated by Leena (group A, age 25), a Saudi female who had just gotten married at the time of the interview and was preparing to leave with her husband to study in the US: *“Privacy is important but it is not in my hand... I wouldn’t say it is a need”*. The phrase “it is not in my hand” refers to the understanding among Saudis that privacy is achieved by a group; individuals do not approach privacy with the goal of protecting only themselves. In effect, she is saying that privacy is a collective practice that she alone would not be able to achieve.

Another example is from Layla (group C, age 26), a Saudi female who previously was a social media influencer (e.g., a social media figure with many followers who influences followers’ buying decisions) and at one time had more than 10,000 followers on Instagram:

“If privacy means you have your alone time, or you get to go somewhere and spend time alone, then I don’t think anyone has privacy in general. I think it is an illusion. The more advanced technology gets it makes the world a very small place. There is no escaping anything with technology. You might have to deal with people who might know you or know someone who knows you.”

From her statement, clearly her unique experience on social media influenced her perspective, however it’s interesting to note her definition of privacy: “your alone time... or spend[ing] time

alone,” or in other words, having control over managing interpersonal boundaries. In Layla’s experience this idea of privacy doesn’t exist, whether online or in general (i.e., offline), because one will have to deal with people all the time, confirming the collectivist nature of privacy.

Participants also provided insight into the practice of privacy collectively online, in the form of seeking permission before posting someone’s photo (e.g., group photos) or tagging them in the photo. In this respect, Neda (group C, age 24) explained:

“If there was a doubt that they might not like it then I don’t [post the photo]. But if it is anything that is considered a sensitive topic, I usually direct [message] it to a friend that is close enough. [Also, if] I know what their answer might be or remember what they post on their own Facebook, whether it is similar or not similar. And obviously if someone says, ‘oh remove that picture’ I will.”

The way privacy is explicated in this example draws on a different facet of privacy: it is not only about what one exposes of themselves, but also what others expose about them. Other participants also expressed their discomfort with their Saudi friends sharing photos and information that revealed personal and intimate moments (e.g., kissing) or generally showed actions considered culturally or religiously unacceptable.

Another example is from my conversation with Mona (group A, age 20), a female in her twenties who just graduated high school, told me when I asked her about posting photos on social media:

*“Mona: On Snapchat, I block some people from my story. For example, my male family members, especially with *girlie* posts and sometime my teachers; it depends on what is the story. I have three male family members, my cousins from my dad’s and my mom’s side.*

Norah: Do you wear the hijab around them?

Mona: No...but I hide my feed from them because of my other female friends who wear the hijab (muhajabat in Arabic).”

Mona’s quote illustrates the gravitas placed on conforming to expectations regarding what is permissible for females, as well as the obligation to protect others’ *hurma*. Mona is careful to

protect her female friends' *awrah*, in this case, images of them unveiled from her male members of the family.

These examples demonstrate the communal aspect of privacy; in many cases, separating from one's family and seeking seclusion — even in an online space — was viewed negatively by the family members of my research participants, as explained by the participants. In this way, the concept of privacy, as expressed by my participants, is not merely about protecting the identity of a discrete individual or navigating interpersonal boundaries in such a way as to maintain one's "individual privacy" (in the way many American social media users may view it). Rather, privacy is more about maintaining modesty to uphold an acceptable group image and preserve family honor, accomplishments achieved with the help of the entire group. Similar views regarding the communal value of privacy were shared in an earlier study I conducted and published with colleagues on the discourse around privacy on Qatari Twitter (Abokhodair et al., 2016).

Privacy Is Immortal and Everlasting

The results of my dissertation reflect the strong influence of Islam and the Bedouin lifestyle on the use of technology; many participants indicated *fear of God* and *maintaining family honor* as important reasons for protecting privacy. Thus, another theme invoked by participants regarded the nature of Islamic values and beliefs in regard to the afterlife, and the accountability for one's actions whether good or bad, caused by the accumulation of good deeds or sins. Participants often discussed their social media profiles as extensions of themselves, rather than just a digital image or a digital self: what applies to these profiles and how they are perceived extends to their creators. Participants referred to feeling responsible and accountable to God, in addition to their collective, for the shared content and the way this content circulates and travels online over time. For example, if one posts negative, revealing, or blasphemous content, the perception is that they accumulate

sins. Alternatively, when they post positive or pious content, this is considered a good deed, which then generates more good deeds every time someone reads it, engages with it, or retweets it.

In exploring how these beliefs relate to privacy, one observation I made regarded the question of how photos live on even after their subject dies, and the fear of exposure of this private content. Participants expressed that privacy and the protection of it remains the individual's responsibility, whether alive or dead. This was expressed mostly by women in my sample. To illustrate this aspect, Asma, a female participant, said:

“Posting was 90% of my life, I loved to receive comments and engagement with the content I shared. I shared photos of myself, and these took more time to produce than others because I cared about how people viewed me. Recently, I deleted most of my photos from Instagram. Mostly because I was afraid of God. I am exposing so much of myself, my face and parts of my body to men that are not related to me and I started thinking what If I died and these photos stayed.”

In this example, Asma explained her perceived fear of posting photos of herself that show her awra (e.g., body parts or her face) online. She believes that one of the negative consequences from posting pictures of herself online is accumulating sins every time her photos are viewed by men who are not considered mahrams. Asma feels accountable for the content she posts of herself and who views her pictures, and what might happen to them if she one day died. She eventually decided to delete all her photos from her social media profile.

Another example of this is revealed by Anwar, a male participant, who said:

“I post some prayers on Instagram, like morning prayers, to remind people of praying and to receive the good deeds. You never know when you die.”

Anwar conceptualizes his Instagram account as both an extension of himself and a source of good deeds, which he achieves by sharing prayers and religious reminders with his followers.

Privacy Is Gendered

Gender is a theme that was referenced, either overtly or subtly, in every interview. Participants discussed privacy in terms of protecting and maintaining *hurma* (the sanctity of their profiles), and gender played a significant role in these discussions. In this aspect, social expectations and religious commitments trumped personal views. Simply put, the gendered aspect of privacy is mostly inherited from the fact that Saudi Arabia is a gender-segregated society where women are the bearers of family honor, and this responsibility, whether real or perceived, permeates social media in various forms.

The gendered aspect of privacy is explicated in this quote from my interview with Jamila (group C, age 28), a female participant who recently returned to Saudi Arabia after finishing her masters degree:

“Here in Saudi privacy is forced on you. You have to be private...it is not a choice to be secluded...it is society telling you as a woman to be private...because of religion, culture, society.”

Jamila refers to her responsibility to protect her family’s reputation through the control of information sharing, a theme I further discuss in section 5.3.3. Privacy Protection Tactics. In speaking about posting something “a bit too public,” she is referring to her position as someone under *social surveillance* by her family and her society (Vieweg & Hodges, 2016). In effect, Jamila has very little choice in what she can post; she can test limits, but this will likely result in admonishment, and her family will remind her that she must maintain her privacy (i.e., protect the family honor) at all times. Similarly, Salem stated:

“Salem: As Saudis, we know how to keep our private life private and what is supposed to be public, we still keep private.”

Norah: “Like what?”

Salem: “Your name, your work, and your mother’s name...the worst example we have here...a lot of guys are ashamed of their mothers’ name.”

In his reference to “mothers’ name[s],” Salem is referring to the significance of the honor and shame that manifest in everyday situations; this aspect is further depicted in the following section. In Saudi Arabia, some men experience shame if their male friends know the names of their female family members; this custom is borne of tribal practices that persist in some form today. A man’s *mahram* women (mother, wife) are usually referred to by nicknames or in the abstract (e.g., “the family,” “the mother of my children”). In this regard, men “consider the names of their female relatives a private part of their lives that they do not want to share with others” (Al-Nowaisser, 2005). Female relatives’ names are *awrah*, and must be protected. If names are known to other men who are not mahrams, it can *haram* honor. As this relates to digital behavior, the social onus is on men to ensure that their female relatives’ names or photos are not released or spread.

In the interviews, one of the often-discussed forms of practicing privacy in a gender-sensitive way was regarding profile photos. Participants, especially the women, shared that photos of themselves on social media (e.g., profile photos and tagged photos) are a source of much anxiety and fear. Therefore, photos deserved a high-level of privacy (refer to section 5.3.3 Privacy Protection Tactics, for additional information). This is illustrated in the following excerpt from Ahlam, a Saudi female in her early thirties, who said when I asked her about her profile photo: “*it was a picture of a flower and my name was...well, it wasn’t my real name it was a fake name*”. When I asked Majed (group A, age 28), a male participant preparing to begin his PhD in Canada and immigrate there permanently, about women’s use of fake or baby photos for their profile pictures:

Majed: “70% of the girls here in Saudi don’t share their profile photo and if they did it is most probably a fake photo. Nowadays, I think it is fine for girls to use their real profile picture. Before, there was a stigma, or a title for girls that used their real photos: open-minded girls.”

Norah: “What do you mean by open-minded?”

Majed: "It is relative, for us here in Saudi it is not good, for example, posting your picture as a woman on Facebook is considered open-minded."

Norah: "Do you think it is better for women to stay safe and private and not share photos of themselves?"

Majed: "Whether it is a girl or a boy they both should be careful what they are posting. Like some photos aren't appropriate for social media [general consumption] like wearing bikinis, drinking, smoking, with guys [mixed gendered gatherings]. On the other hand, anything flies for men. They can post photos half naked working out and no one would call them out for posting."

Majed's quote highlights the difference between men and women in terms of sharing profile photos: *"there was a stigma, or a title for girls that used their real photos: open-minded girls."* As Majed expressed, being open-minded in the Saudi context has a negative connotation, and is usually used for individuals who don't adhere to conservative cultural norms. In addition, Majed explained how enacting privacy is a gendered issue; men have more leeway than women in sharing photos taken in culturally-controversial places or that expose more body parts.

Another example of these gender differences is illustrated in my interview with Ali (group A), a 26-year-old male, who suggested that gender differences are related to the audience, and that the background of the viewer is what influences their judgment:

"It depends on how religious their [the audience's] family is and how the society thinks. For example, a person who comes from a conservative background, if they see a girl using her real name and real photo, they would think, 'oh, she is open-minded.' But another person, who comes from a liberal background, wouldn't see anything wrong with that."

When I asked Ali about his sisters' use of social media, he explained that although they are not a conservative family, they are still responsible to uphold a certain image for society:

"My sister has an account and all her photos is family stuff, mostly photos of her kids, and her account is limited to her close friends and family. My other sister runs a business...she posts photos of her products but never photos of herself, that's because this account is open to the public."

Gender roles played in an important dynamic in how participants did, or didn't, maintain their privacy in online spaces. As an aspect of communal privacy governed by social surveillance, both

men and women understood expectations — and tested limits — as they used social media within the boundaries of their culture.

Privacy Is a Religious Practice

Up until now I have discussed aspects of privacy that, at the root, stem from Islam's influence on the practice and conceptualization of privacy, similar to the influence of Islamic tradition on the architecture of the homes (recall Figure 3.2). In concluding this section on the meaning of privacy, I wish to note that one of the main findings of this study is that privacy is conceptualized as an Islamic practice, whether online or offline. This is evident in the ways my population enacted, sought after, and vigorously guarded privacy (or *khososyah*) because of their belief that it wasn't about them and what they thought; instead it was a socially- and divinely-monitored practice. Thus, in this context, privacy extends beyond one's lifespan, making it a *perpetual* value; it is also a *religious practice* that inherits societal expectations. This raises questions regarding the current design of privacy, which assumes it mostly as an individualistic practice.

During the interviews, participants frequently cited reasons such as “religion,” “Islam,” or “Allah” when discussing different dimensions of privacy. For example, when I asked Samira, an intelligent 18-year-old Saudi female, preparing to attend college in the US to study engineering, about why she cares about privacy:

“It is mostly Islamic views and traditions here in Saudi Arabia and my town... Especially that I am from Ehsa [a small town], for girls it is not common to post our pictures.”

Mona (group A, age 20), another Saudi female, at the same stage as Samira (seeking admission to an undergraduate program in the US), recited a saying (*hadith*) from the Prophet for clarification as to why she protects her privacy online: “*Seek help to accomplish your demands (needs, requirements) through confidentiality*”. Recitations of this particular hadith occurred

multiple times in my conversations with participants from different stages, stressing the influence of the Islamic faith in the enactment of privacy.

5.3.2 *Privacy Concerns*

Participants reported various real and perceived privacy concerns and threats in regard to social media. Concerns were strongly related to how participants conceptualized and perceived privacy as a religious, communal, non-individualistic, and immortal practice. Amongst this population, visual content (e.g., profile photos, tagged photos, videos) was clearly a source of much more contemplation than textual content (e.g., status updates, news sharing), as will become clear in the following examples. In this section, I report on the *commonly* shared privacy concerns while also paying attention to the *unique* cases to explore the nuances of this population. In a later section, 5.4: Transnational Privacy in Action, I articulate the privacy concerns most prominent in each stage of the transnational experience.

Fear of Audience Judgment and Damaging Family Reputation

The social media users I spoke with stressed that their online practices and activities are representative not just of themselves as independent individuals, but also of the larger familial units to which they belong. Within this context, membership in a larger collective (e.g., the family, the tribe) is of paramount importance and impacts the way social media users adapt platforms devised with different assumptions about the individual. In many cases, the concept of privacy is not solely about achieving *interpersonal boundaries* but is about maintaining *family honor* and protecting reputation, an accomplishment achieved with the help of the entire group. Participants frequently referenced the “audience,” “society,” “family,” and “people” in the context of “fear of judgment” or “bringing shame on the family” as the main reasons for maintaining online privacy.

Sarah (group A, age 18), an aspiring computer scientist and a musician, is an 18-year-old Saudi female, who spends an average of 10 hours online every day (though some of this time is passive consumption). In our interview, she recalled a scenario where she participated in an online music contest at the age of 13 and had to post a public video on YouTube of her performance. Before she participated in the contest, Sarah asked for her parents' approval; they granted it on one condition: that Sarah "*remove the video as soon as the contest was done.*" When asked why that was a condition, Sarah said:

"Because my parents told me that people will react if they saw a Saudi girl on YouTube, and although they don't mind they just did not want me to get that negative attention. If I can ban a specific country from viewing my video that will make my life easier. The close-minded people are not like Saudis that are abroad but the Saudis here [in Saudi] who usually give the negative comments. I don't mind negative comments but I mind negative publicity... they make you famous for a bad reason. They would overlook your talents and judge you and that is what I am afraid of bad publicity."

Raising the important issue of audience background and exposure to other cultures, Sarah eloquently unpacks the nuance in her experience by distinguishing between Saudis in Saudi Arabia and "transnational" Saudis who, due to their exposure, are less likely to judge her. In her situation as an aspiring musician, she is not worried of the negative or constructive feedback on her talents but rather her fear is mostly from the "*negative publicity*" that she defines as "*make[ing] you famous for a bad reason. They would overlook your talents and judge you.*"

In another interview, a Saudi female in her early thirties, Manal (female, group C, age 31), who spent time studying in the US and is now back in Saudi, articulated how she needed to keep "*her eyes wide open*" when she is online in order to guard her reputation. This sentiment arose after she was the victim of a scam post that posted pornographic contents to her Facebook profile and caused "a problem for [her]":

“After that video incident, I tried to block every single thing that might be source of another incident. Now, when I’m on Facebook my eyes are wide open, I am seeing what is around me very carefully, because this is me. It’s my reputation, my electronic reputation. Now, in the electronic world we live in and we are posting everything and your electronic reputation is everything. If you post specific kinds of photos [culturally controversial content], then they [society] will think you are a bag girl and say, ‘her reputation is not good at all.’”

Manal, rightfully scared after the scam video appeared on her profile, became more aware of the implications of not controlling the privacy levels of her account and realized that privacy violations can have far-reaching consequences. She cites the notion of her “electronic reputation.” This effectively points to the reputation associated with the presentation of her online profile that is an extension of herself — one that she needs to protect and maintain to appropriately represent her family and those who invested in her public actions. When she says, *“they will think you are a bad girl,”* “they” refers to society as a whole. She recognizes that she will be judged not only by her family and friends, but by those who share her cultural values and identity as a Saudi, based on the photos she chooses to share. Importantly, they not only judge her individually, but that judgment extends to her family as a whole.

Samira (group A, age 18), the young woman preparing to study engineering abroad, explained that privacy is something she learned as a child:

“Families clarify this from childhood. We’re raised with an understanding of what is right and what is wrong. It might not be explicitly about not posting pictures but you’d know growing up what is and what isn’t permitted. You’d know from the girls in school when they speak about a person and judge them.”

In this example, Samira explained that privacy and the protection of family honor is initially explained by the parents. Then, the education continues in schools from *“girls in school when they speak about a person and judge them.”*

In another example, a female participant explained:

“My friends from high school a lot of them had double accounts or such account for the family and everyone can see it and an account where they can be themselves and post everything they want just to have a good image in the society itself.”

Fear of judgment wasn't the only reason participants cited for protecting the privacy of some personal information; safety was also referenced by one participant, Mona (group A, age 20):

“I wouldn't post about my religion on my Facebook because nowadays people don't think of religion as peace... I am Muslim on Facebook but without a sect.”

Mona explained that information about her religion might need to stay private, especially now that she is going to study abroad. Privacy, in this sense, is a mechanism to protect something, and for her, it is about protecting herself from being identified and treated with prejudice.

Fear of Blackmail

Due to the importance of family honor in this context, and the ramifications of damaging it, blackmailing has become a rising phenomenon in Saudi Arabia since the increased use of ICTs and social media (Almakrami, 2015). A recent report revealed that the Saudi Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (i.e., the religious police) dealt with 1,834 incidents of women being blackmailed by men in 2014 (of those, 57% were initiated using ICTs) (Al-Saggaf, 2016). Blackmailing typically involves threatening to share women's (and men's) photos in public in return for sex or “extorting money” (Sharawi, 2013). In Saudi Arabia, the acquisition and distribution of female photos is prohibited by law, as it is considered an attack on the family *hurma* and therefore, honor (Al-Saggaf, 2016; Almakrami, 2015). Keep in mind that these numbers reflect only the reported cases. Knowing the importance of family honor, I speculate that these statistics represents only a small fraction of the actual cases, as many cases go unreported to protect the family from shame and disgrace.

In the case of female photos, it can be as simple as misusing or capturing photos from social media accounts that expose *awra* (e.g., face, hair, or body parts), taken with or without consent;

these photos don't necessarily contain sexual content (Al-Saggaf, 2016). To an outsider, the photo content often appears very benign, showing the female at a party or at a mixed gender gathering. However, to an insider, especially one with a conservative outlook, it can be considered religiously and socially unacceptable. This issue influences women's and men's attitudes toward the taking and sharing of their photos in online settings (Al-Saggaf, 2016; Almakrami, 2015; O'Neill, Mawy, & Adamson, 2016; Sharawi, 2013).

One example of the fear of blackmail is illustrated in my conversations with Samira (female, group A, age 18). When I asked her why she doesn't share photos of herself on social media, she said:

“Privacy. We have friends and other people following us and I have a concern that someone will take it and share it. I would share it on Snapchat, because it will send a warning if anyone takes a screenshot. I feel that WhatsApp is better to send out pictures to my family because it has privacy settings.”

Samira's concern is due to the possibility that someone from her friends, who have access to her profile, might take a photo and share it without her consent: the fear of possible blackmail that can be caused by a friend's misuse of her photos. Aligned with my findings in terms of friend danger, a study by Almakrami (2015) on understanding information disclosure online amongst Saudis identified “in-circle friends” as a bigger threat to privacy than “stranger danger.”

