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# The Impact of Community Service in College on Volunteerism in Saudi Arabia: An Interpretive Case Study

Mahmoud M. Alaish

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The Impact of Community Service in College on Volunteerism in Saudi Arabia:

An Interpretive Case Study

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

By

Mahmoud M. Alaish

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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UNIVERSITY OF ST THOMAS

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the most important people in my life: my family. First and foremost, my late father, Mohammed Zain Alaish, who put my siblings and me on the right path of education. He was our role model as he was the first electrical engineer to earn a bachelor's degree in Saudi Arabia. Secondly, I would like to dedicate this success to my mother, Raefah Hashem, who suffered a great deal because I left Jeddah when she was almost seventy years old, to earn this degree, and with her prayers I am who I am today. Third, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my four beautiful children, Rayan, Anas, Rahaf, and Yousef. Without their support and understanding I would not have been able to achieve this success. Finally, I dedicate this success to my lovely wife, Sahar Awliya. Without her determination, full support, love, and compassion, I would never have been able to pass this important stage in my life. Sahar believed in my abilities, believed in me when no one else would have supported my dreams, helped me when times were tough and difficult, extended a gracious and courteous hand, picked me up and kept pushing forward to achieve something worthwhile in life like graduating with my doctorate degree, getting me to this point in life where I am able to achieve my dreams and goals. I am grateful for all of you because you have guided me on this journey of becoming the man I am today. Thank you all for helping me throughout life and my dissertation.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of college students' volunteerism and the lasting effect their community service experiences had on post-graduate attitudes toward volunteerism. The research employed an interpretive case study approach of undergraduate female college students' participatory experiences during their service learning programs. The study participants were students and graduates from two private nonprofit schools in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The study included three participant groups: female college students and graduates, college staff members, and the students' family members and close friends. Data was collected through semi-structured, open-ended face-to-face, and Skype interviews.

Post-interview data analysis identified emergent themes regarding the students' past and current experiences with volunteerism, as well as their attitudes toward future volunteerism. Major themes that emerged from this study were: There is a major transformation among young women in Saudi schools and colleges, and relationship is imperative in Saudi culture for gaining research participants' trust.



## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Chapter1.....   | 1  |
| Background.....   | 1  |
| Personal Interest.....  | 1  |
| Problem.....  | 2  |
| Problem statement. ....   | 5  |
| Purpose.....  | 5  |
| Research Question.....  | 5  |
| Significance.....   | 6  |
| Relevance to OD.....  | 7  |
| Definition of Key Terms.....                                    | 8  |
| Chapter 2.....  | 10 |
| Literature Review.....  | 10 |
| History of Volunteerism.....                                    | 10 |
| Volunteerism in the U.S.....                                    | 11 |
| Volunteerism in the Arab World.....                             | 13 |
| Volunteerism in Saudi Arabia.....                               | 13 |
| Chapter 3.....  | 18 |
| Methodology.....  | 18 |
| Research Design.....  | 18 |
| Sites Selection.....  | 18 |
| Data Collection.....  | 21 |
| Changes in Methodology.....                                     | 23 |
| Changes in Criteria for the Participants.....                   | 24 |
| Changes in the Data Collection Sequence.....                    | 24 |
| Changes in Interview Questions.....                             | 25 |
| Challenges during the Data Collection Process.....              | 26 |
| Limited Knowledge about Volunteering Field in Saudi Arabia..... | 27 |
| IRB Approval for U1 and U2.....                                 | 28 |
| Interruptions of Data Collection Due to Religious Holidays..... | 29 |
| Meeting Participants in Open Public Places.....                 | 30 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Researcher’s Bias.....  | 32  |
| Ethical Issues.....   | 33  |
| Confidentiality.....  | 34  |
| Chapter 4.....  | 35  |
| Findings.....   | 35  |
| Chapter Organization.....   | 36  |
| U1 University.....  | 38  |
| History, Campus Location, and Program Details of U1.....                    | 39  |
| U1 Interview Process .....  | 41  |
| U1 Participants.....  | 41  |
| U2 University .....   | 54  |
| How I Learned about U2’s Community Service.....                             | 55  |
| U2 History, Campus Location, and Program Details .....                      | 59  |
| The Community Service Program at U2.....                                    | 59  |
| Value Point Calculations.....   | 60  |
| The Ambassador Program.....   | 61  |
| U2 Interview Process .....  | 64  |
| U2 Participants.....  | 64  |
| Themes and Issues .....   | 72  |
| Chapter 5.....  | 128 |
| Discussion.....   | 128 |
| Reflection on the Process.....  | 128 |
| Major Similarities and Differences between U1 and U2 Data.....              | 130 |
| Overview of Major Themes.....   | 134 |
| Implications for OD Practice .....  | 158 |
| Promoting Service Programs in Saudi Schools and Universities.....           | 158 |
| The Need for Cooperation between the Nonprofit Sector and Universities..... | 160 |
| Preparing Saudi Society for the Already-Started Change.....                 | 161 |
| Implementing Better Practices for Better Service Learning Programs.....     | 162 |
| Limitations.....  | 162 |
| Suggestions for Future Research.....  | 164 |
| Personal Reflections.....   | 165 |

Conclusion.....166  
References.....167

**List of Tables**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 1. U1 Participants' Profiles..... | 41  |
| Table 2. U2 Participants' Profiles..... | 64  |
| Table 3. Major Points in U1 and U2..... | 130 |

## **Chapter 1**

### **Background**

Saudi Arabia is located geographically in the southwestern part of Asia; it is about one-third the size of the United States with a population of about 27 million people (Matic & AlFaisal, 2012). I am a Saudi Arabian national born and raised in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. I earned my undergraduate degree in engineering from the University of Miami, Florida in 1981. I returned to Saudi Arabia and worked for twenty-five years in both the government and the for-profit sectors. Before returning to the United States in 2006, to earn my Master's in nonprofit management and my Ed.D. in organizational development, my knowledge in the nonprofit sector was quite limited—I had not actually worked in the field. As soon as I finished my Master's in 2010, I became alert to nonprofit work both in the U.S and in Saudi Arabia. I started to connect with key stakeholders in Saudi Arabia to gain information about nonprofit work. I found very little academic and non-academic literature (newspapers and some government reports) to support this chapter, which resulted in basing most of my information on my own experiences, knowledge, and observations.

### **Personal Interest**

My 2010 Master's capstone data revealed that nonprofits often lack long-term volunteers. My passion for volunteerism increased while I learned about the impact of service learning on K-12 students in the United States. The instructor—the CEO of the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), a leading K-12 service-learning organization in St. Paul, MN—sparked my interests in volunteerism and service learning;

I eventually attended several relevant seminars and conferences. As my learning journey continued, I related course concepts to the Saudi context.

My 2010 Master's capstone project investigated the extent to which mandating K-12 service learning could both institutionalize the practice of volunteerism and inspire the young Saudi generation to commit to long-term volunteerism. Data was collected through a positivistic instrument (a questionnaire). Data analysis revealed the need for additional in-depth interpretive data from constituencies that have actually engaged in community service. In addition, my perception of the lack of institutionalized and education-based volunteerism added to my desire to research volunteerism during my doctoral studies in organizational development.

### **Problem**

Until recently, Saudi Arabia was not known in the field of institutional and formal volunteering. There are a very small number of organized long-term institutionalized volunteering groups in Saudi Arabia, perhaps because the government has, historically, been the only entity in charge of supporting the needy. In Saudi Arabia "the old axiom is reversed; it has been more common to 'give people the fish' rather than 'teach them how to fish'" (Matic & AlFaisal, 2012, p. 13). The Saudi government has used its wealth to support needed social activities and to support those who are in need. While these government efforts produce real and needed resources, it has also sent the message that citizens are not required to volunteer. This heavy reliance on the government caused disengagement among younger generations. The Saudi government also appears concerned about youth disengagement (Thurman, 1998), finding that the lack of

mandatory national service programs are linked to teens' and young-adults' lack of a sense of national duty. Thurman (1998) argued, "in the absence of a compulsory national program, today's teens and young-adults are more disconnected from national duty, the political process, and each other" (p. 2).

**Saudi people's perceptions of volunteerism.** As a native Saudi, before I become involved in the nonprofit field in 2010 I paid little attention to volunteerism. I actually thought that contributing money to poor people and charities was a form of volunteerism. It is my belief that many citizens in my age range (ages fifty-sixty) had similar understanding of volunteerism. From my experience, this generation was rarely involved or even encouraged to volunteer. The only volunteering that I recall among this generation was the volunteering to train with the Saudi army to protect Saudi Arabia from a possible invasion by the Iraqi forces in the early nineties.

The only organized volunteering that I was aware of since the last decade of the twentieth century was the volunteering that took place in k-12 schools. Students helped plant trees in the *Tree Week* and cleaned cities, beaches, and streets during the *Cleanness Week*. As for the young-adult age range (ages seventeen to twenty-five) I noticed that only small number of organized episodic volunteering existed (an example is the flood relief efforts in Jeddah in 2009).

**Jeddah flood relief efforts.** In November 2009, one of the worst destructive floods in Saudi history hit Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The official number of deaths was one hundred and sixteen people (Al-Saggaf, 2012). More than four thousand cars were wrecked, and more than twelve hundred families became homeless (Al-Saggaf, 2012).

Thousands of the young-adult volunteers engaged in relief efforts. Were it not for the help of these young-adults, flood results would have been far more devastating.

**Volunteerism in action.** The 2009 Jeddah floods resulted in more Saudis becoming involved in helping natural disaster victims. The incident provided an excellent opportunity for government officials and the media to begin emphasizing the demand for people to assist needy citizens. Because of the flood, the governor of Asir, in southern Saudi Arabia, hosted a three-day international forum on volunteerism in Abha, Asir. Forty experts from sixteen countries around the globe shared their volunteerism experiences and discussed issues related to volunteerism. They discussed the positive impact those issues could have on the future of volunteerism and community service in Saudi Arabia. One result was a new emphasis on providing charitable activities in a better-organized manner, with an ultimate aim of developing a culture of volunteerism within Saudi Arabia (Al-Ghamdi, 2009).

Before the 2009 flood, the topic of volunteerism was rarely mentioned in general conversation in Saudi Arabia, especially among younger generations. Because the young-adult generation's volunteering was not recognized and because of the lack of organized volunteerism among this population, I perceived that young-adult Saudi generations did not like or want to volunteer. In fact, in 2010, as I was finishing a course on volunteerism and civic engagement, I expressed my perception and stated in one of my papers that, "the young-adult Saudi generation does not want or know how to volunteer."

Despite the existence of some small, self-organized volunteer groups, those groups were mainly formed on episodic bases (when crises happened) rather than as



organized entities. Thanks to these young people's efforts, this stereotypical image has changed among Saudi people (including me), among government officials, the media, and nonprofit organizations. During this incident, several major nonprofits gathered in the rescue efforts and successfully utilized the help of those youngsters.

**Volunteerism and the nonprofit organizations' role.** Matic and AlFaisal (2012) indicated that the first formal Saudi nonprofit was founded fifty years ago, but the majority of the nonprofit organizations have been active only in the last decade. Until recently, nonprofit agencies played a minor role in serving poor and needy communities. Consequently, nonprofit organizations did not recruit volunteers. Low-paid non-Saudi expatriates perform most of the work in those nonprofits.

**Problem statement.** Volunteerism among the Saudi population is low; there are few structured institutionalized groups of volunteers in my hometown Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of the community service programs of two private nonprofit universities in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on graduates' volunteerism beyond college.

### **Research Question**

The study's primary research question is "how does community service during college impact Saudi college graduates' volunteerism?"

## Significance

Volunteering is seen as a substantial activity in most developed countries and is growing in importance in many developing countries (Kakoli and Ziemek, 2001). Volunteers have played a very important role in providing a range of valuable services to the Community (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, 18-19), in the development of non-profit organizations, and in the work they do to help society. (The Forbes Funds, 2002, 4, as cited in Afif, 2010, p. 6)

“Nonprofit organizations are struggling to fulfill their missions with a shrinking pool of long-term daytime volunteers” (Nunn, 2000, p. 119). Seven hundred registered nonprofit organizations (NPOs) currently exist in Saudi Arabia (Matic & AlFaisal, 2012). According to the Saudi Ministry of Social Affairs (2009), this number was almost five hundred in 2005. It is my perception that this increase in the number of nonprofits must be accompanied by an increase in the number of volunteers. This is especially true because I believe, like in the U.S., “volunteering [in Saudi should be] one of the most powerful mechanisms through which individuals build communities” (Nunn, 2000, p. 116).

There is very little academic literature about the topic of volunteerism in Saudi Arabia. It is my desire to bridge the gap in the literature by conducting a study that will be the first of its kind in Saudi Arabia. Research recommendations could be used as a reference for future research on volunteerism. I will present this research to Saudi officials, nonprofits, and educational institutions in a quest to apply its findings and recommendations to those organizations.

I am hoping that this research could advance the scarce observed knowledge that exists on women’s volunteering in Saudi colleges. I hope that the data from this study can help the Saudi government and nonprofit institutions understand the impact of

community service programs in college on volunteerism. Since Arab region cultures are similar, the findings from this study could also help other Arab voluntary institutions.

I also hope that the results of this research will encourage Saudi policy makers to view volunteerism differently. In the long term, I hope to contribute to a major nationwide program that would become a starting point for a new era of volunteerism and civic engagement in the country.

According to what I learned in the volunteerism courses and because of my interacting with nonprofit organizations in the U.S (and lately in Saudi Arabia), it is becoming clearer to me that volunteers are the backbone of most nonprofit organizations. I believe it is almost impossible to run a successful nonprofit work without involving volunteers. Since there is now a great demand on nonprofits to partner with the government and the for-profit sectors to serve the poor and the needy in Saudi Arabia, it is essential to find ways to build the capacity of volunteerism.

**Relevance to OD.** Understanding more about impacts on volunteerism in Saudi Arabia due to community service work in colleges might help develop knowledge about the field of volunteerism in the country, which would be a change effort; or in other words organization development for the voluntary sector in Saudi Arabia. OD is about organizational change – knowledge of volunteerism in SA can help the development of non-profit organizations.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

For this study, six terms warrant clarification and definition: volunteerism, long-term volunteerism, institutionalized volunteerism, episodic volunteerism, service learning, young-adult Saudis, and community services.

**Volunteerism.** Volunteerism is defined as “a specific type of sustained, planned, prosocial behavior that benefits strangers and occurs within an organizational setting” (Snyder & Omoto, 1995, as cited in Marta & Pozzi, 2008, p. 1). Volunteering is also defined as "any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization" (Wilson, 2000, as cited in Afif, 2010, p. 5). An example of volunteerism is what is happening in U.S. organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, where volunteers gather to help build homes for needy people.

**Episodic volunteerism.** Volunteerism is said to be episodic as it occurs when “individuals give time sporadically, without an on-going commitment, often in the form of self-contained and time-specific projects” (Nunn, 2000, p. 116). Episodic volunteerism occurred during the Jeddah floods relief efforts.

**Institutionalized volunteerism.** For the purpose of this study, institutionalized volunteerism is defined as practicing volunteerism through a well-structured organizations specialized in providing data of potential volunteers in different areas of service. A good example is the Hands-on Twin cities volunteering nonprofit organization. This organization specializes in matching volunteering opportunities with volunteers.

**Long-term volunteerism.** Different literatures define long-term volunteerism differently. AmeriCorps’ long-term volunteerism ranges from one month to six months.

Slaughter and Home (2004) define a long-term volunteer as “a person who has volunteered at the same event or with the same organization for at least five consecutive years” (p. 2). For the purpose of this research, long-term volunteerism is related to volunteers’ ability to volunteer for three years or more.

**Service-learning.** Several definitions of service learning were found. I am defining service-learning as Billing (2000) defined it, “a teaching strategy that explicitly links community service experiences to classroom instruction” (p. 660). A good example is when students learn how to analyze the results of a river water sample in a biology class and then present findings of the analysis to the City.

**Young adults.** I am defining young adults as those between ages seventeen and twenty-five.

**Community service.** Community service is defined as a volunteer action taken to meet the needs of others and better the community as a whole (Niemi, Hepburn, & Chapman, 2000). It can be in any field where needy people require assistance.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Scant academic literature exists on volunteerism and community service in Saudi Arabia. Most of the literature on Saudi volunteerism was available in newspaper articles and government institutions' websites. I found limited literature on Arab world volunteerism. The scholarly literature on volunteerism and community service in the United States is vast. After being involved in the nonprofit field in both the U.S and Saudi Arabia, I realized that it is possible to connect the volunteerism culture in Arabic countries and the U.S to Saudi volunteering culture. Hence, this literature review synthesizes the limited literature from Saudi Arabia with recent scholarship from the Arab world and the United States context. Key areas in the literature review are history of volunteerism, volunteerism in the U.S., volunteerism in the Arab world, religion and volunteerism, and volunteerism in Saudi Arabia.

#### **History of Volunteerism**

“Civil society organizations were known 15 centuries ago in Arabia. Examples are "Souk Okaz" and "Dar Al Nadwa" established before Islam and waqf (endowments) after the rise of Islam” (Al-Salloum, 2006, as cited in Afif, 2010, p. 2). Salmon (1992) noted that volunteerism has existed throughout human history (as cited in Awad, 2010). Structured volunteerism was organized formally only upon the founding of religious societies and the nonprofit sector. Awad added,

Anderson (1973) report[ed] that voluntary associations arose during the Neolithic period (7000 or 8000 B.C.E) with the development of individual villages that were not integrated into larger, more complex political and economic systems.

Scott (1998, p.40) indicat[ed] that ‘voluntary activity within and between family and clan groups likely has been characteristic of human history since the earliest times, voluntary associations appear to have been around for only about 10,000 years. (as cited in Awad, 2010, p. 4)

### **Volunteerism in the U.S**

The spirit of volunteerism was Alexis de Tocqueville’s central interest in his nineteenth century study of America life (Awad, 2010). President John F. Kennedy’s twentieth-century call for service stands out as one of the most famous: “My fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you— ask what you can do for your country” (as cited in Dionne, 2003, p. 198). According to Putnam, non-volunteers in 1995 contributed half or even one-third times as much of their household income to charities as did people who volunteered (as cited in Nunn, 2000). Upon his inauguration, President Barak Obama’s call on Americans to volunteer through ‘United We Serve’ has greatly increased school-based service programs in America (Arfstrom, 2009).

Because federal funding and loan programs for education are tied to volunteer service, many schools now require their students’ participation in these types of programs in order to receive class credit (Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999). Finally, there is a new trend of ‘episodic’ volunteerism in which “a growing number of volunteers make short-term commitments to a variety of projects or agencies” (Nunn, 2000, p. 118).

**The role of volunteerism in a society.** Yaha (1985) and Harb (2003) wrote,

Volunteerism, an important concept in the social and economic affairs of most societies, has inspired thousands of scholars to analyze it and write about it. Volunteerism reflects an important value held by many persons in societies throughout the world and is central to the social development of those societies. (as cited in Awad, 2010, p. 13-14)

According to Nunn (2000), building community and social capital is highly dependent on serving and reaching out to help others. Nunn noted that service is the base for community commons, where people can join together into the “tapestry of a community” (Nunn, 2000, p. 116).

**Benefits of volunteerism.** Scholars such as Yaha (1985) and Harb (2003) noted that volunteerism is essential to all societies, mainly in areas related to social empowerment and community organizing (as cited in Awad, 2010). Volunteering has developed greater political efficacy and citizenship especially among youth (Nunn, 2000). Moreover, individuals who volunteer have traditionally been more likely to be more politically engaged in community issues (Nunn, 2000). To encourage youth to volunteer Dionne (2003) stated that serving is particularly important since the young-adult population has the “fastest-rising group of volunteers” (p. 167). Some scholars call the young-adult population the greatest “untapped resource” in the U.S (Thurman, 1998, p. 2).

**Nonprofit organizations and volunteers.** According to Putnam (1995), the U.S.A. has encountered a crisis period with respect to citizens’ participation in civil society and policies. Lynn (2003) stated that the current economic situation requires higher involvement of volunteers with nonprofits (as cited in Awad, 2010). Nunn (2000) said, that without the millions of volunteers, nonprofit organizations would not be able to feed the hungry, support research for new discoveries, enhance social change advocacy, and protect neighborhoods. The author expressed a concern that the shrinkage of “long-term daytime volunteers” (2000, p. 119) would affect the work of nonprofit



organizations. Tmkovick, Lester, Flunker, and Wells (2008) also warned that attracting and retaining volunteers to help nonprofits is one of the biggest challenges facing the sector. These authors attested that many colleges and universities mandate student' participation in service-learning programs as a means of refining students' civic engagement skills.

### **Volunteerism in the Arab World**

Queen Rania Alabullah of Jordan said, "Civic engagement is rooted in Arab culture and now is the time to revive it again and fuse fresh energy into it" (Alabdullah, 2010, p. 1). Despite the fact that Arab Middle East philanthropic cultures have rich roots, it is not well-documented when compared to the well-established research on philanthropy in the West (Awad, 2010). Yavas and Habib (1986) mentioned that opposite to the Western trend, the link between academia and practice in the Middle East is very weak.

### **Volunteerism in Saudi Arabia**

According to Saudi Ministry of Economics and Planning statistics, nearly three million Saudi citizens (in a population of about 25 million) live beneath the poverty level and yet are out of reach by the government. To help close the gap, the Saudi government has asked corporate and nonprofit sectors to increase their involvement in providing services for the needy in Saudi Arabia (The Eighth Saudi Strategic Development Plan, 2006). Afif (2010) noted that awareness programs for the Saudi citizens on voluntary work are weak. She added that the role of the mass media is very minimal in giving enough focus on voluntary work (Afif, 2010).

Very few studies about volunteerism have been undertaken on a scholarly level in Saudi Arabia. The subject of volunteerism has been broached publicly only on government institutions' websites and in a few newspaper articles. There are seven hundred nonprofit organizations in the country (Matic & Al-Faisal, 2012). Al-Salloum, (2006) stated that in comparison to the West, Saudi formal volunteering organizations were rather new concepts (as cited in Afif, 2010). According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (1999), "Civil society organizations in the sense of the Western world organizations were only established in 1962 (as cited in Afif, p. 3)."

**Saudi women and volunteering.** Saudi women were pioneers in the establishment of the first three philanthropic societies in the nation in 1962 (Afif, 2010). According to Afif (2010), Saudi women were motivated to volunteer because they felt a sense of national feeling and responsibility. The women aimed to improve Saudi women's conditions. Ali Rida (2003) stated that volunteers focus on serving Saudi families in need of housing, child care, medical care, and education (as cited in Afif, 2010).

***Problems facing women volunteers.*** Saudi regulations prohibit Saudi women from driving. Transportation prevented 78% of Saudi women volunteers to pursue their passion towards volunteering. 62% could not volunteer because they needed to stay home with their children. 59% said their families discouraged them and prevented them from volunteering (Afif, 2010).

**King Abdullah's reforms and volunteerism initiatives.** In the last eight years, the standards of living in Saudi Arabia have improved dramatically with comprehensive

development and reform programs. When he ascended the throne in 2005, King Abdullah Bin AbdulAziz (known among Saudis as the founder of modern Saudi Arabia) issued new development reforms. These reforms restructured the nonprofit sector and increased demands for more corporate-sector involvement. The reforms have also encouraged more Saudi citizens to volunteer and to do community service (King Abdullah's reforms, 2006).

In its Eighth Strategic Development Plan (2005-2009), the Saudi Ministry of Economy and Planning addressed voluntary and charitable activities in the fields of social work, healthcare, and education. Moreover, the strategy proposed a set of programs, which included support for the "National Charity Fund" by \$80 million per year for five years (The Eighth Saudi Strategic Development Plan, 2006). At the same time, the Ministry of Education has gone through an important phase in its development because of the reforms introduced by King Abdullah. In its 2006 strategic plan, the ministry "allocated nine billion (SR) Saudi Riyals [\$2.4 billion] for a new general education development project. SR4.2 billion [\$1.25 billion] was allocated to improving the educational environment and SR3.58 billion [\$1 billion] for extra-curricular activities" (King Abdullah's reforms, 2006, p. 5).

In his speech in the first International Forum on Volunteerism in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Social Affairs Minister (the government agency in charge of assisting poor population in Saudi Arabia) Yousuf Al-Othaimen said that the event should contribute to promoting a culture of volunteerism and boosting charitable activities. He urged businesses and NGO's to support the voluntary work (Al-Ghamdi, 2009). Aldakhil

(2008), a well-known journalist, said: “it is about time to establish a national service organization to encourage volunteerism in Saudi Arabia” (p. 3). He suggested that the first task would be to educate students and teachers about the seriousness of the swine flu pandemic and how to deal with it.

Finally, an agency (Arab Volunteering) established a website in 2006 to revive volunteerism in the Middle East. The Saudi-based organization’s executive director was interviewed after the Jeddah incident and expressed hopefulness that the government would ease its bureaucratic attitude towards supporting his organization and other organizations. He mentioned that there was a new memorandum about volunteerism being prepared by the Shura Council (the Saudi government advisory council). The council was expected to pass a bill to the governing Chamber of Ministries in favor of civic engagement in Saudi Arabia (Arab Volunteering, 2009).

In summary, a limited literature exists on the topic of volunteerism in Saudi Arabia. I found some newspapers’ articles on the topic of Jeddah floods, and some general information on current government initiatives to foster volunteerism in the country (such as holding conferences to publicize for some volunteering initiatives). Some scholarly authors wrote about the volunteerism topic in general but nothing specific about how community service in colleges can impact volunteerism.

I also tried to find articles about community service and volunteerism in the Arab World but I was unsuccessful to find valuable information either. This is why I decided to look for U.S. scholarly articles in order to find what is out there about the topic. I found a

great amount of scholarly work but my problem was how to relate this literature to the Saudi culture.

I found a good number of scholarly sources that addressed the history of volunteerism in the U.S. Most scholars noted that structured volunteerism was formally initiated upon the founding of religious societies and the nonprofit sector. Politically, key U.S. leaders like Martin Luther King, and Presidents John F. Kennedy and Barak Obama encouraged volunteerism. They asked the American people to support community service and volunteerism in order to help the poor people thrive (Dionne, Drogosz, & Litan, 2003). Similarly, but only recently, leaders like King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and Queen Rania of Jordan supported the revival of volunteerism among their societies. The leaders asked their people to restart volunteerism that was put on hold for over a hundred years (Aalbdullah, 2010, p. 1). Finally, a new era of volunteering (episodic) aroused among the youth generation. Scholars have called on society to accept support this trend of volunteerism because it aroused as a response to the recent tough economic situations around the globe (Nunn, 2000).

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Research Design

One major goal of this study was to discern the complexity of the case of *how required community service as college students impacts their volunteerism after graduation*. Initially, this study was designed to employ a single interpretive case study methodology. Stake's model for performing case studies was the primary guide to conduct this research. The rationale was based on Stake's (1995) statement, "Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi).

#### Sites Selection

One community service program I became aware of in the early stages of this research was the program at a private nonprofit University (U1). It was my understanding that this college was the only higher education institution in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for women that required its students to complete community service hours as a degree requirement. After I started the U1 data collection process, new information emerged that another school, I will identify it as U2, included a community service component in its curriculum but with a different program structure than that of U1.

