

Crafting Continuity and Change: Narratives of Saudi Men and Women Inhabiting Socio-Cultural Norms within Undergoing Change

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Student Name: May Hamad A Alhusayni

School of Sociology and Social Policy

October 2022

Words count 99.941 (including acknowledgement, dedication, appendices and references)

Dedication

To my mother, Sarah, and father, Hamad, who taught me love and generosity. I feel I do not have the words to express my gratefulness.

To my kids, Nasser, Faris and Sarah, and to my husband, Hisham. Having you in my life has made it possible for me to follow my dreams, including pursuing this doctoral degree.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank *Allah* (God) for his strength and power and for guiding me through this journey. Without *Allah*'s guidance this work would not have been possible.

I am also grateful to my supervisors. Words cannot express my depth of gratitude to Professor Andrew Yip and Dr Amal Kabesh who have been an incredible support throughout this journey.

I am very thankful for their understanding, wisdom and encouragement and for their scholarly insights and guidance in my work. I owe immense thanks to all my interviewees for agreeing to be part of this study and for sharing their experience with me. I hope these participants realise that they have made a contribution to the academic debate and that they are of great value.

Without them, this thesis would not have been possible. I am also grateful to my sponsor Saudi Cultural Bureau in the UK who generously funded my study.

Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	7
1.1. Research justification and knowledge gap	8
1.2. Research aims and questions	13
1.6. Historical and cultural background of the research	15
1.6.1 <i>Socio-political</i>	16
1.6.2. <i>Socio-economic</i>	22
1.6.3. <i>Politics of gender relations in Saudi Arabia</i>	24
1.6.4. <i>Tribes as social capital</i>	28
1.7. Outline of chapters	34
Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	38
2.1. Introduction.....	38
2.2. The relevance of post-colonial theory.....	38
2.3. Empirical themes in the portrayal of social actors in the Middle East	43
2.4. Empirical themes in the portrayal of social actors in the Saudi context	52
2.5. Alternative lens to understanding agency	61
2.5.1. <i>Agency and relationality</i>	70
2.5.2. <i>Relationality and choice</i>	79
2.5.3 <i>Identity and relationality</i>	81
Summary	87
Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Method	88
3.1. Introduction.....	88
3.2. Epistemological and knowledge claims	88
3.3. Research design	92
3.3.1 <i>Qualitative approach</i>	92
3.3.2 <i>Narrative methodology</i>	93
3.3.3 <i>Narrative interviews</i>	96
3.4. Sampling	97
3.4.1. <i>Challenges encountered in the sampling process</i>	99
3.4.2. <i>Sample size</i>	100
3.5. Fieldwork	101

3.5.1 <i>Conducting the interviews</i>	102
3.5.2. <i>Sample characteristics</i>	104
3.5.3. <i>Data analysis</i>	110
3.6. Reflexivity.....	115
Summary	123
Chapter Four: Negotiation of Marriage and Divorce.....	124
4.1 Introduction.....	124
4.1.1. <i>Integrating a personal story</i>	125
4.2. Negotiating personal choice.....	127
4.2.1. <i>Selecting spouses</i>	128
4.2.2. <i>Negotiation of direct involvement in selecting spouses</i>	136
4.3. Marriage as a partnership between spouses	149
4.4. Negotiation of familial perspective of “decent” marriage	164
4.4.1. <i>Ibn ’amm marriage</i>	165
4.4.2. <i>Compatible tribal lineage</i>	167
4.5. Divorce.....	174
4.5.1 <i>Divorce narrative and quality of relationship between spouses</i>	174
4.5.2 <i>The impact of divorce on family relations</i>	181
Summary	182
Chapter Five: Sexuality, Gender and Modesty: Negotiating of Work and Present in Public Places	184
5.1. Introduction.....	184
5.2. Women’s responsibility and respectability	185
5.2.1. <i>Defining appropriate feminine jobs</i>	185
5.5.2. <i>Inappropriate feminine jobs</i>	195
5.3 Women’s negotiations of work.....	202
5.3.1. <i>Femininity and work–life conflict</i>	202
5.3.2. <i>Women’s desires for more job chances</i>	205
5.4. Negotiations of women’s modesty.....	216
5.4.1. <i>Distinguishing the self</i>	216
5.4.2. <i>Modesty and Islamic virtue</i>	224
5.4.3. <i>Rethinking freedom</i>	230

Summary	238
Chapter Six: Masculinity, Family Dynamics, and Inter-Generational Conflicts: Rethinking the Gendered Nature of the Unmarked Male Subject.....	240
6.1. Introduction.....	240
6.2. Constructing masculinity	241
6.2.1. <i>Men’s experience of power across generations</i>	241
6.2.2 <i>Father’s role in separating men’s children from women’s spheres</i>	246
6.3. Negotiation of “freedom” and responsibility	259
6.4. Performing masculinity.....	264
6.4.1. <i>Masculinity in relation to protecting honour</i>	265
6.4.2. <i>Masculinity and showing honour</i>	274
6.5. Strategies to navigate through honour	281
Summary	288
Chapter Seven: Conclusions: Narratives of Saudi Men and Women Inhabiting Socio-Cultural Norms.....	290
7.1. Introduction.....	290
7.2. Contribution to knowledge	292
7.2.1. <i>Inhabiting norms and relationality</i>	296
7.2.2. <i>The ethic of performative acts of agency</i>	307
7.2.3. <i>The construction of relational selves through embeddedness</i>	312
7.4. Recommendations for future research	317
7.5. And then.....	318
References.....	320
Appendix 1: Interview Guide.....	1
Appendix 2: Ethical Approval	4
Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet	5
Appendix 4: Consent Form.....	12
Appendix 5: Glossary of Arabic Terms	1

Abstract

This thesis explores gender relations in contemporary Saudi Arabia. It seeks to inform an understanding of how Saudi men and women inhabit and negotiate gender norms in relation to various normative references e.g., nation, religious traditions, and defining masculinity and femineity. It also aims to look for contradistinction and complexity to understand sociological, historical, economic, and political issues that have impacted on gender relations. This thesis uses a constructivist–interpretivist paradigm through narrative interviewing with a sample of 16 men and women in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It applies narrative analysis using postcolonial critique of Western liberal feminists. This thesis shows the participants’ understanding of themselves in relation to their parents and kinship. It illustrates how the centrality of family sets ideals for both men and women that organises social relation which should not be understood as patriarchal oppression of women. The participants are strategically negotiating their choices, freedom and independence, reflecting their religious agentic capacity to find an alternative path towards social change that would not correspond to the universal language on liberation. They promote religious interpretation to be more reflexive on light of their contemporary context to the pursuit of wisdom that neither surrenders to social custom in relation to gender relation nor abandons. The meanings men and women assign to their understanding of their identities are built on being Saudi.

Chapter One: Introduction

The pace of social transformation is extremely significant for social norms within today's Saudi society. Examples of such societal reforms include economic changes that provide more job opportunities through the pursuit of sustainable revenues from investments in solar power, science, entertainment and tourism in light of Vision 2030 (Saudi Press Agency). Another shift in society is the newfound awareness of civil responsibilities and decision-making brought about by increasing levels of educational attainment and social media usage (Thompson, 2017; Turner, 2007). Additional examples include the regulation of the religious police in April 2016 and the removal of restrictions on women in 2017 allowing them to drive and enjoy freedom of movement in 2019 without obtaining permission of a male guardian to travel, work, and study (Saudi Press Agency). Within these socio-political, economic changes that are ongoing, this thesis explores gender relations in contemporary Saudi Arabia. It is a timely attempt to contribute to the academic debate on the potential impact of these changes on social norms. Here I intend to inform an understanding of how Saudi men and women inhabit and negotiate gender norms in relation to various normative references e.g., nation, religious traditions, and defining masculinity and femininity. It is also aimed at looking for contradistinction and complexity to understand sociological, historical, economic, and political factors that have impacted on gender relations.

This thesis uses a constructivist–interpretivist paradigm through narrative interviewing with a sample of 16 men and women in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It applies narrative analysis drawing on a postcolonial framework for critique of Western liberal feminists. This thesis explores the

complexity of lived experience in contemporary Saudi Arabia. A view on prominent meanings and understandings of the participants' experiences of marriage and divorce, sexuality and honour, women's work, family dynamics and masculinity is offered. It reinforces the argument that despite the dominant discourse of the detraditionalisation thesis, traditions (e.g. religious faith, tribe) continue to persist. This thesis argues: firstly, building on analyses the participants' negotiation of gender relations in the context of undergoing socio-political changes, the centrality of religion in participants' negotiations of gender and sex gives definitional cues about physical, relational, emotional and social reality. Secondly, as the participants understand themselves in relation to others (parents, kinship, tribe) through embeddedness, this study provides insight into how men and women participants balance the tension between their individuality and the fluidity of relationality. Thirdly, relationality is a context where participants understand choices, wishes and desires to voluntarily conform to social norms that constitutes the sense of who we are.

This chapter starts by explaining how it helps fill the gaps and contributes to the existing literature on gender and identity. After that, the research aims and questions are presented. Then, I outline how the thesis answers these questions by describing the structural organisation of the data. This is followed by the research background, which is set in the context of Saudi Arabia. Then I provide an overview of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

1.1. Research justification and knowledge gap

Before outlining the current state of research knowledge about Saudi men and women, I would like to note that the references cited in this section will be developed more fully in Chapter Two. While some previous studies of Saudis have described identities as 'hybrid' (e.g. Elyas, 2014,

Elyas and Picard, 2010, Yamani, 2000), an explicit connection to the theoretical aspects and conceptual literature on identity and the relational self has often been lacking. This study adds theoretical depth to its empirical analysis through an explicit and detailed consideration of the link to relationality and embeddedness. If one accepts that identities can be intersectional, as reflected in the analytical approaches explicitly or implicitly taken by researchers on Saudis' identities, it is then surprising that the existing literature (e.g. Thompson, 2017, Yamani, 2000) on Saudis has not addressed, for example, what their national identity as Saudi and their religious identity mean to them on a personal level and how salient this dimension of identity is in their lived experiences.

Saudi men's and women's attitude in crafting continuity and change has been extremely under-researched, this study aims at bringing complexity that would help to fill the gap. Often in previous studies, young Saudis have been discussed only in relation to the impact of socio-economic change, which undermines Saudis' sense of stability and order (Bin Safran, 2011; Elyas and Picard, 2010; Yamani, 2000). Scholars have argued that Saudis are simultaneously exposed to horizons of opportunity that offer them a chance to chart an independent life, and at the same time wish to hold on to valued aspects of tradition to resist change (Bin Safran, 2011), and/or to mix modernity with tradition (Yamani, 2000). While there have been small studies concerning Saudis in terms of identity, development and societal issues, women's voices have been insufficiently covered (e.g. Thompson, 2017; Elias and Picard, 2014). While women's perspectives were covered by Bin Safran (2011), it was done quantitatively. Though notably Yamani (2000) covers women voices in a qualitative account, she was not systematic in detailing the questions asked to her participants, which would allow the reader to assess the credibility of the data produced. Notably, Le Renard (2014) conducted a rich

qualitative study on Saudi women's voices on this topic. However, because I view identity with a relational approach, I want to add more richness and nuanced understanding to Le Renard's (2014) gender analysis through the conjunction of men's and women's voices.

There is certainly a need to expand on previous research relating to this topic, which my study attempts to do. People in the Arabic world has been studied from a number of angles, and economic contraction in particular has received much attention. However, there has been a paucity of literature on relationality and individuals' agency in the research on Arabic people, and when this has been referenced, the research has usually focused on people's lacking agency and irrationality. This thesis takes the relational self as its point of departure, mapping the lived experiences of Saudi men and women from Riyadh in relation to family, gender relation, life choices and perceptions of autonomy and freedom. Identities, as I will argue, are not only about individualistic choices, troubles and decisions; they are also constructed in relation to structure and memories.

I decided to start from the lived experiences and understandings of Saudi men and women themselves to illuminate the ways in which they navigate their subject position on diverse spaces and contexts and how they operate within the above-mentioned dominant discourses. As subsequent chapters will show, the dominant discourse that patriarchy is undermining Saudi men's and women's agency does not sit well with their ongoing engagement and negotiation. Therefore, 'oppression' is not the whole story. Although the social actor in a collectivist culture is often constructed as occupying a limited space of freedom, yearning to be free (for Saudi men and women) from the demands of other human beings is in contradiction to the enjoyment of the security that others provide. Though significant factors such as gender play a part in influencing Saudi men's and women's view and impact how they navigate both their aspirations and their

relationship with the opposite sex, religious brings men's and women's voices together to craft continuity and change.

Little has been written on Saudi and social capital (the cultural and historical dimensions of family that constitute the classed subject). It seems that equally scant attention has been given to how the identity dimension of social capital overlaps with other identity dimensions within the lives of Muslims. There appears to have been no discussion within the extant literature of any outcomes of the junction of social capital with other aspects of Saudi's identities. My study, therefore, aims to explore the salience and effects of the social capital positions occupied by the participants. This aims to highlight how dimensions of social capital experience and history that constitute the subject provide insights into mechanisms of social capital. It is my argument that the ways in which social capital is lived in Saudi Arabia is through cultural mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, normalisation and pathologisation. It is perhaps the value that society gives to honour and to stigmatising those break social norms that is deeply embedded in gender relation issues in the country. A recent book by Al-Shuqir (2020), a Saudi sociologist, laments the lack of academic attention to social capital and locates this disappearance within what he calls the reduction of political, social, and economic history while the 'religious establishment' was only the focal point as an identity marker that he sees grounding theorising. I agree with Al-Shuqir (2020) that an analysis of cultural capital has been a relatively neglected area of academic study and, specifically, has been one of the most undertheorised areas of feminist analysis of Saudis' identities. While the identity of Saudi society is still Islamic, diverse and flexible interpretations have emerged. My emphasis in this thesis will be on the cultural and symbolic configuration of social capital, which I argue is incorporated into participants' negotiations. This challenges the assumption about class consciousness of inequalities, as economics may not be

the most meaningful way to discuss social capital. One of the aims of this thesis, then, is to highlight the ways in which social capital can be configured through cultural and symbolical artefacts, and how this is significant for Saudi men's and women's middle-class sample self-understanding which will be clear in their negotiation of marriage choice, negotiation of women's respectability and code of masculinity. One way in which inequality works—based on participants' articulation—is through making Saudi men's and women's pathological (in relation to pre-marital relationships, women's work and appearance in public, and men's justification of masculinity), so that social capital relations are relations of superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality, judgment/shame. In a context of ongoing change in Saudi Arabia in light of Vision 2030, this thesis aims to highlight how Islam intersects with the honour code in mapping gender relations and the demands of relational others, but departs from it in other ways, offering a higher moral order in situations where the system of honour occludes.

The research questions that emerged from the combined process of bringing my personal interests to the research and reviewing the literature on Arab people's identity centre largely on perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and feelings: on how participants understand their lived experience and how they interpret their interactions with others in the familial and gender context. For example, I want to know how they perceive their gender identities, how gender forms their understanding, why they intimately feel they are relational to family and kin, and how they navigate their wishes within family relations.

Within this context, this study on Saudi men and women crafting continuity and change is located. It attempts to go beyond the popular discourse on oppression and questioning agency. The thesis aims to explore lived experience of identity in Saudi Arabia for 16 Saudi men and women in Riyadh. It seeks to understand how Saudi men's and women's lived religion and social

capitals inform how they experience and understand their identities. At the inter-personal level, the thesis aims to understand how Saudi men and women negotiate their sense of who they are/are not through interactions with others (family, kinship relations, and other national citizens) and ascribed identity. The study encompasses the search for meaning, performative acts that enable different readings of the subject and understandings of power and truth. It researches what beyond symbolic expression reflects the joined interiority and exteriority of the subject. In other words, the thesis attempts to acknowledge the ability of institution to construct identity, but more importantly is the ability of the individual to negotiate and sustain meaning and alternative (Lawler, 2014, Smart, 2007). The study uses a postcolonial framework to critique Western liberal feminists as underpinning the theoretical framework to interpret the empirical data generated through narrative interviewing with over a 6-week period in 2018-2019.

The research questions, which emerged out of the combined process of reviewing the literature on Saudi men and women and bringing my personal experience as internal to the research, centre largely on attitudes and beliefs and feelings: on how Saudi men and women as middle-class participants inhabit gender norms that intersect with cultural and religious norms and how they interpret their interactions with others. The next section details the research aims and questions.

1.2. Research aims and questions

Using Riyadh as a key fieldwork site, this thesis aims to examine how Saudi men and women negotiate their identity in contemporary Saudi Arabia. Empirically, I provide a critical account of the lived experience of the participants, which have not been closely examined in existing literature. This has been accomplished by a narrative approach based on interviews. This has given me, building on Heelas (1996), the insight that there is not a clean disjuncture between

modernity and traditionalism. Certain values continue although adapted; some are changed strategically. This is all about social actors, men and women, about their vision in crafting a meaningful life. The literal meaning of ‘crafting’ reflects the negotiational and adaptive work involved in this process. I refute the developmentalist perspective that has development resonance with the process from ‘tradition’ to modernity where some are advanced and others are backwards. I do not regard here tradition and modernity as given nor as opposition. I looked at these Saudi men and women inhabiting and negotiations of gender norms in relation to various normative reference e.g., nation, religious traditions; defining masculinity and femineity. We need to look at gender in terms of state formation, urbanisation, religious authorities, and capitalist globalization which has shaped gender relations. One of my aims has been to look for contradistinction and complexity to understand sociological, historical, economic, and political factors that have impacted on gender relation. Evaluating gender relation based on “tradition” that can be justified by various normative reference to “tradition” (“religion”, “nation”, “tribal”) has been the object of my analysis rather than a guiding framework. Theoretically, I have used empirical data to challenge the assumption that people like Saudi men and women lack agency by conceptualising their religious powers to negotiate their position in the society, calling into question the detraditionalisation thesis and the dominant Western feminist conception of ‘agency’. Participants’ strategies and actions have illustrated the relevance of Islam as a holistic framework in which they construct and negotiate matters of everyday life.

Through my engagement with the participants’ strategies to negotiate gender relations, my focus has been on the ways in which they inhabit and rework gender norms and power relations within social change. To do this, I aim to trace the modalities of agency that are operationalised by Muslim selves inhabiting, and experiencing norms in various ways (Mahmood, 2005). Hence,

this study explores lived religion as infused in the participants' negotiation of gender relations and the honour order. This is relevant considering the current situation in Saudi Arabia in light of Vision 2030 as a temporal influence on power relations, which I will detail in section 1.6.3.

Accordingly, I approach my study through the following interlinked research questions:

1. How do Saudi men and women inhabit gender norms through their representations of marriage, work, religion and gender identities?
2. How do Saudi men and women inhabit gender norms within changing social circumstances?
3. How do Saudi men and women inhabit gender norms in relation to various contradictory normative projects (national, Islamic, religious, tribal) that define masculinity and femineity?
4. How is Saudi men's and women's understanding of the way in which they inhabit gender norms used to signal relationality and embeddedness?
5. How does the exploration of the empirical issues illuminate understanding of the complexity of contemporary Saudi Arabia?
6. How is the participants' generation similar to, and different from, the Saudi men and women of the previous generation?

The next section gives historical and cultural background of Saudi Arabia. These contexts are useful to understand the collective mind of Saudi society.

1.6. Historical and cultural background of the research

This section provides a succinct history of socio-political, socio-economic, gender policy and social capital in Saudi Arabia, eliciting momentous events and developments in the evolution of

self-understanding. This history unfolds against shifting generational dynamics as well as the social context in Saudi Arabia.

1.6.1 Socio-political

In light of the weakening of religion in the early part of the 18th century and the spread of polytheism (*shirk*), fads (*bediah*) and superstitions (*kurafat*), Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahab saw a need for religious reform (the Salafist movement, (*Aldawah Aleslaheah*))¹ to adhere to Islam in the same way the Prophet Mohammed and his friends (*Alsalam Alsaleh*) did in their time (Bin Sunitan, 2014). At that time, an alliance emerged between Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahab and Muhammad Ibn Saudi, founder of the First Saudi State (1744–1818), to bring about religious reform and unify the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula under Islam as a single political entity (Bin Sunitan, 2014). These political reforms acknowledged changes in the political, social and economic spheres within an Islamic context, which is articulated in the revival (*tajdid*) and reform (*islah*) agendas (Foley and Datta, 2015). The First Saudi State collapsed following an

¹To clarify, the term *Wahhabism* as it is commonly used is often conflated with the idea of extremist ideology, but this was not a principle of Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahab's movement. Although this religious movement did call for religious reform, it did not have any political interests or extremist ideology. The Wahhabi movement is based on avoiding those who do not worship God (*shirk*) and who worship idolatry (Al-Alosi, 1857). This movement does not exclude non-Muslims and did even not see political figures or the West as enemies (Lacroix, 2010). After Mohammad Ibin Abdulwahab's time, Wahhabism emerged among radical extremist groups (*aqsayiyin*) who were reflexive about their understanding of *shirk*, and they excluded people who did not worship as they did, even other Muslims (who work for the government). Some of these people made an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood, and they directed themselves toward excluding the West (e.g., Osama Bin Laden) and Muslims who have relationships with the West (e.g., the Saudi government) (Lacroix, 2010), and the extremists' ideology came from this group who allied with the Brotherhood and not from Mohammad Ibin Abdulwahab (Al-Alosi, 1857).

invasion by the Ottoman army. Then, there were further attempts at political reform (Second Saudi State) by Turki Bin Abdulah Al Saud.

The Third State (1926–present) was founded by King Abdulaziz. Abdulaziz allied with the Bedouin tribes (*Ikhwan*²) to unify the Kingdom. Religious activists supported the king by convincing the Bedouins to escape poverty and a nomadic life by settling in small towns (*hujjar*). Abdulaziz began to promote modernity as a way of developing the country by, for example, using technology such as the telegraph, riding in cars and communicating with the West. These practices of the king were not accepted by some citizens and fell into conflict with King Abdulaziz, who crushed this movement³. Abdulaziz cooperated with Islamic scholars to legitimise the use of Western technology while retaining Islamic principles as key precepts (Foley and Datta, 2015). The allied leaders who helped to unify the Bedouins shared the same vision as the Brotherhood – some of whom came for the Haj, and they strengthened their relationship with the people of Saudi Arabia. They were frustrated with the Saudi government, along with what they perceived as a drift away from core Islamic values regarding new technology that had not been available during the era of the Prophet Muhammad (Bowen, 2008;

² To clarify, the term *Ikhwan* is commonly conflated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The *Ikhwan* is a group of Bedouin tribes who left their nomadic life and lived in *hujjar*, and they received new knowledge about religion (following the Salafist movement by Mohammad Ibn Abdul Wahab). King Abdulaziz made an alliance with the *Ikhwan* to unify the Kingdom. The word *Ikhwan* has the meaning of “brotherhood” in the religious sense (Ben Sunitan, 2014), and they are different from Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood movement, called *Al Ikhwan Al Muslemeen*.

³ Since that time, the ideological conflict about modernity brewed in the Kingdom until 2017, when Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman announced that he would return Saudi society to centrist form of Islam (Future Investment Initiative, 2017).

Foley and Datta, 2015). Some citizens destroyed telephone lines and automobiles despite decrees by religious leaders stating that most modern technology was acceptable since the Prophet had not explicitly prohibited it (Bowen, 2008).

Following the Egyptian Revolution in 1952, many Brotherhood members migrated to Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi government welcomed them as civilian migrants (Bowen, 2008) and granted some of them citizenship (Lacroix, 2010). This wave of migrants was followed by another wave due to the oil boom (*altafrah*), in the early 1970s (Lacroix, 2010). These migrant Brotherhood members were educated university graduates who were able to meet the national need for education (Lacroix, 2010).

Within a relatively short time, the Brotherhood's influence on education was evident in that they worked to educate students to be good Muslims through Islamic culture curricula in universities. Later, Islamic activities started take place through student societies at secondary and intermediate schools and through social, cultural and athletic organisations in universities (Lacroix, 2010). The Brotherhood made a great deal of progress, eventually influencing members of the religious establishment through education, who were then appointed to state-funded administrator positions; they also had influence among organisations such as the Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, the Muslim World League, and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth⁴. These three organisations provided bridges that were used by the movement to

⁴ Imam Mohammad Ibn is a Saudi university established first as specialised in Sharia 1953, then it became a university in 1974 to provide a variety of disciplines.

The Muslim World League is an international non-governmental Islamic organisation based in the Holy City of Makkah. It aims to present the true Islam and its tolerant principles, provide humanitarian aid, extend bridges of dialogue and cooperation with all, engage in positive openness to all cultures and

access the most prominent state institutions and link the country with Islamic societies throughout the world (Bowen, 2008). Some of its members modified their Brotherhood vision to be in line with Sroufi Salafism (the Brotherhood in Syria). After October 1973, there were new modernising processes taken on by the government, such as banking systems and less censorship on TV programmes, and educated elites began to take over the media and challenge tradition (Al-khader, 2010). Then, the so-called “religious awakening” (*Sahwah*⁵) began to restore Islamic glory (Lacroix, 2010). In 1979, when the Brotherhood took control of Al-Haram Al-Sharif (the Holy Mosque in Mecca), the government started viewing Brotherhood activities in a negative light, and many supporters were expelled from the country (Bowen, 2008); in the meantime, the government tried to mitigate these groups’ anger by reducing the amount of music

civilizations, follow the path of centrism and moderation to realise the message of Islam and ward off movements calling for extremism, violence and exclusion for a world full of peace, justice and coexistence.

The World Assembly of Muslim Youth was founded in 1972. It defines itself as “an independent organization and Islamic forum that supports the work of Muslim organizations and needy communities the world over”. Its international headquarters are located in Saudi Arabia, and it has branches in 56 countries and is affiliated with some 500 other Muslim youth/student organisations on five continents.

⁵ The *Sahwah* ideology emerged as a political movement in Saudi Arabia and is similar to Islamic movements such as the Brotherhood. *Sahwah* is a mixture of two ideologies with different points of view about the world, namely the Brotherhood’s ideology and some of Wahhabism. The Brotherhood started as a political movement to stand against imperialism (Hassan Al-bane’s school), fight infidel regimes in the Middle East (Saied Qutip’s school), and follow a singular Islamic vision in all aspects of life (Alhabieb, 2015). The Saied Qutip School was most dominant in Saudi Arabia, represented by Qutip’s brother, Mohammad Qutip, who was a migrant in Saudi Arabia and played a dominant role in theorising, and Abdul Rahman Aldawseri, who was the Saudi figure who called for moving from theorising to action. On the other hand, Wahhabism is a religious movement based on fighting fads *bediah* but neither the West nor political authorities were the enemies. The *Sahwah* ideology aimed to preserve Islamic glory and protect Saudi society from Westernisation (*Altaqreeb*). Although the Brotherhood was known in Saudi Arabia, *Sahwah* has this name because Islamic movements were known to exist at that time, but they needed a less sensitive name as political activist parties were not allowed in the Kingdom (Lacroix, 2010).

on TV, especially women singers, as well as banning cinemas and controlling social, cultural and youth organisations to reduce the Brotherhood's ideological expansion (Al-khader, 2010); additionally, the government launched the General Presidency for Scientific Research⁶ to maintain control over the expansion of random religious judgments (Lacroix, 2010).

The takeover of Al-Haram Al-Sharif paved the way for the religious a awakening to emerge. Around the end of the 1980s, *Sahwah*'s message became more pronounced. Their religious advice cassettes became more popular than music cassettes. They discussed issues related to youth at that time, such as drugs, travel abroad, Westernisation and women's affairs, and they were focused on individual deviation. Their criticism was directed toward those who had liberal and secular minds. In parallel to this, on the international stage, there was the war in Afghanistan, so political and Islamic aid to Afghanistan was reasonable at that time. Many activists preached against Westernisation, and the majority of these were also penitents (e.g. for their deviance in adolescence) and started their religious education (Al-khader, 2010).

After the Gulf War (between 1982 and 1986), further economic contraction occurred, caused by a decline in oil revenues and its effect on the labour market in terms of employing people who had graduated from local universities.⁷ During the Gulf War, the government received support from the US, but there were those who did not want US presence in their country. At the same

6 The General Presidency for Scientific Research is an organisation that researches matters in people's everyday lives to create better cooperation between the government and religion, and it influences policies in issues such as banking, music, and women's affairs.

7 These generations are the outcomes of the Saudi education system with teachers who were trained by the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1960s. This generation called itself the *Sahwah* generation, and this name reflects the strong feeling of a common identity among its group members (Lacroix, 2010).

time, graduates of US universities⁸ worked for the government in good administrative positions (e.g. as ministers and senior leaders), yet those who trained and graduated in Saudi Arabia had lower positions; this was combined with weak private sector employment and the private sector's preference for foreign employees that cost less than Saudi employees who grantee lower cost and higher benefit the Saudi employee. Combined with this was the difficulty in getting promotions and changing positions as a result of the economic downturn, which led to the *Sahwah* movement taking a hostile stance toward those who were educated in the US (Lacroix, 2010). These difficulties led to an increase in the number of penitents, who become the majority and they achieved public acceptance. Religiosity then became a point of interest for all age groups and genders, not exclusively (Al-Khader, 2010).

The *Sahwah* generation tried to be different in their appearance from those who were modern. The *Sahwah* wore short clothes and they did not shave their beards; the women wore gloves and abayas that covered their heads. They began to control the social sphere and disrupt any practice that they saw as moral degeneracy (*enhwrafat aklaquah*). For example, they fought against any changes in women's status, such as being allowed to drive cars and receive education. They also demanded that the government introduce religious police (*Alhayah*) to control the social sphere

⁸ These were people who had scholarships sponsored by the Saudi government to study in the US in the 1970s to further the country's development as there was a need for educated and trained people. Locally, to better educate people in universities and schools, the government employed educated Arabs who had migrated to Saudi Arabia, and the majority of them belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. People who were locally educated perceived those who were educated outside Saudi Arabia, especially in the US, as liberals and secularists because they smoked, shaved their beards and were less religious. To guard against this liberal and secular movement, the *Sahwah*—based on the theses and theories of religious scholars such as Mohammad Qutip (Egyptian)—saw themselves as victims of secularism led by the West (Lacroix, 2010).

and sanction people who engaged in moral degeneracy. Other members of the *Sahwah* took a different approach and demanded a conservative Islamic democracy. This demand was in parallel with the 11 September tragedy and the urgent need for moderation and openness, with an emphasis on the commitment to cultural and religious specificity. To deal with these issues, the government started the so-called "war on terrorism" and launched the national dialogue (Lacroix, 2010), which created an opportunity for non-Islamic groups to make their entrance into the political arena by allowing liberal-leaning businesspeople and centrist religious leaders to move up the ranks of Saudi society (Al-Saif, 2014). The government also recently began to regulate the role of the religious police (April 2016), and they introduced the General Authority for Entertainment (May 2016) to organise festivals and events, and gave women the right to drive (September 2017) (Saudi Press Agency). The *Sahwah* movement was ended when Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman announced that Saudi society would return to moderate Islam, fight extremism, and return to same state it was in before 1979 (Future Investment Initiative, 2017).

1.6.2. Socio-economic

Following the discovery of oil (from 1970 until 1985), Saudi Arabia experienced great prosperity as a result of rapid income growth. This was reflected in the infrastructure and in the agricultural, industrial and transport sectors, as well as in health, education and housing. As a result, citizens were, for example, able to afford housing without any additional interest payments or to obtain loans to establish farms; university students were given a monthly salary (King Khalid.org.sa).

The Saudi economy continued to flourish, and government spending on the state sector (infrastructure and public services) as well as support to the private sector continued. This was

followed by the Gulf War (1990–1991) and decreases in oil revenues, which affected state income, given that the state mainly depended on oil. Accordingly, the government recognised the importance of continuing to support services while decreasing consumption. It devoted its efforts to supplying security, education, health and technology. Government spending brought about an improved standard of living for citizens, support for technology and investment in education and research (e.g. the scholarship programmes set up in 2005), and support for women participating in economic development (through education and an increase in employment opportunities). However, this blossoming was also associated with increased poverty and unemployment for both sexes (King Khalid.org.sa).

Recently, the Saudi government launched its so-called Vision 2030 (released in 2016). It is based on three pillars. The first pillar of the vision is Saudi Arabia's status as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds. Modernising the country in light of Vision 2030 based on Islamic principles is the start point to realise this vision. Islam is the reference in all life, actions, decisions and attitudes. Moderated Islam, tolerance, perfection, justice and transparency are the basic foundations for achieving development.

The second pillar of the vision strengthens Saudi Arabia's global investment, stimulates the economy and diversifies its revenues. The third pillar is transforming our unique strategic location into a global trade and the gateway hub connecting three continents: Asia, Europe and Africa. This is a plan to reduce dependence on oil, diversify the economy and develop public services such as education, health, infrastructure, recreation and tourism. It involves reinforcing economic and investment activities by increasing non-oil industry trade between countries (e.g. goods and consumer products) and increasing spending on the military and manufacturing. It

also aims to develop alternative sources of revenue such as taxes and fees. Another aspect of the vision is to reduce the dependency of the country's citizens on public spending (e.g. spending on subsidised salaries and increased contribution of the private sector to employment opportunities) (Vision2030.gov.sa).

Significantly, Vision 2030, by promising better governance and a better future, is raising hopes and expectations among Saudis.

1.6.3. Politics of gender relations in Saudi Arabia

This section contextualises the country's historical, political and sociological aspects that impacted on gender relations. The state established nationalism based on harmony between national, political and common cultures, and language as a cultural specificity of regional identities and tribal belonging continues to exist and refuses to be distributed under specific genres of nationalism (Al-Torki, 2000).

After the initial period of state formation and uncertain initial development (1953–1970) due to oil discovery, the state introduced services to the public, including additional educational institutions, substantial infrastructure and commercial, financial and administrative services, which strengthened the global market economy (Al-Torki, 2000). The state also sent students (men and women) to study abroad (Al-Torki, 2000; Al-Rasheed, 2013). The oil industry enabled the state to introduce women's education, while the oil industry fails to increase the participation of women in the workforce. Educated women participate in education (as teachers), journalism, medicine and business (as entrepreneurs) (Al-Qahtani, 2012; Al-Rasheed, 2013), whereas men benefited men by providing them high monthly wages (Al-Torki, 2000; Al-Qahtani, 2012; Al-

Rasheed, 2013). Moreover, some women are unqualified to engage in the labour market due to their lack of skills, despite their education. As a result, the state employed foreign women to meet the demand of the labour market. They structurally distinguish their religious nation from other countries. Their appearance, segregation, sexuality and purity reflect signals that mark the boundaries of the nation (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Al-Qahtani, 2012; Al- Rasheed, 2013; Al-Madani, 2020).

Between 1980 and 1985, the Third Development Plan aimed at increasing women's participation in the workforce for the country's growth according to Islamic values. However, conservative groups interpreted these values in a way that disadvantaged women at work and in the education sector in gender-segregated places, where women are limited to the education and humanities sectors (Al-Qahtani, 2012; Al-Torki, 2000). This strategy was employed to avoid Saudi women being influenced by Western women's lifestyles (Al-Subaie and Jones 2017; Al-Qahtani, 2012). Notwithstanding their visibility in the public sphere, the increasing number of educated women and those seeking jobs gave rise to urban shopping centres and modernised local markets and created conditions that limit the possibility of further developments (Al-Qahtani, 2012).

Saudi Royal Decree 1985 stipulated that Saudi women workers are confined within teaching in women's schools and the nursing field. It also prohibited men and women to merge in workplaces under any circumstances (Al-Torki, 2000). Compliments to religious nationalism and gender segregation were favourable as a result of the oil industry, which established women only in banks, universities and schools. Revenues from the oil industry also provided technological investments to allow male lecturers to teach female students through video conferencing, thus maintaining gender segregation. This strategy also enabled employment of foreign women doctors to supervise female students. Religious police were also employed to ensure that men

and women complied with the national religious code. Furthermore, a male guardian (*mahram*) was required to accompany women who seek higher education abroad (Al-Qahtani, 2012).

The early 1990s witnessed rapid development along with the emergence of demand for political reform after the Gulf War. These reforms demand for a consultative assembly, equality among individuals, judicial reform, revisiting the role of the moral police and reforms in women's status. For example, a group of 47 women defied the ban on women driving automobiles under the customary law (*'urf*) (Al-Torki, 2000; Al-Madani, 2020). This event was followed by a group of *'ulama* in 1991. They were unhappy about the reduction of their role in society as a result of expanding the *Shari'a* to facilitate the modern operation of commercial enterprises and obtain support from the US during the Gulf War (Al-Torki, 2000; Lacroix, 2010). The *'ulama* also demanded a consultative assembly to restore the *Shari'a* as the basis for the conduct of affairs and equal distribution of public expenditure. Moreover, they urged for a stronger role of religion in the legal system and thus viewed the demand for women in the workforce as Westernising projects for women (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Al-Gazami, 2005; Al-Qahtani, 2012).

These two attempts resulted in the establishment of the Consultative Assembly, which has an advisory role. It has 60 members restricted to men (profiles of *'ulama*, doctors in Islamic law and traditional *Shaykhs*), engineers, physicians, attorneys, journalists, government and private administrators, military officers, merchants and professors (Al-Torki, 2000). The groups *Sahwah* then took over the public sphere and produced many *fatwas* associated with women as they are the pillar of society. They become the centre of opposition discourses that challenged state matters, such as wearing of high heels, travelling without a guardian, clapping of hands and seduction of their voices (Al-Rasheed, 2013), and banned the interaction between unrelated women and men (Al-Subaie and Jones, 2017).

In light of the 9/11 attack, the role of the *Sahwah* group started to erode as media opened an arena to an alternative interpretation on gender, and a new legislation was introduced to increase women's participation in economic growth. Women, particularly professionals, such as doctors, scientists and entrepreneurs, their achievements gained more attention from local and international media than before. Media also focused on other women's stories of domestic violence, poverty, forced marriage, child marriage, illegal divorce and abandonment by male guardians. Educated women demanded that the state protected these unfortunate and neglected women and denounced the strictness regarding driving, employment in non-segregated places, travelling with a male guardian and legal representation to adopt a moderate view on these matters (Al-Qahtani, 2012; Al-Rasheed, 2013).

This visibility of women was combined with a series of state initiatives, such as limiting the control of religious groups on women's education and appointing the Ministry of Education to manage this sector. In 2004, groups of women started to discuss their gender-related issues in a session in the newly established National Dialogue Forum. Subsequently, an initiative was announced in 2008 by King Abdullah to establish women's university to educate girls in various fields, such as medicine, pharmacology, computer science and management. In 2009, the king announced new appointments to enhance gender equality. For example, a woman was appointed as a deputy minister of the Ministry of Education (Al-Qahtani, 2012). A scholarship programme was also instated in 2010 that provided scholarships to women to study abroad. Furthermore, in 2013, women participated in the Consultative Council Assembly for the first time (Al-Qahtani, 2012). Then, Saudi Vision 2030 was announced in April 2016, and the National Transformation Programme set 2020 goals to increase the number of women in leadership positions by 2020. The plan includes multiple initiatives to support this goal, such as training plans for women and

legislation reform to improve their condition (Council of Economic and Development Affairs). Subsequently, two royal decrees were issued in 2017 to minimise the country's guardianship laws and lift the ban on driving placed on women, which was implemented on June 2018. Furthermore, in 2019, Saudi women gained freedom of travel within and outside the country, obtaining passports without the need for their male guardian's permission. Finally, they were rewarded with scholarships to study abroad, regardless of the presence of their guardian (Saudi Press Agency).

1.6.4. Tribes as social capital

This section places the tribe phenomenon within the larger contextual framework of Bedouin self-representation. It also explores the symbolic uses of the notion of *nasab* (attributing the individual to its parents).

A tribe is a large family based on an inherited lineage that extends to one grandfather, often the fifth (or more) grandfather. The grandfather carries a special meaning in the memory of the grandchildren, and the meanings are often mythical, based on imagination—inherited orally—and in the circle of competition between groups because one can only assert oneself by defeating the other. Imagination works as a foundation for the production of the tribe and immortalises it as an effective identity to nourish the cultural structure. This unlike family for example, one can choose the size of the family and its location, or perhaps options in homeland through a change in nationality from immigration (Al-Gazami, 2009, p.112). Bourdieu (1977) described this phenomenon as a habitus that embodies the important association between social rules and an individual's disposition. Bourdieu (1977) believed that culture is mostly inhabited and unconsciously internalised, but most importantly, culture has a cohesive quality. According to Maisel (2014, p.104):

What does it mean being tribal or belonging to a tribe? Being a member of a tribe, large or small, noble or inferior, does not guarantee wealth, success or political power; however it provides the necessary backup in times of hardship, conflict and need. Even urbanised and liberal Saudis remember and cherish their kin network during these times.

A Muslim sociologist, Ibin Kholdoon, singled out solidarity (*asabiyya*) is the most important component needed to connect and organise societies (Maisel, 2014). But according to Maisel (2014) and Al-Gazami (2009), *asabiyya* and tribalism are often understood as racist. I will start by examining the difference between ethnicity and racism to set the context for understanding meaning of tribes (*qabilah*). Ethnicity, in its basic meaning, is social and cultural capital. Its fundamentalist meaning does not coincide with postmodernist discourse on race and racism. While the latter concerns minorities of class, beliefs, gender, etc. and their issues, the former in anthropological analysis means relationships between groups who view themselves as having special cultural attributes about who they are (Eriksen, 2010). In Arabic, there are differences between ethnicity (*eirg 'ah*) and racism (*ensure 'ah*). Tribe is essentially an objective term reflecting a primary need to group people together to face the environment in human history. Research on tribes focuses on cultural attributes for the self's sense of 'We', which is positive and reflects closeness. *Ensure 'ah* though is refusing and exclusive (Al-Gazami, 2009).

Eirg 'ah is a cultural imagination shared by a group of people that works as an ancestral affiliation (Al-Gazami, 2009). As Al-Gazami (2009) explained, this cultural capital is a custom based on what is equal and indigenous in nature to legitimise differences and hierarchy, which draws the boundaries between 'Us' and 'Them' and links it to blood relations and group numbers. Eriksen (2010) observed that ethnic groups create a cultural myth that depicts their rottenness and inspires them to engage in kin-group marriage, which reinforces the metaphorical

meaning of ethnicity. As Al-Gazami (2009) indicated, although ethnicity is abstractly imagined, its myth must become convincing to its members to function.

In order to understand the causes of these variations [between us and them], historical knowledge is necessary—the snapshots of conventional anthropological fieldwork can give a profound understanding of the contemporary functioning of ethnicity or other categorical distinctions (Eriksen, 2010, p.45).

The cause of variations, as Eriksen (2010) advises us to look for in the case of tribe identity in Saudi Arabia, is the centrality of cultural imagination about purity of the blood relation and the ability to trace their ancestry to *Qahtan* (from authentic Arabs from the second *Jurhum* tribe from ancient civilisation) and *Adnan* (those who had only acquired an Arab identity belonging to Ishmael, Abraham's son) (Leder, 2015). Although I acknowledge that there has been a long controversy about the origin of Arabs, I sociologically focus on the idea of attributing the individual to its parents (*nasab*) as imagined power internalised by tribal people. However, as Al-Gazami (2009) noticed, the purity of rootedness (*eirg* and its literal meaning is 'veins') is imagined as people intermarry, but groups still claim their purity. Here, countable (*hasab*) become symbols that reflect superiority (Leder, 2015; Al-Gazami, 2009; Limbert, 2007). *Nasab* does not exclusively refer to genealogy itself; it refers to affinity with a local origin and is distinct from temporary special closeness, e.g. a neighbourhood, which is strictly outside the category of kinship. Relating *nasab* to 'origin' provides an understanding that *nasab* does not relate to the biological and physical aspects of kinship as the parameters for determining heredity; instead, the focus of *nasab* is related to the way one's origin influences behaviours and attitudes. This is apparent in Bedouin poetry, which aims to orally transmit the group's history, and in publications about tribal customs' histories and genealogies that their tribal authors

present to the public (Maisel, 2014). Discourse on *nasab* is characterised by the tension among permanent, temporal and sequential relationships. Data on individual and collective kinship affiliations serve as a means of establishing a cohesive and permanent order of descent. Arabs' interest in genealogy through family trees (*shajarah*) can exemplify this interest (Leder, 2015). Consent in *nasab* contributes to a sustainable political structure because genealogy must alter existing tribal divisions (Leder, 2015), justify social relationships and acknowledge descent and parentage bonds to represent a religious duty—e.g. alimony (Leder, 2015).

Interest in *nasab* may reflect a deeper genealogical purpose with an emphasis on tribal roots in contemporary Saudi Arabia. According to Samin (2019), the settling of Bedouin and the urbanization of both Bedouin and sedentary elements have increasingly driven individuals and families to document their tribal identity to assert their place in the new order, which reflects a transition from the oral culture of premodern Arabia to the new textually oriented, bureaucratically influenced society of the modern kingdom. Tribal kinship was reified as an essential component of national belonging and promoted tribal cohesion as a unifying instrument for varied tribes. This aimed at building a historical narrative of the past and a common identity that transcends regional identities, and keeping the segmentary hierarchy of the tribe. Genealogy is a textually recorded political subject formation and effectively aimed at symbolising permanence (Samin, 2019).

These are the basic meanings of these words and institutionalised meaning, but culture creates additional values through attributing to these words dual connections. Thus, *hasab* becomes a symbol of glory and what one can count from the feats of one's fathers and grandfathers (Al-Gazami, 2009). The important aspect of this meaning is what it carries of symbols related to cultural quality, and rules of inclusion and exclusions. Values of a group, its name, its unifying

instrument and its status are constructed on emotional or material glory. Thereby, symbols may idealise certain values based on *hasab* and *nasab* and their relations to glory and power. Some of which the thesis will draw on are compatibility (*kafa'a*) between spouses' families in marriage, honour and ascribing different ideal roles based on gender and age.