In another example, Sarah (female, group A, age 18) explained how she uses blurry (or unrecognizable) profile photos on Facebook as a protection measure. Because Facebook profile photos are associated with real names, and are public by default, they risk getting downloaded and manipulated by strangers:

“I use a random profile photo on Facebook because it's an easy gateway for unwanted people to find you. Like you'd type a random name and your profile might pop up. Plus, the picture can be downloaded, unlike the Instagram profile photo where people can't zoom in or save the photo.”

However, Sarah's practice changes with the platform:

“On Twitter, I don't use my real name, so my profile photo does have my face and people can save it if they want. You can only know it is me if you know me... It is a like a safe photo choice.”

Forced by the design decision to make profile photos public by default, Sarah's choice of profile photo is what she refers to as a “safe picture”: one that doesn't reveal much of her facial features, making her only recognizable by her friends and avoiding the risk of her photo being seen and downloaded by strangers.

Fear of the Evil Eye (*Hasad*)

An additional privacy concern mentioned by participants is intertwined with a particular traditional belief and the customs it invokes. “*Hasad*” is an ideology that greatly influences everyday practices in Saudi culture around sharing news, inquiring about others' lives, and social media practices. The concept of the “evil eye,” or *hasad* as it is colloquially known in the Gulf region, is a popular belief with Islamic origins. One can think of *hasad* as a negative mental or emotional state in which one can wish for the removal of someone else's good fortune. It is a commonly held belief that *hasad* is something to be genuinely feared, and many take regular action to ward off any chance of *hasad* entering their own or their loved ones' lives. The literal translation of *hasad* or “ayn alhasud” is “malicious envy.” It is “brought to bear when a person shows something desirable to another person who does not have it, and might in turn desire it” (Almakrami, 2015). The notion of *hasad* is very similar to the idea of a jinx, which also has religious and folkloric roots. *Hasad* is directed toward whoever has something desirable (e.g., beauty, success, money) and induces bad luck.

The belief in *hasad* often plays an important role in the decision-making process around sharing personal information of any sort, and good news or photos receive particular attention (e.g., engagement news, pregnancy, and travel). In casual interactions, people remind each other

to mention God's (Allah's) name when praising one another, or when sharing good news, in order to protect these positive aspects or moments of one's life. It is also expected that one follows expressions of admiration with "*Masha' Allah*" (ما شاء الله), an Arabic phrase that literally means "God willed this." This practice acts as a reminder to Muslims that achievements and blessings happen to a large degree due to God's will. In addition, *hasad* keeps people from sharing news before an event actually happens. Almakrami (2015) found that social media users "purposely hide news related to their achievements and success from Facebook" to avoid being affected by the "evil eye." As a result of the adherence to a belief in *hasad*, secrecy is common and encouraged in Arab culture to prevent others from the "evil eye."

In my interview with Mona (group A, age 20), she brought up *fear of hasad* as a likely reason for not sharing information about the results of her exams, protecting her privacy as her mom had taught her:

"If I have a test tomorrow, I'd rather share that I did good on my test which was yesterday rather than a quick update. Following the Prophet's hadith."

Another female participant, Hind (age 28), mentioned that she is especially concerned about sharing travel plans before they materialize:

"I am pretty conservative about sharing my travel information because I have a philosophy, if you want to get something done, then don't share it or tell it to anyone. Get it done and then you can discuss it. This is what the prophet also taught us."

Leena, who studied abroad with her husband for four years and had her first son while abroad, explained that since becoming a mother, her *fear of hasad* is regarding the photos of her son being circulated online and viewed by people whose intentions she cannot anticipate. She said:

"I don't like to share my baby's picture on Instagram although my husband and my sisters put his pictures but I don't like it. It is out of protection because I'm a mother and I need to protect my baby from hasad. Mashallah — He's very popular! Because my sisters and my husband always share his photos on social"

media and people love to see them. I had a dispute with them when I saw a video of my son on a random person's phone and I was really upset."

Whether *hasad* is a superstitious or a perceived concern, it does have an impact on some of my participant's privacy-related attitudes.

Fear for Personal Safety and Freedom

In other cases, privacy invasion, or failure to protect privacy in a culturally accepted way, can be a threat to safety. This threat can be imposed by the government, family members, or the general public. Hala (female, group B, 27), who studies in the US explained:

"[P]art of the way I live my life is that every time I make a new friend I have to let them know about my social context. I have to explain to them the reason why I don't prefer to take pictures and when I do I tell them flat out 'please don't share my pictures!' It is not a privacy issue it is a safety issue for me, 'so please don't share my picture!' Everyone — at least my brother my sister and my mom — know I don't wear the cover [hijab], but my father doesn't. But if he did know this could affect my wellbeing and my way of life. My opportunity to study abroad might get revoked or he could refuse to renew my passport. You know all the consequences that a Saudi girl has to go through if her father [is unhappy with her behavior]."

Critical for Hala is the fact that she needs to explain to her friends, who are mostly Western, that it's not safe for her to have photos of herself online without the hijab (in her case full face cover). As part of living in the US, she's responsible for protecting herself from the harm that might follow her if a photo of her appears and her dad accesses it.

In terms of *freedom of speech*, which is considered a delicate matter under an authoritarian regime like Saudi Arabia, participants have expressed varying accounts regarding the protection of their thoughts and opinions through either *privacy settings* or *censoring shared content*. This is an important aspect, because some shared opinions, if exposed, can have negative consequences on livelihood. Commenting on this, Mostafa, a 24-year-old male living in the US for over five years, who at the time of the interview preferred to introduce himself using a nickname for security

reasons, shared that since he moved to the US he's been able to freely discuss local and international politics on social media just like his American peers:

“I was under surveillance by the government in the past [in Saudi] and I went to jail for posting comments on social media. They came to my house to search for evidence and they took my computer, books, and all my electronic devices (mobile phone, iPad, laptop.) Now, I'm not keen on visiting Saudi because of the content I post online. Last time I visited I left my name with a Human Rights Watch lawyer in case.”

Mustafa discussed a conspicuous tension for these transnationals, as they come from Saudi, where the internet (and most ICTs) are censored and the general assumption is constant government surveillance, and then experienced a decentralized internet and freedom of expression in the US. These different orientations not only hold implications for the way these social media users conceptualize privacy but also how they maintain culturally-specific identities across the two contexts.

After an in-depth look into the concerns and motives of my participants, I observed the importance of the roles of *indirect stakeholders*' (e.g., society, family, strangers, faith), which can directly influence decisions to protect privacy. In this sense, privacy, as understood and practiced in this context regardless of one's background, is dictated by the group and not by the individual. Moreover, women have a bigger stake in the protection of their privacy to protect the family honor, as I further explain in the following section.

5.3.3 *Privacy Protection Tactics*

The transnational social media users I interviewed adopted novel tactics that allowed them to refashion social media sites designed around different ideologies of the individual and notions of privacy. They demonstrated remarkable adaptability and ingenuity as they embraced these global

technologies while making them “their own” in a way that allowed them to maintain traditional values important to their family and community life.

In this section, I share examples of the culturally-specific ways my participants refashioned their Facebook accounts and other social media accounts to protect their privacy. The tactics I found included: private accounts; self-censoring; acquisition and management of multiple accounts that reflected different personas on Facebook or other sites; the maintenance of accounts on different social media for different audiences and purposes (e.g., maintaining an account on Twitter for work-related posts, and Facebook for socializing with friends); the use of pseudonyms and “fake” or unrecognizable profile photos; code switching; and the management of boundaries between friend circles and the information shared online.

Private Accounts

In my sample, almost all my participants (especially females) maintained private social media accounts with limited access to non-followers. A common tension I noted was the individual desire for being online, which entailed conforming with the rules of the platform, and the need to adhere to collective expectations. *Khososyah* often clashed with technologies designed with the goal of openness and widespread sharing, especially the sharing of “selfies” and other photos done from the perspective of individual, rather than collective concerns. This tension is closely tied with a key challenge I synthesized in my research journey: negotiating modernity while maintaining authenticity and tradition, and managing transcendence and coherence in the age of social media. This challenge was mostly an issue for women, more so than for men, as I discussed earlier in the Privacy Is Gendered section.

During one interview, I asked Nouf, a female Saudi in the process of finishing her medical degree and who has lived in the US for over three years, “why did you keep your profiles private?”:

“Because of the community and the environment. Personally, I don’t find something wrong about being a public person [on social media] but if you don’t comply necessarily with all the rules around you in your environment, then sometimes it is not a good idea.”

In her explanation, Nouf states that while she is fine with keeping her profile public, her society might not approve it. To her the fear of societal judgment is larger than her personal preference of maintaining a public account. Nouf was not the only participant that shared a similar opinion. Jamila’s quote (also used in the previous section on Privacy Is Gendered) not only explicates the communal aspect of privacy, but also the gendered one:

“...here in Saudi privacy is forced on you. You have to be private... it is not a choice to be secluded... it is society telling you as a woman to be private and it is just expected of you to be private... if you post something that is a bit too public people will call you and be like ‘why are you posting this? You are sharing too much information.’”

A male participant, Salem, (age 29), further unpacks this tension in the following excerpt:

“As Saudis, we are new to technology... everything came to us at once, the Internet, mobile phones, and social media. At the same time, we are a conservative society. Something you can see in the restaurants and malls, we segregate and use partitions between the single and family section. Similarly, it became like a psychological reaction, I know I’m not allowed to share some things in public then I’m also not going to keep my profile public.”

Overall, the creation of a private social media account is not always chosen because a user wants to maintain a private account, but because if they do *not* have a private account, the societal and familial backlash they would likely encounter is too great a risk. This underscores the fact that privacy in this context is not individualistic; it is the foundation for how entire families and tribes uphold their reputations.

Both examples also refer to the notion of *social or online surveillance* (Marwick & boyd, 2014; Vieweg & Hodges, 2016) previously discussed in the Privacy Is Gendered section, which can be seen as an important avenue through which older generations socialize younger generations into appropriate ways of protecting privacy and presenting oneself via social media.

Profile Photos

Profile photos were clearly a source of discomfort for many, especially for women who wanted to use their real photos but couldn't due to social pressure (as I discussed in *Privacy Is Gendered*). Posting faceless or blurred photos, or images of objects and landscapes were two methods that women and in some cases men used to present themselves online while adhering to societal expectations. Manal (female, group C, age 31) commented on this:

“My profile photo was just like a picture of a flower and my name wasn't my real name it was a fake name...because that was shameful and it was haram [prohibited]...people will tell you 'no you can't do this and you can't do that'.”

Leena (female, age 31) also recalled how her profile photo caused some issues with her parents:

“I put my picture and it wasn't really clear picture of me... people who will see it will not recognize that it is me. Still this was a big deal, although I was married and my husband didn't mind! My parents called me and asked me to remove it they said that people were shocked.”

Differences in social backgrounds also influenced the practice of sharing or refraining from using profile photos. Women who used real photos for their profiles signaled that they belonged to a progressive and probably “open-minded” family. Layla (female, age 28) makes this distinction clear:

“I personally will not add people who don't have their own photos on their profiles if they added me. This is because I feel that our relationship is one sided and more like stalking. I have a problem especially with people who hide behind fake picture like taking a screenshot picture of a celebrity. It is sad and it becomes well known they're not allowed to use their real photos.”

Farah (female, group C, 26 age) also commented:

“It is hypocritical because if they [people who don't use their real photos] just did it for the way they seem then I will be fine with that. But many of them go too far attacking other people [people who do use their profile photos] and they might be projecting in a way. They are not aware of how much they want to do these things [posting photos of themselves] and how much their views are similar to the views of the people who are doing these things but because they can't they hold back and judge, starting the cycle of hate and judgment. When you have privacy,

you have the power to be very demeaning and bad to other people because you believe that no one will get to you.”

Both of these women, who did use their real profile pictures on Facebook, also received negative comments, mostly from followers who, as expressed by Farah, hid behind fake profile pictures. This anonymity offered them space to judge and be “demeaning,” an often-discussed tension between the value of anonymity and privacy.

Boundary Management and Information Disclosure

Participants also talked about different degrees of information disclosure on social media, which was contingent on three aspects: audience; proximity to home (Saudi Arabia); and content longevity, whether permanent (e.g., Facebook and/or Instagram) or ephemeral (e.g., Snapchat). As I explained earlier, my participants engaged in an ongoing process of optimizing the shared content based on context. For example, a user studying in the US may want non-Saudi friends to see a particular post or photo on Facebook, but not Saudi friends or family. This practice is discussed in the section on Transnational Privacy in Action. Hanan (group C, age 32), a Saudi female, explained her use of privacy settings to manage information disclosure:

“I have my dad blocked on Facebook (laughing). The moment I learned he opened an account I blocked him because at the time he opened it I was getting tagged on a lot of pictures that I didn’t want my family to see. Pictures of traveling photos or wearing shorts, etc. I didn’t even want to risk something accidentally being set on the wrong privacy setting. Even though I always had my privacy setting on pretty high. The only things I allow to be shown are the things I allow. I have ten different friends’ groups. I have ‘limited’, ‘more limited’, ‘most limited’ ...I have six to seven different levels of privacy.”

Her father’s decision to open an account on Facebook caused her to go through great lengths to make sure that her Facebook account was finely tuned to ensure particular information is shared only with the chosen audience(s). If her father or other family members were to see that she has photos in circulation showing her wearing shorts for example, her reputation would be severely

damaged, and her family’s honor would be brought into question as a result. In another example, Abdo (male, age 30) described his privacy settings on Facebook using a large piece of paper:

“It is four layers...See, I’m an old school Facebooker (illustrates his privacy layers on paper). To me, basically, you have a big circle here which have the pictures and the tags, the tags, the tags...the tags are full of details on college life and many things, so I don’t want to have anyone seeing them. You have the Facebook events piece this is for me. That is only me or someone who tagged me in that picture. And then you have the [city name anonymized] friends most of them were Americans and some are Saudis, selective too. This one included selected [friends] Americans from college and from the city, they can see my albums, my friends list, my wall and a lot of things. And then you have another layer, who I call limited, which I spent a lot of time back in the days creating it and it includes my family.”



Figure 5.2 Abdo, taking advantage of the collage assemblage and drawing his four privacy layers on a piece of paper

Abdo stresses that while he is an avid user of Facebook, and had already configured his privacy settings to be quite strict, there are still things he cannot control, such as getting tagged by other users. Features on social media sites — such as the “like” and “tagging” features on Facebook — can have unintended consequences for users who are in a position to have their image put at risk by the accidental sharing of photos or information. For example, he recalled the following scenario:

“There was a gap in Facebook privacy settings, which allowed people to tag you and then somehow it would appear on the ‘friends in common’ feed. A Saudi friend of mine who’s hobby is to follow others news (sarcastic tone) saw me at a lounge and said that clearly that’s what I do most of the time. I was puzzled by his comment and asked him what do you mean? And he said from your Facebook. I did things that I’m not proud of but people don’t have the right to follow my life...some people will take pictures out of context. Since then I started un-tagging myself from photos and asked my friends to improve their privacy settings.”

One additional technique for managing boundaries involved removing friends (or unfriending), which one participant referred to as “Facebook spring cleaning.” Hind (female, age 28) discussed that this is a necessary process, especially since she moved away from Saudi Arabia:

“I deleted a lot of people when I went to Canada because I don’t like this sense of paranoia...I don’t like to create lists or multiple accounts.”

Acquisition of Multiple Accounts

Another tactic that also appeared in the data was regarding the acquisition and management of multiple accounts; this can be switching from one system to another system and abandoning the old system, deleting or deactivating an old account and starting a new one from scratch on the same service; using different accounts concurrently (one for Saudis, one for Americans) on the same system; or using different accounts on different systems concurrently for different communities. Five participants I interviewed expressed similar behaviors.

This behavior was not uncommon within my sample, especially the transnationals currently studying abroad, as explored further in the section on Transnational Privacy in Action. Samir, who indicated that he is a “liberal guy” in the background questionnaire, explained that since he came to the US he has acquired multiple accounts on Facebook, each one serving a targeted group:

“I have a special account for the US that excludes my family. It is only for my US audience, because I’m having the best time here and I take photos of everything and I share it. I’m not conservative at all but I have a conservative family. I don’t want them to see this side of me.”

Similarly, Mostafa (male, age 24) also managed two accounts during his time in the US:

“I have a Facebook account for my Saudi friends who are still in Saudi and another Facebook for my American and Saudi friends in the US. It includes the open-minded friends and those who disagree with me on social and political issues.”

Sarah (female, group A, age 18) didn’t manage multiple accounts herself, but many of her friends at school did, where one served as a representation for the autonomous self (explained

earlier in the section on Identity and Self-Presentation In Transition) and the other one was for maintaining a good image for the society:

“When I think about my friends from school a lot of them had double accounts or such. One account for the family and everyone can see it and another account where they can be themselves and post everything they want. They did that to have a good image in the society itself, which sometimes really annoys me because it is a bit hypocritical but that is the society so I understand that.”

Self-censoring

Relevant to this theme is the practice of *self-censoring*: a method to manage information disclosure and maintain boundaries. Hind (female, age 28) explains this practice:

“Posting anything on my social media is a conscious decision, everything that goes online will live online so if I don’t want to risk it I won’t post it because social media is not the right place for that. I am okay if my account went public suddenly because I am careful.”

Hind’s answer to my question regarding how she manages online privacy describes her intentional, conscious decision-making practice for posting on Facebook. Her practice depends on censoring the content rather than posting it and managing it through privacy settings.

Physical proximity is another factor that plays into what users post to their social media. Aziz (group C, age 28), a Saudi male participant who studied abroad, discussed his self-censoring practice and explained why:

“When I was there [in the US] it was different (long pause) ...I would post anything I want if it was proper and if it is on me only I wouldn’t be ashamed of it, I would keep it public even. But here [in Saudi] I would not.”

When he was abroad, Aziz had a different sense of privacy, one that made it personal, and in which only he faced consequences of information disclosure. Upon returning home, and being in close proximity to his family, he felt the need to modify his behavior regarding social media, and to conform to the societal expectations. Alternatively, Majed (group A, age 28), a Saudi male who was about to go study abroad, said: *“I’ll be censoring when I go there, probably even more because*

I will be exposed to more. Mostly, my family and parents, I don't want them to see if I go to clubs and stuff.” More examples and discussion regarding self-censoring will be discussed in the following section on Transnational Privacy in Action.

Code Switching as a Privacy Measure

Linguistic code switching, as a construct, provides much meaning and nuance for this study. It originated in linguistics theory and traditionally refers to the transition between languages in a single conversation among bilingual speakers (Milroy & Milskén, 1995). The participants of this study were mostly bilingual, which makes multilingualism (e.g., the posting in Arabic or English) a key concept in the transnational use of Facebook (Lingel & Naaman, 2014). Interestingly, the participants I interviewed used code switching from Arabic to English, and vice versa, as a privacy protection mechanism. Participants indicated that using a language that is not understood by their audience protected their content from being seen or understood by the unintended audience. This practice was also revealed in a study on transnational newcomers to New York city by Lingel (2013), who found that code-switching was used “to draw linguistic boundaries around their social media content, signaling information intended for a specific subset of their social networks.” This practice of “draw[ing] linguistic boundaries” through code switching was discussed in my interview with Hanan (female, group C, age 32), who runs a blog that discusses social issues in Saudi Arabia:

“I blog in English because I discuss hot topics like women driving...if I wanted to get noticed by Saudis I would blog in Arabic. Language choice is a privacy mechanism, because at the end English is like you are really really constraining your audience with your language choice in this country [Saudi Arabia].”