I learned that "the multicase study is a special effort to examine something having lots of cases, parts, or members" (Stake, 2006, p. vi), and that adding U2 as a *second case* was the right approach to add richness to my research. I went ahead and started the data collection process from participants from the two schools, assuming I had two cases.

After I started analyzing the findings of the two schools I noticed that the findings were similar. The similarities may have been because the participants may have come from the same circle or may be because the two intended cases had the same boundaries (i.e. the time period covered by the case study, relevant social group, organization, and geographic area.). I then realized that using the multiple case study approach was not necessarily the right fit for this research, and I decided to go back to the initial single case study approach but with adding the feedback from U2 participants as the sources for data instead of using just U1 participants' data.

**The case.** The case is: *Young women who do community service in private nonprofit colleges in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.*

**The sites.** Both U1 and U2 universities are private nonprofit universities for women in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Both schools require their graduates to fulfill certain hours of community service (one hundred hours in the case of U1 and what is called *value points* in U2).

**Participant selection criteria.** This section presents the criteria for each group of people, which gave me the data to answer the research question. Three groups of participants were targeted for this study. First, Saudi female graduates who were from Jeddah. Ages of this group ranged between 20 and 30. The intention was to interview graduates who had actually gone through the community service in the college and finished the required service hours. I chose this age range under the assumption that recent graduates would be around age twenty. Since both universities were about ten years old, I expected that their first cohort of graduates would be around age thirty. This

group included a mix of the graduates, which assured age diversity among graduates. Later in the data collection stage I decided to also include current students as well. Finally, I had a mix of participants who had good, bad, or even no experiences while conducting their community service.

The second group I targeted was staff members connected to the colleges' community service. This group included leaders (executives, or front line staff) who dealt directly with community service within the college. No age, gender (even though it is an all-female college), or nationality limits were put on this group. I interviewed key people from both universities who knew why, how, and when this program took place. I had expected some members of this group to know the mission, vision, and the values behind the community service program and I was correct. I started by interviewing the Presidents of the two colleges and asked them to connect me to other group members.

Finally, I sought the feedback of people close to the graduates (parents, relatives, friends, and close ones). The purpose was to find out how the community service program may have affected the first group, the graduates/students. I was only successful to meet two of the graduates' parents—one parent from each school. There was no age, gender, nationality limits for this group. I had expected additional participants to emerge as the study progressed but this did not happen.

**Participant selection process.** I was returning to Saudi Arabia for a summer vacation immediately before I received University of St. Thomas's IRB approval. I was careful not to look for participants until I earned the IRB approval. But because there was a key person who used to reside in the Twin Cities during the proposal writing for this



research, I conversed with her informally about how to recruit graduates from U1 when I return to Saudi. She was an alumna of U1, and had completed the required community service hours. She had promised to connect me with as many student participants as she could, and she did. I then employed a snowball method of case study participant recruitment.

Once I got the IRB approval from the University of St. Thomas, I contacted some U1 alumnae, and asked each of them to connect me with other student/graduates participants. I asked the President to connect me with student participants and other key people, such as the executive and other professional personnel in the college's community service department. I also asked the President of U1 for a letter of support, and asked her to connect me with alumnae. I also asked for my spiritual mentor's help because he had significant connections with participants. I had asked him to prepare a list of eligible U1 student alumni/students. At the proposal stage, U2 had not yet been identified as a possible source of participants, which is why I did not originally prepare any plan to collect data from U2 participants.

### **Data Collection**

I was not able to gain the IRB of U1 and U2 before I went through the same process as that of UST in the Saudi context (something I did not account for, as I thought the IRB did not exist in Saudi Universities). As a result, I was not able to start my data collection immediately upon my arrival to Saudi for the summer of 2013 as planned. Once I received final IRB approval for UST, U1, and U2, I scheduled appointments with

all the participants mentioned in the previous section. Because of the delay of the approval processes, most of my interviews were through Skype.

The primary method for data collection was via face-to-face and Skype, semi-structured, open-ended interview questions. I had planned to meet participants in sequence, i.e., start by meeting with leaders and staff who were involved in the program to become acquainted with the program, meet graduates, and then finally meet parents. I had intended to be flexible if this sequence did not work. In other words, I planned to interview any of the three categories of participants (graduates, people involved in community service, and parents) as they become available. This is exactly what happened; there was no specific order on which group to start interviewing. The reason for this was the limited time and number of participants.

Before I started the data collection phase, I had planned to do a pilot check on the interview questions I designed. I intended to ask one of the graduates to give me her feedback on the questions to see if they were easy for her to understand. This step was done and resulted in detailed, helpful feedback.

In addition to English, Arabic was used during the interviews to accommodate participants, who were not proficient in English and were more relaxed speaking in Arabic (I did not expect this to happen since I was dealing with participants from all-English-speaking universities). I had to tweak some of the original interview questions as I went through the interview process. Both original and revised interview questions are listed in appendices I and II.

I conducted several interviews to collect data until I reached data saturation. All interviews were audio-recorded while I simultaneously took notes in Arabic. Each participant was assigned a number (which was used throughout the study). In addition, other data were collected through documents (hard copies and online) review.

Over the research proposal stage, I had planned to have two sets of interview sessions. The first was to start on July 15, 2013 and the second on the last week of October 2013 (tentative dates for planning purposes). I could not commit to these dates due to some challenges and some cultural issues that faced me to find participants (listed on page 23)

Before I went into the actual findings of this study, I described in detail changes that occurred to the participant selection criteria, in the data collection sequence, and changes in interview questions. Finally, I explored some of the unexpected challenges that caused exceptional difficulties to my research process. It is my belief that the changes and the experience of overcoming the challenges have added value and richness to the outcome of this research. I then wrote key points expressed by interviewees for each university (U1 and U2) separately from which I highlighted key major and sub themes of what has been said by interviewees. Finally, to protect anonymity of the two schools, I omitted citations of literature talking about the schools.

### **Changes in Methodology**

As explained in the methodology section, the design of this research was finally changed to a single case study research to examine how the community service programs

at U1 and U2 affected future volunteerism among participants to add richness to the study.

### **Changes in Criteria for the Participants**

Adding students as participants. Another change to the design was my decision to interview students who finished at least forty community service hours in addition to graduates. The rationale for adding current students was tied to the recommendations I received from graduates of U1 University, who helped me pilot check the interview questions. Two graduates from U1 stated: “there are key students involved in community service who could add rich data to the research.” The two students recommended I interview students who at least finished forty hours of community service because these students would have had reasonable time dealing with the community service program. One of the leadership team of U2 had a similar recommendation. After finishing the interviews I discovered that the recommendation was worth the extra work and effort because of the wealth of data I gained from current students in addition, of course, to the data collected from graduates.

### **Changes in the Data Collection Sequence**

During the early stages of this research, I had planned go from top down to collect data. I was planning to first meet the Presidents of U1 and U2 to obtain their feedback and gain their support then meet other participants from the three categories (graduates, people involved in community service, and relatives of graduates) as they become available. I believe I was affected again with my bias that the best way is to go top down and use the power of leaders to ask them to mandate their followers to work with me on

this research. I was thinking this would expedite my data collection. This worked fine for me with U2 but not for U1, because meeting U1's President was difficult and I had to search for participants before I met with her in Los Angeles.

It was hard to connect first with the President of U1 and other key administrative people both due to the school year's end and because of Ramadan's tight schedule—wherein most Jeddah inhabitants were busy either worshipping or shopping for the post-Ramadan feast. These challenges led me to begin U1 participants' interviews without any specific group ordering. This worked fine for me and did not cause any change to the data collection structure.

### **Changes in Interview Questions**

During the interview with the first interviewee from U1, Sumaiah, I rephrased the first interview question to be: Tell me about the community service program at U1. After going through the interview question pilot check, two U1 participants recommended a change in one of the questions related to graduates' relatives. One of the two participants suggested eliminating one of the questions I had planned to ask. The original question was: What is your opinion about the community service program that your child went through? Her rationale for eliminating the question was that normally parents and relatives do not know details about the community service programs and the relatives' feedback would not add much to the findings. I agreed with her and omitted the question.

Other key changes I made to the interview questions were adding two probing sub questions to the graduates/students' questions. Question one read: Tell me about the community service program at the University. I added two probe questions: What is the

purpose of becoming involved in this program and what were the community service programs you have been through? The reason I added these question was to help participants speak more as some of them needed to be encouraged and helped to talk more. It was a way to motivate participants to speak more.

Another probing question I added was to Question Four. The question read: Do you feel the community service program is doing a good job in making students commit to volunteering post-graduation? If they answered no, I added: what would you change if you were the person in charge? The reason I asked this was to help the program directors get some feedback (if needed) on what changes could enhance the quality of the program to help graduates continue community service after graduation with passion. Both original and revised interview questions are listed in appendices I and II. As I interviewed more participants, I became more fluent in the interviewing process and got some sense of what was a good question and what was considered a weak one. I got this feeling after interviewing about one-fourth of the participants.

**Interview cycles.** During the research proposal stage, I planned two sets of interview sessions. The first was to start on July 15, 2013 and the second was to be held on the last week of October 2013. The obstacles and challenges for meeting these deadlines are explained in the following section.

### **Challenges during the Data Collection Process**

I received the IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval from University of St. Thomas UST on Jul 25, 2013 (according to plan). I was then in the middle of my two-month summer vacation in Saudi Arabia after a long eight months living in the United

States to finish my studies. Contrary to my expectation, it was quite a daunting experience to start collecting data. Some of the challenges and factors that affected the progress of the interview process were as follows:

**Limited knowledge about volunteering field in Saudi Arabia.** The first and most important challenge to the data collection process was my limited volunteering knowledge. I moved to the United States in 2006 with my wife and children for what I called an educational trip. My wife and I are pursuing our doctoral studies, three of my children went to college, and my last child is still in high school. Before I left Saudi, I had worked over twenty-five years in the government and the for-profit sectors. I had very limited knowledge of volunteering in Saudi Arabia. As a matter of fact, I was semi-illiterate with the non-profit sector as whole. It was not until I finished my Masters' in non-profit degree in 2010 at Hamline University in St. Paul, MN that I started to gain a feeling of how the non-profit sector was doing in Saudi.

**Cultural detachment from the Saudi culture.** In addition to my illiteracy in the nonprofit field, it was hard for me to keep up with the volunteering and the non-profit sector's news in Saudi because of my long stay abroad. Even though I had travelled at least twice a year back and forth between 2006 and 2015, I still sensed I was detached from my own culture. Every time I returned home, it took me at least two weeks to become acquainted with *my own culture*. Jet lag played a great role in my suffering. By the time I caught up on what I missed throughout the prior year, it was time for me to return to the US. This made me miss a great deal the changes that were happening in my own society! My inability to keep abreast of current events and developments in Saudi

that I was unaware of the fact that colleges required community services a manner similar to some American colleges. It was not until I accidentally came across an article in the newspaper about U1's students' involvement in community service that I learned about the topic of community service in colleges.

### **IRB Approval for U1 and U2**

One of the main time-consuming items in this research was that I had to deal with two IRB approval processes to do research in the two Saudi universities: U1's and U2's. This step was not calculated for when I first decided to conduct this research. I did not even know that gaining IRB approval was a necessary process in Saudi universities. At the early stages of the research I even questioned myself if such approvals were needed in Saudi. What I found out later was that the IRB is as important in Saudi universities as it is in the United States' universities.

I had thought that because the President of U1 University is a sister of close friend and the President of U2 was a sister of a very close family member, I would have had no problem getting the help of the schools to conduct the research even without their IRB approval. I was mistaken and later learned that the two institutions were highly professional and would not make any exemptions to the rules, especially when it came to ethical issues. The Presidents of the two institutions immediately referred me to what was called the schools' "research committees" which were administered in a very professional manner. Time was working against me, because it was the end of school year (summer vacation) and the research committee members were about to depart for their summer



vacations. This fact delayed my U1 approval process for another month and U2's for two months.

U1's IRB approval also took longer than usual because the person in charge resigned from her position during the same time frame—however, she processed my application anyway, and connected me to her successor. I was asked to fill the IRB application and was promised quick action from the committee.

### **Interruptions of Data Collection Due to Religious Holidays**

Another cultural obstacle to my research process was that the IRB approval from UST occurred at the beginning of the last ten days of Ramadan. Special rituals take place during the last ten days of Ramadan, which made it difficult for participants to commit to meetings or interviews.

*About the last ten days of Ramadan in Saudi Arabia.* The period of the last ten days of Ramadan is very special worshipping of Holy season for Muslims, especially in Saudi Arabia. In the last ten days of Ramadan, all Muslims fast during the day, and the majority worship for long periods of time during the night. Worship and prayer is more extensive because the two Holy cities of Mecca & Madinah are in Saudi Arabia. Most people prefer to visit these two Holy cities during Ramadan. I go with all my immediate family (wife and children) every year to the Holy City of Madinah, which is about 300 miles from Jeddah. When in Madinah, we worship all nights of the last ten days of the month. Most Saudis do the same, either at Mecca, Madinah, or in one of Jeddah's mosques.

On the other hand, another significant number of the Saudi populace in Jeddah tends to sleep most of the daytime, and go shopping in the evenings to buy new clothes to celebrate the big feast (Eid Al Fitr) after Ramadan. These rituals caused me to postpone my data collection for about a month. Thus, my faith and cultural traditions posed a challenge relative to starting the research during that time period.

*About the Eid Al Fitr Holiday.* ‘Eid Al Fitr’ is a principal feast in Saudi culture. Saudi families gather to celebrate this Holiday. People visit each other, go to cabins at the beach, and some travel outside the country. I found working on data collection very hard to work at that time because of the many festivals. All in all, the total un-productive time during my sixty-day vacation in Saudi, due to religious rituals, was more than a month. By the time I wanted to resume the data collection process, it was time for my family and me to return to the States to go to school.

### **Meeting Participants in Open Public Places**

Another cultural disconnect I faced was figuring out how and where to meet participants, especially graduates and students. Culturally, I was under the impression that males were not allowed to meet with strange females without the presence of a relative or a close one of the female. I struggled in the beginning of the process to find a public location to meet the participants, and felt overwhelmed. I managed to overcome this obstacle when a close friend of mine—one whom works as senior manager in a famous hotel—offered to provide a space to meet in public with my participants. I was then faced with the worry of *how to meet the female participants alone?* Three solutions came to mind:

- i. To have my wife, my daughter, or one of my nieces be present during the interviews
- ii. To have some relative or a close friend accompany the participants and attend the meeting
- iii. Do interviews in groups of two or more

In some cases, I was able to meet alone with female participants—for instance, when close friends of mine (who were parents of interviewees) agreed to invite me to their homes and meet their daughters in their presence. Even though the culture of not meeting a strange female holds true for a large share of Saudi society, I found out later that I had been too conservative and had let my own bias lead me to think that it was hard to meet strangers in public. Luckily, I eventually figured out that I was too overwhelmed by this matter and it was acceptable to meet females in public places. After the third interview with participants, I recognized that the beliefs I held were not true in 2013, and I could relax when meeting females and conducting interviews with them in public places.

**Collecting data in both English and Arabic.** In addition to English, Arabic was used during the interviews to accommodate participants who were not proficient in English or who were more relaxed speaking in Arabic. Three-fourths of the interviewees were relaxed and wanted deeply to speak English, while the remaining quarter decided they wanted to converse in Arabic. It was clear to me, though, that all participants were fluent in spoken English.

*Before I left Jeddah in September 2013.* I was not very successful in conducting interviews with U1 participants after Ramadan and Eid Al Fitr (August, 2013) because the participants and I were busy during Ramadan and during the Eid Al Fitr (feast) after Ramadan. I tried several times to connect with participants but was unsuccessful. I was able to only conduct nine interviews before I left Jeddah. The remaining interviews were postponed until I had settled back in the U.S. in late September, at which point I conducted most interviews via Skype. Before leaving Saudi, I spread the word to close family and friends that I needed their help finding participants from both U1 and U2 for my study.

*After I returned to the US in mid-September 2013.* It was frustrating to “restart-the engine” (a phrase I used for restarting the interview process). After gaining U2’s IRB approvals, I networked by telephone with friends and family members to connect me with participants from U2. My only way to conduct interviews was to Skype. I also looked for U1 and U2 participants (graduate Saudi students who lived in the US) to go over the obstacle of time difference between Saudi and the US.

### **Researcher’s Bias**

According to Stake (2006), “It is important to recognize your bias. It adds credibility to your research if you recognize it rather than claim objectivity” (p. 87). This case study was not designed to replicate prior research studies. As such, my mind was open to new information and I worked hard to bracket any biases that might affect the themes that emerged from the data collected from participants. One bias was my positivistic mindset, which sometimes limited my ability to simply listen without

predicting what I was hearing and then filtering my data analysis through these lenses. I tried to limit this bias by developing written notes of the audio-recorded interviews.

I also sought to triangulate the data collected. I sought peers' feedback. Peers helped point out possible instances in which my bias shaped my analysis. Several peers helped me through the process of deciphering my biases. First, two of my dissertation committee members were previous professors who knew about my way of thinking and how I wrote my previous research papers. Another peer was a professor at U1 who gave me feedback when she detected my biases during the writing process. Finally, I consulted with two peers from my OD cohort number 6 at the doctoral program at UST to help me detect any biases.

### **Ethical Issues**

One ethical issue is that the Saudi culture still depends on word of mouth and mutual trust rather than written consents. Because in Saudi culture one's word is sufficient and cannot be broken, I thought at the beginning that it would be difficult for some the participants to understand why one's words would require a written signature. Surprisingly, none of the participants hesitated to sign the written consent. Because I believed strongly in the importance of the written consents to the research process, I made sure to obtain the signatures of all participants before each interview, with the exception of twelve interviewees who allowed me to send them the consent forms post-interview. Five participants even said: "I trust you; you do not have to send me the form" and were comfortable with me summarizing the points of the form over the Skype call.

**Confidentiality**

Data confidentiality and subject privacy were kept in mind throughout this study to make sure that the participants were not affected or harmed in any way. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants were not asked to reveal any of their personal data. But as I interviewed participants, whom I knew personally (three of them), or participants who were related to people I knew (thirteen participants), they all accepted to share with me their personal information, which led me to understand their passion to volunteerism.

To reduce the risk of participant identification, I used pseudonyms for all interviewees in my notes and in the final dissertation. Individual participants were assigned random numbers. These numbers were the only way to identify participants throughout the study. The list of participants and the assigned numbers were kept in a locked safe, where it remained until I have defended the dissertation successfully and my terminal degree has been granted. All alumni were referred to with feminine pronouns such as “she” and “her.” Some of the non-alumni case study participants (parents of alumni, college personnel) were male; gender-appropriate pronouns were used for those participants as well, such as “he” and “him.” In addition, when necessary I modified the direct quotations of the participants to protect them from any possible identification. All electronic copies were kept in a password-protected and encrypted file.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to understand and explore the impact of the community services programs on college graduates' volunteerism beyond college in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The goal was to gain a deeper understanding of how working on community service at college would really affect attitudes toward volunteerism among the college graduates. One major goal of this study was to discern the complexity of the case of 'how required community service as college students impacts their volunteerism after graduation.' The study's primary research question was, "How does community service during college impact Saudi college graduates' volunteerism?"

What made this research significant to me is that it dealt with the topic of volunteerism in Saudi Arabia, which I have been passionate about for the last seven years. I wanted to investigate the graduates' attitudes towards the volunteering they conducted to fulfill the college requirements for graduation and how their volunteer experiences affected their future volunteerism. In addition, I wanted to learn the values gained by the graduates in relation to their volunteering experience. Since I am fairly new to the volunteerism field in Saudi Arabia, I also conducted this research to understand more about the types of community service programs in colleges, how they were conducted, how they were applied, and eventually how they were implemented. In this chapter I explored what I learned about the experiences passed to me through the participants (students, graduates, relatives, and management staff of the two institutions U1 & U2).

## Chapter Organization

**Findings.** For each site (U1 and U2), I described the experience I went through while conducting my first interpretative case study research related to my home country, Saudi Arabia. I first began with describing the interviews' processes, which described how, where, and when meetings took place. I then gave a brief history about each University, campus, and the community service program. Subsequently, I recorded my observations of the participants' feelings and emotions while they were speaking. Then, after reading the interviews' transcripts several times, I wrote my analysis of what I learned from the data.

**Analysis.** Stake's (1995) model of analysis indicated that researchers could begin the analysis process at any moment during the study. Accordingly, analysis of themes took place before, during, and after interviews. I have not limited myself to a certain sequence on whose data I will analyze first. After reaching saturation from interviewing the participants, I transcribed all the interviews from U1 and U2 participants. I read the transcriptions of the findings of each institution separately several times to analyze what was said and looked for issues, common themes, and subthemes that arose. I gave each theme a different color for easy referencing. I noted themes from each of the participants of each school. Under each theme I wrote about how the various participants spoke.

I confirmed what I wrote by listening to the recorded material of the corresponding participant. I also used the recorded material to look for exact quotes, which enriched my analysis. I used verbatim quotations in reporting what was said to



make the findings more interesting, to lend credence to my arguments, and to add variety to the tone and style of my research.

*Analyzing documents of the programs.* As for analyzing the data, which I retrieved from the documents of the programs, I looked for themes to see if they match the themes I noticed from analyzing what the participants said. New themes from this source were given different colors. I used the themes that aroused to further investigate and develop a clear understanding of how curricular community service affected post-graduate volunteerism. The themes that came out were: Theme I: There is a major transformation among young women in Saudi schools and colleges. Theme II: Relationship is imperative in Saudi culture for gaining participants' trust. For the data collected from participants who preferred to be interviewed in Arabic, I translated the key themes and quotes into English.

A good case study involves good storytelling (Conbere, May, 22, 2013, personal communication). Finally, I wrote a report in the form of a story, with detailed summaries of participants' community service experience, how they felt about this experience and how it affected their volunteering beyond college, and themes that aroused after analyzing the data from each case. Once the data were analyzed, I looked for more literature to compare how the findings compare to what other researchers have found.

### **U1 University**

In Saudi Arabia, if one has a strong connection, especially with a close family member, it is easier to get the job done; connections are key to earning trust. I have indirect connections with the leaders of the two schools (U1 &U2). The president of U1 is a sister of a close friend, and the president of U2 is a sister of a close relative; I also knew her personally. I contacted both Presidents to ask for permission to conduct the study and to ask for support to find participants to conduct the study.

#### **Meeting U1's President**

I waited for two months before I could meet the President of U1 to gain her approval to conduct the research with U1. The President instructed her assistant to help me get the U1's IRB approval but asked me not to start the interview process before I gained the approval. Meanwhile, I tried several times to meet with her in Jeddah and was unsuccessful. I learned she would be in Los Angeles for a conference and I decided to meet her in Los Angeles. It worked: I met with her face-to-face for over two hours.

I had to wait until the school staff resumed work in late August 2013 to receive U1's IRB approval. By the time I received the IRB approval, I was only ten days away from returning to the States for the fall semester. Before I left Saudi, I was able to conduct nine face-to-face interviews with participants introduced to me by close friends and family members. It felt like a great achievement to complete nine interviews in this time period, considering the religious Holy days schedule. Once I received the IRB approval, a liaison officer from the school was assigned to help me connect with alumnae

and staff. I approached the participants via emails and phone calls to arrange for Skype calls.

I collected the U1 data from four sources: participant interviews, University website data, from data that was sent to me via emails by the person in charge of the community service at the University, and from literature I found on the web. I was not able to do any observations because I was not able to visit the university. I needed to have an official meeting with the management team first in order to visit U1 location. Because it was summer time, I was not able to find such officials.

As I pursued my interviews and data collection, I figured there was a great deal of data I missed during the first chapter of this research. The reason for the lack of thorough data was because I had relied on what was available online (since I was not involved much with the University due to being abroad in the U.S. for the last nine years). After I connected formally with school officials through the school's President, the officials, graduates, and current students gave me more details about the community service program. In addition, updated data were always posted online which was very helpful for my study.

### **History, Campus Location, and Program Details of U1**

U1 University is a private non-profit university. The campus is located in my hometown, the cosmopolitan city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on the shores of the Red Sea. The university is a four-year all-female University. It was founded in 1999 with private donations. The school then offered classes in Arabic and English. Today all classes are taught in English. The first year, 120 students were enrolled.

The University has been built and equipped to the highest international standards and designed to provide the best teaching and educational resources and facilities for its students, faculty, and staff. The campus can accommodate up to 1,500 students. The school is managed and operated by Saudi and expatriate faculty and staff. In 2013, the University graduated 222 students, the highest in the school's history.

**The U1 community service program.** I found it easy to understand the U1 community service program because it was so straightforward: students must complete one hundred community service hours in order to graduate. There were exceptions to the required number of hours, wherein some graduates who graduated during the first year of the mandatory community service program were exempted from doing the full number of hours. Three of the participants said they were asked to only finish forty hours.

According to one of the U1's leadership team:

It is the university's belief that community service builds leadership skills, teamwork, a sense of citizenship, and other skills that cannot be acquired in the classroom. Students and faculty at U1 are required to do community service. The service learning instructional methodology at the university integrates community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility.

***Program efficiency and students' satisfaction.*** According to Sumaiah, a 2011 graduate of U1, "The school officials were generally strict about implementing the community service program. It was a tough program to fulfill but it was not enforced by surprise, the school implemented it a bit by bit."

## **U1 Interview Process**

### **U1 Participants**

I contacted twenty-six participants from U1. I interviewed twenty-five of them. The only participant I was not able to meet was, Nisma, one of the community service program managers. I was able, though, to gain data I needed from her via emails. I interviewed fifteen graduates, three students, an ex-community service program coordinator who was also an ex-student from U1, an ex-faculty member who also graduated from U1, a parent of a graduate, a business partner of a graduate, a husband of one of the graduates, and the President of U1. In order to keep the confidentiality of the participants and the data collected I used pseudonyms for all interviewees. Table 1 contains the pseudonyms of the interviewees and a profile, background information, and key points about the interviews with the participants. I have listed the pseudonyms in an alphabetical order for easy referencing.

I was fortunate to start my interview process with meeting four key participants. They were four graduates. All of those participants had great passion for the community service program during their studies at U1. It was a great way to jump-start my learning process about the community service program. I had the chance to clarify and learn more about the program and its outcomes during those four interviews.