At the heart of tribal understanding is the belief in inheriting historical narratives of glory and power, which differ from those without such stories (Maisel, 2014, Al-Gazami, 2009). As Al-Gazami (2009, p.22) referenced, the story of Ishmael's marriage to the *Jurhum* tribe of Yemen, who spoke Arabic, began Arab history (the immigrant of Islamic civilisation) when a civilised marriage between a mystical religion and the language (Arabic *eirg*) occurred. Therefore, language and nation acquired glory when it came under the religion of *Abraham* (*hanifia*), which is based on monotheism of *Allah* (*tawhid*). From this glory, power and competence immersed. Notable in this story is the marriage between the two *eirg[s]* who did not speak Arabic, and since then, he has become the rote of Arabs' reality (Al-Gazami, 2009). If the purity of *nasab* is acknowledged in tribes' customs, *Jurhum* would not agree to marry their daughter to a non-Arab man born to an enslaved mother. Yet, they ignored that requirement, and a civilisation began from this marriage due to the emergence of Islamic civilisation from Ishmael's ancestry (Al-Gazami, 2009). This means that the purity of the *eirg* was not the essential *eirg* intermix, then language, culture and territory came. Its symbolic origin is a mix of facts and fantasy, creating a historical story. Therapy, based on their imagination of superiority, groups immunise their superiority through laws, rules, requirements and controlling mixture to preserve its cultural and material purity (Al-Gazami, 2009).

Al-Gazami (2009) suggested understanding tribe as an imagined hunting power within three conceptual levels: marriage, city (civilisation) and family. Recalling Ishmael's marriage story,

we can imagine that marriage as a meaning is the most important and strongest value for social relations. If a human is a social being, then relations between two *eirg* [s] are more than two individuals; purity then is only complete, as Ibin Kholdoon understood it, unless there is only complete savagery (Al-Gazami, 2009). Obviously, communicating between *eirg*[s] through marriage is the basic human requirement for communication and coexistence. In the Qur'an, marriage is associated with affection and mercy which are the primary meaningful values for the realisation of the law of acquaintance, and thus human civilisation arises. In history, there is a repertoire of stories that repeat the deep meaning of Ismail's marriage to the Arabs, which breaks and nullifies the system. A similar example, the Prophet Muhammad get his cousin Zainab bint Jahsh marriage to his master, Zaid bin Haritha, although she was a honourable woman. Then, when her husband divorced her, the Prophet himself married her to confirm that her position would remain and that intermarriage between groups did not diminish her lineage or her value (Al-Gazami, 2009). However, there are examples of recent Arab history reflecting this cultural line of relationship, such as relatives marrying, which positions *nasab* as remaining in the tribe's lineage. This means that the name is the only remark that fulfils the family's condition, inheritance, economic status, loyalty and solidarity (Al-Wardi, 2018, Al-Gazami, 2009). Thereby these marriages inside the tribes become the main condition for producing solidarity (Maisel, 2014). This basic requirement is understandable for Al-Gazami (2009) within the context of district and nomadic life as a natural requirement for survival. Nevertheless, the symbolic value of *nasab* persists even within civilised cities, which explains the ability of the cultural structure to reproduce itself and manipulate meaning with ideal values—for example, claiming *nasab*'s purity of *eirg* through interpretations of religious sources based on a social ideal because its

cultural context gives a meaning of superiority that will vanish if the people become equal (Al-Gazami, 2009).

The thesis' narrative is based on the contextual background that I have presented in this section. In the following section, I outline how the thesis' chapters tell the narrative.

1.7. Outline of chapters

Chapter 2 explores the conceptual and theoretical parameters of this study as well as empirical themes into identity in the Arab and Saudi context. Agency and relationality are elaborated to contextualise Saudi men's and women's negotiation within broader discussions on social theories of identity, explaining social reproduction and social integration as a promising and constructive framework to study the topic. The chapter also devotes a great deal of attention to Mahmood's (2005) conceptions of agency and inhabiting norms, which underpin this study's focus on how participants' inhabit social norms, through their representations of marriage, work, religion and gender identities, using resources available in the social structure to work within, not against, it.

Chapter 3 details the research method and methodology and the study's epistemological and methodological commitments. The chapter outlines the interpretive epistemology of the research based on a constructivist ontological approach to knowledge. This stresses the belief in subjective social reality, which remains under construction through social interaction. Though the findings are not generalisable, using history to situate participants' narratives helps identify patterns and comparisons to understand specific meanings under a variety of circumstances prevailing in a particular period.

In the three empirical chapters 4, 5 and 6, I explore the social and cultural forces impacting Saudi men's and women's negotiation of gender, family and religion in navigating their views. I focus on Saudi men and women's lived experience to elevate their voice to explore how they inhabit norms and how this is articulated in relation to socio-political and economic changes ongoing in Saudi Arabia. The data chapters outlined below are interlinked whereby the research questions can be answered from the three data chapters.

In the first empirical **Chapter 4**, I explore the significance of family in making Saudi subjects. I argue that family constitutes the main building block of national as well as personal attachments. I explore how family honour and tribal belonging affect the ways in which participants negotiate marriage and pre-marital sexual relationships, focusing on pleasure and difficulties experienced by these men and women in marriage, gender relations and sexuality. I explore participants' negotiations of issues of marriage and divorce. I argue that the centrality of marriage in building familial relationships is an official way to secure their rootedness and claim their identity. To develop my argument, I explore participants' views in expressing their desires to engage directly to assess prospective spouses and their preferences to engage their family members in the process of selecting spouses. Although participants view the Islamic perspective of compatibility between spouses as more justice than customary law, the achieved narrative highlights that the only way to secure their rootedness and inclusion is through tribal marriage between relatives and/or between compatible tribes within national citizens.

In the following two empirical chapters, **Chapter 5** and **Chapter 6**, I focus on participants' role in the process of self-definition and negotiation of gender and power relations. I explore a central theme that emerged through participants' narratives as forces shaping their religious and tribe

identities and negotiations of gender relations. The discussion focuses on the centrality of honour on women's bodies beyond the domestic sphere in **Chapter 5** and the requirement for men to demonstrate their masculinity as honourable persons in **Chapter 6**.

In **Chapter 5**, I explore diminutions of classed femininity which provide insights into the mechanisms of social capital, pleasure and complexity that have informed Saudi women's position. I start by considering how Saudi women are using their capital as mothers and wives, thereby expanding their opportunities to access social, economic and political resources. I challenge the dominant Western-feminist portrayal of Muslim women (and, correspondingly, Saudi women) as oppressed because of the Western understanding of the binary gender divide between the domestic and public spheres in which women are 'excluded' from public participation. Imagining that women lack the agency to change their status, agency is understood as a synonym for 'resistance' to submission and relations of dependence. Engaging with the voices of participants, my exploration in **Chapter 5** helps depict how women use different bargaining strategies to negotiate beyond the domestic domain that maintains the ethics of Islamic virtue and assembling points to their agentic capacity.

In **Chapter 6**, in turn, I focus on the pleasure and complexity of the masculine subject in demonstrating their worth and continuing the hierarchical relations of family. In focusing on men's narratives, I challenge the dominant portrayal of Arab men as holding exclusive power. Specifically, I look at the internal family dynamics described by these men and women indicating that power is not exclusively tied to men and each individual has access to power in patriarchy. I cast the net wider to examine how the central role for men is to protect family honour from insult. Regardless of the homogeneity between families, the moral worth of a person is based on passing as the appropriate role for their position: submission for men and

women, independently tied to seniority based on demonstrating responsibility, commitment and affection. This challenges the power available to men. Men must pass various demonstrations of holding honour to prove their virtue because men as ‘value’ is not equal. This chapter considers men’s views as inscribed into the Islamic framework as a way of adapting compulsive demands of masculinity to protect family honour and demonstrate their worthiness. Their narrative of self-actualisation is displaced by the existence of Islam, which provides high value for promoting integrity based on how the relational self, gender relations and submission are managed.

In conclusion, **Chapter 7** argues that it is important to understand the complexity of the social, cultural, material and political contexts as well as relational processes within which participants’ everyday life unfolds. This chapter takes the discussion of the previous three chapters into a wider key-conceptual thematic discussion. These themes are inhabiting norms and relationality, performative acts of agency, and construction of relational selves through embeddedness. Thereby, I contribute to the theoretical literature to move forward in theorising agency from a relational perspective. This chapter also discusses the thesis’ implications, contributions to knowledge and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework and empirical themes that have informed and are tied to the research aim discussed in Chapter 1; to look for contradistinction and complexity to understand sociological, historical, economic, and political issues that have impacted on gender relation.

Section 2.2 discusses the relevance of the postcolonial theoretical framework I utilise in the study. After that, sections 2.3 and 2.4 discuss how Muslim, Arab, and Saudi men and women in the Middle East/Saudi Arabia are represented in literature, which informs my thinking in section 2.5 about the alternative lens through which we can conceptualise agency, to look at agency as embedded with religious, familial relationality.

2.2. The relevance of post-colonial theory

Postcolonial theory is interested in political and social conditions that form subjectivity and knowledge productions (Julian, 2016). As a body of work was concerned with conceptualising and speaking about the complex relationships between the West and the rest and how this marks the relationship of human beings and continuous global inequality. Postcolonial proliferated in the humanities drawing on poststructuralist and postmodern to “to go beyond economic determinism and unearth various types of discourses, epistemes, cultural schemas, representations, and ideologies that were part and parcel of Western imperialism” (Julian, 2016, p. 5). More importantly, it is a response to endurance of imperialism to change the social and

cultural political structure of the other parts of the world to enable democratic for all (Julian, 2016 Abu-Lughod, 2013, Mahmood, 2011; 2005). Postcolonial discourse takes this critique not to argue it is “specialized activity only for minorities or for historians of imperialism and colonialism” but rather as a starting point for questioning all of “Western knowledge’s categories and assumptions” (Young, 1990, p. 11).

Among influential theorists is Edward Said, an Arab academic. In his book called *Orientalism* (2003 but originally 1978) Said urged academics to face up to their political allegiances to the West and which informed their way of recognising the world despite the appearance of objectivity. Said (2003) argued that things become true not because they are intrinsically true, but, as he builds on Foucault, because they are produced within a power position (Julian, 2016). However, importantly sociologist analysis should ask “under what conditions do certain types of knowledge articulate with power, and how exactly?” (Julian, 2016, p. 21). *Orientalism* (1978) illuminates how Orientalist discourse represents Eastern cultures, while centred on Western experience and knowledge to the extent that these held attitudes infuse identity itself and understanding those who are not Western by default ‘others’. Said (2003) urged theorists to revise their socio-political position and loyalty to the West, which informs their understanding of others. Said (2003) believed that intellectual enquiry should be based on self-consciousness and questioning previous beliefs and thinking to explore and describe the lives of other human beings. However, while I agree with Said (2003) on methodological sensibility and the importance of rising above previous beliefs and assumptions, my ethical and political positions differ from his own. Much of his formulation of *Orientalism* is based on experience of *Orientalism* and migration whereas Saudi Arabia probably falls outside of its geopolitical zone.

Engaging with postcolonial theory, this thesis aimed to conceptual, methodological and theoretical inspiration to critique Western liberal feminist understanding of agency, choice and freedom. Foremost, the premise of postcolonial does not engage in a romantic opposition to valorise the West and the East. What is significant important to take in this thesis from postcolonial theory for Said (2003), as a core of his argument in his book ‘Orientalism’, and Julian (2016), in her introductory of edited book for postcolonial a reader, is a careful examination of political, ideological, cultural discursive to overcome analytical bifurcations because academics are not free of ideology. In Orientalism, Said traced how representations of Orientalist historians are embedded in what is called the “exotic” Orient, which was pervasive to the degree that it affects academic interpretations, and this indeed has an effect on contemporary accounts in relation to the Middle East and Islam, and the possibility of talking about Arab people without representing them as having a culture of oppression and thereby missing their agency. This takes us to another issue which postcolonial theory considers: agency and the importance of detaching it from time of historical differences ‘backwardness’ and orientalist classification ‘irrational’.

The problem of agency in postcolonial theory not to position others absent within power relations. According to Julian (2016, p. 13), “this is more so the approach in conventional social theory, where questions of agency are subsumed into universalizing and abstract categories like ‘agency versus structure’ or pragmatist reflexivity. The problematic aspect of agency is about attending to what even traditional sociology should attend to: interactions’. Embedded in this discourse is construction of identity questions: who we are in both ways for the West and the others, and more importantly, power has limits; it is about relationality (Said, 2003, Julian, 2016). Foremost is the ethical question on how we place ourselves in duality of similarity (as

human)/differences, a question at the heart of narcissism of difference. In understanding others, there is a need to acknowledge differences, as philosopher Young (1997, p.348) put it in her article ‘Asymmetrical Reciprocity’, in which moral respect entails recognising others as follows: “that she is an ‘I’ to herself just as I am an ‘I’ to myself and that I am an ‘other’ to her just as she is an ‘other’ to me.” As informed by Young (1997), a structure of communication that neither describe historical and social position which make their relation asymmetrical. Indeed, as Young (1977) argued, moral respect should move from imaginative on the other to taking the perspective of the others.

This thesis takes a cultural approach to critique Western liberal feminist assumptions about agency, freedom and choice, and section 2.5 will go deeper into the relevant literature on these subjects. The thesis situated on postcolonial feminists who were interested in the Middle East and Arab context, such as Abu-Lughod (2013, 2008, 2002, 1990, 1986), Al-Torki (2000, 1999, 1986, 1977), Kabesh (2013), Le Renard (2004), Mahmood (2011; 2005), Mernisi (2011), and Joseph (2012, 1990a). They argued that, through clarifying the complexity of experiences of people in the Middle East, social issues could be better understood, and alternative perspectives from the Western experience could be opened up. Using postcolonial feminist theory as the core theoretical framework in this study is applicable in the context of Saudi Arabia—though it had never had a history of being colonised. The colonialist discourse of other human beings remodelled in new genre of liberal feminist scholarship with explicit aim justifying war in terror, democratising in the Muslim world (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Mahmood, 2011).

The aftermath of 9/11 has given rise to a new wave of commentary that questions the capacity of Muslims to establish modern gender-equal systems (Moghadam, 2003). Reference to 11 September also cannot be avoided in terms of its impact on rhetoric and representations of the

others especially in relation to gender dimension to this, i.e. Muslim men are more implicated in the “management of Muslims” agenda, and Muslim women are more implicated in the aspect of “gender equality”, thereby justifying the war on terrorism (Abu-Lughod, 2013, 2008). This is the logic through which Western imperial power seeks to justify its political domination by posing as liberating women from “Brown” men, from their indigenous and patriarchal cultures (Abu-Lughod, 2013, 1993; Mahmood, 2011).

Discussion about Islamic women’s rights is part of the interpretive process of identifying the identity of others. As Joseph (2012, p. 12) put it, “the category of ‘Arab women’ almost always points to the most prominent feature of the familiar landscape: culture. [and] culture is most often discussed in terms of women”. The context of identifying differences implicates political issues, such as directing others’ policies, defining enemies and legitimising violence against different cultures (Abu-Lughod, 2002, Said, 2003). My point in applying the postcolonial theoretical framework, though I have never had an issue with independence nor autonomy, is to shed light on the connection between liberal feminism discourse and imperial power in the Arab world (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Mahmood, 2011). Thereby, this thesis aimed to communicate to Western readers on a ground of the lived experience of Saudi men and women that is rarely heard. As Mahmood (2011) drew our attention to the fact that the militarism form of domination may lose its power, Western laypeople trust the judgment offered by their politician officials and representation of Muslim societies on the media that their life is complicated by ‘fundamentalism’ and *Shari’a*, whose worst victims are women.

Importantly, there arises a question of how to respond to such a judgment in “Arab culture”? Abu-Lughod (2013) and Joseph (2012) argued that it is very simplistic if we accept cultural

explanation while asserting cultural specificity and criticise the assumption of universalism. As Joseph (2012, p.13) queries the theoretical problem:

How can the question of culture be addressed with more nuanced constructs to study Arab cultures as operating on, between, among, by, for, against and with Arab women as subjects without essentialising or dissolving culture, so that “Arab culture” informs rather than obstructs analysis of Arab women subjects.

It is vital to point out here that I do not aim to essentialise culture (Arab culture here) (see section 2.5.3 on problematising cultural essentialism). I do not see culture as coherent, timeless, unchanging or discrete. I adopted in this thesis three strategies to “write against culture” suggested by Abu-Lughod (1991): to look at discourse and practice, connections with present and the past, national and transnational connections, commodity, particularity of experience in relation to time and place and subjectivity and contradiction of living a life.

The next section reviews literature on Arab and Saudi men and women that is part of the context that informs my thinking and critique of Western feminist assumptions about agency.

2.3. Empirical themes in the portrayal of social actors in the Middle East

In this section, I highlight key questions associated with two familiar markers of understanding people in the Middle East as a subject of political and patriarchal oppressions. The aspect of debates in this section will be employed through this thesis to reflect on discourse on agency and submission to Islam and family relations as being incompatible with free will.

Daniel Lerner (1950) claimed in 'The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernity in the Middle East' that traditional Middle Eastern societies had passed away. Lerner's model of transition offered an ideal type and a trajectory process leading from traditional to modern society. "The modern men" relied more on media than family for information, more on scientific explanation than religion, and their interest went to national issues rather than local ones. Passing from a traditional stance to a modern perspective was driven by media use. News of the nation and the world at large, along with narratives of people outside of the local community, encouraged the audience to consider their lives outside their immediate local experience.

What is problematic about the study of modernity is that the developmentalist approach to understand modernity has resonance with the development process from 'tradition' to 'modernity' where some countries are 'advanced' and others are 'backwards' (Abu-Lughod, 1998; Le Renard, 2014). Even more crucial for understanding modernity according to Abu-Lughod (1998, P.7) is "to ask how modernity-as a condition-might not be what it purports to be or tells itself, in the language of enlightenment and progress, it is". This is because modernity is loaded with cherishing rational values, such as objectivity and improvement of knowledge. This perspective views the trajectory of modernisation as unidirectional and linear, e.g. religion becomes less important, nuclear family becomes the primary family form, which does not entertain the possibility of "multiple modernities". In relation to family, for example, Mernissi (2011), Hatem (1987), and Al-Torki (1986) deconstructed Western discourse on the trajectory to nuclear family. They indicated the intimate co-existence of nuclear and extended family. Arguably, these misinterpretations have emerged from a tendency to view Western historical and political development as the general standard and as applying to the whole world (Susser, 2012). According to Susser (2012), technology serves as the ideal illustration of a

general, globalised process of change; consequently, observers have the feeling that there is no distinction between virtual presence and real power in real space. As Susser (2012, p.320) put it, “such universal paradigms attempt to explain widely divergent historical developments as if differences in culture, time and place had no vital bearing on historical outcomes”. According to Susser (2012, p.30), understanding modernity as a means to integrate Middle Eastern societies into a universal process of change is a “false universalism”. The words used—“Arab Spring⁹” is a case in point—to analyse revolutionary events that have swept the Middle East suggests that the region is echoing a globalised process of change, which suggests an emulation of the West (Susser, 2012). The expression Arab Spring arouses a historical analogy with the Spring of Nations in Europe in 1948, the Prague Spring in 1968, or the Spring of 1989 with the fall of Communism in Europe. All of these national uprisings were held by groups of people wanting to break free from authoritarian government, which was to be supplanted by a secular, liberal democracy (Susser, 2012).

What is problematic in such representations is the dominant perspective that modernisation is inevitably a secularising process. Susser (2014, 2012), Hoffman and Jamal (2012), and Abu-Lughod (2013, 2008) argued that Middle Eastern culture differs from the liberal/secular West because the population ascribes great importance to belief and religious rituals as a component of their collective identity. Susser (2014) draws an analogy between European and Middle Eastern historical experiences of state formation and secularisation. The decline of religious beliefs in Europe, which had scientifically been forecast, has not taken place in the Middle East. The

⁹ Series of anti-government protests that spread across much of the Arab world between 2010 and 2011. It started in Tunisia with a protest against low standards of living. Thereafter, it spread to other countries: Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain.

adoption of secularisation policies in the 19th and 20th centuries failed to produce secular societies (Susser, 2014). In that time, according to Anderson (1991), nationalism and religion continued to be intimately associated (Anderson, 1991, cited in Susser, 2014). Therefore, critiques to Western liberal feminists should be understood in relation to these specific representations. If modernity is the correct frame, we should look at it in relation to developing nationalism in the Middle East and what role should be given to Islam to emulate the West (Abu-Lughod, 1991). In all development including gender relations, we should look at all complexities and contradictions and how what is called ‘modern’ is produced, which might not be liberatory and I add what importance of change and continuity (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Le Renard, 2014). The tricky task according to Abu-Lughod (1991, P. 11) is “how to be sceptical of modernity’s progressive claims of emancipation and critical of its social and cultural operations and yet appreciate the forms of energy, possibility, even power that aspects of it might have enabled”. Empirically, Hofman and Jamal (2012) doubted the claim that the Arab Spring was caused by people’s (mainly young) frustration about the exclusion caused by unemployment, opposition to the “old” regimes, and aspiration for democracy. They analysed (using the Arab Barometer survey) the characteristics of Arabs and compared them with earlier generations. They found that the picture is more complicated than simply “resistance”. Although the survey indicated that this generation is less religious in terms of attending religious institutions, more educated and less employed, these cues did not simply imply their support for secularisation. Instead, they were more supportive of political Islam than earlier generations, tended to support *Shari’a* and identified themselves primarily as Muslims. They were more satisfied with their countries’ economic conditions than the previous generations and more optimistic about future economic prospects. As Hofman and Jamal (2012, p. 186) put it, “[t]he opportunities presented by a

mobilized citizenry seemed to play more of a role in motivating the Arab Spring than did an elevated sense of anti-regime sentiment”.

However, as Susser (2014; 2012) points out, we need to be careful about not essentialising Western socio-political experience as a linear trajectory through which the world should progress, where other religious traditions have different historical experiences in relation to the role of religion in public life, and it is experience that shapes Muslims’ attitudes. In relation to secularisation, I want to elevate participants’ lived experience of religion as practised in the context of their everyday life. Reference (in the Saudi context) to “*Oh Allah*” comes spontaneously when we are scared, astonished or happy. Reference to thank *Allah* in everyday conversation for worse and happy situations that all God’s fate. We spontaneously turn off music when the call for prayer floods and people called to *Allah* (and there are more examples than these). These are not only exclamations, but more importantly religious belief infused with cultural practices. Ammerman (2007) and McGuire (2008) draw our attention to studies of religion as theology, and institutions, though important, cannot capture the complexity of what matters for individuals. As Ammerman (2007, p. 189) put it, “we need to refocus our work in order to see the religion that often appears in unexpected places”. Although the empirical context of Ammerman (2007) and McGuire (2008) is different from this study, I find these insights conceptually persuasive to theorised multi-layered understanding of religion.

Abu-Lughod (2013, 2008) reflected on her anthropological research on Bedouin community in Egypt, which gives us a glimpse of how religion is lived out, which is significant in understanding their lived religion. According to Abu-Lughod (2013, 2008), everyday language is saturated with religion, reference to God’s will, fate, God’s guidance on everyday choices and their practices reference to their belonging to Muslims. At that time also, Islamic piety was

reshaping everyday practices as something it has been interpreted to justify new form of power which shifted gender power (on light of Salafi movements in Egypt), in the other way women were gaining confidence and power brought about religious education navigating through marital choice. This lived experience as Abu-Lughod (2013, 2008) convincingly argued should remind us to be “respectful of other paths toward social change that might give women better lives. Can there be a liberation that is Islamic? And, beyond this, is liberation even a goal for which all women or people strive?’ (Abu-Lughod, 2008, p. 287).

In addition, other studies on the Middle East highlighted assumptions of oppression as a result of economic exclusions of people and their behaviour are ‘irrational’. Hashemi (2017) focused on assumptions pertaining to the representation of men and women in the Middle East who are economically disadvantaged as a result of unemployment as feeling powerless and with no hope. This feeling leads to engaging in deviant and radical acts to gain dignity causing a natural result for psychological irrational. This interpretation hints at what Julian (2016) called a metrocentrism interpretation based on Western experience as universal. According to Hashemi (2017), this interpretation is founded on individual interest based on rational calculation to gain upward mobility. What is overlooked for Hashemi (2017) is the complexity of motivations for those economically disadvantaged in the Middle East and their way of navigating through the structure. Hashemi (2017) argued that based on his empirical study Iran, behaviour and attitudes should be placed on cultural values and looked at within the context of relationality.

Hashemi (2017, p. 92) suggested that we should look at behaviours in terms of “aspirations-bounded rationality”. By this, Hashemi (2017) meant that choices and behaviours are arising from motivations that come from “his or her ideas, hopes and beliefs about the future. Seemingly irrational acts become understandable if we know enough about the person’s aspirations, about

the people with whom the person sees or interacts with”. These aspirations exist neither as a personal preference nor as a standard assumption of “subjectivity” of the individuated self, nor as an irrational reaction driven by the failures of the labour market. The relative autonomy of youth’s aspirations to escape socioeconomic limitations and gain status and dignity is within the limits set by their culture. They base their aspirations on a preference to live within their community (Hashemi, 2017) and wish to be close to their family and morally upright. These aspirations drive an individual’s behaviour as well as constraining it (Hashemi, 2017). This can be exemplified by Iranian youth refusing to leave their towns to look for better opportunities since they would not be close to their families; this value outweighed the economic gains that they would make if they moved. They felt that “a person can make money by finding employment elsewhere, but that there was no point since there would be no one around to share the wealth with” (Hashemi, 2017, p. 92).

Singerman (2011) also analysed how people (mainly young) in the Middle East are socially excluded from full participation in normatively prescribed activities for “youth culture” as a result of their low rate of participation in the labour market. Their lack of employment and, consequently, their inability to earn an income creates a barrier to socially accepted gender relations (e.g. meeting the rising cost of marriage). However, Singerman (2011) carefully explains the agency of men and women in Egypt to transition to adult life in a collectivist society that ascribes values on morality pertaining to gender relations. For example, they enter into relations with the opposite sex through a customary marriage not registered with the authorities (*Urfi*) to reconcile their desires with social norms, values and the expectation of marriage as a proper outlet to meet sexuality.

Although Hashemi (2017), Hofman and Jamal (2012), Susser (2014; 2012), and Singerman (2011) focused on young people, the useful aspect of these works is that it helps to explain how they inhabit social norms. I take these studies to establish a firm analytical basis for agency which I will explain in greater depth in section 2.6. As Bayat (2012) argued, discussions of lived experience of young people in the Middle East where culture and structure is controlling their behaviours can give us rich insights into conceptualising their agency and they as social actors are present. Indeed, as argued by Bayat (2012), this conceptualising tells us about their agency as part of collectivist others unlike representing them as a collective body, “youth”, involves on an assumption of global diffusion for youth culture adoption of modern ideas and political forms of protest. This entails a presumption that all youth cultures are similar and detaches them from other identity categories such as ethnicity, which may be a source of how they understand themselves and direct their behaviours.

Bayat (2012) indicated that “youth” recalls the mobility of young people in Europe and the United States during the capitalist boom in the 1960s who were revolutionary forces for transformation. Indeed, their agency should not be confused by others in the world only because their negotiation is about challenge the collectivist whose their central claim is to extend youth habitus (e.g. independence, autonomy and change). Julian (2016) indicated studies of global culture trace adoption of cultural diffusion of political ideas through which agency is only understood based on individuation and motivation by autonomy. This perspective does not consider that others in non-Western contexts have their indigenous local discourse of rights and obligations. Foremost, as Bayat (2012, p. 49) put it, “is the political ideal of the young necessarily revolutionary?” Indeed, there is no action much less agency among others (Julian, 2016).

Hashemi (2017) argued that what is neglected in the patriarchal context is that men and women have recourse to gain power. People in the Middle East were not irrational, nor did they adopt strategies and calculations to pursue their aspirations. Their rationality is not identical with “subjectivity” and the individualised self as in Western understanding; it is a form of “relative autonomy” to escape cultural exclusion. Their choices and decisions are aligning with social norms. Muslims in the Middle East reproduce social norms and religious practices. They utilised prevailing norms and religious rituals to accommodate and adjust their claims within socio-political, economic, and moral norms and thereby they creatively redefined norms (Hashemi, 2017). As Bayat (2012, p. 51) put it, “in the process, they redefined dominant norms and institutions, blended divine and diversion and engendered more inclusive religious mores. Yet this subculture took shape within, and neither against nor outside, the existing regime of moral and political power”. By this, they represented high religiosity, that God does not prevent them from dating for example. Religion is ontological reality more than cultural norms (Bayat, 2011).

Bayat (2012) interpretations of agency of people in the Middle East in relation to accommodating norms also has an echo with gender relation as early indicated by Singerman (2011) about *Urfi* marriage. It also echoes women’s practices as informed by Ahmed (1982) and Abu Odeh’s (1993) views about the incompatibility (as a result of the participation of young Egyptian working women in the workforce) between traditional gender roles, ascribing a woman’s place at home, and women’s economic role, which requires work in the public sphere. Women don the *hijab* to demonstrate that they are still committed to social norms and they are worthy of respect. Women veiling has been a tactic to accommodate norms and to fight back against harassment in Egypt as well as to claim their right to work outside their house (Hashemi, 2017).

The next section will focus on how Saudi men and women are represented in the literature, which would help establish a firm empirical basis for this thesis.

2.4. Empirical themes in the portrayal of social actors in the Saudi context

Turning to empirical studies specifically focused on Saudi men and women, literature takes pressure for social and economic change as a focal point in understanding how people in Saudi Arabia manage their identities. It weighs economic contraction (Yamani, 2000; Bin Safran, 2011; Ali, 2013; Thompson, 2017), and how the emergent educated middle class manage the contradiction between their aspiration and the social structure (Elyas and Picard, 2010; Ali, 2013).

‘Changed Identities: the challenge of the new generation in Saudi Arabia’ is a sociological study conducted by Yamani (2000). The recurrent theme to emerge from Saudi men and women who were interviewed in that study was the conflict between the continuity that family and religion bring as significant wellsprings of identity and security, and disappointment over cultural restrictions in a hierarchical and gendered divided society. Yamani (2000) claims that these Saudi men and women are ambivalent about tradition and change. While they were aware of changeability of the world and like other “global youth” experience life abroad through travel, satellite, and the internet and their education and career opportunities gave them diverse cultural cues on ways societies should be run, there are stronger forces promoting a nationalist lifestyle that combines the comfort of tradition and religion. However, Yamani (2000) argued that although religious support accepting conventions, it provides chances for resistance to look for regional identification on the expense of national belonging. As Yamani (2000, p. 133) put it:

Among the building blocks of identity available to today's youth are residual customs and traditions together with new notions of belonging at the regional, national and global levels. Their Islamic and Arab heritage are central influences. In addition, more specific sub-national, regional and tribal roots jostle with professional, educational and now even unemployed identities. The new generation is in the process of developing its own hybrid identity that springs directly from its peculiar set of circumstances.

Although Yamani's (2000) understanding was historically and culturally specific and highlighted that these Saudi men and women look at opportunity differently, Yamani (2000) hinted that their education and opportunity opened by globalisation should give them a cue as to how they act to manage their immediate circumstances, and looked at their identity category (tribe familial, religious, national) as constraining and these Saudi men and women as oppressed. If Yamani (2000) described identities as "hybrid", an explicit connection to the theoretical and conceptual literature on identity and the relationality has often been lacking. If identity is "hybrid", we should ask what do the intersections between these identity categories mean? How can we address the question of identity without essentialising culture? Yamani (2000) missed taking the analysis to the next step to tell what this means for the social actor and inclusion and exclusion. This question is essential for sociologists to look at the inter-relationship between these forms of identity and agency to tell how society works and the social production, which this thesis empirically attempts to answer.

Whereas Yamani (2000) was concerned about the stability of Saudi men and women, Bin Safran (2011) argued that religious and national identity is a source of their stability through which they reconcile their wish and draw the boundaries with others. Thompson (2017) also studied Saudi men and found that although these men experience economic difficulties and are concerned

about political issues pertaining to public opinion and transparency, they still value national belonging.

Bin Safran (2011) and Thompson (2017) looked at factors affecting their sense of national belonging. They found that these men and women experienced economic difficulties and were looking for more income equality, more job chances and were fighting poverty and corruption. Men were more concerned than women about the economic issues in both studies. This is, according to Bin Safran (2011) and Thompson (2017), due to the cultural factor that ascribes the responsibility of expenditure to males, and the need for income to afford the cost of marriage.

Thompson (2017) found that Saudis are social media users and they rise their wish and desires to policy makers and indeed some domestic change informed by their opinion; nonetheless they viewed that it is the government's right to make the final decision. Although these men and women had an opportunity to communicate with other societies outside the national boundaries through social media, which gave them a cultural cue about freedom of expression, they felt that their Arabic Islamic culture identity is strong; thus, they immunise against cultural change (Bin Safran, 2011). Thompson (2017) also indicated that these Saudis experience change in socio-cultural differentially based on their regional, age, tribal status and gender. Yet, Thompson (2017) referred to these Saudis emphasising gradual change and rising awareness and educating the public to accept societal change. According to Thompson (2017), these Saudis indicated that it is imperative to look at specificities of the Saudi society and not apply a Western-centric interpretation of civil society. These Saudis' view about their opinion tell us about the idea of "civil society" where "networks between the family and the state in which membership and activities are voluntary" and these voluntaristic strategies are used to achieve the collectivist's goal through negotiation and dialogue (Thompson, 2017, p. 842).

Arguably, some interpretations such as Yamani (2000) are based on a liberal understanding of “citizenship” as individuated and autonomous human beings. In contrast, as argued by Al-Torki (2000) in her analysis of the practice of the concept of “citizenship” in Saudi Arabia, Caldwell *et al.* (2009), and Muslim feminists such as Wadud (2005), the condition of the idea of “citizenship” focuses on juridical rights for equal national members as the ideal system for inclusion and exclusion, and rights entitlement in capitalist and secular states.

How can we understand these men’s and women’s compromise between Western modernity and their traditions, and adaptation of local (national Islamic and tribal) identity to guard against dominant Western ideology? How do we draw a line between these identities and agency? These strategies adopted by Saudi men and women in Yamani’s (2000), Bin Safran’s (2011), and Thompson’s (2017) studies emerged as recurrent patterns pertaining to managing identity among educated men in Elyas’ (2014), and Elyas and Picard’s (2010) studies. They examine how multiple identities of Saudi students and teachers who have access to foreign languages are formed and managed. They argue that unlike the prevailing discourse of promoting a conservative educational system based on religious tradition that promotes extremism against the backdrop of post 9/11, and fixed Islamic/Arab identity, the narrative was complicated. Elyas (2014) and Elyas and Picard (2010) found those Saudis who study abroad use English to communicate with native speakers and use the advantages of communicating with others around the world. Moreover, Elyas (2014) and Elyas and Picard (2010) argued that regardless of fear of Westernisation dominated in the society, told us that, the participants realised forces of media and the internet that they should accept and understand the social, political and economic forces and how they adapt to contradictions to preserve Islamic identity. Also, Elyas and Picard (2010) argued that these Saudis hold the view that Saudi people follow a “glocalised” form using Homi

Bhabha's (1977) concept of hybridity to analyse these Saudi's responses to contradictions. As Elyas and Picard (2010, p. 136) put it, "it suggests the concept of 'hybridity' as one way for local English teachers to construct identities that meet the contextual challenges". Educated men are enthusiastically embracing neoliberalism and globalisation, although a kind of 'glocalised' version in which local Saudi and global cultural forms merge into a mixed structure to manage the tension between tradition and modernity. This 'glocalised' identity is explained in narratives of foreign language students by Elyas (2014) and Saudi teachers trained abroad by Elyas and Picard (2010), who found that these stressed 'information-age' learning yet had doubts about the domination of Western ideology. It also found that although the cohort had an appreciation of the hierarchy of Islamic Arabic identity, they were more inclined towards becoming technological natives and global citizens in order to construct their identity.

Elyas (2014, p. 36) further provided a cue for connection between this observation with Foucault to locate these Saudis' practices within relations of power as he said: "Foucault (1980, p. 191) suggests, within every productive network there is always the possibility for resistance. This resistance evidenced in the students focusing outwardly in order to access knowledge through the medium of English and also in order to acquire English". The significance of the work of Elyas (2014) and Elyas and Picard (2010) is locating these strategies with power relations. They wanted to argue that teachers as social actors articulate power through not adopting Western ideology in education without questioning, nor completely accepting, traditional teaching, which suggests that there is not a clean disjuncture between modernity and traditionalism. However, using the language of "resistance" to detect power a critical point is conceptually problematic, which I will explore in depth in section 2.5. to suggest how we could conceptually understand agency.

Le Renard (2014, P.38) conducted a sensible ethnography on Saudi women's strategies of negotiation gender power relations in Riyadh. Le Renard (2014, P.159) told us that "Saudi women do not adopt confrontational positions, but rather appropriate consensual discourses in creative ways. Through these discourses, they push the limits that constrain their mobility and activities." Le Renard (2014) argued that Saudi women in Riyadh used a 'consensual' argument which legitimated and depoliticised their negotiation. These women used discourse of Islamic women's rights and participated in society. From Le Renard's (2014) point of view, without resistance, by appropriating their negotiation through Islamic discourse, negotiation with their families, enable by their level of education and using their 'only-women spaces'; these women were successful in changing social norms. Le Renard (2014) was reluctant to take a colonial tone of resistance and look for complexity and contradiction for political, social, economic factors that have led to organising public spaces based on segregation.

Le Renard (2014) persuasively argued that 'religion' or 'culture' cannot explain women's status in Saudi Arabia, and we should look at this complexity because they are crucial for gender analysis. As Le Renard (2014, P. 82) put it: "being a woman is never an isolated status: while the category of gender is necessary to analyze any society. [...] Their lives are deeply impacted, in ambivalent ways, by the rapid transformations of Saudi capitalism." However, the problem in analysis of Saudi subject, according to Al-Shuqir (2020), seems to take *Salafi* history, though it was crucial for re-establishing Saudi Arabia, as a focal point of analysis, neglecting previous history and cultural capital of the society or what he called "Saudi habitus". The habitus before the *Salafi* movement for Al-Shuqir (2020) consists of historical, imaginary that are overlapped and embedded into the individual through the socialisation process, and the family's history and tribe, which becomes part of the social unconscious and transmits to generations. History then

made the present. According to Al-Shuqir (2020), Saudis have their cultural resources to generate meaning and navigate through the structure. Thereby, Al-Shuqir (2020) views habitus as a source of reproduction, “‘a modus operandi’ that develops without control” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 79) through individual interaction with cultural (social and religious capitals) symbols. As Al-Shuqir (2020) then argued, change should be carefully analysed as an indigenous not something threatening to national Islamic identity.

Al-Shuqir (2020) argued that “religious establishment” was only the focal point as an identity marker for sociological analysis of identity in the Saudi context, which contributed to what he called a typology of epistemic violence with regard to public policy and social issues as simply oppressions. Al-Shuqir (2020) was critical about the way outside users of social media dealt with Saudi society and its identity and how their discussion was used as psychological warfare against Saudi society, to its politics, citizens, and mutual trust. Indeed, a violence was captured by Bin Safran (2011) when these men and women indicated they that using social media led them to get a glimpse into others’ assumptions about Saudis as oppressed. The violence also captured by Le Renard (2014), who is a French researcher, was critical about the way Western media dealt with Saudi society especially in relation to women status. As Le Renard (2014, P.38) captured the stereotype, “that is, treating [Saudi women] as necessarily oppressed and sequestered as women. The tone commentators adopted most often fell between victimization and irony, between romantic calls to save Saudi women from their fellow men and sarcasm about the ‘customs and bans’ of this society”. Such violence also were circulated on Twitter hashtags in 2012. The tone of internal commentators adopted fell between mocking women as lacking beauty and at the same time commentators showed women among themselves are bored about their male counterparts’ (Al-Abas, 2013). Such a circulation of allusions to gender relations questions

‘love’ in traditional marriage, anxiety about gender segregations and homosociality, and stereotypes come up in the narrative in chapter 4, 5, and 6.

Al-Shuqir (2020) and Renard (2014) argued that sociological analysis should adopt reflexive sociology to establish analysis for societal change and look for contradictions and tensions which make the differences. It is arguably crucial for Renard (2014) to look for “the sociological, historical, and political conditions that have led to the spatial economy of gender [...] the organization of public spaces based on the segregation of men from women. Projects promoting Saudi women’s “progress” away from “tradition” that can be justified by various normative references (“religion,” “nation,” “modernity,” “women’s rights in Islam”). The complexity which was captured in chapter 4,5, and 6 was guided by these objects.

The problem of describing Saudi men and women overemphasises economic obstacles, presenting Saudis as lacking in agency, and takes a developmentalist perspective. Indeed, the nexus between disposition and cultural capitals are important to understand agency and strategies of negotiation suggested by As Al-Shuqir (2020) is more generative than Elyas (2014) and Elyas and Picard (2010). All approaches suggested by Al-Shuqir (2020), Elyas (2014), Renard (2014) and Elyas and Picard (2010) offer a novel examination of lived experience and between what is called “tradition” and “modernity” and critically reassess the problematising of the relationship between them and the agency of individuals in the society. Indeed, Al-Shuqir’s (2020) argument takes us to another arena of social analysis that is to accept multiple modernities.

Al-Shuqir (2020) through using Bourdieu’s (1977) framework directed us to ask whether the contradictions strategies adopted by these Saudis work within power relations rather than assuming it is non-indigenous, whereas Elyas (2014) and Elyas and Picard (2010) regard

“modern strategies” and what they called “hybrid” as representing two extremes. In doing so, Elyas (2014) and Elyas and Picard (2010), which also seems from Yamani’s (2000) argument, offered a sociological analysis which highlighted agency as informed by experience through communicating with others beyond the national boundaries. Elyas (2014) and Elyas and Picard (2010) used Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity to interpret these Saudis’ strategies to accommodate “modern” views.

Al-Shuqir (2020) puts that concept into conversation with Bourdieu’s sociology. With the effort of managing economic contractions and different societal issues, individuals manage both ways, their heritage (religious, familial groups) and their individual desires, while preserving their traditions. Al-Shuqir (2020) shows how the Saudis negotiate identity as a process and something that can be managed rather than something static, and how individual conscious and identity are developed within individual ways of interpreting their lived experience. Al-Shuqir (2020) enlists Bourdieu’s theory of fields to better situate negotiation practices in wider relations of power and systems of interaction in a way that emphasises agency of social actors in the Saudi society. À the very sort of social analysis that Elyas’ (2014) and Elyas and Picard’s (2010) conceptual apparatus did not offer. This is the problem then whereas Elyas (2014) and Elyas and Picard (2010) seek to go beyond essentialising Western thought, but the world ‘hybridity’ cannot do so without keeping Westernism in full view.

The remaining question is, how can we understand agency beyond the language of resistance, to tell us about the instruct of the social and identity? This is probably the most challenging question this thesis attempts to answer. In the next section I place my discussion of agency of the social actor within the larger contextual framework of identity.

2.5. Alternative lens to understanding agency

A concept like agency involves a degree of uncertainty, which mandates me to clarify what the concept of agency means throughout this thesis. According to Mahmood (2005, p. 8), it is

[T]he capacity to realize one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective). Thus the humanist desire for autonomy and self-expression constitutes the substrate, the slumbering ember that can spark to flame in the form of an act of resistance when conditions permit.

In relation to my research aim, I find it appealing to think through the concept of agency beyond liberal values of “subjectivity” that focus on “freedom”, “choice” and “autonomy”. I argue that we should first look closely at agency beyond progressivist politics and allowing its meaning to emerge from within power relations. Then I will suggest looking at it in terms of embeddedness and relationality, which inform the analysis (chapter 4, 5, and 6).

The insufficient conceptualising of agency in feminist theory is the issue that Mahmood (2001, 2005) engaged with through her exploration of the women's piety movement in the mosques of Cairo, Mahmood (2005) argued that agency, as understood according to Western liberal feminist assumptions, reflects a progressivist view could not cross-examine to understand her study cohort whose desire, interest and will have been formed by non-liberal conventions. According to Mahmood (2005), perception of agency in Western liberal feminism thought is configured and recognised only when subverting norms which by necessary interns liberating the agent. This conceptualisation tends to look for “instruments of [women's] oppression”; [they search for]

expressions and moments of resistance that may suggest a challenge to male domination (Mahmood, 2005). Mahmood (2005) appealed for the possibility of other forms of agency that may not lead to the subversion of subordinating norms. Agency in Mahmood's (2005) view is an ethical formation, where the individual engages in a process of reflection to construct their ethical life. This reflection may lead simultaneously to the subversion of a subordinating norm, as well as to reinscribing norms that "specific relations of subordination create and enable" (Mahmood, 2005, p.18).

Mahmood's (2005, p.29) thought of agency "beyond the binary model of enacting and subverting norms" is useful to move past the portrayal of Muslim Arab Saudi men and women as agentic subjects just seen as "resisters", and consequently, conceptualising agency through the disturbance of existing power relations (Joseph, 2012; Mahmood, 2005). Mahmood (2005: 29) argued that Foucault's work causes us to notice outside structures to develop explicit modes of human agency from two spirits: "(a) in terms of the capacities and skills required to undertake particular kinds of moral actions; and (b) as ineluctably bound up with the historically and culturally specific disciplines through which a subject is formed." It is through the "paradox of subjectivation" that we can begin to think about the development of agency through relations of subordination. Mahmood (2001) recalled Butler, a post-structural feminist, on the power and constitution of subjects that are useful in analysing agency. In following Foucault, Butler (2001, p. 17) suggested that "the paradox of subjectivation is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power and not a relation of external opposition to power." Responding to Butler (2001), Mahmood (2005) argued that although Butler located agency

within the structure of power relation itself rather than in the consciousness of the autonomous individual, she considered this kind of agency as an act of resistance to social norms and subordinating function of power. I argue that this approximation to agency would leave Arab Muslim Saudi men and women who do not “resist” any form of subordination as subjects devoid of agency.