Farah (female, group C, 26 age) uses a similar practice:

“I'll not post anything in Arabic on Facebook, and I always played on the fact that I can post in English, which allows me to filter out the wrong people (unintended audience) and they will not get to me.”

Overall, these examples demonstrate how users navigate social networking sites in ways that make them culturally appropriate; users make these platforms “their own.” The goal of these privacy tactics, in many cases, is to satisfy all stakeholders, as Rachels (1975) explained it for offline relationships:

“privacy is necessary if we are to maintain the variety of social relationships with other people that we want to have and that is why it is important...It is not merely accidental that we vary our behavior with different, people according to the different social relationships that we have with them. Rather, the different patterns of behavior are (partly) what define the different relationships; they are an important part of what makes the different relationships what they are.”

Overall, whether Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat, these platforms were used by this population to stay connected with family and to overcome the strict cultural and religious barriers the ultra-conservative society imposed on them. These platforms also played a big role in offering them a way to achieve modernity while at the same time preserving tradition. My population displayed tact in smoothly swinging between multiple identity facets to appeal to the expectations of their imagined audience. They actively managed the platform privacy settings, the shared content, and their audience viewing ability. From the moment they created a profile, my participants were always thinking of privacy. They scrambled through the privacy controls to switch off the public profile setting, the default setting in many social media sites. As you have seen in the previous examples, the community of my population could view actions and behaviors that may seem innocent or innocuous to some as intrusive. At the same time, the ways privacy is understood and built into systems does not always meet the needs of transnationals. The interpretations of identity and privacy that tend to prevail in technology design have significant consequences on users who do not subscribe to this same view, as we saw in the previous section. Therefore, *khososyah* as conceptualized in this context clashes with technologies designed with the goal of openness.

5.4 TRANSNATIONAL PRIVACY IN ACTION

In an effort to introduce all of the privacy dimensions' themes, I have thus far discussed them with limited focus on the stage in the transnational experience. In this section, I delve deeper into each of the stages of the transnational experience, highlighting privacy-related moments of change, confusion, and questioning. I present a chronological journey of my participants and the common privacy concerns and privacy protection tactics relevant to each stage. I also discuss how my participants used code switching to manage their identity online as they negotiated this transnational experience, seeking to blend in with their peers in the US while maintaining a good image with their family and society as a whole.

The overarching theme I observed was that transnational social media users from Saudi Arabia engaged in privacy practices that stretched their original understanding of privacy to include patterns adopted in the hosting society. In time, transnationals learned to skillfully navigate and adapt to the different norms of their originating society (Saudi Arabia) and their hosting society (United States). During their transnational experience, my participants discussed the influence being in the United States had on their social media privacy behaviors. In one form of adaptation, participants opened new accounts that represented their newly formed, or imagined, transnational identity. In another, participants felt at liberty to present a true or *autonomous self* openly by using real profile pictures, real names, and sharing what might be considered culturally controversial opinions on their profiles.

I wish to note that the presentation of the data in these three sections is for the purpose of highlighting the differences and nuance between the three groups (A, B, and C) in an effort to develop the concept of transnational privacy. The differences between each group was mostly based on factors such as, proximity to their collective, stage-related needs (e.g., dealing with

entering a new context), and other related factors. That being said, presenting the prominent themes in each stage doesn't neglect the individual differences within each group that I observed, which were mostly related to differences in individual experiences (e.g., travelling to US with a parent, marital status, gender). I will further elaborate on these differences at the end of this section.

5.4.1 *Imagined Privacy: Students Before Going to the US*

In alignment with my *privacy in transition* framing, I begin my findings with group A — the students still living in Saudi Arabia, preparing to attend school in the US. For these participants, privacy was mostly influenced by the teachings of privacy in Saudi Arabia — that is largely in line with privacy in Islamic doctrine. (Please refer to *Privacy in the Arab World and In Islam*.)

During my interviews with the students in group A (8 participants; F=4 & M=4), I focused on understanding the present situation (i.e., present privacy protection tactics) and the imagined future (i.e., how they imagined using social media during their time abroad, what concerns they might have about it, and how they imagined protecting their online privacy during this time.)

Participants in this group used social media platforms to varying degrees for different communicative purposes. Some used it to stay connected with family and to make new friends, while others didn't use it frequently because they were in close physical proximity to their families and friends. Mona (group A, age 20), a Saudi female in her early twenties currently enrolled in a program that prepares her to study in the US, said:

“I have an Instagram but I don't use it much. I also have a Facebook account I started with this program [the college preparation program] to stay in touch with my family who lives in Jeddah. I used to have an old account in 2011, but I got bored with it and closed it. Friendships on Facebook were superficial.”

Samira (group A, age 18), another Saudi female in the same program as Mona, said:

“I have a Facebook account and WhatsApp. I use them every day and I have friends from everywhere; I usually don't accept friend requests from strangers, just

people I know and sometimes people I know of (not in real life) and I follow on Twitter, because I know them from their tweet, their personality and their norms.”

Another participant, Sarah (female, group A, age 18), said:

“I have a Facebook account, but it’s kind of getting out dated right now. I started to get bored with it because I had it since I was in 4th grade. It was the cool thing then and right now it is not.”

Within this group, Facebook use and frequency of use varied; some people used it frequently and some not at all. Use and frequency of use was more common among participants who had friends or family abroad. The students in group A were mostly under 20 years old and preparing to study abroad, so age and prior exposure to social media likely play a role in Facebook adoption behavior, which I accounted for in interpreting my quotes.

When asked about their views on imagining privacy concerns and protection tactics during their transnational time, participants’ answers ranged from *“It’ll stay the same”* to *“I’ll adapt.”* Fahad (group A, age 26), a Saudi male preparing to continue his masters degree in the US, illustrates the former:

“I’d continue in the same path. I’ll post stuff that are acceptable to everybody. I’ll be censoring when I go there, probably even more because I will be exposed to more. Mostly, my family and parents, I don’t want them to see if I go to clubs and stuff. I can keep it to myself, what’s the point of sharing it. I’ll still care about the people I left behind. You know here in the Arab world; your personal and family reputation is everything. So, if I damaged mine while there it will affect my family. Even if you are doing something that is cool with you and maybe your family, but you just know that other people don’t see it the same way you do, you must ride the wave. Our community is small, so anything you do will be known by the community and someone will end up telling your father or mother.”

Fahad foregrounds the importance of his relationship with his community — his family and society — that is more important to him than his ability to express himself freely. In a sense, Fahad’s imagination reflects his ability to imagine code-switching between projections of an *autonomous self* and *collective self*; he ends up deciding to self-censor content that reflects his *autonomous self*, and instead post content that is respectful to his collective (i.e., presenting his

collective self). He is fully aware of the adversity that can follow his family back home if his actions abroad are disrespectful to or conflicting with the collective.

While Fahad, like many respondents in this group, imagined a future of staying respectful to his collective and adhering to its expectations, one participant had a different view. Majed (male, age 28), — whose plan was to leave Saudi Arabia permanently, said:

“I will just adapt. I left those people [society] behind so I don’t care about their opinion. It doesn’t influence me. Because I imagine it to be free once I go there and thus free to share your real self, whatever your feelings are, whatever your faith is. Here is different...Bottom line, the culture you live in has an influence on what you post and what you don’t. For me, living here I can’t post everything, even though I would like to, but because of the people and the culture you are restricted. You can get into trouble, for example, you are not allowed to share your political view right here. So obviously, there are clear restrictions that you have to follow.”

Physical proximity to the collective influenced Majed’s privacy decisions on social media. Once he immigrates to another country, he will no longer physically confront members of his collective at school or the neighborhood. He will adapt his privacy practices to his new life. Majed’s imagination reflects his strong opposition to self-censoring and conforming to his collective. On the contrary, he doesn’t see the reason for his collective self to take precedence over his autonomous self, which he associates with the “real self.”

Samira’s discussion of privacy focused on the imagined new society rather than the one she is leaving behind. She said:

“To be honest, after I heard about the accident of the 3 people who were killed in the US because of their Twitter accounts, I think I will change the way I write tweets and comments on Facebook because I wouldn’t feel safe. Plus, before I add people, I’ll see their tweets, their following and their followers and then make a decision.”

For Samira (female, group A, age 18), privacy and security are interconnected, as seen in her reference to the 2015 Chapel Hill Shooting incidence —where three young Muslims were gunned

down in North Carolina. Her need to be careful about how she expresses herself online is tied to fears about people who might view her account and attempt to harm her physically. Samira's situation is unique, and worth highlighting, as she recently lost a member of her family in a terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia and thus her conception of privacy is informed by that experience.

Mona (group A, age 20), also divulged that while she doesn't plan to wear a hijab in the US, she will make sure that she still communicates a poised image of herself. When I asked her about social media use during her time in the US, she said:

“It depends [the sharing of photos of herself]. I don't wear hijab but I will never wear revealing clothing. When I go to the US, I'll share photos of me dressed modestly with or without wearing the hijab, I still didn't decide. I worry someone will see it and then make a big deal out of it, like tell my mom. My mom doesn't mind but I don't want her to be bothered by others. People are already criticizing her and telling her 'why are you letting your daughter study abroad and get too independent,' especially, older family members.”

Mona is adamant that her public photos must represent her as a respectful Muslim woman — her collective self must be seen as appropriately pious and in line with familial expectations. This is juxtaposed with her autonomous self — the self that she puts forth in the US context, where the way she presents herself is not representative of a larger collective or tied directly to her family's public image.

From an analytical point of view, imagining the future was an important early stage in unpacking the transnational experience of my participants as it helped make the contrasting themes visible throughout the transnational journey. Going back to my analytical device, transnational privacy, in this phase the elastic was not stretched, there was no obvious tension nor concern other than the ones imagined by the participants. In the next section, I continue the chronological journey with group B, illuminating how these challenges arose and become prominent — and the rubber band started stretching — based on discussions with Saudi students currently in the US.

5.4.2 *Students During Their Time in the US*

Transnational theory asserts that transnationals, especially newcomers (i.e., those in the first few months of arriving to the US,) “*remain behind linguistic and political walls and assimilate Anglo-Protestant values*” (Levitt, 2006). I asked this group of students currently studying in the US the same set of questions I asked the earlier group about their Facebook and social media use while in the US, privacy concerns, and strategies for privacy protection. Regarding social media use, participants’ answers focused on the following themes: integration, making new friends, experiencing freedom of expression, practicing cultural exchange, and dealing with the “clash of civilizations” (Samuel P. Huntington, 2004.) In this context, I refer to a “clash of civilizations” as a situation when privacy norms from the sending society conflict with the norms of the hosting society, as practiced and experienced on social media. I posit this as the point of the most tension in the stretched elastic; the norms of the hosting society come into tension with the norms of the sending society.

In general, within this group, the privacy concerns that participants invoked revolved around two themes: fear for personal safety and fear of judgment. In addition, most of the privacy protection tactics I summarized earlier appeared within this group.

Early Stories Of Managing Privacy In Transition

Ahmad, a young Saudi student who had been in the US for a few months at the time of the interview, used Facebook to connect with family and friends. Ahmad was also very proud of being the reason his mother joined Facebook, since this allowed her to stay connected with him and keep up to date with his activities.

“I use mostly Facebook to stay connected with my friends back home. Most of my friends are Americanized, all of them are Saudis who are more Americanized. I also have my mother on Facebook!”

I found Ahmad's reference to his friends back in Saudi as "Americanized" intriguing. He clarified that: *"it's due to their experience abroad and those are the ones I stay in touch with."* When I asked Ahmad why he only kept in touch with these friends, he said, *"Because they understand and they don't judge."*

Ahmad's concern with privacy, since he is now in the US, is centered on his fear of judgment. His way of protecting his privacy is through boundary management and being selective about the audience. In this case, he only allowed his "Americanized friends," those who don't judge him, to have full access to his Facebook profile.

For my participants, struggling with privacy and self-presentation was not only an online issue, but was also an offline issue. Hala (female, group B, 27) explained the importance of being clear about her context and collective self with her new American friends who aren't always aware of her cultural background:

"[P]art of the way I live my life is that every time I make a new friend I have to let them know about my social context. I have to explain to them the reason why I don't prefer to take pictures and if I do I told them flat out 'please don't share my pictures!' It is not a privacy issue it is a safety issue for me, 'so please don't share my picture!' It is something that I really hate...I hate to present myself in this context. I hate having to live this double life. Unfortunately, it is a luxury that I can't afford at this time. There are many things I can lose because of this."

Hala enlists her friends' help to manage her collective self in online contexts. For her, it is important to explain her cultural background when meeting new friends offline who might not be familiar with, or aware of, the assumptions and expectations associated with that background. She takes the time to educate those friends about what it means for her to present herself (namely, the collective self) appropriately online. In her conversations with me, Hala noted that her "Westernized appearance" confused new, Western friends who only saw an autonomous self without regard to the larger collective of which she is a part. In her face-to-face interactions with

those friends, she presents her autonomous self; she is less concerned with how her self-presentation reflects her family's collective identity. However, on social media, she instead presents her collective self. Therefore, she needs to warn her new friends against posting group photos of her face or tagging her in any photos, in an effort to gain their help with the presentation of her collective self in online contexts.

This lack of understanding of another cultural context can result in harm online and offline, especially on Facebook, where features such as “liking” and “tagging” can have unintended consequences for users who are in a position to have their image put at risk by the accidental sharing of photos or information. Mazen, a male Saudi who's been in the US for a year, described some of these concerns:

“Four years ago, when Facebook changed the privacy settings, one of my friends liked a picture of my family, the picture had my sister in it, and I got really upset and embarrassed that he could see that picture of my sister in it, so I deactivated my account for about six months, I think.”

Mazen had a responsibility to protect his *hurma*, in this case, his sister's image. A *non-mahram* viewed a photo of his sister, which was, in effect, an exposure of his sister's *awrah* (in this case, her face). In Mazen's context, this is considered a shameful act, and one which brought embarrassment to him and his family.

In these contrasting examples, it is clear that participants have different reasons and methods for protecting privacy. However, they all expressed similar fears and anxieties towards photos of themselves or their families, especially ones that might be considered culturally controversial and could be viewed by the wrong audience.

Learning the Hard Way

Coming and living in the US, away from home, was a new experience for the majority of my sample (only 5 out of my 34 participants had visited the US before living in it), which resulted in

many examples and stories of the challenges of handling privacy while living abroad. Participants' experiences varied. Many noted that learning how to protect their online privacy while transitioning between contexts involved experiencing a series of costly mistakes, and others mentioned that they learned from others' mistakes. To this end, Ahmad, a 19-year-old Saudi freshman engineering student who hopes to become a petroleum engineer once he graduates, shared an educational scenario with me:

“Do you know that if you post about being at a club you could risk your opportunity to get a job in Saudi? One of my friends told me that and I am not very careful. I have another friend that also lost a job offer because of a political post. After that, I went to my account and I deleted two posts from my Facebook that involved Saudi political figures. I try to move away from political news and posts because Facebook, and social media in general, is heavily monitored in Saudi.”

Ahmad, the same participant that referred to his friends as “Americanized,” learned from his friend's situation the type of information he should self-censor. He learned that sharing political opinions where they can be viewed by the highly authoritarian government system, even when he is abroad, might cost him the future he worked hard to achieve.

The privacy protection tactics within this group revealed that participants within this group actively and vigorously monitored and managed their privacy. They did so by combining different tactics to achieve the desired amount of privacy that granted them safety and security. These tactics included managing privacy settings, self-censoring, boundary management, and removing friends.

Self-censoring was one dominant way my group B sample protected their privacy in. It was mostly influenced by the knowledge that online spaces can be harmful spaces for sharing information about one's life. Ahmad commented:

“In terms of privacy, I know that the information I am posting will be used against me in one way or another, someone could stalk me, or someone will use this post against me...while I am posting something on my wall [Facebook wall], I am always thinking.”

Ashwag (group B, age 33), a Saudi female in her thirties who's been living in the US for eight years, discussed the fact that her mother and her family (except for her father) is on Facebook, which forces her to self-censor photos that might be culturally controversial for fear of audience judgment and damaging her family honor. She said:

“I am very cautious about the photos I post. I have to check for many things like how revealing or not is my outfit because I don't want people to judge and I don't want to hear something that will upset me. My Mom gave me grief and asked me to remove a photo from my Facebook because I was hugging two of my friends and one of them was a male.”

Ashwag told me that she removed the photo as a result of her mother's request, but it was the first time she had done so. She used to be much more argumentative when she first arrived in the US and tried to explain her perspective to her mom and family, but now that she is towards the end of her program and is preparing to go back home to Saudi Arabia, she doesn't feel that it is worth it for her to argue anymore.

The acquisition of multiple social media accounts was another common tactic that transnationals, especially those in group B, employed during their time abroad (please refer back to 5.3.3 Privacy Protection Tactics). Hala (group B, age 27), a Saudi female participant, had followed a strict social media “formula,” as she referred to it, due to her conservative family background. She said:

“My taxonomy that is very personal and almost random if I were to use every app, and I am sure everyone has their own formula as well. My formula is, I only share my photos on Snapchat, Instagram, and Path²⁶. The way I share things is a bit different, but I don't think that has to do with privacy much. Because I think with my whole family except for my father I have reached a point I can share when I go out with friends that include male friends that are not related to me they know that and they are OK with that. They gave me some space. All my Facebook or Twitter

²⁶ Path is a social networking service for mobile devices that restricts users to a total of 500 contacts (after they pay a certain amount). This platform was championed by early adopters because of its simple and clear privacy settings. However, in 2013 the platform was charged by the FTC for violating privacy by collecting personal information from mobile device address books without users' knowledge and consent (Commission, 2013).

accounts are restricted. All my accounts have always been private and probably will always remain private expect for one Twitter account. I have four Twitter accounts they are organized chronologically based on the time in my life. Because I used to use it actively, it was a true record of my life. But it goes back to the idea that I am nervous of the idea of having my stuff out there for everyone all the time. It is private and only my friends can see it but I still I am nervous about the availability of my information. That is why I have 4 accounts.”

Saud (group B, age 25), an enthusiastic Saudi male participant in the process of finishing his master’s degree and who has lived in the US for two years, described a similar behavioral pattern, but gave different reasons for his actions:

“When I was back home [Saudi] there was a rumor that Facebook spies on users and can take the photos in your account and share it with the government. That made me scared and I decided to delete my account, but I couldn’t, the only option was to deactivate it. So, I deleted all the content in my account...Now, I started another one and wanted to add all my personal information in my account, like my phone number, my address, but, I really found the privacy settings very complicated it requires many clicks to achieve privacy.”

Saud’s reaction was similar to Ahmad’s in deleting the posts, although he still didn’t trust the platform and decided that it was safest to close his account altogether rather than just deleting his content. His reaction was mostly motivated by *fear for personal safety* due to surveillance and lack of control, rather than social judgment, like Ahmad. In general, when participants indicated that they came from a somewhat socially permissive family by Saudi society standards, their concerns for privacy were mostly motivated by fear of the government rather than judgment from the family or society.