Table 1

*Participants' profile and background*

| No. | Name | Profile and Background  |
|-----|------|---|
| 1.  | Alaa | Alaa was 26 years old. She graduated from U1 in 2012. Before she joined U1 Alaa studied for a year at King Abdul Aziz University (a governmental university). Alaa was a friend of Kahdigah (# 10). Both Khadiga and Alaa were having dinner at the time we spoke and were very exhausted after a long day at their graduate schools. They both felt very depressed about U1's community service program and their feedback was full of negative remarks about the program. |
| 2.  | Aman | Aman is one of the three students I interviewed. Her cousin, who was a close family member, introduced me to Aman. Aman was a senior majoring in graphic design. She was twenty-one years old. I met Aman who came along with her cousin at a famous café in Jeddah. My wife and daughter were present during this interview. Aman did 120 hours of community service. All the volunteering Aman did was related to her area of passion, photography.                       |
| 3.  | Anas | Anas was Rahaf's (# 17) partner in doing community service programs. He had a famous volunteering group in Jeddah. Aside from being Rahaf's partner, Anas helped local nonprofit organizations and universities, like U1 and U2, in providing volunteers to conduct community service. Anas   |

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|    |      | <p>was also the son of a very close friend of mine. I met him by coincidence during the interview with Rahaf. I had known Anas since he was a little child. It was a pleasure to find out that Anas finally found his way to the non-profit sector. During the meeting Anas consulted me on a plan he had to continue his Master's degree in the non-profit management area in the United States. Of course I was very supportive of the idea because until now the only person I knew who has such a degree was me! The Saudi non-profit sector is in great need for young educated leaders, and Anas definitely was a great candidate.</p>   |
| 4. | Eman | <p>I conducted this interview Eman via Skype. The interview with Eman was very exhaustive because it occurred at four am Minnesota time while it was one PM in Saudi Arabia. Eman was a student at her second year law major. She was 21 years old. Eman was a daughter of a best friend and I had to contact her father, Mueed, several times before he passed the message to Eman that I needed to speak to her. It was the second time to interact with Eman. I knew her father for the last thirty years. Her father had believed strongly, as part of religious norms, in male-female separation. Lately (within the last ten years) he and his wife decided that it was acceptable for males and females to interact and communicate as long as it was necessary. Thanks to their understanding, I was able to connect with Eman. When I talked to Eman the first time, I found that she thinks in a different way; she was open to speak in a relaxed way. On the</p> |

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|    |       | <p>day of the meeting, Eman was at her friend's house Suha (# 22), who had just graduated from U1. Eman did not sound like she was very passionate about the community service program, but despite of that she had finished 190 hours of service through the community service program.</p>   |
| 5. | Ekram | <p>Ekram was a special kind of a participant because she was a graduate of U1 and she also worked as a part-time faculty member for five years after graduation. Ekram graduated from the school of special education in 2006. She was not required to do service during her school time but in spite of that she completed five hundred hours of community service because she was so passionate about doing good. According to Ekram "I was a proactive volunteer". Even though it was not required, she used to go and find volunteering opportunities, take the permission of the administrators in charge, and lead students to volunteer. After she finished her U1 studies she traveled to the US and earned a higher degree. She was very open minded, relaxed at expressing her feeling and emotions about the program, and passionate about volunteering but for some reason she decided to leave U1 to do something else. She actually made me cry when I was listening to her talking with compassion about the importance of volunteering during college. I was introduced to Ekram through one of her students.</p> <p>One incident that drew my attention was that with participants, with whom I talked via Skype, I had to call first via Skype Audio. Then after</p> |



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|    |         | <p>talking with the participants I would ask them if it was fine with her to change the call into a video call. What happened in the case of Ekram was that I forgot to ask her to switch to video call and in no time Ekram said, “I do not feel comfortable about us speaking in audio mode, can we talk via video because I like to see whom I am speaking to.” Her asking to change to video mode before I did both made me feel good and surprised me. It made me feel good because this is what I intended for the interview to be like, and I felt immediately relaxed at the interview process. This attitude from Ekram made me express that I would like to make the interview more thorough because it was a good chance to interview a graduate, a faculty member, and on top of that, she was willing to be open at telling her stories with high level of transparency.</p> |
| 6. | Faridah | <p>Sumaiah (# 24) introduced me to Faridah and her sister Ghada (# 7). The minute Sumaiah mentioned the names of the two ladies’ father (Akram), I immediately realized that they are the daughters of a very close, long-time friend. I was so happy to learn that they are Akram’s daughters because I knew it was going to be easy to meet them. I spent over two hours interviewing Ghada and Farida.</p> <p>Faridah was 25 with an interior design major. She graduated in 2011. She was a housewife with two babies. Faridah was very open minded, and sounded like a well talented responsible person who was passionate about volunteering. The community service program was new at the time</p>   |

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|    |         | Faridah was graduating. She was very frustrated at the way the program was enforced without a prior note, but as time went by she became used to it and had to buy-in doing the required service. Because the program was new she could go by with doing only forty hours.   |
| 7. | Ghada   | Ghada was 26 years old graduate who graduated in graphic design in 2010. She had two babies like her sister Faridah. What was funny was that the young babies were in the same room where the meeting took place. Normally, I would not be able to tolerate this situation because I get distracted, but I had to pretend it was accepted to me just to make Ghada and Farida feel comfortable while taking care of their children. The meeting went fine; I accommodated and respected their need to have their kids around them. |
| 8. | Hawazin | Hawazin, who came to the meeting with Kamilia (# 9), was twenty-six years old. She graduated in 2013 from U1 in MIS (management information systems). She did over 1500 hours of community service and earned an award for being so involved in the community service program. Hawazin was a very open minded young lady. She spoke about volunteerism and the community service program with high passion.  |
| 9. | Kamilia | Kamilia's age was between 25 and 30. She did over 400 hours of community service at U1. My niece introduced me to Kamilia, whose father was my niece's husband's Uncle. I was surprised that I did not meet Kamilia before even though I knew most of her family members and   |

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|     |         | <p>I had been several times to her family's big house. Kamilia graduated in 2013 in MIS. She was a quiet, introverted, and sharp, straightforward person. She only spoke precisely about what she knew. She was very confident of what she was saying and always documented her talks with evidence. The meeting took place in a café in a big mall in Jeddah during the day in Ramadan. All the shops were closed as it was during the fasting time when nobody goes to work. I felt very comfortable at the meeting because it was during fasting time and I was spiritually high. Also, it is always noticed that one before fasting becomes energetically high and productive. The obstacle was that Kamilia could not stay at the meeting for more than forty-five minutes because her mother wanted the driver, who drove Kamilia to the meeting to be at home before the breakfast time (sunset) so he could drive the mother to a family gathering. I asked my daughter, who was 19, to join me to this meeting to overcome my cultural bias. Kamilia brought with her Hawazin (# 8), who was her classmate and who was highly involved in community service.</p> |
| 10. | Khadiga | <p>Khadiga was a twenty four year old graduate. She graduated as a graphic designer from U1 in 2012. She finished 150 hours of community service at U1. Khadiga was the daughter of my best friend (almost like a brother). It took me about four months to meet Khadiga because of her busy study schedule. She was a graduate student at a university in the US. I had to call her via Skype. Luckily, there was another classmate from U1, Alaa (#</p>   |

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|     |  | 1), who joined our meeting at Khadiga's home when I called.  |
| 11. | Maha<br><br>The<br><br>President<br><br>of<br><br>U1 | <p>I met Dr. Maha face-to-face in Los Angeles, CA during a conference.</p> <p>Even though she was a sister of a relative and I had met her (Dr. Maha) in my house in Jeddah during an event, I thought I knew all about her, but I figured that I knew very little. She turned out to be a great personality full of passion for her students, and for the community service program at U1.</p> <p>Even though she had told me she was free to meet only for half an hour, we spent over two hours together. I noticed that she used the words 'community service' and 'social services' interchangeably. When I asked her to clarify this she said, "they are the same." Dr. Maha was very professional in the way she handled my IRB application, and in the way she answered my interview questions. She was a very educated, talented lady. She has been working as the President of U1 since 1997. She first held this position between 1997 and 2000, then left for four years to pursue her PhD. Then she joined U1 as President again and still holds this position up to now.</p> |
| 12. | Munirah  | <p>Munirah was the second participant I met by coincidence. I was meeting with her boss, Zamil, at work on August, 2014 during my summer vacation back to Saudi Arabia. When her boss was showing me around the company, which he was managing, he introduced me to Munirah as being the graphic designer of the company. I asked Munirah where she went to school and, to my surprise; she said she graduated from U1. After</p>  |

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|     |        | <p>explaining to her my research objectives with U1 graduates, I asked her if she would be willing to be interviewed, she agreed. Munirah graduated in 2011 majoring in graphic design. She finished 250 hours of community service. She stated that in the beginning she was not very passionate about the community service but because of some of her friends at U1 she became passionate about volunteering.</p>   |
| 13. | Nafisa | <p>The face-to-face meeting with Nafisa took place in a café in the Twin Cities. Nafisa, a twenty-four year old, graduated from U1 in 2011. She studied finance. She documented the 100 required community service hours but had over 1000 undocumented hours. During the interview time in 2013, Nafisa lived in the United States with her husband, Rayan (# 18), who was finishing his higher education in Minnesota. She moved in 2014 back to Saudi Arabia. She was part of a group of Saudi students who lived in the Twin cities area. Nafisa treated with me as her father in the US, and she was very open to my questions. She gave me ‘uncensored’ data, which was very rich in content. Nafisa had been involved in volunteerism since she was in elementary school. The interview lasted for about three hours.</p> |
| 14. | Nisma  | <p>She was one of the managers of the community service program at U1. I was only able to contact her via email, but was never able to meet her in person because I connected with her during the school’s summer vacation time. One thing to note was that all of the students I interviewed spoke of</p>   |

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|     |        | Nisma highly. One of them said, “Nisma was like a God mother to us. She made sure we embraced volunteerism and community service and implemented what we had learned on life projects.”   |
| 15. | Nuha   | Nuha graduated in 2009. Her age was between 20 and 25. Samar (# 19) asked Nuha if she could join us to the meeting because Samar knew that Nuha could enrich the meeting’s outcome. After I asked Nuha questions I recognized that her Uncle was a friend!  |
| 16. | Raefah | Raefah was a 24-year-old graduate from U1. She finished her bachelor in graphic design in 2012. She was the last of the twenty-five participants of U1 I met in Los Angeles. She was a friend of my son. Luckily, Raefah had heard about me from her Uncle and cousin whom I had known for over three year. I had not planned on meeting more participants for the study because I had felt that I reached saturation. But I decided to meet her to wrap up and triangulate what I had already learned about the experience of the previous participants. |
| 17. | Rahaf  | Rahaf was twenty-five years old. She conducted over 900 service hours. After graduation she worked in U1 in areas very related to the community service program. She sounded very passionate about volunteerism and was devoted to U1’s program in specific. She sounded like she was a committed young lady. Rahaf volunteered in different areas since she was sixteen. I must admit that Rahaf was the most compassionate participant from U1 about volunteerism I met.  |

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| 18. | Rayan | <p>Rayan (# 13), Nafisa's husband, joined Nafisa to the meeting. He was twenty-seven years old at the time of the interview. Because of his relationship to Nafisa he was involved in almost all of the volunteering events Nafis did during college. Like Nafisa, Rayan was too involved in the volunteering that took place during the Jeddah flood relief event. I conducted the interview with Rayan alone away from Nafisa to give him room to speak with privacy.</p>  |
| 19. | Samar | <p>Samar graduated from U1 in 2009. Her age was between 20 and 25. I learned about Samar by coincidence through her mother who I met with my wife in Shababuna (our youth) conference in a big chain hotel in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. My wife and I visited Samar's mother, Lyla, in her booth where she was displaying information about her coaching organization. When Lyla learned about my field of study and my dissertation topic, and when she learned that we were family related, she offered to connect me with her daughter Samar. It took three consecutive text messaging and a phone call between Samar and me to set an appointment. We met in a luxury café in Jeddah. Samar was an open-minded lady who was very fluent in English and was generous to give me over two hours of her time to educate me about the community service program and her feelings towards the program. I asked my wife to join us in the meeting (to calm down my cultural worry). The meeting lasted over two hours. Samar showed up with her best friend Nuha (# 15).</p> |

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| 20. | Sawsan | <p>I met Sawsan absolutely by coincidence. I was visiting her husband Kamel, who was the son of a school friend, at Sawsan's home in the summer of 2014. Kamel introduced me to Sawsan and as we spoke, I found out she was a graduate of U1. I asked her if it was OK to interview her for my research, she said, "yes". Sawsan was 25 years old. She graduated from U1 in 2011 in fashion design. She was passionate about the community service program at U1 and did over 100 hours of service hours to fulfill the University's requirements.</p>  |
| 21. | Shaza  | <p>One of U1's students suggested I meet with this participant because Shaza was one of her kind being a freshman that was greatly involved in community service. Shaza was majoring in motion graphics and animation, a major I never knew existed in Saudi schools. The reason I never expected this major to exist was because for long, Saudi government and the religious scholars have been antagonistic towards initiating such majors for males, so I thought it would be impossible for females to have an opportunity to study this major. Even though she was in her first year, Shaza managed to finish forty hours of service! Shaza was very devoted and passionate about volunteering during her high school and was involved in very famous projects in Madinah (the second holiest city of Islam), where she was from. The way she talked about her passion about volunteering in college also gave me an indication that she was very loyal and in love with the community service program at U1.</p> |



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|     |         | <p>She spoke to me over Skype with openness in a way that surprised me because I always thought of people of Madinah as being so strict and very conservative. We spoke for over fifty minutes, and I had hoped she would not stop because she added a great deal to my knowledge about the community service program, the volunteering field, and the nonprofit sector as a whole. Another surprise to me was that Shaza moved to live in a dormitory in Jeddah to join U1 without any of her family members accompanying her. I was under the impression that Madinah people would not allow this culturally. It appears, I was wrong.</p> |
| 22. | Suha    | <p>Suha was 22 years old. She graduated in MIS (Management Information Systems) from U1 in 2013. Unlike her friend Eman (# 4), Suha was very passionate at the community service program. Suha said that she did not count the number of hours she did at school but according to her, “ For sure it was way over 100 hours.”</p>  |
| 23. | Sulafa  | <p>Sulafa graduated from U1 in 2010 as a graphic designer. She was 26 years old. She finished all the 100 required service hours and did more through her own volunteering group, which she formed long before joining U1. I learned about Sulafa from one of the graduated participants. She was pursuing her graduate degree in the US. Sulafa was very passionate about her volunteering experience during her studies at U1.</p>   |
| 24. | Sumaiah | <p>This was a face-to face interview. Sumaiah was the first interviewee from U1. She was twenty-seven years old. She was a daughter of a best friend</p>   |

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|     |        | <p>of mine, Yousef (# 25), whom I knew for over forty years. She graduated in 2009. Her major was Special Education for Gifted and Talented.</p> <p>Sumaiah only had to do forty hours of community service because the c/s program was still new. She was exceptionally exempted from doing the full one hundred hours because of that. The meeting took place at Yousef's, Sumaiah's father's house. Yousef attended the meeting even though I had told him I was bringing my wife along with me to the meeting.</p>  |
| 25. | Yousef | <p>Yousef, Sumaiah's father (# 24) was a very close friend of mine. I always viewed Yousef as a strict religious Muslim who believed unrelated women and men should not interact or meet publicly. This indeed turned out to be his true belief but he was kind enough and sort of did me a favor by allowing his daughter to sit with me (but in his presence!) He was the only relative of a graduated participant I was able to interview. Yousef and I went to the same school for twelve years and we used to see and meet each other every day in the school bus. He is very close to me even though we do not see each other except once a year.</p> |

### **U2 University**

In this section I have written in detail about how and why I added U2 University to my study. I have given a brief history about U2, the campus, and the community service program. I have described the data collection and analysis at U2. Because I was not planning to add U2 to my research I had no strategy to collect data from U2

participants during the proposal writing of this research. Before I started the interviews I spent few days looking into the program on the university's website, asking people I knew about U2 and their community service program, and looking in the Saudi local literature about the school's activities in the field of service. School officials, graduates, and current students briefed me more on the program. In addition I found some data posted online which was very helpful for my study.

### **How I Learned about U2's Community Service**

My learning style highly relies on deep investigation and asking a lot of questions especially when the topic is new to me. After I returned to Saudi Arabia for a summer vacation in July 2013 several friends in Jeddah who dealt with community service told me that U2 university graduates go through similar community service program like that of U1. In order to learn more and to rapidly become connected with the local volunteering initiatives, I attended several social and professional gatherings in fields related to volunteerism and community service programs in Jeddah. One of the events I attended was a conference on youth volunteering initiatives named *Shababuna*, which translates into *Our Youth*. This event had several speakers who lectured about volunteerism among youth and how to enhance volunteering practices among youth in Saudi Arabia.

One of the speakers was a religious scholar and a best friend of mine. He was my spiritual mentor for the last ten years. He was highly connected to youth and was well known in the field of serving the communities in Jeddah. After I explained to him my dissertation and research goals, he immediately recommended U2 as another case for my

study. The same recommendation came from the head of the conference who also, on the same day, recommended I approach U2 officials for my study. Both the scholar and the head of the conference referred me to the president of U2. In a different occasion, I met the director of community service sector at my previous employer during a Ramadan breakfast event; when I asked him about possible participants for my study, he also recommended that I speak to the President of U2.

**Why I added U2 University.** It took me about a month to investigate more and decide to add U2 as another site because I needed to spend some time reading and investigating about their program. I also thought of the amount of workload and time it would take to add a second site to my research. My first impression was that my bias kicked in (at that point) in that U2 was not a good fit for my study because it does not state clear service requirements for students to fulfill as a graduation prerequisite. I believe this bias goes back to my learning style, as I am always hesitant to do extra work on a topic that was not absolutely clear unless it was worthwhile. My decision to add U2 was mainly supported by Stake's (2006) statement,

Whether learning toward standardization or diversity, almost every educational or social service program will be far from uniform across its different situations. To understand complex programs, it is often useful to look carefully at persons and operations at several locations. (p. v)

After a thorough investigation about the U2 program, and consulting with my committee chair, I finally decided to add (U2) as I figured that investigating another school's community service program would add positively to the findings of my research.

## **My Visit to U2 Campus**

**The meeting with U2 President and leadership team.** I visited the campus during the early morning hours in the last week of Ramadan, 1435 according to the Hijri calendar. This date matched mid July, 2013 according the Gregorian calendar. On a side note, the official calendar in Saudi Arabia is the Hijri calendar. This calendar started 1435 years ago. That was the time when Prophet Mohammad Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH) migrated from Makkah to Madinah (the two Holly Cities of Islam).

Since it was an all-female university, I had to go through special arrangements to enter the university. I entered the school from its back doors through a gate guarded by all male security staff. As I entered the security office, I found my name on the visitors' list for that day. The security man called someone from the female's section. In less than five minutes, a non-Saudi female representative from the President's office came out to the security office and guided me to the President's office. I was asked to wait in the administration's main lobby. Fifteen minutes later the President's executive secretary came out and asked me to enter the President's office. Knowing my Saudi culture and religious norms made me so relaxed at accepting this lengthy process, which is strange for people who do not know the Saudi culture.

Three key leadership team members accompanied U2 President (Dr. Azah) to the meeting. Dr. Roowidah (Dean of Student Affairs), Dr. Asalah (Assistant Professor and Vice Dean of Graduate Studies & Executive Education and Community Services Institute), and Dr. Hajar (Head of research Ethics Department). The President started with a very welcoming statement thanking me for choosing U2 for my study. She then

introduced me to her team, and asked me to start presenting why I was approaching U2, and what I needed.

I explained to the attendees the purpose of my meeting and how I came about choosing U2 for my study. I asked the President to give me history of the program and details of what it was, and how it was implemented. This was the first face-to-face meeting with someone who explained the program details for me. The meeting lasted for three hours. I did not want it to end because of the high level of professionalism of the leadership team.

*Community service was not a commonly used phrase on the schools web.* Before I met the President and her leadership team I conducted online research about U2's community service program. The information confused me. I had thought that the community service program was part of the Ambassador Program, which the school's website explained in detail. I asked the President of U2 to clear my confusion during the first minutes of our meeting. She explained to me that the community service program was embedded in what was called *The Value Points System*. I had to ask Dr. Azah and the rest of the leadership team to coin where the community service component was in the program. After some clarifications, I then realized that the *community service* was also attached to a major students' leadership enhancement program called *The Ambassadors Program*. The meeting with the President and her staff then turned to be a very positive experience.

*The Research Ethics Committee's (IRB) approval for U2.* At the end of my meeting with the President and the leadership team, Dr. Azah referred me to the Research

Ethics department (the synonym of the University of St. Thomas's IRB) to gain their approval. I started U2's IRB process in late-September, 2013. I was told I would be given the approval in a few weeks. Luckily, I got it early October 10, 2013. I then had to file an amendment to St. Thomas's IRB to get their approval for the changes in the design of the study. It only took three days to get UST's amendment approval.

### **U2 History, Campus Location, and Program Details**

U2 was another leading all-female private non-profit institution of higher education in Saudi Arabia. There are 2500 students at U2. U2 was founded in the late 1990s by a famous Saudi female Royal figure. The founder was known for her passion towards the path of modernization of Saudi Arabia. U2 operated under the umbrella of a major charitable foundation in Saudi Arabia. The institution started as a four-year college then became a University in 2009.

**The Campus.** U2 campus was located in the Center of Jeddah. As an architect myself I had a great appreciation for the design of the university. The buildings were built with a modern design. There were a lot of glass components to the buildings, which provided direct natural sunlight to the offices and classrooms.

### **The Community Service Program at U2**

I must admit that it was very hard initially for me to grasp the idea and the logic behind the community service program because none of interviewees explicitly talked about community service when they described the program. Because this program was not as clearly straightforward as U1 program was, it took me longer time to comprehend its details and to understand the philosophy behind implementing it the way U2 did it. I

decided to investigate about the program's components in details. I had to dig deep and ask the first seven participants about the program's philosophy from their point of views in order to really understand the program well. This is why this section took more explaining than the U1 program did. I believe it is important for the reader to understand details of the program and the philosophy behind U2's implementation of it to really make sense of what U2 intended from this program. After the meeting with the President I still needed more clarifications. I received a clear explanation about what the program was and how to calculate the hours by Hadeel (one of the current student participants).

### **Value Point Calculations**

Hadeel clarified to me that,

To earn the Value Points, students needed to finish fifty value points per semester through doing extracurricular work to earn five extra grade points (or 5% of the grade) in each topic they studied in a semester. The value points were divided into two categories. Students could earn twenty-five points through the mandatory *Ambassadors Program*. The other twenty-five remaining points could be earned through participating in any extracurricular activities. Such activities could be accomplished by doing community service work on or of campus. All U2 departments use the Value Point system to encourage co-curricular activities that enhance learning and development.

Noora clarified more, "Until I graduated in 2012, the Value Points System was about collecting 50 value points every semester. It was equal to 5% of the grade of each course students take in the semester. Students cannot get the 5% until they collect those value points."

To make sure I understood the value points system clearly, Noora gave a life example. She stated,

If a student only collected 30 points then she will only get 3% value points, which will be added to the course grade. It was up to the students to decide whether they



wanted to gain those extra points or not. If a student chose not to get those points they will evidently lose a chance to gain that extra 5%. Sometimes the 5% may help the student to earn an A instead of a B+.

### **The Ambassador Program**

I asked Noora (the first participant I interviewed after my meeting with the President) to define the practical application of the Ambassador Program from her point of view. She sent me a link to the program on the school's website. What was notable was that within the 20 program pages, the phrase *community service* was mentioned only once. I asked myself, "Since community service was mentioned in the *official* program website only once, was that an indication that the program was not of importance to U2 leadership?"

**Ambassador program's description.** According to the website data,

[U2's] Ambassadors Program is a program that equips [U2] students with the skills, experiences, and attitudes necessary for intellectual, social, moral, physical and professional development. Hence, it creates plenty of opportunities for all students to develop holistically through providing a variety of workshops, seminars and activities at different levels that culminate in "Value Points" earned by student attendees. Towards the end of this program, [U2] ambassadors learn how to lead a meaningful life through enhancing their instincts for learning, determining their goals and objectives, focusing on their achievements, and having the capability to excel in all domains of life.

The program also aimed to add to students' values of teamwork, cooperation, assistance, and dynamic involvement in university life for their betterment and that of the community. Various departments, mainly Student Affairs departments, delivered the program. Enhancement Centers, Student Life, Recruitment and Admissions were three components of the Student Life department. According to Hadeel,

Structure-wise, the Ambassador Program lies under the Career development office (CDO). Every event has a supervisor/mentor in charge. It is up to the

students to choose the activity they prefer to attend. Mentors are regularly from the career development office. Professors of the courses do not have any control of the value points. The decision to award the points is totally up to the CDO mentor.

For every semester students must attend lectures, seminars, and activities, which would grant them twenty-five points. The syllabus of the ambassador program changes from a semester to a semester

**Ambassador program's mission.** According to U2's mission statement:

The U2 Ambassadors Program was aimed at enriching the students' personal, educational, social, and professional experiences in the light of U2's values that result in producing true leaders who shape a better future for themselves and for the world around them.

**Program's objectives.** According to the program's website, the overall objectives of the Ambassador program were to:

1. Help students to develop a compelling life plan: set personal goals and objectives to be achieved throughout life and work.
2. Provide students with opportunities to develop and enhance leadership traits.
3. Promote effective written and oral communication skills.
4. Encourage students to attend workshops, seminars, and clubs to develop their full potentials.
5. Equip students with knowledge and skills necessary to acquire prestigious positions/jobs nationally and internationally.
6. Equip students with knowledge and skills necessary to gain admissions to post graduate studies at notable, renowned universities across the world.
7. Recognize and reward exemplary leadership behavior through leading clubs, activities, and events.

As a comprehensive summary of the program's details, Dr. Muznah, the Deputy to the Dean of students said about U2's philosophy of the community service program,

We at U2 have a different community service direction. Our community service is done through six departments and units at U2,

1. Through the executive community service program. This program requires doing community service in the community through courses. In this program, we teach the public to do community service.
2. Through student life office. Our role is to provide opportunities for volunteering. We give the needed support. We implement this program in two ways.
  - a. We coordinate with nonprofit organizations. The nonprofits ask us for volunteers. We tell our students about those opportunities. The girls sign up and do the work.
  - b. Students find a community service opportunity outside U2. They do the volunteering work. They then bring a proof of volunteering finished hours.
3. Within student life office. U2 has community service clubs. Our main objective here is to serve the community through our clubs. Examples of those clubs are OSWAH and ATTA clubs. In these clubs students donate toys to ill kids, they read to kids in need, and celebrate with labors (staff).
4. Through student government. One of the requirements of this office is to do volunteering. An example was when members of this office went to work for the Jeddah flood relief efforts.
5. Through the Ambassador Program. The program is delivered through different workshops (within the curriculum) speeded over the span of the students' academic years. The program is almost implemented the same way in the first three years. It is implemented differently when students are in their fourth year. In addition to the workshops, senior ambassadors (students) have to do actual community service.
  - a) First year we teach students how to cope with being a college student.
  - b) We teach them how to make peers.
  - c) Help them come over the anxiety of the new environment they are in.
6. Through the courses. Most of our courses require community service component in them. This is mostly common in majors such as Islamic studies and research.

This year, we are making it a requirement for each of our 20 clubs to make a project that offers something to the community.

When I asked Muznah, “Why did U2 decide to implement the community program?” She said,

In today’s competitive times there are more competitive measures of excellence. In addition, the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment NCAAA (The Schools Accreditation Facility for Saudi Arabia) now requires every school to add a community service component to its curriculum.

### **U2 Interview Process**

#### **U2 Participants**

I interviewed fourteen participants from U2. I met six students, two graduates, five leadership team members, and an ex- community service staff coordinator. I was not able to interview relatives or friends of graduates or students. In order to keep the confidentiality of the participants and the data collected I used pseudonyms for all interviewees.