Mahmood (2001, 2005) draws on Foucault (1980) to describe the paradox of subjectivation to argue that agency is individual “capacity for action [that] is enabled and created by specific relations of subordination” (Mahmood 2005: 29). Mahmood (2001, 2005) suggested a definition for “a modality of action” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 217) to leave its meaning to emerge in a context of discourses and subordination that enable the condition of enactment. Viewed in this way, “agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that result in (progressive) change but also those that aim toward continuity, stasis, and stability” (Mahmood, 2001, p. 212). This understanding of agency has informed the analysis in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Among Arab feminists also, Abu-Lughod (1990, p. 43) scrutinised the assumption informing feminist scholarship, including her own, for being too preoccupied with “explaining resistance and finding resisters” instead of analysing power. In Abu-Lughod’s (1986) early work, she analysed women’s poetry (among the Bedouin tribe in Egypt), which was an expression of women’s resistance to male domination. Later on, in Abu-Lughod’s writing (1990, 2013), she questioned in what capacity may we understand women’s resistance without “misattributing to them forms of consciousness or politics that are not part of their experience—something like a feminist consciousness or feminist politics?” (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 47). As Abu-Lughod (1990, p. 41–42) argued

[T]o romanticize resistance, to read all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated. By reading resistance in this way, we collapse distinctions between forms of resistance and foreclose certain questions about the workings of power.

Thereby, Abu-Lughod (1990, p. 42) suggested shifting the focus on resistance to view it as a “*diagnostic of power*”. Abu-Lughod (1990) took a cue from Foucault (1978, p. 95–96) “where there is power, there is resistance” to argue that resistance is not exterior from the power structure. She proceeded then to give examples of Bedouin women such as using cosmetics and dressing fancy dress in the marriage ceremony to challenge parental and social norms. As Abu-Lughod (1990) viewed this practice cannot be simply read resistance as “not indigenously as before [...], neither outside of nor independent from the systems of power. Nevertheless, what is peculiar to these new forms of resistance is how they travel between two systems and what this can tell us about relations of power under such conditions.” As Abu-Lughod (1990) suggested, this can tell us about forms of power as practice urban values.

Abu-Lughod (2013, 1990) wanted to argue that women are not silent on their issue of suffering. They are taking the advantages of contradiction to assert their issues and resist. This position led Abu-Lughod (2013) to reflect on the risk of victimising women. According to Abu-Lughod (2013), women’s actual experiences must be explored within their cultural, social, economic and global interconnections to think beyond rescuing certain Muslim subjects (women) from their culture and religion. Abu-Lughod (2013) gave the instance of such practices as veiling, honour crime and forced marriage used within Western feminist discussions as evidence of women’s lack of agency and practices to be resisted, since they are incompatible with “empowerment” and “freedom”.

Whereas Abu-Lughod (2013) argued that point persuasively, understanding women within the framework of submission is a position I am pursuing in this thesis. I argue that borrowing the “Western” language of subjugation and liberation is not enough to describe the experiences of women (and men) in the Middle East. According to Mahmood (2005), “resistance as a diagnostic of differential forms of power marks an important analytical step that allows us to move beyond the simple binary of resistance/subordination’. However, Mahmood (2005) was reluctant to take a word like resistance to identify acts outside its political and ethical conditions where the word has meaning. “Resistance” for Mahmood (2005) fails to problematise universalising the desire for freedom central to liberal feminist thought and to be free from relations of subordination to norms and male’s structure.

Mahmood (2005, p. 9) suggested that we need to describe a whole range of human actions, including those which may be socially, ethically or politically indifferent to the goal of opposing hegemonic norms”. Here I want to argue, building on Al-Shuqir (2020), conceptualising agency to address Saudi men’s and women’s agency requires according to Mahmood (2005) to go beyond norms to explore how Saudi men’s and women’s desires, choices and wishes would conform to societal norms that will help to explain how they are constructed ontologically. In this way freedom does not mean resistance of relation of dominations nor does it mean absence of outside constraints. As Stevenson (2012, p. 73) persuasively argued “ the idea of freedom is intimately related to our ability to tell a story about who we are’.

Mahmood (2005) criticised theorising freedom by feminist liberal thought as a universal desire and as a diagnosis of the status of women across cultures who are considered oppressed, marginalised and dominated by males. Mahmood distinguishes between positive and negative forms of freedom to explain her conceptualisation of agency. The former means capacity for

self-mastery to act on free will on the weight of custom and tradition, and the latter is the absence of restraints of any kind to self-guided actions. According to Mahmood (2005) the individual capacity for self-mastery is not an intervention of Western liberal feminist thought, it is already existed in religious belief to transform the self. Indeed, as Abu-Lughod (2013, pp. 18–19) put it, “we have to ask ourselves what we think about those for whom choice may not be the only litmus test of a worthy life”.

As Mahmood (2005) argued, this approach should not be considered as secular oriented as fatalist and acceptance of injustice which its origin rooted in the structure of patriarchy. The notion of individual responsibility is according to Mahmood (2005, p. 173) “bounded by both an eschatological structure and a social one”. Indeed, the Islamic framework provides virtues and values to disciplines believers and individuals bear the responsibility for self-discipline in their everyday life conducts. There is no separation between the sacred and secular (Mernissi, 2011, Wadud, 2005). We here face the idea that God’s will is “divine causality, [...] the wisdom of which cannot be deciphered by mere human intelligence” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 173). Qur’an verses such as 90:10 indicate that: “and shown him the two ways”. This means that his ability to distinguish between good and evil is a blessing. I will illustrate my point using the example given by Mahmood (2005) when someone who is poor can either steal or use lawful means to alleviate poverty. This individual responsibility according to Joseph (1999a, p. 11) indicated individuals are “embedded in relational matrices that shape their sense of self but do not deny them their distinctive initiative and agency”.

Through my reference to Saudi men’s and women’s agency through this thesis, I want to follow Mahmood (2005) and look at how religion as lived informs how we inhabit other parts of our selves. As Mahmood (2005, p. 27) writes, “bodily behaviour does not simply stand in a

relationship of meaning to self and society, but it also endows the self with certain kinds of capacities that provide the substance from which the world is acted upon.” Bodily behaviour is relevant to reflect on how religious practices become intersects to the participants’ experience. The significance of an embodied practice does not index social or class habitus that Bourdieu calls “the practical mnemonics” of a culture. According to Mahmood (2005), the significance of bodily practice is crucial for the kind of relationship it presupposes and the act it constitutes wherein an analysis of the particular form that the body takes might transform our conceptual understanding of the act itself. Indeed, as Mahmood (2005, p. 130) stated, “the point is not simply that one acts virtuously but also how one enacts a virtue (with what intent, emotion, commitment and so forth)”.

According to Mahmood, Foucault distinguished between ethics—that entail those practices, techniques and discourses that a subject changes by herself to accomplish a state of being, bliss or truth—and morals—that alludes to sets of norms, rules, values and orders. Self-representation, in Foucault’s understanding, is formed by an individual’s effort that is not autonomous; the subject is shaped within the limits of formative practices and moral code that are delimited ahead of time—what Foucault described as “methods of subjectivation”. The relationship between mode of subjectivation and moral code is not unduly determined simply in the sense that the subject either complies “or resists” the moral code. As Mahmood (2005) argued, Foucault’s (1980) ethical framework—human behaviour—takes a wide range of ways in shaping a relationship’s moral code, each of which takes a specific connection between one’s capacity (e.g. will, reason, want, activity) and norms. The completed form of human submission to a moral code is a vital component of ethical examination in that it is a way of depicting the particular constitution of the ethical subject. For Foucault (1980), these practices, including bodily and

spiritual practice, which all operate in everyday situations, are important for understanding self-conduct. These practices are significant, not for the meaning they signify, but for their function through which the embodied subject is formed.

Mahmood (2005) wanted to draw attention to the performative acts encompassing the search for meaning that enable different readings of the subject and understandings of power and truth. I argue that, as inspired by Mahmood's (2005) framework, an inquiry into ethics helps us understand the value of the moral code and how people live by this moral code. The performative acts according to Mahmood (2005) help us to notice the relationship that one establishes between practices, choices and a particular norm and how one adjusts to which one's conducts. Thereby, exteriority of the subject reflects interiority and self-realisation to submit their free will to religious virtue. This theoretical stance guided my lens to understand participants' lived experience in relation to sexuality, gender relation and women's veil, which I will explain more my strategy of the analysis in Chapter 3.

Following Mahmood, I contend that if the necessary condition for enacting the ethic of freedom is autonomy, there is no problem associated with one taking a non-liberal action on their own accord to based conducts and desires with existing power relations, norms and structure. Arguably, even non-"liberal" conduct can be tolerated if they were enacted on the free will of the social actor (Mahmood, 2005). In addition, the value of looking for performative acts of ethics and how exteriority reflects interiority of the social actor provides a view of participants' lived experience that is different from the common understanding of ethics and gender from the perspective of identity politics (e.g. veil). As Mahmood (2005) argued, nationalist-identarian views reduce Islamic rituals to a practice of culture and customs and thereby reduce the role of

ritual practice in a pious life. Therefore, this approach even more has implications for how freedom understood and negotiated (Mahmood, 2005).

I argue this approach to understand agency as it is lived will enable a different understanding of Muslim Arab (Saudi in this thesis) men and women beyond the simplistic registers of submission and patriarchy and “resistance” and dominated by the structure of male authority (for women). The approach suggested by Mahmood (2005) does not assume homogeneity of the self within the cultural and temporal terrain. Different selfhoods that emerged within the cultural and historical space and configuration of the self are contingent to discursive formation rather than culture at large. A deference that “has consequences for how the horizon of individual freedom [...] imagined and debated” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 121).

Whereas Mahmood’s (2011) approach is useful for understanding Saudi men’s and women’s lived experience to highlight different self-formations in the Arab world and locating power on the subject, I do not address religion separately. I want to draw on nuanced understanding of agency that not only embodies religious identity but also intersects with the family relation and kinship structure. Joseph (2012, 1999) argues that, while culture and religion are familiar for exploring Arab culture, we should look at the nuance of the critical question of historical, political, tribal, economic, class, religious and regional variables as always embedded with the subject formation. As Joseph (2012, p. 13) puts it, “A similar sifting of sands through clenched hands dissipates the category of Arab [men and women] as subjects of Islam. Arab [men and women] as subjects of Arab culture or of any broad social collectivity raises problematic issues for inquiry”. The category then of “Arab culture”, though it is problematic for general assumptions about agency, becomes simultaneously significant for capturing complexity and differences. This suggests that the subject does not independently exist outside social structure

and, thereby, we should pay attention to social structural variables that would help unveil shifting and plural of identities.

In the following section, I push my understanding of agency in the direction opened by Joseph (2012, 1999a). In particular, my argument is to pay attention to complexity and nuance to consider agency as embedded in relation to family and kinship relation. Then I will look at how we can conceptualise choice in a context of relationality to family and kinship relation.

2.5.1. Agency and relationality

I want in this thesis to detach agency from autonomous will and look at agency as embedded in relational context. In the edited book ‘Intimate selving in Arab families’, Joseph (1999a) wanted to convey for us that the individual is ethically formed relational through cultural, social and religious discourses. As Joseph (2012, 1999a) argued that this formation is different from individualist assumptions in the West. An individual derives the sense of who they are from constant affective exchange where mutual dependency is nurtured, and from identification with the honour of family and idealised elders. Family relations are sustained through traditional responsibilities that are contextual.

Building on Abu-Lughod (2013) and Joseph (1999a, 2012), I argue here that the relational agency that I explain is constructed of a patriarchy that is not fixed, historical, contextual or subject to the power of specific persons. The existing understanding of agency as integral to an individual subject, and the relationality dismisses the individual and more specifically denies women’s agency, is not enough to understand the patriarchy. By patriarchy, I mean “cultural constructs and structural relations that privilege [the] initiative of males and elders [male, and/or female] in directing the lives of others” (Joseph, 1999a, p. 12). I argue as Joseph (1999a)

suggests that relational matrices “should not be read as equivalent to or coterminous with the ‘collective’”. Relational matrices (connectivity in Joseph’s use), although primarily embedded in kinship and relationships of proximity, are shifting and situational. The construct “patriarchal connectivity” that Joseph (2012, 1999a) coined does not necessarily mean there is inequality (hierarchy) or the submission of women and young men (patriarchy).

In Islam, there is a strong injection to relationality between parents and children, kinsmen and relatives, neighbours and between other Muslims. Qur’an verses such as 36:4 indicate “Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good—to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious”. Tracing the semantic meaning of good work (*ihsan*) in Islamic thought, Toshihiko (2002) *ihsan* means is more than the translated meaning of good. Toshihiko (2002) indicated that a prominent place is given to “factors relating to justice and love in human relations, so much so that— to take two representative elements— the act of rendering religious service to God and that of feeding the poor are made to stand there almost on the same footing. Nor, if we reflect, should this surprise us, for the Qur’an as a whole gives an outstanding emphasis to justice and love in social life. Piety, in other words, cannot be piety unless it manifests itself in various works motivated by the will to practice justice and love towards others”.

According to Toshihiko (2002), the Qur’an verses 177:2 “Righteousness does not consist of turning your faces towards the East and the West. But righteous is he who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Scripture and the prophets. Who gives money, however, cherished, to relatives, and orphans, and the needy, and the homeless, and the beggars and for freeing slaves; those who perform the prayers, and pay the obligatory charity, and fulfil their

promises when they promise, and patiently persevere in the face of persecution, hardship and in the time of conflict. These are the sincere; these are the reverent” gave the word *ber* to give further confirmation to and contextual definition of this word, at least within the Qur’an framework. The *ber* means you dictate you *ihsan* to these people because you believe in God and these are the true believers’s behaviours.

True *ber* is not only based on worship to Allah (e.g. pray) but also all your work should be based on believing in God so to explain you not attain taqwa until yourself over others until you expend of what you love whither your money or good treat to others by which you like others treat you. Then the of *ber* is equity and justice in conduct. This is the Islamic ethical practice for relationality even in relation to other non-believers who do not fight you Allah ask you to *ber* and act equitably to them otherwise is the wrongdoers. These ethical conducts are the essence of human beings in Islam. This reminded me with early quote ‘Asymmetrical Reciprocity’ philosopher Young (1997).

Social expectations and social rules demand parents and children to give themselves over the others. Parents are in a position next to the position of Allah; we do not expect Allah to forgive us if we negative spoken to them. Qur’an verses such as 23:17 indicate “Your Lord has ordered you to worship none except Him, and to be good to your parents”. Although, as noted by Kabesh (2013) and Joseph (1999c), due to custody laws stating that when parents become responsible for their children, children in the Middle East are expected to follow their fathers politically because children are members of their father’s family, they also take on his religion, citizenship, national identity and familial allegiances. Paradoxically, children are expected to provide mutual unconditional love to their mother. There is a short, pithy saying that is frequently used, which is “A standing mother is the world” (*ad dunia um*), and songs and poems praise and romanticise

mothers. In everyday conversation, those who devote their affection to their mothers are praised. Hadith emphasises mothers more than fathers. As Abu Hurairah reported:

A person came to the Messenger of Allah and asked, “Who among people is most deserving of my fine treatment?” He said, “Your mother”. He again asked, “Who [is] next?” “Your mother”, the Prophet replied again. He asked, “Who [is] next?” He (the Prophet) said again, “Your mother”. He again asked, “Then who?” Thereupon, he said, “Then your father” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim, Book 1, Hadith 316).

However, parents also have a duty and obligation to their children, enclosing their socialising to be well behaved, expense, treat them with respect, mutual understanding and dialogue in relation to their age differences. Reciprocity then goes both ways. In Hadith there is indication to asymmetrical reciprocity to respect parents and elder (men and women) and soft with younger as in Hadith: “He is not one of us who does not have mercy on our young and does not respect our elders” (Al-Tirmidhi, 43, Hadith 171).

Connective relationships, as Joseph (1999a) argues, are not exclusively reduced to the father as the prime mover of the relationship. For example, at the domestic level, each person, including women and younger people, is a cause of inequality in the patriarchal system (Joseph, 1999a; Kabesh, 2013). Kabesh (2013) argued that power, circulation and negotiation are not avoidable in family life, and they are not exclusively assigned to either men or women. It is a power relationship that involves women’s constant negotiation to gain power over men within an idealised view that men maintain all power and control (Kabesh, 2013). Men’s control over power is not straightforward. In Kabesh’s (2013) view, women hold power within the domestic sphere through nurture and love, which are no less important than the public world of

masculinity. It also needs to be mentioned that serving others in Arab culture is not seen as an act of inferiority or subordination; rather, being of service is honourable (Kabesh, 2013; Abu-Lughod, 1986). Indeed, in Islamic ethics those who give services are better off than who do not.

Joseph (1999a) argued that relationality is not a limit to autonomy but rather a process of socialising a person into a social system that values kinship, linkage, bonding and sociability. As Joseph (1999 a, p. 14) argued, “intertwined, patriarchy and connectivity have unwritten the crafting of relationally oriented selves, socialised to negotiate gendered and aged hierarchies and locally recognised healthy, mature and responsible”. Interpersonal relations, as Joseph (1999a) argued, function in maintaining kinship relationships that are voluntarily and spontaneously enter relationships and are committed to one another, and relationships are where they derive satisfaction and develop their belongings (Joseph, 1999a). Joseph (1999a) told us that interdependency of relationships and fluid selves reinforce family solidarity and secure participation from individuals and the group, including members of the group who are lower in the hierarchy, as well as strengthen group identity and cohesion, where solidarity is necessary for social, economic and political survival.

Earlier accounts such as Shrabi (1993, early edit 1988) on the centrality of Arab families highlighted how the internal dynamic of family relation works. Shrabi (1993) indicated that starting in childhood, individuals discover that, regardless of their own lack of power, they can still operate within the existing system of power. According to Shrabi (1993), people in Arab families are trained not only to accept submission and authority but also to conduct their dealings in society through, for example, the intercession of a mother, uncle or another figure respected by the family (i.e. with relatives, friends, friends of relatives, etc.). This conceptualising of the family as a basic unit in society contributes to the partial spread of these types of relationships in

other institutions: at work, at school and in religious, political and social associations (Sharabi, 1993). However, Sharabi (1993) is obsessed with the functionality of the corporation of self and affirms that socialising by an authoritarian father and smothering mother prompts reflexive resistance to authority and the inability to separate from the mother. Sharabi (1993) contended that men seen as “father” are the prime movers and the cause of these complex relationships. He argued that the father holds authority in the family and expects respect and unquestioning acceptance of his rules. This practice, in turn, strengthens personal loyalty and dependency, which develops and strengthens the whole society at large in the system of patronage and the distribution of favours and protection (Sharabi, 1993).

In all of these institutions, according to Sharabi (1993), the father (whether as a ruler, leader, teacher, employer or supervisor) holds the highest position in the pyramid of power, where he expects obedience and shows little tolerance of dispute. Based on Sharabi’s (1993) view, the individual under an authoritarian father is homogenised and only able to act and acquire agency when resisting the authority of custom. Although the account by Sharabi (1993) is useful to highlight the internal family dynamic and fluidity of relationship, this conceptualisation builds extensively on notions of gendered child development in Western psychodynamics and is not successful in figuring out how power and agency works. As Joseph (1999a, p. 9) put it, “this hypervalorisation of the family has placed the family in a sacrosanct space which may be seen as inviolate except on peril of accusation of betrayal”.

Hatem’s (1987) is another account that attempted to diagnose power and dependency. She uses Chodorow’s (1978) framework of theorising the exclusivity of women parenting in her work on Egyptian women to analyse women’s dependency as extension of women’s biological role. Such an account according to Spelman (1988) conflates analysis of sexism as a social relation. This

acknowledges that raising children contributes to oppression (Spelman, 1988). This analysis by necessity hints at looking at gender as separate from ethnicity and class “even if at some point in tandem with, the production of other aspects of identity” (Spelman, 1988, p. 86). What is at the core of the feminist categorical approach focusing on gender as informed by Lawler (2014) is neglecting questioning women’s possibilities and existence. I want to highlight through gender approach how the moral system in Muslim Arab culture sets ideals for both men and women shaped by the social structure and patrilineal kin relation that organises political, economic and social relations. That cannot be understood simply as patriarchal oppression of women. I aim to explore how men and women are differentially based on sex and gender to argue that “all identities are forged in the crucible of social inequalities [...] the attribution or denial of value and of a ‘normal’ status is an effect [...] of the power relations that work in and through identities”. (Lawler, 2014, p. 20).

In similar effort, Barakat (1993) alleged that the profound incorporation of the individual into the family leads to the dismissing of the individual. As Barakat (1993) views it, Arabs as a collectivist society tend to interact as individuals committed to a group, as opposed to independent individuals who continually assert their apartness and privacy. Even in cities, Barakat (1993) argues that what distinguishes Arabs’ behaviour is their sense of belonging through a continued sense of duty and loyalty to the family and community. The wellspring of this feeling of prosperity is connection, as opposed to the individual accomplishment that characterises Western entrepreneurial social orders. According to Barakat (1993), Middle Easterners, particularly the young, complain a lot about family and network pressure and the constant intrusion into their private lives. In contrast to atomised industrial capitalist societies, relationships are centred in the extended family and the communal community, where children

are raised by multiple caregivers (grandmothers and other relatives), and they are as protected as those raised in the nuclear family (Barakat, 1993).

What is beyond our understanding of the individuated self as the hallmark of autonomy has led theorists Sharabi (1993), Hatem (1987), and Barakat (1993) to regard relation as an obstacle that is distractive to autonomy (Joseph, 1999a). Such theorising assumes that individuation is essential for agency whereas relationality distracts to maturity (Joseph, 1999a). Joseph (2012, 1999a) problematises this construct and argues that the relationality may not be an impairment in the function of society, including Western societies in which a person is expected to remain close to their family. As Joseph (2012, 1999a) notes, this conceptualisation tends to pathologise the non-individuated construct of the self and is premised on viewing the individual as a separate unit (single mind) connecting with others as separate units. What is apparent from Joseph's (1999a) understanding of identity construction in the Arab world is that although the Arab world self is constructed differently from the West's, this does not mean reifying a decontextualised dualism as cultural specificity as essentialist. What Joseph (1999a) draws our awareness to is that besides paying attention to cultural specificity, we should not neglect historical, political, economic and social structure as well as the experience of class, regional and religious variables. We should look at these variables as embedded in privileging identification forms, such as masculinity and femininity, and being honourable and non-honourable members in the society. According to Joseph (1999a, p. 8), such variables as embedded in recognisable social categories will help to "unravel the plural/shifting basis of identity".

To theorise the subject in the Arab world in general, it is effective to look for conditions and relationalities that affect flexibility. Joseph (2012) uses cultural explanation as a larger context for family relationships, where the larger family creates a permanent context for reconfiguring

relations. This structure creates the role through which kinship governs, and it values guiding behaviours and even kinship terms for relatives (e.g. brother, sister, son of my father's brother). What is gender in relation to reconfiguration of these relations is a matter of age, sexuality and class. This construct of connective relationality suggested by Joseph (1999a) is relevant to the thesis to highlight how Saudi women and men operate on a system of power and acquire agency. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will highlight this complexity.

Even though I argue that social actors are constructed relational to family and kinship, this does not mean that relations are fixed. Stack (2003) correctly argued individuals elect what is workable to arrange themselves into family obligations. Stack (2003) told us the fluidity of the relationship is “written in Western as well as in Middle Eastern family stories as personal and historical struggle unfolds within kin networks and as individuals work through and around the continuum of often competing ideological scripts”. Indeed, the individual biographies which tell us about the collective narrative that are fitted together and that “family transitions and constraints are bundled into hundreds of stories of individual lives fettered together” (Stack, 2003, p. 15). Stack (2003) gave us valuable questions we could understand changeability of family relation such as marital choice, spouses' obligations, women's work and men's economic independence. From the sociological perspective, we should ask how transformation works with or against collaboration with intimate others, how individual biography evolves when we face those who stand against or support our wishes, and what are the cost of changes when obstacles stand between individual wishes and culturally accepted roles. These questions guided my understanding of participants' negotiation in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

2.5.2. Relationality and choice

Related to the contradiction between agency and relationality is an assumption of being devoid of choice. An issue that arises from the Western liberal feminist understanding of freedom, as Abu-Lughod (2013) put it, is that we all find ourselves in a particular social world and placed into a specific social class, as well as geographical and historical landscape, that forges and limits our wishes and choices, while we acknowledge that this is not to say that one has more choice than others. Abu-Lughod (2013) recalled Brown's (2012) account to highlight the problems with liberal democracies legislating what Muslims should do and not do (e.g. veiling, wearing). These politics ignore how choices are conditioned by and overlap with power to the extent that choice is an "impoverished account of freedom" (Brown (2012) in Abu-Lughod, 2013, p. 19).

Abu-Lughod (2013, p. 25) reflected on her work (1986) on the lived realities of women in Egypt, and she believes that a whole range of terms like choice, freedom and oppression are not enough to understand women's dynamic efforts and the quality of their lives. As Abu-Lughod (2013, p. 25) conveyed, "Women would find it bizarre to imagine that people could think they were caged by their culture or oppressed by their religion, even though they have not had easy lives and some of what they suffer is indeed gendered." Although accepting differences in no way means accepting what is going on as "just their culture", it is crucial to recognise differences as a product of different histories, circumstances and expressions (Abu-Lughod, 2013, p. 43).

As Joseph (2012) argued, the subject as relational is a spirit that involves the subject's claims on others, rights, demands and entitlements. Joseph (2012) believes that the structure of expectation in the Arab world is built on entitlements rather than claims of a commonly constructed rational

actor. We should be vigilant about the question of desire, what women (and men) want, need, aspire to and what they want to obtain (Joseph, 2012). Would all women want liberation, secularism, and freedom from “patriarchy” and religion? Would the meaning of these terms not vary across cultures (even within culture)? (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Mahmood, 2005).

In addition, we should question duty, responsibility and power. Joseph (2012) argued that unlike the individual bearer of responsibility, being relational to others essentially entails claims on others and responsibility is often rooted in family, associated with morality and often sanctioned by religion. Joseph (2012) wanted to draw our attention to was observing how agency and choice are packaged in a web of responsibility. Men and women are claimed and claimable, and “to be unclaimed is to be outside of the society” (Joseph, 2012, p. 19). Democracy is not more neutral than inequality and hierarchy, and to understand claims and responsibility, we should look for conditions of structuring claims and situational shift of claims and how a sense of obligation to family may or may not differ between men and women (Joseph, 2012). Therefore, I argue that a more empirical account of the lived reality of Muslim Arab men and women is needed to consider what terms like choice and autonomy may mean beyond the “Western” perspective.

What this line of thought opens up is that choice and desires are formed in a context of relationality. I noted in the sub-section 2.5.1. that relationality is a process of socialising a person. This is similar to the argument by sociologists Lawler (2014) and Smart (2007) on identity and relationality. To explain this further, the next section considers their thought on the connection between individual narrative and relationality in a process of identity production.

2.5.3 Identity and relationality

Although this thesis' argument differs ethically from Lawler (2014) and Smart (2007), I nonetheless find their argument on relationality not only theoretically persuasive but also reflective of participants' narrative in chapters 4, 5 and 6. They encourage us to think about personal experience as socially situated.

Lawler (2014) wants us to think about identity in terms of its sociality and challenges the uniqueness that the term bears especially in Western societies. Identity in Lawler's (2014) understanding is "a social and collective process and not, as Western traditions would have it, a unique and individual possession" (Lawler, 2014, p. 3). Lawler (2014) argues that individual narrative is made up of and interpreted through the assembly of various memories, experiences, and interpretations while exposing the unconscious aspects of who we are and who we want to be. Identities are "produced through the autobiographical work in which all of us engage every day, even though few of us will formally write an 'autobiography'" (Lawler, 2014, p. 26). Along with the personal narrative, kinship for Lawler (2014) is a self-narrative; when we know our ancestors we become ourselves due to the incomplete embedded in getting to know ourselves. Kinship for Lawler (2014, p. 63) is "a cultural category produced as if founded in 'objective nature'". This relation has implications for constructing family, race and nations (Lawler, 2014).

In addition, in the process of "becoming ourselves", Lawler (2014, p. 71) challenges the conception of 'autonomy' valued in Western societies whereby "regulatory power has come to saturate the social world: it is present in all appeals to self-fulfilment and self-improvement, whether of the mind or the body." Therefore, power is not owned by individuals, which defines who and what can be said, and things have real meaning because social relations makes them

true: “*who we (and others) are* is an effect of what we *know ourselves (and others) to be*” (Lawler, 2014, p.73).

Identity is social not only because of its more socially obviously public aspects (men, women, etc.) but also because of its more personal and emotional aspects (Lawler, 2014, Smart, 2007). Smart (2007) informed us that what has been missing in sociological analysis of personal experience is the link between interiority and exteriority. As Smart (2007, p. 38) put it, “in order to explore interiority [...], it is necessary to consider a range of concepts”. These concepts are memory, biography, relationality, embeddedness and imaginary. According to Smart (2007), we should look at these concepts as entwined and mutually invested in the theoretical exploration of personal experience. As explained by Smart (2007), personal desires, choices and emotions are not totally personal as they are framed in social and historical contexts. Sociological interpretation of personal experience advised by Smart (2007) and Lawler (2014) to look at these tools to tell how individual narrative talk about social narrative. The assembled individual narrative does not tell only stories of fragmented individuals; they provide us with narratives of who they are: “Relationality is then a mode of thinking which not only influences decisions and choices, but also forms a context for the unfolding of everyday life” (Smart, 2007, p. 49).

According to Lawler (2014), Smart (2007), identity in its nature is interactive with symbolic systems, and thereby the move from the unconscious to conscious, where the social actor interacts with symbolic systems. According to Lawler (2014), all the time we occupy different social situations and how conflict between these roles is negotiated to prove that we are being a ‘person’ to make our roles visible to others. According to Lawler (2014), Smart (2007), what is important about this conscious process is that we become habituated to distinguishing between true and false, “good” and “bad” parts, hate and love, please and desire to reject, works and what

does not and so on. This is to say that these processes are inevitable, and, in fact, we cannot be part of the social world without them.

Relationality here is a context of our memory that links thinking and doing, and through sharing memory with the familial context (Lawler, 2014, Smart, 2007). According to Smart (2007), this shared memory creates familiarity with our ancestors' experiences. The importance for Lawler (2014) and Smart (2007) recalling of personal experience relationality incorporates more than genetic and blood relations; it relates people to others on several different conceptual contexts, places and moments.

Following this line of thought, I will embrace the concept of embeddedness in kinship through the empirical chapters and provide central focus of the concluding chapter. My aims to demonstrate that—as will emerge from participants' lived experiences—identities “are lived out relationally and collectively. They do not simply belong to the individual; rather, they must be negotiated collectively, and they must conform to social rules” (Lawler, 2014, p. 182).

I want to push in the direction opened by feminists such as Lawler (1999), Spelman (1988), and (Skeggs, 1997) who raise a question of the post-structuralist feminist tendency to detach gender from other identity categories such as race, class, ethnicity that could be the source of self-realisation. I also want to build on Abu-Lughod's research (1991) to raise a question for feminism, which reverses oppression and reverses power relations and locates sex differences in culture, a tenet called ‘women are made, not born’. Feminism is devoted to being against men's selves and patriarchy thereby realising the women's self by conscious oppression as objects of various oppositions (e.g. culture/nature, public/private, work/home, connectedness/autonomy, subjectivity/objectivity). According to Abu-Lughod (1991), the issue of gender or what is called

‘let women speak’ becomes an issue of differences, dealing with ‘gender’ without reference and ‘woman’ deconstructed into women reflecting essentialised speakers from its experience of subjecthood. From this feminist experience with subjecthood there are problems that ignore the self as always a construction never natural, and the process of creating a self entails opposing others (as the concept of culture does in anthropology) and ignoring differences that enforce inequality. Some, like Spelman (1988) criticise feminist assumption like the account of Chodorow (1978) in her analysis of male domination due to biological differences. Chodorow’s (1978) assertion of the fluid personality boundaries of women and men leads her to assume that women are more relational and able to sustain attachment than men, where the latter are individuated and separated with solid boundaries. Proposals like these of ‘women’s culture’ and others who attend to the social and personal effects of gender as a system of difference according to Abu-Lughod (1991; p. 471) build on values that are “traditionally associated in the West with women – a sense of care and connectedness, maternal nurturing, immediacy of experience, involvement in the bodily (versus the abstract), and so forth.” Smart (2007) also views that the problem with liberal feminism is that the interest in the relationship between gender and spouses was theorised as part of the processes of individualisation. Indeed, “what mattered, sociologically speaking, was seen to occur on departure from the domestic sphere, not within it” (Smart, 2007, p. 35).

Lawler (2014) noted, all identities are relational and cannot be understood as a “category” because an identity category does not exist independently. Lawler (2014, p. 7) said:

“identity” in a wide-ranging and inclusive way to mean both its public manifestations – which might be called “roles” or identity categories – and the more personal, ambivalent, reflective and reflexive sense that people have of who they are. [This is helpful] to avoid

reducing identity to categories of gender, race, nation, class, sexuality, etc., with which it is often associated.

In this sense, at the core of feminist analysis of gender is identifying women as a category detached from ethnic group, and historical and political context, whereas, as informed by Lawler (2014), identification relies on dis-identification; Western women cannot be Eastern women, women cannot be men, etc. So, the danger of Western liberal feminist analysis of women as a “category” acknowledges identity as equally relying on the excluding of what they are not.

Although this valorisation by cultural feminists, such as reverse Orientalists, may be useful in forging a sense of unity and in waging struggles of empowerment, this tendency, according to Abu-Lughod (1991, P. 471), is dangerous because the feminists:

“overlook the connections between those on each side of the divide, and the ways in which they define each other. Second, they overlook differences within each category constructed by the dividing practices, differences like those of class, race, and sexuality (to repeat the feminist litany of problematically abstract categories), but also ethnic origin, personal experience, age, mode of livelihood, health, living situation (rural or urban), and historical experience. Third, and perhaps most important, they ignore the ways in which experiences have been constructed historically and have changed over time.”

Hence, while looking at people’s (women’s) experiences of the world, which by necessity are different in terms of political, social, and historical context from Western women, “we need to consider that causation may run in the opposite direction” (Lawler, 2014, p. 13). Following a

“categorical” (gender in this case) approach to identity then obscures the history and politics of social identities, inclusion and exclusion.

Lawler (2014) suggested ways to reconceptualise identity in terms of its connectiveness with values to explain what lies behind the approval and disapproval of certain identities drawing the lines between “us” and “them”; and such lines cover the interdependence within each of “us” and “them”. Lawler (2014) gave explanations for what makes for a human life and whether it is inclusion and exclusion to argue that individuality is not available to all. To be out of a group and assigned as underclass is to be positioned as without valuable identity. As Bauman and Vecchi (2004, p. 39) put it, “the denial individuality, of ‘face’—that object of ethical duty and moral care. You are cast outside the social space in which identities are sought, chosen, constructed, evaluated, confirmed or refuted”. To be out of the bound of the society means, for both Lawler (2014) and Bauman and Vecchi (2004), to be out of a legitimate proper and admissible category defined by those who are in a power position who can define themselves and who are denied such power.

What we need to be worried about is pathologising other human beings when enforcing the idea of autonomy, self-mastery and individuality, so that the heart of the problem becomes not only power and inequality but also enforcing stereotypes of others as holding “faulty” identity (Lawler, 2014, Stevenson, 2012). This enforces the view that Western people know that the best have choice and freedom and are free from domination. Thereafter, as Lawler (2014), Stevenson (2012) indicated, problems of social order become problems of identity and the universal essence of the subject. We need to be worried that the rise of the individualist conception of the subject as a “modern sense” is ideologically related to medieval social, economic and religious revelation set up against feudalism. This was a power struggle that took place between property

owners and the Church that, from its beginning, was a conflict focused on personal existence, who possessed rationality and reason about a new moral order in its rigid hierarchal society (Stevenson, 2012).

Thereby, Stevenson (2012) through tracing the meaning of freedom through the history of slavery, then the Enlightenment and neoliberalism, advised sociologists to think through how and why it became prominent in different historical contexts. Stevenson (2012) concluded that freedom does not mean the removal of outside constraints, nor a set of abstract principles. Freedom is, as Stevenson (2012, p. 73) put it, “intimately related to our ability to tell a story about who we are, what traditions are important and where we are currently headed”.

Within this approach to identity, I situate my analysis of participants negotiation in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Summary

This chapter presents a review of the literature about the main conceptual and empirical themes related to the research aim. It discusses the relevance of the postcolonial theoretical framework. It suggests looking at the complexity of lived experience for people in the Arab world and the intersection between various forms of identity. Thereby, we can productively understand agency as relational, which frames the basis for the analysis of the data (chapters 4–6). Before the data, the next chapter discusses the methodological considerations of the study.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Method

3.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the methodological aspects which were developed while I settled on significant decisions about the research design and data collection. Section 3.2. discusses the constructivist–interpretivist epistemological approach embraced for the study. Then, section 3.3 considers the qualitative approach using narrative interviews. The focus then shifts to a discussion on sampling strategies and related challenges in section 3. 4. Following this, section 3.5 describes the field work which includes conducting interview, sample characteristics, and the data analysis. The focuses will shift in the final section 3.6. to reflexivity on my positionality and interpretation.

3.2. Epistemological and knowledge claims

This study adopted a constructivist–interpretive ontological position. This ontological position claims that reality is socially constructed and knowledge is produced through individual experience and interpretation (Smith, 2016; Crotty, 1998). As Crotty (1998, p. 9) put it:

It is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. Isn't this precisely what we find when we move from one era to another or from one culture to another? In this view of things, subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning.

This ontological position is consistent with this research aim and questions to understand the participants' lived experience. My approach to lived experience informed by Molly *et al.* (2000)

is to view it based on a socio-cultural approach which acknowledges human beings as agents who are able to make meaning of the world using narrative to interpret and direct their experience to configure the sense of who they are. This thesis did not reconceptualise narrative of lived experience as illuminating the interiority of the social actors just in a sense of cognitive ‘“psychological” variables without essence. My objective is to offer perspective on how the interiority of the subject is not separated from its exteriority and dispositioning the assumptions that informed my interpretation, which I will give more details on in section 6. Individual narrative on lived experience, I argue it is “cognitive approach asks both: How do persons structure their stories in such way that we can gain some insight into the actual processes of thought? And, how do storytelling and story structures shape cognition?” (Molly *et al.*, 2000, pp. 251–252)

According to Crotty (1998), it is constructed by human beings through interactions between our consciousness and the world. Accepting the world without our experience is meaningless. Geertz (2017) (originally 1973) insisted that culture has to do with function. We direct our behaviour and organise our experience on culture. Looking at culture as ‘complexes of concrete behaviour patterns-customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters’ not exclusively mean a result of human behaviour (Geertz, 2017, p. 49). Unquestionably, “without men [and women], no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men [and women]”. Human thought is in essence “basically both social and public”.

The role of language then, as Frowe (2001) and Grix (2010) stated, is to label objects and it shapes and moulds reality. According to this view, knowledge is dependent on the individual’s past and present experiences and values as well as for whom and when the stories are being told (Bakhtin, 1986). This ontological basis of the research had practical implications when my role

as a researcher was to report the participants' different perspectives using the actual words of different individuals (Creswell, 2018).

I embraced a constructivist–constructionist approach to reality as a result of the essential relationship between individual experience and culture as informed by Lawler (2014) and Smart (2007). According to Moen (2006), Molly *et al.* (2000), and Crotty (1998), these approaches are useful to illustrate how the process of social construction unfolds, and both claim that people learn and develop through social interaction. I argue, building on Molly *et al.* (2000) and Crotty (1998), that meaning is borne in and out of human beings engaging with their human world. Society and its institutions precede us, and we are embedded in them and we depend on culture to direct and organise our experience (Crotty, 1998).

Drawing on Swidler (1986), I do not view culture as the exclusive determinant of the participants' choices and desires, and understanding of freedom. Culture is a great source of thoughts, norms and values that may be utilised in diverse ways. Therefore, this repository may be mobilised in diverse ways, as a “toolkit” from which Saudi participants, male and female, construct their actions through which values cannot be only attributed to the individual but can also be seen as culturally co-produced (Swidler 1986, p. 277). This epistemological position led me to locate participants' narrative through history to bridge the gap between their individuality and social reality.

Constructionism, then, is consistent with postcolonial feminism in that meaning and knowledge are relative to time, place and generalisation (Patton, 2002). There is no valid or true interpretation; there are, instead, useful, rich and diverse interpretations (Crotty, 1998).

Arguably, as Crotty (1998, p. 55) emphasised: “seeing interpretation as a making of meaning

does not condemn us to subjectivism, it does not condemn us to individualism either. We have to reckon with the social origin of meaning and the social character with which it is inevitably stamped”. Through the field work, I aimed to deconstruct Western liberal feminist approach through privileging participants’ meaning of their lived experience which Oakley (1998, p. 707) suggested ‘a social and historical understanding of ways of knowing gives us the problem of [...] the gendering of methodology as itself a social construction’.

Indeed, as Crotty (1998, p. 55) argued, “the ‘social’ in social constructionism is about the mode of meaning generation from culture and not about the kind of object that has meaning”. Feminist Ann Oakley (1974, p. 27) in her older publication suggested “a way of seeing is a way of not seeing”. The significance of researching lived experiences of Saudi men and women—in relation to family, gender and life choices—lies in how it challenges Western liberal feminist ontological and epistemological positions by paying attention to the locality of meaning. Abu-Lughod (2013) and Mahmood (2005) condemned the merging of epistemological issues in relation to an understanding of non-Western culture. Abu-Lughod (2013) criticised how epistemological positions inform Western liberal feminists to see who do not follow patriarchy are subjective. Thereby Western liberal feminists have advocated a universal standard of rights and equality based on their analysis of sexual inequality taking into consideration the role of patriarchy in creating objectivity to structure the world. Western liberal feminist epistemological dominance as methodological issues that this thesis has addressed.

The strength of a narrative approach lies in its potential for bridging my theoretical critique for Western liberal feminism with methodology. As Molly *et al.* (2000) persuasively informed us, that one promise of narratives is to transcend the dualisms of “subjectivity” and “objectivity”, and the contradiction between “individual” and “society”, and between subjectivity and culture

as mutually constitutive of human experience. As informed by Molly *et al.* (2003, p. 197), narrative “encodes the voices of the powerful as well as those of the oppressed”. This point emerged strongly in the data chapters (4, 5 and 6) where the participants’ narratives are far from challenging power relations.

I do not claim that the thesis’ narrative reflects truth nor its kind is personal one. I view truth as Molly *et al.* (2003, p. 198) out it “partial, contingent, subject to contestation and change”. A narrative approach then is appropriate for this research because the approach does not ignore the individual’s ways in negotiating meaning as relevant to context, similarities and intersections. Participant varied based on their gender and the different symbolic resources they use (e.g. religion, family, friends, social media, and education) to construct and negotiate their identity. I argue that by exploring similarities and intersections between men and women participants through a narrative interview, I can prove my commitment to interpretivism epistemology.

3.3. Research design

3.3.1 Qualitative approach

The research aim and questions are consistent with qualitative approach which privileges the individual experience and helps to generate rich, complex meaning that is extended beyond individual narrative (Ritchie, 2014). The qualitative approach enables the researcher to probe for underlying assumptions among the participants to raise the issues that are most important to them (Choy, 2014). In the quantitative approach, many characteristics of people, including their identities, perceptions, experience and beliefs, may not be captured because of this approach’s preoccupation with overall trends, patterns and “standardisation” (Mason, 2018, p. 114).

Researching lived experience requires a contextualised understanding of the participants' accounts and experiences (Mason, 2018).

Humans always exist in relationalities and meaning transferred from one person to others through dialogue (Moen, 2006). This highlights the nature of narrative as collaboration and the retelling of stories that are co-constructed between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2018; Moen, 2006). Narratives are, therefore, naturally linked to the language through which individuals express meaning (Moen, 2006). Qualitative interviewing, I argue, enabled me to go back and forth and probe for meaning and elaboration, and use quotes to represent participants' perspectives. The best way to find the knowledge to address my research questions leads to a discussion of the most legitimate research strategy in the following section.

3.3.2 Narrative methodology

This research involved exploring how identity lived in relation to embeddedness, relationality and imaginary (Smart, 2007). It sought to investigate how individual lived experience captures the complexity of life. Lawler (2014) and Molly *et al.* (2003) argued that identity is made up through telling a narrative of life assembling experiences, memories, episodes, interpretations and understandings that are brought together in the overall plot. Identity then is “produced through the autobiographical work in which all of us engage every day, even though few of us will formally write an ‘autobiography’” (Lawler, 2014, p.26).

I learnt through this research that narrative not only captures personal experience but also has a great deal to say about social life, in relation to social context and reflecting the specificity of time and region (Kim, 2004, Molly *et al.*, 2003). Participants' lived experience allowed me to see

their individual voices, connections between their individual convictions and experiences as well as temporal dimension, and a spatial dimension which according to May (2011) and Moen (2006) a multitude of voices is captured in an individual story. In other words, narrative methodology shifted my understanding of the breadth of the sample has meant that individual story has been able to explore relationality to family and kinship relations.

Josselson (2011) and Patton (2002) indicated that narrative is an extract of how the stories are structured and scripted within some context. Harding (2006, p. 5) said that meaning emerges “out of ‘knots’ of meaning, rather than unfold[ing] along a singular time line”. Narrative of selected events enables eliciting strands and patterns of a story, and sequential content, which do not link up in a unified linear pattern, enabling the generation of rich description and interpretation with its biographical importance (Harding, 2006).