Saud told me that after he managed to deactivate his Facebook account, he “switched to Path, which offers me simple settings.” This was not uncommon; opening a new profile on the same platform or on different platforms was frequently mentioned as a tactic used by transnationals for privacy protection (explained in the section on Privacy Protection Tactics.) Six participants mentioned Path as social networking site they used while in the US. Another participant, Sa’ad

(male, group C, age 25), said: *“Path is my preferred application to share deeper thoughts and moments with friends than Facebook due to the strict privacy settings.”*

Using privacy setting in this stage (group B) to control audience viewing ability was also common, as explained by Hala (female, group B, 27):

“In 2011, most of my friends deactivated their Facebook accounts. What I do instead is change my privacy settings, I do this twice a year: I go back and use the privacy settings to adjust the setting in a way that fits my life at that time. For example, most of my high school friends are on the strictest and tightest mode. So, we are still friends on Facebook but they can’t view my profile. Part of this process is social and part of it is personal. The personal aspect, I am personally uncomfortable about people who are no longer in my life viewing my personal life. I like to be in control of the experience of my information. I like to know who is viewing my profile and for what reason. The idea is that a person who I knew 12 years ago is still updated on my daily life...it just creeps me out.”

Us and Them (Code-Switching in Action)

I also found that my participants engaged in a type of cultural code switching that allowed them to skillfully navigate and adjust their identities to the different norms of each region. In the United States, social media users lean towards a more individualistic stance regarding their online actions and behaviors. Once they return to Saudi Arabia, however, they return — sometimes with resistance — to a more collectivist orientation as they engage with social media in ways that adhere to traditional Arab Islamic values. To illustrate this process of cultural “code-switching,” Salam, a Saudi female participant studying in the US, explained that when she takes and posts photos of herself on social media, she makes sure that she is wearing a hijab. This is in spite of the fact that outside of Saudi Arabia she does not cover her hair:

“Whenever I am taking photos for a public sphere I am wearing [a] hijab...because I want to pay respect to my cultural traditions.”

Salam is adamant that her public photos represent her as a respectful Muslim woman — her collective self must be seen as appropriately pious, in line with familial expectations. This is in

contrast to her autonomous self — the self that she puts forth offline, in foreign (i.e., non-Saudi) or less stringent contexts where the way she presents herself is not representative of a larger collective or tied directly to her family’s public image. In many cases, participants often described differing interpretations of Islam as reflecting cultural differences rather than as a matter of adhering or not adhering to tenets of the faith. Some Muslim women do not consider wearing a hijab or abaya (a loose over garment worn by Muslim women in the Arab Gulf) something they must do, but they recognize it as an expected cultural convention of the region. Therefore, in the interest of maintaining a positive image of the collective self and mitigating any potential familial strife, many women will don these garments if the situation calls for it.

Recall the example of Hala (female, group B, 27), who explained her social context to her new friends in the US, so they would be aware and not jeopardize her safety. Hala manages the collective vs. the autonomous-self through cultural “code-switching” offline and online.

“[P]art of the way I live my life is that every time I make a new friend I have to let them know about my social context. I have to explain to them the reason why I don’t prefer to take pictures and when I do I tell them flat out ‘please don’t share my pictures!’ It is not a privacy issue it is a safety issue for me, ‘so please don’t share my picture!’”

By using the metaphor of code-switching to describe the practice of managing different facets of the self by participants to protect privacy, I wish to emphasize that the ability to manage these two facets of the self requires an underlying cultural competence akin to speaking two (or more) languages. Here, my participants are aware of the cultural norms and expectations from their home environment while recognizing how those norms and expectations differ from the American context, where photo sharing applications were developed, first adopted, and remain widely used. Not only are these transnationals educating themselves, but in a way, they are also educating their non-Saudi friends in cultural competence.

Mona (group A, age 20), a Saudi female, commented on this practice of displaying a collective self rather than the autonomous self on social media:

“It [posting photos of yourself] kind of deviates your image from what you really are to what you want to be. So, people post about what they want to be rather than what they are. There are people that post pictures that are not true.”

Mona’s reflection underscores the way my participants often associate the autonomous self with authenticity. Mona links her autonomous self with an identity position distinct from her collective self and displays the conflict that some feel as they negotiate divergent presentations of the self.

The privacy concerns, risks, and issues change with the change of context as participants were exposed to a different lifestyle in the West. The participants I interviewed demonstrated deep understandings of their cross-cultural situations when discussing their stories, and all were very comfortable in code switching, linguistically and culturally. For example, they would explain a scenario as it happened to them and then provide a reflection of the reason things were misunderstood or taken out of context by their (social media) audience, while also differentiating the audience (Saudi or American) and their perception. As much as the participants had fluency in code switching between Arabic and English, they had a dual understanding of *us* — their perceptions of themselves as part of the collective — and *them* — the individualistic perspective of Western society — as part of their experience. Thus, group B offered rich examples and scenarios that revealed value tensions, conflicts, and resolutions. The following excerpt, from Sa’ad’s interview, illustrates this code switching:

“As a society, I don’t think we ever talk about khososyah, we show it but don’t talk about it. It shows in our interactions and the way we are...like you would know that this person cares about their khososyah when you interact with them...I think part of it is ignorance and the other part is that it is part of the cultural norms. Like in comparison to here in the US, I feel they value privacy a lot, for example, in my resume in the US I don’t need to include my address or age, none of my personal

[private] information is expected. In Saudi, I remember when I was applying for a job they asked me to include my age in the resume...In Saudi, privacy is in the fabric of the social setting, we care about khososyah in the house—the fence needs to be high enough to cover the house, the window blinds are down to protect from outsider gaze, so norms that we practice without having to talk about it. I feel this is opposite to the US where they talk about it a lot, you feel people are educated about privacy and it is part of their amendment to have freedom of expression.”

In this example, Sa’ad articulates the divergent meanings and practices of privacy in Saudi versus the US based on his experiences in both places. What is worth noting is Sa’ad’s perceived ability to contrast privacy in both contexts. To him, privacy in Saudi Arabia is treated as a traditional value that is reflected mostly in offline social interactions (including gendered interactions) and architecture (e.g., the high fences around the house that protect homes from strangers’ gazes). Sa’ad’s perception of privacy stretched to encompass norms he experienced in the US, and when he went back to Saudi Arabia to apply for a job and was asked to include his age in his resume, Sa’ad considered that an invasion of his privacy right. In doing so, Sa’ad cites his experience in the US with applying for jobs and not needing to include his age or his address. The back and forth movement between Saudi Arabia and the US, where conceptions of privacy take different forms, imposes these confusions for transnationals with code switching. These moments of confusion and tension are what I envision when the elastic band is stretching and springing back to its original form with tension in both ways.

Another interesting theme that emerged in this phase was the changing of privacy behaviors. Profile pictures taboo for women in Saudi Arabia were no longer a concern once arriving in the US. For example, Hala (female, group B, age 27) explained to me her shift from not having a profile picture to an ambiguous one, in the following excerpt:

“I didn’t have a profile picture on all my social media until I was here in the US. Because when I was in Saudi, I had no other option but to cover my face, for the most part. When I came to the US, I felt I had more space to do that. Still when you look at my profile photo you will notice it is taking from an angle so that you

can't tell if I am wearing a hijab or not. Wearing a helmet for example. You can't tell."

As Hala explained, having a profile picture, even a blurry one, didn't become an option until she was in the US, where she felt she could do without the face cover. Still, her profile picture was a representation of her collective self, as it revealed enough that the viewer would assume she was wearing a hijab when she is not. Replacing the hijab with a helmet in a profile photo is a clear example of a metaphorical code switching, utilizing what is allowed here (in the US) versus what is offered there (in Saudi) - presenting herself in one way that can be interpreted in two different ways according to which culture is observing.

5.4.3 *Students After They Come Back*

The reentry process after spending some years in a different context can be challenging to some. One of the common issues that transnationals experience during reentry is *reverse culture shock*, defined as “the process of readjusting, re-aculturating, and re-assimilating into one's own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time” (Gaw, 2000). The literature on this phenomenon states that sojourners experience different reentry issues, such as cultural identity conflict, social withdrawal, alienation, and value confusion, amongst others (Adler, 1975; Church, 1982; Gaw, 2000; Hannigan, 1990). For the Saudi students I interviewed, social media played an important role in supporting their reentry experience by allowing them to stay connected with the friends they left behind (i.e., friends abroad) and staying up to date with what was happening at their now old home (i.e., the US). I asked my participants about their experiences coming back, how they used social media after they returned, what privacy meant to them now that they have returned home, what new and remaining concerns they had, and what new practices they employed.

Farah, a 26-year-old female who finished her master's degree and had been back in Saudi Arabia for four months at the time of the interview, reflected on her Facebook use throughout her transnational time, from first living in Saudi Arabia to moving to the US, to now being back home:

“Facebook is the social media I’m mostly active on since I went to the US until now. In the beginning, it was mostly for my American friends and then after a while most of my Saudi friends in the US and my brother joined and got more active on Facebook just by being in the US. So, I started interacting more with them on it...when I went back [to Saudi] I used it to get more exposure to my friends in the US.”

In her statement, Farah refers to something many other participants also discussed — the importance of Facebook during the transnational experience; during by staying in touch with family back home (in Saudi Arabia) and in their re-entry stage to stay in touch with family and friends in the US. In another interview, Samah (female, group C, age 24), who studied in Canada and had been back for a year at the time of the interview, commented on her current use of Facebook:

“I use it to communicate with people I didn’t see for a while, and see what they are up to. I am not very active on that account now and I created a new account for here [for Saudi Arabia.] Because now that I am back, I started to get involved with things around here [in Saudi Arabia] and working in [a company in Saudi Arabia]and I know I will meet more people who will want to add me and I want to cultivate relationships with people at work. But my Facebook account was not a professional account at all, it is related to my time in Canada and has nothing to do with my life right now...I made this decision to protect others and myself.”

Closing, deactivating or not using an account associated with the transnational time, and establishing a new account or moving to a different platform were all common experiences within this group. For these subjects, the old accounts often carried many memories that no longer fit within their current context or experience.

Another theme was retrospection — reflection and review of the whole journey, from before leaving to returning. One interesting journey was that of Manal (female, group C, age 31), who spent time reminiscing about her experiences abroad with me:

“I opened my Facebook in 2007, after I graduated from University...I quit my job to go continue my graduate degree in the US and my dad and sister joined me. We traveled and lived together. Before I went to the US my use of Facebook was zero [didn’t use it much]. I only joined for Farmville [online game] not for a social media, which I still play until now. In the US, I started to play more and then I realized ‘I could use Facebook for other stuff, why don’t I try it.’ I started making friends outside of my comfort zone, you know like male friends. When I was living in Saudi, having a male friend [Saudi or none] was shameful and haram [not permissible]. People would say ‘no, you can’t do this!’ But when I went to the US it opened my eyes and I now see everything...I tell myself ‘why not, I can have friends from all over the world male and female on Facebook’ and I did. At the beginning my profile picture was of a flower and my name wasn’t my real name it was a fake name. When I went to the US, I asked myself why I am double faced! With an account that is not my real self? Why not be one person all over the world? I did a decision to change my name to my real name and then I changed my profile picture to my real profile picture wearing hijab. Now, I feel more comfortable because this is me everywhere, on Facebook and in real life. I kept everything the same since I came back and didn’t change anything.”

Manal’s reflection of her journey is similar in many ways to the stories transnationals in this category shared. Mohssin, a 29-year-old male participant who spent four years in the US and got married upon his return to Saudi Arabia, had similar conflicting feelings about the memories his profile carried when he moved from the US back to Saudi Arabia:

“I use Facebook because I can stay in touch with friends. For my friends in the US that is the only way to stay in touch. For example, I just learned that one of my American female friends got engaged. Also, when I went back to the US to visit, I posted on the wall of an alumni group and saw 6-7 friends. Overall, I like it and I don’t like. I like it because it brings back memories and I don’t like it because it brings back memories. It is a double-edged sword. Sometimes, I ask myself why I posted some things.”

Note that both Mohssin and Manal, and many other participants in this category, used the expression “double edged” (other participants have used “double standard”) when reflecting on how they navigated social media during their transnational time. These expressions are illustrative

of the faceted selves (collective and autonomous) I discussed earlier. Participants of this category openly expressed their discomfort with these divergent forms of self-presentation when moving across contexts — especially from offline encounters to online encounters where collective considerations trump individual expressions of identity. In addition, Mohssin refers to his Facebook profiles as a “double edged sword” because it brought back memories he liked, but also things he didn’t want to be reminded of. As with previous examples, these excerpts underscore the conflict that can occur as social media users negotiate privacy and the presentation of self, moving between the collective self and the autonomous self.

Many students in this category, spent time remembering stories from the past. These stories involved scenarios of privacy invasions and the associated consequences, in addition to how these experiences influenced their future behavior. Mohssin explained how his uncle’s erroneous assumptions were a source of shame that traveled across continents during his time abroad. After a photo he posted of himself with a female colleague was viewed by his uncle, the fallout amplified the consequences of context collapse when living abroad:

“This photo (referencing Figure 5.3 from the collage collection) put me in trouble with my dad. He is okay but my uncle is a bit close-minded and he is not on social media. One of his daughters checked my Facebook account and saw some pictures with girls (female friends) and she showed it to her dad (my uncle). He took the photos and showed them to my dad and told him ‘you sent him for school and look what he is doing instead, he is making [female] friends and I assume that this is only what he posts in public. God knows what he is doing other than that in private.’ My dad was sad and my elder brother called me in the US and told me the story and I called my dad and explained to him the situation and asked him to tell me the next time this happens because I have nothing to hide.”



Figure 5.3 A photo from the preset photo collection used in the collage activity displaying a group gathering at a bar.

Mohssin, who considered his photo to be benign— he is with a group of female classmates — caused his uncle to escalate what he deemed culturally-controversial behavior to Mohssin’s father, who in return felt sad and somewhat disappointed at his son. From Mohssin’s point of view, the sharing of the photo wasn’t intended to disrespect his family’s values, instead, as a transnational, he was reflecting newly acquired norms from the hosting society (elastic stretched) — norms not accepted in his sending society. Mohssin, through his transnational lens, didn’t anticipate harm in the sharing of the photo, however, having to manage expectations across contexts is very challenging, especially in long-distance familial relationships, where mistakes and misconceptions can be amplified. In addition, the varying levels of conservatism within families can lead to disagreements and strife over what behaviors are acceptable. In effect, Mohssin’s perception of how to present himself via social media — i.e., to show his autonomous self — was not authorized by some members of his family, and became a source of strife.

In this scenario, Mohssin became a victim of his contexts intersecting on his social media profile. By contexts, I’m not only referring to the audience, I’m also referring to his changed self (pre-transnational and transnational). Current design of social media profiles doesn’t account for managing transcendence, forcing these transnationals to have to remember to code-switch or use tactics that help them manage privacy in transition.

For Mohssin and many other transnational youth, their privacy-related practices abroad are strongly tied to the perceptions and expectations of their family back home. This photo was not only an issue for his uncle; Mohssin also mentioned that when he was engaged, his fiancé (whom he met through a traditional arranged marriage) viewed his Facebook account before they were officially engaged and questioned this exact photo and other photos of Mohssin posing with female friends. Mohssin said:

“She asked me ‘who is this girl’, and although I have many friends on Facebook, she specified this one...I told her we are only friends. She asked me ‘why are you posting your pictures with her?’ and that resulted in a debate for half an hour. But I am not doing something I am ashamed of and therefore hide.”

Mohssin associated the practice of hiding his content, by self-censoring or managing his privacy settings, with being “ashamed.” However, Mohssin asserted his individuality by not hiding or deleting his shared content. Conversely, Abdo, who in Figure 5.2, preferred to self-censor and strictly manage friends and family viewing via settings on Facebook when he was in the US. In his earlier example (p. 130), Abdo stresses that while he is an avid user of Facebook, and had already configured his privacy settings to be quite strict, there are still things he cannot control, such as tagging by other users. Once Abdo returned to Saudi, his information disclosure practices changed. When he was abroad, Abdo had a different sense of privacy, one that made it personal, and in which only he faced consequences of information disclosure. Upon returning home, and being in close proximity to his family, he felt the need to modify his behavior regarding social media, and to conform to expectations. I then asked Abdo to imagine the following scenario:

Norah: You wake up and your account is public — everything you worked on in terms of privacy settings is gone.

*Abdo: I don't want to imagine that (nervous laughter) ...I am actually going in and removing all these tags...sh*t, may Allah forgive me, yeah that would hurt...hurt reputation, my relationship [with his fiancé], relationships with people.”*

Upon hearing this hypothetical situation, Abdo became so nervous and fearful of the remote possibility that his privacy settings would be reset, that he decided to remove all tags of himself in any photo. While this is an extreme example of a participant making a hasty decision about his Facebook account, it highlights an outlook that pervades throughout this population: the importance of honor and reputation.

The process of learning and reshaping identity in transition wasn't a straightforward process, Farah recalled. *“Independence came gradually to me...,”* she said about her experience in the US.

Although her family was with her about 70% of the time there, and while she had “*to always seek permission when she was in Saudi,*” things changed after she came to the US:

“I am not going to ask for permission unless I totally have to. I tried to do my best to be more authentic and do whatever I want and whatever represents me more. Hence, when I post things I post them for myself.”

In terms of freely expressing opinions, Farah recalled the moment she struggled with her autonomous self and how others (i.e., her social media audience) perceived it:

“I remember I changed my profile photo to the rainbow to express my support to the gay rights movement. I saw a lot of hate on Facebook and it really annoyed me...I posted a link and commented ‘yay freedom congratulations!’ Saudis on my Facebook started writing in the comments sections, which probably reached to more than 30 comments or so, saying I should remove this post, as it is offensive. My brother also sent me a message asking me to delete the post because he said, ‘if a company saw this they won’t hire you...and that it is controversial.’ I ignored him because I hate to appear afraid.”

Farah wanted to express her opinion and show her support to her American friends. In doing so, she decided to participate publicly in supporting a cause that considered a highly controversial²⁷ topic for her Saudi audience by changing the color of her profile picture and posting a celebratory status message. Farah is a transnational experiencing a moment of stretching, where she expressed herself online by celebrating values acceptable to her hosting society but not to her sending society. Farah received a lot of pushback from her friends in Saudi Arabia, including her brother, which put her in a hard situation. She nevertheless decided to keep her post and not appear afraid, because, for her: “*things are not black or white to me anymore, I see the shades of gray...*” a powerful statement that sums up the experience of many of these transnationals.

²⁷ This is not to say it is not still controversial in the US, too.

5.4.4 Differences Within Groups A, B, And C

As I mentioned earlier, in analyzing my data I have observed individual differences with participants in the same group. These differences were sometimes clear and in others, it was nuanced and intricate—something I was able to observe as a cultural insider. Important to the future direction of this study is to highlight these differentiating factors as we might be able to control for them in future work.

In recruiting my sample of participants, I made an effort to find a diverse and representative. In doing so, I recruited participants from different regions in Saudi, which as I mentioned in section 2.4 does affect perceptions regarding gender roles, modesty requirements, and other factors. This relatively diverse sample generated high-level themes that were shared across the whole group, in addition to some unique experience that were due to individual differences. For example, in interviews with participants in group C, a differentiating factor was related to conservative levels of the family and marital status. These factors influenced how participants dealt with their accounts after returning to Saudi. In my interview with Layla (group C, age 26), she said,

“[I have] a liberal family and that why I don’t hide things from my family. Nevertheless, I have a friend whose family is more conservative, she was wearing hijab in front of her family and not when we were in the US. She posted pictures wearing hijab on her social media. I used to think to myself, the whole world knows expect your family, they are the only ones who care and you lie to them. I understand that some people aren’t lucky to be transparent with their families like me.”

While, a different participant within group C, Haifa (female, age 27) had a different experience with her family, she recalled her relatively conservative family reaction when she first posted a profile photo of herself on Facebook, she said,

“I put one of my pictures that wasn’t really clear as my profile picture. Who will see it will not recognize that it is me in the picture. This made a big deal,

although I was married, but it still made a big deal. My parents called me and asked me to remove it and people were surprised I used my picture.”