My first interview with a graduate was with Noora. My first and second students participants were Hadeel and Yasmine. I was fortunate to start my interviews with these three participants (after my meeting with the leadership team). The three were very involved and great proponents of the community service program during their studies at U2. It was a great way to jump-start my learning process about the Ambassador Program, the Value Points System, and the community service program. I had the chance to clarify and learn a great deal about the program and its outcome during the interview with those three interviewees. I listed U2 participants’ profiles and background in Table 2.

Table 2

*U2 Participants' profiles and background*

| No. | Name   | Profile and Background  |
|-----|--------|---|
| 1.  | Afnan  | <p>Hadeel (# 6) introduced me to Afnan. Afnan was a third year student at U2. She started studying architecture first but then decided to move to the electrical and computer-engineering field. She sounded like a very intellectual student. As an indication, Afnan said, "As you know, on average in Saudi, students enter college at age eighteen. Thank Allah, I finished my high school with honor one year younger and I started college at age seventeen."</p>   |
| 2.  | Asalah | <p>Dr. Asalah was the head of executive community service program. It is the program that teaches the community members how to serve. It was Dr. Asalah who first informed me that my passion area (service learning) existed (with the same exact name) in Saudi Arabia under the umbrella of a national program sponsored by the Ministry of Labor called "Sawaed Al Amal." She noted that most of U2 courses have a service-learning component to them but they were not necessarily named "service learning." She later sent me all the details about Sawaed Al Amal program. It was Dr. Asalah who put me on the first step to finding connections to pursue my passion, which is to 'enhance service-learning in Saudi Arabia.'</p> |

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|----|---------------------------|---|
| 3. | Azah<br>U2's<br>President | Dr. Azah was the President of U2. I had met her with her husband during the Haj (the pilgrimage) in Mecca in 2009. I only knew little about her at the time. Dr. Azah was a very well educated, well talented person. She has a bachelor degree in business administration, a Master's degree in Public Administration, and a Ph.D. in public policy. She earned all her degrees from the US. Dr. Azah started working in the academic field in Saudi since the 1980's. She held several key government and private academic and leadership positions. Dr. Azah's great hospitality and the wealth of the U2 community program were some of the factors that convinced me without hesitation to add U2 to my research as an extra case even though it was an extra workload for me. |
| 4. | Bilal                     | Bilal, Daren's (# 5) father, had been a close friend of mine for the last twenty-five years. Our relationship since the 1990's has become closer and closer. Even though I knew Bilal for a long period of time but I knew nothing about his family. I have always perceived Bilal as a moderate religious person, but when I approached him to arrange for an interview with Daren I was surprised how he responded to my request. I will talk about this in details in page 125.  |
| 5. | Daren                     | Daren was a 21-year-old student. Despite the fact that she was in her third year in English translation major, she preferred to be interviewed in Arabic. Even though she was a daughter of one of my best friends, Bilal (# 4), Daren was the only participant who refused to have a video-  |

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|    |        | <p>Skype interview because of cultural and religious norms. She was a key source of information to the study because she knew the Value Points System inside out. She was very involved with the program because, according to her, she was a student government member. Dureen's high passion towards change led her to say, "Because we as youth are the changing agents, we will change the future."</p>   |
| 6. | Hadeel | <p>Hadeel was my first U2 student-interviewee. She was in her fourth year earning an electrical and computer engineering degree. She entered U2 in fall 2010. Hadeel and I exchanged several emails before we met. I interviewed Hadeel via Skype. And like all my interviewees, I first interviewed Hadeel via audio Skype and then had to ask her for permission to conduct the interview via video Skype. She asked me to call again after five minutes while she put on something decent and put the hijab (the head scarf). Hadeel was an outgoing open-minded lady. I liked it when she said,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">When it comes to practicing my passion, volunteerism, I have no problem to work with females or males who were strange to me because I believe men and woman should work hand-by-hand, especially when the work is related to helping the community.</p> <p>I explained to Hadeel that I was too close to understanding the details of the value points system, but still needed to triangulate the information I attained. She expressed sincere will to help as much as she could.</p> <p>My meeting with Hadeel was one of three richest interviews I conducted</p> |

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|----|--------|--|
|    |        | <p>with a U2 participant. The other two were Noora (# 9) and Yasmine (#19). I believe my interview with Hadeel was the second most educative interviews I had in this research; the first was with Noora who suggested I meet Hadeel. Hadeel seemed to know the inside details of the ambassador program and the value points system, probably because of her position as a current President of the student government at U2.</p>   |
| 7. | Hajar  | <p>Dr. Hajar was an academic staff member. She was the head of research department at U2. I met her at the leadership meeting with the President of U2. Hajar spoke very little during the meeting. After the leadership meeting the President asked me to connect with Hajar who was very cooperative and helpful in speeding the U2 IRB process.</p>   |
| 8. | Muznah | <p>Dr. Muznah was one of the executives in the office of the Dean of students at U2. After my meeting with the President and the leadership team I needed to triangulate some of the data I received from students and graduates. I needed to understand more about the philosophy of the program, to be narrated by a leader in U2. I was lucky to meet Dr. Muznah. Dr. Muznah was a very well educated lady with long work experience at the Academic field. She earned her bachelor and Master's degree from the US. She received her Ph.D. degree from a school in Europe.</p> <p>I believed, because of her position, she knew a great deal about the program. When she spoke about the program description and the</p> |



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|    |       | <p>philosophy behind it, Dr. Muznah was very structured in the sequence of information she told me. I was very proud to speak to such an intellectual Saudi leader. I learned about Muznah from several of U2 students and graduates. One of her students, Dareen (# 5), said, “Dr. Muznah was a very intellectual leader, I learned a lot from her.”</p>  |
| 9. | Noora | <p>Noora was the first graduate-participant I met from U2. This interview took place on September 15, 2013 via Skype (just after my return from the summer vacation in Saudi). Noora was a twenty three year old. She graduated in 20132 from the college of Engineering with computer information systems major.</p> <p>Noora was fluent in English. Even though she spoke excellent English, she preferred to speak with me in Arabic. She was a very outgoing lady with great passion towards her university, fellow students, and the community service program. Noora was a very active student during her study time at U2. She was the Vice President of student government. She had a very strong personality and seemed to have a clear personal vision. She said with confidence: “I know one day I will be the mayor of Jeddah.” I count this as a very courageous statement especially that it came from a young Saudi lady.</p> <p>Noora previously worked for the Municipality of Jeddah, in the same place I worked for ten years. We spoke a bit about my and her experience at the Municipality. Currently, Noora is a project manager at</p> |

|     |          |   |
|-----|----------|---|
|     |          | <p>a private media firm in Jeddah.</p> <p>I contacted with Noora via email after I got her email from her friends in Minneapolis. It took us several rounds of emails before we could agree on a time to meet via Skype. Time difference was a major obstacle to the interview process. There was an eight hours difference between Saudi and Minneapolis (Jeddah time is eight hours ahead of Minneapolis). The timing was specifically hard because the best time to call was around 3 am Minneapolis time! Of course I had to accommodate the interviewees' best time.</p> |
| 10. | Olfat    | <p>Olfat was a nineteen-year-old sophomore student majoring in IT.</p> <p>According to some of her peers Olfat was a remarkable volunteer at U2.</p> <p>At the beginning of the interview I asked Olfat about a best friend of mine, who I knew for the last thirty-five years, that has the same family name; happily for me, he turned out to be her uncle!</p>   |
| 11. | Rowaidah | <p>Dr. Rowidah was the Dean of Student Affairs. I met Dr. Rowidah outside the President's office on the day I met the leadership team. I had the chance to talk to Dr. Rowidah for about fifteen minutes before the meeting started. She was so open to all my questions. I asked her general questions about the program's details. Thanks to Dr. Rowidah, she broke the ice! She gave me heads up information about the program, which assured me that the meeting with the President would be of great value to my study.</p>  |

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| 12. | Sahar   | Sahar was the only participant from U2 whose native language was not Arabic. She was from a non-Arabic neighboring country and was the only participant who spoke to me in English 100%. She was a 20-year-old psychology student. Sahar started her studies at U2 in 2012. She held an important position in the student government office. I knew Sahar through her school friend, Hadeel (#6).  |
| 13. | Shadiah | Shadiah was a 24-year-old graduate. She studied electrical engineering. After graduation, Shadiah moved to live with her husband in a major city in the central part of Saudi Arabia.<br><br>Hadeel connected me with Shadiah. They were close friends during their college life. Shadia expressed her involvement with community service during college through what was known as “Toastmasters International (TI).” TI is a world leader in communication and leadership development. There are 14650 clubs in 126 countries. The clubs have 313,000 members. According to (Toastmasters, 2014), the club’s vision was to provide high-value, experiential communication and leadership skills development. Members were given the chance to improve their speaking and leadership skills. |
| 14. | Tota    | Tota was a 36-year-old ex- staff at U2. She worked in the Career Development Office. She dealt with all volunteering initiatives at U2 for two years. She helped students in the area of career development.<br><br>According to Tota, “Doing community service was considered as part of  |

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|     |         | the career development of students.” Tota has a Master’s degree and during the interview time she was pursuing her Ph.D. at a university in the US.  |
| 15. | Yasmine | Yasmine was my second student-participant. She was 21-year-old. She joined U2 in 2012. She held two official positions as a student at U2. First she was the student government President. Then she became a student government advisor. She was full of passion towards helping the surrounding communities, and most importantly towards her fellow students at U2. Her friends said great words about Yasmine’s involvement with the community service program. Noora (# 9) told me in reference to Yasmine’s commitment to volunteerism, “You must meet Yasmine if you need to fill in the gap.” Hadeel (# 6) said, “Yasmine is full of enthusiasm to community service, she is a big asset for your project.” |

### Themes and Issues

According to Stake (1995), there are two types of issues that could arise from a case. They are called *etic* and *emic* issues. *Emic* issues emerge; they are “the issues of the actors, the people who belong to the case” (p. 20). “*Etic* issues are the researcher’s issues” (p. 20). They are issues that evolve from the researcher. Analysis of U1 and U2 data revealed two major themes. One was *emic* and the other was *etic*. Theme I (*emic*):

There is a major transformation among young women in Saudi schools and colleges.

Theme II (*etic*): Relationship is imperative in Saudi culture for gaining participants' trust.

**Theme I: There is a Major Transformation among Young Women in Saudi Schools and Colleges**

It became apparent to me that there has been a major transformation that occurred among the young women participants, at least since I left Saudi Arabia in 2006 for the family educational trip to the US. This transformation was apparent in the feedback of the participants on the research question: *How does community service during college impact Saudi college graduates' volunteerism?* Several reasons may have caused this transformation. In the following sections I have elaborated on possible causes and issues related to the transformation among the young women. Major issues that may have caused the transformation were: Young Saudi women at U1 and U2 demonstrated true leadership traits; young Saudi women are changing the way they interact with men; previous passion for community service before college may have affected participants' volunteering outcomes during college; support, which seemed to be critical to participants' commitment to the community service program, may have empowered the participants; and finally, the participants may have gained powerful skills during implementation of the community service programs which may have caused the transformation among them.

**Young Saudi women at U1 and U2 demonstrated true leadership traits.** One of the reasons that could have caused the transformation among the young female participants could have been because of the leadership skills that did not seem to exist

during the time I left Saudi Arabia in 2006. The young women answered the research question in a way that showed that they has been a major shift in their leadership skills between the time I left Saudi Arabia in 2006 and the time this research took place (2013-2015). Eleven out of the fifteen U1 students and graduates I interviewed showed remarkable leadership traits. These leadership skills were clear to me when they discussed their volunteering experiences in and outside U1. It was a surprise for me to hear how the women spoke with confidence. Before I left Saudi Arabia to the US in 2006 one could rarely see young women of this age speak and act with such leadership skills.

When I asked Nuha what made the young Saudi women become so self-confident, she said, “I was a shy person when I was in high school, but because of the leadership opportunities I was given at U1, I became a leader myself. My parents noticed these traits in me on the first year at U1.” Nuha added,

After I finished high school I had always dreamt of studying abroad, in the West specifically, to gain more leadership experiences in the fields of volunteering and community service. Thanks to the U1 program I did not need to travel and suffer from being away from my family and community. The program had all what it took to learn up to standard leadership skills.

Thank Allah, the leadership skills I have took out the fear of introducing myself as a new graduate to the professional field. As a fresh graduate, it was very hard for most graduates to blend with the job market. Thanks to the leadership skills I had, I did not face this problem.

Samar had her own volunteering group. I asked her, “How does a young Saudi girl like you have such great leadership traits?” She replied,

Previously, I did not have any leadership skills. Many of the skills I am practicing now I attribute to U1 programs. I may have been a leader before, but because of the programs I went through I was able to apply what I learned at U1. I also had the will to be so probably this is why you see me as a leader. Now after graduation, my appreciation to U1 has increased.

It is great that U1 designed a series of leadership programs for us the way they have done it. Before I graduated I did not feel the benefits of those programs, but once I finished I admit I learned a lot of leadership skills.

Nafisa also was leading her own volunteering group. She said,

I have had the advantage of joining several leadership symposiums. The latest of which was before I moved to the US for my studies. I went to a major leadership conference, which added a great deal to my leadership skills. My father always told me that I was born with a leadership personality.

Raefah was a Saudi U1 graduate who came from a wealthy family. She went to a US university to earn her Master's degree in graphic design. According to her she was a *spoiled girl* before she went to college. It was not normal for Saudi women to live alone and depend on themselves for everyday life matters. Raefah shared with me how she became a head of a department at a big group in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. She said,

My boss [who was known as a tough leader in Jeddah] admired my leadership skills and was surprised how I had those leadership skills. My leadership skills helped me overcome all the obstacles I am passing through in my educational trip in the US. What's funny is that my family is not worried about me anymore, they know that if I have a problem, I am able to solve it with the skills I have.

Ekram, who was not a Saudi herself, but who taught female Saudis at U1, expressed her appreciation to her students' leadership traits. She said, "I have never seen such committed and outgoing leaders like some of my Saudi students. I am thankful to God that I am spreading social responsibility knowledge to the future leaders."

During the interviews with Hawazin and Kamilia they both always referred to their skills as leaders of volunteering groups. Kamilia said,

U1's programs enhanced my leadership skills. I became a leader of a group when I was only twenty years old." At the business level, I decided to pursue my first business opportunity as an entrepreneur. One of the chances U1 gave me was to work with the famous Al Baik fried chicken company. The work experience with

Al Baik gave me the chance to embrace their business models, which is considered to be one of the most valuable models among Jeddah's corporate world. I had the chance to work closely with Al Baik employees who helped me gain more leadership skills.

Aman said that her leadership skills helped her a great deal in her graphic design work. As an active student she led groups of volunteers to do community service work all around Jeddah. Shaza moved from her city to join U1. I always thought of male workers who came from Shaza's hometown as lousy leaders. Some of the people from that city, with whom I worked with, showed low level of management and leadership skills. I was surprised that Shaza was different. Shaza presented high level of awareness of up to date leadership skills. She explained to me how she would structure her organization after she graduates. She spoke to me about how networking and teamwork were important to any business entity, in a very professional way. Shaza came from a very religious and conservative community at one of the two holly cities. During the interview she shared with me some of her leadership experience as a leader of a volunteering group at a summer camp. I asked her, "How did you manage to gain such great leadership skills?" She replied with confidence, "My city is not as conservative as people think of it. There are great female leaders. We have lots of opportunities, but of course not as much as in Jeddah. It is only a stereotype people have about us."

I met Eman for the first time a few months before I met her for the study. She sounded to me that she was a very low profile person with minimum leadership skills. Eman, who was a second year law major student, said that in her first two years she was able to meet important people in Jeddah. She explained to me at the interview that she had exceptional leadership skills (something I did not see in her),



I did my service hours with a major bank in Jeddah. I got this opportunity through the U1 program. I learned a great deal at the bank; I learned how to deal with a boss, how to work, how to face real life problems and solve them. Luckily, because of my management and leadership skills, the bank offered me a part time job, and promised me a permanent job once I finish school.

I asked Dr. Maha, the President of U1, what was the most important benefit she wanted U1 students to have after they graduate from school. She quickly replied, “I would love to see them great leaders in the community. This will automatically enhance their employment chances.”

All the students and the graduates I met at U2 showed remarkable leadership traits. These high leadership skills were clear to me when the young women talked about their volunteering experiences in and outside U2. The women presented high levels of confidence and courage when they talked about their different volunteering practices. This was notably much more than what I was used to when I left Saudi Arabia ten years ago. Dr. Azah, U2 President, stated that, “a major role of the ambassador program to develop female leaders who could be held responsible at any place they work at.”

Noora, the first interviewee I met at U2, was a great example of a Saudi graduate with high leadership skills. She was the Vice President of student government. When she spoke about her achievements at U2 as a Vice President I was really stunned because I had not heard that *students government* existed in Saudi Universities, especially not in all-female universities! I was under the impression that the Saudi government would not allow such organizations to exist. At the end of my interview Noora (from U2) said: “One day I will be the mayor of Jeddah!” I had not heard a young Saudi woman speak with this

level of confidence and ambition to become a head of a sensitive government position before that time.

When I asked Hadeel, who was a President of U2 student government, to elaborate more about what a President of *student government* position meant to her she replied,

We are the *voice of the students*. Last year there were 40 members in the student government. We do campaigns, trips, services, and events. We teach students what their rights are. We give them a guide.

An example of what we did was when tuitions were once increased, we met with students to explain how to make a campaign to complain to the school's leadership. We had to educate the students how to do a petition. Another example was when students got fed up of the bad quality of the food served at cafeteria, we as a student government helped students reach to the proper department and supported the students' initiatives for change. We helped construct a 'student government park' within the boundaries of the school, which served the students' needs. We assisted in finding a sponsor to cover the cost of constructing the park. We also did beach trips, musical events.

At one point during the interview with Shadiah from U2, she said, "My boss always questioned where I learned to be a committed person with high level of leadership skills. He said that I was a better leader than some of my male peers.

Like Hadeel and Noora, Yasmine (from U2) was an exceptional participant who sounded like she had high-level leadership skills. She sounded like she was so intellectual and hard working person. At the end of my interview with Yasmine I expressed my admiration of her leadership skills and asked her to give me examples of her leadership roles. She said,

During my studies at U2 I decided I wanted to become a leader. I worked on institutionalized volunteering through well-structured organizations where I gained leadership experience. At the student government my role as a President facilitated meetings with key leaders, which I learned a lot from. I worked on a

fund raising to build a lounge in the university. We worked on *empowering students*. I gained a *profound leadership experience at U2*.

Examples like Hadeel, Noora, and Yasmine, and Shadiah gave me the confidence and the trust that Saudi females in Jeddah have transformed and are talented at what they did.

***Participants perceived poor and unethical practices by the leadership team, which caused distrust and hurt the credibility of the program and the leadership team.***

One of the indications of the new leadership traits among the young women at U1 and U2 that they could speak up about unethical issues done by schools' management staff. For example, eight out of the twenty students and graduates at U1 expressed their frustration at some negative program experiences. Ekram, said,

Some of my students complained about the extra load the mandatory community service program put on them. Those students were frustrated about the fate of their academics as the service hours took more time than it should. Other students sometimes were depressed because of the mandatory program.

Munirah, who was not very passionate about volunteerism until she met Rahaf and Yousef during a volunteering event, spoke negatively about one of the managers of the community service program, she said, "That manager did not really care about us and how much we got out of the program. She just worked to fulfill her job requirement and get it over with after five o'clock."

The eight participants expressed unhappiness and distrust with the program because of "unethical practices." For example, participants were upset about how other students completed the program requirements through unethical practices, such as fabricating hours. Those participants talked about other unethical behaviors by U1 like accepting (sometimes forcing) certain types of community service projects.

Other ethical issues participants raised were related to documentation of hours, allowing paid volunteerism, miscalculating community service hours, counting event hours at U1 towards fulfilling program requirements, and lack of controlling students' cheating in documenting the service hours. Participants showed concern over how those ethical matters could hinder the program's credibility.

Nuha made a striking statement about how she felt U1 leadership has breached ethics. She said,

The university is missing the real meaning of the phrase community service. Management sometimes told students, 'if you participate in our schools' events, the hours you spend during those events can be considered as volunteering hours and they would be counted towards the required community service hours.

Program management also told students sometimes that they could get extra grades for participating in those events. I believe that is not right. Volunteerism should be geared to helping the community not events at the university. It is unethical to do this, especially that one can learn from volunteering. When the school miss interprets volunteerism and utilizes it as a way to promote and show off, this is unethical from my point of view.

Samar, who was at the same meeting, interrupted:

It may not be unethical, but this limits the fields of service that students can help in? So instead of serving the community, the girl goes to attend and work as ushers on career day, in a lecture, or at a conference at the university, for example to seek extra grades. This could be unethical. What is not right here is that students did not do service to the community and on top of that, they got extra grades!

Some girls did not really care but to finish the required community service hours even if they had to fake it up and cheat in documenting the hours by illegitimately having an organization sign off for the hours. Some students selected to join my volunteering group. Those students asked U1 officials if it was accepted to do that. I appreciated that the school trusted me and allowed me as a student to sign for other fellow students, but what concerned me was that I heard from a big number of students that other volunteer groups cheated in documenting finished hours.

Nuha was surprised when U1 accepted students' service hours at KAUST University's soft opening, and counted those hours towards the community service program's hours. She said, "It was paid volunteering. I wonder if that was ethical!"

When I asked Raefah what she thought of the issue of working as ushers and counting the hours as service hours, she replied, "I think using students as ushers and helpers for U1's events is fine, but using students as ushers for events that U1 got paid for by other organizations is what I believe was unethical."

I believe there seem to be two parts for these ethical concerns. One concern the participants had was in response to the university's behavior. Participants may have felt that the university was not doing its job of controlling the quality of the hours served. Meaning that the university was apathetic about the quality versus the quantity of hours the students served. Or may be that the school was not controlling the monitoring of how volunteer hours were achieved. The other concern the participants may have had was that they might have felt that they were more committed to volunteering than others, which they might have thought of as unfair. They probably are raising a question, "Why are we more committed while others were not. It is unfair."

Even though all of the participants at U2 expressed that they have benefitted greatly from the program, there were notable negative complaints on the program's credibility, by three of the eight students and graduate participants. The three participants (one Saudi graduate, a Saudi student, and a non-Saudi student) experienced actions taken by the school management that were not necessarily appropriate and in some cases unethical from the participants' point of view. The three participants stated their concerns

with sorrow. They were concerned that their institution, which they loved so much, may lose credibility because of negligence to fix those problematic areas.

*Poor value points program's deterioration and the leadership.* Noora from U2 said that there was a great problem with turnover among some of U2's best staff especially in the Career Development Office. She blamed the huge turnover to the attitude of some of the key people in the leadership team. She was planning to meet with the President of the university and the Dean of students to discuss this problem. She stated,

Having professional and dedicated workers at the Career Development Center (CDO) did help students. One of the major problems lately was the high turnover among the staff. U2 is giving more attention and support to building U2 from the outside rather than the inside.

U2 is now giving more attention to the media coverage of new construction projects, versus taking more care of the most important assets of the University, the students. There used to be more caring for students when I first applied to the University.

Noora continued with sorrow,

U2 in Jeddah used to be like the Harvard of the United States. Acceptance criteria were high. Now a days the criteria of the accepted students is not the same and 'Now everyone can easily get accepted into U2.' Previously, U2's motto was: 'We accept only fifty students per semester because we want our graduates to be leaders in the community.' I don't feel this is the case anymore.

Before I joined U2 it was clear to me that the value points was important for the students' future. This has changed in the last two years. Students do not know any more why the ambassador program and the value points system were established. Even students' government is not as strong now as it was because there isn't support from the top management anymore. In my opinion this is making the program and the school lose credibility.

Another concern Noora expressed was her discomfort with the way value points were calculated on and off campus. She said, "The school will count more value points

for on-campus projects over the off-campus projects.” She thought that this was unfair and unethical. Points should be the same wherever students serve. She had a feeling that the ambassador program and value points programs were not core to the curriculum as they used to be six years ago, which meant students would not get the chance she got six years ago. She continued “It was clear to me before I entered the school that the value points were important for my education process and that the school was committed to excellence. I do not see this happening today.” She continued with disappointment that previously the leadership person in charge of value points program used to meet with students every Sundays and Tuesdays to monitor how the program was doing; now this rarely happens. This caused a “Poor monitoring of value points recording.” She stressed that there was a need of more close attention to the value points program.

Sahar commented with disappointment,

I don't like the phrase *Value Point* because it sounds to me like a *bribe*. When U2 invites speakers to give lectures, they mandate that students attend, to get value points. I believe that attendance should be voluntary to, at least, give respect to the speakers.

The girls should not be given the impression that they should come only for the points. Unfortunately, U2 is encouraging girls to attend such events to better their grades. Some inefficient students should not be given the chance to pass because of the extra *unethical* points. I am part of “woman empowerment team.” I really hate that the girls are miss using the honorable value points system.

Finally, Olfat criticized some of the professors for not doing a good job at delivering the value points system. She said, “Sometimes the professors are lousy about the way they apply the program.”

**Young Saudi women are changing the way they interact with men.** Part of the transformation among the young women at U1 and U2 was shown in the way they

interacted with young men in different occasions. Ten out of the fifteen Saudi students and graduates I met at U1 talked in way that showed that they were relaxed at dealing with men who were strange to them. I asked Nuha and Samar (from U1) a straightforward question, “What happened, it seems that I am outdated.” Samar swiftly answered, “Of course things have changed, Uncle Mahmoud. Today boys and girls in Jeddah do interact with high level of trust. The old days are over.”

Eman, who was my best friend’s daughter, also had no problem interacting with males. I thought because Eman’s parents were very religiously strict people, that Eman would be as strict and would not talk to strange men. This was not true. When I first met Eman few months before the interview to discuss some personal problem she had, she surprised me by openly speaking to me. I also noticed that she knew my son, who was her brother’s friend, and she had met him at one point in the presence of her brother. Eman also spoke about her meetings that she had at the bank she worked at as a trainee. All of these incidents surprised me.

Aman, whose father worked with me for a few years, was another example for how the new generation wanted to interact with males who are strange to them. Aman’s father acted like he was a strict religious man who did not allow females in his family to speak or interact with strange males. This was not true. Aman spoke with an open mind and said, “We must admit the fact that we have to interact with males who were strange to us in a more elaborate and smooth way. As long as we respect each other and do not pass the red line, we should interact with each other in a modern way.”



Samar and Nuha were the second and third participants I interviewed. They were the first *open-minded* Saudi females I met in this study. The previous participant, Sumaiah, was more culturally conservative. I thought that most of my participants would be as conservative as well, because I knew what my culture required. Samar noticed at the beginning of the meeting that I was a little frustrated and told me, “relax Uncle Mahmoud, we are like your daughters.” Later in the meeting I was still shy to ask the two young women to connect me with their parents (fathers or mothers) to answer some questions I had for this study. Nuha told me, “It is okay Uncle Mahmoud. My family is open to this as long as males and females are respectful to each other and the females are wearing hijab (veil). I was really shocked when I heard Nuha say, “I did a project (a documentary video) about poor women collecting any valuable stuff from garbage cans. I did this project with a *male friend* of mine.” I stopped Nuha and asked, “A *male friend*?” She replied, “My parents know and approved it. He was a very respectful man.”