Biography in this sense enables an understanding of how the interviewees want to represent themselves in the present (Harding, 2006), with an “emphasis on how looks back on his/her life and how to s/he chooses to put in this into words, what s/he emphasises and what s/he leaves out” (Harding, 2006, p. 3). The understanding is not reducible to class; it can be a product of childhood and early family socialisation that is continuously modified by individuals to the extent that members of varied social classes are different in terms of, for example, their socialisation; thus, they have characteristics (*habitus*) with individual variations that determine their positions (DiMaggio, 1979; Navarro, 2006).

The use of history is relevant in this thesis’ analysis for finding recurrent patterns and comparisons to understand specific meanings under a variety of circumstances. According to Mills (2000), history identifies the institutions, ideology and the type of people prevailing in a

period of time, all of which reveals something about the patterns that govern a specific historical era. Otherwise, we are limited to descriptions of limited human types and social institutions. The use of history also gives an explanation for why something happens, how it varies according to historical phases, what role it plays and what was passed on to the next phases (Mills, 2000). Acknowledging history becomes relevant when examining social structures in the Middle East that are different from those in the West. Questioning this takes epistemology and economics for granted and explores how Western claims to reality are linked researching and interpretations of other's life and how they become a force in the social world (Clifford and Marcus, 2010; Said, 2003; Mills, 2000).

My role in the interpretations was to question the extent to which participants are accurate in their understanding because people are rarely articulate about how categories such as gender, class, historical processes, and economics have shaped their lives (Kim, 2004; Mills, 2000). According to Back (2007) and Kim (2004) the role of the sociologist is to question the public understanding and invite more voices to be heard as well as subject participant views to deconstruction and analysis. This active role of sociologists raises an issue about whether their view is different from that of the participants, and the challenge lies in whether sociologists' terminologies reflect reality more accurately than those of the agents (Kim, 2004). I adopted a critical attitude that advocates exercising methodological caution in interpreting data rather than epistemological doubt (Hammersley, 2008; Kim, 2004). To overcome this issue, I identified meaning units in the interview transcripts, which I paraphrased into main themes, a strategy that will be explored in the analysis section 3.5.3.

3.3.3 Narrative interviews

Interviews are a meaningful way to gain access to the complexities and richness of individual accounts (Mason, 2018; Patton, 2002) to capture how those being interviewed view their world (Patton, 2002) as well as their values and attitudes (Silverman, 2006). Although other methods such as focus group could offer a platform for co-construction, the advantage of a focus group interview, for instance, is the exploration, reciprocation and elaboration of ideas that may not occur outside a group context (Cleary *et al.*, 2014). The interaction within focus groups also narrows the power distances between historically stratified people and between the decision-makers and participants. My aim, however, was to focus on participants' narratives, as they do not necessarily share identical experiences (Twohig and Putnam, 2002). In constructionism, stories of individuals, with their commonalities and differences, tell us something beyond the individual's narrative, which helps to discern common patterns (Crotty, 1998, p. 50). The interviews would enable me to generate contextual knowledge by focusing on the specific experiences of the participants (Mason, 2018) that would help me represent different lenses on the research topic.

I adopted a narrative with a flexible interview guide to stimulate participants to elaborate on their responses. The first question in the interview allows a flexible and free space for the participants to tell about their experiences and access multiple realities while focusing deliberately on questions tied to my research topic. This also helps me to probe for untold narrative to ensure that these participants are clear and that they display particular events, emotions and insight within their stories (Galletta, 2013). Although the unstructured interview is characterised by open-ended questions that make room for participants to express their views within their frame of reference and challenge the interviewer's preconceptions (May, 2011), this form of interview

is dominated by the participants, who may drift away from the main research topic (Patton, 2002). My epistemology does not fit structured interviews which limit participants in expressing their views and force them to fit into the predetermined categories that the researcher chose (May, 2011). Standardising questions also does not mean that participants will understand the questions in a standard way or even that their articulation will genuinely express unbiased, contextual views (Mason, 2018).

I used an interview guide (see Appendix 1). According to Patton (2002), an interview guide helps in that the topics that were freely explored and probed are outlined in advance in order to increase the comprehensiveness of the data. It also provides a better structure for comparability and accuracy, compared to the unstructured interview (May, 2011). The early part of the guide was intended to elicit a central narrative from the participants, focusing on their entire life story, which would indicate the direction of responses (Galletta, 2013; Harding, 2006), and then asking about topics introduced by the narrator. The following two parts involved asking narrative questions that extract participants' experience of marriage, work and study and gender relations. I piloted the interview guide questions in early December 2018 with an English-speaking sociologist and an Arabic and English-speaking sociologist (both in England) as well as an Arabic-speaking sociologist and Arabic-speaking laypeople (all in Saudi Arabia). Accordingly, I designed the questions using simple, general language that is understandable for laypeople.

3.4. Sampling

In this sub-section, I outline my use of purposeful sampling through a network-based strategy using WhatsApp to approach the maximum random sample. Purposeful sampling yields in-depth insights about the research issue (Curtis *et al.*, 2000, Lund, 2012; Patton, 2002; Trotter, 2012;

Walsham, 2006) from a relatively small sample (Patton, 2002, p. 265). I made use of the purposeful random sample through WhatsApp (Patton, 2002), which adds credibility to my study by documenting the variability, depth and diversity of experience (Creswell, 2018). The purposeful random sample is appropriate for my research, especially in the context of Saudi Arabia, because the potential population of Saudi men and women who can participate is larger than what can be researched with the time and resources available to a PhD student (Patton, 2002; Curtis *et al.*, 2000).

I used the maximisation of sample variation approach, which I determined in advance with some criteria for participant characteristics, to increase the probability that the findings would reflect different perspectives (Creswell, 2018). Cohort of Saudi men and women category ranged from 18 to 35 years of age was set as a recruitment criterion. This range embraces the transitional phase between education and includes those in secondary school or university, college graduates or dropouts and those who have been in the labour market, which is often a marker for adulthood, in Saudi Arabia (Khalifa *et al.*, 2018, Thompson, 2017; Alnuaima, 2014; Bin Safran, 2011). The upper limit of 35 years reflects the maximum age that has been considered as adult from the sociological perspective in Saudi Arabia. First of all, I started of wondering to understand Saudi young men and women. However, as my analysis developed, I changed the focus from studying youth to draw upon postcolonial critique of Western liberal feminists. Nevertheless, an argument still can be made for including this age group to capture historical perspective by including different generations that have emerged within the last two decades, who experienced societal and economic changes in light of Vision 2030. Participants from varied demographic variables, such as sex, age, education, marital status and work, could provide certain types of information (Sandelowski, 1995). Participants were also allowed to join

regardless of educational, employment or marriage status and whether or not they had children. Subjects from diverse regional backgrounds over Saudi Arabia were allowed to participate.

I began sampling by asking my Saudi friends and colleagues to publicise the WhatsApp invitation. The broadcast explained the research aims and the method of conducting interviews, either in person (for people in Riyadh, where I am based) or using Skype (for those in Saudi Arabia but not in Riyadh) so as to provide an opportunity to participate in the study while not limiting participation. The broadcast also included methods for volunteers to contact the researcher, including an email address and a mobile number for calling the researcher or to use WhatsApp.

I decided on this sampling strategy because it has the power to approach a wide range of targeted age category (Heckathorn and Cameron, 2017). As insider researcher, I observe that WhatsApp is widely accessed in Saudi Arabia at no cost. Although using existing agencies or organisations that involve the targeted group is efficient (Given, 2008), If I chose organisations such as universities, I would expect the sample to be educated elite and/or that it would represent the organisation's perspective; more importantly, I would not be able to access male participants because there is gender segregation in the majority of Saudi organisations.

3.4.1. Challenges encountered in the sampling process

Khalifa *et al.* (2018) told us that in Saudi society recruiting participants for qualitative studies is not always easy, and this is because the members of that society are reluctant to talk about their lives with people outside the family, and many are not very appreciative of the importance of research. This true in the case of this research. When I decided on using WhatsApp, it was

because it is an extremely popular social media platform that seemed to offer a promising means of recruitment for the study. Given the wide reach of WhatsApp, many individuals sent me messages that expressed interest in participating, and two were not located in Saudi Arabia; one was not Saudi, but she was interested in participating due to her Arab background.

Males tended not to volunteer because they did not know me personally. Social interaction in Saudi Arabia tends to be limited to persons who are known to one another and trusted. Strangers necessitate a mediator who is known and trusted by both. This manner of interaction reflects an in-group mentality and affects relationships with others (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). Men who did not know the researcher likely may also not have wanted to take part in the study; generally, males are unwilling to be seen with females who are not related to them. This was suggested in a conversation with a female participant and evidenced by men participants too, who emailed the researcher suggesting an interview via voice call. Although it made me uncomfortable as well, I offered male participants a face-to-face interview. However, male participants expressed a preference for conducting interviews via phone in accordance with local customs governing male–female interactions, a preference with which I complied. As is by all accounts the case with much empirical research involving interviewees, some potential participants changed their minds about taking part in the study.

3.4.2. Sample size

I interviewed 16 participants. This sample size fits with the qualitative paradigm because it maximises the collection of rich information and allows complex interpretations and explanations (Boddy, 2016; Cleary *et al.*, 2014; Cohen, 2017; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Sandelowski,

1995; Östlund *et al.*, 2011). As long as data is sociologically fascinating and gives me rich insight that can be linked to theory, I argue that the “[a]dequacy of sample size in qualitative research is relative, a matter of judging a sample neither small nor large per se, but rather too small or too large for the intended purposes of sampling and for the intended qualitative product” (Sandelowski, 1995, p. 179).

Although estimating an adequate sample size in qualitative research is related to the concept of theoretical saturation (Cleary *et al.*, 2014; Marshall *et al.*, 2013; Sandelowski, 1995), data saturation is not practical for my research because it is an elusive concept (Marshall *et al.*, 2013). It provides little guidance for estimated sample size prior to data collection (Boddy, 2016); therefore, it is difficult to estimate the time and cost needed to reach saturation. Data saturation is accomplished when interviews are conducted in sequence, with repeating concepts, but without any new concepts emerging (Cleary *et al.*, 2014; Sandelowski, 1995). To determine theoretical saturation, data analysis needs to be carried out after each interview, and when themes are echoing each other, saturation is reached (Cleary *et al.*, 2014; Trotter, 2012).

3.5. Fieldwork

Before I started the fieldwork, I obtained ethical approval from the School of Sociology and Social Policy’s review board in October 2018. This approval is guided by policies that require an awareness of and plans for addressing ethical issues in terms of three principles: respect for the participants, concern for their welfare and justice.

This section is a reflection on fieldwork process, including the interview location, recording, and consent.

3.5.1 Conducting the interviews

Similar to Le Renard's (2014) observation in her research on Riyadh society, I have found that crossing the boundaries of the private sphere is dangerous for unrelated women. This was evidenced by one interviewed woman, who said to me after I interviewed her, "I thought about inviting you to conduct the interview at my home, but I thought it would be difficult for you to be at my home." Highly public venues such as cafés were often chosen by the female participants (in Riyadh) whereas male participants preferred voice calls.

Some participants cancelled or rescheduled interviews at their convenience, which suggests that power is not always located within the interviewer throughout the entire research process. I had little alternative but to politely agree to reschedule interviews. As informed by Creswell (2018), Bryman (2016), Saunders *et al.* (2015) and Baez (2002), to reflect my commitment to research ethics and ensure confidentiality, I shared the aims of the research with the participants and provided them with full written details of the project on the informed consent form. I informed the participants that I possibly would use the data at conferences and/or in published articles. I ensured participants that their identifying information would be replaced by a pseudonym to protect participants' privacy.

I informed potential participants before conducting the interviews that they would be audio recorded, especially as I anticipated there would be concerns about a stranger recording their interviews. I disclosed this information before the participants had signed the consent form as I wanted to build trust and rapport between the participants and myself, and I did not want them to feel coerced into conducting the interview or have them withdraw as a result of lack of transparency.

All interviews were double-recorded on a digital voice recorder and a mobile phone voice memo application to minimise the chance of recorder fault. The shortest interview lasted 40 minutes and the longest was 1 hour and 30 minutes. The average length was 1 hour and 10 minutes. The physical location of some of the interviews sometimes proved disruptive to the smooth running of the interview. Problems included the background noise causing difficulty during the transcription process.

The recording devices appeared to have a negative effect on some female interviewees. The participants expected me to take written notes. I explained to them that written notes would not give satisfactory data if I needed to audit the original conversation during data analysis. Audio recording reduces the probability of mistakes or misinterpretations of responses during data analysis (Byrne, 2001; Fernandez and Griffiths, 2007). I explained to the participants no one would have access to the recordings apart from myself and that all recordings would be stored securely on OneDrive and destroyed after I finish my PhD. It is worth noting that as the interviews continued, the participants started to engage more actively.

In addition, men and women cohort were not at all familiar with the information sheet and consent form, and some worried about signing the forms. It took a significant amount of time to explain to them why it was obligatory to fill out the consent form and that it was their legal right to understand why they were participating in the study (Appendix 2). Certain participants trusted me and gave me permission to sign the consent form on their behalf; to them, I explained that I was obliged by research ethics to obtain written consent from the participants and could not consent for them. Others, particularly males, said they would send their consent to me after the interviews. The participants' unfamiliarity with the consent form was thought provoking. I utilised an ethics contract designed by a Western society where formal exchanges involve written

regulations and rights. Transforming this into Saudi culture proved challenging because relationships and trust are not based on formal interactions or benefit/loss calculations (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). Implementing what Western society considers as standard I argue is built on understanding individual mainly on legal-juridical aspects, which foregrounds legal rights and entitlements in modern capitalist states. This does not mean though there is no standard for obtaining consent. However, relationships between people tended to be face-to-face trusted interaction and speech confirmation which are reflect collectivist culture. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will follow more on interdependence and relationality.

I attempted to pursue collaborative relationships between researcher and researched through asking participants, at the end of each interview, questions about whether there was anything else that they wanted to discuss. This strategy, according to Bickham and Wolf (2012), helps to position participants to decide some of the interview content and to provoke them to elaborate on their views.

3.5.2. Sample characteristics

The sample was recruited and interviewed between December 2018 to January 2019, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Table 1 below outlines some biographical details about the participants (who have been given pseudonyms), such as their, age, occupation, educational status and where they are based. Participants are listed in the order of interview.

Table 1. Biographical details of the sample

Pseudonym	Age	Educational level attained	Family status	Occupation	Location based in	Interview method	Sex
Sarah	32	BA ¹⁰	Married with children	Unemployed	Riyadh	Face-to-face in a public space	F
Muna	27	BA	Married with children	Unemployed	Riyadh	Face-to-face in a public space	F
Maha	30	MA ¹¹	Single	Unemployed	Riyadh	Face-to-face in a public space	F
Amal	33	MA	Divorced	Academia	Riyadh	Face-to-face in a public space	F
Wafa	33	MA	Single	Academia	Riyadh	Face-to-face in a public space	F

¹⁰ Bachelor degree

¹¹ Master degree

Salem	25	BA	Single	Unemployed	Riyadh	Voice call via phone	M
Salma	26	MA	Married without children	Unemployed	Riyadh	Face-to-face in a public space	F
Eman	27	Secondary school ¹²	Married with children	Unemployed	Riyadh	Face-to-face in a public space	F
Muaad	22	Secondary school	Single	Unemployed	Riyadh	Voice call via phone	M
Latefa	25	BA	Married with children	Business	Riyadh	Face-to-face in a public space	F
Muhanad	28	College ¹³	Single	Working in the public sector	Riyadh	Voice call via phone	M
Sahad	34	MA	Divorced	Academia	Riyadh	Face-to-face in a public space	F

¹² Obtained public school which admits pupils from ages 16–18.

¹³ A degree below Bachelor degree that is based on receiving educational training for two to three years.

Fahad	27	BA	Single	Business	Southern Saudi Arabia	Voice call via phone	M
Musa	22	Secondary school	Single	Unemployed	Riyadh	Voice call via phone	M
Salman	29	MA	Single	Working in the public sector	Riyadh	Voice call via phone	M
Sami	27	MA	Married with children	Working in the private sector	Riyadh	Voice call via phone	M

The sample consists of 16 participants who live in Saudi Arabia (15 in Riyadh and 1 in southern Saudi Arabia). Men represent 44% of the sample ($n = 7$) whereas women represent 56% ($n = 9$). The age range is between 22 and 34 years old. Of all the interviews, nine were conducted in a public space with females (in Riyadh), whereas interviews were conducted by voice call with seven male interviewees (six in Riyadh and one male interviewee in the southern region).

In order to establish the numerical viability, the sample comprises Saudi men and women from different geographical locations. I would argue that a sample of mixed gender, age and geographical region enriches the study because it may lead to interesting intersectional differences or similarities. I did not intend to have an equal number of men and women because the aim is not to generalise or represent an entire population (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, including both males and females of different socio-economic classes can illuminate typically disempowered groups that are underrepresented in the research.

The majority of participants have a high educational status; 7 out of 16 interviewees (44%) had Master's degrees, 5 (31%) had Bachelor's degrees, 3 had completed secondary school and 1 had a college education (25%). This profile seems quite astonishing, considering there was no purposive sampling to try to recruit well-educated middle-class participants; I expected to reach a broader range of educational statuses. It would be due to the fact that the rate of the educated population in Saudi Arabia reached more than 95% of the total population, increasing distribution of universities between cities and villages in Saudi Arabia. It may be, also, that the sample obtained indicates that people who had university educations were therefore willing to consider participating (indeed, a majority of participants with Master's degrees expressed exactly this sentiment). It is also possible that the time of conducting the fieldwork in Saudi Arabia coincided with the final examination period, and this would limit those with lower educational

statuses from participating. The high educational status especially for women compared to men could be due to gender norms related to the breadwinner role assigned to men, which is evidenced from participants' insights in chapters 4 and 5, where their main task is to join the labour market after obtaining a basic education. The higher educational status of women could be attributed to increasing awareness about women's education in the society to empower their daughters, sisters, etc., which indeed is expressed in the participants' articulations in chapters 4 and 6.

Considering this profile, the modest sample size does not represent Saudi men and women. The sample gave insight into the middle class whose issues might not be shared by the lower class and/or upper-class sample. For example, on the subject of marriage stories (Chapter 4 will discuss in greater detail), participants discussed the issue of needed financial resources to establish their families. This would not be a problem for those from the upper class because they can afford the resources, whereas the financial situation of lower-class and poor people would be more serious. They may not be able to afford the amount of money required for marriage. Furthermore, the respondents are exclusively from Riyadh which is a unique city in the zone that differs from other urban cities in terms of gender norms (see chapters 4, 5, 6), therefore the sample reflects a specific geographical location. In addition, this sample draws on urban femineity which does not necessarily reflect other women from other regions in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter 5 for a detailed explanation). The stories reflect class position and geographical location, and because of this limitation, the findings should not be generalised. However, the narrative being told based on this sample illuminates our understanding of contemporary Saudi Arabia.

3.5.3. Data analysis

I carefully deciphered the recordings, which was very tedious and time consuming because I am not a trained touch-typist. At the start, it took me 25 minutes to transcribe three minutes of interview talk; then it got quicker as it proceeded to 15 minutes. Despite its appeal, I did not use a professional transcription service because I had assured the participants that I would be the only person to hear their recordings. More importantly, I wanted to be fully immersed in the information to improve my comprehension of any arising themes.

Then, I began the coding process, which involves, according to Bryman (2016, p. 568), “reviewing transcripts and/or field notes and giving labels to components parts that [...] appear to be particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied”. At the start, I looked at participants’ significant words through reading my initial line-by-line transcription to code analytical themes. I stopped thereafter when themes became recurrent. Then, I compared my initial codes to the data. After this initial stage, I divided themes into sub-themes, which is useful, according to Smith (2016, p. 210) to “keep the story intact in order to preserve and examine the wealth of storied detail contained in it”.

As Riessman (2008) and Smith (2016) suggested, I started the thematic coding with questions in mind guided by theory as well as looking for new theoretical insight through sequence of narrative. My interrogation of the data drew on Mahmood’s (2005) discussion of agency and Joseph’s (1999a) theoretical insight into relationality that are explored in Chapter 2. This kind of analysis, according to Patton (2002), helped me to find data patterns and assign meanings to them with given terms that connect and interpret the implications of each pattern.

I organised the data in Microsoft Excel because I did the thematic analysis using Arabic language because the original meaning could be lost if I translated the data. I, by myself, translated only the quotations that I extracted for this thesis. My mother tongue is advantageous for me in terms of understanding participants' meaning. In the coming chapters 4, 5, and 6, I styled the Arabic terms that the participants used in bold to help represent their voices. I also used parentheses to give meaning to the Arabic terms and denote pauses in the interviews. The differences between the two languages caused difficulties in transcribing, interpreting and understanding the narratives in English. For example, I tend to use the term *identity* in the singular form to describe people's identity because in the Arabic language, *alhaweah* (identity), is linguistically cannot be a plural. In Arabic dictionaries, *alhaweah* is defined as humans' absolute truth and sense of self-feeling about individuality, values and behaviours in various situations (Ibin Manzure, 1984). However, the meaning of "identity" was understood differently by, for example, my supervisors. They told me I should stop assuming that people in my country are categorised into one form. Conversely, I became bogged down with the same dilemma when I piloted the Arabic version of the research aims with an Arabic linguistics expert, who pointed out the linguistic errors. I responded to this issue by changing "identities" to "identity," and I explained to the participants that using identity in the singular form does not mean that I assume "we" are identical. In addition, Participants used the collective subject "we" instead of "I", the pronoun used to note the degree of collectivism to speak about ourselves (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014).

I adopted the structural and performative narrative analysis described by Riessman (2008) and Smith (2016). In relation to the former, the analysis focused on how the participants' narrative of lived experience is structured. The analysis focused on the narrative performative aspects in uncovering "intention and language – how and why incidents are storied, not simply the content

to which language refers” (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). These approaches to analysis enabled me to capture participants’ insights into past actions, current behaviours and intentions, which helped me to describe “meaning and significance in an unfolding plot” (Smith, 2016, p. 211). According to Molly *et al.* (2000, p. 78), “through our stories, we indicate who we have been, who we are and who we wish to become.” This approach helped me to describe continuity and change.

The narrative of lived experience complemented the aim of this study to capture relationality.

Kramer (2011, p. 22) observed that lived experience means more than personal life in relation to gender, class, regional locations. It means “how individual people consciously and knowingly embed themselves in their social, geographical and temporal context through imagination and speculation. [...]in creating a vantage point for themselves, as individuals, as family members, and even as members of the ‘nation’, in and across time”. As Molly *et al.* (2000, p. 13) put it, “stories do not entirely account for individuals or societies, both of which are too complex to be caught in such simple analogies”. Analysis focused on mutual relationships between the participants’ narrative and culture with its symbols.

My point of view does not dismiss Geertz’s (2017) affirmation that culture is semiotic as much as adopting ‘writing against culture’ strategies suggested by Abu-Lughod (1991). I agree with Mahmood (2005, p. 14) in that we should “inquire into practices whose assumptions about semiosis do not map onto the model of signs that stand for meaning or identity”. I looked at “semiotic” not only as a discourse but also as encompassing the search for meaning, performative acts that enable different readings of the subject and understandings of power and truth. For example, while the veil and *hijab* in Saudi Arabia are commonly viewed as religious requirements, which I am not questioning, they can also function as symbolic representations of honour and class. My interpretation of how the *hijab* functions highlights how its symbolic

expression reflects the joined interiority and exteriority of the subject. Following this understanding, the *hijab* cannot be understood as oppressive because it demonstrates the free will of the social actor. This approach helped me to counter the argument that individuality and agency are neglected in a collectivist culture and to highlight the interplay between individualism and relationality.

Essentially, in this thesis, the focus is on elucidating how participants constructed meaningful lives and highlighting their distinct social context. While the literature allowed me to gain useful theoretical insights, the interpretation of data is based on field knowledge. This strategy, as Smith (2016, pp. 213–214) argued, takes the analysis “in unexpected and fertile directions, breathing fresh life into moribund concepts, encouraging theoretical curiosity and provoking new ways of seeing in the process”. I used particular expressions of participants’ articulations to ensure that local meanings were captured. My investigation of agency focused on the work that the participants performed to make the subject, their worlds, their attachments and their practices. As a result, my use of terms such as “wisdom” and “sensible” allowed the participants to teach us how their practices and negotiation worked within their power relations.

By using these terms, I explored the participants’ ethical positions to submit to religion and family morality using their own free will. Virtue, meaning the submission to religious pedagogy (e.g. modesty, obeying parents and honesty), is a form of knowledge that involves appropriate responses (e.g. bodily practices and behaviours) with an inward disposition (e.g. emotional states and intentions) (Mahmood, 2005). In the analysis, I built on Mahmood’s (2005) discussion of ethical formation to illuminate how the unconscious acquires habitus (Mahmood, 2005).

Thereby, my analysis in the empirical chapters often shifts its focus from the social construction of identity to individuality. Crucially, it highlights that although the participants departed from

the construction of reality, they crafted the self to articulate their conceptions of the ethical subject.

In addition, in looking for the meaning of narratives, I stipulate the temporal context as an essential condition to the particularisation of a narrative's meaning. Saudi Arabia's undergoing changes in light of Vision 2030 (refer to Chapter 1) related to economy and gender policy which uphold the rhetoric of reforming based on Islam and the historical specificities of customs. I looked at the analysis and how participants appropriate their narratives with this discourse which might give the participants the confidence to discuss these norms in an engaged way. Due to the changes occurring in the regulation of gender policy, policies related to certain issues that the participants negotiated have changed. For example, I mentioned in Chapter 4 on p.153 a change in the regulations related to guardianship. Further, publicising in the time of revising the thesis a codified personal status in relation to family and compatibility between spouses in marriage which tackles issues raised by the participants in Chapter 4 (see pp.169-170). Therefore, it is important to consider this particular moment of time to understand the findings of this research.

I derived the title of the thesis to do justice with the participants' position. Although "men and women" is a well-established phrase, I did not disrupt convention and consider using "women and men", which amplifies men's fragile ego and women's undeserved perceived inferiority. However, I wanted to accept the social conventions as a social etiquette. Women's negotiations show aspects of shifting the power balance on their side not by "resistance" and "rebellious" against authority as is evidenced from the narrative drawn from chapters 4, 5, and 6. I wrote "women" before "men" to not suit the ethical position of giving self over to those who we love, our fathers, our boys and our husbands.

According to Mills (2000), the use of specific terms should demonstrate that empiricism is filled with assumptions about other individuals and societies that determine which things are observed and how they are explained. If I escaped this condition, I would impose abstracted details on field observations and empty the study of clear empirical references. According to Mills (2000, p. 23), “every man his own methodologist”, and we should use this slogan to incorporate theory and methodology into our research practices. Indeed, as Geertz (2017) argued, “a good interpretation [...] takes us into the heart of that of which it is the interpretation [...] into its admiration of its own elegance”. As it is important to tell stories of the participants in a way that is engaging, I reflect on my research journey and the resulting stories in the following section.

3.6. Reflexivity

My research into lived experiences began with my postgraduate degree in 2013. I did my Master’s research on national belonging, and I wanted to broaden my understanding of the area of identity for my PhD. Doing my PhD gave me the skills and time needed for analysing qualitative research and allowed me much-needed resources that enabled me to do the research in a different language from my Arabic tongue. Before I started my research, I was always questioning how my identity is constructed and I distinguish between what is called ‘tradition’ and commitment to religion. Within this context, research serves as a tool for self-exploration in terms of how identity category works and informs my positionality in everyday life. Within this context, my research aims to uncover the complexity of social life and self-exploration.

In the following section I reflect on my positionality in recruiting participants, data collection and the analysis and the insider-outsider dynamics in relation to how I saw myself during the research process and how the participants saw me. First of all, I feel that I am an insider

researcher in terms of my class, and I probably fall into the age category of the participants which might have impacted the research process. As I illustrated in section 3.4, I used my network to circulate participants' invites to the research which resulted in recruiting a middle-class sample. Indeed, some participants assumed that, because I am from the same community, I would understand specific idioms or euphemisms, with responses such as, "You know what I mean; you know our society." Others, assumed because I am a sociologist, I would be able to understand the issue they were discussing, as evidenced by a tendency to respond when I asked for clarification, "This is your role; you are a sociologist and should have the explanation." To rephrase what the participant said: you are like us, and I guess I do not need to tell you about that which is common. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) put it, whereas sharing experience would ease the access to participants, it might lead participants to assume similarity and therefore they may fail to explain their experience. I reiterated that I wanted them to explicitly describe and give examples rather than suggesting I make assumptions. I intended to achieve "richer and more intricate analyses than those elicited through presumptive, coded communication [which enables] for researching at the hyphen of insider-outsider" (Kanuha, 2000, p. 443). As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argued, being a member of the society that is being researched does not impact the research process negatively. It may yield rich insight in keeping with a reflexive approach. In this research, sharing class and age group would impact participants' acceptance of me, ease of interviews and explain the thesis' data richness. Due to sharing age group, the participants and I may share experiences and mutual understanding. During interviews and analysis, I felt like I shared some of the experiences that the participants (especially the women) described. Not only did I understand their stories, but also I felt like I could see some trajectory of Sahwah and some contradictions between the religious point of view and customs on the issue of gender. As a

woman researcher, I felt that I understand women's issues and I was not familiar with the men's issues. I was not quite sure if men would volunteer to provide me with rich insights. Moving to an outsider position forced me to examine my assumptions that men are careless, and I did not think that women's issues would not come into their insight. I may hold this assumption because men's voices in gender studies are under-researched. I realised then that I judged others and I found that men's voices added depth and breadth to my understanding of gender relations.

Within this context, my research not only serves as a tool to explore the complexity but also helps with self-exploration. Some of the participants (especially women) asked me about the contradictions regarding women's veils. She said, "The veil you wear, I do not think you wear it in England." This woman could see me as an outsider, and it could also mean that I experience the same contradictions as her which I believe is true. It is true also that I share women's experiences and strategies in Chapter 5 on women's work and in taking advantage of studying abroad, for example, but this does not mean I reject my traditional role. I accept changes that are not opposed to religion and changes that will help society at large. I hold on to traditions, for example, I got married and I brought up children while pursuing my studies. I understand that social norms are changing regarding the relationship between spouses, but I still believe that men are responsible for the cost of living which is similar to the participants' insight in Chapter 4. At the analysis and interpretation stage, I see myself in various narratives when certain issues were being described by the participants, therefore I decided to tell stories of my marriage to make a connection to those participants.

Sharing my experience would run the risk of blocking participants' voices. I was questioning, as discussed by Berger (2015, P. 224), how to integrate my experience 'which offers intimate familiarity and hence potentially deeper understanding [...], and at the same time, not impose [the

researcher's] experience on the participants'. It was crucial to make the distance in the analysis and rely on participants' articulations as I illustrated in section 3.5.3. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argued that in a dialectical approach similarity and differences are not always absolute; therefore, the relation between them is not contradictory. As evidence from participants' insights in chapters 4, 5 and 6 shows, belonging to the same identity group of the participants does not denote being complete identical. In the analysis and interpretation, I looked at some demarcations of the participants, i.e., a woman indicated that if she saw and loved her husband before marriage, her life will be better (p. 137), and another single woman indicated her preference to live independently alone (p. 179), which challenged my customary assumption, because if I were them I would not feel the same. Indeed, the lived experience, even for women, was not consistent with my values and compelled me to re-evaluate my biases. Thus, while most of the participants and I accept submission to family tradition, we differ on relational ethics. My own stance would not sync with these women's although it would not contradict religious values. I voluntarily submit to family tradition as long as it does not harm my being. I do believe that women have the right to select a husband, but I do not believe in love before marriage. I also believe that independent living for single women is not religiously prohibited, nor is it banned by law. Family support cannot be compensated, and I cannot live without it. Indeed, the hardest part of my study abroad is missing family and their emotional support.

My position as a woman impacted my relations with male participants. I was an outsider in relation to male participants. They asked me to choose a day and time convenient for me to conduct the interviews, which was a sign of respect for me as a female researcher with family responsibilities. I want to question the power relation between researcher and researched and whether, according to Gubrium *et al.* (2012), giving the choice for participants to decide on time

of interview is well-ingrained and not always necessary effective in the field. I understand these men's position as feeling shame because the masculinely dedicate that men are ideally should take care of women, which is in line with men's narrative in Chapter 6. Therefore, the effective researcher who is able to understand conversation. As Kanuha (2000, p. 444) suggested, "exploration of methodological concerns as well as analyses that illuminate the complex interactive and innovative research would be a welcome addition to the social work research literature". Therefore, I want to argue that move towards a more reflexive approach is needed to understand social reality.

My impression was that as the participants talked to me openly, they showed their curiosity to participate in the study and some (a man) were interested in reflecting and understanding his story and a woman was interested in how the interview will be interpreted and create a joined voice of shared experience with other participants. The woman continued to ask me about the findings. Although these participants are from Riyadh, they may be suspicious of me because I do my research in a Western institution. As a result, my insider position may be compromised. Some participants were also asking me during the interviews, "Is what I said OK?" I was increasingly concerned that these participants probably wanted to check they were saying the right things and confirming what I was looking for. I reassured these participants that there was no right or wrong answer and I was only looking for their insight to get a deep understanding. This may be because I follow Saudi on them and I will retrain back to Saudi and feel more scrutinised than if I was an outsider researcher. Indeed, one male participant expressed concern about my outsider status and questioned my political interest around the issue of gender and tradition. As he said, "I was not sure who you [were]. You [came] from outside [the country] and you were asking about identity and tradition. I googled your name to find out information about

[you].” Needless to say, liberal feminism must be rejected when it has an echo with women’s negotiation in Chapter 5. I was eager at that moment to explain to the participants that discussions would be limited to the aims and questions, and interpretations will be evidence-based on interview extractions.

While being an insider might impose upon the researcher’s perspective, being an outsider does not account for objectivity (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Kanuha, 2000). No one can be a complete insider or outsider. The most important requirement is that the researcher be honest and committed to representing participants’ experience accurately while maintaining a reflexive approach, which I hope this section has achieved.

The next sub-section reflects on how my position impacts on the interpretation process.

3.6.1. Interpretation

I aim here to reflect on my thinking while interpreting the data. In this section, I reflect on my positionality and ontological assumptions as a self-identified Saudi, since I could not entirely distance myself from the participants despite our differences.

I wanted to consider the ways in which gender was formed in a particular context. As Lawler (2014) and Spelman (1988) noted, gender identity criss-crosses with other categories of identity such as ethnicity, class and nationality. These multiple identities have been understood by Western liberal feminists, as Lawler (2014, p. 11) put it, in an “‘additive’ model”. Whereas, “each social division has a different ontological basis, which is irreducible to other social divisions” (Lawler, 2014, p. 11). Therefore, any attempt to essentialise “womanhood”,

“manhood”, “Muslim” or “Arab” as a type of oppression because of its added substance unavoidably conflates identity politics with positionality.

My perspective on gender is inspired by postcolonial gender studies (e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1998; Le Renard, 2014) that view gender as produced and reproduced within situated historical configurations of power relations, rather than a universalisation innate to ideas such as patriarchy or women’s oppression. Gender is the socially and culturally constructed differences between men and women delineating norms and behaviours appropriate to men and women. These norms though are constructed, negotiated and inhabited in different ways beyond fixed identity categories.

I explored the complexity of the identity categories that the sample offered. I emphasised the importance of understanding the participants’ local experience with the complexity of their national and social and religious identities, and the rapid economic transformation. This thesis acknowledges that the historical space within which its knowledge was constructed is singular and poignant, given the recent economic and gender policy changes in light of Vision 2030. Thus, the underlying philosophies, politics and histories formed tangible links between the participants’ responses and the pursuit of evidence.

I focused on analysing the individual, structural, and collective negotiation processes that underlay participants’ views. Understanding these multi-layered gender-power relations allowed me to develop a framework to assess the politics of belonging in the ground narrative. This framework includes national boundaries as well as the often-neglected boundaries of family and kinship, social capital and gender. I focused on the gendered expressions of power and agency that might be overlooked by restrictive Western understandings. Notably, Caldwell *et al.* (2009)

commented on ethnography and engendering citizenship in ways that are normally considered to be outside the domain of citizenship, such as matters of spirituality, intimate relationships and family and kinship. My gendered analysis of the participants' narratives sought to answer questions related to agency and participants' views about their experiences of entitlement and spirituality.

This multi-layered approach to gender helped me while situating the data within a larger theoretical picture. In particular, I paid attention to how local meaning was placed within larger systems of meaning. While maintaining my theoretical perspective, I returned to the empirical data to identify which data were applicable and which were not, and this involved a consideration of the relevant political, economic, social and cultural sensibilities. During this process, I situated myself as a subject of study alongside the unit of analysis. I applied reflexivity to acknowledge my epistemological position and investigate how I understood the data, interpreted them and arrived at certain conclusions. Hence, the reader can better identify what should be taken on faith as a common understanding of a subject's lived reality.

As an insider researcher, I am often bewildered by what I read when reviewing literature about Muslim, Arab and, by extension, Saudi men and women. Namely, they are portrayed as lacking agency and rational choices, and women are especially shown as oppressed. It is difficult to reconcile my experiences in Saudi society with this representation. For example, one audience member at an academic conference asked me, "Are women there oppressed?" Consequently, this thesis distinguishes between this liberal feminist attitude and the lived experiences of the participants and me as the author. It attempts to bring knowledge on a population that are rarely heard in the Western literature. During my analysis, the individuality of the participants' experiences challenged essential representations and generalisations of their culture.

While presenting participants' experience, I do not claim that they are representative of or stand in for others in Saudi Arabia or the Middle East. Instead, I use their particular narrative to answer a question on choice and freedom and support an insight of Abu-Lughod (2013, p. 17), namely that "intimate familiarity with individuals anywhere makes it hard to be satisfied with sweeping generalisations about cultures, religious, or religion or to escape the idea that problems have simple causes or solutions".

Summary

This chapter has provided relevant details on the methodological considerations to the research design and process, with which I hope to assess the credibility and validity of this research. The following chapters (4, 5, and 6), the participants express their perspectives on how they negotiate and inhabit norms in relation to marriage, women working, and masculinity.

Chapter Four: Negotiation of Marriage and Divorce

4.1 Introduction

Family is the basic unit of society; it carries out functions of biological, social and cultural production (Al-Torki, 2000; De Bel-Air *et al.*, 2019). Al-Torki (1986, pp.123–124) wrote that in Saudi Arabia, “the world of kin is generated in part by descent and in part by affinal ties; behind the affinal ties is the marriage bond itself....[T]he aim [of marriage] is to create a bond between the two families, as the marriage of a man to a woman widens the next of kin and it produces blood relatives (*arham*) who are potential sources of support and cooperation”. Some of these functions (normative construction) include control of sexuality, biological reproduction, power relations between parents and children and couples, mentoring of women, health practices related to sexuality and distinction of otherness. These functions produce norms that define good versus bad (e.g. endogamous marriage, divorce and birth of children from foreign fathers), which are inseparable from the national building (De Bel-Air *et al.*, 2019).

Within the national Vision 2030 is the call for the cohesion of family ties; marriage continues to assume a hegemonic status in Saudi society, regardless of the modification of gender relations. Marriage is a prominent theme of the participants’ narratives, whether they are married (four women, one man), planning to marry (two women, six men) or divorced (two women). I argue that their narratives embody the “choice” element that is often considered absent in “arranged marriage” (as opposed to “love marriage”). Although they negotiated their way around social expectations of gender relations and compatibility between spouses, I will show how they frame the continuity of viewing marriage as a continuing relationship to family.

This chapter is divided into four parts. Section 4.2. discusses participants' perception of selecting spouses and suspension of premarital relationships, and their preference for involving their family in their assessment. Section 4.3. discusses participants' view of relationship between spouses. Section 4.4. then discusses the participants' negotiation of "decent marriage". The final section, 4.5., presents divorce as a fertile context to study negotiation continuity and change in family that emerged from two women participants who fit into this category. Before I proceed with the discussion of the findings, I will integrate my marriage story to highlight the marriage process.

4.1.1. Integrating a personal story

I was recommended by womenfolk of my mother-in-law as a prospective bride for her son. The recommendation was based on my degree of beauty, as well as my mother's reputation.¹⁴ My mother-in-law told the groom and his father about me. The groom and his father evaluated my family's reputation and tribal affiliation and decided to approve the engagement. My mother-in-law contacted my mother and informed her about her son's interest in marrying me. She then asked my mother for more information about me, who in turn asked the groom's mother essential questions about the groom, such as his age, level of education, occupation and income. My mother presented the marriage proposal to me and my father. I accepted the idea at first, and then my father assessed the groom and his family descent (*asel*), reputation and the groom's character, such as whether he religiously prays at the mosque and refrains from drinking alcohol. My father asked the groom's relatives and his colleagues at work about the groom's character.

¹⁴ As Sharabi (1993) explained, a woman's descent, and especially if she cannot claim her origin, affects the mobility of her husband's tribe. A mother's reputation is also due to the moral order because a woman's sexual conduct is tied to her father, brother, and husband's honour (Munajjed, 1996).

After this stage of evaluation, my father welcomed the groom and his father to our house, and they exchanged information about the two families. Following this meeting, the groom's mother made a second contact with my mother and asked my mother to arrange a time for visual contact, (*Alnazrah Alsareah*), between the groom and myself. We met and then I told my parents that I accepted him. The groom's mother then made a third contact with my mother, informing her that her son had accepted me and asked my mother whether there were any conditions that my family and I wanted met before the marriage process began. She also asked my mother how much my family wanted for dowry (*mahr*), and my mother replied, "It must come from you. We do not ask for a price for our daughters. We purchase a man".¹⁵ The families then arranged a date for the ceremony during which the marriage contract was signed. At the time of the ceremony, the *mahar* was presented, and an authorised person in charge of certifying marriages (*Mazoon Ankeha*), asked my father if he and the bride had final conditions. He said, "Do you have any conditions, such as an independent accommodation"? My father said, "Although we orally told the groom that our daughter will have an independent accommodation, we do not place this condition on the parents;¹⁶ we only asked that our daughter complete her studies if she wishes". The contract was then signed by the groom, my father, me and witnesses.

With this opening, I wanted to illustrate the interconnectivity of family members in the process of marriage. As in the process described above, each of the actors had an active role in the

¹⁵ The metaphor implies that the father's strongest values to his daughter and hence no amount of money would be equal to her value. Therefore, the father 'purchase a man' imply also the father trusts the man attribute that he will take care of their daughter, respect her, and being generous with her. The social usage of the world 'man' (*rajul*) does not equal the male sex; it refers to adjectives such as independent, magnanimity, generosity, and courage.

¹⁶ This implies that even we prefer an independent accommodation for our daughter we do not say not to give yourself [the groom] over your parents; they have to come first and you still submit to and care for your parents when they need you.

process of marriage; although the parents handle the process, the agency of the groom and the bride is not dismissed. The interconnectivity parallels the narratives of most of the participants, who described the influence of not only gender but also the self being relational in the processes of negotiating marriage and divorce experiences. In this chapter, I will argue that attention should be given to being a member of a tribal family and dimensions of social capital and how these frame and continue to inform men's and women's positions, though, whereby identity is achieved. The forthcoming sections will represent participants' narratives on love, marriage and sexuality and satisfying aspects of relationships with family and difficulties experienced as being relational.

4.2. Negotiating personal choice

Relationships between men and women in Saudi Arabia have become possible because of opportunities to meet people of the opposite gender in public places such as restaurants, cafes and shopping centres (De Bel-Air *et al.*, 2019; Al-Rasheed, 2013). According to Al-Rasheed (2013) and Al-Gazami (2005), men and women exposed to this new reality have different ideals about marriage because of the nation's inundation in modernising the economy and heavy publicity. In turn, these beliefs create new implications appended to marriage, such as love, educational compatibility, attraction and other measures related to the modern perception of the marital bond. Narratives in this section seem to support this claim. The first sub-section will focus on why participants wanted to know their prospective spouses, and their negotiation strategies are discussed next, as I highlight how these frame continuity and change.

4.2.1. *Selecting spouses*

The participants sought more unencumbered time and space to get to know potential suitors and to independently assess their ability to get along. Salma questioned the traditional form of marriage in which the family suggested a suitor:

My objection was the approach to marriage—not the young man. [. . .] I said to my family, “It is not you who will suggest the husband; it is me who will suggest him to you”. Of course, other routes are known and we are a conservative family.

Although Salma wished to introduce a suitor to her family, she nevertheless covertly suspected premarital relations. This account was shared by other women, Eman and Wafa, who expressed that whereas premarital relationships would be accepted by some flexible families, they themselves did not appreciate engaging in such a relation.