The two excerpts reveal the different experience of Haifa and Layla, who due to the varying levels of conservatism between their families they experience a different reaction to the sharing of their photos. This is one example of many others that clarifies the difference amongst individuals within each group.

5.5 SUMMARY

This qualitative cross-sectional study on the use of Facebook by 34 transnational Saudi Arabian young adults (ages 18-35) examines three different points in their transnational experience: before coming to the US, during their time in the US and after their return to Saudi Arabia upon graduation. The descriptive data that resulted from the design sessions pertained to the transnational participants' views, opinions, and thoughts regarding privacy and identity on social media. As a result, the data led to a rich understanding of the research problem.

The participants indicated in many forms that cultural and religious norms, practiced and valued in the sending society (i.e., Saudi Arabia), significantly influenced the ways they managed privacy and enacted identity online. By studying these everyday uses of social media, I gained a greater understanding into the ways these global, modern, and mostly exposing forms of communication are taken up by users that profess cultural and religious ideals that may differ from those held by the designers of the technologies. Emerging from the adherence to cultural traditions and Islamic teachings, *khososyah* (privacy) in this context is a moral and multifaceted notion that is interwoven with notions of honor, reputation and modesty. Yet, when it comes to commonly used tools such as social media, the assumptions around privacy and identity embedded in technology design do not necessarily make it easy for those who adhere to Islamic interpretations of privacy to use them. In short, I gained insight into the ways transnational social media users

from Saudi Arabia embrace modern technologies while simultaneously attempting to maintain traditions.

Drawing from my interview data, I argue that these transnational travelers engage in a type of cultural “code switching” that allows them to navigate and adjust to the different norms and expectations of each region and the associated audience. In the United States, the transnational social media users I interviewed, lean towards a more individualistic stance regarding their online privacy and identity actions and behaviors that is reflected in their sharing behavior. Once they return to Saudi Arabia, however, they return — sometimes with resistance — to a more collectivist orientation as they engage with social media in ways that adhere to traditional Arab Islamic values. By interweaving the notion of “stretching”—borrowed from transnational theory (Basch et al., 1994)—with the themes that emerged from my data, I suggested *transnational privacy*: the process where transmigrants stretch their conceptualization of privacy as practiced in their “societies of origin” to include new patterns and norms of privacy practiced in the “hosting society”. In visualizing the stretching movement to capture privacy enactment on social media during the back and forth movement, I use the elastic band metaphor (see Figure 5.1), which even if imperfect, offers a way to envision the stretching process while accounting for the tensions, resistance, and snapping that occurs as a result of the cultural code switching.

These tensions become much evident within groups B and C; in group B, the stretching process starts as a result of the introduction to the new culture. This stretching, in most cases, is not easy as it includes moments of resistance when different ideas of privacy in different cultures clashes with each other. With group C, privacy is stretched to include additional perceptions of privacy, however, these newly acquired privacy-related-practices no longer fits into the existing (sending) society context. For example, participants discussed closing Facebook accounts since they no

longer fit into their original societal context (i.e., Saudi Arabia). In other cases, when participants wanted to use these profiles as archives (or albums) for past memories, they kept them secure with strict passwords and started new accounts that are more suitable for their re-entry stage. In essence, the elastic band snaps back to a different form, but similar to what they originally started with. These different orientations of privacy not only hold implications for the way these social media users conceptualize privacy but also how they perform culturally-specific identities across the two contexts. In the next chapter, I provide a discussion on the implications of these findings for theory, design, and method.

Chapter 6. DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Drawing on 34 face-to-face *design sessions* with transnational Saudi Arabian young adults (ages 18-35), which including a background questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and a collage construction activity, my research has centered on privacy and identity related practices experienced on social media. I focused on how Saudi students conceptualized and enacted privacy as transnationals, that is, during back-and-forth movement from Saudi Arabia to the United States. Specifically, I employed a qualitative cross-sectional approach from three different points in their transnational experience: before coming to the US, during their time in the US and after their return to Saudi Arabia upon graduation. Recall that I started my dissertation journey with three research questions: RQ1) What are their privacy concerns? And what approaches and tactics do they currently employ to protect their privacy? RQ2) How do Saudi youth conceptualize privacy (and other related values) while using social media during their transnational experience? RQ3) What design insights and principles might guide the technical and policy design of culturally-sensitive technologies?

In the previous chapter, Chapter 5, I begun with a commitment to investigate my three research questions through a transnational framing. Specifically, I started with introducing my theoretical frames which included a summary of the main theories and concepts that I used in discussing my findings. In the course of collecting and analyzing my design sessions data the concept of “transnational privacy” emerged. This concept captures the experience of my transnational population and the journey of privacy across two cultural contexts vis-à-vis social media. In developing this concept, I also drew on literature from transnational studies, social media privacy, identity and self-presentation, and cross-cultural studies.

In answering RQ1, I presented the three dimensions of transnational privacy in three separate sections with their related themes. The three dimensions are: the meaning of privacy, privacy concerns, and lastly, privacy protection tactics, which includes the culturally-specific practices that my transnational population employed to protect privacy online. I provided empirical data that revealed newly reported findings regarding Saudis' sense of privacy, their concerns for privacy and how they, in many occasions, clashed with the design of social media platforms, and how they appropriated these platforms to serve their own privacy and identity needs.

Drawing from my design session data, I found that privacy (or *khososyah*) is conceptualized as an *Islamic practice*, whether online or offline. This was evident in the many ways my population enacted, sought after, and vigorously guarded privacy. They were influenced by the belief that privacy, or the maintenance of it, wasn't optional, nor "in their hands" or about "what they thought," rather it was a socially and divinely-monitored practice. In other words, it was mostly associated with fear of societal judgment, governmental or political consequences, or committing sin. Thus, in this context, privacy is conceptualized as an Islamic practice that inherits societal and *gendered* expectations, whether online or offline. It is also a socially and *divinely-monitored* practice, framed as a communal attribute, including not only the individual, but the behavior of those around them. It even extends beyond one's lifespan making it a *perpetual* value.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Path and Snapchat were all utilized, together or separately, by my population with the goal of navigating impression building with newly-acquired friendships (in the hosting society) and impression management with their old ties (in the sending society.) Saudi transnationals demonstrated skill in the way they navigated social networking sites making them culturally-appropriate and appropriating them to make them "their own." In offline practices, women are only allowed to be seen without a *hijab* (head scarf) by female friends and *mahrms*

(male relatives that a Muslim woman cannot marry, or to whom she is already married, such as father, husband, brother, son). Likewise, online practices adhere to the same norms. Female social media users often use photos of natural scenery, babies or unrecognizable images of themselves taken from afar for profile pictures. They also often employ nicknames or the names of their children instead of their real names to veil their online identity. Women engage in these tactics because revealing their real names or allowing photos of themselves to circulate can violate norms surrounding modesty and privacy, reflecting poorly on family honor and reputation.

Moreover, the examples illustrated the ways my population used (and refashioned) these platforms to overcome the strict cultural and religious barriers the ultra-conservative Saudi society imposes on them. In some cases, the inappropriate sharing of an image or failure to protect privacy in a culturally acceptable way, can severely threaten reputation, which has far-reaching consequences on livelihood, including marriage prospects and general well-being.

As a result, these sites played a big role in allowing Saudi transnationals to manage privacy and identity by offering them a platform to achieve modernity, while at the same time preserving tradition. My population displayed tact in smoothly swinging between multiple identity facets, whether the collective self or the autonomous self, to appeal to their imagined audience's expectations in both contexts.

In terms of privacy, the data revealed that my participants actively managed the platform privacy settings, the shared content, and their audience viewing ability. From the moment, my participants created profiles on social media, *privacy* served as a central and guiding value that dictated their interactions. Actions and behaviors online that might've seemed innocent or innocuous to some were viewed as intrusive by their community. Meanwhile, the ways in which privacy is understood and built into systems does not always meet their needs. The interpretations

of identity and privacy that tend to prevail in technology design have significant consequences on users who do not subscribe to this same view, as we saw in the previous section. For example, some participants referred to how they scramble through the privacy controls on Facebook to switch off the default public profile setting. In other extreme cases, participants discussed fear for personal and familial safety if the shared content slipped from one context to another. Therefore, *khososyah* as conceptualized in this context clashes with technologies designed with the goal of openness.

Towards the end of Chapter 5, and with the goal of answering RQ2, I followed the chronological footsteps of the participants' transnational privacy and identity experience and fleshed out the relevant dimensions of privacy, supported by examples from the interviews. To draw a clear picture of this experience, I envisioned this process in an *elastic* form (Figure 5.1). Before attending school in the US, privacy is merely a reflection of dominant privacy norms in the sending society (Saudi); the elastic band is relaxed in its relaxed shape. After spending time in the hosting society (the US) and getting exposed to new experiences, cultures, and practices; perceptions and practices of privacy start stretching to encompass norms more relevant to the new hosting society. The rubber band is stretched and that stretching is uneasy and in many cases full of tension. These new patterns and unconventional norms (e.g., attending mixed-gender gatherings for males and females and not wearing a hijab for females) sometimes come in conflict with the original teachings in the sending society. At this point, participants within this group expressed that the conflict is a result of their need to maintain a positive connection with their family and society (the collective they're eventually going back to) by adhering to expectations, while still having ownership of their experience. Complicating the matter, upon returning home, the newly-acquired perceptions and behaviors no longer fit within the norms of Saudi. As a result, the elastic

band snaps back to a different form, but similar to what they originally started with, although not without causing some discomfort and unease.

The tension caused by context-shifting— from the collectivistic society of Saudi Arabia to the largely individualistic society of US and back again —is an important theme during this process of stretching, learning, and shaping. The notion of transnationals values being shaped and reshaped by context is not accounted for in the literature on social media nor in the literature on design for privacy. By introducing the concept of transnational privacy, I made a first step towards addressing the gap into this line of research.

Moreover, in my exploration and unpacking of transnational privacy through the cross-sectional design of the study, I aimed to understand my participants’ transnational journey offline and how it was managed online. Taking cue from Miller and Slater (2001), who in their ethnographic investigation of Trinidadian Internet cafes confirmed the need to understand offline social structures to better understand digital interactions: “we need to treat media as continuous with and embedded in other social spaces, that they happen within mundane social structures and relations that they may transform but that they cannot escape into a self-enclosed cyberian apartness” (p. 5). The cross-sectional aspect of my study aimed at engaging and further exploring the use of social media throughout the whole (continues) transnational experience and identifying the differences within each stop.

In this chapter, my main goal is to answer RQ3 regarding the design guidelines and principles that might guide the design of culturally-sensitive, privacy-aware, and inclusive technologies. I do so by providing a discussion on the implications of my findings on theory and design. First, I draw implications on Contextual Integrity Theory, Privacy Regulation Theory, and Transnational Theory. I then turn to a more design-oriented discussion of social media profiles, privacy settings,

and privacy policies. In doing so, I go back to Value Sensitive Design methodology, as it was my inspiration in pursuing this inquiry, and include a stakeholder analysis that provides a description of all the stakeholders (direct, indirect and influencing) and the associated value tensions with each type. I also provide a reflection on the often-discussed design researcher ethical dilemma and responsibilities that arose from my research: what values should be promoted, traditional values or emerging values.

Lastly, I provide a reflection on conducting empirical work in Saudi Arabia, a research context that for many researchers and designers seems hard to access or comprehend. Acknowledging the fact that this is the first qualitative study that included face-to-face interviews and design activities with a representative sample of men and women in Saudi Arabia on the topic of privacy and identity online.

6.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the previous chapter, I introduced and developed my analytical device, *transnational privacy*, a concept I used as a guiding framework. To construct this concept, I drew on literature from transnational studies, social media privacy, identity and self-presentation, and cross-cultural studies.

In the early stages of my investigation, as I attempted to formulate meta-level explanations for my observations, I found myself constrained with definitions and perspectives that were developed with non-Arab, non-Muslim populations in mind, or with a very narrow image of the envisioned user. To illustrate this challenge, in the following section, I provide examples of theories and definitions that I worked with and in what ways they were limited. My goal was to be as representative as possible, to “think with” my participants, while offering a theoretical contribution that extends beyond a single study. I defined transnational privacy (Figure 5.1) as the

process where transmigrants stretch their conceptualization of privacy as practiced in their “societies of origin” (similar to privacy in Islam) to include new patterns and norms of privacy practiced in the “hosting society.” I hope other researchers will build upon this study to examine other populations that do not always share Western ideologies of the individual.

6.2.1 *Non-Individualistic Notions Of Privacy*

In terms of privacy definitions and theories, many discussions on privacy approach privacy as a concept of the *self* as an individual, apart from a *group* (Altman, 1977; Moore, 2003; Solove, 2008; Warren & Brandeis, 1890; Westin, 1967), i.e., assuming full individual autonomy and control, which was not the case for the individuals I studied. Very little research approaches privacy from a point of view that doesn’t assume individual’s control over interpersonal boundaries (i.e., Privacy Regulation Theory), but allows for alternative interpretations of privacy. Whereas in the US (where many social media sites originate) the individual is commonly seen as an autonomous cultural subject that can more easily be detached from any larger groups of which she or he may be a part (Irwin 1976), my transnational Saudi participants emphasized the way the individual within their societies is viewed as an integral part—and thereby an indivisible representative—of the larger familial unit of which they are a part.

Palen and Dourish (2003) delve into the ways in which technology is viewed and implemented vis-à-vis cultural norms. They provide a careful consideration to the highly contextual, culturally-bound nature of privacy within the realm of technology use. The authors consider privacy through the lens of Altman, leaving room for me to interpret what is meant by “privacy,” and not be bound to a particular perspective. Building on Palen and Dourish’s (2003) work, Barkhuus (2012) emphasizes that “privacy is not an easily measurable unit... we as HCI researchers and practitioners need to approach the notion through more contextually grounded measures.” Inspired by this

ground work, my dissertation provided a case for a new approach to understanding privacy as my research participants adhered to a more collectivist orientation that is often at odds with the assumptions about the individual built into many of these technologies.

An earlier study by Bidwell (2010) on Facebook use in rural Africa, states that “in the everyday acts, linguistics, and philosophy of precolonial African society, personhood was constituted by others—both living and dead—and identity was perceived as undifferentiated and fixed to a social position” (p. 68). This idea of formulating the



Figure 6.1 The hierarchy of belonging in a collectivist cultural orientation

self through others applied to the transnational Saudis I interviewed, and as this relates to privacy, the notion of “personal privacy” or interpersonal boundaries took on a different tenor. In Saudi, the basic idea of *the self* and *the group* is conceptualized such that asserting one’s individuality is viewed in a negative light. Membership in a family and tribe are of the utmost importance; there is no individual separate from a family or a family separate from its larger collective (See Figure 6.1). My dissertation illustrated how privacy revolves around the needs of the collective rather than the individual per se. In this way, the concept of privacy, as expressed by my participants, is not merely about protecting the identity of a discrete individual or navigating interpersonal boundaries in such a way as to maintain one’s “individual privacy” (in the way many US social media users may view it). Rather, privacy is more about maintaining modesty to uphold an acceptable group image and preserve family honor, accomplishments achieved with the help of the entire group.

6.2.2 *Islam, Honor And Privacy*

Understandings of privacy for Muslim Arabs are tied to expectations and norms that have foundations in the Muslim religious practice. As the findings of my dissertation have illustrated, the importance of privacy is borne of the responsibility to maintain the sanctity of one's body and one's home, in an effort to uphold the honor and good name of one's extended family. Many of my participants contributed understanding of privacy online that can be traced to the commandment in the Quran to respect *khososyah* and are bound up in the importance of modesty. Sobh and Belk (2011) explains, "The notion of privacy in the Arab-Islamic paradigm is largely related to the requirement of modest self-presentation for Muslims in public, particularly women...the underlying meaning of privacy in the Arab-Islamic culture is respect and not seclusion" (p. 88). These notions of modesty and reputation are not as influential or frequently discussed in other contexts, which results in undermining these values. Reviewing *Privacy in the Arab World and In Islam* (please refer to the Literature Review) enabled me to provide a better understanding of privacy behaviors and conceptualization that participants shared in the interviews. The ways in which "privacy" was enacted among my participants goes beyond concerns for safety, security, and the ability to separate oneself from a larger group in a controlled manner. In fact, I observed adherence to Islamic teachings, maintenance of reputation, and the careful navigation of social media activity to preserve respect and modesty.

One clear example is in the discussions about profile photos and the maintenance of *hurma* thorough the protection of *awra* that often gets exposed through the sharing of personal photos (or selfies). In offline conservative practices, women are only allowed to be seen without a *hijab* (headscarf) by female friends and *mahrims* (male relatives that a Muslim woman cannot marry, or to whom she is already married, such as father, husband, brother, son). Likewise, online

practices adhere to the same norms. Female social media users often avoid using a real photo of their faces and instead use photos of natural scenery, babies or themselves from afar with unrecognizable features for profile pictures. They also often employ nicknames or the names of their children instead of their real names to veil their online identity, a novel tactic adopted by my participants that allowed them to refashion social media sites designed around different ideologies of the individual and notions of privacy.

In addition, the nature of Islamic values and beliefs in regard to the afterlife, and the accountability for one's actions whether good or bad, caused by the accumulation of good deeds or sins influenced how users treated these social media profiles as extensions of themselves, rather than just a digital image or a digital self. This was evident when participants referred to feeling responsible and accountable to God, in addition to their collective, for the shared content and the way this content will be treated at the present time (i.e., how it circulates and travels online) and over time in the future (i.e., after they die). For example, if one posts negative, revealing, or blasphemous content, the perception is that they accumulate sins. Alternatively, when they post positive or pious content, this is considered a good deed, which then generates more good deeds every time someone reads it, engages with it, or retweets it. The former explains practices and themes in my study around deleting content as a sign of repentance and atonement, a topic that has yet to be explored. The latter results in the emerging practice I noticed in the region that is related to opening accounts for dead relatives and friends, as people believe that the good deeds will reach them and benefit them even though they are dead.

Therefore, technologies designed with the goals of openness and widespread sharing often clash with *khososyah*—especially the sharing of “selfies” and other photos done from the perspective of individual rather than collective concerns. Yet my data revealed how my

participants demonstrated remarkable adaptability and ingenuity as they embraced these global technologies in two different contexts while making them their own in a way that allowed them to maintain norms and values important to their family and community.

6.2.3 Contextual Integrity And Transnational Privacy

Engaging with Nissenbaum's (2004) framework of "contextual integrity" as the benchmark to understand privacy in the context of my user group was useful in explaining the larger cross-cultural aspect of privacy in each "distinct realm" (Saudi Arabia or the US). However, I found the theory and framework limited to divergent realms and fails to encompass situations where these distinct realms collide through technologies like social media. Contextual integrity suggests that people engage in activities that take place in a "plurality of distinct realms... Each of these sphere, realms, or contexts involves, indeed may even be defined by, a distinct set of norms, which governs its various aspects such as roles, expectations, actions, and practices" (p. 119), which falls short when considering a transnational experience. My participants' experience of being transnationals who are situated in two realms at the same time (by stretching the borders and norms of their sending society to include that of the hosting society) seems to be ignored in the contextual integrity framework. Thus, in my dissertation I found it useful to form the concept of transnational privacy by extending the contextual integrity theory to encompass transnationals.