Hawazin and Kamilia were other two examples of female students who interacted with men openly during volunteering events. Hawaizin said, “Even though my father was against my interaction with male volunteers, I still did it because I believed it was the right thing to do at that time, as long as there were certain cultural boundaries that were met.” Kamilia did not have this problem as she explicitly told her parents that she had to interact with males during volunteering events. As the leader of the group she had to be open to dealing with both genders.

Anas, Raneen’s business partner, said,

Raneen always recruited volunteers from U1. They were close friends to her during the time she studied at U1. I have dealt with a big number of them during volunteering events. They were very respectful and open-minded girls.

Finally, when I asked Khadiga and Alaa, “I know your fathers, they were very conservative, especially of male-female interaction. What happened that you are so open to dealing with men the way you are now?” Khadiga said, “Uncle Mahmoud, things have changed now. Women and men now are partners in everything.” Khadiga joked,

Uncle, you are talking to me now in Boston, USA. I am now finishing my studies at a US institution. What would I have done if I were not relaxed at interacting with men, but as you know me, there are limits and boundaries to what a relationship with males can be.

Nafisa said that when she formed her volunteering group in 2010, she used the help of a *male friend*. The group members were a mix of young men and women.

To me it was very normal to interact with males because I was raised like this. My father and mother are open-minded people. They both actually did their studies in Egypt, where the education system is a co-ed. So I did not have to convince them at all to create my mix-gender volunteering group.

Raefah, who was living alone in Los Angeles to finish her graduate studies, told me,

I do understand your frustration Uncle Mahmoud. Even though I am very open to dealing and interacting with other Saudi men, I admit I do not represent the full spectrum of Saudi females. There are still lots of families who will not allow their girls to meet men that are not related to them without the presence of a male family member with her, like a husband for example. Still the social obstacles are there. It depends on the kind of people, some are still strict, but there are others who are open minded and liberal like my parents.

I have several examples. Some girls were not able to present their projects at the graduation exhibition day. Some did it behind their family because it was mandatory to present in order to graduate. They were putting their veils on their faces. For sure social obstacle is still there, but thank God I am not like that. I have actually seen this strict cultural obstacle at the Jeddah flood relief efforts.

The religious police was all over us and I must admit, in some cases we needed them because males and females were not behaving respectfully.

All the seven young Saudi women I interviewed at U2 had high levels of openness towards dealing with men who were strange to them, certainly more to what I had experienced before I left Saudi Arabia nine years ago. Actually my meeting with Dr. Azzah, the President, and her leadership team at the school's premises was a direct indication that the culture of *separation* between men and women in Saudi was over, at least in educational institutions. The meetings with Hadeel, Noora, Yasmine, and Shadiah gave me indications that I should not panic or be worried when I met all the other participants.

Afnan (from U2) said,

One important outcome I am very proud of is that the program made me relaxed at dealing with males who are strange to me. I count this as a religious benefit because as you know, Uncle Mahmoud, our culture, most of the times, bans us females from dealing with males who are strangers to us. Before the program, like most Saudi women, I used to avoid interacting with men because of the culture. This is now over for good. Because of the program, I learned how to deal with males in the community with respect and dignity.

When I asked Hadeel (from U2) explicitly to explain to me how she was an outgoing young lady who did not seem to mind speaking openly with strange men, like me. She said with a humble smile,

My mother is a Saudi but my father is not. May be because my father was a non-Saudi, I was more relaxed when I interacted with males who were strange to me. Any way I thank Allah that I my parents raised me on equality. I actually have been interacting with non-related males all my life. This is a fact of life that everyone has to admit. As long as we are respecting each other, it should be allowed in our culture.

**Previous passion for community service before college affected participants' volunteering outcomes during college.** During this research, I wondered, "Why were students and graduates committed to doing community service at U1? This study revealed an internal motivation for participants' commitment, which was key to students' successful commitment to community service at U1 and U2. I noticed that participants, who had previous passion about volunteerism, and especially those who had formed volunteering groups prior to joining college, had higher levels of commitment to the U1 community service program.

Interview data revealed a positive relationship between participants' passion for volunteerism prior to their matriculation at U1 and U2, and the nature of their commitment to the community service program. Some participants indicated a pre-matriculation passion to volunteerism. Most of the graduates and the U1 students commented that they had notable successful experiences with serving through the U1 program, because of their past passion to volunteerism. One graduate, Ekram, said that community service hours were not mandated during her college years, but she still decided to develop volunteering initiatives, which the university supported. Five participants initially disliked the community service requirement, but their actual involvement changed their attitudes. Some participants had their own volunteering groups before going to college.

Hawazin (from U1), who linked passion for community service to greater positive outcomes said,

Family members call me 'The God Mother' of the family, for community service. My aunt told me once, 'We gave you this nick name because of the capacity of

passion we see in you'. I have a belief; if people were really passionate about doing community service they would do it any time anywhere. I was so devoted to the community service program that I decided to take a course on social entrepreneurship even though the course was not required in the curriculum.

Part of the requirements of the social entrepreneurship course was that I had to work and present on a project of my interest. I presented on how to start a restaurant business. My plan was to give some of the income to charities in Jeddah. I even presented on where people can go to find institutions that support their entrepreneurial projects, which have social give back component to it. One of those institutions I suggested was Jamil social responsibility project funded by the largest Toyota dealership in Jeddah, Abdulatif Jamil.

Hawazin disclosed that she had not done any volunteerism during her high school years. She also said that she was neither very passionate nor committed to community service at the beginning of her studies at U1. But because one staff member spent some time with Hawazin explaining the value of doing community service, Hawazin loved to serve and became committed to her society from there on. This staff member used to spend extra hours with Hawazin until Hawazin became engaged to community service at U1. Hawazin later started her own volunteering group.

Kamilia (from U1), who was with Hawazin at the same interview said,

To be honest, during the first year of the community service program, I thought of the program as a big challenge. I then moved from the *challenge* phase to the *passion* phase. I became in love with the community service program to the point that my parents always warned me that it was taking a lot of my study time. I physically became addicted to the service program and favored it over my studies, which I must admit was a danger. It was not until the end of the second year that I could draw a balance between my passion for the community service program and my studies.

Rahaf, who worked in U1's community service program at one point said,

I was so passionate about volunteerism and community service since I was sixteen. At that age, my teachers at my school took me with others to visit an orphanage. It was my first time to be with orphans. This ignited compassion and passion towards volunteerism and I continued since then. I will continue to give to

U1 as long as I live because I was so passionate about volunteerism, I did not care about documenting all the hours I served. I was asked to only do eighty hours of community service but I decided to work over a thousand hours. I did not document all of those hours so I do not look like I am making a big propaganda about it. I served those community service hours for the sake of Allah (God) not U1.

Ghada had a different story with regards to passion to volunteering. Because the community service program was only mandated in her final year, Ghada was not required to perform one hundred hours of community service; rather, she was asked to complete only forty hours. The word ‘service’ was new to her, as she did not do any community service or volunteering prior to her joining U1. Ghada said,

I was frustrated in the beginning but there was something inside me that was telling me I should be happy when I do community service. . . . The minute I changed my attitude I became connected to the program and regretted the time that elapsed without doing service the right way.

My friend for thirty years, Yousef (Sumaiah’s father), was very supportive of Sumaiah’s devotion to the community service at U1. Yousef said, “Even though doing community service required Sumaiah to interact with males who were not related to her, she still worked with them anyway.” Yousef’s words surprised me because I knew that Yousef did not like his wife and daughters to be part of a mixed-gender work environment. When I asked him, “What happened?” He said,

Things have changed, Mahmoud. My daughter, Sumaiah, explained to me that the program was mandatory for her graduation, and most important, she explained to me how passionate she was about community service. I had to let go and let her follow her passion. Of course I put some limitations to what she could do, and asked her to try to avoid being among males who are not related to her as much as she could. To be honest with you Mahmoud, even if she had been with total strangers I would not have objected because as I told you, things have changed these days and we need to give up our old style of handling issues like this.

Ekram graduated from U1 in 2006. At that time the community service was still not a requirement. In spite of that, she finished five hundred hours of service just because she was passionate about volunteering. Ekram said,

I did it for my own learning experience. I always sought new opportunities. I used to name myself 'a proactive volunteer'. Some of my peers and I decided to do service because we were in love with community service. We went to find opportunities and then introduced them to U1's management. U1 gave us full support in our mission. My peers and I had a passion to find and do international service projects.

Thus, although the curriculum did not require her students to volunteer, she did it anyway. Shaza was a first-year student studying motion graphics. She moved from her city to Jeddah because U1 had a community service component. She said,

I was very passionate about volunteerism, way before I entered college. I went to conferences and summer camps just to empower my volunteering and service skills. I first joined a college in my hometown. But I realized after I stayed there for a year that my previous school did not support community service initiatives. Even though my parents were very conservative I asked them if I could move to Jeddah just to join U1.

I was lucky that my parents agreed and allowed me to move and live alone (something that you Uncle Mahmoud know is not very acceptable in our culture). [Young people in the Saudi culture use the word 'Uncle' to show respect when they speak to older generations]. I chose to move away from my favorite city, stay far away from my family, and live in a dormitory just to fulfill my passion, which was mainly to get education in a school that respects and promotes service initiatives.

Noora was an active volunteer before she joined U2. She was always involved with local nonprofits such as The Society of Majid Bin Abdulaziz for Development and Social Services, and Friends of the Municipality of Jeddah (City of Jeddah Social Commitment Program). She happily said: "I used to stick my nose in every volunteering opportunity in Jeddah. I am always looking for something new to become involved with."

When I asked Noora about her enthusiasm with volunteering she replied: “It was actually my personality as a previous continuous volunteer”.

Afnan stated it clearly,

I am lucky I was a volunteer before I joined U2. I feel that my previous passion with volunteerism made me really love dealing with U2 programs. Because of my previous experiences and passion I was able to manage my frustration with finding a sponsor for a U2 event I hosted.

My passion started at my high school. I went to a great school in Madinah, which cared a lot about volunteerism. I learned how to make professional presentations in front of people through the community service program. I used to design and print magazines for free.

The top management in the high school made me love community service. I am not worried about finishing the value points at U2 at all because I am used to doing service. I am happy serving because I am impacting the community.

Volunteering takes a lot of my time, but thanks to my passion, I feel very happy doing it at U2. As much as it is U2’s desire that students just do the extra 25 points to fulfill the value point system’s requirement, my desire was geared more towards achieving a successful 25 service points. I totally believe, all of this success in what I am doing for the community had something to do with my previous passion.

Dareen stated that she did not do any community service at high school, but she did a lot of volunteerism on her own before she joined U2. She did most of her volunteering through a famous group in Jeddah called *Kun Mohammadian*. Because of her previous passion to serve Dareen said, “I never felt that the U2 community service program was a burden. It was something I liked to do. I totally felt happy about it.” Dareen continued to do projects with *Kun Mohammadian* during her time at U2. She also did work with *Kiswah Project*, which is a volunteering initiative to provide clothes for poor people in Ramadan. She continued, “I did not do this for the value points, I did it for God.”



I asked Dareen, “Do you now do service with these organizations for the value points?” She answered with a firm tone,

No, not at all. It was to raise the good values our Prophet asked us to spread. In fact, U2 documented all my required hours without asking me to submit any document because they knew what I was doing. I served basically because I have a vision and love to serve others. I wanted to have a legacy of being a servant to my society. I never felt it was an obligation at all. It is something I liked to do and I was always very happy about it.

Olfat expressed that she was very involved with volunteering before she joined U2. With others she organized trips to orphanages in Ramadan and in Eed (the festival after Ramadan). Olfat said,

A group of girls at high school and I were active as volunteers. We visited orphans, brought them new clothes, did their hair, cooked and ate with them, and cleaned their rooms. To us this was real community service. Now at U2 I am more enthusiastic to serve the community because I am now wiser and have better resources through U2 community service program. Currently, I document 200 value points every semester. Even though I do not need any more points, I still volunteer and do community service with the help of U2.

I asked Yasmine (from U2) if she did community service before college, she replied,

Yes but very limited. I visited orphans in Al bir orphanage in Jeddah. I started those visits since I was in elementary school. I continued through middle and high school times. Before that I never knew there was orphans! In high school I met lots of people who motivated me to commit more to community service. When I went to college I learned that I had to volunteer to earn points. I worked on more organized volunteering through organized organizations such as *Youm al mihnah al alalmi*, *Ezzati Islami*, and *YIG*.

I then joined YIG (Young Initiative Group). It is a big volunteering group in Jeddah. I worked with them on cleaning 50 houses in Jeddah. We taught poor people how to clean their homes (this was one of the experiences that impacted me highly). We built parks through *Shababona*. From their on I decided to join institutionalized volunteering so I can have a long term impacts. I then started my own club where we taught people their ‘human rights’. We did several workshops in my own club.

Then the student government at U2 approached me to join them. I worked with them on a fund raising to build a lounge in the university. I did it for free just to make the university look good. Then I ran for the position of the President of student government for one year. I got it.

At the student government we worked for the students, with passion. During my time as a President of the student government the team suggested doing an ‘innovative ‘marathon idea. Our vision was to work to help the students and Jeddah community be aware of health issues. We also worked on “empowering students”. We covered five aspects: intellectual, physical, academic, spiritual and emotional, and establishing social responsibility unit.

Another project we worked at was to build a space for coffee and gathering for students in front of the student government. We advocated for the right of students to have labs. We did 18 events (low stake, medium, to high stake events).

We worked on volunteering day and volunteering week. We sent messages to students reminding them to do “volunteering” on a daily basis.

In the CSR (corporate social responsibility) unit we had several points. One of them was to connect with local charities and nonprofits to help girls find venues to do volunteering. We did an event on how “YouTube” was important for volunteering.

Hadeel, likewise, said that she had a great passion for service before she joined

U2. She said that she was a very active volunteer and was a community service advocate.

Hadeel added,

I did a lot of volunteering before I joined U2. I served for the passion. ‘I eat and drink community service.’ I did it with happiness because it made me feel pleased. It is running in my blood stream. I would do anything to help anyone in need. My deep passion is to do community service work as you, Uncle Mahmoud, experienced it in the US.

As far as the service hours for the U2 program, I collected 150-200 every semester. I had no problem what so ever of collecting points because I bedeviled highly in the importance of the community service.

I loved the community service for its moral values, not for the materialistic gains like some girls did. Sometimes I become so passionate about serving to the point that I have to self-fund the volunteering activities I do. I always felt happy when I

volunteered. If I did not enjoy it I would never do it. Because I was happy serving I could pass my passion to other students.

**Jeddah flood relief efforts acted as a volunteering catalyst.** Several participants at U1 said that the Jeddah flood relief efforts inspired their experiences while implementing their community service hours at U1. Anas (Rahaf's partner), Rayan (Nafisa's husband), and Dr. Maha (U1's President) also mentioned the influence of the Jeddah flood relief efforts on U1's volunteers during the relief efforts.

Part of the nine hundred community service hours Raefah documented at U1 were related to her volunteering at the Jeddah relief efforts in 2009. She said,

The two floods occurred during my first two years at U1. U1 did not ask me to become involved in the relief efforts. I was not mainly doing the service hours to fulfill the mandated U1 hours. I did it because I wanted to help my community for the sake of Allah. It was all my desire but I remember how these two incidents fired me up to serve the community. I must admit that those two horrible incidents increased my commitment to the community service program. I actually had my own volunteering team then in which we helped packaging food to be distributed to the affected community. In these two incidents I was introduced to so many participants who later worked with me on other projects I did for U1 community service program.

Kamilia said,

Nobody should underestimate how the Jeddah flood efforts have changed people's attitude towards voluntarism. The relief efforts taught me how to work in teams when in such crises. Even though the work I did in the Jeddah relief was not documented as part of my U1 community service hours, I feel the work I did in that relief mission helped me commit more and be more passionate about finishing my hours at U1's community service program.

Hawazin said,

Even though I had done more than a thousand hours of community service during my years at U1, the work I did with the Jeddah relief efforts had a great impact on me. I will never forget the dynamics of the work we did. We used to work till late hours at Al Harthy center (the headquarter of the center of the relief efforts). During that time I learned how to delegate authorities to volunteers. I had not

practiced this within my own volunteering group prior to that experience. I also learned that commitment is essential to the success of any work, and community service work specifically.

Samar and Nuha had their own volunteering group. My wife asked them during the interview, “How come we never heard about the big number of volunteering groups that exist today, before we left Saudi Arabia in 2006”? Samar indicated,

Major volunteering work had not become on the surface until the Jeddah flood relief efforts happened in 2009. When the Jeddah flood happened in 2009, volunteering work was very modest in Jeddah. My volunteering group, for example, did volunteering on a very limited basis. We used to mainly work in Ramadan to distribute food and money for the needy so the poor people can afford to eat well and to dress well in the big feast after Ramadan. But when the Jeddah floods happened lots of groups came out from nowhere. Of course not all of those groups were working effectively. When an organized group formed in Al Harthi center in 2009 all of those groups worked under the umbrella of the main group sponsored by government agencies, non-profits, and some for profit big companies.

The experience volunteers gained in the 2009 floods relief work helped greatly when the 2010 flood hit Jeddah again. Both of the flood relief efforts happened during my time at U1. It was a great opportunity for U1 students to work in those two incidents and document the service hours towards the required hours for the community service program.

Rayan, Nafisa’s husband, helped Nafisa form her group. Actually, they ended up working hand in hand together in all the projects. Rayan spoke to me about young women, like Nafisa, who were U1 students and wanted to join his and Nafisa’s group to work as volunteers. He said,

Three girls came to join us at Al Harthi center to serve as volunteers. At the beginning the girls were coming to work to document their hours so they can use them to fulfill the U1 program’s requirement. After a few days of work the girls became so committed to the work that they forgot about documenting the hours and were full of passion to volunteer for the sake of doing good for Allah. One of them ended up finishing five hundred hours of work just in the 2009 incident. Another finished almost three hundred hours. One of them told me, ‘I am fortunate I got this chance to work in the Jeddah relief efforts. It superseded my

expectations and I now know what to do to serve for the rest of my years at college’.

Finally, Dr. Maha (U1 President) said,

I was very proud to learn that a great number of our students were committed to the flood relief efforts. This is a proof that our students and graduates are of great responsible personalities that stood up for their communities when incidents like the Jeddah relief efforts happened. Even though we did not force them to join those relief efforts they did it anyway and they became attached to those efforts.

In summary, several graduates I interviewed spoke about the importance of the work done at the Jeddah flood relief efforts, and to their commitment to finishing the required hours for the program at U1. The flood was a disaster of major proportions, and affected Jeddah’s entire metropolitan area. Thousands of citizens struggled in the flood’s aftermath, and U1 participants indicated that the flood inspired many of their volunteer efforts.

**Support was critical to participants’ commitment to the community service program.** Some external factors also motivated U1 and U2 graduates and students to engage in community service. External support from families, peers, and schools’ leadership team influenced participants’ community service activities. Some U1 participants also talked a great deal about how Jeddah relief efforts during the 2009 floods crisis shaped their community service experiences at U1. Finally, some U1 participants talked about how mandated community service (an external motivation) made them more committed to the service program.

Participants appreciated the support they received from their family, friends, and leadership team. The participants expressed that if it was not for the support of those important people, they would not have been able to commit to doing good service.

*Family, friends, and peers' support.* Most of U1 participants said that their family, friends, or peers' support facilitated their success in accomplishing community service.

Sumaiah said,

Even though I was very passionate about doing the community service program hours, transportation was a great obstacle for me. As you know Uncle Mahmoud we as women could not drive; my father could not take the cost of a driver at home. My father always drove me to events and volunteering venues even though he had a busy schedule. He was a big believer of helping the community; as a matter of fact he was one of the leaders in the field among his generation. Sometimes my mother would go with me to places where it was not safe to be alone. We had to take taxis several times just so I do not miss volunteering occasions. It was a big hassle to do the community service during college and without the support of my parents and brothers I would not have been able to join the community service events.

When I asked Yousef, Sumaiah's father, to describe his experience with Sumaiah's community service work he said:

I was obliged to support Sumaiah in her community service work because it was for the right cause and for the sake of Allah. My wife and I had to support Sumaiah because this is what our parents did for us. The minimum I could do was to help my children give back to the city and the community that gave us good living conditions and good education. One important issue is that we are giving back to a community in the country that hosts the two holly mosques in Mecca and Madinah. What is better than that?

Sahza, who was from another city in Saudi Arabia, said that her sister and a friend of her sister taught her how to build teams of volunteers. Shaza did not know how to work with teams prior to her sister's help. When I asked her if her parents played a role in her involvement with community service at U1 she replied with enthusiasm, "Yes, of course. . . . Without the support and the understanding of my parents I would not be the

Shaza you are talking to now. Thank Allah, because of the support of my parents, I am now a better servant.”

Aman followed her mother’s model of volunteerism:

My mother is a well-known social activist. My mother has been involved herself in volunteering and serving the community for over ten years. She is so passionate about helping others. I followed the path of my mother with the confidence that I would get her support in conducting my community service hours.

Sulafa graduated from U1 in 2010. She was one of the graduates who did not need to do the full hundred service hour. In spite of that, she managed to finish four hundred hours. Sulafa said, “I owe my commitment and devotion to community service to my parents.” Finally, Dr. Maha, the President of U1, said, “We have great students, who have been raised by their families to be responsible and dependable. With the help of the girls and their families U1’s community service program has become the leading program in the country.”

***Leadership and program staffs’ support, encouragement, and flexibility were a crucial factor for completing the community service requirement.*** A big number of the participants at U1 and U2 attested that school’s leadership support and program administrators’ facilitation of the community service program motivated students to buy in and commit to the program. Students, graduates, family members, and leadership expressed statements that proved the above statement to be valid. Nisma, who was one of the program managers said,

We, at the leadership level at U1, will do anything possible that would facilitate worthwhile community service opportunities to our students and graduates. Since our program started we have provided limitless opportunities so our students did not have to panic to look for organizations to work with. We are also open to opportunities that were suggested by our students. After all, we are here to help

the students succeed at their tasks. There are cases where some of our students have their own volunteering groups. We were willing to work with those students on a mutual trust basis to provide opportunities for their other fellow students.

Hawazin, a graduate, described the support she received from one of the previous program managers, Miss. Basimah. Hawazin said,

I had not done much community service prior to my attending U1. I was not very interested in the community service program at U1, but with the help and encouragement of Miss. Basimah I was motivated to become so in love with the program. Miss. Basimah was so encouraging and supportive of any initiatives I came up with to finish my community service hours. Miss Basimah used to teach me a lot of stuff that I did not know about community service. I used to work with Miss. Basimah at least for half an hour daily for about two years.

One day Miss Basimah told me, ‘You will be one of the pioneers in the volunteering field’. Thanks to Miss. Basimah, I became so passionate about volunteerism and I lead my own volunteering groups today. Miss. Basimah’s support went over and beyond my expectations. She was actually dealing with me as a member of the community service staff. She asked me to help other peers who needed support in finding organizations or programs to finish their community service hours.

Kamilia, who was at the same interview with Hawazin, said,

I second what Hawazin just said. We were given great opportunities to deal with big organizations like AL BAIK. Personally, I too learned a lot from the experience with AL BAIK. This organization was a role model to me when I did all my community service work. I learned from AL BAIK’s CSR division what the corporate world feels like. I did several campaigns with AL BAIK to help the poor communities in Jeddah. One of the campaigns AL BAIK did was to engage in the *Earth Hour Saudi Arabia Campaign* (it is the largest global action against climate change where people are encouraged to go powerless for one hour and live by candlelight). AL BAIK was one of the main sponsors of the event. Another campaign I worked with them was on teaching children the necessity and the needs for clean cities, to stop smoking, and plant flowers all around their cities. AL BAIK is my role model for doing service. Working with them, thanks to U1, was an inspiring experience.

Samar also expressed her appreciation to the commitment of U1 leadership to a *first-class* community service. She said, “I am so lucky to have graduated from U1. It is



by all means a ‘first class university.’ The community service was not any different. What got my attention before I joined U1 was that the university’s vision included a target for the students to be servant leaders who knew up to date first class community service.” The University’s President, Dr. Maha, emphasized how “U1 will not spare any opportunity to upgrade the knowledge of our staff to become pioneers in the field. After all we at the leadership level are looking after our students and graduates and want to make sure the graduates go out with the best education and become servant leaders.”

U2 leadership and program staffs’ support, encouragement, and flexibility also were a crucial factor for completing the community service requirement. Students and graduates participants at U2 attested that school’s leadership support and program administrators’ facilitation of the community service program motivated students to buy in and commit to the program. Students, graduates, and leadership expressed statements that proved the above statement to be valid.

U2’s leadership and the community service program management played an important role in making the students and the graduates buy-in to serving through out the school years at U2. During my meeting with the leadership team at the beginning of my data collection, the President sounded like she was supportive of the community service program. She sounded determined to pass the message to the students and staff that community service is a major component of the academic journey at U2. She told me, “We at U2 make sure that everyone is on board” (in reference to commitment to community service program). Dr. Azah continued,

It is our obligation to remove any obstacles that students face while they pursue their volunteering experiences. Meanwhile, we expect all students to approach us

if they face any difficulties with the program. Fortunately, in general, we have very committed girls who are loyal to serving the community through our program.

Another complement I want to add to some of our students who are passionate about serving is that they are eager to help their peers, and actually cooperate with U2 staff and faculties to make other students' service journey worthwhile.

After the meeting, I was later contacted by all attendees who sent me valuable data for the research. Again, a great example of the leadership support.

When I asked Noora if U2 leadership support played a role in her volunteering involvement, Noora answered quickly, without hesitation, "Of course. One of the main reasons I chose U2 was because of how flexible management was." She added that she was personally proud of the Value Points System because it taught her great volunteering skills. Noora expressed clearly that "The community service she did at U2 was more important to her than what she learned academically". She was very appreciative for the role U2 helped her to become a committed volunteer. Noora added: "U2 tried every way to pull me towards volunteering. They played the game very well!" They tempted students to be passionate about volunteering. The way Noora was talking about the leadership and management team showed how flexible the leadership was in providing opportunities for the students to become involved in the community. Noora said,

I liked the way the management used to manage the students' frustration and anger with the value points. The career development office provided as many volunteering opportunities as they could during convo hours [a break time during the day for all U2 students].

It was an eye opener for me to learn that a Saudi university has a career development office, and even more surprising was to learn that universities in Saudi use the term *convo hours* the same way I have experienced at the University of St. Thomas.

Another note here is that I was used to a management style at universities in Saudi that was too bureaucratic, at least this is what I was used to in government universities. Another sign of flexibility of applying the community service program at U2 was that management allowed students to have the option of doing service on and off campus projects. Finally, Noora added,

Committed students do inspire others. I was so involved in volunteerism that when I was in charge of student government U2 management encouraged me to help lots of students to become involved. I used to direct them to the path of volunteerism.

Yasmine was just as passionate about volunteerism before joining U2 as Noora was. Yasmine expressed that she went to U2 just because of its extracurricular work. She added,

I wanted to become a leader in the field and become more involved with institutionalized volunteering through the U2 program. To me U2 is comparable to international institutions especially in the way they implement their value points system. They helped us by bringing speakers from all over the world, especially after the Jeddah floods volunteering. The atmosphere of the community service work at U2 was very healthy for volunteerism. The program management always pushed us to do *fine* volunteerism.