Tradition has an impact, especially here in Saudi Arabia and especially among tribes—not those families who are open-minded. Now, there are tribes who are still strict. For example, in the marriage tradition, the prospective groom [*alkateeb*] must come to the door to ask for the girl’s hand and get to know her family, and the family must agree to accept him, followed by the girl. So, they [prospective groom and bride] do not know each other before. If the family knows that they know each other, the marriage will be cancelled. This is unfair. (Eman, 27-year-old married woman)

Although Eman stressed the right for women to get to know their prospective grooms, she called for the importance of involving family members in the process. The idiom that Eman used, *alkateeb*, “must come to the door”, highlights the stances of Eman and her family in not tolerating pre-marriage relations for their daughters. Al-Torki (1986) observed that in Saudi

society, suitors meeting families serve to verify the extent to which a prospective groom is serious in pursuing the marriage; love would imply a clandestine relationship before marriage, which would, in turn, have a negative effect on the woman and her kinsmen's honour. This observation is evident in the case of Wafa's and Eman's insights, whereas their articulation relates more to the temporality of marital relations and intimacy. Wafa recounted a conversation she had with a female colleague about how they should get to know their prospective grooms:

One girl said I went out with him [the prospective groom] to a restaurant. It is acceptable for some open-minded families. But I do not trust a man because who comes through the door is better than who comes through the window.¹⁷ He may see me and does not want me. This is a marriage, not a game. I do not come to entertainment [*taslīʿa*] and chat with him. Even though society is changing, this is a basic requirement. (Wafa, 33-year-old single woman)

Wafa articulated that although the mixing of genders becomes possible in light of undergoing change when it comes to marriage, involving their family is “a basic requirement for her. What Salma, Eman, and Wafa articulated underscores customary stereotyping of men as careless of their girlfriends' reputations and discourages premarital romance, a concern that would lead a family to prefer to guide their daughters' marriage choices. Assaf (2018) explained that in the case of the United Arab Emirates, men tend not to show affection towards their wives in public as a form of respect to them. In addition, in Arab culture intimacy is tied to sexuality, and this is a sacred thing that must be kept in the domestic sphere, and the more they are intimate, the more they hide their intimacy. According to Labieb (1987) and Bourdieu (1966), this is associated

¹⁷ It is a saying that reflects the seriousness of a suitor; that is, a man asks for a girl's hand from her family, not coming in like a thief from a window.

with feeling a strong attachment to kinship. By contrast, boyfriends do not share an interest in protecting their girlfriends' reputation because it does not affect them. According to Assaf (2018) in his exploration of dating in the Emirates, the consequences of a premarital relationship¹⁸ pertaining to dating are much more serious for women than for men (Assaf, 2018). This common concern is obvious in Eman's and Wafa's narratives (the issue of women's sexual honour will be focused on in Chapter 5).

Wafa noted that in having a premarital relationship, a woman puts herself at risk of regretting a choice made based on passion. According to Nasser El-Dine (2018) based on his study in Jordan, under the ambiguity of dating, it is difficult to determine the extent to which a man is serious about pursuing marriage or simply seeking "entertainment". According to Assaf (2018), attractiveness and passion end when a man leaves a woman vulnerable after taking advantage of her by having sex, which reflected in Wafa's observation. Breteau (2020) touched on the attitude of men—in the context of Oman—noting that men view love as synonymous of premarital pleasure, whereas marriage is associated with responsibility and the imperative for men to demonstrate the financial ability to establish a family. This resonated with the male participants' commentary in section 4.3. According to Assaf (2018, p. 130), this concern is "a functionalist

¹⁸ A broader relationship (e.g. friendship) between opposite sexes exists in a context of professional relationship at work, or a network of shared interest such as groups of intellectual writers. The relationship between the opposite sexes even becomes more common in online communities using social media such as the popular Twitter and Instagram and where online space, according to Breteau's (2020, p. 101) conception, is a "milieu of construction of an ideal intersubjectivity". In other words, men's and women's interactions through online space is a product of idealisation where the nature of the interaction is distinct from physical interaction even in the context of dating. According to Breteau (2020)—in reflection on the Muscat context—the material absence of body fosters this relation that comes with freedom of self-presentation. Thus, the online sphere offers a way to transcend the construction of gender segregation and the scariness of gender encounter, in terms of love and seduction; it still reflects the role of offline norms that are inscribed into the self where family identification remains strong in individual choices in relation to the matrimonial trajectory (Breteau, 2020).

manner” to discourage girls from courtship and flirting before marriage. Hence, the role of the family in guiding their daughters towards the proper marital choice could be understood as saving them from such behaviour (Assaf, 2018). Men, too, are dissuaded from the dating relationship. Muaad, 22-year-old single man said:

If you inform your mother that you will marry a girl, she will infer that there is a relationship between you and the girl. How do you decide to marry that girl? (Muaad, 22-year-old single man).

Therefore, this narrative supports Breteau’s (2020) argument that romantic love and marriage are distinct, whereby they remark on different stages in life, where marriage is the entry into culturally ascribed adulthood.

In addition, the importance of involving the family in the personal choice of marriage is justification of their sons’ seriousness so that families evaluate tribal compatibility essential for long-lasting relationships for a potential family. Latefah and Musa reflected on the attitudes of young men and women towards using available spaces to interact outside of the limits of families’ organised gatherings. Latefah, a 25-year-old married woman, discussed the changing attitudes of men regarding getting to know their future wives by communicating in the workplace:

I feel that someone may fall in love in a legitimate and polite manner. A man may love a female colleague at work, even though they do not have a relationship;¹⁹ he may just

¹⁹ Relationship refers to a casual relationship that does not involve abstaining from premarital sex.

adore her. He may like her and say to his mother, “Ask about this girl, and let’s go ask for her hand; I see she has good behaviour.

Similar to Latefah, Musa, a 22-year-old single man, who experienced studying abroad, stated that his family would not be reluctant if he loved a girl:

If I met a girl when I travelled anywhere and loved the girl from first sight, I would talk to my family about her. I saw her in that place, and I wanted to marry her. They will say, “Okay. Ask about her”, and they will go to ask for her hand... We have a tradition that does not prohibit love if I am honest from the start, and my aim is to marry the girl.

Latefah and Musa explained that families should be involved in arranging their son’s and daughter’s marriages, even in the instance of couples who have courted or are in romantic love based on attraction. This insight echoes Adely’s (2016) observation of men’s and women’s preference in Jordan to involve their families even in the case of courtship. This continual family role encompasses matters of intimacy and sexuality. Before embarking on describing intimacy, I will outline various discourses on active/passive sexuality and association with virtue.

Musa indicated that it is acceptable for men to express that they are attracted to a woman.

According to Cohen-Mor (2013) and Abu-Lughod (1986) sexuality is a natural strength that demonstrates the virility of masculinity as a procreator, whereas women must be virtuous and protect the purity of kinship and moral order. Interconnected with this construct is the idea that women should not express their desire because women should be sexually passive, whereas men are sexually active, and this is the primary reason for gender segregation in mosques (Kabesh, 2013; Mernissi, 2011). According to Cohen-Mor (2013), males are considered honourable when

they increase in honour by utilising sexuality legitimately through marriage, demonstrating their masculine role as a protector. Males must go through the process of demonstrating their desire for children. This entails heavy responsibilities for the father, who must bear and rear his children, and the mother (Cohen-Mor, 2013).

Sexuality in Arab and Islamic norms must be fulfilled through marriage because it is not only a need, but sexuality is also a duty to the continuity of the human race, and spouses must be responsible for their sexual conduct. This ideal is firmly embedded in political, social and religious constructions. Women carry bloodline relations and honour, and men carry children's legal identification within a lineage. According to De Bel-Air *et al.* (2019), the “civil” task of marriage is to regulate sexuality to reduce the problem of fatherlessness, and continuity of the next generation raised by father and mothers. We cannot restore government incentive for marriage as a response to national norm because Saudi society is primarily—before the state initiation—organised based on kinship relations that assign high value to purity of blood (Al-Khateeb, 2007; Al-Torki, 2000). In this sense, the participants' view on intimacy maps their experience as being relational and shared familial responsibility rather than private emotions (Jamieson, 2011).

Jamieson (2011) stated that intimacy encompasses and sustains cultural and legal arrangements for recognised relationships as legitimate partners, parents and kin. Most importantly, religious privilege for marriage as a natural institution and moral safeguard based on a legal binding contract between spouses is primarily for emotional bonds and sexual relationship as well as to raise children and afford social rights (De Bel-Air *et al.*, 2019). As argued by Bhandary (2018), justice in society must respect not only the “autonomy” and “free choice” of spouses, but it must also consider the social arrangement of care. If sexuality is considered free of choice, it would

burden children born without parents, and hence, the family as the moral guardian of society itself is a view of justice (Bhandary, 2018). Thus, we will arrive at a different principle of equality, framing a just arrangement compatible with tradition other than the Western value of freedom (Bhandary, 2018).

Intimacy overlaps with other feeling and sharing trust. Love to be authentic for Wafa must take a practical level through processing the marriage with the family:

How can I trust that he will be the father of my kids in the future when I do not trust him? There must be an arranged talk with my father.

Wafa indicated that a man must demonstrate his seriousness about carrying on relationships and bear the responsibility of rearing children by approaching her father. The gender dimension seems to foster this tendency, as Wafa indicated earlier in this section. However, Salman and Maha taught us that the context of *ketbah*²⁰ is broader than demonstrating seriousness:

There is process where I go for *ketbah*; then the bride's family ask about myself and they make sure that I'm a suitable candidate for their family. I do not feel there is another way apart from this because marriage is not only a matter for me. I'm being selfish if I want to do it in my way. (Salman, 29-year-old single man)

Maha indicated the same notion:

It [marriage] is not only a matter for me. It is a matter for my family, too. (Maha, 30-year-old single woman)

²⁰ In familial tradition, *ketbah* should come from the groom's side. The bride's family, represented by the father, then plays their role in assessing a groom (Al-Torki, 1986).

Salman stated that if he escaped the *ketbah*, he would be “selfish” because he must secure family approval for compatibility (*kafa’a*) before any marital plan takes place. This family requirement is evident in Muhanad’s narrative. Muhanad indicated that the personal selection of a bride based on her attributes would not be acceptable if his family determined that her tribe was not a suitable match for his:

I believe if her behaviour is good and her education and her family’s economic status are good, and of course, the girl’s beautiful at first sight, then I would talk about tribal affiliation. But tribal affiliation is not the only consideration. (Muhanad, 28-year-old single man)

Salman and Maha informed us that the first thing that families consider in the process of *ketbah* for their sons is tribal compatibility in the case of exogamous marriage, which confirmed Maisel’s (2014), Al-Khateeb’s (2007), and Al-Torki’s (1986) observations on Saudi society. The remark ‘marriage is a shared matter’, according to Lawler (2014), suggests that life is worthwhile and emphasises our obligation and debt to others, where the self is always relational. What should be tangible then from the participants’ negotiation is that *ketbah* with their family is culturally loaded with emotions and beliefs about the extended family that remains common configurations in Saudi society, although the nuclear family is gaining ground (discussion will flow on section 4.4.).

I argue that due to the interconnectivity between family members in Saudi society, doing love between couples is not sufficient to sustain intimacy. Kabesh (2013) draws our understanding to the complexity of loving others, which traces of earlier objects not only tide to the present time. As Salman and Maha understood marriage as a shared family matter, their negotiation hinted that possible satisfaction and pleasure would gain from similar encounters between the two families

with all social and emotional configurations. That is, homogeneity is the only reliable route to lasting spousal relationships. Although Muhanad's stance would not be a rejection of involving a family, explored the possible difficulties of the exclusivity of tribe as a family criterion to assist in choosing a bride. This evokes another discussion of the concept of *kafa'a*, which I will discuss in section 4.3. What is important in this narrative is the participants' understanding of love and intimacy—to borrow Fortier, Kreil, and Maffi's (2020, p. 17) phrase—'a specific mode of subjectivation' that emerged as self-conscious configuration of feeling. Participants' understanding of intimacy craft continuity and reshape pre-existing familial order and group boundaries as the central discussion of Section 4.3. Although the narrative rests on understanding themselves as relational, their negotiations in the next section, to be directly involved in selecting spouses, induces a configuration of their spirituality.

4.2.2. Negotiation of direct involvement in selecting spouses

Notably, Latefah and Musa hinted at the role of mother in her son's probable marriage. Muaad and Muhanad were other male participants who indicated the mother's active role in assessing prospective wives for their single sons:

It is difficult to choose a wife on your own. You must tell your family, especially your mother. She must at least get to know the girl's personality. (Muaad, 22-year-old single man)

Muhanad also narrated his mother's predominant mother's role in processing the marriage.

I have a friend who recommended a girl. He talked to me about the girl's attributes and her level of education. I honestly liked her personality. When I talked to my mother, my family did not like her family at first. I tried to convince my mother, and she went to visit

the girl's family, but she did not talk to me about the girl or her attributes. My mother from the beginning, did not like the idea, and her mind was already made up. (Muhanad, 28-year-old single man)

Both Muaad and Muhanad indicated the power which the mother exercises in processing marriage. Scholars, such as Al-Khateeb (2007) and Al-Lily (2020), viewed the active role of women due to gender segregation and veiling being the norm in Saudi Arabia, where it is practised in both the domestic and public spheres (Al-Lily, 2020). Al-Khateeb (2007) noticed that gender segregation in Saudi society was a matter of diversity in terms of class and region, with segregation tending to be relaxed in the western region, such as Jeddah (Al-Khateeb, 2007). Al-Torki (1986) conducted a study on the elite class in Jeddah and found that women's role in initiating marriage was instrumental.

It seems that the context of the role of women role in selecting a bride for a groom extends further than segregation. As I argued in section 4.2.2, marriage is not separable from being relational; the role of women in initiating marriage is instrumental, although it is not negligible either in the case of consanguineous marriage (Al-Torki, 1986). Al-Torki (1986) argued that women from the groom's side gather information on the domestic background of the girl, hint at their plan and sense the girl's family's plan. In addition, the role of women is to observe the girl's appearance—especially in the case of non-consanguineous marriage—and character and to seek information beyond what the groom has asked for, such as obedience and her expectation of financial resources (Al-Torki, 1986). As Al-Torki (1986) viewed women's mission certifications, a bride and her family, who are best met the expectation of a new segment of their extended family, will be established.

It could also be that due to the importance of honour, families tend to protect their daughters from premarital relationships, and the role of women is an alternative way to assess a bride. Such an instrumental role, according to Adely (2016), would save girls from feeling undermined if the man saw her before marriage and no longer wished to wed her afterwards. However, Adely (2016) indicated that the “traditional” process of going to check out a potential bride at her house is problematic because it could result in a situation where a woman who has had multiple suitors sees herself being left without any marriage proposals. This threatens the girl’s reputation and lowers her chances of receiving a marriage proposal in the future (Adely, 2016). This seems to be true for Sarah, a 33-year-old married woman:

I was deprived of religion and customary law [*urf*] because of silly tribal beliefs; they [fathers] view themselves as noble, and so they will not allow a man to see their daughters because he may see her and not proceed with the marriage, while he still remembers her face and appearance.

While men and women in Saudi society might make use of other means, such as photos, to see their spouses, as in the case of Al-Torki’s (1986) participants in Jeddah, this strategy might not work for other provinces, because Jeddah is much more relaxed in terms of gender issues. Al-Rasheed (2013) indicated that although technology in Saudi Arabia expands opportunities for communication between genders, making use of these new technologies would leave Saudi women vulnerable to blackmail and the risk of circulating photos via the internet. However, whereas Sarah indicated that she was deprived of her religious right to see her husband before marriage, other women, according to Al-Rasheed (2013) in her analysis of Saudi society, reject even the religiously ascribed right to see their suitors, as it would likely generate gossip that

could hinder her chances of future potential suitors (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Indeed, women are complicit with patriarchy.

Family insistence on protecting their daughters' honour and reputation could leave men vulnerable to the degree that a man's choice is dependent on information that his prospective bride wants to reveal (Al-Torki, 1977; Al-Torki, 1986; Al-Rasheed, 2013). Sarah informed us that her husband only relied on his womenfolk, who told him that "this girl is beautiful and ambitious, and he then comes to engage with me". Sarah and her husband saw each other in a passport photo once their marriage was definite, knowing that he could no longer harm her because she was legally his wife: "I saw him only in a photo, and he saw me in a passport photo two days before the wedding." However, this view should not be taken as timeless, given that it is becoming more usual for women's faces and pictures to be seen in public in light of Vision 2030 and the easing of restrictions on women's appearance and style of *hijab*, although this change could help change some families' perceptions about the norm.

As Sarah indicated, family insistence on protecting their honour resulted in a violation of rights prescribed by Islam whereby suitors may communicate with each other. Fahad, a 27-year-old single man, also shared Sarah's feelings towards the norm and refused to marry without seeing the bride.

If I wanted *ketbah*, a girl in the provenance where I live, and her family did not allow me *Alnazrah alsareah*, I would cancel the marriage. This contradicts *shari'a*. This is a legitimate seeing that is *halal*, and the Prophet Mohammad recommended it. They are depriving me and the girl of our right to see each other.

Families' unwillingness to let their daughter be seen by a suitor also varies in terms of family practices. Eman, a 25-year-old woman, captured this sentiment:

In some family norms, there is not *Alnazrah Alsareah*, and he does not know her or talk to her. Nothing. This is prohibited

However, participants asserted that their communication with prospective suitors should be based on the legitimate Islamic right (*Alnazrah Alsareah*) to assess their compatibility.

Seemingly here, participants' negotiation was not a total rejection of family engagement in the process; they negotiated for the presence of their role in marriage. This attitude echoes other men's and women's attitudes in a close regional country (Jordan) where they ask to see each other, instead of their female relatives assisting in assessing their compatibility (*Insijam*) (Adely, 2016).

In addition, there are some families who, along with allowing *Alnazrah Alsareah* for their offspring, allow suitors to communicate through voice calls before marriage to build intimacy and assess their compatibility individually. Salma, a female participant, as observed in the first section, was disappointed that her family introduced a suitor to her. She said that her brother helped her resolve the conflict and communicate with her suitor before the official marriage:

My youngest brother was close to me, and he knows my personality. He knows that it is [the marital life] uncertainty that I am scared of. I like that everything is clear, and I like to understand everything before I go ahead. My brother said to me, "Wasn't it your idea

to understand the groom? Communicate²¹ with him. Talk to him to have concord [yataqabal]²² with him [the husband].

The word *yataqabal* replicates what Adely (2016) called *insijam*, which incorporates practical issues of financial security, compatibility between spouses' families and spouses' shared expectations of marital life. These concerns make sentimental love an extravagance in finding a life partner who has the qualities needed for a happy marital life (Adely, 2016). Participants' negotiation to see prospective spouses would be caused by exogamous marriages—between different tribal ancestral within national state boundaries—which have become common in urban areas (AL-Khatteb, 2007). In the interview, Salma retold her discussion with her mother. Salma's mother was brought up in a rural area in a southern province. Her mother knew and played with her relatives and neighbours. By contrast, Salma grew up in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. In Salma's position in Riyadh, gaining a well-informed account of the prospective spouses, if they were not relatives, is difficult, whereas it was easy for her mother to know a suitor because she was brought up and played with them. Salma drew our attention to the fact that gender segregation is not related to rural life. The oil boom and rapid urbanisation attracted large families to migrate to Riyadh and benefit from taking public sector jobs, which impacted on women's lifestyle and confinement to home. An ethnographic study by Al-Khateeb (2008) conducted on sedentarised Bedouins in a settlement indicated that women before being sedentary were not separated from men of their extended families, and they enjoyed freedom of

²¹ It is common for prospective spouses to talk to each other through mobile phones before marriage to build their relationship and discuss their future plans and their roles as spouses.

²² Equivalent meaning of *insijam*, as illustrated above.

movement, whereas after sedentarisation they were confined to home, and they only socialised with women. Al-Qahtani (2012) also captured this in her work on Asir province. She indicated that the economic need for agricultural labour reduced gender segregation in Asir, and only those from the upper and middle classes were secluded from the public. In light of Salma's circumstances, rural life was interpreted as more egalitarian since women had freedom of movement and could socialise with extended family. I can imagine that migrated families adapted to live with stranger rather well-known extended families which might have complicated the role of families in terms of knowing suitors. According to Le Renard (2014), like this observation challenge the dominant reading of linearity of progress and modernisation according to all the problems women face including gender segregation as a result of inherited traditions from the past.

According to Al-Lily (2020) and Al-Torki (1986), whereas the families of both suitors take on the role of seeking information about the other families, this step would not be successful in determining a groom's character because it relies on people's honesty and ethics in terms of revealing information about prospective spouses, which depends on how well people know each other. This leads to increasing *Fatwa*²³, which warns people of not being honest in revealing truth about either the groom's or the bride's attributes when considering marriage (Al-Torki, 1986). This led Fahad to be suspicious of the traditional way of asking relatives:

Our view about people is superficial until we live [*ishra*] together, whether we share an accommodation or even travel with them... [when I] discovered that people are

completely different. This has led me to be hesitant about marriage, and I delayed marriage (Fahad, 27 years old, single man).

Fahad questioned marriage between relatives, which in his region is considered the ideal marriage. He indicated that an intimate relationship between spouses is constructed through daily communication, caring and obligation. As Jamieson (2011) pointed out, intimacy is associated with quality of connection between people and practices, which include sharing, giving and knowing, caring for, feeling attachment, expression of affection. It is to be recognised as having a different quality when associated with a sense of election, and privilege in access to each other's time, undivided, of good quality and on demand. The concept of *ishra*, which Fahad refers to, means an intimate attachment developed by living together, sharing food, and making sacrifices for each other's happiness when the relationship is too intimate (Abu-Lughod, 1986). Using Jamieson's (2011, p. 21) understanding of the practice of intimacy, *ishra* encompasses a commitment to "sweet or bitter"²⁴, which parallels "for better; for worse". This quality of relations, for Fahad, draws on nonverbal memory, shared, and based on marrying within national boundaries (see sub-section 4.4.2). This quality encompasses "being trusted with back-stage and secret information and relationship-specific sense of uniquely knowing each other (Jamieson, 2011, p. 4). This is what Salma realised after she was married: love comes after marriage.

He [the husband] was neutral. [Does not try to show his romance emotion in words trying to attract her]. I was upset that he had talked to me because he did not try to attract me. I

²⁴ An idiom that means whatever the circumstances, good (flourishing) or bad (hardship), we stay and stand together and support each other. It is widely used not only to refer to the relationship between spouses, but more broadly to explain the expectation of support and solidarity between people in the same society, e.g. relatives, non-relatives such as neighbours within national boundaries at peace and war.

assumed he would introduce himself to me in a certain way, which would fascinate me...but later on, I honestly loved him.

Salma told me that marriage and love were important subjects for her conversations with friends, especially as they grew older at university. The subject also started coming up with their families. She told me they were questioning family norms of not preferring premarital relations.

In 2012, I was on Twitter and at that time, I was following talks about women's rights. I believe that women are exploited and do not have the freedom to choose anything in their lives. Even my discussion with my friends was the same. We believe that we are in Saudi Arabia, and this is the way in which we will marry.

Salma brings to the fore the time after the Arab Spring 2010, when Twitter became famous in Saudi Arabia, and feminist activism started to demand changes in women's status. This was parallel to circulated trends in terms of messages attacking men as lacking the ability to show romance. Women are also said to lack natural beauty (Al-Toaimy, 2018; Al-Abass, 2013). This quote conveys that the focus on the forces of "tradition" and "patriarchy" as guiding marriage among Saudis builds on a simplistic understanding of feminism and takes an ethnocentric stance when understanding others' lives regarding marriage (Pande, 2015). I argue that Twitter can be party to circulating racism, which hints that the "Western nuclear family structure and related ideology of 'romantic love'[are] more 'progressive'" than third world family structures (Pande, 2015). Such a circulation precludes agency of the participants who navigated their choices along with family preferences, and those who did not equate freedom with adopting the Western perspective of individualism, which will be evidenced in chapters 5 and 6 where I will develop the analysis.

Unpacking the meaning of this circulated media image helps us see why Salma and her friend questioned familial norms and aspired for love, and why Salma suspected her husband did not attempt to attract her verbally. Being in love undermines men's agency in the Arab world (Nasser El-Dine, 2018; Mernissi, 2011). According to Kabesh (2013), men tend to hide their emotions because their masculine identity builds on being independent, autonomous and free. Hence, expressing their love verbally would weaken their masculinity because expressing love essentialises the interdependency and fragility of men in a culture that constricts men, demanding that they have the power to control themselves and others.

In addition, hiding emotion relates to the broader Arab context (especially before the 21st), where love threatens the social order because it involves sexuality, as illustrated earlier, and so love is only represented in poetry (Assaf, 2018). Labieb (1987) indicated—on his analysis of courtship in Arab poetry—the absence of verbal love between spouses is a social issue and a form of self-defence, so that the couple's intimacy doesn't replace the love and attachment to the kinship. A “nuclear” family cannot be a substitute for the collective group, and people's attachment cannot exist apart from in the group. By this, a man confirms his nomination practically and confirms the mental construction of masculinity (Labieb 1987). Labieb (1987) and Bourdieu (1966) told us that virtue is the norm of expressing feelings in the familial circle, between spouses.

According to Labieb (1987), the meaning of virtue in the Arab mindset is different from religious virtue; it means in Arab understanding what is imagined as “beautiful”. As Bourdieu (1966, p.255) stated, “the expression of feelings is always carefully controlled, restrained and reserved”. Applying this meaning to the verbal expression of love between spouses, Labieb (1987) affirmed that although the Arab men expressed love through poetry; they hardly sang about their wives. There were exceptional cases, but those occurred after a wife's death. This is because love

cannot exist alongside matters of sexuality between spouses, as their understanding of love is virginity; although sexual desire exists, they reject sexual relations with adored women (not a wife) (Labieb, 1987). The emotion of love restrained women's attractiveness, but a woman's body was not a commodity.

Whereas Nasser El-Dine (2018, p.432) indicated that while a man does not admit love verbally, he “does ‘everything for her’, buying her things and giving her money”; hence, a man expresses how much he loves by how much he spends. This is important for demonstrating commitment to the marital relationship, which section 4.3. will explain in depth. Assaf (2018) indicated that as part of the Emirates government's initiative for the preservation of moral and social norms, marital love is altered in the modern nation to be a natural feeling in marriage. These pedagogical courses include marital sexuality and sexual pleasure intended to make marriage more romantic and loving (Assaf, 2018). In Saudi Arabia also there are charities funded by the government to offer similar courses. Indeed, Mernissi (2011) correctly indicated that the *hadith* contains directives to men to ensure that their wives are satisfied. Foreplay is encouraged, and kissing is described as the messenger between spouses that triggers sex.

It seems that Salma's and Fahad's experience of love underpinned Jamieson's (2011) differentiation of love and intimacy, where the former linked to emotion and the personal attributes of a person, and the latter to the interpersonal connection and interaction that is durable over time and acquires social recognition as a relationship. Salma's and Fahad's understanding captured what Jamieson (2011, p. 13) viewed as forms of love that are not celebrated in Western culture, with love being a relationship that is “emotionally constrained”, as in the case of Fahad, and “taciturn intimate”, like for Salma. This understanding relies more on temporality than on attraction, and that the latter's nature can vanish in real-life situations (e.g., beauty destroyed by

ageing, reality of love not demonstrated by words, but paid by commitment and actions). Thus, the quality of intimacy that characterises a “good” relation is socially constructed; viewing “love” as taboo for other human beings is therefore based on a narrow assumption about what constitutes love. In participants’ views, love needs to be developed and constructed in a broader context of demonstrating commitment through involving spouses’ families. This process of handling marriage with the family meant that the appropriate feelings were considered authentic (Jamieson, 2011).

What was obvious from earlier quotes from Sarah (female) and Fahad (male), and which also came up within Eman’s and Wafa’s narratives, is that they articulated *Alnazrah alsareah* as a right given by *Shari’a* to suitors:

The girl must know the groom under the supervision of her family. A principle in Islam is *Alnazrah alsareah*. He sits with her, and they see each other; he may like her or not, and then they get married. (Eman, 27-year-old married woman)

Wafa also indicated that:

He must come to my family while I’m with my menfolk in the light. We talk and he sees my personality. If he does not like me, this is *nasseb* [a polite refusal of marriage, that Allah has not foreordained the union]. This is a life between all of us, forming a family. (Wafa, 33-year-old single woman)

This narrative reflects participants’ agency to be present in the process of selecting and evaluating spouses without abandoning conventions. They wished for *Alnazrah Alsareah*, and involving family reflects their wisdom in making of rational choices that in turn acknowledge social norms of gender relation. In this way, religious convictions become a shield that protect

men and women from the demand for honour and the new social changes that the nation is undergoing. This commitment to gender norms is not exclusive to women, as Al-Rasheed (2013) argued. I want to argue, though, that the relationships are significant for men, as most men prefer a bride with little experience in relationships with the opposite sex (Nasser El-Dine, 2018).

Further, participants' negotiation reflects Breteau's (2020) observation that intimacy and love are distinct from attraction, the moral and intellectual dimensions being superior to love, which came across explicitly in Wafa's words.

Recalling "methods of subjectivation" Mahmood (2005), these participants' views build on their religious capacity to subordinate the secular (familial non-preference of premarital relationships) to the sacred, where the latter guarantees rights for prospective spouses to assess each other independently. Their assertion of a right to *Alnazrah Alsareah* enables the enactment and submission to the familial preference not to allow the mixing of the genders while acknowledging their individuality and submitting to *Allah's* guidance of the marriage.

Participants' agency formed their direction towards the continuity of familial gender norms and reinforcing the social order, which is important, according to Mahmood (2005), in understanding the function through which the subject is formed as relational. Clearly, the active role of men and women in the process of marriage and the assertion of religious rights speaks back to Western feminist generalisations about the forces of family and religious rules on marital choices (Pande, 2015).

In what follows, I will focus on why spouses emphasised their wish for personal compatibility.

4.3. Marriage as a partnership between spouses

Insijam, according to Adely (2016), echoes companionate marriage and is meant to ensure marital stability. It is also related, in this thesis, to a new emergence in men's and women's perceptions of marriage as a partnership. Participants, such as Latefah, Eman and Sami discussed new perceptions of the relationship between husband and wife as a partnership:

I feel that our generation now understands that this is your wife, your life partner. You will stay with her all of your life. (Latefah, 25-year-old married woman)

Men reject returning to their family for everything. He must return to his partner²⁵ [wife]. These are all matters of the small family. Couples now share the responsibility of children, which becomes solely the responsibility of the mother and father. (Eman, 27-year-old married woman)

I live independently with my children and my wife. I live on my own terms and nurture them in the way that I want. It is a freedom that allows you to make your own decisions by consulting only your wife. (Sami, 27-year-old married man)

Muna, Eman and Sami acknowledged that although spouses' roles become conjoint in raising their children, extended family relations do not disappear. This is especially true in nurturing their grandsons. Muna and Eman said:

²⁵ In Saudi culture, husband and wife are considered life partners to reflect their intimate relationship.

My mother-in-law influenced my husband's opinion. He comes to me and questions what I have done. (Muna, 27-year-old married woman)

Eman, a 27-year-old married woman, said:

I still observe that some mothers-in-law influence how spouses raise their children. Even though the participants indicated that they lived independently, still within this family structure, some urban families live in gated compounds that consist of villas for a father and his sons as an extended family. This is deduced from Sami's excerpt:

You can see some families living with others in a family compound. But these are not fully independent because people will still help raise each other's children. (Sami, 27-year-old married man)

Sami highlighted that even when spouses live as a nuclear family, there will still be close relationships with the parental family, especially through weekly family visits and during Eid celebrations. This narrative tells us, similar to elsewhere in the Arab region, about the coexistence of the nuclear family and extended family (Mernisis, 2011; Hatem, 1987). This is characterised by two couples with their children living in independent households with extended relationships with their extended families (Hatem, 1987).

Participants' narrative about spouses' roles becoming conjoined confirmed Al-Ruwaitea's (2014) observation of Saudi society. Al-Ruwaitea (2014) emphasised that the power gap between a husband and wife has narrowed in Saudi Arabia due to education and women's work and assertiveness, which impact on the changing masculine image as the "God of the house". According to Al-Ruwaitea (2014), comparing older and younger women's relationships with their husbands can demonstrate the changes in Saudi society. Wives are obedient to their

husbands and view them as holding power in the family; they submit to their husbands and occupy themselves with the family's emotional side (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). This observation is captured by Sahad:

Now, a girl marries over 24 years old, so she has completed her university studies and has her thoughts and temperament. She is not a scared little girl who marries an older man. I feel that in previous marriages, women considered a husband a father responsible for her. (Sahad, 33 years old, divorced woman)

Sahad compared women of her generation with those of her mother's generation and argued that age, education and age gap between spouses helped narrow the power gap between spouses. Al-Kateeb (2007) wrote that (based on three ethnographic studies conducted in 1973 on women in Saudi Arabia) the marital relationship was not equal, and the supremacy of a husband was not questioned. According to Al-Kateeb (2007, p. 1345), a woman's obedience to her husband is reflected in the tendency to call him *abuna*, meaning "our father" (2007, p.1). The average age of marriage was 21 for women and 25 for men in 1997 and 24 for women and 28 for men in 2000, and marriage was required for women to enjoy their full life as mothers, as they are financially dependent on their husbands (Al-Kateeb, 2007).

However, power asymmetry has not completely disappeared in the participants' generation. Muna and Wafa, who articulated the following:

The husbands had the final say on matters related to our life. (Muna, 27-year-old married woman)

There are some—I do not generalise—husbands of my friends who stand against their wives in realising their aspirations. Maybe he [husband] does not better himself. Maybe a

man feels jealous of a woman's success. He does not want to rely on her. I have a recommendation from my friends: "Wafa, be careful not to marry someone who is not educated or whose education is lower than yours. He will see you as higher than him."

(Wafa, 33-year-old single woman who works and is pursuing her PhD)

Wafa provided us with a rich narrative that confirms Al-Ruwaitea's (2014) observation that successful women would still not be welcomed as wives because men would see educated wives as a threat to their masculinity. Given that masculinity was forged in a discourse about being responsible and taking power, educated and working, women qualified to be equal to men in authority (Al- Ruwaitea, 2014). Wafa was frustrated that married women were entering the labour force and pursuing their education without men sharing domestic chores and childcare responsibility:

If I had a house²⁶ and children, I would be busy and I would not have control. Often, single women manage projects, employment and education.

For this reason, Wafa decided to push marriage back to even later years until she had advanced her education. Wafa wanted to marry an educated man who would be attentive to understanding and sharing the double burden of childcare and domestic chores while his wife studies or works. Sarah, a female participant who married at an earlier age, had a similar preference of marrying an educated man. As Sarah narrated:

I feel that after I had my bachelor's degree, I should probably get married and complete my Master's. But the person I would marry must understand that I intend to complete a

²⁶ It is common in Saudi Arabia to use a house as a metaphor to refer to family, e.g. "I will establish a house", meaning I will build my family. Another example of its usage (especially by men) is "I will ask my house", meaning his wife.

postgraduate degree and that I would want to be employed. And when they signed my marriage contract, my father would explain this desire to him [husband]. (Sarah, 33-year-old married woman)

Sarah married a husband whom she chose from two suitors selected by her family. He had good qualifications and worked for a high-status petroleum company, and thus had a good financial future in comparison with other candidates who lived in a rural area and would not be openminded. Sarah believed that her decision to marry her husband made it possible for her to pursue her postgraduate education. Wafa's and Sarah's narratives draw our attention to women who prefer educated husbands, which seems to echo other women's accounts in a study conducted by Al-Lily in Saudi Arabia (2020). Almost all of the women in the study stressed the importance of an educated husband and knowing whether the husband would allow them to work before agreeing to marriage. Al-Lily (2020) explained that women cannot legally start their jobs without the permission of their husbands. It should be noted that this legislation has been changed; the restriction under which women had to obtain a male guardian's consent was eased in late 2019 (Saudi Press Agency).

Women's preference for educated husbands shows their strategies for overcoming cultural and social obstacles standing against their wishes (Al-Rasheed, 2013; Hamadeh, 1999). Their strategies are a necessary condition for enhancing their public role (Chapter 5 will deal with respectability). Sarah's narrative introduced more nuance in terms of her fear that if she were married, her husband would stand in the way of her realising her aspirations, which can be settled through utilising her rights ascribed by Islam. When her husband signed the marriage contract, he accepted Sarah's condition of pursuing study and work. I would argue that even

though women may secure their wish to benefit from their religious rights, and assuming the spouses' relationship became equal, married women in the labour force still bear the burden of childcare and domestic chores. Domestic workers then become common among middle-class families in order to overcome the conflict; Chapter 5 will elaborate on the class dimension.

El-Hadad (2003) contended that in his assessment of changes taking place in Gulf countries, spinsterhood is not a result of women being unable to find husbands or men being unable to afford marriage. It reflects men's and women's desire to delay marriage until they realise their aspirations (El-Haddad, 2003). What lies beyond realising aspirations are men and women internalising gender norms, who does the housework and who spends. Fahad, a 27-year-old single man, expressed an attitude similar to Wafa's in that marriage should be delayed until his goals were achieved:

I have many ambitions that I have not obtained yet. I have not completed my educational goals. I now try to do self-learning, as I do not have the desire to complete my studies. I only obtained a bachelor's degree; I do not have the desire to pursue a Master's or PhD. [. . .] I defer marriage. I do not know. I feel it is too early.

Fahad expressed that although education is important to him, he can rely on self-learning to improve his skills, and he emphasised that his finances and business development are most important to him. In this context, Fahad talked about the cost of living and the requirement to marry:

Now, in marriage and in your life in general, a level or quality of life is needed. You need to have money for a certain wedding. You need to drive a particular kind of car or have a mobile phone.

Sami was another man who discussed the burden of expectations contributing to the cost of marriage:

For a wedding, a man has to do things that are beyond his ability. To get married, he may take a loan and may pay 200, 300, 400 thousand [Saudi Riyal (SAR)] just to get married [equal range from 4,500 to 9,000 British pounds (GBP)] (Sami, 27-year-old married man).

Studies on marriage in Saudi society, such as those by Al-Torki (1986), Al-Munajjed (1997), and Al-Kateeb (2007), have shown increased dowry (*mahar*) standards from about 4000 SAR (850 GBP) in the early 19th century to 10–15000 SAR in the late 19th century. Today, it can reach SAR 100,000 (21000 GBP) and 200,0000 (42000 GBP) in some tribes, which shows that the social status of family is not a national standard. The standard is combined with the burden of urban life, which imposes costly levels of consumption on new families alongside the rising costs of items a bride is entitled to, such as clothes and furniture (Al-Torki, 1986; El-Hadad, 2003). Urban life has also caused the disappearance of social solidarity between close relatives who support new families. Although the father of a groom usually still pays the *mahar*, there are cases in which the groom pays the *mahar* himself, so young men face economic pressure (Al-Torki 1986; El-Hadad 2003).

Whereas men and women might negotiate the traditional paths to marriage, Saudi women, like other women in the Middle East, would not consider marrying a man who could not provide her with a certain standard of living or provide *mahar* (Nasser El-Dine, 2018). This is because it is a husband's responsibility to provide her with alimony, even if she works or comes from a wealthy class (Adely, 2016). Men must demonstrate sufficient economic resources to support a young family as a precondition for compatibility between spouses (Adely, 2016). Nasser El-Dine

(2018) argued that material aspects are fused with intimate elements due to contextual factors that are hidden in the material exchange. In the traditional marriage process, once the families reach an agreement on the marriage proposal, they arrange a date for performing the ceremony where the marriage contract is drawn up (*melkah*), and *mahar* is presented. *Mahar* is the property that women are entitled to, a right given to women under *Shari'a*, and to be used for their bridal goods (Al-Torki, 1986). Considering *mahar* in a tangible way, as granted by *Shari'a*, if a man wants to break up a relationship before marriage, he cannot claim the money that he has paid. Paying *mahar* for a bride guarantees that a man is serious about his relationship with her. Delayed dowry (*Mu'khar*) is another type of *dowry* that women have recently begun to demand as a guarantee of financial support if divorce occurs (El-Haddad, 2003). This suggests that women invest in patriarchy to secure their rights.

When young people do not have sufficient means to establish a publicly acknowledged marriage, they may adapt norms to form a marriage. Al-Torki (1986) discussed the increasing demand for young Saudi men to have resources, leading them, especially those from the middle and lower classes, to seek marriage to girls from other Arab countries, such as Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, whose expenditures are lower than those of Saudi brides. This situation has consequences for Saudi society because the loss of marriageable young men leaves the daughters of elite families without husbands. Accordingly, an approach that has become acceptable is for the bride's father to ask for a minimal payment, though the initiative must come from the bride's father because it is in a bad taste, (*'Ayb*), to negotiate the *mahar*. The father does not determine the sum of the *mahar*, as it is a voluntary payment by the groom. Sometimes, *mahar* offered by grooms is higher than traditional rates, hence, the increased general standards. The government initiative to solve the problem of spinsterhood among women was to restrict young men's marriage women

from outside the country to encourage Saudi nationals to marry other nationals (marriage outside the country is allowed only under specific circumstances) (Al-Torki, 1986). Further, the government funds collective weddings (*zawaj jam' iyya*) for men who are unable to afford marriage costs, in which up to 50 young spouses are married at the same ceremony. Attempts by the government to limit dowries have not been successful as they interfere with social hierarchies; the dowry reflects the bride's family status (Al-Torki, 1986). However, this social policy can be understood as part of shaping the subject who will serve the nation and promoting a sense of we-ness through the promotion of national marriage (Anthias, 2007). This policy is the result of trust and solidarity being endangered by the increasing diversity of social groupings (Anthias, 2007), and such a policy assumes homogeneity within national citizens (regardless of the intersection of region, tribe, class and gender).

The material aspects of a traditional marriage are useful for understanding how they manage waitthood. Although it did not emerge from the participants' narrative, it is conceptually relevant to explore the participants' strategies. According to Singerman (2011), the term refers to young Arab men who cannot enter culturally marked adulthood because they cannot afford to get married, and they cannot enter into sexual relations without marrying. To assert their sexuality, men and women in Muslim and Arab world adopt "accommodating innovation", a strategy that has redefined and reinvented prevailing norms and traditional means to accommodate their desires (Bayat, 2012). For example, men and women in Saudi Arabia experiment with secretive marriage (*misyar*), a modern marriage differs from informal marriage (*'urfi*); it is officially registered, the bride's family is involved, and the wife waives her legal right to *mahar*, alimony, and accommodation and generally agree not to publicise the marriage. The husband visits his wife by day or night without setting up a home with her. A marriage contract is signed only by

spouses and a witness (Welchman, 2007). According to Al-Nasr (2011), *misyar* legitimises sexual relations outside the framework of traditional marriage and alleviates society from the “ills of spinsterhood”. Therefore, engagement with innovative marriage practices permits them to assert their sexual needs and remain committed to religious, political, and social norms around satisfying sexual needs.

Even though participants of both genders endured suffering as a result of their gender division role, a good life for them was, as Jamieson (1998, p. 33) put it, “intertwined with and expressed through practical arrangements of who did which household chores, who spent what money”. Participants invested in dominant gender ideals that still represent men as the primary breadwinners. Male participants, such as Salem, Muaad, and Sami, indicated the centrality of work for men to financially provide for the family, as articulated below:

Work is your sustenance, and your children’s sustenance if you are married and have kids. (Salem, 25-year-old single man)

Work is almost the most important thing besides family. You should have ambition and be productive, especially between 20 and 30 years, because after 30, you will be responsible. (Muaad, 22-year-old single man)

I would not mind that she [the wife] works, especially if we do not have kids. Her stay at home is without benefit. Her going to work develops her socially and increases her financial income (Sami, 27-years-old, married man).

Salem, Muaad and Sami did not discard the breadwinning ideal. Men hold that their income facilitates the household, and wives are not expected to work for monetary purposes. This attitude echoes a result of the survey conducted by Al-Ruwaitea (2014) on Saudi university students (174 men and 168 women) regarding the characteristics that men and women should possess. Regardless of these changes in masculinity, the survey revealed that men maintain the notion that they should work. In Arab culture, decent men are relied upon to cherish their wives and treat them well by providing them with everything they can sensibly ask for (Nasser El-Dine, 2018). Remarkably, Sami gave credence to the idea that male breadwinners are declining as he acknowledges his wife's right to work to enhance her social and economic power, but ideologically, Sami conserves his position as the main provider for the family. Sami's articulation reflected Al- Rasheed's (2013) observation about the common perception among Saudi men that women's wages are luxuries to be enjoyed for their own consumption and not for supporting the family. Men's narrative on material caring gives us insights into understanding the masculine view of producing affectionate relationships and addressing masculinities in the context of romantic love (Nasser El-Dine, 2018).

Nasser El-Dine (2018, p.245) convincingly argued that "distinctions between the 'instrumental' and the 'emotional' nature of intimate relations are often artificial, and how one should be careful not to downplay the affective dimensions of relationships in which materiality is involved". I contend that as Nasser El-Dine (2018) posited, "caring masculinities" is a useful descriptive way to address material aspects of marriage, where a man meets marital needs for the well-being of the family. This perspective is useful for understanding the continuity of the position of men in that men must be committed to being the main breadwinner and the importance of demonstrating the financial ability that is necessary to establish a family. Adely

(2016) and Nasser El-Dine (2018) stated that financial aspects are often unnoticed in the understanding of intimacy by observers who internalise Western ideology, which considers material exchange incompatible with intimacy. Nasser El-Dine (2018) argued that, even in a Western context, intimacy intersects with the legislation of alimony, inheritance and sharing possessions after divorce. It should be clear then that, as Nasser El-Dine (2018) told us, love, and material money are not necessarily opposed. Jamieson (1998) argued that inner qualities and feelings are not exclusive elements in intimacy. Gender inequalities can persist alongside intimacy, and we cannot ignore acts of practical love and care as a way of constructing the everyday practice of relationship. Managing material effects and money is symbolic and constitutive of relationships and entails demonstrating care or neglect (Jamieson, 1998).

Women participants also pay attention to men's caring actions as symbolic expressions of affection. Sarah and Eman shared this sentiment:

[A man] is responsible for accommodations and money, so we are able to live a good life. A mother is responsible for taking care of the children, educating them and cooking for them. (Sarah, 32-year-old married woman)

Eman also indicated that:

Men are responsible [financially] for the house and his offspring, and his wife's valued tradition has still existed. The successful man who can buy a house from a family, has a wife and children, and is completely independent. He should not rely on his wife's or others' help. He is able to bear responsibility. Now, some men want to get married, but they do not want children. They want a working woman responsible for herself. They want to live without responsibility.