I also suggest that transnational privacy not only aids in explaining the elasticity characteristic of privacy over a stretched social field, but also over time (i.e., in different life stages). In exploring transnational privacy, I found that my participants' experience with privacy was not only affected by the locational and/or the contextual norms, but it was also impacted by age, proximity to the context, and stage in life. In my study, I engaged with participants from varying stages in their transnational experience, either at the beginning, the middle or towards the end of their time in the

US. I also engaged with students who have returned to Saudi either recently or have been there for a while. A common theme amongst these participants was concerning questioning previously shared (even unshared) content. Participants' questioning was mostly through the lens of regret, remorse or shame by using expressions like "if time goes back," "in this stage of my life," or "I am a different person now." Participants associated this change with feeling that they've matured over time and that certain content or way of self-presentation doesn't explain their current experience and world view. These expressions carry in them a deeper meaning for this population than what current theories address, suggesting a need for a discussion and a consideration for content temporality and how it influences privacy.

Consider, for example, the notion of context collapse (Boyd, 2007) that Lingel and Naaman (2014) suggest is a result of "a multi-faceted social network being flattened into a single audience, such that users find it difficult to curate content intended for or legible to only part of their personal networks." Compare that to offline interactions, where "people have the option to modify behavior based on their immediate social surroundings or to encode messages and gestures for a select few" (Lingel & Naaman, 2014). While the concept of "context collapse" offered my study a useful lens for analyzing the issues and tensions in forming online identity, it was also limited to the social networks that individuals form without considering the ever-changing, contextually formed, and constantly evolving nature of individuals' identities. In other words, the individual relationship their own personal growth and evolution. Through studying transnationals in different stages of their transnational experience (i.e., cross sectional study) and in suggesting transnational privacy, I have learned that one's lifespan, i.e., their past, their present and their future, by their very nature are different contexts. Meaning, they grow and change, and for some this past is better hidden and not be saved nor shared with their social networks.

For example, students in group B, their struggle with privacy online wasn't only concerned with the context (i.e., hosting and sending society) or proximity to their collective, it was also about negotiating their identities between the past, present and future selves, which one to put forward and which one to protect (through privacy protection tactics) from exposure. Leading them eventually to close profiles and start new ones, or migrating from the platform, as the past no longer fits within the present selves. All in an effort to avoid privacy violations, because failure to protect privacy in a culturally acceptable way can severely threaten reputation, which within the contexts of their communities can lead to shame, loss of face and livelihood including jobs, familial relationships, marriage prospects and general well-being. Thus, my study suggests a new consideration into users' ever-changing identities throughout their lifespan and how could this understanding influence the current design of profiles that are currently designed with the idea the one's life is constant when in reality it is not.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGN

My dissertation findings highlight the ways in which particular values are enacted through the use of social media. Notably, these values are not necessarily understood, much less taken into consideration, when designers and developers create and/or augment technologies. Working in this vein of inquiry, I assert that a way to reduce cultural bias is to consider cross-cultural studies of privacy and identity. By looking to research that examines various cultures and the value tensions associated with technology use, we give designers and developers the necessary tools to produce technologies that are inclusive and appropriate for a global audience.

That said, challenges persist in finding a systematic way to translate theoretical insights into technical design principles. Inspired by value sensitive design, which considers the stakeholders

(direct and indirect) and their values tensions, I first discuss my stakeholders and their values, before I propose some design guidelines for this population.

6.3.1 *Indirect Stakeholders And Important Values*

In terms of stakeholders, this study highlights the importance and influence of the *indirect stakeholders* on my participants' decisions about what information to share, and through which medium. The indirect stakeholder list goes well beyond the individual family or friends, to include the individual's extended family and tribe, society as a whole, and the government. For the collective to preserve cultural values, individuals are expected to maintain 'oneness' and 'homogeneity' with their groups. Within the context of my participants, social ties and inclusion rely heavily on cultural homogeneity "as these ties are prone to be broken in the state of pluralism" (Alshehri, Abokhodair, & Olivier, Forthcoming). When individuals skew towards pluralism or do not adhere to societies' values they are treated with hostility. All indirect stakeholders engage in a form of surveillance (*social or governmental*), which appeared to be influential in my data (please refer to the Privacy Concerns section).

The participants expressed that there are personal differences in how they prioritize these different indirect stakeholders. For example, some participants have indicated that their closer family members are more important than their extended ones. As a result, tension could arise between different stakeholders' interests, with individuals negotiating a balance between satisfying the whole stakeholders group or satisfying one at the expense of the other, a theme I am currently exploring in a forthcoming publication with Taghreed Alshehri and Patrick Olivier.

VSD theory and method addresses the direct and indirect stakeholders, limited to the context it was developed in (i.e., the West). Expanding VSD to more collectivist orientations, such as my study context, resulted in identifying a new type of stakeholders, that is *influencing stakeholders*.

This type of stakeholders is not merely affected by the use of technology like the indirect stakeholders, on the contrary, they mainly influence the way the direct stakeholder engages with the technology. My study has revealed a principal influencing stakeholder that is *Allah (God)*. My participants indicated, either implicitly or explicitly, that *fear of God* played an important role in their everyday social media behaviors and interactions, as it is in every aspect of their personal lives. For people of faith, such as Islam, a sense of being monitored by Allah at all times prevails, more so than other types of surveillance. Whether in Saudi (where the internet is surveilled at all times) or the US, my participants have indicated a uniform sense of concern for content longevity on social networking sites. This concern had influenced their sharing behavior, where they opted for self-censoring or deleting content if the content triggered feelings of religious guilt and remorse that resulted in repentance like behaviors. I detected similarities between this behavior and the European privacy law on the “right to be forgotten” where one stems from fear of God and the other is a legal process revolved around reputation recovery. Further theorizing of this phenomenon and how it relates to privacy policy is needed in future work.

6.3.2 *Inclusive Design Principles For Privacy*

I am cognizant that my findings cannot simply be represented in design features or directly translated into design implications. Take for example the difficulty of designing while accounting for God as a stakeholder; the challenge of designing for “faith” or the autonomous-self as important concepts in this culture; or designing around a notion of privacy bound up in honor, modesty and reputation. Nonetheless, exploring these values can influence designers’ thinking and decisions by generating empathy for users from complex contexts. Here are some potential design principles inspired by my participants:

“Private” as the default setting. Participants expressed lack of trust in some platforms because of incidents in which privacy settings were reverted to ‘default,’ which was *public*. One way to avoid this is to make the default setting ‘private.’

Gender sensitive recommendation system. The many examples I provided in the findings section demonstrated a situation where some social media functionalities like the tagging and liking can do harm in the most unintended ways. Some of the culturally-specific tactics my participants employ include the acquisition and management of multiple accounts that reflect different personas on Facebook or other sites, self-censoring, maintaining private accounts, and the management of boundaries between different friends groups and the information they can see online. Through privacy settings, our participants actively manage their profiles making sure that no personal content slips from one context to the other. Recall the example of the female who had her dad blocked on Facebook and had “ten different friends groups. I have ‘limited’, ‘more limited’, ‘most limited’ ...I have six to seven different levels of privacy.” A design suggestion could include identifying relationship and level of disclosure to each.

Support for code switching as a privacy tactic. The current Facebook and Instagram status features offer translating posts to the desired language. From what I learned from my participants and other studies, such as (Lingel, 2015), linguistic code switching is used by some as a mechanism to ensure privacy. With automated translation features available, the participants that used code switching to protect the privacy of their content have now lost that privacy measure.

Support for hiding time ranges of content or archiving. Profiles seem to present social media users as constant identities, whereas in reality people’s “identities are multi-faceted”, ever evolving, and constantly changing. Overtime, social media profiles become a reflection of both who these transnationals were and who they became. Frequently, as time goes on, they want to

hide big parts of that and end up deleting their accounts. Instead, a design suggestion to allow them to archive an older post that no longer fits within their representation or an option offering them the ability to hide an arbitrary time range of content from their account.

Multiple account support. I recommend the development of an interface that allows for management of multiple accounts. Due to the fear of context collapse, and the all too real possibility of harming one's family through information sharing, the ability to easily maintain more than one account would be a welcome feature by many.

6.3.3 *Implications for Social Media Policy*

“Real name” and “one account” policies. Some participants confessed to managing more than one account on Facebook in particular: one for family and “judgmental” friends, and one for “open minded” friends. Some also said they use nicknames as profile names. We learned that although many refer to this practice as the use of “fake names,” the names are in fact representations of themselves that they like to present to particular audiences; the digital platform is the space where they experience self-expression that cannot be had elsewhere. Policies that require users to maintain only one profile in their “real” names stymie the freedom that is highly valued by those who seek more autonomy than what their cultures permit. As the results of this research have suggested, and joining other researchers, such policies need to be more lenient and flexible.

6.3.4 *Designing for Traditional versus Emerging Values*

In my ongoing research, I draw on Value Sensitive Design to take a first step towards exploring cultural values among transnational Saudis. One of the decisions that Value Sensitive Design keeps open to the researcher is regarding the nature of the values they are designing for

and whether the researcher's role is to remain neutral or partisan in the selection of values. In the case of Saudi Arabia, my research to date revealed a set of complex values that lean towards traditional values, rather than emergent ones. Take for example, the value of maintaining family honor and reputation. To many, this value represents nothing but misogyny and subjection for women, especially coming from a cultural context that is known to be male-dominant and patriarchal. I often struggled in explaining the importance of this value to audiences when presenting my research. During this research journey, I questioned, alone and with collaborators, whether a discussion of honor is important and for what purpose? Due to its prominence in my data as a highly influential, guiding value that is closely tied to self-presentation and privacy, I decided to include and unpack honor.

Not only was a discussion of honor a reason for contemplating, I also engaged with collaborators on topics related to steering away from a state of cultural expectations to cultural transcendence. My interviews with transnational participants, the wild card, revealed that in many cases participants wanted to put forward a self that steps outside those traditional boundaries—e.g. for women, to show photos of their faces or be seen without hijab; for men, to share photos in which they are with female friends. These conversations offer clear image of the bi-directional effect of technology on people and societies, not forgoing the impact of people on the shaping of technology.

I learned from my participants that the most applicable design for this context would allow them to benefit from modern technologies while maintaining traditions, customs, and religious practices that they value. However, these preferences may not be representative of all Saudi Arabians and may privilege certain value systems. Therefore, as I continue in my research, and as others embark on exploring additional values in this cultural context, I leave a set of open questions

for the community. In terms of values and design, what values do we design for? And how do we avoid marginalizing a group of users with design? How do we design systems that can respect the needs of cultural traditions without creating systems that reinforce existing power structures? As I struggle with my stance as a researcher of this context, I invite the larger Human Computer Interaction community to participate in this conversation.

6.4 REFLECTIONS ON METHOD

Pilot work. One of the strengths of this study was the maturity of the method, which allowed it to be effective in extracting the needed data (and beyond). The two pilot studies I conducted enabled me to overcome one of the early anticipated challenges of my dissertation research: the limited knowledge regarding Saudi Arabia as a field site for research. By accessing the field early on and developing research relationships, I was able to establish rapport and contact with local informants who offered personal connections and advice throughout the timeline of the research. In addition, early on I was able to recognize the shortcomings and opportunities of the adopted methods, in addition to making on-the-spot improvements.

Face-to-face interviewing. Reviewing most of the studies that were conducted in this context (a total of approximately 30 studies), there was a clear gap in qualitative research, which includes face-to-face interviews with this population. One particularly challenging area that emerged for a female researcher such as myself was attaining access to male interview subjects. Earlier, I proposed that one way to address this limitation was to hire a male interviewer. However, I decided against doing that because in my opinion, it was going to affect the quality of the generated data due to two reasons:

- 1- Being immersed in the study and the literature offered me tools and expertise that are hard to be passed by training to the male interviewer

2- I documented and analyzed field notes after each interview concluded, which was going to be hard to transfer to the male interviewer.

Instead, I decided to conduct face-to-face interviews incorporating collage construction, which resulted in coherent and nuanced data, even with the male participants.

The main actual difficulty that emerged in conducting a face-to-face interview in Saudi with an opposite gender participant was related to finding neutral public collaboration spaces. A solution to overcome this challenge, which was suggested by one of the local informants, was to approach mix-gendered companies that offered access to non-employees and to use their meeting rooms (think of your traditional office building in the Google or Microsoft campus with meeting room and cafes.)

It is worth noting that this study involved many cases of thinking on the spot and working around the limitations of the field. Taking the ‘interview’ or ‘collage construction’ method as-is and trying to implement it within the Saudi context did not always work in favor as a researcher. I faced situations that required prompt action and iteration. One of the interesting context-related challenges was concerned with the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia. When I conducted interviews in homes, I sometimes had to wait for participants to acquire an oral approval from their male guardian (e.g., husband or father). In other cases, when I was out of options to find locations for meeting male participants at public locations, I sought approval from my male guardian (my father in this case) to conduct the interviews in my family house. These opportunities to improvise on the spot gave me a new perspective, that the implementation of methods should be contextually grounded, as much as the interpretations of the findings of this study. Methods depend on many factors including, but not limited to, context, location, gender, and experience. Thus, it is important to realize when the method is not producing the data you need to be creative and iterate on the go, rather than being stuck in the method guidebook.

Interviewer gender effect. After conducting 40 interviews including the pilot work with this population, I am confident that for the larger part of my study, the interviewer effect was not an issue. This was largely due to the nature of the sample being largely from my network and mostly open-minded and willing to be interviewed (as I have mentioned earlier in Recruitment, Participants and Sites section). Looking back at the recruitment stage of this study, I am confident that there were situations where potential participants refrained from participating due to some reasons such as: 1) it was a step too far (e.g., for a man to be interviewed by a woman; 2) A woman was not able to get permission from her family to be interviewed; (3) Or for male participants, not wanting to be seen in public (e.g., at a café) with a non-related female.

To limit this effect, I was careful in documenting the context and the situations, which aided me in noticing interviewee discomfort. In addition, the pilot work had prepared me to be flexible and think on my feet by adapting and iterating, either by asking a question in another way or by verbally assuring my participants that they have the option to not answer. Moreover, the questionnaires came in handy before the interviews to learn and set expectations regarding my participants' backgrounds. For example, when conservativeness level was indicated as high, I made sure to consider those, because the goal is to learn from my participants rather than to exert power.

Individual sessions instead of group session. In some of the design sessions, I had more than one participant in the same room working on their collages. A few participants shared their concerns regarding the other person in the room by indicating that they would like to present their collage and talk with me privately. As a result, I made a change in my procedure to hold individual sessions rather than group ones. This is understandable, as this is not a particularly new challenge with interviewing Arab participants. A few researchers conducting research in the Arab context

attributed this challenge to the Arab culture being conservative, private and somewhat shy when it comes to engaging with researchers (AlMunajjed, 1997; Alsheikh et al., 2011).

6.5 REFLECTIONS ON CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN SAUDI ARABIA

Throughout this research, I learned many lessons in conducting research in an environment in which “a researcher is not readily accepted in a traditional milieu that frowns upon those enquiring into other peoples’ lives” (AlMunajjed, 1997). In the interest of guiding others and providing a model for similar research, I offer some reflections.

Bi-theoretical perspectives. I noticed the strong and often very clear distinction participants made between how they perceived themselves in line with an upbringing that emphasized collectivist values in comparison to what they viewed as the more individualistic perspective of “modern” or “Western” societies from which social media technologies originated. This dual understanding of *us* and *them* was fascinating to observe with transnational participants. Participants not only focused on personal behavior but spoke about how technology is approached and perceived in Western countries based on their experiences studying there. This perception contrasted greatly with the concerns my participants expressed about representing a whole larger than the individual self when they used social media. I took this as further corroboration of the usefulness of my analytical device, transnational privacy, in describing their privacy-related practices. Moreover, the keen awareness of cultural differences expressed by my participants with international experience emphasizes the way immersion in a different cultural environment provides an opportunity to unmask and become more aware of one’s own cultural assumptions that otherwise typically remain hidden. In many ways, this is what an ethnographically informed analysis like this study attempts to do for researchers and designers who do not have personal

experience in the context being studied—namely, to learn about their own cultural assumptions that often guide technology design.

In summarizing this section, I offer a few practical methodological guidance for researchers aiming to conduct qualitative research in Saudi:

Requirement and samplings. Snowball sampling, although has its own drawbacks, is by far the most common strategy to overcome the challenge of finding participants for your study, which is what I used for my study. An additional strategy to recruit can be by posting a call on social media. Keep in mind that it might not be very useful for face-to-face interviews, however, still very useful for survey studies or online interviewing (e.g., using Skype). In my recent collaboration with Adel (2017) who recruited participants from Twitter to study marital matchmaking technologies in Saudi Arabia, I was pleasantly surprised with the number of participants who agreed to be interviewed or answer his survey from Twitter.

Conducting interviews with opposite gender. It is still not a common method to conduct face-to-face interviews with an opposite gender participant in Saudi Arabia due to some factors, conservativeness level of the participant or the interviewer, finding a neutral space (e.g., library, café) to conduct the interview. It is much easier to conduct these interviews if you are a student in the UK or the USA and can find other Saudis that are willing to be interviewed. One way I was able to overcome this challenge in my interviews in Saudi was through finding mixed-gendered businesses (e.g., banks, hospitals, multinational companies, etc.) I recommend connecting with a relative or a friend that works in such place to help in acquiring an access for the interview.

Stretching, reinventing existing theories. In the early stages of my investigation—as I attempted to formulate meta-level explanations for my observations—I found myself constrained with definitions and perspectives that were developed with non-Arab, non-Muslim populations in mind.

However, I was able to scaffold on existing theories—i.e. Goffman’s self-presentation and Altman’s Privacy Regulation Theory—and explain the practices I observed with our user population while at the same time providing a theory that is more encompassing of an international audience. My goal was to be as representative as possible, to “think with” my participants, while offering a scientific contribution that extends beyond a single study. I hope other researchers will build upon this study to examine other populations that do not always share Western ideologies of the individual.

Creativity in stretching and re-inventing methods. As with theories, I suggest researchers to consider being flexible with the application of their method without compromising on rigor in the application. In my study, I complemented my interviews with a collage construction activity to overcome the barrier of privacy to speak about privacy. A researcher should be aware of their research environment, meaning be aware as a researcher of the participants, their willingness to engage and open up. If that attitude is apparent during your interview more than once, I recommend the researcher to re-evaluate their collection method. Maybe include an art-based method to illuminate interviewer affect and encourage in depth conversations. In my study, I have noticed during my first pilot work that interviews were not generating the depth in data that was answering my research question, thus in my second pilot work I have included the collage construction method to engage on a deeper level with my participants. Many resources I used helped me identify these issues to overcome them, for example, (Comi et al., 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Friedman, Kahn, et al., 2002; Gourlay, 2010; Hekman, 1997; IDEO, 2003; Lazar, 2010; Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Nasif et al., 1991; Neuman, 1994; Patton, 1990; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992; A. R. Sandstrom & Sandstrom, 1995; Slutskaya et al., 2012; Smagorinsky, 2008).

In this chapter, I provided a detailed discussion on the implications of my study findings for theory, design, and method. In the next chapter, I conclude my dissertation with a discussion of the limitations and opportunities for future research on the topic of transnational privacy and culturally-inclusive design.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

I examined the use of social media, specifically, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, by 34 transnational Saudi Arabian young adults (ages 18-35). The aim was to understand how they conceptualize and enact privacy and self-presentation as transnationals, that is, during back-and-forth movement from Saudi Arabia to the United States. Specifically, I employed a qualitative cross-sectional approach from three different points in their transnational experience: before coming to the US, during their time in the US and after their return to Saudi Arabia upon graduation. Resisting the culturally hegemonic form of privacy, this study provided culturally-inclusive design insights from an understudied user group to address some of the problematic privacy models in social media design. I also provided empirical data that revealed new findings regarding Saudis' sense of privacy and identity, their concerns with the design of current digital media technologies, and how they appropriate these platforms to serve their own privacy and identity needs.