Sahar who was a non-Saudi student said, “Most of my volunteering at U2 was because of the way the management and the leadership approached us. U2 gave us opportunities to work inside and outside U2. They always dealt with us as professionals, not just students.” Sahar remembered how an Egyptian staff member at U2 (Ms. Jawahir) helped her become a better volunteer. Sahar said,

I had the most interesting and valuable experience with volunteering when I worked with Ms. Jawahir on some extracurricular activities. She was a great support for me during my community service experience at U2. With the help of the management, all the work I did inside U2 was for the betterment of U2

students. U2 program management gave us the chance to join Toastmasters where I learned to become a better leader.

Dareen expressed appreciation at U2's flexibility in applying the program. She said,

I never felt it was an obligation at all... it was something I liked to do. U2 let girls choose to serve through any of the myriad volunteering opportunities both on and off campus. To help the students' awareness about the importance of the community service program U2 used to invite speakers every month to educate us about different leadership and community service topics. And yes, we got points for doing that!

Dr. Muznah who was in charge in the office of the dean of students, supported me a great deal to improve my community service skills. Because of Dr. Muznah I was just one of the students' participants in the community program. I then became more involved and became part of the student government. Then I started my own club, which was an idea that came as an initiative from student government. After that Dr. Muznah supported me to take over this work and do it on my own. U2 leadership supported me from there on.

Dr. Muznah was not a very emotional person but when I received an award in my club she gave me a big hug! Her support meant a lot to my community service trip. As a club leader I earned 8 value points per semester and as a student government leader I get 15 value points per semester.

During my interview with Dr. Muznah I sensed her passion, which Dareen spoke about. Dr. Muznah sounded to me like a very professional, modest, informative, and supportive leader. We spent about an hour talking about the program. At the end of the meeting I realized that I still needed to meet Dr. Muznah again. She accepted to talk again with enthusiasm, but unfortunately we could not meet again.

Afnan said, "I like that U2 management gave me a choice to work on projects I loved." She then stated that when she first joined U2, she did not know how to earn the value points. She continued,

I owe it to Dr. Muznah. She helped me comprehend how the system works. Once she put me on track, she helped me to become an expert in the field from there on. Faculties were as helpful. They always sent us emails with opportunities for value points. They continuously encouraged us by saying, 'if you need value points, pass by.' They offered us to work with them as assistants and work in office with them in exchange for value points.

Olfat appreciated U2's flexibility in applying the Value Points System. She said, "U2 allowed flexibility in the timing of earning the value points. I love the idea that we relaxingly could spread the community service work over five years." Finally, Hadeel expressed compassion towards Dr. Azah, the President. Hadeel said, "Dr. Azah is like a mom to us. Its because of her compassionate attitude that I am doing my best to serve at U2.

**Participants reported that the program resulted in positive impacts on them.**

Several of U1 and U2 participants commented positively on the benefits they gained from the community service program at college. Participants reported that the benefits they gained varied between personal growth, social impacts, religious benefits, professional growth, and post-graduation volunteerism.

*Participants went through personal and professional growth.* Participants stated that there was a positive impact of some sort on their lives because of the community service program. The benefits participants gained varied between personal growth, social impacts, religious benefits, and professional growth. The program also affected participants' future volunteering positively. Personal growth examples included self-change, change in attitude towards others, increased awareness of poverty, respect for the surrounding community, and increased levels of self-trust and confidence. Social impacts centered on how community service helped graduates' patriotism and nationalism, and

how graduates became better connected with society and the surrounding community.

Religious benefits showed how community service got the participants closer to Allah (God), and how graduates became thankful for Allah's gifts.

In response to my question, "Did working as a community servant at U1 trigger anything in Nuha?" Nuha, from U1, confidently said,

Uncle Mahmoud, you do not believe how much U1's community service program has changed Nuha! I owe it to U1's program that I am the passionate Nuha you see in front of you now. '*Helping the needy has become a life style for me.*' My close family members told me that I used to be caring, now they are telling me that I became caring with passion. I thought I had community service built in me since long time ago, which is probably true, but now I feel it is more institutionalized. I no longer do volunteering haphazardly; I do it now as an art. Yes, I am now an advocate of *the art of doing community service.*

When I asked Samar, who was at the same interview with Nuha, about the changes she noticed in herself because of doing the community service program at U1, she said,

All the professional excellent connections I have were because of my community service work with the U1 program. The program built trust in me. It was a great experience. Helping people became a *life style* for me and I love it, thanks to U1. I am confident that if I now need to do any volunteering work that U1 got my back.

When I asked Raefah (from U1) whether or not she had gained any added value from the program she firmly answered,

Honestly, I do not recall at all that the community service has ever affected me negatively. I learned a great deal, Uncle Mahmoud. My personality has changed 100%. I now have a stronger personality. The program has prepared me 100% for the work environment and I am now a better Saudi citizen. The program changed my perception of the importance of being patriotic. This is something the simple courses we went through during school years could not build in us.

The greatest benefit I gained was to give up my spoiled attitude. Like most of the Saudi girls who were my age, who went to U1, I was a spoiled kid. As spoiled as I

was, my parents made sure my sisters and I were not as spoiled as those girls who came from wealthy families. In a way, we still had some sense of responsibility. The community service program at U1 affected me positively when it came to becoming responsible at the work environment.

Thanks to my family who, at first, forced me to commit to events and doing community service earlier as a child in school, then later as a university student. My work required me to do a lot of events. The community service work facilitated my work and made achieving my work easier. I am now able to hold more responsibility for bigger projects. I am able to deliver the assigned work on my own way without the help of anyone. I now know what to do in crises. How I react changed positively. I do not take things personal as I used to be during the time I first joined U1. I could work with any size of groups very fluently.

The program taught me to become more social. I am not shy of interacting with people anymore. I now could speak up and defend my case whenever I felt I needed to. This was not me before the community service program at U1. I no longer feel embarrassed when I state my true opinion and how I felt about any issue I faced.

Aman (from U1) said that the most positive affect she got from the community service program was in her personality. She explained, "In my opinion, the program benefited me more than I benefitted the needy people. Before I joined U1 I was known to be a very shy person. My experience at U1 has changed me 100%."

***Some participants noted the benefit of increased networking opportunities.***

Shaza, from U1, benefitted from the networking opportunities afforded to her through the community service program. She said, "I did not have any connection when I came to study at U1. ... Without the help of U1's community service staff I would never have had the chance to meet with those organizations." Eman also noted this benefit, stating, "I am so fortunate to have the connections I now have, thanks to the community service program."

In response to the question about how the U1 community service program was planned to affect the students and how she saw the outcome of the program, Dr. Maha, the President of U1 said, “Volunteering and community service are tasteful, when you taste it, it becomes addictive...in a good way.” She added,

When the team and I designed this program we made sure that the outcome must help graduates and students to be compassionate about giving, raise their employment chances, positively change their attitude toward serving, become passionate about service, change their personalities positively, change their thinking style, enhance their education, and change their concepts towards education as a whole so their learning journey would not be a typical one, it must be exceptional. Thank God, we see these outcomes in most of our graduates and here about their success stories once they are out of U1.

Hadeel (from U2) confidently said,

Yes, of course. The U2 community service experience was very a fulfilling experience. On the personal level, I remember when I entered U2 I was a stubborn person. I was a ‘difficult person to deal with’. It took me a while to ease up. I give total credit to the change that occurred to me to U2’s ambassador and value points programs.

On the professional level, the connections I made with youth volunteers is immeasurable. I know who to talk now to if I need volunteers. The project management skills and teamwork talents I gained are other huge gains. I became a more ‘relaxed person’. I learned how to follow, take orders, and listen to others. I also learned that ‘to become a good leader one has to be able to follow another professional at one point in life.’

Hadeel said that the value points system improves spirituality. Most of the activities and volunteering she did were religious based projects. She stated, “I became a better religious person because of the community service program at U2. I feel now it is my role to pass the message to others.”

Sahar (from U2) mentioned that before she joined U2 she had compared it to a good school in Canada; she believed that, because of the community service program, she



gained more in U2 than what she could have gained in the Canadian school. According to Sahar, the most she gained from U2's community service program was to improve her personality religiously. She believed that she became a better Muslim because of the skills she gained at U2. Sahar added with excitement,

As a psychology major, I would like to apply what I learned to practical life. I realize it is time for me to use my nurturing skills to pass the correct practices of Islam (i.e. modesty, honesty, and unconditional love) in a clear compassionate way, to younger generations.

Professionally, Sahar added, "I don't believe only high GPA will give me success, if I include a letter with my resume that states I have done community service at college, it could add a lot to my carrier."

Noora (from U2) stated with a passionate statement,

Of course U2 affected my volunteerism appetite positively. It is because of U2's ambassador and value points programs that I am Noora you are speaking to now; I am now Noora, the visionary, outgoing, strategic planner, and street smart girl!

It is the ambassador program and the extra value points that made us leaders. The 5% earned by doing value points programs prepared me for the work environment, the market, and opened my eyes to new challenges before I graduate.

If I relied only on the courses I took I would have become like one of the ordinary graduates from a local universities, which do not require leadership and volunteering extracurricular work while in college. I attend meetings with friends from some of those government schools, and I can tell you there is a big difference between students at U2 and others from those universities.

Yasmine (from U2) indicated that volunteering affected her grades positively. When she joined the student government there was "an added value to life." She gained a "profound experience." Yamine described a story about one of her successful experiences with the community service program. She said,

During my first days at U2, when I encountered high workload pressure I used to become so angry and always fought (with anger) for what I wanted. Because of my volunteering projects at U2 I learned to be a more respectful and patient with others.

Afnan said, “Thank Allah that U2 gave us the chance to become involved with the community through the community service (value points system).” Professionally Afnan mentioned that doing community service at U2 gave her the opportunity to create a long list of connections in Jeddah. She owed it to the program that she got a new part time job.

Afnan said,

In addition, I am now able to talk with professionalism to peers and leaders in the non-profit field because of my experience at U2. I also learned how to talk and deal with the media people, which was tough for me before I joined the program.

The community service work I did at U2 improved my skills on how to deal with panic when things go wrong. The program made me flexible. I lately learned to overcome frustration, and learned new conflict resolution skills so I do not personalize conflict even among family.

Afnan said that she also learned time management while in the program. She stated, “At one point, I used to work on my volunteering projects more than my studies. One of my mentors in the community service program taught me how to create a balance between my studies and community service. I now know how to do it!” Spiritually, Afnan said, “The program enhanced me spiritually to a great extent.”

Olfat said that she became a *Volunteer Leader* just because of U2’s community service program. She added,

At U2 I found more ways to volunteer; I am now initiating volunteering opportunities myself, rather than doing normal stuff. I became more persistent to get what I want! For example, if I wanted to do an event...I make it happen...of course U2 would have a big role in this.

Shadiah expressed her high satisfaction with the U2 program by saying explicitly that,

I used to really feel happy when I did community service at U2. I had a rule of thumb that doing any extra work at college counts and helps in one way or the other. Community service at U2 changed me a lot. Too many things changed in me because of the program.

I realized the benefits of U2's program when I started my first real life work experience. My boss always asked me where I graduated from? He was puzzled about my level of commitment to work, because other females at work were not as committed. I told him with pride, 'I went to U2, where I learned to be committed.' I explained to him about the programs at U2 that shaped me up.

Even though I felt pressured during college, especially with my major as an electrical engineer, but only now I could appreciate my community service experience. I felt if U2 did not force us to do it, I would not have been a responsible person.

I am now using all the skills and tools I learned through the value points system. Yes, I do feel I am different than other girls who graduated from colleges that did not require community service and leadership work while at college. The university shaped me really good. I learned to accept others and be able to coexist with others.

When I asked Dareen, "Did community service at U2 change anything in you? She said in a hurry,

Yes, a new Dareen was born. I was the only child my parents had for a long time. I was spoiled. My mom did not like this, and asked me to do something to shape my personality and be responsible. My enrolment in U2 shaped my personality and made me a responsible girl. U2 gave me lots of opportunities.

Finally, I asked Dr. Muznah, as a U2 leadership team member, "You have been in U2 for six years; in what way do you believe the community service program affected graduates and students at U2, and how were they different from other students in other schools?"

Dr. Muznah replied,

The vision and mission of U2 are concentrating on graduating leaders who were committed to their communities. We at U2 believe that “to be a leader you have to gain skills.” Being able to serve others is one of the characteristics we try to build in U2 graduates. We put service projects in curricular, extracurricular, co-curricular programs.

Our graduates have shown commitment and enthusiasm with the program. They are well respected by employers all over the country. I am proud to say that 63% of our graduates are employed. We get feedback from employers that they ‘love our graduate.

*Affects on future volunteerism.* Graduates and the students stated that they became better volunteers because of the community service program. However, there were varying statements on how the community service program affected students and graduates’ commitment to post-graduation volunteerism. Three participants did not anticipate changes to their future volunteerism because of the program. Sulafa (from U1) said, “The program did not change much in my future volunteerism, because I was doing community service before college and continued on the same path after graduation.” Khadiga (from U1) said that the program had neither negative nor positive impacts on her future volunteerism. Another U1 participant, Alaa, said she would not want to volunteer in the future. Alaa (from U1) added, “As a matter of fact, the mandatory program made me hate the whole concept of volunteerism. I do not want anybody to use me again.”

As for U2 participants, both Noora and Shadiah, (the two graduates), and all of the six students responded positively to the question on “How volunteerism at college affected future volunteerism?” In the following section I listed the different feedbacks I received from graduates’, students’, and family and friends’ feedback on the affects on the affects on future volunteerism. The reason I listed the graduates’ and the students’ feedbacks separately was because current students are still in the process of serving and

some of them had to guess how the community service program would affect them in the future.

*Graduates' feedback.* Kamiliy and Hawazin were two very well-educated, open-minded, and outgoing U1 graduates. When I asked them about the status of their volunteerism upon graduation they both said, "It is going fine." I asked them to elaborate. Kamilia said,

I did community service for the four years I stayed at U1, and, of course I continued to do it after. Why should I stop volunteering if I know that there are people I can help out there? I will go and volunteer whenever I am needed, anywhere. If any person or organization calls for my help I will jump with a blink of an eye, without thinking.

After graduation I started projects like 'Iftar Saem' (feeding fasting poor people in Ramadan) and other projects. My motivator to commit to community service after graduation was, *if I do not do it, no body would do it.* If we all lay back and say such a person would volunteer and do the job, the job may not be accomplished because everyone of us volunteers would depend on the other person to do it.

Hawazin (from U1) had a similar feedback but with some conditions. She said,

Now after graduation I would like to commit to the same level of volunteering I did while I was at college. I actually do volunteer, but not as much. I have a full time job during the day and a freelance job, and then I have my family's social life. I barely see my family these days. This is why I have limited my volunteering to certain types of work. All what I could do now is just some graphic design related community service. I design logos and identity themes for nonprofits or anyone in Jeddah that needs this type of voluntary work. The work has to be within my work specialty because of the time constraint.

Nafisa (from U1) stated that she is definitely committed to volunteerism in her post-graduate life. She said,

I continued to work with orphans, and will continue to do so for the rest of my life. Part of my task is to establish an orphanage with my husband one day. This is our passion; I do not see myself giving up this at all. It is my life that I want to live forever. I now have better skill and know how; I can establish an institution based on professional standards. Thanks to one of the staff of U1's community

service program I am now more organized and more confident I will succeed to have my own nonprofit.

When I asked Rahaf (from U1) if her volunteerism was affected after graduation because of the community service program, she answered, “How could I not continue, it is in my blood stream. I believe volunteering is a matter of life or death for me. I breath through volunteering.” Ekram (from U1) also indicated that she would never stop volunteering as long as she was alive. She was determined to pursue more international volunteering experiences. She talked about moving to work with nonprofit organizations in Africa. Raefah stated that “I believe U1 community service experience increased my commitment to volunteering after graduation . . . . I now work hand by hand with the community education department at my organization. This is a corporate social department in my organization. We educate students how to save the environment through trips we organize to an animal museum we run.”

Noora’s position as an ex-vice President of the Student Government Office at U2 gave her the opportunity to be an advocate for volunteerism during her college years and made her a leader in the field after graduation. She said in short simple statement, “I am still committed and will be forever. Thanks to my previous passion for volunteerism, which had been shaped by my service experience at U2.”

When I asked Shadia (from U2) about the status of her volunteerism upon graduation she said, “I have not done any volunteerism post-graduation, but I will for sure.” She elaborated and said,

I am not volunteering because of the society that is now surrounding me. After I finished school I had to move to Riyadh to accompany my husband who works there. I am now working in a big company, but I am not able to make new friends.

I cannot even find any volunteering opportunities, because I am a stranger. I have even asked my colleagues at work if they knew any organizations I could do community service with, they could not help me. They are still too young and they don't know ways to volunteer.

Had I still been in Jeddah after graduation, I believe I would have diffidently been more involved with volunteerism. I wished I could volunteer. I was so passionate about it especially during college. I am still passionate about it. I will give it sometime till I settle in Riyadh and then I will start looking for venues to pursue my volunteering passion.

*Current students' feedback.* In a positive note about her future volunteerism Eman (from U1) said, "In the last two years I have seen some transformation already on my personality with regards to volunteerism. I am now a better volunteer than two years ago when I joined U1." Shaza, a sophomore at U1, voiced her thoughts: "I am not a hundred percent sure where the program will take me two or three years from now. Right now I can see indications, though. I see the vision of U1. I can already sense that the leadership wants to prepare leaders through the community service program and other programs." Aman, who was still in her first year at U1, was very enthusiastic about the program. She said that she could not imagine how a day could pass without doing good for anyone.

In a positive note about her future volunteerism Afnan (from U2) said,

I still have a year before I finish college. I believe once I graduate I will be committed to volunteering because we were taught that the reason for value points is to help graduates deal with the real life problems, to build our personality, to know how to deal with difficult situations, and how to solve problems. I have a great believe in the community service program and I am sure I will be a leading volunteer in the future. U2 has done a good gob at making us become committed volunteers.

Hadeel mentioned that the U2 experience gave her a great competitive advantage over other volunteers. She said:

I now have great volunteering experiences because of U2's community service program. I learned excellent teamwork skills, leadership, and project management talents. I would not have gained those great experiences if it were not for the community service at U2. I assure you when I graduate in about a year I will follow the same passion I have now for volunteerism. Of course no one knows what could happen in the future, but with Allah's will I am committed to pay back to my community.

When I asked Olfat (from U2), "Don't you think you will be busy working which will prevent you from doing it?" Olfat replied without hesitation, "I think when I graduate I will be more free because I will have no studies. I am willing to continue my volunteering passion."

Sahar (from U2) said,

For sure I will continue volunteering. As a matter of fact I have a full support from my parents to continue to do so. I recently created my *life plan*! After I graduate from U2 I intend to work in the field of psychology in either one of the Gulf countries or in Asia. I am going to look for nonprofit organizations in my field to pass what I have practiced and experienced at U2. It will be time to give back to any society I would live with.

When I asked Yasmine (from U2), "Do you believe the value points system (community service) during your college years will affect your future volunteerism?" She answered,

Yes! Definitely" The community service program has increased my love for volunteerism and my passion to join different societies and volunteering groups. It has helped me form a deeper approach in tackling social issues through volunteering.

The program has increased my appetite to volunteer more and more since I joined U2. To face reality, I expect my volunteering to become less after graduation since I will be concentrating more on my professional work and some related volunteerism projects.

*Family and friends' feedback.* I asked Yousef (Sumaiah's father) to tell me what he believes the program did to his daughter's future volunteerism. He answered with a



big smile, “Sumaiah was dedicated to volunteerism before she joined U1, but now she is even more dedicated . . . She also asks me to support her initiatives through asking me to find her donations from my friends, which of course I do not mind at all. As a matter of fact I love her passion. This is how people should be with each other.”

Akarm, Ghada’s and Faridah’s father, described his daughters’ future commitment to volunteerism after graduation. He said, “They have both transformed. They love to commit to volunteerism, but they have great limitations. They are now both married and have kids. I admire that they have come over their frustration with the difficulties they faced when U1 decided to add the extra load of the community service program. In spite of their tight schedule because of family commitment they are doing their best to give back to the community after they graduated. I am so proud of them.”

### **Summary of Theme I**

There has been a major transformation that occurred among the young women participants, at least since I left Saudi Arabia in 2006 for the family educational trip to the US. Several reasons may have caused this transformation. First, students and graduates I interviewed showed remarkable leadership traits. That surprised me. It was my perception since I left Saudi Arabia in 2006, and until I did this research, that college women did not have such leadership skills. Ten out of the fifteen Saudi students and graduates indicated that they changed the way they interacted with males who were strange to them. Young females have become more realistically relaxed when they dealt with me. Trust and respect is the basis of the new trend.

Second, participants, who had previous passion about volunteerism, and especially those who had formed volunteering groups prior to joining college, had higher levels of commitment to the community service program. It did not matter whether participants were current students or graduates. Finally, Several participants at U1 said that the Jeddah flood relief efforts inspired their experiences while implementing their community service hours

Third, family, friends, and peers, and leadership's, support was essential for the young women to participate and engage in the community service program. Leadership and program staff support, encouragement, and flexibility enabled participants to engage in and complete the required community service component of their educations. Had such support been absent, some participants may not have completed the program, or may have dropped out of school before graduation.

Fourth, most of the participants said that the community service program at U1 and U2 enhanced their lives. Three main concepts emerged from the participants' feedback. Participants' professional growth was perceived to be significant, participants experienced personal and religious impacts during the program, and the program created positive social impacts on graduates. Examples of professional growth (which was the major advantage participants gained from the program) were better academic achievements, better learning skills, and learning about sustainable community service. The participants also stated that the community service program positively affected their future volunteerism. Despite the fact that fifty percent of participants disclosed that their work commitment prevented them from practicing volunteerism the way they wanted to,

they still were full of passion toward volunteerism. They indicated that when the time is suitable they would want to work full-time in the nonprofit sector to pursue their passion.

## **Theme II: Relationship is Imperative in Saudi Culture for Gaining Research**

### **Participants' Trust**

I had either direct or indirect relationships with seventeen of the twenty-three of U1 participants. Four of them were family-related, and thirteen were either close friends or friends' daughters. Even the six that were not directly related to me were introduced by their friends or relatives. For example, Samar and Nuha introduced me to Rahaf, and Sumaiah introduced me to Ghada and Faridah. It took me extra effort to set appointments with the participants who lived in Saudi Arabia because of the nine-hour time gap between Jeddah and Minneapolis.

Interview data revealed that at least 50% of the participants were connected to each other in spite of the fact that participants were from different cohorts, colleges, and sometimes from different universities (e.g. some U1 participants were closely connected to U2 participants). The way that these relationships led me to connecting to participants was key for identifying the theme that 'relationship in Saudi Arabia is significant to gain the trust of the participants in a study like the one I was conducting.'

Connections with friends like Rayan, Yousef, and Akram enabled me to find participants. I then asked participants to identify additional possible interviewees. Finding suitable participants without such connections would have been agonizing. For example, as I began the interview phase, I asked Rayan (Nafisa's husband) to provide a list of

possible research participants. Rayan developed a list of about fifty women. It took one phone call to Akram to arrange a meeting with his daughters, Ghada and Faridah.

Family ties were discovered within minutes of speaking to Samar's mother, Lyla: Samar's Uncle is my brother's brother-in-law. Lyla indicated she had heard about my family's educational trip to the United States, and she was highly interested in learning more about our experiences in the U.S. As our conversation continued, I realized that Lyla's husband and I were friends at an organization I had worked for over fifteen years ago. What a small world! Furthermore, when Lyla learned about my field of study and about my passion for volunteerism in Saudi she recommended I meet her daughter Samar who was a U1 graduate and a very active person in the community service field. Lyla said,

Because I know who you are and who your wife is, I will encourage Samar to become part of your research. I am sure once Samar knows who you are, as a related person, and as a specialist in the field that she loves, she would love to be a participant for your research.

Samar and I exchanged several text messages before we could meet. She was kind enough to bring along her friend, Nuha, whom my wife Sahar and I met in a very luxurious coffee shop in Jeddah. I learned, during our discussions, that Samar was engaged to my friend's son. These social connections helped a great deal in making me relaxed at the interview, and also played a major role in making the two female participants more willing to talk. My wife's presence may have also facilitated in Samar and Nuha's willingness to talk.

Yousef's daughter, Sumaiah, was a bit shy at the meeting in their home, until I introduced my wife and described how my relationship to her father had been so close for

the last forty years. I also talked about her five Uncles, one of whom was my classmate throughout my school life. About fifteen minutes later, Sumaiah started to let go of her shyness and then spoke for over an hour without hesitance. She even shared with me some of her bad experiences as a non-Saudi. She told me how she was depressed that even though she was born and raised in Saudi, she still felt like stranger in the only home country she knew. At the interview's conclusion, Yousef told Sumaiah "I did not expect you to say that much, knowing how conservative you are with people." Sumaiah replied, "It is because you gave me the safety net, Dad, that I was elaborate and spoke with transparency." In the meeting with another participant, Alaa, she stated, "If it was not to your close relationship to Khadija, I would not trust to speak about those issues." This was another example of how relationship opens up channels in the Saudi society.

Arrangement for my meeting with U2 President and the leadership team was an indication for how important relationship in Saudi was. Organizing to visit U2 was my first try ever to meet females in *all female organization* in Saudi Arabia. The President's brother, who was a best friend of mine, asked her if she could meet with me to talk about my research. Dr. Azah (the President) was very generous to contact me within two days. After a brief coordination I was able to obtain an invitation by Dr. Azah to visit her at U2 campus. My pre-established relationship with Dr. Azah and her open mind, and hospitality gave me the courage to speak with her and her team straightforward and say,

I came to the meeting with a presumption that U2 might not be the good fit for my study. I still do not see how you have a community service program. When I read about your program in the web, the literature did not indicate that you have a community service. Your program was so unclearly explained in the literature that I thought that in Jeddah, only U1 had a community service program.

Dr. Azah and her colleagues, instead of becoming upset with me, they all laughed with a humble smile and walked me through U2's Value Points System. The first sentence Dr. Azah said was, "I do understand your confusion, but our value points program is 100% geared towards community service, with a twist from the typical programs other schools might have."

After the team explained the program from their point of view, I apologized and said, "I am definitely adding U2 to my study." Dr. Azah worked a great deal on making me feel comfortable at the meeting. As a matter of fact if it were not for her support I may not have been in-flow during the interview.

I had thought I went to the meeting prepared, but I discovered at the beginning of the meeting that I had the interview questions ready, but I was not ready myself. Dr. Azah was very smart in handling this issue. She made me so relaxed by saying a respectful relaxing sentence when she introduced me to her colleagues and new comers to the meeting. She said, " This is Mahmoud, he is a friend of my brother" then she introduced me as a researcher and asked her team to give me all the support I needed for the study.

As soon as I finished the meeting and left the President's office I started putting a strategy on how to find candidates for my U2 participant's list. When I started asking people around me whom they knew what would help me in my research, three Saudi friends in Minnesota (Salah, Farid, and Omaima) directed me to Noora. All the three knew Noora and suggested I start by interviewing her, as she was very involved with community service at U2 and in Jeddah in general. It was a coincidence that they all had

just met her in the summer of 2013 (two months before I met Noora), in Washington D.C, during a Saudi student graduation ceremony and had spoken to Noorah about my project then.