Sarah and Eman discussed gender ideals that represent men as the primary breadwinners responsible for providing the family with the financial resources to guarantee a certain standard of living, with women devoting their efforts to nurturing children and doing domestic chores. Eman's rhetoric claims that a successful man's identity is subsumed by his role as breadwinner and that relying on his wife's financial contributions reduces his masculinity and commitment to being responsible for his family. Nasser El-Dine (2018), Adely (2016), and Cole (2009) stated that, when a husband is striving to gather the material resources for marriage, this is a declaration of certified love and commitment to a relationship and is even considered something that causes him to value her more. This narrative emphasises the ideal relationship dynamic of performative caring in a spouse's relationship where the spouses produce mutual affection, as men are breadwinners and women are housewives. According to Nasser El-Dine (2018), attending to gender-specific needs in a relational process is a form of demonstrating love in a reciprocal cycle. Traditionally in Arab culture, men do not cook or do housework, whereas respectable women do not go to work or do grocery shopping (Nasser El-Dine, 2018). In this understanding, "inner" emotion and the "expression" of it often seem to be inseparable (El-Dine, 2018, p. 430). However, other women, such as Sahad and Amal, were sensible about this assumption. Sahad noted that the burden men face in being primarily responsible for establishing a family was not experienced by their parents:

In the past, they [parents] had many chances that helped them establish their life.

Everything was cheap, and they had good salaries, so they were able to buy their houses.

They owned their houses. Young men now rarely own a house. They rent. But I say to you, I'm responsible for myself, so I do not have economic pressure like a young man who wants to marry. (Sahad, 33 years old, Master's degree, divorced woman)

Sahad observed that her parents' generation benefited from generous spending by the government to help citizens buy their own homes, which made it easy for men to be the heads of their households (King Khalid.org.sa). This confirms De Bel-Air *et al.*'s (2019) observation on Saudi society, whereby they indicated that in light of the oil boom, resources have been distributed to citizens, generating subsidies for the national population in terms of the cost of living and have led to a disconnection of women's education from participation in the labour market, making, due to the subsidies, women's income unnecessary. Due to economic change, Amal realised that:

Within economic contraction and the increasing cost of living today, I see it is necessary that a husband and wife share the economic burden. (Amal, 33-year-old divorced woman)

Amal discovered that it was difficult for men to maintain their status as sole household heads. This economic change would lead young spouses to adopt a dramatic reversal of the norm. Amal understood that women's wages are needed for family stability (the next chapter will deal with class and women's motivation to work). From my observations in society, working women share the financial responsibility of families with their husband to be able to purchase a house for the young family. Hopkin (2003, p. 7) makes us aware of the need for "fluid but vigorous frameworks within which to examine how kin as multi-generational collectives, and individuals embedded within them, negotiate the life course". Hopkin (2003) defined this as "the consequence of gender-, class-, and culturally constructed family obligations defined, in part, in the context of changing social, material and political conditions". Economic change and access to education must affect relationships within families and between couples, since these have evolved into different forms. Within these new households, relationship patterns have changed to incorporate slightly different frameworks and dynamics in line with the changing wider society.

This combination of values, and the understanding of these, has led to changes in the relationship between couples (Hopkin, 2003).

I argue that it is difficult to draw a line between women's material expectations of a husband's commitment and appreciation, and greed. The following quote summarises women's tendency to marry a man who will pamper her with luxury, imitating social media couples. Muna said that "girls understand the game", which prompted me to ask her to explain more. She elaborated:

Girls now want to get married because they want to travel on holiday and go shopping.

They view a husband as a dream that pays for everything for them. They treat their husband as a magic lamp. (Muna, 27 years old, married, homemaker)

Muna told us that because women understand the husband as being responsible for providing for her, as ascribed by *Shari'a*, they want more from the husband to demonstrate commitment.

Nasser El-Dine (2018) noticed that demonstrating love in a couple relationship is not only related to attending to gender-specific needs, as I illustrated earlier; it includes doing additional things to pamper (*dalal*) spouses, and it is gendered. Muna told me that many couple-influencers in the Gulf countries use Snapchat to show how a husband pampers his wife, and women followers wanted the same from their husbands. I contend that men's preference for a working wife, as Eman told us, could therefore be impacted by socio-political change and the movement of the economy from rentier resources to contraction duty drops in oil prices and the excessive demands of the increasing national population (De Bel-Air *et al.*, 2019), whereby men may not be able to meet the excessive demands of their wife and family. This leads men like Sami to adopt that women wages for their luxurious consumption, and not totally waiving their role as the main breadwinner.

Although the narrative in this section has hinted that relationships between spouses have become conjoined and less separated, the participants still value a traditional pattern of gender division of labour. Jamieson (2011, p. 5) argued, “elements of practice of intimacy can be transportable, that is one practice of intimacy is sometimes able to stand in for others, making it as if other praises of intimacy were also in place.” Thereby, participants investment on gender division ideal to take such a relationship for granted as good relationship despite their frustration to demonstrate commitment and reciprocity important for family existence and continuity.

4.4. Negotiation of familial perspective of “decent” marriage

The participants hinted that tribe was a criterion that the family did not ignore in making a marital choice. Assaf (2018) argued that the parents’ capacity to determine the choices of spouses does not spring from being older or having experience in marital life; instead, it is due to *kafa’a*—the concept that defines spouses’ suitability as defined by religious and customary law (*urf*) (Assaf, 2018). *Urf* defines tribal belonging and serves as an important basis of social hierarchy that plays an important role in marital choice for both spouses (Assaf, 2018). Upon receiving a marriage proposal, the bride’s family uses a list of criteria to assess the groom and his family to determine his value as a prospective husband for their daughter. This involves investigating the groom’s complex characteristics, which include 1): attributes that imply the groom’s observance of a religious commitment, such as praying in the mosque as a Friday prayer and not drinking or gambling (*istiqamah*); 2): his ability to fulfil social and religious norms to perform the financial duty of a husband towards his wife and their children (*nafaqah*); 3) moral virtues, such as honesty in dealing with others; and 4) educational attainment, which is

recognised as a means for social mobility and financial security for their daughters (Al-Torki, 1986). However, educational attainment is not a clear indication of financial security because status is more likely to be associated with family wealth and social capital (Al-Lily, 2020). Assessing a groom also includes investigating his social capital and his family's reputation, where "good descent" means belonging to a known and recognised family, preferably not of a lower status than the bride's family. "Good reputation" refers to the community's assessment of the family based on the behaviour of its members in conformity with social norms (Al-Torki, 1986, p.131). This is itself based on the participants' articulation in this section, especially regarding tribe, that is more important than the four personal characteristics of the groom mentioned above. Participants in this section negotiated their own and their familial perspectives of closeness and compatible marriage between spouses.

4.4.1. *Ibn 'amm* marriage

Amal and Musa talked about marrying relatives from within the same tribe:

We are obliged to marry cousin (*Ibn 'amm*) under the law of the tribe. [My family says], "Your cousin is best for you; the dress is better to be patched from itself. Your cousin will save you more than the stranger; with your cousin, you will be close to us." (Amal, 32-year-old divorced woman)

Musa echoed Amal:

I mean, her cousin is the best for her. Because he is from her bloodtie, and he will care for her, and she is his relative, that is to say, from one family. So, he will not harm her or do anything that will bother her because he still knows her father is his uncle, and so he will respect her. (Musa, 22-year-old single man)

Amal and Musa implicitly stated that marrying a cousin helps build a harmonious relationship between spouses. Amal's idiomatic expression, "*the dress is better to be patched from itself*" (meaning a hole in the object is best covered with the same material), explains the rationale for families preferring marriages between cousins or *Ibn 'amm*. It reveals an idealised notion of adhering to origin and dismissing strangers in the hope that closeness makes a relationship more successful. Familial position on closeness can be understood based on two overlapping points. The first one is related to surviving. Maisel (2014), Al-Kateeb (2007), and Al-Torki (1986) argued that endogamy secures the unity of the family and creates closer tribal relations to protect their purity. This same view was espoused by Sarah, who narrated her marriage experience with her cousin from within the same tribe:

We do not get married unless we are from the same tribe. We do not get married to someone from another province; it must be someone from my tribe. They [the family] feel they are noble or so. (Sarah, 33 years old, married)

Family contending on relatives' marriage could be because uncertainty brought about moving to cities where relationships between people have become superficial, which hinders providing a well-informed account of the prospective spouses. Asking a third party about the possible spouse would not be successful, except in the case of a marriage between cousins who live in the same city (Al-Haydary, 2011; Al-Lily, 2020).

Second, Amal and Musa told us that the groom is expected to protect a wife cousin more than he will a stranger, with the knowledge that he comes from the same lineage. This is due to the extended and patrilocal nature of the traditional Arab family. The daughter leaves her parental home upon marriage and joins her husband and his family. Thereby, women living near their

family reduce their husband's capacity to exercise control over his wife (Cohn-Mor, 2013). As Musa indicates, because spouses are honourable, a husband knows that his wife will be defended by her male relatives against any abuse. The same logic, I argue, applies to a husband. Bourdieu (1966) said that, although his analysis is based on tribes in 1960s Algeria, his analysis can tell us the value of tribes in the context of a mythico-ritual system, that closeness protects a husband from being disdained by his out-group wife, as she will think she is nobler than her husband, and prevents a man from being humiliated by out-group men. This means equality of lineage is seen as a communal resource that ignores power relations within groups, including gender (Anthias, 2007). This suggests that maintaining a sense of closeness between spouses is tied to a kinship worldview in the construction of marriage matches and equality (Jamieson, 2011).

4.4.2. Compatible tribal lineage

Participants in this section negotiate the centrality of compatibility in terms of tribal affiliation for *kafa'a* between spouses embracing the rhetoric of national belonging. Other participants fought a hierarchy between national citizens and argued that *kafa'a* should be based on Islamic piety.

Salem, Muhanad, Salem and Maha acknowledge that *nasab* is an important norm for marriage for them, as it is to their family. As they articulated:

I do not like relative marriage. I am not questioning tribal [*Qabilah*] marriage [...], but I have other choices. You can ask about the good house, and you can change and marry a woman from the northern, eastern or from the western provinces. (Salem, 25-year-old single man)

When it comes to marriage, especially the family name of a husband, I must have their opinion. (Maha, 30-year-old single woman)

In marriage, lineage [*nasab*] has its value, and so if you propose a family name, maybe some fathers and mothers will say no. They are [the bride's family] not at the level of our *nasab*. Of course, there are some people whose *nasab* is too little. I do not mind if I do not marry them. There are people who are like us, but *nasab* is crucial in marriage.

(Muhanad, 28-year-old single man)

Participants conveyed to us their approval of compatible lineage between spouses. But homogeneity in terms of Salem's and Muhanad's understanding is based less on family prestige than other compatible (known-origins families) tribes within the boundaries of the country. These participants contend that compatible marriage can be from other known descent families around the country, implicitly embracing nationalist rhetoric regardless of tribal regional identification. Such attitudes adopt positions that would unite a young generation of urban families who come from a variety of regional and family backgrounds, against practices they judge as unfair. Salem's and Sarah's insights reflected official discourse on nationality and the intersection between familial laws and the state's promotion of marriage within the boundaries of a nation to address demographic concerns (Al-Khateeb, 2007) and national population concerns to preserve moral and social norms (Assaf, 2018). This social-policy promotion, I argue, is also an important way of shaping the type of family and the subjects who serve the nation, strengthen the social fabric and ensure citizens' submission, belonging to the nation, being trusted in peace or war, and on secret information. De Bel-Air *et al.* (2019; p. 10) told us that marrying foreigners is one of the "destabilizing factors and is universally decried as social and political threats, a

menace to the ‘community’” cohesion. Building on Jamieson’s (2011), I argue that this deployment of marriage within national citizens may be recognised as having a qualitative difference when demonstrating intimacy compared with intra-marriage with no-citizens as national closeness based on specific memories. What makes a successful marriage are a homogeneity, proximity and social distance, which allow love to develop between spouses and secure a lifelong relationship (Assaf, 2018). From the participants’ point of view, homogeneity means other nationals, but not too far away in terms of their tribal background.

Further, as part of a national building project, in 2004, the government promoted the use of medical tests to control the risk of hereditary disorders—especially between close kinship *Ibn ‘amm* and cousins—and transmittable diseases (AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis). Both spouses must undergo the test before signing the marriage contract. Although positive results may not postpone marriage, the decision is left to spouses and their families (Health Guide for Pre-marriage Medical Test, 2015). These tests would work on reducing the number of marriages between close kinship. As De Bel-Air *et al.* (2019) state, tribal groups of kinship may distract or weaken national cohesion. As kinship tends to support their kinsman at any cost to save face, it may compete with others’ rights and contradict justice and equality between national citizens (as will be clarified in Chapter 6). Therefore social policy is designed to connect citizens with various groups in the national state. This strategy according to Lawler (2014) aims to mask power differentials and to end political injustice in terms defined by the group (in this case different tribal groups) and replace it with the recognition of identity in terms of territory, and all are equally worthy.

While exogamy offers more options for spouses, marriage outside the tribe is an exception that may depend on the compatibility of the spouses’ family status. Muhannad touched upon the

crucial issue of '*nasab*' as 'an idiom' loaded with meaning related to individual kinship relations and to a larger scale of genealogical ordering of people. The term *nasab* refers to proximity (*qarabah*), through descent affiliation that justifies inclusion and exclusion, and *nasab* with marriage alliance is a form of legally recognised kinship that defines categories of parentage as an ethical and religious obligation (e.g., inheritance, alimony) (Leader, 2015). What would then appear from this narrative is that insistence on a compatible tribe invokes tropes of social hierarchy identity as part of family's rhetoric. This confirms Maisel's (2014), Samin's (2012) and Al-Khteeb's (2007) argument that tribe remains most prominent in marriage, exhibiting the continued responses of kinship as identity markers of authentic culture, and stands in sharp contrast with other identity representations, such as regional identity. Maisel (2014) explained that in Saudi Arabia, tribe does not refer to lifestyle (pastoralism and sedentary agriculture); it is based on descent maintained by endogamy. Maisel (2014) indicated that, even though noble families are partly detached from their ordinary tribesmen, they still pride themselves in having a noble origin, and they are able to produce a historical narrative. This would justify Saudis' interest as other Arabs in genealogical family tree (*shajaraht nasab*) (Barakat, 1993) and the popularity of genealogical books in Saudi Arabia. This narrative would explain families' resistance to intra-marriage from other compatible tribes from other regions because the closer members are known. It should be considered that this does not mean intra-marriage between different tribes does not exist, but to build such a relationship, the family goes for deep investigation about families involved in new lines of *nasab* to determine their compatibility.

Whereas these participants adopted the rhetoric of bridging relations with other tribes across the country, they were questioning marrying down to *Khadirie* (unrecognised tribal families). This clearly points to genuine divisions between the innate endogamy that exists in Saudi Arabia and

that of *Qabieli* and *Khadirie*²⁷ (Maisel, 2014; Al-khateeb, 2007). Compatible two tribal lineage (*Kafā'a fi nasab*) has become an issue of sometimes bitter contention within Saudi Arabia, being frequently discussed and debated among religious scholars, social scientists, journalists, and participants in internet forums alike (Samin, 2012; Maisel, 2014). Wafa and Muna reflected on this issue:

One of my friends said, “I told my husband that if my daughter is asked by *Khadirie* and he has good qualifications, his behaviour is good, his reputation is good, I will accept. You will not have a say. I do not care about your family, my family or other people, either. I will stand with her to process the marriage.” In our society, people are oppressed because of the matters of *Qabieli* and *Khadirie*. If a girl’s hand is being asked for by a drug addict who does not have qualifications, he is unsuccessful; yes, he is *Qabieli*.
(Wafa, 33-year-old, single woman)

The tradition of some families does not allow daughters to marry unless the prospective husband is from certain families. As long as I like the person, based on what the Prophet says, when someone comes to ask for your daughter’s hand and you approve of his religiosity and behaviour, you allow him to marry your daughter’. (Muna, 27-year-old, married woman)

Wafa, and Muna talked about the issue of compatible *nassab* in marriage between *Qabieli* and *Khadirie* and how *nassabs* are exclusively valued over other criteria for *kafa'a*, such as

²⁷ This divide used to be reflected in political and economic positions in the Arabian Peninsula. It was a divide on occupation as there were certain jobs that were stereotyped as unsuitable for *qabīlī*, such as carpentry, butchering, and blacksmithing (Al-Khateeb, 2007).

religiosity, education and personal traits of spouses. Wafa understood that being tribal means enjoying prestige and compensating for the absence of other capitals. In several famous cases, courts without a codified personal status law have annulled marriages between spouses of distinct tribal origins upon the appeals of their families (Maisel, 2014). A jurisprudential principle that espouses is necessary at times to ‘avoid greater harm by abandoning lesser benefit’, on the basis of which the compatibility of lineage as a condition for marriage might be acceptable (Samin, 2012). Limbert (2007) indicated that the notion of *kaf’a* invokes that old and familiar social categories are introduced to build peer consensus, even if the issues at stake are more delicate and complex. Increasing demonstrations of tribal brides have been criticised by religious authorities and citizens. They asserted instead the egalitarian ideal of religious piety and equality among believers, where they make reference to religious texts (Qur’anic verses such as 49:13: ‘We have created you male and female, and made you nations and tribes, that you may come to know one another. Verily, the most honourable among you in the sight of God is the most righteous’) for the privilege of a community of believers. However, their discussion of lineage compatibility in marriage has been characterised by their tendency to stick to their existing attitudes regarding family and conserving social practices for stability (Maisel, 2014).

The focal point on *nasab* as a social capital is not inscribing inequality or ways to overcome them though. Maisel’s (2014), Al-Gazami’s (2009), and Anthias’ (2007) understanding of social capital can be located in Ibin Kholdoon’s ‘*assabiyah*’ framework (for Maisel and Al-Gazami) and the Durkheimian (for Anthias) tradition of the construction of community and the ability to produce solidarity. Maisel (2014) indicated that tribal identification is based on their nobility of lineage, which symbolises their adherence to specific social values and acceptance of a specific code of behaviour. Relating *nasab* here to origins does not suggest that biological and physical

aspects as the principal focus of kinship determining heredity. According to Maisel (2014), *nasab* focuses on the way one's origin influences the behaviour and attitudes required for solidarity and backup in times of hardship. As Anthias (2007, p. 791) puts it, "the perennial problem of social relations. Or 'the ties that bind'".

Looking at marriage ties in terms of their ability to produce solidarity, Anthias (2007) differentiated between bonding and bridging social capital, focusing on trust and reciprocity. Bonding ties are identification with social ties articulated through the homogeneity of values. Whilst bridging ties are associational ties and related to loose-knit solidarity ties that articulate shared interests by those who belong to different groups (Anthias, 2007). Applying Anthias' (2007) thought on endogamous marriage negates the most exclusionary boundary formation. Being tribal means the adherence to specific social values. Whereas, as Anthias (2007, p. 791) explained, bridging ties denotes a fixed boundary between existing bonds in a group, which then would become 'essentialist in as much as the boundaries between bonding and bridging may be flexible'. This is because there is always an essentialist problem related to who the group is, and inclusion and exclusion (Anthias, 2007). By this logic, bridging the relation in marriage would lead essentially to looser association between close kin solidarity ties. This means weakening solidarity by including people outside of the kin relation into a kin relation that contradicts familial tribal precise of tracing genealogy.

In examining tribes' mode of organisation regarding its political and social context, Maisel (2014) posited that tribes in Saudi Arabia stand in sharp contrast with religious establishments, and they do not use religion as the main identification. They use the old dichotomy, or a better 'love-and-hate' relationship' between Bedouin and the sedentary (Maisel, 2014, p. 105). Even under state law, both *Qabيلي* and *Khadir* are conjoined; the main distinction between the

groups is the nonexistence of marriage relations, as the family governs by tribes' customary law (Maisel, 2014).

As the discussion in this section revealed that the negotiation of compatibility in marriage does not separate from being relational, the next section will elaborate on divorce and the difficulty of making a decision about divorce because of the possible loss of familial connection.

4.5. Divorce

Whereas the marriage narrative has highlighted that spouses' relationships becoming more joined and less separated was dominant in participants' narrative, this is not a denial of undergoing changes in marital relations, the divorce narrative will help in characterising and contextualising the nature of spouses' relationships, and gender power relations have not disappeared in the first sub-section. The second sub-section will broaden the analysis into the context of interrelation between families. Amal and Sahad were the only two participants who had experienced divorce and shared their narratives. However, divorce as a theme came up in the observation of society by participants like Fahad and Wafa.

4.5.1 Divorce narrative and quality of relationship between spouses

Anthropological works on divorce in Saudi Arabia such as Al-Khateeb (2009), AL-Remaih (2011), Ibin-Mahfooz (2012), Al-Siaf (2015) and Muhammad (2018) have underlined the high rates of divorce. Although the frequency of divorces is not new, its rate may be considered a public problem. Divorce rates may be even higher nowadays. The latest statistics published by

the General Authority for Statistics indicated that for 150,117 marriage contracts, there were 57,595 divorce certificates reflecting a gradual increase of 12.7% from 2019 when there had been 137,913 marriage contracts and 51,125 (General Authority for Statistics, 2022). Fahad, a male participant, was interested in the following marriage and divorce rates in Saudi Arabia. He indicated that the divorce rates in the country have reached as high as 6,000 a month, and about 50%–70% of the total number of marriage cases end up in divorce in big cities, such as Riyadh and Jeddah. He believed the reason behind this was that couples were stubborn:

If you are against my idea or if you do not agree with me, I am not obliged to care about you. For example, when spouses have a problem, such as problems we hear today that are funny: she supports one football team, and he supports another and one of the teams loses, it becomes a marriage crisis, and the couple divorces.

Fahad was frustrated with the increasing divorce rate due to contradictory desires, self-obsession, and the fact that spouses are not prepared to put up with relationships that do not work out. Sahad, a 33-year-old divorced woman, took Fahad's observation further in suggesting that divorce reflects the high importance of the quality of intimacy sought between spouses.

Now, in young people's minds, it [marriage] is a companionship. If you were not a good partner, why I should carry on? In our generation, your family builds you. You are independent. In the previous, a mother was not working, so she felt that her husband was responsible for her and her children. She was not able to go out. She did not have her income, so independence was lost in that generation. She cannot return to her family. [. . .]

Sahad evoked a view of marriage as a partnership in a mutually beneficial relationship between spouses, and if the partner does not perform his/her role effectively, spouses do not hesitate to end their relationship. Sahad draws our attention to the impact of women's work on their confidence. This insight echoes Al-Khateeb's (2007) observation of changes in women's status in Saudi society that, due to women's work and financial independence, women's true selves are not only defined based on being a wife. Muhammad (2018) and Al-Siaf (2015) conducted local studies on divorce and indicate, not allowing spouses to see each other before marriage, different cultural expectations of spouses' role, social incompatibility between spouses, and family interference in spouses' business are among the triggers of divorce (Muhammad, 2018).

In addition, improving the status of women, however, does not come with a change in the social view of femininity and masculinity (as elaborated on in the next sub-section) (Muhammad, 2018; and Al-Siaf, 2015). Drawing on insights from section 4.3., I argue that changes in women's status does not lead to changes in womanhood and gender roles in society. Muhammad (2018) argued that it is too simplistic to view divorce as a rational calculation of spouses' weighing of the benefits of carrying on the marital relationship. This seems to resonate with participants' negotiation in the previous sections. However, this does not mean that stability in marital relationships has necessarily featured in the past. It is more sensible to interpret divorce as 'a continuous commitment to family-type arrangements but with some modification of what counts as 'family', or as leading to the end of 'the family' as a pervasive ideal' (Jamieson, 1998; p. 41). Fahad and Sahad spoke pejoratively about the spouses' relationship, bringing to an end responsibility and obligation to others. However, it could be that Fahad and Sahad's visions of gender role arrangement are implicated in their vision of the future of spouses' relationships. This is especially true, as it was evident too for most participants in the last section, as they

indicated intimacy is intertwined and expressed through practical arrangements of gender division of labour. It is the persistence of the notion of the man being the main breadwinner and the woman being the main houseworker/carer. Thereby, failure to fully avoid this belief distorts spouses' efforts to find a balance in practical caring. A view of the balance that does not simply tolerate a gap between ideal and real arrangement is stuck with resentment. It is worth reiterating that instability in spouses' relationships does not necessarily mean a constant individuation of the self.

The divorce narrative is preoccupied with an individualist tone as an extension of improving women's status by advancing their education, work and recently, women have enjoyed more legal recognition in terms of initiating legal tidying up (*khlea*)²⁸, their rights for custody of their children, and regulating a husband's rights to divorce (draw out *talaq*) without women being informed. Divorce was not an easy experience for women such as Amal and Sahad, who were highly educated women who obtained their Master's degrees and currently work. The experience was tough for them emotionally and psychologically. However, they got through the experience of divorce with the support of their families, as indicated in their stories:

The experience was painful for me, and I hardly overcame it. I overcame it by keeping myself busy with work, research, and reading and my family was supportive. My relatives and the surrounding people looked sympathetically at me, especially because I rejected any suitors who asked for my hand for 10 years after the divorce, and they still believed that I was envied. (Amal, 32-year-old divorced woman)

²⁸ If a woman does not like to live with her husband, she has a right granted by *Sariah* to restore to *qazi* (Judge) to end the marriage.

I married, and then I divorced. This affected me at that moment. [...] psychological pressure; at some stage, you escape it, of course, if your family supports you. Many women view divorce as the end of their lives or as something fateful that ends their life.

(Sahad, 33-year-old divorced woman)

Amal and Sahad told us that divorce is not easy for women because it involves transgression and results in a loss of status. These insights confirm studies conducted on divorced Saudis, such as Saleh and Luppigini (2017), Ibin-Mahfooz (2012), and AL-Remaih (2011). These studies argued that divorced women experience regret and remorse, an emotional vacuum, lack of confidence and depression because of unhappy feelings related to the decision of divorce. These scholars told us that it is widely believed within Saudi society that divorced women are stigmatised and held responsible for the divorce. Amal and Sahad discussed this issue as being true for some women in society:

I think it is a tradition inherited in these families that stigmatises women for being divorced because they do not obey her husband. So, people pass around this reputation about her. And there are families who are tough because of their view that a man has the right to everything. Whenever a woman complains or asks for divorce for good reasons, the divorce request cannot be tolerated.

Sahad observed that:

Some girls feel that divorce is something that is insulting for them. Their surrounding people view a divorced woman as mistaken or as having done something to cause the divorce. There are some families who view divorce as a big matter that affects your reputation.

Amal and Sahad informed us that the pressure that they encounter from their families and the social stigmatising of divorced women because of divorce are associated with shame and family honour. Al-Siaf (2015) argued that sociocultural socialisation conveyed approval of women's gender roles to be dependent and to tolerate a husband's bad temper, which has powerful effects on feminine self-mastery (Chapter 5 and 6 will focus more on femininity and masculinity constructions). The construction of femininity and masculinity still has an impact on charging women as responsible for divorce in Saudi society despite the rise in women's education and work and the improvement of women's status, whereas society tolerates divorced men (Al-Siaf, 2015, AL-Remaih, 2011). Saleh and Luppicini (2017) indicated that because divorced women may bring shame to their families, families attempt to control women's behaviour and urge their daughters to remarry. Some divorcees also find it convenient to remarry to overcome social stereotypes and save their families' reputations (Saleh and Luppicini, 2017; Ibin-Mahfooz, 2012; EL-Hadad, 2003).

The association between stereotyping divorced women and shame may correspond with the value of the honour complex that constructs a standard for women's worth in terms of natural passion. Divorced women without men are not under marital control. Thereby, as Abu-Lughod (1986; p. 133) told us, "women described as being like men are women without men. One divorcée who refused to consider remarriage was teased about being like a man". This would be related to limiting birth outside of a legitimate marriage, especially for young women, whereas for women who are postmenopausal, their sexuality is divorced from reproduction, enabling them to be more independent. But I would also add that this issue still exists, especially with the availability of birth control methods, since divorced women have probably lost their virginity

and hence are not worried about it. Sahad believes that some divorced women could not live by themselves:

There is still social pressure, although the law does not ban you, but we socially cannot. It is still unacceptable in our tradition for a woman to live on her own. Your family is responsible for you. For young men, it is normal for them to make their own decisions.

Sahad spoke to the social and moral norms that kept women under the supervision of family; within this context, the cultural meaning of adulthood is still defined by marriage (Al-Khateeb, 2007; Singerman, 2011; De Bel-Air *et al.*, 2019). As Singerman (2011, p.74) pointed out, in the context of Arab culture, “a girl becomes a woman when she is married, whether she is sixteen or sixty”. Sahad indicated that being “single” is an issue in a society, even though the law does not ban women from independent accommodation.

Indeed, according to EL-Hadad (2003), this familial endeavour in Gulf countries to control women’s behaviour or to bring them back to live under the same roof is not fixed. Ibin-Mahfooz (2012) and Al- Khateeb (2009) stated that the social stigmatising of divorced women has become less serious in Saudi society than in the past. This is because, according to Ibin-Mahfooz (2012) and Al- Khateeb (2009), women work financially independently and have the ability to bear responsibility for childcare. Therefore, some divorced women are satisfied with caring for their children alone and living on their salaries and remaining unmarried (EL-Hadad, 2003). This has led to the appearance of single-headed families composed of mothers and their children. Wafa, a female participant who worked directly with divorced women as part of her postgraduate studies, recalled her observations. She observed that many divorced women and widows were satisfied with being single and living in independent accommodation away from their families, even

though they did not have children and relied on their salaries. What would make a difference between Sahad's experience and Wafa's observation is that a family's tendency to control their divorced women is a matter of diversity of family class and would be more related to whether women having children and financial resources would justify more women's independence, especially if they have children because motherhood is honourable.

However, we should not only negatively look at divorce as only gendered. In the next section, Amal and Sahad explore the issue of divorce and losing family relations.

4.5.2 The impact of divorce on family relations

Amal and Sahad told us that it was not easy to decide to end their marital relationships because they hinted that the issue was related to their families. Amal and Sahad put it, respectively:

I took such a long time—about two years—before committing to any decision. When I got divorced, it was the moment when my feelings were the most important. People do not regard divorce easily as a matter of harmony between spouses. I spent a long time abandoning myself and considering my family. I did not want to hurt their feelings.

Even though Amal and Sahad were financially independent, divorce was a tough experience because they view themselves as relational. Jamieson (1998) told us that the context of family relations as a connection between families and the consolidation of social fabric. Thus, divorce indicates a loss in kinship relations between the two families of spouses and those of any children. This would be reasonable in the case of participants' narratives, as they remarked that early marriage is a shared family matter between the spouses' families. This would lead Amal and Sahad to take a long time to think about divorce and the potential disruption of the familial fabric. This would be chronologically reasonable, especially for Amal, as the recognised

marriage in her family is Ibn'amm marriage. This can explain the common tendency observed in the Saudi society. People increasingly do not prefer to marry close relatives because any dispute between spouses undermines the family and relatives' harmony.

Summary

The aim of this chapter has been to provide a narrative of marriage and divorce in Saudi Arabia. The participants in this study engaged actively in a process of marriage and divorce, as it suited their aspiration. Their experience did not fit within the narrative of a 'lack of agency' of free choice of love marriage implied by the Western assumption about subjectivity and the nuclear family as an ideal family structure. They actively embraced the idea that for 'love' to be heard, it must be built on non-verbal shared memory, commitment, mutual trust between spouses, and acknowledging of others' demands (e.g., family preference and caregiving arrangement of children).

Although the family was featured strongly in participants' narratives, they were critically engaged in negotiating what was wrong with current views of family. They rely on their religious capital to negotiate their wish to see their prospective spouses. Although the participants viewed the Islamic perspective of compatibility between spouses as more just than customary law, the contradiction was not resolved because the participants' narratives highlighted the fact that marriage is related to other people as well as spouses and contradicts being relational to family and members of tribal groups. Such a narrative is achieved through working with scripts that regulate gender relations and their cultural types of inclusion and exclusion. This highlighted the coexistence of intimacy and relationality to family. The following chapters are devoted to the

pleasure and issue experience as being relational. The next chapter focuses issues experienced by women outside the domestic sphere.

Chapter Five: Sexuality, Gender and Modesty: Negotiating of Work and Present in Public Places

5.1. Introduction

The framing of Saudi women's respectability and responsibility are themes that I will discuss throughout this chapter. I will provide participants' narratives interwoven with a historical analysis that frames womanhood through a wider discourse of nationalism, sexuality and social capital. I will show how working women and women in general became a symbol of national honour. I will argue that attention should be given to the diminutions of 'classed femininity' and that the history which constitutes women subjects can provide insight into the mechanisms of social capital, pleasure and pain that have informed Saudi women's views.

This chapter considers how Saudi women inhabit socio-cultural norms in their negotiation of their wishes, expanding their opportunities to access social, economic and political resources. Section 5.2. discusses how Saudi women have been positioned as both within 'fixed womanhood' and honourable, which informs their status as caring and respectable subjects as explained in sections 5.3 and 5.4. These sections will discuss how particular social and cultural legacies were framed and continue to inform women's positions, thus allowing social regulation to be achieved willingly by women.

This chapter builds extensively on the women participants' narratives about transcending their domestic position as well as the men participants' insights about where it is appropriate to highlight male awareness of how positioning women as the core of moral order closed their aspirations for existing beyond the domestic sphere for work, study and their appearance in public places general.

5.2. Women's responsibility and respectability

This section will discuss the economic and socio-political aspects that have shaped the public/private gender divide in Saudi Arabia and that represent women as the core of moral order for society. When women narrated their experiences joining the labour market, they offered views, which were framed by historical concerns about their social capital, citizenship and gender.

5.2.1. Defining appropriate feminine jobs

Cultural values that define what Saudi women should and should not do prevent Saudi women's career development (Al-Asfour *et al.*, 2017; Al-Subaie and Jones, 2017). In the interviews, female participants, such as Latefahh, Eman, Amal, Sarah, Muna and Salma, expressed sentiments about society's preference for 'feminine jobs' for women and how it leads to limiting women's work to contexts like teaching to allow them to maintain a work/life balance. Latefahh, a 25-year-old, makeup artist and woman, said:

We must all be like each other. We are all copies. We all have the same jobs. You do not have any opportunity as a female; you can be a teacher or nothing. Even doctors—society rarely accepts women as doctors.

The other type of employment that encourages gender-mixing is considered by the society as less appropriate for women because it affects their status and respectability. Eman, a 27-year-old unemployed woman, said:

Social status depends on your work. If she is a doctor or in university or a teacher, [she] occupies a great career. There are other careers that you can do, but they don't have status. Unless there is money; its [the job] income is big deal. Social status becomes your identifier. In your community, if you and the other girls are in the same place, are you all

at the same level? When you say [X], a student at university or doctor at university, unlike the other girls, for example, who work in malls or restaurants.

Latefah and Eman touched on the nature of Saudi society's preferred work for women. Teaching jobs have always been associated with women's respectability because of its nature as an extension of a caregiving role. Women have been excluded (though there have been changes here) from other types of jobs in the labour market that were delimited through associations of non-respectability. The two normative references which Eman evoked, which were status (or moral distinction) and professional success, "can only be considered as pertinent insofar as they are linked to family reputation" (Le Renard, 2014, p. 63). A respectable profession according to Eman is a job that most contributes to the family's prestige among the upper echelons of Riyadh society, an observation that echoes Le Renard (2014). This hints at the possible ways of negotiating within families about practices that would be considered as a respectable change.

In contrast, associating women's work with morality is probably related to social assumptions about an ideal gender-role divide with women as the caregiver and men as the breadwinners. Khalifa *et al.* (2018) argued that a woman's worth in Saudi Arabia is tied to her conformity to being a wife and mother. Based on her empirical work on the parent–youth transition to adulthood project in Saudi Arabia, Khalifa *et al.* (2018) explain that girls are expected to do household chores and cook as preparation for their role as married women, with the project giving the impression that this preparation gains women respect from their husbands. Women are also taught to aspire to marriage as early as possible and refrain from being ambitious, attending college or pursuing a doctoral degree, as this contradicts their expected future roles as mothers and wives (Khalifa *et al.*, 2018).

According to Salma, these cultural norms and expectations work to educate women to relinquish work for domesticity by conditioning them to enjoy this role, which illustrates using pleasure as a form of productive power, and I argue that this is undeniably central to women's insights in the rest of this section. Skeegs (1997) invites us to think through pleasure of domesticity and notice that women present themselves as acquiescent rather than constructed by regulation of social policy (or, I would say also religious and familial 'patriarchy' as understood by Western feminists). This ideal role has also been valuable because it gives women a particular moral significance and responsibility, which has captured the public in Saudi Arabia who say that women are half of society if not the whole society. Motherhood and domesticity are not a lesser status than other roles outside the domestic sphere due to the fact that women give birth to, nurture and raise the next generation. For instance, the Arabic poem by Hafiz Ebrahim captured this: *Alum madrasah eza aadadtaha aadat shaba tauib alaraqi* (mother is school if you prepared her, you prepared a solid nation). Motherhood and moral teachings are believed in Saudi society to be solutions to national social order. Expectations about motherhood still persist according to Salma's and Sarah's articulations.

My mother viewed marriage as a dream of each girl. (Salma, 26-year-old married woman)

Sarah, a 32-year-old married woman, said, too:

You have to get married at a specific age. You should study at first, and when you finish your Bachelor's degree... in my family, you have to finish your Bachelor to get married. You have to get married if you have the chance.

Motherhood has been constantly raised by society (to define and legitimise whether women should work and become active members in society) against the government's effort to enrol women in the labour market to replace foreign workers in sustaining the economy of the Kingdom (Al-Munajjed, 1997). Defining an appropriate role of domestic responsibility became the focus of attention by the government as it sought to encourage women's involvement in the development of the country as long as women's work does not contradict *Sharia*, arguing instead that if women are prevented from working, that contradicts *Sharia*. Therefore, women's job availability was limited to 'caring' occupations, as Latefah and Eman articulated. The centrality of women's work on teaching would be due to widespread investment in women's education, especially in human science and religious studies (Al-Munajjed, 1997), and I would also argue it was caused by family preference for teaching over other caring jobs, such as nursing and medical positions, even though these jobs are available (see Section 5.3).

However, it is important to note that the context of associating women with 'caring' is not simply based on women's compassion, the gender division of emotion, and motherhood as important feature for secondary women status as understood by Chodorow (1978). What derived from this universality of mothering is the understanding that a family model of care—in Western feminist understanding—became an appropriate framework for social policy and inequality between genders, including limiting women to caring professions and their male counterparts to high-tech, managerial jobs, resulting in the high salaries, status and power going to men. It should be noted that work regulation in Saudi Arabia does not discriminate against women, but to process women for jobs, it must be evident that there will be no conflation between work and family (women were required to obtain permission from a male guardian until 2019) (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Al-Torki, 2000). According to Al-Munajjed, (1997) and Al-Torki (2000)

maintaining male guardians' permission to process women for jobs and education is due to the fact that the state has a contract with the tribes to keeping families under the ruling of family law (refer to Chapter 4), while the government takes on the role of modernising the country. Therefore, female enrolment in the labour market has varied based on familial status and position on female work and morality, which impacts the acceptance of families for women enrolment in other 'caring' jobs, such as a medical care jobs, as the next-sub section explains. It is also important to note that the reason teaching has been constructed as a respectable job is that schools and universities in Saudi Arabia are gender-segregated, so the absence of sexuality is involved in gendering the division of labour. It should be clear that association of idealising motherhood with women doing respectable work such as teaching is not caused by a circular hypothesis that women are more relationally orientated than men (Joseph, 1999a; Spelman, 1988). This explanation of gender identity, as argued by Spelman (1988), does not acknowledge how class and ethnic identity are inseparable. Assigning women 'caring' roles, although it builds on the virtue of biological difference, is derived from the notion that men are considered the breadwinners and women are considered mothers and housewives—as approved by *Sharia*, social norms and local tradition (Al-Munajjed, 1997).

Al-Ruwaitea (2014) suggests that the meaning of femininity/masculinity does not involve sex, which differs from gender; the former is related to biological differences, whereas the latter is associated with social roles internalised by people throughout the socialisation process. This discrepancy is related to gender identity and suggests that men and women should ideally take on different 'caring' roles. Society socialises males to behave in a way that reflects assertiveness and toughness, whereas females are instructed to reflect nurturance and tenderness (Al-Siaf,

2015; Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). Socialisation, according to participants Fahad and Wafa, has powerful effects on how masculinity is asserted against femininity to bolster masculine self-mastery and confine women to domestic roles. According to Fahad, socialisation conveys the ideal role of gender:

Men are associated with hardness, whereas women are associated with softness and emotions. Men's nature is bravery (*h'amesh*). When they were little, they are taught that their nature is precisely to defend and that they are fully depended on. This makes women independence difficult. But what is wrong is that men do not help women in their independence. Men want to be dominant. Everything requiring their permission. (Fahad, 27-year-old man)

Fahad touched upon how honour closely defines the roles and the transactions between men and women. He indicated that honour for men lies in embodying traditional masculine virtues to be defending, while women's honour lies in fulfilling traditional feminine virtues through nurturing and being tender. As Fahad explained in the interview, due to sexual differences, society treats men and women differently, labelling women as emotionally weak and unable to be independent. Viewing men as 'defenders', according to Fahad, leads men to ruthlessly deny female independence to assert their identity. Wafa, a female participant, spoke clearly of the difficulties that men experienced in the past when their women worked because it reflected poorly on them as being failures as providers.

What will people say about us? A girl couldn't go and come; it was acceptable ['Ayb]. 'Ayb was strong. I'm a man. They will say, "She has a man. Why does she go work? I'm responsible for spending money on her". (Wafa, 33-year-old government employee, woman)

Wafa told us that this social construction of masculinity and femineity has two dual aspects – a successful man provides for a woman, so that she does not have to work, which is a “success” (husband-enabled) for her. Respectability in this sense affects men and women in intricate ways. Kabesh (2013) indicated that male gender role expectations created strains on men; being dependent is seen as humiliating and shameful and should always be fended off. According to Cohen-Mor (2013) there is a persistent anxiety that a man will be seen as inferior to a woman because masculine self-mastery is related to preserving honour and saving face, which Chapter 6 will discuss in depth.

Although Islam gives capacity for men and women means that women are compelled to submit, capacity is a matter of responsibility, whereby the greater the capacity the greater the responsibility that the individual has to fulfil (Wadud, 2005). Kandiyoti (1988) indicated that because women are given rights in accordance with Islam, they are cared for and valued in marriage emotionally and financially, and in the case of divorce, women and children should have appropriate financial support. As indicated in AlNisaa (4: 34), “men are the protectors and maintainers of women because God has given the one more (strength) than the other and because they support them for their means”. While men’s responsibility is normally to protect women (Kandiyoti, 1988).

The belief system within Islam tells us that men and women are different but complementary to one another. Based on this principle, Kabesh (2013) argued that respect between men and women is earned based on duties fulfilment. Therefore, men and women’s relationships (in family life, marriage and in the community) should be based on obligation. “Balance” should guide the rights and duties of men and women through Islamic discourse; however, duties take precedence over rights. Chronologically then, men and women are members of the human

community, and therefore, their struggle for integrity (self-jihad), honesty and responsibility as well as to overcome internal desires and needs is a mutual endeavour. Thus, being complementary is essential for the social order (Kabesh, 2013).

Islam accords the fact that men are “stronger”, which means that women are compelled to submit to men because the latter grant alimony. Hence, patriarchal domination over women at the domestic level is reinforced at the state level because it competes with traditional and social structures for people’s loyalty (Al-Torki, 2000). Therefore, men lean on women to master their masculinity, reinscribing gender disparities that affect the discourse on involving women in the public sphere (Wadud, 2005; Kandiyoti, 1988). As Wadud (2005, p.184) put it, “the moral agent is conceived as a metaphysical reality for both women and men but not the basis of social agency [that] was restricted to the male person”. The nexus, as Kabesh (2013) mentioned, is not about power, but it cannot be denied that men invest in power. The part of the struggle for self-mastery takes place through actual women’s assault; Sami depicted that the complexity of relatedness necessitates a responsibility to his wife but leads a man to struggle to acknowledge that the other, ‘his wife’, has different thoughts and wishes (Kabesh, 2013). Sami said:

Because in Islam, men guard women, you see that a woman does not have the freedom to do as she wishes. (Sami, 27-year-old married man)

Sami indicated that being a protector prevents a man from recognising women’s different wishes—and rights granted by Islam—because a man wants to demonstrate his commitment to avoid shame. Cohen-Mor (2013) attributed many dark sides of men’s behaviour and raising inscribing to Islamic movements to regain control over families and women as a coping strategy for men whose masculinity is insecure. But I want to argue that economic wealth consolidated

domesticity to women and limited their participation in the public sphere. Al-Rasheed (2013) and Al-Torki (2000) wrote that after the initial period of state formation and uncertain initial development (1953–1970) due to oil discovery, the state introduced public services, such as substantial infrastructure and commercial, financial and administrative services, which strengthened the global market economy (Al-Torki, 2000). The labour market was not able to integrate women due to their lack of skills, as most women were only educated in literature or religion. The oil wealth diminishes the need for women's salaries to support the family because the oil industry provided men with high monthly wages. This wealth has confirmed men's status as the provider and their wives as the recipients of financial support (De Bel-Air *et al.*, 2019; Al-Rasheed, 2013).

The association for women between domesticity and respectability and for men between the economic provider role and respectability was further consolidated when women of the salaried middle class were able to employ foreign domestic workers (e.g., maidservants, baby-sitters) (Al-Khateeb, 1998). This resulted in freeing women from their traditional roles (household chores, cooking, nurturing children) and solidifying the idea that their husbands had satisfied their needs. Hence, female domesticity became a symbol of wealth and moral standing (Al-Rasheed, 2013).

Although there have been cases where women delay marriage, as was made clear in Chapter 4, societal preference for early marriage is related to the assumption about fertility and motherhood, especially if the couple have customary roles, with the women assuming greater responsibility for their homes and children and the men being the primary financial providers (Al-Asfour *et al.*, 2017; Al-Subaie and Jones, 2017). Both the male and female participants consistently note that men bear almost no responsibility within the home:

The economic side is the most important. He is responsible for accommodation and money, so we are able to live a good life. A mother is responsible for taking care of the kids, educating them and cooking for them. (Sarah, 32-year-old married woman)

Muhanad, a 28-year-old single man, also indicated that:

Usually, a woman has an emotional and caring role, and of course, there are some mothers who are bearing the responsibility of fathers. When a father died, or he was away for work. It is normal in our society that males always—I'm sorry—ignore the family side more than females do. Always, we see a father rely on his wife to nurture their children and care for them.