My study involved the development of what I called design sessions: they included a background questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and a collage construction activity. This method was powerful in eliciting value conceptualization, concerns, and emotions that I synthesized through a thematic analysis of the 34 face-to-face design sessions with Saudi men and women. I used this qualitative approach to provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of this understudied, and often misunderstood, population in design and research.

I also wish to emphasize that while conducting my research, I noticed that none of the implications that I've drawn from participants' accounts are inherently tied solely to the experiences of transnational Saudis, as I believe that other kinds of transnationals likely deploy

and conceptualize similar privacy and identity related information practices. My study sought to provide greater understanding of the cultural and religious values shared by Arab Muslim populations, which is especially important given the mass migration of refugees from conflict zones in Arab countries (e.g. Libya and Syria) to European nations where social media norms more closely align with those found in the United States.

7.1 LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE WORK

Cross-sectional study versus longitudinal. I tapped into this unexplored area of research through a cross-sectional study rather than a longitudinal one, for two main reasons: First, knowing that this is an understudied population, a general exploratory understanding of the group to identify special considerations is needed. A cross-sectional study design allowed me to compare many different variables at the same time (within groups and between groups). The second reason concerned the challenge of maintaining study participants for the whole time of the study. Knowing that most of my sample are students studying abroad on a scholarship is not a definite situation and their conditions might change at any given point and data loss would have occurred. That being said, I suggest that a longitudinal study is needed in the future to measure changes in students' behaviors and attitudes in relationship to privacy and identity practices over time.

Sampling procedure (i.e., snowball sampling). As this is one of the first qualitative studies that employed face-to-face interviews with both genders in Saudi Arabia, recruitment and sampling had its own unique limitations. In using a recruiting strategy that draws from my network I recognize that my participants sample might risk being skewed towards like-minded informants who are educated, open to speak in face-to-face settings about private subjects, and willing to be audio and/or video recorded (4 participants asked not be video recorded). Additional qualitative and quantitative research is needed to further the impact of this exploratory study,

Future work might, for example, control for class, background, level-of-religiosity in the family, and other societal factors that this study investigated.

Detailed user studies of different social media platforms and other cultural backgrounds. This study centered on Facebook as the main social media platform under investigation. And while I took into account all the other platforms that were mentioned throughout the interviews, (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, along with others), further detailed investigation of specific social media platforms that serve different goals is still needed. Future work might, for example, look into ephemeral content platforms like Snapchat and how that concept of disappearing content might play a role in managing and enacting privacy and other related values online. Future research might include other cultural or cross-regional factors that impacts privacy-related practices and concerns on social media.

Transnationalism. In conducting this study, I purposefully engaged a transnational population through a cross-sectional study design in an effort to elicit close-to-real-life situations on social media being used in movement, rather than a mere comparative study (i.e., Saudi versus the US). In working from a transnational lens, I opened a new dimension to studying cross-cultural populations through the extended social field between two nations, hosting and sending. Between modern ICTs and traditional methods, people travel and engage in an everlasting cultural exchange process that affects their personal experiences in ways that are not easily captured by traditional study design. This approach provided rich data to examine the practices and behaviors of many transmigrants maintenance of close relationships with families and friends in the sending society, while simultaneously forming groups in the hosting society.

Steering away from cultural expectations. Overall, my participants often adhered to cultural expectations on social media environments out of respect for their collective, due to fear, or to gain

religious favor, among a host of other reasons. However, many transnationals spoke about their preference or wish to put forward a self that steps outside those traditional boundaries—e.g. for women, to show photos of their faces or be seen without hijab; for men, to share photos in which they are with female friends. Might this represent an emerging sense of individuality among younger social media users in communities where collective values remain prominent among older generations? If so, what role do social media technologies play in cultivating and reframing understandings of the self apart from the collective? Although answering such questions is beyond the scope of the current study, I hope to have laid groundwork that other researchers may build upon to answer these and similar questions.

The right to be forgotten and transnational privacy. In conducting this study, I have discovered the strong influence of the Muslim belief in the afterlife to managing privacy online and on sharing behaviors. Specifically, I note the themes of self-censoring, Fear of God, and the deleting of content after its been shared, as ones that are utilized by this population to not only manage reputation and image to the imagined audience, but also to manage their relationship with their creator. In a sense, my participants utilized the functions of deleting content as a method to practice repentance and atonement (*toubah* in Arabic). In Islam, Taubah (repentance) is the practice of confirming regret (and sadness or shyness) as a result of committing or remembering a sin. In some resources, it is necessary for the “validity of the taubah [by] shunning the sin [and to] firmly abstain from it in [the] future and controlling the [self] when it urges for the sin” (Islam.org). Again, it is important to note, that different Muslims have different reasons and ways of practicing *toubah* online, a theme I discovered in this study that needs further exploration. Future work might explore this practice and how it manifests on social media to provide a better understanding of certain privacy-related practices, such as, content deleting or self-censoring practices. This can

also be extended to suggesting design solutions to provide users a better way to achieve their cultural and religious needs. Another venue for future work could study this practice from the dimension of reputation recovery and how it relates to the right to be forgotten—a concept practiced as part of the Data Protection Directive in the European Union—an essential law for the practice of reputation recovery and the prevention of being stigmatized for actions performed in the past.

These are just a few suggestions of directions to further the impact of this cross-sectional exploratory study that investigates the use of Facebook by transnational Saudis and the related privacy concerns, practices, and meaning. In my introduction, I noted that there are risks for users in industry assuming that one size privacy fits all regions and contexts. As such, my objective in my study has been to use qualitative analysis of the experiences of transnational Saudis in a way that simultaneously considers their culturally-specific values and needs, the influence of the transnational experience on these values, and the role of social media in this process.

Appendix A: IRB Approval



UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

HUMAN SUBJECTS DIVISION

Date: June 23, 2014
PI: Ms. Nora Abokhodair
RE: HSD Study #47538
"Transmigrant Saudi Youth use of Cloud Computing Applications and Digital Media"

Dear Ms. Abokhodair,

The University of Washington Human Subjects Division (HSD) has determined that your research qualifies for exempt status in accordance with UW IRB policies. Details of this determination are as follows:

Exempt category determination: **Non-Federal Category 7**

Determination period: **6/23/2014 – 6/22/2015**

If the research becomes federally funded, supported, or regulated, the researcher must immediately cease research activities until IRB approval is obtained. This will require submission of a new application.

Although research that qualifies for exempt status is not governed by federal requirements for research involving human subjects, investigators still have a responsibility to protect the rights and welfare of their subjects, and are expected to conduct their research in accordance with the ethical principles of *Justice, Beneficence and Respect for Persons*, as described in the Belmont Report, as well as with state and local institutional policy.

Determination Period: An exempt determination is valid for five years from the date of the determination, as long as the nature of the research activity remains the same. If there is any substantive change to the activity that has determined to be exempt, one that alters the overall design, procedures, or risk/benefit ratio to subjects, the exempt determination will no longer be valid. Exempt determinations expire automatically at the end of the five-year period. If you complete your project before the end of the determination period, it is not necessary to make a formal request that your study be closed. Should you need to continue your research activity beyond the five-year determination period, you will need to submit a new *Exempt Status Request* form for review and determination *prior to implementation*.

Revisions: Only modifications that are deemed "minor" are allowable, in other words, modifications that do not change the nature of the research and therefore do not affect the validity of the exempt determination. Please refer to the *Guidance document for more information about what are considered minor changes*. If changes that are considered to be "substantive" occur to the research, that is, changes that alter the nature of the research and therefore affect the validity of the exempt determination, a new *Exempt Status Request* must be submitted to HSD for review and determination *prior to implementation*.

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the category of review, notify HSD promptly. Any complaints from subjects pertaining to the risk and benefits of the research must be reported to HSD.

Please use the HSD study number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this research, or on any correspondence with the HSD office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at (206) 543-0098 or via email at hsdinfo@uw.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kristin Puhl
Review Coordinator
Human Subjects Division
University of Washington
(206) 543-0919

4333 Brooklyn Ave. NE, Box 369470 Seattle, WA 98196-9470
main 206.543.0098 fax 206.543.9218 hsdinfo@uw.edu www.washington.edu/research/hsd

Appendix B: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON | CONSENT FORM

Transnational Saudi Youth use of Cloud Computing Applications and Digital Media: Design Study

Principal Researcher:	Norah Abokhodair – Ph.D. Candidate University of Washington – Information School 4311 11th Ave NE, Suite 400 Box 354985, Seattle, WA, 98195 2069300302 noraha@uw.edu
Associate Researchers:	David Hendry - Associate Professor Information School, University of Washington dhendry@uw.edu

RESEARCHERS' STATEMENT

We are asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Privacy is personal, complex, and a complicated subject to communicate. The meaning of the value of “privacy” may shift radically depending on who is using it, to whom it is applied, and in what context. In this research, I seek to understand what the value of “privacy” means for young Saudi women and men, aged 18-30, who are studying in the US and who use social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Social networks are defined as online spaces that allow users to sign up and represent themselves via a personal profile, which is used in creating online communities and relationships among people who share common interests, backgrounds, and activities. Facebook is one of the most popular social network sites. This study intends to investigate the two broad research questions: (1) What does “privacy” mean for Saudi men and women, aged 18-30, living the US who use cloud computing applications to stay in touch with their family and friends?; and (2) When living in the US, do young Saudi men and women conceive the value of “privacy” differently? If so, then how? This research component is important because it will inform the design for culturally sensitive privacy control technical solutions and policy solutions

STUDY PROCEDURES

The interview sessions will be conducted individually. Subjects will be University of Washington students, Kaplan English institute students, and other students from Saudi Arabia living in Seattle. Men and women will participate in separate sessions that will range from 1-1.5 hours maximum.

In each session, we will prompt participants to create collages of (a) the type of information they like to keep private from friends and/or family (e.g. photos of their family, political news) (b) the type of information they like to share publicly on social media (e.g. nationality, education). Collages will be each completed by a single participant on a large piece of paper. We will provide a preset collection of images, words, shapes, scissors and glue sticks (we will also provide food and beverages for the participants).

Next, each participant will present their collages to the researchers, to provide clarity and insight about image choices and meaning.

Finally, participants will be asked semi-structured interview questions. You have the right to refuse to answer any question in the interview. Upon completion of the session you will receive a 10\$ Starbucks card to compensate for their time.

Presentations and interviews will be videotaped for analysis but subjects' faces will not be recorded. Instead, only hands and arms and collages will be recorded. To enable this the video camera will be placed on a tripod and will be pointed at table so that the collage can be seen but nothing else.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

The risks of this research are no more than the risks encountered in everyday life.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

You may not directly benefit from taking part in this study. We expect that the results of this study will help us address the problems that transmigrant Saudi youth experience with the current Facebook privacy settings.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH INFORMATION

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially and will be made anonymous when transcribed. Participating in this interview will not require you to provide any personal or identifiable information. Any data collected as part of this research will be stored securely in the Information School server.

The video recording is essential for this project. We will make sure that your face is not showing in the video and you have the right to review the video to make sure for yourself.

Only the research team will have access to the video recording and the collages, which will not be used for any other purpose. The transcribed video recording and the collages will be safely stored; and the material might appear in any publications arising from the research.

OTHER INFORMATION

You may refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have questions later about the research you can ask one of the researchers listed above. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call the Human Subjects

Appendix C: Study information Sheet

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Researcher:

Norah Abokhodair – Ph.D. Candidate
Information School
4311 11th Ave NE, Suite 400
Box 354985, Seattle, WA, 98195
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Associate Researchers:

University of Washington – Information School
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PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The meaning of privacy may shift radically depending on who is using it, to whom it is applied, and in what context. That said, we want to understand what it means for young Saudi women and young Saudi men to be private in the era of social networking that promotes online information sharing and broadcasting. Social networks are defined as online spaces that allow users to sign up and represent themselves via a personal profile, which is used in creating online communities and relationships among people who share common interests, backgrounds, and activities. Facebook is one of the most popular social network sites. This study intends to investigate the two broad research questions: (1) What is privacy on Facebook for Saudis living in the USA? and (2) Is privacy gendered? If so, then how? Our goal is to learn how to design technologies that improves user awareness of online privacy as well as reduces gender inequity. We focus on Saudi students living in the US using Facebook.

PROCEDURES

A. Study Design. Privacy is personal, complex, and therefore, a complicated subject to communicate. Considering such challenge, we will conduct an exploratory design research using semi-structured interviews with design probes (e.g., images and sketches). Specifically, we will use collage method: “As inspiration for design teams, collage allows participants to visually express their thoughts, feelings, desires, and other aspects of their life that are difficult to articulate using traditional means... When prompted by traditional research methods such as questionnaires and interviews, people often find it challenging or uncomfortable to articulate and express their innermost feelings, thoughts, and desires. Collage can help mitigate this challenge, by providing an opportunity for research participants to project personal information onto visual artifacts, then using these results as a tangible reference point for conversation²⁸.”

B. Study Procedures. The interview sessions will be conducted in small groups of students from Saudi Arabia living in Seattle. Men and women will participate in separate sessions. In each group, we will prompt participants to create collages of (a) private information space and (b) public information space on social media. Collages will be each completed by a single participant on a large poster paper. We will provide a preset collection of images, words, shapes, scissors and glue sticks. Next, each participant will present their collages to the researchers, to provide clarity and insight about image choices and meaning. Finally, participants will be asked semi-structured interview questions. Presentations and interviews will be videotaped for analysis.

²⁸ Hanington, B., & Martin, B. (2012). *Universal Methods of Design: 100 Ways to Research Complex Problems, Develop Innovative Ideas, and Design Effective Solutions*. Rockport Pub.

RISKS

There are no risks beyond normal day-to-day living associated with your participation in this project.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially and will be made anonymous when transcribed. Participating in this interview will not require you to provide any personal or identifiable information. Any data collected as part of this research will be stored securely.

The video recording is essential for this project. However, it will be available for you to verify your comments and responses prior to final inclusion. If we do not hear any response from you within 7 days, then we will assume that you are satisfied with the transcript, and agree to its inclusion in the study.

Only the research team will have access to the video recording and the collages which will not be used for any other purpose. The transcribed video recording and the collages will be safely stored; and the material might appear in any publications arising from the research.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate.

QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If have any questions or require any further information please contact one of the research team members below.

Norah Abokhodair
Information School Ph.D Candidate
(206) 930 0302
noraha@uw.edu

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

Appendix D: Background Questionnaire

Transmigrant Saudi Youth use of Social Media Applications: Background Questionnaire

Personal Information

How old are you?

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Neither applies to me

What is your marital status?

- Unmarried
- Engaged
- Married
- Divorced

If you are engaged or married, is your partner with you in the US?

- Yes
- No

If yes, are they in the same city?

- Yes
- No

Information on Studying Abroad

What year did you first come to the US/Canada to study?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> January | <input type="checkbox"/> 2007 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> February | <input type="checkbox"/> 2008 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March | <input type="checkbox"/> 2009 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> April | <input type="checkbox"/> 2010 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> May | <input type="checkbox"/> 2011 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June | <input type="checkbox"/> 2012 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> July | <input type="checkbox"/> 2013 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> August | <input type="checkbox"/> 2014 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> September | <input type="checkbox"/> 2015 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> October | <input type="checkbox"/> 2016 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> November | <input type="checkbox"/> 2017 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Did you have to finish an English Learning Institute (ELI) course in US/Canada?

- Yes
- No

If yes, for how many months?

- 1-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7 months to 1 year

More than 1 year

What is your current academic level?

Bachelor Degree

Master Degree

Doctoral

Other (please specify) _____

What is your major or main topic of study?

Art

Business

Education

Law

Computer Science

Engineering

Political Science

Medicine

Science

Other (please specify) _____

Have you lived in the US/Canada or other western country before coming to study in the US/Canada?

Yes

No

If yes, approximately how many months/years in total have you spent in the US/Canada or other western country prior to coming to US/Canada for college?

Less than a month

Less than 6 months

Less than a year

More than a year

Are you in the US/Canada with a family member?

Yes

No

If yes, which family members?

Brother

Husband

Father

Other: _____

Sister

Other: _____

Wife

Other: _____

Upon your graduation, do you plan to return to Saudi Arabia?

Yes

No

Conservativeness Level

The next question concerns the idea of “conservativeness” in Arabic هل تعتبر نفسك صاحب فكر منفتح أو منغلق؟

By this I mean, “How observant you are in traditional and religious practice.” In other words, do you consider yourself or your direct family open to progressive interpretations of our cultural norms and Quranic Laws (Sharia). Please read the following statements and rate how you feel about them

	Not applicable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Personal Outlook on Life **						
I have a conservative outlook on life						
I imagine I will have a conservative outlook on life when I go to the US/Canada to study						
I had a conservative outlook on life when I first arrived in the US/Canada						
Prior to coming the US/Canada to study, I had a conservative outlook on life						
Today, I have a conservative outlook on life after returning from the US/Canada						
Family outlook on life						
In general, my direct family has a conservative outlook on life						
My father has a conservative outlook on life						
My mother has a conservative outlook on life						
My husband has a conservative outlook on life						
My wife has a conservative outlook on life						
My brother has a conservative outlook on life						
My sister has a conservative outlook on life						
Friends outlook on life						
In general, the majority of my friends in Saudi have a conservative outlook on life						
In general, the majority of my friends in the US have a conservative outlook on life						

**Note: please note that all questions that start with A,B,C,D, and E are only there to illustrate the different versions of the same question that will be asked to the students from different participant groups.

For example, the questionnaire will show only the before, during, and after version of the question for a participant who've been in the US for 18+ months.

Attitude toward Internet Use

How long have you been using the Internet?

- Since it was publicly available in Saudi Arabia (1997)
- 5 years or more
- 10 years or more
- Other (please specify) _____

How often do you use the Internet?

- Once a month or less
- Once a week
- Several times a week
- Every day
- Several times a day
- Other (please specify) _____

In average, how many hours per week do you spend online?

- 0 to 1 hours/week
- 2 to 4 hours/week
- 5 to 6 hours/week
- 7 to 9 hours/week
- 10 to 20 hours/week
- 21 to 40 hours/week
- Over 40 hours/week
- Other (please specify) _____

Which of the following devices do you most prefer to use to connect to the Internet? (Check all that apply)

- Laptop computer
- Computer tablet
- Desktop computer
- Smart phone
- Other (please specify) _____

In a typical weekday, do you use the Internet most often for work, for personal reasons, or about an equal amount on both?

- A great deal for work
- Somewhat for work
- About an equal amount for work and personal reasons
- Somewhat for personal reasons
- A great deal for personal reasons

In a typical weekday, what do you most often use the Internet for? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send or receive videos | <input type="checkbox"/> Send or receive instant messages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keep in touch with current or former coworkers | <input type="checkbox"/> Send or receive photos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take online professional training classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Start new friendships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keep in touch with current or former friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Research academic articles or books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Find people you know | <input type="checkbox"/> Find recipes |

- Play games
- Take online academic classes
- Find local events
- Pay bills
- Use social networking websites
- Other (please specify) _____

When using e-mail for personal reasons, who do you communicate with? (Check all that apply)

- Family in Saudi
- Family in the US
- Friends in Saudi
- Friends in the US
- Other (please specify) _____

Attitude toward Facebook

Please read the following statements and rate your attitude towards social networking sites:

How familiar are you with Facebook?