During the interview with Noora I was at ease because I was connected with her through her three friends. I also found at the beginning of the interview that she was a close friend of my wife's niece. They were high school friends back in Saudi Arabia. Before I started the interview I had my wife's niece (Amaal) who was coincidentally at my house in Minnesota during the interview time, join our Skype call and speak to Noora. I also asked my daughter to come and speak to Noora just to relax Noora! Actually, this turned out to be relaxing to me more than it seemed to have relaxed Noora. I later noticed that Noora's outgoing attitude was her norm and she was not as frustrated as I was.

I became so relaxed interviewing her because of her welcoming personality. She actually expressed to me that she trusted me because of the common relation I had with her three friends and with my wife's niece. She said,

I have heard a lot previously about you from Salah and Farid uncle Mahmoud. I was also surprised to see Amaal, who is one of my best friends, at your house. This made me more relaxed and made me want to help you as much as I could. I actually find myself fortunate to be part of this research because you do not know how much this means to me. You are an inspiration to our generation.

When I asked Noora to connect me with more participants, she suggested I contact Hadeel and Yasmine. She thankfully emailed fourteen graduates and current students and sent me a copy of the emails.

I interviewed Hadeel just after Noora. She started our meeting by saying, "Noora told me all about your research Uncle Mahmoud. Noora asked me to help you in anyway

I could. How can I help?” Hadeel sounded like a very active leader as the President of student government at U2. Her open mind encouraged me to go into fine details of my research as well, and I asked her help to look for participants to gain valuable information to enrich my research. Because of her position Hadeel was smoothly able to connect me with other four students’ participants. One of those participants was Olfat.

I was so excited and relaxed at meeting Olfat. The reason was because I learned that her uncle was a best friend during my work at the Municipality of Jeddah. I told Olfat,

At one point your uncle used to be my mentor at work. I have a great respect for him. He actually was a role model for me when I first joined the City of Jeddah. He introduced me to the ‘ethics of work’ way at the first months of my job. It was your uncle who taught me the foundations of customer relations. I am so grateful for him.

As we spoke, Olfat texted her uncle and asked him about me. He called her and told her about our close relationship. When she hung up with him, Olfat said,

Wow, I do not believe it. My uncle spoke highly of your relationship. He loves you Uncle Mahmoud. He said he hadn’t seen you for a long time. And asked me to say hello to you. I am so happy I connected both of you again. My uncle asked me to support you with whatever it took.

Olfat’s uncle’s call made my interview so fluent from there on. I took all the time I needed to clarify all missing information about the program. I even asked Olfat to become one of three most important coordinators who connected me with other participants. I had a feeling that she became more committed to my project (research) because of this trusted relationship. She emailed me several times and connected me with two of her close friends.



Another person who Hadeel introduced me to was Yasmine. Yasmine was a key figure to my research because of her great involvement with the U2 student government office. Her peers always mentioned Yasmin's name and said "She is the volunteering guru of U2." When I met Yasmine, I only had to use Hadeel's name as a reference to show that I have a relation with someone Yasmine recognized. Yasmine told me,

Uncle Mahmoud, I have known Hadeel for several years. We worked together two consecutive years. Hadeel has actually sent me two emails regarding your research. She recommended and urged me to speak to you. The reason she urged me was because, when Hadeel met you, she expressed that she had a great belief in the topic of your research, and she also believed you could add a lot to our service experience. After all you are the first person we know of who have earned a Master's degree in non-profit management from the US. I am sure we can learn a lot from you.

Another good example of how relationship played a big role in finding and interviewing participants was my meeting arrangement with Dareen. I learned by coincidence that Dareen was a U2 student through one of her friends at college. I did not know Dareen then, but her family name matched with the family name of a close friend I knew for the last twenty-five years, Bilal. I called Bilal and asked him if he knew Dareen. To my surprise, Dareen turned out to be his daughter. I thought that was it; because Dareen was Bilal's daughter, I would be able to meet her immediately. I was wrong!

Bilal got me confused. He said, "Why would you want to meet my daughter." I had to explain to him in details about my research and my need for participants to conduct the study. Bilal had known me inside-out for a long time and always counted me as an older brother, but still he was a little hesitant to allow me to meet his daughter. I used my usual sense of humor to convince Bilal to do me this favor. He finally laughed and told me, "Of course you can meet my daughter; she is just like your daughter." When

I called Dareen, she refused to have a face-to-face Skype talk. The reason, according to her, was that she was *Munakkabah*. This is a direct translation for *veiled*. For the readers' information, some Muslim scholars prohibit women from showing their faces to males who were strangers to them. As for Dareen, she revealed to me that she personally was not convinced with it! She only covered her face to respect the social norms and to respect her mother's advice (request). I understood Dareen's choice right away and respected it, because I was aware of these specific social and religious rules.

Despite the fact that Dareen decided not to speak to me face-to-face, she still was very generous in giving me data about her U2 community service experience. As a matter of fact, she was more open to talking with me than half of her peers. She asked me several times during the interview not to be mad at her because she refused to speak via video Skype. During the interview, Dareen always referred to her father's request to help me as much as she could, and expressed full support to me in my research. She said,

Even though it is my first time to know you and speak to you Uncle Mahmoud, but you seem to be, as my father said, a very sincere man. My father spoke very highly of your relationship and how you both care about each other. He even told me to help you find other participants, which I will be honored to do after I heard all about your research.

Finally, it was a surprise to me when I learned that Tota (who was introduced to me by two common friends) had also known my son Rayan who had some culinary shows on TV. After we talked a bit about Rayan's passion for cooking, Tota became so relaxed with me during the interview to the point that she stopped talking about my research and asked me if I would speak to her father to let her pursue Rayan's path as a chef!

**Summary of Theme II**

Relationship is important in Saudi culture to gain trust. It is an essential tool when looking for female research participants, especially for male researchers. Most of the U1 and U2 participants were either related to me, to a friend, a relative, or a close family member. In fact, these personal connections made the data collection possible.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

#### Reflection on the Process

This final chapter includes an overview of the study's major findings, limitations, implications for the organizational development field, personal reflections, suggestions for future research, and the conclusion. This study addressed the experiences of *how volunteering during college affected post-graduation volunteerism* of participants at two Saudi private nonprofit universities. The answer to the research question was: Yes, community service did affect post-graduation volunteerism. A major finding was also that there has been a major transformation among the young female participants from Jeddah. The following sections explain this transformation in details.

My Master's program in nonprofit management sparked a scholarly and professional interest in volunteerism in Saudi Arabia; I became particularly interested in *service learning*. My Master's capstone project was devoted to service learning, because I believed service learning would be beneficial for Saudi youth. My topic was *Capacity Building of Volunteerism Among Young Generations in Saudi Arabia: A Look at Service Learning*. Those findings revealed several benefits for Saudi youth, and it thus became my initial intention to do my doctoral dissertation about this topic. I decided not go further with service learning because the concept and the name service learning was very new to Saudi people. It was not practiced by any of the over three hundred participants I approached during the Master's research, and it was hard to find participants who knew service learning.

During my search for a topic for this dissertation, I learned about the community service programs U1 and U2. I reasoned that understanding volunteering through the lenses of how the programs in U1 and U2 affected participants' future volunteerism would be more worthwhile; I learned from close friends that community service is more widely dealt with in Saudi schools. I found scarce literature about volunteering in Jeddah colleges and universities. The dissertation's primary research question became: *How does community service during college impact Saudi college graduates' volunteerism?* I conducted this research using the interpretive case study approach to gain a deep understanding of the meaning of the participants' collegiate volunteering experiences.

After analyzing the two major themes (shown in table 3, page 130), I found that 'change has started among Saudi youth behaviors in Jeddah, especially when volunteering and doing community service'. The themes, that derived from this study did not simply provide data regarding how the community service programs at U1 and U2I affected the graduates post-graduation volunteerism, it went further to reveal data that reinforced my perception that there was a major shift in the Saudi culture among this generation. I have observed this shift since 2006 (the time I left Saudi Arabia for an educational trip with the family); every time I returned to Jeddah, I felt there was cultural change happening, but I did not expect the change to be so powerful. Young females' norms and attitudes were changing!

### Major Similarities and Differences between U1 and U2 Data

According to Stake (2006), “Comparative studies – whether of quantitative or qualitative design – seek similarities and differences among cases on a relatively few specified attributes. The purpose of those studies is to make some grand comparison rather than to increase understanding of individual cases” (p. 82). The concept behind the *Grand Comparison* phrase motivated me to compare findings from both U1 and U2 because it brought an additional perspective to my research design. Table 3 shows all the major issues which came out of the two universities.

Table 3

#### *Major points in U1 I and U2*

| Themes  | U1  | U2  |
|---|-----|-----|
| Theme I: There is a major transformation among young women in Saudi schools and colleges.   | Yes | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Saudi Women Presented True Leadership Traits</li> </ul>  | Yes | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>Participants perceived poor and unethical practices by the leadership team, which caused distrust and hurt the credibility of the program and the leadership team.</i></li> </ul> | Yes | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Saudi women are changing the way they interact with men.</li> </ul>  | Yes | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous passion for community service led to better volunteering outcomes during college</li> </ul>   | Yes | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeddah flood relief efforts acted as a volunteering catalyst</li> </ul>  | Yes | No  |

|   |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support was critical to participants' commitment to the community service program</li> <li>• Family, friends, and peers' support were critical to participants' commitment to the community service program</li> <li>• Leadership and program staffs' support, encouragement, and flexibility was a crucial factor for completing the community service requirement</li> </ul> | Yes | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants reported that the program resulted in positive impacts on them</li> <li>• Program resulted in personal and professional growth.</li> <li>• Positive post-graduation volunteerism impacts due to the program.</li> </ul>   | Yes | Yes |
| Theme II: Relationship is Imperative in Saudi Culture for Gaining Research Participants' Trust  | Yes | Yes |

Two themes stood out in both U1 and U2. In addition, two points stood out in U1 but not in U2; Jeddah flood relief efforts acted as a volunteering catalyst; and the issue that family, friends, and peers' support were critical to participants' commitment to the community service program. The two issues are discussed in details in the following section. The point that: Jeddah flood relief efforts were a *volunteering catalyst* to U1 students during college did not appear much at U2. Only two participants out of the fifteen participants thought that the floods' efforts helped increase volunteering while in college.

One point was noted by U1 participants but not by U2 participants. It was: *family, friends', and peers' support was critical to U1 participants' commitment to the community service program*. Twenty-one out of the twenty-five U1 participants said that their family, friends, and peers' support facilitated their success in accomplishing community service at U1. In comparison, only three of the six U2 participants lightly mentioned that family support was important during the volunteering at college. There was not any mentioning by U2 participants to peers, or friends' support.

Under the *unethical experiences of the community service programs*, both U1 and U2 participants agreed there were unethical issues, but each group had different issues. I find it interesting that women at both schools identified possible ethical issues in the community service programs, but there were differences in what the women found unethical. For example, U1 participants were upset about how other students completed the program requirements through unethical practices, such as fabricating hours. Those participants talked about other unethical behaviors by U1 like accepting (sometimes forcing) certain types of community service projects. Other ethical issues participants raised were related to documentation of hours, allowing paid volunteerism, miscalculating community service hours, counting event hours at U1 towards fulfilling program requirements, and lack of controlling students' cheating in documenting the service hours. Participants showed concern over how those ethical matters could hinder the program's credibility.

U2 participants commented differently on the ethical issues with the community service program. For example, one expressed concern and discomfort with the way value



points were calculated on and off campus. She was upset that the school counted more value points for on-campus projects over the off-campus projects. She thought that this was unfair and unethical. "Points should have been the same wherever students served." Another student commented with disappointment that she thought of the *value point system* as a *bribe*. She said, "The girls should not be given the impression that they should come only for the points."

### **Recommendations to Upgrade Programs**

Both U1 and U2 participants proposed some recommendations to help sustain and enhance the community service programs. Participants from both schools suggested that '*Program's design needs adjustments for better volunteering outcomes.*' U1 participants' recommendations were totally different from those suggested by U2 participants except for the part where the two agreed that *making the program optional in U1 and keeping it optional in U2* was essential to keeping graduates hooked to volunteering post-graduation.

U1 suggestions were more thorough and specific to the program design. For example U1 participants recommended that the leadership team should introduce more program *diversity* options, *institutionalization* of the program, program *internationalization*, adding community service courses to U1's curriculum, there was a need for *staff and faculty awareness* programs, there was a need to change *communication styles*, and a need to *re-evaluate the number of mandated hours*.

U2 recommendations were centered on the documentation of the service hours. U2 participants also concentrated on criticizing the top management, and the need for

more management involvement with the program. Finally, U2 participants asked that the management *needs to gear the services to the community needs not U2's needs.*

### **Overview of Major Themes**

**Theme I: There is a major transformation among young women in Saudi schools and colleges.** I discussed the transformation, which had happened within the context of Mezirow's theory of *transformative learning*. Mezirow's frame of reference is highly applicable to this transformation because the study of transformative learning has been largely derived and applied in formal education settings, like that of U1 and U2 (Taylor, 2007, as cited in Coghlan & Gooch, 2011).

***What is Transformational Learning Theory?*** Mezirow (2000) theorized that a person's fundamental understandings of the world could be transformed through a ten-step process:

1. The need to experience a disorienting dilemma.
2. The need to undergo self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame.
3. Must conduct a deep assessment of personal role assumptions and alienation created by new roles.
4. Sharing and analyzing personal discontent and similar experiences with others is necessary.
5. Exploring options for new ways of acting.
6. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles.
7. Planning a course of action.
8. Acquiring knowledge and skills for action.
9. Trying new roles and assess feedback.
10. Reintegrating into society with a new perspective.

I found that many of these steps applied to the participants' experiences at U1 and U2. I developed a sequential step-by-step outline for the change process I believed happened in a chronological order, and called this outline the *change process map*.

The findings of this study indicated that Saudi female youth began volunteering about ten years ago. Young women helped poor people through collaborations with various charitable organizations in Jeddah. Some participants took care of orphans while others helped seniors who could not afford basic necessities. The young women needed their parents' and friends' support to serve in volunteer roles.

Parents supported their children as a way to teach them best practices of Islam. The parents encouraged their daughters to help the community so God would reward them for their good deeds. At the same time, leaders of private nonprofit universities like U1 and U2 began to address community service programs. Those leaders built community service programs to cultivate students' and graduates' passion for serving the community.

After some initial resistance, students became more attached to doing community service at U1 and U2. The students then needed the support of the leadership and management team to be able to deliver the community service in a professional manner. In 2009, the first Jeddah flood relief efforts happened, and students had an opportunity to practice what they learned at school. The students learned personal and professional skills and many were motivated to continue volunteering upon graduation.

The development of skills fostered participants' leadership proficiencies. Almost all participants showed leadership traits that I had not seen among Jeddah female youth before I left Saudi Arabia in 2006. Those leadership traits brought out young women who were independent and innovative leaders in their work. The leadership skills the women built helped them resist what they perceived as the school leaderships' unethical

practices. The young women developed professional recommendations for program improvement and for changing key Saudi norms regarding male/female interaction in the public sphere. Female youth sketched a new outline for how they wanted to deal with males who were not part of their families, especially when doing community service work. The young women expressed several times that their new interaction norms would be within the allowable Islamic religious beliefs of how men and women were supposed to interact.

**Young Saudi women demonstrated true leadership traits.** U1 and U2 participants demonstrated remarkable leadership skills during their community service activities. Eleven of the 15 Saudi students and graduates I interviewed at U1 spoke of the topic of leadership. All seven participants at U2 cultivated or enriched their leadership skill set during their college years; at least one participant held leadership positions in student government and other student organizations. The finding of this study confirmed existing literature about the role women played in the leadership in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Saudi women already share leadership positions with men. I wondered: when did this change occur?

It has been shown that collegiate volunteer experiences prepare college students for their post-graduate lives in the public sphere (Al-Bilali, 2011; Francis, 2011). Al-Zoubi and Rahman's research found that "women in Saudi Arabia have achieved significant gains in higher education and school education . . . In the area of political empowerment women have taken over political and leadership positions" (2014, p. 93). Al-Bilali's research (2011) found similar result that "indicate a clear strategic direction of

policy makers and development plans in Saudi Arabia towards an even greater role for women in public life and into top leadership positions in public domains” (p. 149). Moreover, women in Saudi Arabia “are slowly but definitely assuming high positions that include deputy minister, university president, Shura Council consultants, board members of chambers of commerce, and many other new and exciting positions in both the public and private sectors” (Al-Bilali, 2011, p. 150).

I was surprised to learn that programs such as *student government* existed in an all-female Saudi university in Jeddah! I was under the impression that the Saudi government prohibited such organizations from forming, especially at an all-female university. When Noora said, *we are the voice of the students*; I was stunned and happy at the same time—stunned because this was the first time I heard such a statement with such a firm tone—and happy, because the voices of the young women are finally out.

***Participants perceived poor and unethical practices by the leadership team, which caused distrust and hurt the credibility of the program and the leadership team.*** Even though all of the participants expressed that they have benefitted greatly from the program, there were notable negative complaints on the program’s credibility.

Eight out of the twenty U1 students and graduates reported unethical program experiences. Three of the eight students and graduate participants from U2 had the same feedback. The participants experienced actions taken by the school management that were not necessarily appropriate and in some cases unethical from the participants’ point of view. According to Saudi author Fatany (2013), “Saudi youth today will not accept

leadership by the incompetent; they will refuse to continue to lag behind the more advanced countries of the world” (p. 49).

It seems that the government’s initiatives for women to play a greater role in public sphere has become a fact. To listen the young women to speak up and say that their university officials were doing something unethical was a new experience for me. I had not experienced such denouncement by youth females before.

***Mandatory community service was perceived as unethical.*** Some participants took issue with the mandatory nature of their community service experiences. Like in the case of U1 and U2, Taylor and Pancer (2007) found that some institutions tried to “promote greater civic engagement among young people” (p. 241). Jones and Hill (2003) noted that demanding community service at schools just for the purpose of meeting the curricular requirements caused school officials to focus on delivering the service but without service purpose and quality.

The participants in this study were inflexible about the negatives of mandating community service at school. Programs that required service deterred students from becoming civically engaged with social responsibilities (Jones & Hill, 2003). Findings of the study noted that required community service programs at schools caused many of the participants to drop community service programs after it was no longer required by the schools (Jones & Hill, 2003). The authors recommended that program staff help students understand *why community service was important* as a means of encouraging students to become more involved in community service programs at schools (Jones & Hill, 2003).

U1 students were mandated to complete 100 hours in order for them to graduate, while U2 students were asked to serve through the value points program. As Noora from U2 said, “even though U2 leadership said the program was not voluntary, it was! Some students feel that the five value points are their way of getting a full mark. Without it they could not get that 100% in any course.”

A question came to my mind, why did two participants at U1 recommend that the program remain mandatory? I asked this question explicitly and I received three answers: “because most Saudi girls are spoiled,” “because we as Saudis have always been mandated to do things,” and “without mandating the community service program, girls will not take it seriously.” Being a Saudi from Jeddah, I could relate to all three answers, but I am not sure that mandating the program is the right way to encourage volunteerism and community service. I believe that students need to be encouraged to buy in and do service out of passion, not fear of low grades.

I noticed that mandating the program or making it voluntary did not have an effect on whether the program had positive effects on students’ lives. U1 students, who were mandated to serve 100 hours, made some strong points about how the program changed their lives positively. No participants indicated that their lives were made miserable by the community service program. More than fifty percent of the young women said that they finished more hours than what was required. Had they been desperate and annoyed by the mandated program, they would not have finished triple or quadruple as much as the required hours.

*Young Saudi women are changing the way they interact with men.* Saudi culture is largely conservative. Traditionally, Saudi females are not supposed to interact publically with males unless a relative is present. Americans typically find this custom strange. It appears that Saudi customs may be changing. Young Saudi women from Jeddah are changing the way they are interacting with males who are strangers to them. The young women are rejecting a long-standing tradition practiced by more conservative Saudi people. To understand the cultural shift for young women in Jeddah, it is vital to know Saudi Arabian society's structure and to understand the role tradition and religion play (Hamdan, 2005). To comprehend this new trend among young females from the perspective of existing literature, I found several articles that helped me understand why the young women may have changed their perception of how they should interact with males who were strange to them.

### **How Transformation Took Place**

The findings of this study confirmed what the literature has attested. There seemed to be major transformative change in culture among youth females and their families in Jeddah, especially the females that went to private nonprofit colleges. Applying Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, the way the youth females interacted with males who were strange to them could be considered as a form of transformative learning. The participants learned and changed as a result of their experiences (Coghlan & Gooch, 2010). There have been changes in the minimum acceptable norms and rules by parents and adult family members who lived in Jeddah. I related these demands for change to the girls' apparent new leadership traits. The girls



rejected traditional cultural norms, set new rules for dealing with men, spoke up against unethical actions, and demanded new program changes.

I applied Mezirow's ten-step theory (2000) to the change that occurred to the young women at U1 and U2. I believe the women went through the first nine steps to reach the change that occurred. They are yet to face the consequences of the tenth step, *reintegrating into society with a new perspective*. As an example for this last step, one of the women who went to school in the US approached me to help her find an internship opportunity in Saudi. The organizations that came to my mind were private companies and factories that were owned by people from Jeddah, and who shared the same beliefs the women and I had about females interacting with males. I approached five companies. I was surprised that one of my friends, who I believed was open to the changes that happened to Jeddah society, told me, "It is better to look for a place which has an isolated female section." When I conveyed this news to the young woman, she said, "I do not like to take this opportunity, I am looking for a company that does not compromise my freedom and does not impose such restrictions on me!" In a way, I agreed with her sentiment, but change is incremental—it will take time to change the mentality of the more conservative Saudi people.

It is not clear whether the U1 and U2 participants or the female students who studied abroad will experience smooth transitions into professional lives in Jeddah. This may not be a problem for those who get a job opportunity in private conglomerate groups in Jeddah, Riyadh, or Dammam—the three cosmopolitan cities in Saudi Arabia. If the women were to work in the government sector, in local private companies, or nonprofits

anywhere else in the Saudi Arabia, I expect they would face problems as a consequence of challenging the status quo.

**Saudi societal rules and boundaries.** The history of Saudi Arabia has been shaped by a single factor, which is Islam (Pharaon, 2004). In addition, Afif (2010) argued that the “Saudi society is a unique mix between religion and culture” (p. 121). This unique mix has caused Saudi to be a religiously conservative country in social contexts; the mix has also resulted in a society of a high cultural homogeneity based on Islamic and tribal affiliations. This is why Saudi Arabia has a mix of unique and complex culture (Afif, 2010). The mix between tribal and Islamic affiliations made it difficult for the public to differentiate between Islamic laws and traditional norms, which produced a conservative society.

According to Alsaggaf and Williamson (2004), in general Saudi society is considered to be mostly conservative. Religion plays a principal factor in the Kingdom’s culture. It shapes people’s practices, behaviors, and attitudes (as cited in Guta & Karolak, 2015). Major cities like the cosmopolitan city of Jeddah are generally less conservative than small towns and cities (Afif, 2010). The high level of conservativeness was noted in a survey, which indicated that 80% of Saudi women believed women should not work in a mixed gender environment (Alhabidi, 2013). There is “Strict gender segregation” in Saudi Arabia (Sallam & Hunter, 2013, p. 146). The conservative Saudi public almost sees strict separation of men and women in public areas as a national and religious duty (Guta & Karolak, 2015). Enforcements of the restrictions vary by region. The capital city of Riyadh and the surrounding regions are much stricter, where Jeddah is relatively relaxed

(Alhabidi, 2013). According to Huyette, 1985, “For many Saudi women, sex segregation, does not imply a lesser social status (p.118)” (as cited Hamdan, 2005, p. 58).

***The status of women in Saudi society.*** “The position of women in Saudi society, especially in the public domain, is complicated” (Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth, & Al Dighrir, 2015, p.122). Females are expected to be more responsible than males to uphold family honor (Shoup, 2009). Women are expected to observe social norms at all costs; if they do not, the entire family is dishonored (Guta & Karolak, 2015). For a long time, Saudi women were not permitted to form groups other than charitable organizations focused on other women and children with disabilities; they were prohibited by law to form any association that dealt with professional volunteer organizations (Pharaon, 2004). Recently, the Saudi government started working on enforcing the rights of women to have a role in the political, educational, and social domains (Fatany, 2007). According to Fatany, the government is making sure that women’s rights are originated from Islamic religion customs and traditions, which assures women and men are equal in rights and duties (As cited in Al-Zoubi & Abdel Rahman, 2014, p. 94).

***Changes in youth females of Saudi society.*** “Saudi Arabia is at the crossroads. There are undercurrents suggesting that there will soon be massive social change within the Kingdom” (Sallam & Hunter, 2013, p. 143). The role of female youth of Saudi Arabia is looked at as a “potential forces for change within the Kingdom” (p. 141). Part of what is encouraging the change among youth is that in every Saudi family or community there are liberal males who are open to change in ideas and methods, and vice versa, there are females who are resistant to change (Pharaon, 2004). Saudi youth from both genders are

exposed to a great influx of Western cultures through the Internet (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015), “Women in Saudi Arabia are... making big use of the Internet” (Pharaon, 2004, p. 359). The youth female generation knew about US culture through other sources, such as family, friends, and the media (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). The globalization of Western culture may have been a factor in the changing attitudes and behaviors of young Saudi women. The fact that many young Saudi women leave the country to study at American universities may also play a role in the cultural shifts.

*Saudi young women who studied abroad as change agents.* The change among young Saudi females seemed to have started nearly 40 years ago. More than half of the students who studied abroad in 1980 on government-sponsored scholarships were women. This influx of female students was stopped when the government imposed a rule that each female had to have a male guardian who was a close relative (Pharaon, 2004).

Political and cultural developments In Saudi Arabia in the past decade have created new international education opportunities for Saudi young women (Lefdahl-Davis, & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). As a consequence, according to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission SACM (2012), the Saudi government rarely encouraged women to study abroad until 2005 (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). In 2005 the Saudi government started a scholarship program where students, males and females, went abroad all around the world to gain a college education. In 2012, the number of females was 17,117, which comprised 22% of the total number of Saudi students in the U.S. (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015).

Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) investigated Saudi female students' cultural adjustment experiences in the United States. The study found that the Saudi females who attended schools in the United States had to pass through different experiences in order to adjust culturally in classrooms, among public, and in their private lives, in order to bridge the gap between Saudi and American cultures (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015).

Saudi females in the States needed to deal with cultural difference during their temporary stay in the States. Cultural differences included having to deal with male professors and male classmates (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). The study concluded that Saudi international students potentially transformed through higher levels of personal freedom, self-discovery, increased confidence, and cultural understanding of other societies (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015).

Females interviewed for the study did not experience culture shock when they moved to the United States (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). The most common explanations for this cultural comfort were that most of the women had travelled before, and they may have been raised in cultural conditions similar to that of the States. Many participants reported that they benefitted from their time in the States. They became more confident, independent, intellectual, and most importantly, they learned to accept others. The participants reported that they were ready to go back to Saudi Arabia with a change in their vision for the future. One of the worries the girls showed was on how they would prepare to return back home and face the reverse cultural shock.