Sarah and Muhanad, and as the previous chapter highlighted, the female as much as male participants still harbour ideals about men being the breadwinners, with women fulfilling their obligations by becoming wives and mothers. Accordingly, men participants believe that women should not work, as the women view themselves as released from men's responsibility over expenses. Therefore, gender role arrangements granted as good relationship are compensatory of power imbalance. Although women experience a gender role divide and framed respectable job with doubt, women experienced motherhood with pleasure. This is reflected through women in this study preference for a feminine job where they can manage work–life balance. This is woman's view which I will explore in section 5.3. The following sub-section discusses how respectability is made more complex when the work environment is mixed gender.

5.5.2. Inappropriate feminine jobs

Amal, Eman, Sarah and Salma discussed how, even under the current economic circumstances of low job availability, their families still do not want them to work in a mixed-gender environment, unlike their male counterparts. In the women's words,

My sisters want these jobs, but they cannot work because these jobs are in mixed-gender workplaces. (Amal, 33 years old, academic woman)

My family does not allow me to work in a mixed-gender environment. I think hospitals are different from other mixed-gender places. They are public places where all people can go out and enter. It is different from any other mixed-gender places that are exclusive only to employees. (Eman, 27 years old, unemployed woman)

Everything is open to men. They aren't limited because of mixed-gender workplaces. They get a job wherever they want. We, the girls, our families do not accept mixed-gender workplaces, such as hospitals. Sometimes, our tradition holds us back in a nasty way, and this is why we don't have many job opportunities. (Sarah, 32 years old, unemployed woman)

Salma insisted on testing the stereotype about 'inappropriate' mixed-gender workplaces for women. She worked as a receptionist at a medical centre after graduation to kill time:

I honestly assumed they'd take advantage of me or they would view me as a bad girl. They always say mixed-gender environments are not suitable. In my family, this is unsuitable, not good and it is better to work somewhere is convenient than this job. My

father rejected it because he was honestly worried about me. My father said to me, ‘Are you in need so that you work? You’ll work from 1 P.M. to 10 P.M. Why?’ (Salma, 26 years old, unemployed woman)

Amal, Eman, Sarah and Salma’s narratives demonstrated the emotional politics of social capital, specifically the association of mixed-gender spaces with non-respectability, which has been a common context (cultural, economic and religious) specific to Saudi Arabia. The discussions with Muhanad and Latefah centre on honour (*Sharaf*) for women and how this strong force still hinders women’s work:

The jobs available to women in the past, as they embarrassingly put it, touches *Sharaf*. But sorry, in no way does it touch *Sharaf*. I see women oppressed regarding work. Until recently, society fought against women working as doctors and nurses. (Muhanad, 28 years old, government worker, man)

Latefah, a female participant, shared information about her mother’s work experience outside the domestic sphere as an interior designer. Her career was not successful, though she expressed her virtue:

[They noticed that] she worked with males. ... When she opened her shop, people humiliated her. Four years later, she responded to people’s judgment, and she closed her shop. She cannot withstand criticism, [...] especially if they talk about her *Sharaf*. It’s a big topic. (Latefah, 25 years old, makeup artist, woman)

From Latefah’s account, we can see that women internalise others’ gazes, which scrutinise their behaviour to pressure them to uphold the values of society. Although women in this study never suggested that *Sharaf* is exclusively linked to women’s sexuality, they spoke with

disappointment regarding society's different treatment of sexual misconduct with men and women. Eman expressed the following:

Preference for a boy over a girl— it has been this way until just recently. I see this as oppression against girls. Why are boys preferred? What are the differences between boys and girls? Boys are entitled to do anything? And boys do nothing wrong with this freedom? Islam does not say this. Boys are like girls. *Halal* is *Halal* [permissible], and *Haram* is *Haram* [forbidden]. We know that if a boy does something, they will forgive him. *He 'ma ya 'iba shay* [he does nothing wrong]. Many examples ... if a boy dates or loves a girl, the family will forgive him, but the girl may be killed. (Eman, 27 years old, woman)

Eman indicated that men are not stigmatised for sexuality, unlike women. According to Kabesh (2013) and Mernissi (2011), heterosexuality and virtue are critically essential in the value system of Arab culture. Women must be virtuous and held to moral order, while men are considered easily corruptible in terms of sexuality. The female body is the explanation given for segregation in mosques; women's bodies will distract men from prayer. It is men's inclination to be distracted that drives some priests to contend for wearing of the hijab (veil) and the chador (the all-out covering of the female body); without a doubt, the takeaway is that women must be modest.

Heterosexual relationships are not only important to domestic and sexual life but are also related to division of labour and resources (Sharma, 2008; Skeges, 1997). This is especially true when recalling religious and cultural discourse on women's significant role (as mother, daughter and sister) for conserving the family and social order in society. What is significant then about Muhanad and Latefah's narratives on the association between *Sharaf* and mixed workplaces for

women is that gender expectation has a disciplinary effect (Sharma, 2008). This was clearly true for Latefah's mother who internalised the fear of being judged by others. Sharma (2008) argued that policing others in relation to traditional masculine and feminine roles through scrutinization of one another's behaviours is a discourse and practice aimed at maintaining an order of normative masculinity and femininity. The fear of social judgment which Latefah mentioned highlighted shame as disciplinary and policing power to keep members of the society conform to socially ascribed gender role to save their face from criticism; a public aspect of honour which Chapter 6 will explore. More importantly, policing others reflects mutual responsibility of society members, which is a reflection of relationality.

Paradoxically, men are also lacking rationality when it comes to sexuality, so it is ironic that they require women to balance them out when women are supposed to be lacking rationality (Kabesh, 2013). Interconnected with this generally held view is the idea that women have to be modest and should not have desire and must be 'sexually passive'; however, they should be desired. Men can be 'sexually active' (Kabesh, 2013; Mernissi, 1991). This dichotomy of active/passive sexuality is rooted in Arab culture where women carry the bloodline of the family and men, as part of their masculinity, are the creator of the bloodline and defender of its purity (Cohen-Mor, 2013). According to Al-Ruwaitea (2014), in Arabic culture, people highly value the conservation of their genealogy (*asl*) and fight those who fight them. Jealousy of a family's *Sharaf* is the principle that controls the *asl*, where moral values are based on the pride of the *Sharaf* for men and for women. Chastity, courage, generosity and virtue—for men and women because insulting 'ird would cause a war—are all requirements for sovereignty and acquiring honour. This

sensitive aspect of *'ird* was well-known before Islam because collectivist nomadic societies²⁹ triggered war for women, killing them by burying them alive for fear of shame (*'iar*). Since then, the meaning of *'ird* has become equal to *Sharaf* and the important aspect of honour among women (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014).

Whereas Islam granted women rights to save their lives and prohibited killing women for fear of illicit sexuality, and the Qur'an demanded sexual purity for both men and women, *'ird* stays sensitive (Al-Munajjed, 1996). Abu-Lughod (1986) suggests that Islam adds to a negative view of sexuality because piety symbolises the most noteworthy aspect in every Muslim society and in arranging parts of sexuality. Eman spoke clearly about sexuality and virtue in Islam where accountability means both men and women must commit to sexual virtue and should avoid illicit sexuality outside marriage as a legitimate arrangement to keep their obligation to faith. In Eman's understanding, sexual commitment and scrutinising should be based on Islam's guidance of halal and haram, and this interest demonstrated her commitment to a heterosexual social order. To live out the morals and values of Islam in relation to sexuality is expected of both men and women, and for Eman because religion is not only a matter for the soul, but the body should also embed the sacred. Nevertheless, the wellspring of the power and guidance of this attitude is not based on the Islamic belief system but on the tribal social structure model related to patrilineal descent.

²⁹ Rabieah was the first tribe to kill a daughter because they were raided and the daughter was abducted by a prince. They brought her home after reconciliation. She was asked to choose between her father and the person who abducted her; she chose the latter. Her father got angry, as their inability to reply resulted in the loss of their honour. He then urged his family to kill his daughter by burying her alive. They did it for jealousy for their honour, fear of repeating the scenario and to conserve their honour, reputation and respect for others (Al-Alosi, 1857).

This connection between women's chastity and the honour of one's family, called '*ird*', is evidence of tribal and contemporary urban Arab practices that resist forces of change, e.g. adhering to Islam, urbanisation and education (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Dood, 1973). Al-Wardi (2018), Al-Ruwaitea (2014), and Abu-Lughod (1986) argued that Islam affirms the position of caring for women, and at the same time, Islam devalues sexuality outside the purpose of binding people together (marriage); therefore, Arabs interpret religious sources to be more appropriate for the female ideal that women should not desire but be desired by men to show respect for social order and support their epistemology of valuing paternal patriarchal structure ordering family. Abu-Lughod (1986) argued that the cultural ideology that women are morally inferior led to women being associated with the natural reproductive function that marks independence and self-mastery, as well as the femininity that naturally accompanies menstruation and sexuality. In the antithesis, the same value associated with women's fertility is contrasted with the positive value of fertility. The tribal system is organised around patrilineal bonds and solidarity, and the importance of affine and cognatic kinship are integral to tribal, social and economic segments that only grow by adding males to family lineage. Bearing children consolidates a woman's dependence on her husband as she will lose her children if she divorces or leaves him by her own choice (Abu-Lughod, 1986).

Respectability, then, relies on adjusting to both cultural norms of honour and religious modesty (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). According to Uskul *et al.* (2010), honour-based collectivism in society emphasises the public face of one's worth and protecting honour through positive presentation of one's and the group. Maintaining, losing and restoring honour involves the group. Sensitivity to '*ird*' has resulted in all of Saudi society being segregated, which keeps sex psychologically and

socially vivid symbolising the Saudi moral code of honour, though this has not been the in recent years (Al-Munajjed, 1996).

Women's bodies and appearance beyond the domestic sphere were the battlefield of the post-oil forces (Al-Rasheed, 2013; Al-Qahtani, 2012; Lacroix, 2010; Al-Gazami, 2005; Al-Torki, 2000).

On one hand, for women to enter the labour market it would involve freeing them from subordination and it would mean them becoming more similar to 'Western' women, while 'traditionalist' forces restrict them to being sexually conservative, as women are considered distractions to the social order, given men's fragility towards women and their sexuality, which inevitably leads to chaos (*fitna*) by driving them to illicit copulation (*zina*) (Mernissi, 2011).

Islamic scholars have, in turn, promoted a rigidity in legal definitions of gender boundaries. The *Sahwa* movement limited female participation in economic growth because such efforts would lead to similar social and sexual problems as those occurring in the EU and US (Al-Munajjed, 1996). Although in Islam, neither the Qur'an nor the Hadith (the Prophet Mohammad's sayings) indicate that women should be segregated from participating in public life; they only warn against mixing men and women (*ikhtilat*) because it would lead to seduction. *Ikhtilat* is prohibited when a man and a woman are left in private without a woman's male guardian (*mahram*). These examples illustrate that segregation did not originate with Islam (Mernissi, 2011; Al-Munajjed, 1996). Women's visibility in public was limited; fatwas required women to pay detailed attention to their appearance, protect themselves like jewels and gain a reputation for being educated and 'ideal' (the veil and abayah became the norm; Al-Rasheed, 2013).

In addition, I argue that wealth from the oil boom solidified women's segregation through the ability to subsidise gender-segregated public places, such as women's banks and universities (Al-Rasheed, 2013; Al-Torki, 2000) and segregation spread across various provinces over Saudi

Arabia. Al-Qahtani (2012) concluded in her research on women's work across three generations in Abha that with the development of Sahwah, as well as the development of the economy at\after the oil boom, segregation became the code of women including those who were in other regions which used to be more relaxed than Riyadh. Wealth suggests women's involvement in the so-called 'public' sphere of work would undermine not only their involvement in the 'private' sphere but also the foundation of the sphere—the family itself—which in turn weakens the cornerstone of society.

Against this background, women in the next section negotiate their wishes for work.

5.3 Women's negotiations of work

This section will discuss women's views on job obstacles and motivation to work.

5.3.1. Femininity and work–life conflict

Studies have found that society's expectations of Saudi women, including caring for their children, supporting their husbands and keeping the family intact, are challenging for Saudi working women (Al-Asfour *et al.*, 2017). Another study by Al-Subaie and Jones (2017) found that Saudi women considered their family responsibilities when deciding whether they should work outside the home. The family–work balance is a fundamental challenge for a Saudi woman looking for employment, as it relates to both motherhood (Al-Subaie and Jones, 2017) and household chores (Al- Asfour, 2017). These challenges also apply to the women of this study. Eman, 27 years old, housewife said:

I can't focus on more than one thing. If I was employed, all my time would be allocated for my work. I would come back tired and go to sleep. I would exclude my children from

my life. I witnessed many examples: My sisters and cousins ... My sister left her job. She could not complete it because it is exhausting. She would return home and cook and be responsible for her kids along with her job responsibility.

Eman felt that being a wife and mother were her fundamental roles in life and decided not to pursue education or a professional career to avoid burnout. Eman noticed that cultural norms surrounding the importance of caring for children conflicts directly with the changing norms regarding women's participation in the workforce. But even though she does not want to work, she feels the teaching profession "is good. [because] They [women] finish the school day with their children, especially if there is no baby at home."

Choosing to be a teacher, as Eman indicated, is another way in which these women are able to maintain their social status and family. Employment in education and other public-sector industries, where women can work for a limited time and take advantage of benefits, such as paid maternal leave, can make working as a mother easier. Another participant, Muna, aspires to a governmental job, which is unavailable to her. Although Muna sees jobs available in private companies, she would rather not take them:

Women's job chances here are not suitable for Saudi girls. I mean, for example, [the work] takes a long time, so I sacrifice my family, or I sacrifice myself. So, I prefer not getting a job. (Muna, 27 years old, unemployed)

When I asked Muna about the kind of job she felt suited women, she said:

Teaching is my ambition, and I am waiting for it. I'm waiting for a government job in teaching because its time is suitable to go and return home with my kids, and, at the same time, it is not gender mixed.

Eman and Muna want teaching jobs because of their potential to enable better management of various professional and personal responsibilities. Women's rationalisation goes beyond what was articulated above (e.g. teaching as a caring profession is more suited to women's nature). Rationalisation here refers to self-imposed limits on their opportunities, which allow them to maintain their most valuable role within the home: femininity as a cultural imperative that is just as important as economics. In line with Le Renard's (2014) argument, Saudi women in Riyadh did not view an unmixed environment as something they experienced as a constraint; it was actually preferred by their cohort over providing a mixed environment (work, leisure places). This view suggests a continuous investment on 'good womanhood'.

The opinions of the participants discussed in this section suggest that educating women combined with their ingraining their role as a wife and mother would help to produce women with traditional values of submission, which Foucault (1977) identifies as a form of power ineluctably bound to cultural discipline of the self whereby social regulation can be achieved willingly by the participants themselves. On the other hand, internalising being a wife and mother may result in limiting women's access to the job market and putting pressure on women, causing many to choose not to work at all or to choose to work in the public sector because family interaction is based on affection and mutual obligation, not justice as Chapter 4 demonstrated (Moghadam, 2003). Women's roles tend to be as caregivers while men's roles include being the sole breadwinner. From this position, women in the next subsection negotiate their job opportunities as a caring subject.

5.3.2. Women's desires for more job chances

Although women subscribe to femininity as a way of adapting to their circumstances, women in this study are more often asserting their wish to work, and do not want to recognise themselves as any of the categories of identification that were made available to them. Some of the women participants' negotiation for recognition now is a context-specific desire that arises from their access to education and increasing government support for women's political participation.

Muna, Sahad and Wafa summarised this sentiment as follows:

I saw my mother, my aunts and people who are older than me. They did not complete their education, and they were forced to live that life. [...] When someone completes their studies, they likely get cultured. They have their own money through which they could be independent of anything. (Muna, 27 years old, undergraduate, unemployed)

In our generation, your family builds you. You are independent. In the previous, a mother was not working, so she felt that her husband was responsible for her and her children. (Sahad, 34 years old, has a Master's degree, works in the private sector)

Sahad believes that since her mother was not educated, she was not able to be independent of her husband.

Women are educated, and their view about themselves is changed; their families also support them. (Wafa, 33 years old, has a Master's degree, government employee)

The opinions of women like Muna, Sahad and Wafa suggest that education opens the door for women's independence. These women wanted to be recognised as educated women, which they feel distinguishes them from their mothers. Ideal women in their mother's time were confined to

the home as a result of economic and social discursive relationships that are not related to permanent women identities. Muna's, Sahad's and Wafa's views are more informed by recent political support for women, which has impacted women's feelings on being able to change their fixed social position. Latefah said, "I feel there is someone [the government] empowering for young people and women". Similarly, Eman feels that government support for women "is enough to change families' perception sooner or later." According to Le Renard (2014, P162),

"[S]ince the family is experienced as the most significant source of limits to [women] mobility [...], young urban women invent themselves elsewhere, subject to other norms, through which they take on other statuses, other ways of belonging. While appropriating elements of the government's reform discourse, they contribute to delegitimizing public order founded on [...] the family order itself. Indeed, in using reform discourse to go beyond the limits they face, young urban women contribute to upholding it."

Refusal to be fixed historically appears to be a major feature of women's narrative, suggesting instability in the markers that define women in Saudi Arabia. When women were identified as honourable and not working, it was a category imposed on them that may not have been consistent with their own views, which confirms the impossibility of identity politics (Skeggs, 1997). With women having more access to education and with the government's support for women's participation in the workforce, the participants' reactions to change were complex. While many expressed the belief that men should be the breadwinner—as seen in the previous chapter—some felt that it was important for women to ensure their future security by becoming financially independent from their husbands (Moghadam, 2003). Some women's perceptions that their marriage was fragile and divorce was likely suggested their changing attitudes towards

adherence to the idea of exchanging obedience for protection in a typical patriarchal family. Eman, Munam and Latefah spoke of being able to rely on themselves and provide for their children, if necessary and worried that marriage and family would impede their independence; hence, they expressed a preference for increasing their education and delaying marriage. They said:

If I have a problem with my husband, I will not have to live with him because I need his financial support, and it is difficult to return to my family and oblige my father to support my children. I feel that a job is a woman's life, her independence, her support. (Muna, 27 years old, unemployed)

Women's work is their support because it is guaranteed to stay for her, not her father, not her husband, not her family. Her work becomes her support by which she can live. (Eman, 27 years old, housewife)

[A woman's job] is financial power, your independence so that you don't need anyone...you don't have to ask for money. If your husband did not have money, you will not die. Or if I get divorced, no one has to take care of me. (Latefah, 25 years old, makeup artist)

Muna, Eman and Latefah express the insecurity women face in cases of divorce or the inability of a husband or father to financially provide for them because of economic shortage. Although divorced women are entitled alimony in Islamic law, some men neglect to pay it; thus, many women struggle with financial insecurity, especially if their natal family is not able to provide.

This was especially true at the time of data collection as there was no legislation to force men to pay alimony. Fortunately, Saudi women can take advantage of legal benefits in which qualified divorced and widowed women have access to government building loans (Al-Torki, 2000). Some women may be subject to domestic abuse and may not have access to government resources (although the government initiated a hotline for abuse, women do not always report it). This narrative suggests that women convert insecurity into a conversation of economic capital (here, submission in exchange for financial maintenance).

Muna and Amal also told us that maintaining a middle-class lifestyle was also a motivation for women to work outside of the home to keep their family intact.

We have many demands. I feel like what we spend within one month, our families spent in one year in their time, and they were happy. Now it must be branded shoes, a branded bag. People look how others dress. I feel this is because of social media and fashion's effect on society, especially on girls. Now, I see the life of other people in the world while I'm in my place [Saudi Arabia] through Snapchat and social media. You see how fashion affects us. (Muna, 27-year-old housewife, married)

The responsibility becomes big. It becomes important that a husband and wife share financial responsibility. Our needs increase. We want to travel; travel needs money. You want to own a house in the best neighbourhood. And everything needs money; and this causes pressure. (Amal, 33-years-old, working in academia, divorced)

Muna and Amal expressed that the increase in demand for luxury products requires more financial resources. These consumerist lifestyles are specific to the younger generation. Whereas women may criticise the model of consumerist femininity but often conform to it in practice, this attitude is also pervasive amongst the men. Women are more susceptible than men are to consumerist values. Their criticism does not lessen what they feel as the constraining power of consumerist norms in their lives. It is easier for them, somehow, to transgress the image of the women's traditional role which can tell us about forms of power as practice urban values, according to As Abu-Lughod (1990). Although their basic needs are satisfied by their husbands, middle-class women seek jobs to pay for more luxury desires to maintain their status and keep the family intact. With the drop in the price of oil, the average household income has decreased, and Amal expressed concern over her future husband's ability to maintain their middle-class lifestyle, and she felt that she had to work to keep her family's economic status.

The coexistence of consumerism and the Islamic way of life are constantly negotiated in the everyday practices of Saudi families. Women have found innovative ways of accommodating the requirements of faith in the face of temptations, such as purchasing luxury goods to satisfy themselves and their husbands. Excessive consumption under economic contraction was another reason behind the drive for women's work. However, although middle class status allows educated women to maintain a work-life balance, this is not the case for women of the lower class. Some women, though, strategically build their own home-based businesses, converting their domestic capital to economic capital (selling their cooked food, designing clothes, doing makeup). A study conducted in Saudi Arabia by Al-Malah (2014) found that money was the primary push factor for motivating women to work from home to financially support their family and gain an independent income. Home-based businesses are widely accepted by the society especially because the nature

of the work is compatible with the domestic role of women and helps them maintain work–life balance. While this type of job was considered respectable for women, as revealed by Al-Malah (2014), it was not desirable for Latefah and her friends. Latefah told me her friend’s family were disappointed about their daughter working on a food truck and cooking food:

She [Latefah’s friend] said all my family are disappointed; they said, you are a seller like [a foreigner]. (Latefah, 25-year-old woman)

Latefah retold her narrative of being a makeup artist. Latefah worked as a makeup artist before she finished her undergraduate degree, while she was on her maternity leave. She decided to use her skills to financially support herself. But her relatives were judgmental about her work.

Latefah said, “Some people said to me, ‘Don’t you feel shame when customers give you money?’ Why does it hurt me? It is normal as in any business, as in a company, when you take your salary.”

Latefah explained that her work was associated with shame because it was not suitable to her class as it is a type of manual job that differentiates citizens from non-citizens (e.g. food sales, carpenter). De Bel-Air *et al.* (2019) and Al-Asfour *et al.* (2017) indicated that Saudi society views manual jobs as inferior because wealth enabled the hiring of foreign workers to do such jobs and confined socially rewarding job opportunities to the government sector. The wealth reinforces Arab tribal classification assumptions where such manual jobs are related to the lower class of residency who cannot trace their genealogy and merely join the tribe in exchange for their labour as their livelihood (Al-Subaie and Jones, 2017). It should be clear not only that women’s limited job opportunities are gendered in nature but also that economic wealth shapes the boundaries of inclusions and exclusions of what is desirable work for citizens and non-citizens.

Al-Torki (2000) and Le Renard (2014) argue that Saudi women displace social norms through adopting, as Le Renard (2014, P. 161) put it: “consensual discourse and through reproduction among themselves of practices transgressing official Islamic regulations [, which] is made possible by their high level of education, an asset in family negotiations”. Women in this study not only question the model of Islamic femineity promoted in the 1970s for negotiating more job opportunities, but also use what Le Renard (2014) called ‘self-help’ to appropriate their wishes and negotiate greater autonomy from their families. This appropriating of their register was facilitated by their education which is higher than their mothers. In this way, they uphold the reform discourse, and their agency is essential for societal change and they subjected themselves to other norms through which they gain another status. They contributed to delegitimising family order, and their relationship with the official institutions became more direct, which is similar to an observation made by Le Renard (2014). This finding proves Al-Torki’s (2000) expectations about Saudi women’s status. These strategies according to Al-Torki (2000) increase the “strategic capacity” of Saudi women to negotiate more rights with their husbands and fathers. Their access to political, social and economic resources can be expanded using motivations rooted in the home, such as preventing financial insecurity caused by their husband’s or father’s inability to provide financially in case of divorce or keeping their family intact. These negotiation strategies are important, especially in a context where women’s access to public resources” has been constructed as a symbol of Western hegemony versus cultural and/or Islamic authenticity” (Le Renard, 2014, P.160). Thereby, Al-Torki (2000) expects that Saudi women will gain more family support and political attention. Skeggs (1997) would see this investment in femininity as more than a rational gains calculation. In the process of making oneself tradable as a woman, enormous costs can be incurred in relation to identification and relation with others. The women’s strategies in this study

are an investment in themselves, deployed to halt any losses to their familial relationality and to generate value.(Lawler, 2014; Skeggs, 1997). At a point where women are confined and only offered admittance to a limited amount of capital, the use of femininity might be better than nothing at all. Femininity is as effectively an economic imperative as a cultural one. Skeggs (1997) contends that femininity allows women to leverage themselves out of a default position as they use their caring strategies.

Al-Torki (2000) argued that the rights of Saudi women cannot be attained through dissent, as was the case in the Western world. Saudi women must negotiate changes in their status by building on their moral authority as mothers and nurturers. Even though, as the previous chapter suggested, the dynamic of the relationship between a husband and wife is changing, this does not necessarily lead to a change in the relation of men and women in society at large. Clearly, Al-Torki's (2000) argument like Mahmood (2005) encouraged conceptualising agency more broadly than the liberal Western feminist view of the autonomous individual and beyond "resistance" of relationality. Al-Torki (2000, p. 235) states, "as women successfully renegotiate their rights and status in the family, their success will inevitably become part of the national agenda as more men of the younger generation accede to women's demands at home for more effective authority". Al-Torki (2000) argued that Marshall's (1990) classical model of citizenship is built mainly on the liberal image of human beings as atomistic agents that are ontologically prior to society. I want to argue, building on Caldwell *et al.* (2009) and Wadud (2005), that conditions of citizenship in Western understanding are mainly focused on legal-judicial aspects of national members, which foregrounds exclusion and inclusion, and legal rights and entitlements in modern capitalist states. However, such an approach obscures nuance and omits women's cultural experience of citizenship in various national contexts (Caldwell *et al.*, 2009). In the Middle East, specifically Saudi Arabia,

the rights and responsibilities of the citizens are not compatible with secular “nation-state” ideas. Equality of gender is not envisioned, and women’s access to public life is precluded by socialisation and family customs. This has resulted in a complex gendering of women (Joseph, 2000; Al-Torki, 2000). In Saudi Arabia, until 2020, women could not legally start a job without obtaining consent from their male guardians. This is an indication of the rationale behind using this feminine strategy. I argue that women would still invest in their femininity as mothers and nurturers as long as they still believe as much as men that their primary role is caregiving and men should be the breadwinners.

However, the obstacle of work–life balance remains, even though the help of family networks are already available for women (e.g. their mother and mother-in-law). Women of the middle class would have more opportunities for emancipation, which would allow them to maintain a work–life balance (Al-Rasheed, 2013).

Women in this study who were highly educated wanted to extend their caring role, maximising their chances to practise their responsibility in national building as a citizen. For example, Amal, Wafa and Maha (two are pursuing their PhDs) explicitly expressed their desire to impact the country’s development and prove their worth:

Work is creating and conveying, conveying knowledge and experience to participate in advancing the country and contributing to progress. Work is not only for personal accomplishment. (Amal, 33-years-old, divorced, holds a Master’s degree, works in academia)

When I stay home without anything to do, I do not feel that I have value. I do not do anything in society; I do not have an impact. (Maha, 30-years-old, single, holds a Master's degree, unemployed)

Allah [God] created us to develop the earth. Allah gave me the ability to think, to create and to give, even for my nation. I'm not a number; I am a productive human. I have to be productive, not only to take, but to give. (Wafa, 33-years-old, single, holds a Master's degree, government employee)

Amal, Maha and Wafa define the concept of active citizenship as being enabled to share the power with men. This position is further enabled by their education being used as a cultural capital whereby they negotiate further empowerment in public. Active citizenship, then, depends in part on how people are taught to be regarded in society. Discourse of personal development, which Amal referred to, justifies her professional ambitions, as she sees herself as an individual seeking success and self-affirmation and becoming an exceptional person through her professional career. Whereas this discourse promotes the pursuit of personal objectives, fostering and justifying the possibilities of women having a life beyond the home, which may have similar effects to liberal feminist ideas. However, Muna, Eman, and Latefah insisted that individual well-being makes people personally responsible for what happens to them and ties any problem self-help explanations that encourage private problems rather than denouncing socially unjust situations (not politicising personal problems). According to Le Renard (2014, p. 68), "this discourse indirectly contributes to moulding devoted and well-behaved employees useful for Saudi Arabia's private-sector expansion: whatever the conditions may be, work becomes a source of personal evolution and a mode of emancipation from family authority." We need to be

wary of transnational perspectives on gender and citizenship to assert an association between women's agency and resistance and structural inequality (Caldwell *et al.*, 2009). In this excerpt, Wafa broadens the discourse of gender ideology (constructs women as producers in the form of child-bearing and caring) to practise her agency as full human. This position unsettles the dichotomy between public and private in local citizenship practice. We should pay attention to the intersectionality of belonging, intimacy and spirituality as parts of the foundation of citizenship (Caldwell *et al.*, 2009).

In addition, Wafa explained that femininity is not an exclusionary category in the Islamic political framework. Islam, as a matter of faith, grants women full human dignity, rights and participation, and it is as socio-economic and socio-political does not confine to home (Kabesh, 2013; Wadud, 2005). Wadud (2005) and Mernissi (2011) argued that in the Qur'an and Sunnah, the ideal Muslim society was based on the principle that all believers are equal; this was evident through what Mernissi called revolutionary conflation of public and private spheres. This is why the Prophet's wives were allowed to participate in debates and even in battles. On Islamic principles, all believers have a role in building society (*Ummah*), with women's right to property and the creation of public/private divide emerging when national states are built (Mernissi, 2011; Wadud, 2005). According to Wadud (2005), as a matter of faith, implementing equality becomes inevitable as fundamentally inherent in the oneness of God (*tawhid*) paradigm. Moral agent (Khalifah) in Islam is the basis of creating a human being as a trustee for Allah on earth (which was clearly articulated by Wafa: "Allah created us to develop the earth") as stressed by the Qur'an, according to Wadud (2005). But moral agency means empowerment and responsibility, which are operationalised in reciprocal terms to arrive at truth, justice, honour and dignity. This intersectional understanding of citizenship beyond Western constructs— as informed by

Caldwell *et al.* (2009) and Al-Torki (2000)—lends us insight for understanding what constitutes a “political actor” and experiencing citizenship as lived. It also highlights that while women encounter exclusion, they actively negotiate the scope of their entitlements and rights. Where there is no Islamic principle forbidding women from taking a public role, in the next section, women deconstruct “honour” and the identification of women as moral beings and negotiate how they can move forward as respectable and demonstrate their worth.

5.4. Negotiations of women’s modesty

I want to contextualise the theoretical move towards the problematisation of the “universality of the desire—central for liberal and progressive thought and presupposed by the concept of resistance it authorises—to be free from relations of subordination and, for women, from structures of male domination” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 10). This section focuses on women’s position—more specifically, with the ways in which women frame their negotiation to move from being a national symbol of piety to being self-regulative informed by religious decent. This section will focus on the experience social capital and history, which constitute women subject and may be missed in feminist analyses.

5.4.1. Distinguishing the self

Women participants of this study criticised what they consider prevalent forms of marking people’s behaviours in a way that deems custom and national sentiment a code of conduct. This prevalent tendency is referred to by the participants as the tradition (‘*ada*) and the custom (*tagalied*), which describe the reduction of Islamic knowledge to a code of conduct in terms of gender and custom. The participants used terms such as these to refer to tribal and familial affiliation and strict forms of religious interpretation of matters related to gender and women’s

affairs. Wafa is one of the women who demonstrated her concern about the folklorisation of religion:

I do not like tradition's control because life is not a tradition and custom. There are basics in life. There is our Islamic religion that I follow. There are things that our ancestors and our families incorrectly understood. I'm now educated. I know the right and the wrong, and I know that there is incorrect folklore about us. (Wafa, 33-years-old)

Wafa explained that religion is more important than tradition. In Wafa's words, principles that guide our behaviours should be religious: "Why not say it is from our Islam religion? I am proud of my Islam religion. I was built on the basics". Wafa and Sarah echo women's argument in Le Renard's (2014) study who invoked Islam against customs and traditions as a strategy for family negotiation. Interestingly, Wafa and Sarah, as with other women in this section, distinguish explicitly between what is forbidden by religion *haram* and what is forbidden by society: "Ayb emphasis[es] the importance of conformity to religion as proof of modernity." This indicates, according to Le Renard (2014, p. 62), that "'traditions and customs' are less a historical reality than the product of a past imagined in light of contemporary urban life". From this vantage point, these women were critical of being Muslim in nominal way—by 'tradition'. This distinction between tradition and religion is related to how these women position themselves between the notion of community and collective identification and the notion of agency granted by the *tawhid* paradigm. Wadud (2005) explains that such a stance taken by Muslim women is compatible with the ontology of existence of a human being where women as humans are responsible for choices and judgment of all choices. In contrast, moralising discourse by relying on "honour" would position women in a subsidiary status in the family and society at large (Wadud, 2005). Even though women have advocated being a full social actor ascribed by Islam, this moral agency

does not contradict being relational to family because family relations involve voluntary submission, which Chapter 6 will follow up.

Participants of this study argue that national acceptable behaviour has become increasingly focused on customs or conventions undertaken as a religious-cultural identity. According to the women participants, this has led to the tendency to consider matters of women and gender relation as a means to realise a collective identity. For example, women's use of the *hijab* is a prominent area of convention representing *hismah* and women's appearance in non-domestic spaces. Sarah, for example, argued that veiling was not informed by religious instruction but by conformity to traditions set by tribal affiliation:

Tradition and custom do not allow me to uncover my face when I'm walking in public places in a comfortable way. I'm really opposed to this. I still have to be masked or cover my face, not because of religion. Our religion does not say we have to cover our faces. Because of our tradition and customs—my husband says to me that it is not for religion; it is for tradition [. . .] because we came from a specific tribe, so it is 'Ayb that a girl walks with her face uncovered and all people see her. (Sarah, 32-years-old)

Other participants presented similar views. For example, Sahad, 34 years old realised that veiling is not part of religiosity; however, she believes it is a rule that they cannot avoid:

The veil. I regard it as tradition and custom, but there are a lot of people who see it as religious.

Sahad further explained how tradition is binding; when she goes outside for dining or other activities, she veils herself because the veil is still crucial to her family. She highlighted the contradiction:

This is a tradition, so you cannot get rid of it completely because it does not only relate to your family in the house but also to your extended family. I'm not influenced by tradition, but I am affected by my parents. There are a lot of things that I am not convinced about, but I do them for my family, for example, covering my face, when going out with my father.

Another participant, Amal, 32 years old, felt that traditional conduct contradicts her understanding of freedom, as informed by her reading on philosophy. Amal believes that she is at liberty to choose what she wants in her religious practice, but she feels there is a conflict between the principle of choice and general acceptable practices for women regarding the *hijab*, which is associated with honourable families in society. Explaining the conflict, Amal said:

when some of my sisters had the choice and said "I decided to not wear the veil, I will wear *hijab*", I implicitly knew it was their right, but at the same time, I reject it. I know her right will offend her relationship with others. It offends the family reputation, how others view her, and her sisters at the same time, and the family.

Latefah, 25 years old, provided another account of women's confliction in their acceptance of their limited position. Latefah was independent, started her own business and drove her own car, as a young married woman who likes to travel alone. Although Latefah was not constrained by her family, she recognised that being outside the country did not exempt her from the honour code. She said:

I feel that travelling with my friends is extreme freedom. [...] I feel I'm young to do so. I feel it is dangerous [...] I feel I am a bit scared of these things. There must be someone old with me, such as, my mother, my husband.

Although Sahad and Amal acknowledged their complete freedom to choose their conduct of piety, they both chose to accept socially prescribed pious conduct. This would suggest that, for these women—to borrow Lawler's (1999) expression—the “real self” is relational. Smart (2003) told us personal desires and choice are not totally personal as they are framed in social and historical contexts. Arguably, this narrative, according to Smart (2007) and Lawler (2014), tells us how individual narrative talks about social narrative, a narrative of who they are. Social capital and relationality catch up with Sahad and Amal to disrupt the trajectory of self-actualisation. Amal spoke explicitly about social capital as something internal and integral of her sense of self:

I think we inherited these things that are rooted in our history, tradition and customs. These become part of us and subconsciously guide our lives. Our traditions and historical customs, our class. I am, for example, rooted in Bedouin values that I am sure affect me beneath my consciousness ... A human is the son of his environment, and he is raised on the things that rule him—either the religion or the norms that he has inherited. We cannot say that there is 100% untraditional life. It is impossible. (Amal, 32 years old)

Amal made clear that she always describes herself as “tribal Bedouin” by claiming a godly history. She said that our everyday life contains affiliations to tribal and class groups that we have subconsciously adopted in our experience. Her Bedouin heritage defines her goals, choices, aspirations and freedoms. Bourdieu (1977) informed us that habitus embodies the important

association of social rules and an individual's disposition. Bourdieu (1977) believed that culture is mostly inhabited, unconsciously internalised and that, most importantly, culture has a cohesive quality (Gary, 2005; Lawler, 1999).

For Amal and Sahad, the loss of perhaps the most public and visible marker of their class habitus—the veil—induces shame. To put their narrative in another way: they are educated and have sufficient knowledge to move from their families' position on the veil, but part of their self is feasible and wants to be seen as a reflection of who they are; this is our history. Lawler (1999, p. 16), in his analysis of class, explained that the unseen part of self is and is not the actual self. It is a “superficial” indicator of the self: “[it is] manifestations of historical desire which I locate (through narrative) within myself. [...] they imply, i.e. that I have a history of being [of class], that this is a habitus in which I am (literally) at home”. This suggests that security for these women was in “fitting in” (Skeggs, 1997). Indeed, both Lawler (2014, 1999) and Skeggs (1997) argued that focusing on identity issues suggest those who already believe they are privileged may be able to claim more value although paradoxically through their suffering. That suffering does not confer the status of truth. Indeed, as Lawler (2014, p. 169) put it, “claims to suffering, like claims to rights, are likely to give rise to counter-claims”.

These women did not engage in individualism and self-mastery, not because they were not available, but because they valued trading in power and accruing respectability instead. Latefah accepted her limited position to show that she is worthy, has value and should not be written off. Latefah explained how she experienced class through her internalising emotionally fuelled by insecurity and doubt that others would find something about her wanting and undesirable. Latefah did not prefer to travel alone, which reflects she was hoping to avoid being a sexual being. As Skeggs (1997) noted about the formation of class and gender, respectability protects

against the implicit sexual trading women enter, which is established in the interest and benefit of others. Therefore, shame was produced as a result of her consciousness of “the mismatch of [her] dispositions and positions” (Skeggs, 1997, p. 151). As Skeggs (1997, p. 150) put it, “desire for value reproduced the very distinctions they were trying to avoid”. It is precisely this submission to culturally prescribed social conventions that evokes the critique that Muslim women reproduce and reinforce the patriarchal order and do not act from a place of free will (Mahmood, 2005).

Sahad, Amal and Latefah show a repression of their personal desires for the sake of maintaining relationships and family reputation. Building on Abu-Lughod (2013), Mahmood (2005) and Al-Torki (2000), I argue that women’s “voluntary submission” to their family does not diminish their agency nor does it indicate a conflict between individual and social realms where resistance is the only option. Ahmed (1982) and Abu Odeh (1993) argued that veiling—with its connotations of segregation and protecting women—should be understood as a source of women’s strength rather than an imposition of men’s will over women’s freedom. Veiled³⁰ women have been found to be in the strongest position to avoid and fight back against harassment (Abu Odeh, 1993).

Bourdieu’s (1966) analysis is useful for highlighting cultural competencies which are not a result of socialisation but are inherent within the self. In this sense, Lawler (1999, p. 6) suggests that “class is not an ‘objective’ position which one occupies but becomes configured into

³⁰ Abu Odeh (1993) reflected on a historical moment after colonialism among urban lower- and middle-class professional women (e.g. school teachers, civil servants, secretaries, nurses, university students and bank employees) in their twenties and early thirties who adopted the veil in the 1980s after going unveiled in the 1970s. She argued that capitalism had not really changed the Arab ideology; instead, woman’s bodies cohabited with the construction of capitalism as sexual beings, and at the same time, their body still cohabits with the family’s sexual honour.

subjectivity”. Class serves as an unconscious model of behaviours that are internalised and have the feel of a coherent system. Hence, these women used politics of respectability and regulation of the self to negotiate their relationships with the opposite gender. They invoked what Lawler (1999, p. 7) called “cultural artefacts of class”, which they expressed through donning the veil and not travelling without a guardian—the very stuff of cultural capital. According to Lawler (1999, p. 9) the possession of this cultural capital was “represented as an integral component of the self: less about what they owned than about *who they were*”. Women’s voluntary submission thereby implies women’s attempt to naturalise their cultural and symbolic capital, which is not necessarily confined women yet is important for social portrayals about cultural ownership (Lawler, 1999).

However, a point that was not recognised in Bourdieu’s analysis of habitus as a subject of continuous adaptation was the disposition and change when people experience real-life situations (Lawler, 2014; 1999). These women had not inherited the capitals (social ideal of women); they carried them within a system of education and job experience in their adult life. They cannot occupy what Bourdieu (1977) sees as “the embodiment of interpersonal politics, as ‘a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of feeling and thinking.’ Culture becomes second nature, becomes a grammar by which people read their experiences and negotiate their relationships” (Gary, 2005, p. 96). This is clear if we consider how women in the following sub-section inhabit gender norms when negotiating being in public for work, reproducing the norms in relation to public narratives.

5.4.2. Modesty and Islamic virtue

These women participants redefine what it means to be an “honourable woman” and to advocate for their place in the public narrative. If, as Lawler (2014) suggests, class existence is constituted based on inclusion and exclusion, what would happen when women of class found the opposite gender unavoidable (e.g. at work or in public). As Lawler (1999, p. 14) put it, “[...] when the ‘something that one is’ dislocated in time and space and when a later habitus is founded on the pathologizing of an earlier one?” Consider, for example, the group of women in this study who acknowledged being modest in their negotiation of being beyond domestic. Amal and Latefah talked about how trying to avoid a mixed-gender workplace limited job opportunities under the current economic state. If a mixed-gender workplace is unavoidable, it should not cast women as trying to change or resist moral order. As Amal argued, religious principles should regulate her conduct:

For example, in your work, mixed-gender workplaces are okay, but we still conserve on our religious values. Allah asks us to be modest (*s’iter*) and decent (*hismah*). These instructions must guide us, to downcast eyes (*Qaz Albasar*) and keep space between man and woman. These are things that we need to give attention. (Amal, 33 years old)

Latefah discussed how economic change reduces job opportunities and believes that people should change their views regarding appropriate workplaces for women. She recounted her experience being a makeup artist and stated that it does not mean that she resists the social norm of avoiding mixed-gender workplaces. Latefah said:

I still have constraints from my family, but it is simple. For example, I do not go to anyone’s house. I go to known public places. I have an open area in my house to host

clients. I feel now we [Saudis] are a bit open ... we are in the middle. This is to say, of course, I still have contact with male photographers doing a photoshoot for models, but there is regulation. I deal with them professionally, in a formal way. There is no ease in dealing with them. (Latefah, 25 years old).

Amal and Latefah claim their behaviour and appearance is based on Islamic virtue, which represents their preservation of being decent. Amal and Latefah provided insight regarding various strategies that reflect the meaning of decent, such as downcast eyes as well as expressing toughness, keeping space and being modest. These examples show women's agentic capacity for submission to religious beliefs about piety. Amal and Latefah believe that values of religious virtue should translate into bodily practice to regulate gender relations. Whereas women in this study call for gender relation to be regulated according to modesty, they still conform to social norms. Abu-Lughod (1986) argued that the term *hismah* has multiple meanings that represent socially appropriate acts. It involves feeling shame in the company of powerful individuals, which is an involuntary experience. It also involves acts of deference that arise from conforming to the "code of modesty". In addition, it includes feelings of shame and acts of modesty, a formal language of self-effacement. *Hismah* involves the culture shock of behaviours that involve veiling, dressing modestly (covering hair, arms, legs and body) and using body language, such as downcast eyes, talking, laughing and joking. According to Abu-Lughod (1986), these behaviours imply social sense and self-control (*'agl*) of an honourable individual. Having *'agl* permits individuals to control their needs and interests in acknowledgement of their beliefs of honour related to the ideal woman. These women pointed to *hismah* as a religious duty of Muslim women that should distinguish Islamic societies, such as Saudi Arabia, from liberated societies. This was the case for Sahad, Maha and Latefah:

I have generally acceptable behaviour. We have basics that we follow. We are an Islamic society. Modesty is, without regard to your convictions, that you respecting the place that you are in, for example, when you are at women's places or women's celebrations, your clothes will not be the same as outside in the public or in mixed-gender spaces. As I told you, this is a good tradition that limits exaggerated freedom. I agree that there are traditions that are safe for society in the end. There is a path that society follows, but it does not have to be considered as basic as religion. Tradition should be changed with time and with life. (Sahad, 34 years old)

Even though I practise my freedom, I would not cross the generally acceptable behaviour related to appearance, such as my dress in public and so on, very much. Even if I had freedom, maybe because I'm affected by traditions, I would not go out without *hijab*, even it was allowed for me. My appearance should suit the generally acceptable behaviour. In our society, I give you clothes as an example, clothes should be modest (Sater)³¹. (Maha, 30 years old)

I cannot go out without *Apaya*, without *hijab*, with nothing, and walk on the street and break tradition because I, in the primarily, link it to religion more than I link it to tradition. So, I feel that I do not care about tradition as much as I link only with a position of religion. I think from the *Shari'a* side is that thing is harmful for me or *haram*. (Latefah, 25 years old)

³¹ *S'iter* is infinitive and means covering things. And when we say a cloth is *Sater*, it is the cloth that covers nakedness from being looked at.