- I use Facebook and have a profile
- I know about Facebook but I don't have an account
- I don't know Facebook

When using Facebook, who do you communicate with? (Check all that apply)

- Family in Saudi
- Family in the US
- Friends in Saudi
- Friends in the US
- Other (please specify) _____

What do you usually do on Facebook? (Check all that apply)

- Add/ Remove Friends
- Stay in Touch with Friends in the US
- Stay in Touch with Family in the US
- Stay in Touch with Friends in Saudi
- Stay in Touch with Family in Saudi
- Follow political News
- Follow Sports News
- Follow Entertainment News
- Other (please specify) _____

Attitudes towards specific activities on Facebook and general SNS

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students Perceptions on Communicating with Family, Friends in Saudi, and Friends in the US/Canada					
I like trying new social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat)					
Communication with Family					
I imagine that Facebook will improve the communication between me and my family when I come to the US/Canada					
I think Facebook improved communication between me and my family prior to living in the US/Canada					
I think Facebook improved communication between me and my family during my time in the US/Canada					
I think Facebook improved communication between me and my family after I came back from studying in the US/Canada					
Today, I think Facebook improved communication between me and my family					
Communication with Friends in Saudi	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I imagine that Facebook will improve the communication between me and my friends in Saudi when I come to the US/Canada					
I think Facebook improved communication between me and my friends in Saudi prior to living in the US/Canada					
I think Facebook improved communication between me and my friends in Saudi during my time in the US/Canada					
I think Facebook improved communication between me and my friends in Saudi after I came back from studying in the US/Canada					
Today, I think Facebook improved communication between me and my friends in Saudi					

Communication with Friends in the US/Canada	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I imagine that Facebook will improve the communication between me and the new friends I am going to meet when I come to the US/Canada					
I think Facebook improved communication between me and my friends in the US/Canada during my time in the US/Canada					
I think Facebook improved communication between me and my friends in the US/Canada after I came back from studying in the US/Canada					
Today, I think Facebook improved communication between me and my friends in the US/Canada					

Part 2: Friending

Students comfort level with adding non-Saudi male friends to Facebook	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I imagine I will be comfortable with adding a non-Saudi male friend to my Facebook account when I come to the US/Canada					
I was comfortable with adding a non-Saudi male friend to my Facebook account prior to living in the US/Canada					
I am comfortable with adding a non-Saudi male friend to my Facebook during my time in the US/Canada					
Today, I am comfortable with adding a non-Saudi male friend to my Facebook account					
Students comfort level with adding Saudi male friends to Facebook					
I imagine I will be comfortable with adding a Saudi male friend to my Facebook account when I come to the US/Canada					
I was comfortable with adding a Saudi male friend to my Facebook account prior to living in the US/Canada					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am comfortable with adding a Saudi male friend to my Facebook during my time in the US/Canada					
Today, I am comfortable with adding a Saudi male friend to my Facebook account					
Students comfort level with adding non-Saudi female friends to Facebook					
I imagine I will be comfortable with adding a non-Saudi female friend to my Facebook account when I come to the US/Canada					
I was comfortable with adding a non-Saudi female friend to my Facebook account prior to living in the US/Canada					
I am comfortable with adding a non-Saudi female friend to my Facebook during my time in the US/Canada					
Today, I am comfortable with adding a non-Saudi female friend to my Facebook account					
Students comfort level with adding Saudi female friends to Facebook					
I imagine I will be comfortable with adding a Saudi female friend to my Facebook account when I come to the US/Canada					
I was comfortable with adding Saudi female friend to my Facebook account prior to living in the US/Canada					
I am comfortable with adding a Saudi female friend to my Facebook during my time in the US/Canada					
Today, I am comfortable with adding a Saudi female friend to my Facebook account					

Part 3: Privacy

Privacy concerns with SNS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In general, I worry about my privacy when I use social media networks					
I imagine that I will worry about my privacy when I use social media networks after I come to the US/Canada					
I began to worry about my privacy on social media networks during my time in the US/Canada					
I began to worry about my privacy on social networking sites after I came back from studying in the US/Canada					
Privacy concerns with Facebook					
In general, I worry about my privacy when I use Facebook					
I imagine that I will worry about my privacy when I use Facebook after I come to the US/Canada					
I began to worry about my privacy on Facebook during my time in the US/Canada					
I began to worry about my privacy on Facebook after I came back from studying in the US/Canada					

Part 4: Preferred medium

Preferred SNS for communication	Facebook	Snap Chat	Instagram	Twitter	Other
What applications do you use to stay connected with your family during your time in the US/Canada?					
What applications do you use to stay connected with your friends in Saudi?					
What applications do you use to stay connected with your friends in the US/Canada?					

Part 5: Indirect Stakeholders Perception on Using SNS

	Not Applicable	Yes	Some	No
My parents know about all of my accounts on SNS				
My parents know about only my Facebook account/s				
My parents approve all my accounts on SNS				
My parents approve of only my Facebook account/s				
My partner knows about all my accounts on SNS				
My partner knows about only my Facebook account/s				
My partner approve all my accounts on SNS				
My partner approves only my Facebook account/s				
I don't friend my family on all my accounts on SNS				
I don't friend my family on my Facebook account/s				
I know friends that don't friend family on all of their accounts on SNS				
I know friends that don't friend family on their Facebook account/s				

Part 6: Open questions

What are three benefits of Social Networking Sites?

What are three risks of Social Networking Sites?

A lot of Saudi students are receiving their education in the US and are planning to come back, how do you imagine this group impacting the future of Saudi Arabia upon their return?

How do you imagine social media will be used to empower things that are important for the people of Saudi Arabia?

How do you imagine social media will be used to undermine the things that are important for the people of Saudi Arabia?

Think of a story when an important thing/value to you was undermined by the use of social media. Please write it down in your own words in the language you prefer. The story shouldn't be long.

1. Think of a story when an important thing/value to you was promoted by the use of social media. Please write it down in your own words in the language you prefer. The story shouldn't be long.

Appendix E: Collage Session Prompt

Using the collection of images, words, and martial please construct a poster (collage) that reflects the following question:

What would you consider public information and what would you consider private information on your Facebook Page

In general, what information is posted in private mode? What information is posted in public mode?

Using the provided collection of images construct a collage that best describes how you express yourself on Facebook

Appendix F: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. At the end of the collage study, students will be asked to present their collages and then the researchers will conduct a semi-structured interview that will consist of the following questions:
2. When did you start using [Facebook]?
3. What do you like about [Facebook]?
4. Let's talk about friends for a second, how many friends do you have on [Facebook] network?
5. Do you know them all?
6. How do you decide whether or not to approve friends?
7. Do you ever add strangers? What do you look for in people's profiles that determine whether you add them (race, gender, age, level of attractiveness?)
8. How do you feel about people who use fake pictures or pseudonyms on [Facebook]?
9. Do you use a fake pictures or pseudonyms?
10. Do you have friends who do that?
11. Why do they use fake pictures or pseudonyms?
12. Would you friend them?
13. Do you have privacy concerns with [Facebook]?
14. You leave to the US in a few months, how do you imagine your views about privacy will change?
15. Now that you are in the US how your views have changed?
16. Thinking back to your time in the US/Canada, how did you imagine your views about privacy will change, and how did they changed?
17. How have [Facebook] in general changed you and your lifestyle? (Friends, time on computer, etc.)
18. Overall, do you like [Facebook]?
19. Do you feel like it has enhanced your life or hindered it? How so?
20. If you feel the latter, why do you still go on [Facebook]?
21. How do you like to express yourself on [Facebook]?
22. What factors do you think of when you are constructing your profile?
23. What factors do you think of when you are constructing your profile picture?
24. Who do you think as your audience? (Who's your audience?)

25. Who do you want to be your audience? (who's your imagined audience?)
26. After completing your collage:
27. How do you imagine it changing after coming to the US?
28. How do you imagine it changing before coming to the US?
29. How do you imagine it changing after you are back in Saudi Arabia?
30. What would be different if you were still in the US?
31. Who/what influences the way you use [Facebook]?
32. How do you imagine it changing after coming to the US?
33. How do you imagine it changing before coming to the US?
34. How do you imagine it changing after you are back in Saudi Arabia?
35. How does your family feel about you being on [Facebook]?
36. How does your father feel about being on [Facebook]?
37. How does your mother feel about being on [Facebook]?
38. How does your partner feel about being on [Facebook]?
39. How does your brother feel about being on [Facebook]?
40. How does your sister feel about being on [Facebook]?
41. Was there a time when you regretted a public post? What did you do this case?
42. Was there a time when you made a private post public? Was this by mistake or purpose?
43. What would you like to include in the collection of images provided to you?
44. What would you like to remove from the collection of images provided to you?
45. What are images you didn't use and you don't imagine using at all in you collage?
46. How did this activity make you feel?
47. A lot of Saudi students are receiving their education in the US and are planning to come back,
how do you imagine this group using social media for development in Saudi Arabia?
48. Thank you for participating in this activity

Appendix G: Pilot Studies

PILOT STUDY #1: SAUDI STUDENTS IN SEATTLE, USA

Pilot study #1 was done for a class project in collaboration with a classmate, and became the primary motivation for my dissertation project. In this study, we worked with six Saudi students living in the Seattle area (F=2, M=4). Participants were recruited from the Kaplan English institute, the mosque close to the University of Washington (UW) campus, and the Saudi Students Club (SSC) in Seattle. Participants were asked to create a *collage* that reflects what they consider private and what they consider public on Facebook using a preset collection of images, words and phrases. The collage sessions were conducted in groups of two, except for two sessions where participants worked individually. To create a comfortable environment, separate sessions were held for each gender.

The sessions were conducted in a large conference room in Roosevelt Commons Building (RCB). Each participant was provided with a preset collection of 101 images, 34 logos and icons, and 97 words and phrases. The materials were selected carefully to include (a) the culture and landmarks of Saudi Arabia as well as of Seattle and the UW and (b) representations of women as well as men. In addition, we provided large poster paper, color markers, scissors, glue sticks, and cellulose tape.

In each session, we started with a brief introduction of ourselves and the purpose of the study. Next, participants were prompted to create collages to describe what information they maintain private (post in a private mode) and what information they would post to their public profile on Facebook (the one that everyone could view). Participants were encouraged to be free to express whatever they wanted, however they wanted. For example, we told participants: “You don’t have to use the whole image. If you like only part of it, you can cut it any way you like. Also, feel free

to use pens to draw or write anything.” The activity continued until the participant said he/she were finished. Next, each participant was asked to present their collage to the group and researchers (*Figur*), to provide clarity and insight about image choices and meaning. Each presentation was video recorded with oral consent. Finally, we asked participants to show us the images that they did not want to share at all. In this study, we compensated our participants with a \$5 Starbucks gift card.



Figure 1: Examples of the collages students produced in pilot study #1. In the first one, the male-identified participant decided to present how he manages his information sharing by dividing his audience into groups: family, best friends, public. In the second collage, to the right, the female-identified participant indicates that there is nothing private about Facebook, therefore, she considers everything she shares public.

We walked into this study with an assumption of gender inequality - inherited from my experience living in Saudi and being an active participant in the Saudi lifestyle - among Saudi youth and its influence on their use of Facebook. The results confirmed this assumption with several compelling examples as well as uncovered new insights. In the following sections, I present selected themes and examples from the study that illustrate some of the issues around privacy on Facebook. I will refer to each participant in terms of his/her self-identified gender (F for women and M for men) followed by the participant number.

Why Do People Use Facebook? During the presentation, participants articulated their motivations for using Facebook. In general, all participants indicated that they use Facebook mainly to stay connected with family and friends. For example, M1 used the phrase “staying in touch” in his collage and said: *“I started Facebook when I left Saudi to stay in touch with friends... When I was studying in Australia [a few years ago], everyone was asking me about my Facebook account.”* Another reason for using Facebook was to share business ideas and find jobs, as illustrated by M2. He used the word “Money” in his private profile and said: *“[it: the word ‘money’] is for money generating ideas. So, if I had a business idea I like to share it on Facebook with my friends and see what they think of it²⁹.”* In addition, some participants publicly shared their LinkedIn account on Facebook.

On the other hand, a few themes presented in the collage assemblage, raised tensions and conflicting behaviors between the participants. I present and discuss one of these themes with selected interview excerpts.

Women driving. An interesting boundary theme that emerged was women driving. In Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive by law, therefore, the topic is often considered as controversial or “a big issue” as one of our participants put it. Two images reflecting this topic were included in the preset image collection (see *Figure*).

²⁹ Running a business on SNS for Saudis (especially women) is a very popular theme for many reasons. One important reason has to do with the constraint on women driving that makes working from home a more convenient alternative. In an article in the NYT the reporter asks a Saudi woman regarding her job: “Haya al-Fahad, 27, described how she quit her first job after university because one-third of her pay went to the driver she used to get to and from work. She now works from home, making bracelets she sells on Instagram. That gives her more time to manage her three Facebook pages, three Instagram accounts and two Twitter feeds, where she likes to pick fights with people whose political and religious views she dislikes.” (Hubbard, 2015)



Figure 2: Images of Saudi Women Driving Provided to The Participants.

Participants were divided into two conflicting groups whether to share these photos or not. One group had a positive reaction to the images and expressed support by using these images in their collages. For example, F1 said: “[I would share] the women driving photo, probably of myself or my relatives”. Similarly, M3 elaborated: “The picture of a women driving reminds me of my sister. You know driving in Saudi for women is a big issue so this picture is private for my sister.”

The other group of participants had a negative reaction to the images by explicitly stating their dislike for including in the preset image collection. For example, M1 said: “I am not in support for women driving. That’s why I didn’t choose these images in my collage.” F2 was also reluctant to share such images: “Personally, I would like to drive, I am not against it. However, I think it’s better to do it in the legal way not to protest.” By protesting the participant was referring to the Women2Drive Movement.

This study also revealed a complex online privacy management behavior, mainly enacted by controlling access. We identified four types of information access levels:

- Close friends > Public (friends) > Family: Close friends have the most prestigious access level. Friends in general have access to public information. Family has the least access to the user’s personal information.

- Family and close friends > Public (friends): Both family and close friends have access to the user's private information. Friends in general have access to public information.
- Public Only (Friends): Friends in general have access to public information. There is no private information on Facebook.
- Private Only (Friends): Friends in general have access to private information. There is no public information on Facebook.

The first cohort of participants seemed to be most afraid of being judged by their family members more than anyone else. For example, drinking alcohol is prohibited in Islam and is a big taboo in Saudi, while the negative association in the US is less widespread. Therefore, some participants -who either drink alcohol or are do not mind being around friends who do - felt it was important to hide such images from family back home but it was fine to share them with friends.

In short, these were some of the major themes that emerged from the first pilot study that was conducted with Saudi students living in Seattle. The results of this early (pilot) study influenced the design of the follow up study that was conducted in Saudi, and the development of the study questionnaire. I elaborate on this in the lessons learned section.

PILOT STUDY #2: FIELDWORK IN SAUDI ARABIA

Motivated by the results of the first study, I applied for a Human Subject approval to continue this research. In August 2014, after receiving the IRB approval, I traveled to Saudi to conduct a second pilot study. While in Saudi, I recruited Saudi students through personal connections who either just returned from the US or who are planning to study in the US in the near future. My initial objective was to gain additional insight in this area and to compare the results of both studies.

Informed by my experience in the first pilot study, I added an additional tool to my data gathering technique and that is a background questionnaire. It included questions regarding technology use and personal information. In addition, I constructed a protocol that contained a few

semi-structured interview questions. As a result, my field work experience in Saudi was very valuable for three reasons: 1) it allowed me to test the questionnaire instrument; 2) it prepared me for the complexity of the field, and 3) it helped me develop strategies and contacts for recruiting additional participants for my main study.

I successfully conducted 6 full sessions with 6 female participants who were recent graduates of a university either in the USA or Canada, who recently returned to Saudi (in the past year or two) to pursue a career. The interviews were conducted at their workplace due to the difficulty of finding a place for collaboration that was not a café. The fact that the interviews were more interactive and in the same time recorded limited the places where I could have met with my participants. The sessions were successfully completed with consent forms, completed questionnaires, collages and video recordings (see *Figure*).



Figure 3: Example images from the design session in pilot study #2. To the left, a collage constructed by a participant who chose to organize her images based on topics she would share in public. To the right, collage construction in progress by a participant.

Lessons Learned

From the pilot studies, I learned a great deal about my participants, the method I am using, and the challenges and opportunities of the field work, which had an impact on my study design.

I present four important lessons that impacted the study design and three themes that emerged from the initial data analysis:

Images and words choice. Participants asked me to add more images to the preset image collection, such as images of physical activities, traveling and volunteering. This was particularly common with the students in the second pilot study (who returned from the US/Canada), indicating that these are new habits and activities they learned during their time abroad and liked to share them on social media.

“The Collage” as a space for freedom of expression. During and after most of the interviews, participants shared with me their positive experience creating the collages and how it allowed them a space to freely express their opinion. In addition, a few participants asked if they had to use the entire image or parts of it to express their thoughts. This was an important observation because it revealed their interest in taking this activity further than what I planned for and their willingness to show their creative side.

Male participants. I experienced difficulty in conducting the design activity with male participants in Saudi Arabia, due to gender segregation, which affected my ability to find a neutral collaboration location. This made me realize early on that interviewing men in Saudi might be a very hard, if not impossible, task. However, I was determined to not make this study about women only, as I was keen on interviewing and reflecting the experience of both genders. During my proposal time, I thought a solution would be to train a male interviewer who can facilitate the sessions with my male participants in Saudi Arabia. In the method section I will further discuss how I managed to interview men during my field work in Saudi and how I overcame that hurdle.

Themes from the initial results:

Maintaining old ties and managing new ties. One of the first things I learned from the pilot work was that Saudi students used Facebook mainly to stay connected with family and friends back home and to maintain the new friendships they made during their time in the US. For this reason, I included questions in the questionnaire on communication with family and friends in Saudi Arabia and in the US (see Appendix D: Background Questionnaire).

Gender differences in privacy perceptions. Another important finding was regarding the way women perceived their privacy online. The female participants showed strong concerns regarding their privacy on Facebook by stating different type and reasons for their worries. For example, a participant commented that since she opened a Facebook account she considered everything she shared public information, which affected her mental model of the types of information she shared (e.g., she never posted her personal pictures or information). Another participant stated: “privacy online is an illusion and everyone should know that by now.” One reason for her conception is that she felt that there were no guarantees that Facebook will not change their privacy settings suddenly, which will consequently expose users’ private information.

Privacy concern with SNS. In the second pilot study, I added three questions to measure the baseline privacy and security concerns on Facebook. Responses options ranged from 1 *strongly agree* to 5 *strongly disagree* where 3 indicated a neutral state. The questions were:

- I worry about my privacy when I use Facebook
- I worry about my security when I use Facebook
- I think my friends should be careful when using Facebook to communicate or exchange information with me

The majority of students indicated that they do worry about their privacy and security on Facebook. However, in our conversations participants indicated that this was much less of a concern before they studied in the US/Canada and got exposed to different privacy invasion

scenarios. This was a significant realization that stresses the impact of the transnational experience. Therefore, to address this observation I designed all my instrument questions to gauge the level of privacy concern before, during, and after studying in the US/Canada.

After testing my proposed study procedure twice and making some modifications, I reviewed it with my advisor for additional feedback. This procedure was then used in the main study, which I will discuss in detail in the following section.

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