*The role of the Internet in the change to Saudi youth interaction rules.* “Saudi youth are much more complex than the generation before them” (Sallam & Hunter, 2013, p. 145). For a long time, young men and women used to meet secretly or through parental pre-arrangements. The Internet provided youth a new, virtual meeting space (Pharaon, 2004). According to Guta and Karolak (2015), a large segment of Saudi youth are changing norms through social media and blogging. Meanwhile, this group remains attached to their moderate religious and cultural conservatism. Because of the changes female youth are implementing in Saudi society, CNN has called female Arab bloggers “agents of change” (p. 116) in their societies. The study by Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) demonstrated a concrete role of the Internet as a change tool. Saudi youth’s openness to the Internet has clearly established new social rules between both genders of the Saudi young generation (Guta & Karolak, 2015). In summary, Saudi Arabia is facing the challenge of having to deal with the implications of globalization’s main instrument, the Internet. The other powerful vehicle the Saudi society is struggling to deal with is the satellite television (Guta & Karolak, 2015).

***Previous passion for community service was needed for better volunteering and community service outcomes during college.*** Passion for volunteerism was not a commonly-used phrase among my Saudi peers when I was in Saudi Arabia. However, ninety percent of the U1 participants and all U2 participants stated that their previous passion for volunteerism was a motive for them to deliver better service. This high percentage prompted me to wonder, was previous experience really needed that badly for the women to become committed to community service? During the interviews, I always

wondered, where did that *passion* come from, and what ignited it? I began questioning this phenomenon about three years ago when a group of young Saudis from Jeddah came to study in Minneapolis area. All fifteen males and females surprised me with their passion towards the Jeddah-area volunteer experiences.

Recent scholarship suggested that a cultural shift in attitudes toward community service and volunteerism are indeed at work in the Saudi context. The foundation for the development of community services initiatives was created with the 1962 establishment of the Saudi Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 1999). Over half a century later, Saudi culture has experienced reforms in the “social, political, and economic” spheres, including “the creation of the Shura Council or the Consultative Council, municipal elections, an independent organization for Human Rights, and founding of King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue” (Al-Kurdi, 2004, as cited in Afif, 2010, p. 2). In the 1980s, “[p]rominent female members of the royal family established charitable organizations across the Kingdom in an attempt to support Saudi females in need of help. These charitable organizations were part of the Ministry of Social Affairs” (Pharaon, 2004, p. 364).

In the aftermath of the early 1990s Gulf War, countries in the Arab region experienced rapid growth in the community service sector (Afif, 2010). The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs’ initiatives included the creation of The Center of Social Development; the Center’s recommendations included the development of community-based committees that specialized in voluntary work (Bendania, Al Dini, & Garris, 2012). Educational institutions encouraged student, staff, and faculty engagement in

volunteering initiatives (Afif, 2010). According to Afif the “concept of volunteerism is spreading” (p. 3) in Saudi culture.

Some of the U1 and U2 participants had pre-college volunteer experiences, which probably became one of the sources of motivation for community service in their undergraduate years. According to Jones and Hill (2003), “students who have been consistent participants in service in high school will most likely seek out these opportunities at college” (p.535). Jones and Hill’s research found that nearly 83% of first-year college students indicated in a 2001 Freshman Survey that in their senior year of high school, they volunteered (2003). Dalton (2006, as cited by Sullivan, Ludden, & Singleton, 2013) found that higher education institutions view “community service as one of the most important institutional strategies for promoting students’ ethical and moral development” (p.512). As demonstrated in previous chapters, both U1 and U2 missions included commitment to service learning or community service programs for its students.

I have been investigating about volunteerism in Saudi Arabia since 2010. The level of enthusiasm and passion by the volunteers I interacted with astonished me. The same was true for U1 and U2 participants. I observed that when participants were passionate about volunteering, they were automatically willing to commit to the community service program and to volunteering as a whole. Like everything else, my experience tells me that if people are passionate about anything in life they will be devoted to achieving it.

U1 and U2 volunteers had both intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivations for their participation in community service initiatives. Student participants demonstrated intrinsic



motivation, for instance, when they perceived a link between “a course or project outcome and their personal goals” (Pope-Ruark, Ramsey, Brady, & Fishman, 2014, p. 131).

Some of the U1 and U2 participants’ pre-college experiences were tied to their religious faith, which is not surprising given that Saudi Arabia is Islamic. As Al-Zoubi and Rahman (2014) wrote, “the ruling regime is based on the tolerant teachings of Islam, which based the foundations of justice and equality between women and men in rights and duties” (p. 93). Sullivan, Ludden, and Singleton’s (2013) review of literature also addressed the role that students’ religiosity played in volunteer activities. Their literature review indicated that the more religious students were, the higher their rate of engagement in volunteer activities. Religious organizations themselves “provide structured opportunities to engage in volunteer service” (Ozorak, 2003; Serow, 1989; Serow & Dreyden, 1990; and Wuthnow, 1991, as cited in Sullivan, Ludden & Singleton, 2013, p. 513).

*Jeddah flood relief efforts as a volunteering catalyst.* Research has found that natural disasters often serve as a catalyst for community engagement and volunteerism (Taniguchi & Marshall, 2014; Wilhelm, 2006). My dissertation research found similar results. Several young women I interviewed at U1 were moved to volunteer after a major flood in Jeddah in 2009. The flood was a disaster of major proportions, and affected Jeddah’s entire metropolitan area. Thousands of citizens struggled in the flood’s aftermath, and U1 participants indicated that the flood inspired many of their volunteer efforts. Episodic volunteering like the Jeddah flood efforts did help volunteers become

passionate and committed to volunteering, and seven U1 participants' passion for community service was sparked in the context of the flood aftermath. This theme was not apparent among U2 participants. I am not sure why; it might have been that I did not ask as much as I did with U1 participants on their role in the Jeddah floods relief efforts.

For a fact, the Jeddah flood relief efforts by the youth volunteering groups were a catalyst for future volunteering initiatives in the City. Volunteering had become famous among youth in Jeddah, but, according to experts in the volunteering field in Jeddah, those groups vanished after the crisis ended. Members and leaders of the volunteering groups requested some incubation and direction so they could continue their passionate volunteering after the flood relief work they did, but found no sponsors to do so. During this study I heard from over thirty young men and women that they lacked clear direction for sustaining volunteer efforts in the post-flood era. The only notable action by the government, they said, was the acknowledgement party sponsored by the famous Governor of Mecca area Prince Khalid Bin Faisal in 2013. The youth did not perceive other key initiatives by any government official after that date.

*Family, friends,' peers,' and leadership support was critical to participants' commitment to the community service program.* The findings in this dissertation research support previous scholarly findings. For example, two researchers' study found that the "more individuals felt that family and friends supported their community service involvements, the more decided they were on a career, the greater comfort they felt in their progress at making a career choice, and the more knowledge they felt they had about career possibilities" (Taylor & Pancer, 2007, p. 337). Parental and sibling support was

particularly useful. Pharaon (2004) found that “daughters will find support from their Saudi fathers for pursuing their education, careers, or travels, in the face of unyielding mothers. Some sisters find their strongest allies in their Saudi brothers when they need to lobby their parents for more freedom” (p. 358).

As described in earlier chapters, U1 participants were highly vocal about how the support of their family, friends, and college was a significant factor in their decision to begin and/or continue volunteering. Only two participants from U2, however, noted the importance of family and peers’ support as a major factor in their commitment to the service program. Even these two participants skimmed through this point without stressing its importance. I am not sure why that was the case.

*Leadership support.* Both U1 and U2 participants mentioned that the support of leadership was very needed in order for the young women to be able to commit to the community service program. This finding was supported in the literature. Jones and Hill (2003) stated that to have a better connection to service, students needed encouragement from friends and a “nudge” (p. 335) from student affairs educators and university faculty. The authors added that community service participators also need extra encouragement from administration and faculty to make the initial involvements in the community service (Jones & Hill, 2003).

Saudi culture is collectivist; as such, it is important that Saudi young women who do community service to have the support from family, peers, and leadership for two reasons. First, females in the Saudi society are still not a hundred percent independent—they are not even close. Without the support of everyone around them, the young women

are still going to face obstacles to volunteer, do community service, or even work. Second, the young Saudi people are still dependent on close ones in almost every decision-making process. From my experience, I noticed that it is still a habit for the young Saudi females to ask peers' help for major decisions such as what to study, which school or program to join, whom to marry, and what activities to do. Once they had a sense of direction, they approached parents, elder family members, mentors, and sometimes bosses at work, for final decision-making. However, I have seen changes in these trends during the last five years. The young women are becoming more and more independent, especially ones who were educated in schools like U1 and U2 and young women who went to study in schools outside Saudi Arabia.

*Participants reported that the program resulted in positive impacts.* U1 and U2 interviewees stated some positive impacts that their volunteer experiences had on their collegiate and post-graduate experience. This emerging data is supported by prior research that has found similar results (Ibrahim & Sarirete, 2014; Sullivan, Ludden, & Singleton, 2013; Taylor & Pancer, 2007). Ibrahim and Sarirete's research into the effectiveness of the student affairs programs at a private nonprofit university found that its community service program was "well-received by students and conceived to be relevant for life after university" (2014, p. 56).

When I began this research project, I had no relevant experience for understanding how community service engagement could affect people's lives. Now, after analyzing the data, all forty-interview participants indicated that their lives have been enhanced by the experience. I was excited to find the article by Ibrahim and Sarirete

(2014) on how community service at universities affected students because the research occurred at a private nonprofit University in my hometown of Jeddah.

I believe one of the reasons the programs resulted in positive impacts on students' lives was that the young women were strongly receptive to change because of such programs. They wanted to benefit from the program; this is why they affirmed that it had good impacts on their lives. In other words, if they did not believe inside them that the program would positively affect them, they would never have felt the positive changes the program gave them.

*Participants stated that the program resulted in personal and professional growth.* U1 and U2 participants' personal growth was exemplified by self-change, change in attitude towards others, increased awareness of poverty, respect for the surrounding community, and increased levels of self-trust and confidence. Social impacts centered on how community service helped graduates' patriotism and nationalism, and how graduates became better connected with society and the surrounding community. Some participants noted the benefit of increased networking opportunities. Thus, my dissertation research confirms the findings by other researchers (Francis, 2011; Nunn, 2000).

**Theme II: Relationship is imperative in Saudi culture for gaining research participants' trust.** Doing the study confirmed that relationship is key among Saudi people. If it were not for the support of the people surrounding me it would have been hard to recruit participants for this study. According to Hofstede, Hofstede, and Michael (1991), Saudi Arabia is considered to be a collectivistic society. Loyalty in a collectivist

culture is dominant. It overrides most other societal rules and regulations. The society promotes strong relationships where everyone in the society takes responsibility for fellow members of the group. Trust was key in this study. The trust the participants put in me during the interview was an indication of how relationship was important throughout this research. Taniguchi and Marshall (2014) said, “The effect of trust may also highly depend on specific social contexts” (p. 157). I believe the trust the participants put in me was a result of the social context of Jeddah people. People in Jeddah society are very attached to each other. I was able to relate over eighty percent of the participants I met to people I knew. I probably was lucky because I had held two major public and private positions, which exposed me to the Jeddah society.

I was not able to find literature that connects the importance of relationship in the Saudi culture to recruiting participants who were college students or graduates from Saudi colleges. This is why I decided, as a fifty-five year Saudi who has lived and worked in Saudi all my life, to paint a picture of how Jeddah culture looked like. From my past experience I confirm that this theme is applicable. The importance of relationship in the Saudi culture is a major social issue that I always experienced whenever I had to interact with other Saudi citizens.

Before I conducted this research, I expected this social factor to appear in the study findings. I took for granted the fact that relationships are vital for accomplishing anything in Saudi culture. As a matter of fact, my trip away from Saudi for over nine years proved this fact. Without the *remaining* relationship I had with some key people, I would not have been able to finish important projects back in Saudi.

I believe that without the strong relationship I had with a good number of people of Jeddah, it would have been hard to finish my tasks as I had scheduled. I counted on some relationships to expedite the process of finding participants, but in some cases it did not work. For example, I was counting on my relationship with U1 and U2 Presidents to expedite the interviews process but relationship did not work as I had planned. I expected, because I had family and friendship relations with the two Presidents, that I would be given an exception to bypass some of the rules of U1 and U2. At the very least, I assumed that I could have skipped the IRB process. I thought that thought because I am related to them, I would have been able to meet the participants without completing the proper forms, letters of consent, and other ethics committees' requirements. As much as I found those processes annoying, I respected both Presidents Azah and Dr. Maha more. To me, their commitment to the rules and the regulations raised U1 and U2 credibility.

One issue about relationship was that once I connected with the first five or six people I felt I did not need to exert more efforts to find more people. The *snowball process* worked perfectly. Because all the participants from each school were connected in some way and trusted one other, I did not have to push my *relationship engine* a lot. All what I had to do was to say, "I was introduced to you by X or Y"; this statement gave me quick access to participants' trust. One question remains: how long will the relationship-based culture be sustained in the context of the significant cultural changes at work in Saudi Arabia?

Knowing the society closely, I am concerned about how effective relationships will be in the future in Jeddah area. Saudi cities, like Jeddah, have been experiencing

significant population growth with huge migrations from villages and small towns surrounding them. The structure of the Saudi society in the big cities has changed and continues to change at a rapid pace. The demographics of neighbors, school teachers and friends, and government officials are no more the people of Jeddah who I knew for the last fifty years. They are from all around Saudi Arabia. Even though Saudi people are very hospitable, friendly, and nice to each other, there are still great cultural gaps that could take decades to resolve—differences in social, economic, educational, and religious beliefs. My family and I are facing this fact now while we are living in the United States.

The Saudi government began a scholarship program nine years ago. Students from different cities, sectors and provinces are now studying together in the States and other universities around the world. My family and I were heavily involved with Saudi students all around the United States. Most of them count my wife and I like Godparents. We attend almost all the events Saudi students do at their universities, especially University of St. Thomas events. Sahar, my wife, and I learned new habits and rituals from the vast number of Saudi student (over 200) in St. Thomas. We deal with students from the East coast, West coast, Central region, and the Southern region. We run frequently through the different cultures of Saudi students.

As Saudi people are collectivist, most students like to gather in clusters. The problem that I am facing is that it is not uncommon that students from each region gather with each other separately. I noticed that in most cases people from Najran (a big city in the Southern part of Saudi Arabia) tend to gather around a leader who is a great man. The same is happening with the students from Jeddah, and those who are from the East coast



of Saudi. Automatically, I notice that except for the leader from Najran who deals with all Saudi students on the same level of relationship, all other students from the different regions in Saudi have an *enclosed* relationship bounded by where they came from.

The government system in Saudi has improved significantly during the last decade. Electronic governance is now widely used to complete many government transactions. For example, it used to take weeks to issue a new passport, a national ID, or a trade certificate. Today, such documents are attained in sometimes as little as an hour. Human relationship and interaction is highly needed to attain official documents in other government agencies. For example, when I needed to obtain a building permit for a project I wanted to construct in Jeddah while I was still in the US, I needed to use my relationships as an ex-Municipality employee to obtain the permit. Without that relationship, it would have taken me much longer to receive the building permit.

To tie this to my concern about how relationship is going to work in the future, I believe that unless government officials develop programs that tie people from the different regions together, relationship will no longer be a strong factor in the Saudi society. Hence, I do not know if we will continue to be a collectivist society in the future. Hence, I wonder if this theme will appear in studies like this—that is, can future researchers assume that *relationship is very important in the Saudi culture to gain the trust of the participants*? I wonder if young women in Jeddah, with the leadership traits they showed, would tolerate the need for relationship to get their businesses done.

### **Implications for OD Practice**

According to Afif (2010), women have been involved in civic engagement in Saudi Arabia for over fifty years. Saudi females have been successful in their social work in spite of regulatory obstacles. This study revealed several important themes that illustrated how the voluntary sector in Jeddah could benefit from the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the universities' young graduates who were taught how to deliver acceptable service through the community service programs at their schools.

This study has four major implications for Saudi organization development practice. First, there is a need to promote service programs in Saudi schools and universities. Second, nonprofit organizations need to collaborate with universities' service learning programs. Third, there is a need to help more conservative or traditional Saudis adjust to the cultural shifts occasioned by members of younger people generally, and to the changes that female youth have already demonstrated. Fourth, there is a need to implement better practices for better service learning programs.

**Promoting service programs in Saudi schools and universities.** Inman and Pascarella (1998) argued, "student involvement is a key to student development" (as cited in Ibrahim, & Sarirete, 2014, p. 55). Structured programs such as those implemented by U1 and U2 are great programs for students' involvement. In order to make it easy for college students to buy-in to service, I believe that community service programs need to be introduced during elementary, middle, and high schools. I believe the turf is now ready for this change in Saudi schools for two reasons.

First, there is a powerful intention by the government to support the nonprofit sector. This became clear when King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz ascended the throne after the death of the King Abdullah, who died in January 2015. The new King appointed young Ministers to the board of Ministers. One of them was the Minister of Social Affairs. I have known this Minister for over thirty years. He is a Ph.D. scholar who earned his degree in the West, and he has worked in the academic field and other key government and private sectors. He also has a long history of international experiences. He is all about change. With the support that this Minister has from the King, I believe there can be a major shift in how the nonprofit sector is operated.

Second, another Minister was also appointed recently, the Minister of Education. He has the same qualifications as those of the Minister of Social Affairs. An advantage that the new Minister of Education has is that he is now in charge of both the pre-college schools and higher education systems. The two Ministries have been combined. Prior to his appointment, there were two separate Ministries: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. For a long time, there has been a discrepancy between the outcome of the pre-college school system and the quality of students Saudi universities were seeking. It is believed that joining the two ministries would help coordinate the strategies of lower and higher education. If service is implemented in the pre-college schools system, it would benefit a great number of higher education students.

*Service learning or community service.* It has been clear to me that service learning has been applied at U1 and U1, but under the name *community service*. Actually, it became clear that more Saudi people than I expected knew about service learning. The

Dean's deputy at U2 and some of the participants I met from U1 have talked about service learning but in the context of community service; the Saudi Ministry of Labor has a major program that prepares fresh graduates for the job fields using service learning as a tool. That program is called Sawaed Al Amal. Service learning has proven to be a very useful program in American schools. Service learning has shown positive impacts on students' future. Finally, service learning is more attached to curriculum, where students have to do projects that serve the communities within the course work.

All these reasons made me believe that it is the right time for Saudi officials officially introduce service learning as an extracurricular program in the educational system, both in pre-college and in higher education contexts. Since the concept of doing service at schools is still new in Saudi Arabia, programs should be mandatory to ensure that as many Saudi students as possible gain early exposure and experience to volunteerism and service learning. The Ministry could mandate the program at least for ten years or until a whole new generation of committed students graduate. The Ministry of Education should probably utilize the success that schools such as U1 and U2 has achieved and build on their success to build structured service learning programs that would be implemented in all schools. The Ministry of Education and other Ministries, such as the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Planning, could collaborate on a national program to produce a new generation of citizens committed to service.

**The need for cooperation between the nonprofit sector and universities.** I learned through my nonprofit experience in the United States that volunteers are at the core of nonprofit organizations. Without volunteer assistance, nonprofit organizations

would not be able to operate and deliver service successfully. This is not necessarily true in Saudi Arabia. There needs to be a more rigorous role for volunteers, including those who do service at schools, in the nonprofit sector. Nonprofits could utilize the passionate volunteers at universities, such as U1 and U2 students, to thrive.

**Preparing Saudi society for the already-started change.** The government needs to prepare the society for the upcoming change among the young female generations. The women I met from U1 and U2 indicated that change among female young generation has started. This trend was more confirmed when I interacted with the young women studying in the States. This generation would not give up their demands for social change. The good news is that they have the Saudi government's blessing. For the last ten years, government officials have been stressing the importance of female involvement in all sectors. Women leaders have been appointed to the Council of Advisors (Al Shura), have been given high-ranking positions in Ministries, and have assumed key positions in all government offices. This is a sign that women are being empowered by the government. Young females are building on this government support and are demanding that their voices be heard. I believe it time for the government to use Mezirow's transformation theory with the Saudi population with a specific emphasis on step ten, in which the young women are ready to *reintegrate into society with a new perspective*.

Unlike older generations, the young Saudi generation is more open to global changes. The participants at U1 and U2 have proven this to be true. Their leadership traits and their demands for new norms demonstrate they are searching for change. The government needs to develop programs to prepare the student who are graduating from

institutions like U1 and U2—and those studying abroad on scholarship—that will teach them step-by-step how to become active change agents. These females could act as the new change agents of other young generation in Saudi Arabia.

**Implementing better practices for better service learning programs.** The U1 and U2 participants demanded that the schools' leadership deal with them as responsible women. The participants spoke up about several unethical issues, which summarized their demand for better service learning programs. In summary, participants' recommendations centered on designing professional up-to-date programs. They needed programs' managements to first respect their demands, and to listen to students' voices. That said, the students may need to be clearly aware of the mission and vision of the university, and why the program was mandated. They may want to also understand the importance of the program before they are asked to implement it.

The schools may need to design quality programs; arrange for service opportunities so students will not struggle to find service opportunities; and, finally, program managers should respect that the young Saudi females are more tech-savvy than the older generation and prefer to use social media as tools for interactions and awareness programs.

### **Limitations**

Practical limitations to the study were difficulties of recruitment, language, time, and distance considerations. The primary obstacle was recruitment, since during the first month of the data collection stage I had to travel to Saudi Arabia to meet school officials,

apply for the IRB to the two schools (U1 and U2), meet participants, and conduct the interviews.

I was also limited, with respect to time, during my summer vacation to Saudi Arabia. Since I currently live in the United States, time constraints for traveling and interviewing (face-to-face and via Skype) to collect data were significant concerns and limitations. The interviews' processes with participants and focus groups were considered as limitations, since there was a limited window of opportunity to reach the participants. I had to schedule interviews around participants' availability, so planning was methodical, and precision was highly considered while carrying out the interviews.

The interpretive case study design of this study limited the outcomes. The research study was limited to participants who attended two private non-profit universities for women, and only those who lived in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Findings of this case study research may not apply to the larger population of Saudi graduates from other colleges or those who live in other cities in Saudi Arabia.

Another key limitation was that participants lived in Saudi culture. In the Saudi culture, it takes people a long time to build trust and for people to speak with transparency. I had very limited time to build this trust. Being a stranger to eighty percent of the participants may have limited or skewed the data I collected. As an example, one of the participants was reluctant to let her father know that she volunteered with males. The fact that she was afraid her father might become aware about her past volunteering experience could have limited what she said in the interview.

Another limitation involved linguistic differences between English and Arabic. Even though all the participants (except one) spoke excellent English, all participants from the U1 and U2 preferred to speak more Arabic than English during the interviews. I made sure to carefully review the translation of the interviews I transcribed. Some concepts or ideas, though, may not have translated well. I had to pay special attention to translation. Sometimes I consulted with one of my family members who helped me translate some of the hard concepts or wordings.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

New research questions and opportunities arose from this dissertation study: 1) where and how did U1 and U2 participants learn to speak up about unethical wrong doings by the management, even though participants were not taught to speak up?; and 2) where did the participants learn the leadership traits they demonstrated: did they learn them at school, or were they inborn traits?

Since the topic of service learning is new to Saudi Arabia and I found no literature on it, additional research on the effects of service learning in Saudi high school and college students would be helpful. It might also be fruitful to learn how students who complete service-learning classes differ from students who do not participate in service-learning classes. Is service-learning class participation a significant predictor for degree completion? Finally, research about how Saudi women who earned their degrees abroad, and how they blended back into Saudi culture, would enrich the topic of the changing norms for male/female communication in the younger generation.



### **Personal Reflections**

This dissertation process has transformed me. On the academic level, I now know, and most importantly, appreciate, what interpretive research is all about. I will never forget my struggle to understand positivistic and interpretive approaches to research. I could not really understand the difference between the two designs until I performed this research.

I sensed the difference in the quality of data and findings I gained when I chose to use an interpretive design over a positivistic design. I now can say with pride that I am fortunate that I picked interpretive design for this study because I got more than what I wanted from this research.

My question was to understand how community service in college affected graduates' future volunteerism. I did get answers for my question, but I also obtained a significant amount of data I was not expecting. I learned a great deal about volunteerism in Jeddah society; I also learned about major cultural changes of which I was unaware before I began interviewing participants. My interaction with the young female college students of Jeddah was a new experience to me.

I had always perceived open-minded females as liberal "bad girls". It turned out I was wrong and I was hit by my own biases and prejudices. The participants turned out to be great personalities who understood facts in life much better than I did. The young women taught me how to become passionate, how to be a better leader, and most importantly, how not to judge anybody by the way they look or act. This study has

changed me a great deal. As I told my entire UST doctoral cohort six colleagues, “I have transformed and a new Mahmoud came to existence.”

### **Conclusion**

In this study, I aimed to understand how community service at college affected graduates' future volunteerism. The quick answer to my question was that participants reported positive post-graduation volunteerism impacts due to the program. The participants also reported that the program resulted in positive impacts on personal and professional growth. These were not the only answers I gained from this research.

Two major themes emerged from this research. The first theme was that there is a major transformation among young women in Saudi schools and colleges. One fact stood out during interviewing those girls that they are changing the way they want to interact with men who are strangers to them. Several issues also emerged: Previous passion for community service led to better volunteering outcomes during college; support was critical to participants' commitment to the community service program; Jeddah flood relief efforts served as a volunteering catalyst for college students, and young Saudi women demonstrated true leadership traits. I learned that there is a major transformation among some, perhaps many, young Saudi women. Finally, a second theme emerged from this study, which confirmed that relationship is imperative in Saudi culture for gaining research participants' trust.

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## **Appendix I**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **Questions to Graduates**

- 1) What was your experience going through the community service program?
- 2) In what way did it change your volunteerism post-graduation?

#### **Questions to President of the University**

- 1) What was the philosophy behind the community service program?
- 2) Tell me about the community service program experience?
- 3) In what way do you say the impact of community service on students and the community?

#### **Questions to People in Charge of the Community Service Department**

1. Tell me about your community service program.
2. What was the philosophy behind the community service program?
3. In what way do you say the impact of community service on graduates and the community?

#### **Questions to Parents of Graduates**

1. What is your opinion about the community service program that your child went through?
2. In what way do you believe the program affected your child volunteerism?

## **Appendix II**

### **Revised Interview Questions**

#### **Graduates' Questions**

1. Please tell me about the community service program?

Probes –

- What is the purpose?
- What were the community service projects?

2) What was your experience going through the community service program?

- What were your thoughts and feelings about the experience?

3) Did community service change any thing in you? If so, in what way did it change your volunteerism post graduation?

4) If you were to change any thing in the design of the community service program what would you do?

#### **Staff and Leaders' Questions**

1) Tell me about the community service program experience?

2) What was the philosophy behind the community service program?

3) In what way do you say the impact of community service on students and the community?

#### **Relatives/Friends of Graduates' Questions**

1) In what way do you believe the program affected your child volunteerism?

- 2) Do you believe your child will continue volunteering post graduation because of the community service program at the college? If no,
- 3) From what you know about the program, what could be changed in the program so your child continues volunteering post graduation?