Sahad's, Maha's and Latefah's understanding of *hismah* and women's veil and face covering styles informed by their understanding of *Shari'a*, where women's clothing styles should be different when they are in public. According to Le Renard (2014, p. 165), this performance contributed to "doing difference" to distinguish themselves from other forms of femininity that are not Saudi and Islamic. However, it should be stated that maintaining the ethics of Islamic virtues is not a discipline explicit to women in terms of regulating their sexuality; men are also required to maintain a respectful distance from unrelated women and treat them politely (Abu-Lughod, 2013). This was acknowledged by Salman, who is a 29-year-old man:

When you and I meet each other in any country, I know you are Saudi. Our tradition and customs determine how I speak to you in such a way that we use to in Saudi Arabia. For example, there should be space. I cannot shake your hand by virtue of gender differences.

Hismah is not associated with the discipline of women and masking their sexuality; instead, it is related to the appropriate behaviour of honourable people. Latefah, a 25-year-old married woman, talked about her experience of motherhood and the moment she realised that she had to behave herself and be soft spoken:

[M]otherhood changes everything in you, your personality ... I become more rational, I become mature; ... motherhood makes you feel like a model; you should be perfect.

[Motherhood] is something sacred, and you must be perfect ... I'm too uptight and my voice is loud, but I try to change myself, so my children do not see me as a crazy mother who just screams ... In the past, I was without restriction. But now, and after I become a mother, I control myself.

These narratives outline the noteworthy connection between bodily practices and ethical formation. Veiling and decent actions are, according to Mahmood (2005, pp. 120–121) “indications of different configuration of these women who ‘cohabit the same cultural and historical space with each configuration the product of a specific discursive formation rather than culture at large”. Indeed, modesty norms are not done or undone, but inhabited in different ways within lived experience. Arguably, though, the ethical formation of these women would not necessarily be based on their free will of the social actor against the structure. My point of view here is that these women’s view on how *hismah* should guide their behaviours is informed by discursive traditions formed by higher forces. But within the historical moment in which they are located, these women recall norms to understand themselves against the ideals overhaul by these traditions. The reflexive agency of these women should not be understood in a universal language of subjectivation. The mode of subjectivation here is “a particular kind of relation to oneself whose form fundamentally depends on the practices of subjectivation through which the individual is produced” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 32).

A question arises here as to how we should interpret the embodied Islamic practises that prevail among the female participants of this study in contemporary Saudi Arabia undergoing political changes. The words of Amal, Sahad, Maha and Latefah are particularly relevant in illustrating women’s compliance to *hismah* for the sake of spirituality. Being veiled, unveiled or wearing *hijab* (any form of *hijab* reflects pedagogical religious beliefs of *hismah*) for reasons of faith does not diminish Saudi women’s agency. Different configurations of personhood can coexist in the same cultural and historical space, with each configuration being the product of a specific discursive formation rather than a culture at large (Mahmood, 2005). Women’s conduct regarding *hismah* can highlight the relationship between the interior and exterior of the self,

which informs the pedagogical models of *hismah* for women in this study. The narratives of Amal, Sahad, Maha and Latefah illustrate that they do not view the religious requirements of *hismah* as imposing in a way that constrains them; rather, they view the act of maintaining *hismah* as the potential to realise their “authentic” self as Muslims.

These narratives can be understood through “positive ethics”, which states that specific forms of moral behaviour are definitely not accidents (Mahmood, 2005). This can help us understand the relationships established between Saudi Muslim women and the authority of religious norms in terms of self-understanding (understanding oneself as a Muslim and a woman), what one wants to achieve (building an Islamic society that does not dismiss any form of *hismah*) and what one can do to produce a specific “modality of being and personhood” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 120).

According to this view, *hismah* is a pious exercise through which women transform themselves and relate themselves to a moral code to make spiritual progress. It is progress towards changing Saudi society’s views on women’s appearance and their form of *hijab* as representing Saudi culture. This progress, according to Mahmood (2005), demonstrates a different form of engaging with the moral code and how freedom is fluid. It is precisely this self-submission to religious and social convention that shows what is often analysed as blind emulation and inspires the critique of women practising *hismah* in this study, who serve to reproduce the existing patriarchal order and to prevent women from distinguishing their own desire from the prevailing culture. This debate will be explored in the following sub-section.

The women in this study exemplify autonomous subjects. Thus, a genuine liberal should tolerate this kind of Muslim female agency regardless of whether it contradicts greater liberal objectives.

What should be emphasised is that freedom in liberal thought presupposes a fundamental split between an individual's "true" desires and those that are socially prescribed. The politics that result from this disjuncture aim to identify moments of resistance to conventional norms and hinder the realisation of an individual's free will (Mahmood, 2005). I argue, building on Mahmood (2005), that autonomy does not mean acting on one's free will; rather, it suggests a certain condition with which the social actor is engaging critically to assess wishes and desires and determine the social possibility and strategies for acting on them. Autonomy does not mean ridding the individual of social roles and content (e.g. religion, dogma, tradition and relation) (Mahmood, 2005). It should be clear now that assumed freedom in liberal thought contrasts, conceptually and practically, with freedom shaped by Saudi women, where they look for strategies that are not detached from Saudi social ideals.

5.4.3. *Rethinking freedom*

To analyse ethical practice under "positive ethics", it is not sufficient to analyse the ethical practice of *hismah* in this study through moral rules or the value of moral rules. The way people build relationships (with emotion, reasoning and the body) is with moral codes; knowing who the women in this study are and what they want can help to understand their identity. The women of this study utilise Islam to negotiate their religious commitment to gender/sexuality. This points to the agnatic modalities of action rooted in systems of submission that contribute to the recognition of one's sense of individual freedom. Think about Amal, Salma and Wafa's insights and how they viewed their practice as inseparable from their spirituality. Amal, a 33-year-old woman, talked about reading about freedom. She became more open to ideas of personal choice and freedom, the diversity of people and their conduct and the capacity for each person to decide his or her own interests without the influences of family or culture, in whatever form culture takes—

values, traditions or customs. However, Amal feels that not all freedom of choice is compatible with her spirituality. In Amal's words:

I instinctively devote myself to God's (*Allah's*) guidance, meaning that I am a believer in him. There are things I accept, but precisely related to human behaviour, the body, I do not. I accept all customs and traditions because it affects the family's reputation.

Similarly, Salma, 26-year-old woman, said:

My family's nurturing, whether social or religious in nurture, means they help shape my personality. They are like a filter through which you know what suits you and what does not ... what is right and what is wrong.

Wafa, 33-year-old woman, also echoed this theme:

You have red lines that you do not exceed, religiously and socially. To say my family nurtures, if a thing is wrong, I will not do it; things that are forbidden I do not approach.

These responses from Amal, Salma and Wafa speak to the role of spirituality in the habituation of moral order and determination of the outlines of freedom. This highlights the coexistence of religion with modernity for these women. Where they negotiate the reductionist approach of framing women, they also continuously embrace the influence of the foundational basis of Islam on rights, which has an entirely different genesis and pedigree from the secular human rights discourse (Mahmood, 2011; Wadud, 2005). As Wadud (2005, p. 177) put it, "just given the denotation 'universal'... does not guarantee its universality".

I find it appealing to recall habitus, the revealing concept from the sociological writings of Bourdieu (1977). According to Bourdieu (1990), habitus is a way to adroitly incorporate phenomenological and structuralist approaches to clarify how the supra-individual structure of

society comes to be lived in human experience. According to Bourdieu (1990), habitus is a “generative principle” that marks the dispositions of social actors corresponding to the social class of the actor. However, I want to argue that the bodily practice of women and their use of veils, *hismah*, “does not simply express the social structure but also endows the self with particular capacities through which the subject comes to enact the world” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 139). According to Mahmood (2005, p. 134), “exteriority [is] a means to interiority”. To put it another way, inner quality develops as a result of outer practice, which makes practice a perfect capacity of the soul of the actor (Mahmood, 2005).

These women’s behavioural conduct of *hismah* and their understanding of freedom are not separable from their religious beliefs about freedom. Looking at women’s ethical practises draws our attention to pedagogical aspects of religious obligations beyond the prevailing perspective of Islamic doctrinal and legal arguments. Recalling Amal’s narrative about engaging with philosophy, she believed her internalisation of Islamic principles of freedom was not compatible with Western philosophy’s idea of freedom of choice, where humans assert their free will against prevailing values and norms in the social field. She believes that philosophies like these are mainly based on the freedom of the human mind, which is not compatible with every religion, and that Islam is a religion of freedom and will not force her to do things without convincing her:

Islam calls for freedom of mind in the Qur’an: “afala yaeqiluna, afala yatadabaru”

[critical thinking] ... Nothing is imposed on you without your being convinced. If you are not convinced, you can go deeper into religion and make your choice in your life; your behaviour, your dress style, are details in religion. But in your choice, you will not

exceed the pillars of religion or the foundations of the Islamic religion; no one deviates from it. (Amal, 33 years old)

Amal's narrative suggests that her everyday practice, appearance and behaviour are open for scrutiny as informed by Islam as long as she conserves the pillars³² of her religion. Accordingly, Amal explained that she understands the diversity of how women don the *hijab* based on their own internalisation of religion, which does not deny them adherence to their religion.

An understanding of how participants like Amal, Salma and Wafa internalise Islam as part of their religiosity through daily actions offers a lens through which religion can be viewed as compatible with existence. Women in this study call for diversity of practice based on their intellectual capacity. This attitude may hint to more visibility of non-national residents (especially women) in public places, which I observed had already taken ground at the time of writing the thesis. A situation was less visible at Le Renard's (2014) time of study. They contributed to "doing difference" but in a different way from Le Renard's (2014, p. 165) observation. Their appearance as they argued incorporates other femineity that is not necessarily Saudi or reflective of a specific Islamic style. These conditions are enabled by increasing women's education, job opportunities and participation in the workforce, specifically in managerial work. These improvements have steadily opened doors for urban women to pursue their studies and have blessed them with the privilege of feeling that they have the option of perpetuating the Islamic tradition in a way similar (though not equivalent) to men. In light of this, it is not surprising that the women in this study are either postgraduate students or working

³² The basic immovable tenets of Islam are belief in the oneness of God, the prophecy of Muhammad and the five pillars of the religion (praying, fasting, Ramadan, zakah [paying annual contributions for the poor] and haj [pilgrimage]; Al-Munajed, 1996).

women employed in a range of fields, including education, government bureaucracy, private enterprise and so on.

These women's internalisation of religious teachings further opens the door for their agency to emerge in a way that is contradictory to the Western feminist concept of equality. Take, for example, Maha and Salma's narration of their experience of being Twitter users and following women's matters. Their words deny that they are feminist:

I follow people who support freedom, who defend rights. They may contribute to my additional awareness. But I am not a feminist. Women have personal rights, whether civil rights or rights such as driving a car. But not too feminist, I mean, that is to say, I support rights, but I cannot say I support equality. Not all equality is fair. (Maha, 30 years old)

Although Maha revealed her consciousness as a woman to define respectability and being a caring subject, her articulation, "I am not a feminist", indicates that she wants to distinguish herself from the perception of being a "liberal feminist", a tactic that in keeping with Le Renard (2014) distinguishes their position from that of global organisations for women's rights, which considers imperialism. Maha, though, does not deny her life, as other women have struggles which need negotiation and have to work to shift the power balance in their favour. But Maha, just as the other women's narratives confirmed, believes shifting power can be achieved through work under subordination to her family, the government and, more importantly, her spirituality. In a similar observation on Saudi women, Le Renard (2014) indicated that selective negotiation of gender norms is important in a context where "women access to public has been constructed as a symbol of Western hegemony versus cultural and/or Islamic authenticity" (Le Renard, 2014, P. 160). Embedded in the "liberal" and "secular" mentality are a number of assumptions about

“autonomy” and “freedom”, which Maha feels can be projected onto her because she is revealing her consciousness as a woman. Mahmood (2011, 2005) argued that behind “autonomous” individuals who are capable of acting on their own free will rather than according to tradition, custom and religion, there are two problematic ideas. The first is that acting on free will against customs, norms and male domination contradicts Maha’s and Selma’s understanding of a good life and relationality, which is evident in the women’s narrative in this chapter and in Chapter 4. The second assumption, which is central to Western feminism, concerns secularity and the essential separation between religious rituals (e.g. veils and body practice) and scriptures, which are essentially transnational. In terms of the women’s narratives on religiosity and how their practice should be enlightened by religious instructions, submission to God’s will (the next subsection will provide more on this) provides a counterpoint to Western understanding of secularity.

Salma also shares Maha’s stance in that she does not like to be labelled liberal. Hence, she avoids discussion with others, as she says:

I do not like to express my opinion on specific things, so they do not classify me ... You are traditionalist, or you are not in the middle on how you tailor things; you are *munfatehah* [open, free]. Your lifestyle is not normal. (Salma, 26 years old)

These quotes demonstrate the notion that media such as Twitter must have encouraged some of these women to rise up and negotiate issues of women’s liberation (although I am not intending to analyse the media’s role). However, this does not necessarily mean that the arguments of the women in this study were affected by other feminist movements on Twitter. For the women in this study, their rationalisation goes beyond the simplistic argument that until women and men

can do the same things, there is inequality (as noted in Maha's narrative). According to Al-Ruwaitea (2014), equality evokes masculine equality, "anti-subordination" and "men haters", which involves the performance of manly jobs and waives women's feminine roles, such as reproduction. Nawar Al-Hassan (2004) explains that feminist and national consciousness emerged at the same time and as a reaction to the West. Contrarily, feminism is recognised in the Arab world as imitating Western feminism, where feminism is a product of capitalism that distances women from their culture, religion and family obligations. Nawar Al-Hassan (2004) explained that feminist discourse is weakened in a society where sexual freedom is not a priority and where the number of professional women has yet to match the number of professional men in all fields.

As informed by Mahmood (2005) and Al-Torki (2000) I want to argue that women participants' negotiations for recognising were deployed strategically and in dialogue to present themselves as caring and respectable. The argument they made for respectability was combined through their *hismah* that has been observed and consolidated by way of a caring role, which impacts their status, their value and the significance of their claims. Skeggs (1997, p. 153) explained that caring performances reflect agency "through the discursive conflation of caring *for* with caring *about*". While women's work is legitimised by government support, women's negotiation has clearly not occurred in isolation of accepted familial gender relations. Their negotiation is enabled and produced by power relations in which value can be consolidated, capitalised on, lost and/or enhanced (Skeggs, 1997).

Skeggs (1997) indicated that the processes of being and becoming operate simultaneously alongside processes of not being and refusal. The women's strategies suggest that they are

redefining what it means to be a “good” woman, not becoming less honourable, but because they remain honourable.

When these women negotiate that they are beyond domestic life – at work, in their relationships with the opposite gender, in their *hijab* style and in the kind of religiosity they seek – they seek a national identification of Muslim women. The development of women’s agency, therefore, is part of a shared, ongoing history of transformation that has occurred in secular and religious institutions in contemporary Saudi Arabia. These women welcomed the diversity in Islamic women’s practices. Achieving this diversity means necessarily resisting the Western dominant concept of freedom. At the same time, it means continuing to struggle internally with the nationalist idea of casting women as representatives of culture, and hence, assuring society that their openness to negotiation is not alien to their culture.

The accounts of Amal, Salma, Wafa and Maha exemplify a celebration of an Islamic solution to gender issues in Saudi Arabia. These women see Islam as the framework that should guide their emancipation, and their enemies are tribal, ethical and moral codes that enforce women’s subordination. This discourse enables women to take the conversation to a new level for convincing their families of the legitimacy of their conduct and pursuing new activities.

According to Le Renard (2014), this negotiation contributes to a particular way of thinking about Saudi Arabia’s history and its contemporary society. The obstacles they encounter are a result of the past “traditions”, as opposed to Islam, a moderate religion that is compatible with professional aspirations (Le Renard, 2014). But what makes the difference between this study and that of Le Renard’s (2014) is that this version of the history emphasises Islamic rights which women have enjoyed in contemporary Saudi Arabia as a result of moving the country to moderate Islam in the light of Vision 2030. Islam in these women’s understanding is compatible

with different styles of women's appearance (Chapter 6 will synthesise men's and women's views) whereas previous generations experienced conflating Islamic norms with family and tribal national norms. This is especially true because these women are critical of what is called 'Islamic awakening'. Therefore, their rationalisation also challenges the often implicit and uncritical assumption that religion is intrinsically equality-averse and that secularism is inherently equality-promoting (Wadud, 2005). For these women, feminine equality is complementary, interdependent and cooperative in the distribution of roles within and beyond the domestic sphere. Since women believe they are spiritually equal to men, there is no contradiction between public/private roles.

Summary

The narratives in this chapter have emphasised women's desire to be recognised as caring and respectable subjects who are feminine, who have social capital and – more importantly – who are religious. This chapter has focused on the public narrative that casts women as the foundation of moral order of society, revealing constraints on women joining the labour market. For the women in this study, "respectable women" cannot be fixed. This suggests that categorising is not redundant but, according to Skeggs (1997), may need continual modification in order to understand women's lived experience. Women's negotiations highlight how establishing a fixed definition of a "respectable" woman had political consequences for women's aspirations. Although their argument takes the form of being feminist, Western feminism does not encapsulate Saudi women's experience. Women's views cannot be dismissed as illegitimate just because they are not understood by Western feminism, which has the power to make judgments

on others. Skeggs (1997) explains that certain theories tilt the explanatory balance of power towards those they are being utilised for. Cultural capital, for example, shifts power back to those who have limited access to it. This explains why it is impossible to impose the frameworks of fixed academic concepts onto lived experience. These women's narratives show that these women are reflexive and aware of what they are doing (what they think is permissible, what is permissible and what is possible), which confirms Le Renard's (2014) finding on Saudi women's negotiation strategies. Where these women's narratives have revealed that they are negotiating with power to gain status, the next chapter will broaden the analysis on relationality moral agency. It will challenge the idea that power is exclusively held by men and draw on the nuances and fluidity of family relations.

Chapter Six: Masculinity, Family Dynamics, and Inter-Generational Conflicts: Rethinking the Gendered Nature of the Unmarked Male Subject

6.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the central role of men in protecting family honour from disrepute. The position within the family is important, as the moral worth of a person is based on occupying the appropriate role for their position: submission for young men and women; independence regarding seniority based on demonstration of responsibility, commitment and affection. The structural context of the relationality manifest in masculine practices in relation to women and other family members in terms of weaving family relations and continuity should be considered. In this chapter, I analyse the complexity of masculinity to highlight the pressure experienced by masculine subjects in perpetuating families' hierarchy, power and nobility.

This chapter is divided into four parts based on themes that emerged from the narratives. Section 6.2 discusses the construction of masculinity through childhood in relation to older men, parents and family members. Section 6.3 considers men's experiences in becoming older and responsible, and how power is non-exclusive for men. Section 6.4 investigates difficulties and pleasure experienced by men in conforming to the masculine code. Section 6.5 explores men's negotiating of the masculine role as a protector and as submissive to parents and seniority.

6.2. Constructing masculinity

This section discusses the formative experience of constructing a masculine identity in relation to older men and the son/parents.

6.2.1. *Men's experience of power across generations*

Men participants compared their experience of male society with that of their parents, whereby the latter were more powerless than their sons have been. Sami and Salman demonstrated how customary practice influenced their subordination as children:

My childhood was traditionalist. You know, as children, that you do not have an opinion. (Sami, 27-year-old married man)

I would see my family members who were aged 14, 15 and 16; they would express themselves spontaneously. [. . .] When I was at their age, this was impossible. The group would decide everything for you. (Salman, 29-year-old single man)

Sami and Salman expressed how childhood is constructed in relation to adulthood, which itself shifts across time so that young people nowadays are more articulate than the participants. This suggests that patriarchy glosses over gender in childhood and treats younger men as subordinate. However, when boys become older, male socialisation takes a different path. In describing his childhood, Muhannad described his experience of a distant father and a nurturing mother, and how when he grew up, his father took his sons, including Muhannad, to men's gatherings for interactions exclusively with the same sex.

We accompanied my father. I socialised with respectful men [his father's friends]. Their socialisation method was of a high standard. They took their sons with them. Associating with them taught me how to be respectful and how to respect those who are older than me. Although they were like my uncles, we had fun with them. But even though, we did not diminish the value of a person who was older than us. (Muhannad, 28-year-old single male)

Muhannad referred to the father's role as instrumentally breaking the male child away from the women's and mother's worlds, a process which I will explore in depth in the following subsection; here, I focus on the male child's transition to the men's world. Muhannad's experience would certainly be shared by men who grow into adulthood in the Middle East, where male and female socialisation take different paths at the age of puberty (Cohen-Mor, 2014). Muhannad indicated to the transition from the point of entry into the men's world, and how they felt "feminised" by virtue of their understanding of their position as inferior to their father and older men. Although Muhannad and the other boys' status as mature boys were unquestionable and secure when set against the opposite sex, the elder men were still superior. This transition to the men's sphere is a symbol that involves young boy's realisation of being "superior" to women and younger men. In this hierarchical context, the male child internalises his position regarding other family members and acquires appropriate gender and age behaviour. Indeed, maleness (*dhukura*) and manliness (*rujula*) are different (Cohen-Mor, 2013). The powerlessness, silencing and invisibilising of children reflect the social norms that a child is a human in transition, rather than a human in their own right. Socialisation focuses on how children appropriate society.

Arguably, this strategy supports the constructivist model of childhood because the father's role actively attempts to place the male child's identity in the masculine culture. Integrating male

children in the hierarchy of other men in Abebe's (2019) understanding is "a rite of passage" where duties, responsibilities, symbolic and actual, are bestowed upon children. This demonstrates a family's expectations in terms of a male child's future, to submit to asymmetrical age and treat younger ones as subordinate. They learn a general pattern of relations essential to reproducing family and kinship relations. Kandiyoti (2014) argued, based on her understanding of Connell's (1987) hegemonic masculinity, that attention should be given to the dynamism among men and detailed in relation within genders to gain an adequate explanation of the reproduction of patriarchy, which are imperative for reproducing masculine identity. Connell's most useful suggestion is that hegemonic masculinity at any given time involves specific institutions of patriarchy. Interestingly, although Muhannad's father remains superior, the power distance tends to be insignificant within their relationship, which is indicated in his comment, "My father was a friend to us." Although the participants reported feeling subordinate as children, they recognised that this subordination dynamic had been shifting when they compared their experiences with those of their parents' generation.

For example, Salem informed us how his father was positioned at the bottom of the male hierarchy and that all the older men had the power to control and even discipline him:

In the past, anyone who was older than you could decide on everything – your father, your uncle, your older brother, even your neighbour. They could hit [discipline] you because they saw you as their son. Now, we are cultured. (Salem, 25-year-old single man)

Salem explained how the relational power gap between a father (and by extension all older men) and younger men has narrowed:

In this generation, they [fathers] ask boys and girls for their opinions. They are educated. Now there is culture and awareness. Their vision has changed because of education, culture and social media. People know how to read and write. They do research on the internet. They read articles and watch TV programmes – a lot of things. We are cultured. (Salem, 25-year-old single man)

Muhannad is another male participant who narrated how both men and women in his parents' generation – in the past 50–60 years – were treated strictly, as subordinates. He recounted:

Upbringing in the past was very strict for men, but specifically for women. (Muhannad, 28-year-old man)

In addition, Salem and Muhannad's narratives showed that patriarchy afforded exclusive power to fathers in their parents' generation over younger men and women. This insight echoes the observation of Sahad, who is a female participant, offering insights into the ambivalence and confusion of young men in the past, which cut across their positions at home with their wife and their positions in the world of their father and older men:

Ada [tradition] and *tagalied* [custom] were exerting much power. In the past, when a man got married, his father and neighbours still had power over him. So, he was a man in his house, but in his community, he was their son and not an independent man. (Sahad, 34-year-old woman)

Sahad's insight describes how men's masculinity is contradictory. Even though a man was married and expected to be dominant in their relationships with the women, his fathers, older relatives continued to rule younger men in a way that maintained the subordinate status of their sons. Kandiyoti (1994, p.194) stated, that as "placatory and obedient and in several ways, his behaviour replicates that expected of women in the face of adult male authority". Arguably, the

theme of subordination is evident in intergenerational interaction. There may be an undercurrent of violence in masculinities that emerges between men in intergenerational interactions and, more importantly, patriarchy trumps gender. Muaad told how poverty at that time could be the reason for child abuse and strictness of fathers:

Their economic status was not good. This positively and negatively affected people at that time. But, many were negatively affected. For example, stealing, bullying, etc. Generally, however, they were affected positively by respecting their parents, older brother and relatives, which shaped their personalities. Yet, there are differences among those people that cannot be understood – how a whole society was socialised under the same circumstances, but they became different. Some are emotional, and some are strict. (Muaad, 22-year-old single male)

Muaad was hesitant to take poverty as the only reason for child neglect and strictness. Muaad then recalled his father's socialisation in a poor family and how he tried to overcome all the deprivation that he suffered during his childhood and not repeat it with his children. He believed that individual personalities seemed to be the factor determining a father's style, method of parenting and mode of interaction with his children. This insight supports Cohan-Mor's (2013) argument, based on analysing autobiographies of various Arab writers, that masculinity is socially and historically constructed, and the meaning of masculinity varies within one culture and over time, and through the course of an individual's life. Cohen-Mor (2013) indicated that notwithstanding the harmful effects of child abuse and neglect, there were always exceptional individuals who managed to overcome the deprivations they suffered (e.g. poverty, absent father) in their childhood and develop the skills necessary to become successful and well-adjusted

adults. Even where fathers are educated or from wealthy classes, Cohen-Mor (2013) argues, this does not necessarily mean good parenting. This observation reflects what Kimmel and Messner (1992, p. 8) stated:

Men are not born growing from infants through boyhood to manhood to follow a predetermined biological imperative encoded in their physical organisation. To be a man requires participation in social life as a man, as a gendered being [...] by actively constructing their masculinities within a social and historical context.

I want to argue, as informed by Uskul *et al.* (2010) in their analysis of how psycho-culture affects one's attitude, that in a collectivist culture the outer image of honour is related to self-evaluation and norms of self-image and how one should represent oneself to the group's members.

6.2.2 Father's role in separating men's children from women's spheres

Cohen-Mor (2013) argued that the cultural prototypes of the nurturing mother and authoritarian father (in various Arab contexts) are not always realised in their life situations. This was true for the male participants, like Sami, for example, who depicted his father as distant because he was the breadwinner, while his mother was always available to nurture her children. However, Sami described his father as kind and wished to have some of his attributes, he said:

My father was not extremely close to us, but he was a little close. He always encouraged us to behave well in our interaction with others. I try to be like my father. (Sami, 27-year-old married male)

Similarly, Muhannad described how socialisation took place at home exclusively under his mother's care due to the public–private division of labour. Muhannad's father passed away when he was 16 years old, and he felt that he had lost his support. In his view,

A father's role is to encourage us. He will help you when you fall or be discreet. He is always the man who will help you, and his role is strong because he is the leader in the family. [...] He is the leader for [the] girls and boys. His words have the biggest impact. I do not deny that some mothers can take both roles; however, when a mother often plays both roles, the father is either dead or away. (Muhannad, 28-year-old single male)

Muhannad described his father as the head of the family and the authority figure to which the boys and girls were taught to submit. His father's method of socialising was harsh. His harshest disciplinary action required his son to always maintain a high standard. But Muaad realised that a hard father is good for raising children. However, he explained, like Sami's mother, that his mother was always available and devoted her life completely to her children, compensating for the father's role after his death. A mother's commitment to the well-being of her children is acknowledged in Sami's and Muhanaad's narratives, and, as Muhannad articulated, the mother is the source of love, care and protection and has a lifelong devotion to her children. Especially in the case of boys, the strong mother–son relationship that is frequently encountered in Arab families is a critical factor in mediating the son's response to the loss of his father:

In my perspective, a mother plays both roles [the father's role and emotional role]. [...] If a woman wants to achieve something in her children, she gives herself over to her children, to her sons and daughters. She will fight for her children, devoting her health and time to her children's success. I have observed many mothers doing this. Honestly, a mother is created stronger. (Muhannad, 28-year-old single male)

We can deduce from Sami's and Muhannad's experience that culturally defined women's roles have a decisive influence on the experience of maternity and on shaping masculinity. A woman's domination of her children is the result of a cultural division of labour (Cohen-Mor, 2013). However, the father is the "leader", as Muhannad indicated and he is obeyed by the boys and girls. The family's relation to the father tends to be distant, as Sami and Muhannad narrated, and as the latter remarked:

I see that fathers are always harsher than mothers, but this cruelty has a positive side that is not realised until we grow up. The positive is the father's encouragement for us not to make mistakes. A father does not accept mistakes. This is usually a motive for us not to make mistakes, but for a mother who has tenderness and emotion.

This different roles of fatherhood and motherhood would ideally be constructed according to religious and paternal discourse. The affinity of a son (and children in general) with his mother (and parents in general) is normalised and naturalised and favourably valourised in familial Arab culture, songs, and poems praising children's love for their mother (Joseph, 1999b). In a hierarchy of love and affinity to one's parents based on religious injunctions, love and kindness

should be submitted to the mother over the father (Kabesh, 2013). Besides cherishing one's mother, the constituent of good behaviour is kindness to relatives as an enactment of one's connective relation to others as a structural result of patriarchy and reinforced by religious injunction, which further strengthens the normative patriarchy of creating an order of people (Joseph, 1999c; Toshihiko, 2002).

This ethical position is informed by religious as well as cultural aspects of relationality and interdependence. Joseph (1999a) and Sharabi (1993) have explained that these relations extend beyond family and the parent-child relationship to shape relationships outside the family (with relatives, at school, work, etc.). In a patriarchal society (that gives initiative to men, senior men, and women), involvement with the other (in this case, *khawwal* disciplining their sister's sons and daughters) can support patriarchal power by directing males and juniors towards culturally recognised healthy behaviour and these seniors internalise their role to direct the lives of women and juniors and hence reinforce this patriarchy.

Although in Sami's and Muhannad's narratives the mother was the main caregiver, this is different from how Chodorow (1978) and Hatem (1987) (in explaining the Egyptian context) understand differences between gender and the extent to which women are dependent on men. Indeed, as argued by Al-Nowaihi (1999), the process of socialisation and the pattern of relations based on which self is constructed is fundamentally different from the Western individuated self. Al-Nowaihi (1999) indicated that – as is also evident from the narratives in Chapter 4 – in the nuclear family with its extended relation, and close resident, multiple caregivers in the extended family, there is no clear division between the “public” and “private”, where the space in which the children are raised is communal. Perhaps this is why males in the Arab world have an element of their personality that would be considered “feminine” in the West, such as

relationality (Al-Nowaihi, 1999). This is even evident in the participant's articulation in section 6.3. As Al-Nowaihi (1999) reminded us, relationalities within the Arab family and community inhabit a distinctive space compared to that of the nuclear family in the West, where the latter explicates identity construction and gender differences based on an understanding of the nuclear family as normative.

The different roles of mothers and fathers in the socialisation of Sami and Muhannad can be attributed to the prevalent paternal power. Kabesh (2013) informed us that the mother naturally is the carer during the period when the child is helpless, providing the foundations for good behaviour and emotional care. Subsequently this role passes to the father (normally at age of seven), which is enforced by Islamic custody laws that state when the father becomes the guardian of his children, and that when a father dies, this responsibility passes to the grandfather, uncles or cousins. Therefore, the role of a father (and that of the men's relatives, neighbours, etc.) is fundamental in separating the male child from the mother (and the women's sphere in general).

I want to argue that this separation in a male child's life is a symbolic act of defeminising the male child. Al-Nowaihi (1999, p.256) described the effect of this role as "the instrumentality of the other in the understanding, even recognising of the self, of the outsider illuminating the world on the insider". Kabesh (2013) argued that a mother (but I want to say more accurately to my argument because mother symbolises femininity) becomes a horror that must be expelled in order that the individual can create a separate psychological space. The masculine subject is inseparable from the discourse of independence. This sentiment was clearly indicated by Fahad, a 27-year-old single man, when he narrated the different kinds of socialisation of boys and girls:

Boys are given hard toys to dig with outside. He became independent and relied on himself.

Fahad indicated that directing boys to play outside is the appropriate way to begin to establish independence. According to Kabesh (2013, p. 53), “a profound fear of women as [...] claustrophobic, as if femininity drains life out of masculinity. [...] The emotions aroused are due to the numerous kinds of initial and profound dependency, but among them is shame, as men frequently learn to feel shame at their need for care, love and attention. Indeed, Muaad and Salem informed us that home is not the right place for men. As they articulated:

Independent is important. It helps you to form your personality especially at age of 20–30. You should rely on yourself rather being dependent on your mother and father. Go outside Riyadh to study for example, to learn (Muaad, 22-years-old single man)

You must depend on yourself; you must know to do the right thing at right time. [...] We [the family] brought you up and you know right and wrong. You are a man and responsible for yourself and we trust that you would not black our face (Salem, 25-year-old single man)

Muaad and Salem view independence as being acquired through leaving the family home, to use Cohen-Mor’s (2013, p. 105) words, to “embark on a journey of self-discovery in which they continue to learn the gender scripts”. This journey was a desire of Muaad’s whereas Salem had already left his family’s home in the southern region to study in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, where he was exposed to other role models, values and ways of life, all of which contribute to constructing one’s identity and modifying the family script, as will also be evidenced from Fahad’s narrative in section 6.4.2.

Kabesh (2013) powerfully argued that boys being taught to be dependent on their mother is bad, but I want to argue that a man's continuous dependence on his parents is bad and as informed by religious and cultural norm when a man takes the role of being responsible for his parents when they are older. Indeed, as argued by Kabesh (2013), maturity requires separation, whereas the father represents civilisation, with him releasing the child from regressive assimilation with the mother. However, I want to use mother here as a symbol to reflect domesticity, dependency and femininity.

I argue that this investment in power is aimed at the rejection of any sign of "femininity".

Salman and Salem talked about how men should avoid softness such as different styles of clothes and entertainment associated with others who are cultured, which therefore conflicts with hardship and hardness:

The appearance of this generation is different; you find people wearing jeans and T-shirts and cutting their hair in different ways. It is not about wrong or right, but it is different compared to my generation; we were all similar to each other. We [Salman and his generation] all wear thoub [national white long dress], all the same, hairstyle. All behaved in the same way. You feel really that we are two different generations. [...] I feel that untraditional things are more acceptable today than in the past. I say, for example, if someone dyed his hair yellow and walked along the street in Riyadh, people would look at him – maybe they would laugh – but possibly ten people would look at him, and only one would comment on him, and the other nine would see him just as something strange. But I feel that if the same person did the same in my parents' time, I think it is possible that would not have passed as normal. (Salman, 29-year-old single man)

My father told me how society viewed someone who played football or rode a bike. My grandparents viewed him as a deviant person. At that time, they saw those behaviours as being associated with foreign people who were developed or modernised. You must return from school to the farm to dig out and then go to the shop to trade. (Salem, 25-year-old single man)

Salem and Salman thought about how the control of social norms regarding behaviours started to become more relaxed, but that an insistence on saving face led people to conform in matters of style and appearance (Patai, 2007). Though practices such as dress code or hairstyle were probably censored by the religious police, they should not be understood only on a religious basis. Strictness would be due to the intersection between the centrality of masculinity, which has to reject any kind of softness, and the drawing of boundaries between in-group (national) against the other. This can be understood in terms of Ibin Kholdoon's framework: *asabiyya* (solidarity), purity and superiority cannot be complete unless savagery is also present, which indeed is in opposition to modernisation (Al-Gazami, 2009).

Although Kabesh (2013) indicated that rejection of femininity is necessary to protect, control, and limit dependency on women, I do not see that men only invest in masculinity in order to restrict their dependency on women. Based on the tribal nature of Saudi society, I want to argue that a rejection of femininity is a rejection of dependency in any form, whether being humiliated by other men either within their tribal groups, other tribes and even at border political relations. Indeed, humiliation and dependency is fended off through "hardness", which defines masculinity. We cannot believe that men's superiority is significant in our life without believing the other side, which implies the importance of affective ties and relationality among men (Spelman, 1988). According to Lindisfarne (2017), honour and shame are not independent from

political domination; instead, they are based upon which inequality is sustained. Those honourable men will not only control women but also, more importantly, will control and humiliate other men (Lindisfarne, 2017).

Spelman (1988) described a gender analysis in relation to ethnicity, fear, pride and anger, being different sets of emotions that have as much of an effect as motherly caring. “[I]t is thus not the absence of affection that characterises the public world, but perhaps it is an absence of affective ties. Men have feelings but not the kind that reflects relations with other people – if they fear, it is for themselves; if they feel pride, it is in themselves.” (Spelman, 1988, p. 109). Building on Spelman’s (1988) understanding, masculine Arab men “affective ties” between men and exclude affection would be devoted to “shared values and goals” of kinship and family ties, where they dutiful to weave the collectives’ fabric. This is how Fahad, 27 years old, understood men’s appropriate role:

Men are associated with hardness, whereas women are associated with softness and emotions. Men’s nature is *h’amesh* [bravery]. When they are little, they are taught that their nature is precisely to defend, and they are fully depended on.

According to honour logic, the respectable man’s place is outdoors, a concept that was evident from Fahad’s narrative, and a man of honour who presents himself under the gaze of others to face up (Bourdieu, 1966). What the father offers here is distance for the child, which becomes a lifelong separation, especially for a male child who directs his emotion to the outside the domestic sphere and towards work. The fathering and masculine role defends the public face of honour. Unlike Chodorow’s (1978) explanation for reproduction of women’s dependency; I argue that along with “sexism”, children learn class and ethnicity appropriate and accumulate

into definition of masculinity and femininity (Spelman, 1988). By defining gender in terms of relationality, men and women are distinguished from each other based on their sense of connection or disconnection. Spelman (1988) mentioned that men may deny relationality, but this does not mean there is an absence of connection. I argue, as Spelman (1988, P. 108) stated, “denial of connection is not only compatible with but also perhaps even evidence of the presence of connection”.

Although men brought in a discourse of independence and taking power, power is not straightforward. The data in Chapter 1 demonstrated, for example, the mother’s prominent role and power in deciding upon her son’s prospective brides. A mother’s obligation towards her son is a way of guarantee women against vulnerability due to a weak marital relationship regarding polygamy and repudiation in patriarchal Muslim Arab culture, where feelings for the husband are displaced onto the male child (Cohen-Mor, 2013; Mernissi, 2011). This creates structural instability in the family unit. According to Cohen-Mor (2013), a weak marital relationship is compensated for by a strong mother–son relationship, a situation that creates resentment and alienation between mother and daughter.

Interestingly, female participants like Sahad and Salma emphasised their strong attachment to their father, and not to their mother. They said, respectively:

When I was a child, I spent most of my time with my father in his library reading with him, and he had more of an effect on my personality than my mother, although we lived in the same house; [...] My father understood and talked with me more than my mother.
(Sahad, 33-year-old woman)

This situation leads a daughter to direct her strong attachment, reliance and credit to her father and not her husband. Most girls in Saudi Arabia grow up with the proverb “each girl admires her father” (*kul fatat be abiha muijabah*), to the degree that a girl wants her husband to have the attributes of her father. Salma, a case in point, compared the position of her father with her husband and informed us that:

When my father does not allow me to do something, he is worried about me. But when my husband does not allow me, it does not mean he is worried about me. (Salma, 26 years old)

Salma believes that her father’s “love” (nurturance) is not in question when he wields his “power” over her to regulate her behaviour. Salma referred to what Joseph (1999b) described as the honour–shame complex instrument, whereby a woman’s modesty and discipline are supposed to uphold her family honour and her familial men—her father and brother (and even her parental uncles and male cousins. In his study on Jordanian villages, Antoun (1968) differentiated between conditions under which parental males and husbands responded to shame and honour relating to women’s conduct. Antoun (1968, p. 22) found a divided honour in the responsibility of a married woman and her dual loyalty to her father and family of birth and to her husband and his family. A married woman is a member of two families, and her conduct affects the honour of both (Antoun, 1968). The differences are that her father (and parental males in general) handles any of her immoral conduct and can discipline her, but her husband handles her good behaviour (Joseph, 1999b). Notably, men’s authority and women’s submission are not exclusive. Men’s duties vary based on their situation and according to individual cases (Bourdieu, 1966). From this logic, (young) men and women not only accept submission but can also still operate within the existing power and benefit from it (Sharabi, 1993).

Additionally, mother–son attachments undermine the marital relationship for the son. A mother’s weak marital relationship leaves her dependent on her son, a situation that produces exceptional contention, resentment and hostility between the son’s wife and his mother. A mother frequently meddles in her son’s conjugal life. The mother–son–wife triangle affects the emotional atmosphere in the family and children’s advancement. The vulnerability of Arab masculinity is disclosed in its powerlessness to resolve the tension between mother and wife, who make conflicting claims to a son’s/husband’s affinity and affections (Cohn-Mor, 2013; Mernissi, 2011). This tension was manifested in the participants’ accounts (described in detail in Chapter 4).

However, building on Kandiyoti (2014), I argue that a mother’s investment in her son’s life is not caused only by a weak marital relationship, despite participants referring to distant fathers and mothers’ over-involvement with their sons. Rather, as Kandiyoti (2014) stated, this is “due to the sheer complexity of the societies in question and the varied context in which male roles are enacted”. When mentioning marital status, the participants did not indicate whether they grew up in a polygynous household. Salem’s and Eman’s insights about mothers showed that a man is expected to be close to his mother despite being expected, as a child, (in Saudi Arabia and other Arab cultures) to legally follow his father (Joseph, 1999c). This kind of mother–son relationship contrasts with the father–son relationship, which is characterised by hierarchy and hostility and is close and strong. As Joseph (1999c) argued, a husband’s primary attachment is to his mother and not his wife, whereas a wife’s primary attachment is to her son. The attachment of the mother to her son would not be consolidated by the structure of polygamy and the vulnerability that results from the threat of losing her husband due to his right to divorce under Islamic law. This is a core value of Arab culture (as patriarchal and, in this case, privileging seniors), regardless of their

religious affiliation. For example, Joseph (1999b), in her exploration of Arab Lebanon, found the same for Muslim and Christian spouses for whom divorce is not permitted, hence these women are not at risk of losing a husband, and yet there is still a strong attachment between mother and son. The strong mother–son relationship and son–mother affinity indicates that the core values of the Arab honour code and mutual rights and obligations are shared by Arabs and cross religious boundaries to weave the fabric of family life (Cohen-Mor, 2013).

However, it would be unlikely, as Joseph (1999b) emphasised, that in a patrilineal context society would accept a son following his maternal uncles to the degree that a son (and daughters) identifies more with his mother and her family than with the father’s family. However, I found that this was not necessarily true in the lives of the participants. For example, Muaad, a 22-year-old single man, described this closeness and strong attachment to his maternal uncles, who play a role in his discipline:

The most effects on my personality have been my family – my *umman* and *khawwal* [uncles from my father’s and mother’s sides, respectively] [...] especially my *khawwal*, as sons always follow their mother.

It is perhaps a paradox of patriarchal patrilineage, which reckons descent through the male line that a close mother–son attachment would not threaten the father or the patriarchal authority of the kinship structure (Joseph, 1999b). It could be that patriarchy and patrilineality are so firmly in place that maternal affinity offers no significant challenges to the grounding assumptions of the Saudi family organisation, rather marriage consolidates it (Joseph, 1999b). This explains why families prefer endogamous marriage for their offspring in the case of *Ibn ’amm* or tribal marriage. In an endogamous marriage, the mother and father’s relatives are the same; hence, a strong connection between the son and the mother’s family in an endogamous marriage would

enforce the family unit, sharing also a strong connection to the father's family. In any case, maternal uncles are vesting power in a familial male and, hence, enforcing the general principle of patriarchy. Therefore, men's experiences in the family regarding their older father and mother would be part of a complex picture that "must be taken in its entirety to make sense of the layering of experiences that constitute one's sense of gender" (Kandiyoti, 2014, p. 190).

After highlighting a man's formative experience as a male child, the following section considers men's experience of manliness in relation to the qualities of masculinity that they should demonstrate with women and other men, and the pleasure and difficulties experienced by the male subject.

6.3. Negotiation of "freedom" and responsibility

Being relational and responsible are emergent themes in the narratives of the male participants, regarding their internalisation of their role as men. Male participants discussed experiencing their masculinity in relation to their close relatives as a way of enactment of agency. Sons are expected to care for their ageing parents while fulfilling their obligations to their family (to their wives and children), and those obligations increase as the family matures. A man's duty to his sisters (and younger brothers if the father is quite elderly or has passed away) always competes with his duties to his parents, wife, and children (Joseph, 1999c). Salem, Muaad and Eman highlighted the experiences of being relational, which requires them to be responsible for their parents, young siblings, and their own families (their wives and children). Muaad, a 22-year-old single man, indicated that:

Besides family, work is the most important because after you are 30 years old, you will be caught up in responsibilities: marriage, children, and maybe your parents will die, and you will have to nurture your siblings. And when your parents start ageing, you will take care of them.

Salem also explained that:

Freedom means that you do not have to live with constraints. [...] For example, a married man will be responsible for his family. Or even if he isn't [is not] married, he handles his [natal] family, his mother and brothers. I do not view this as something negative, but I thought that a man's older siblings would perform their duties for him and provide pocket money for him. (Salem, 25-year-old single man)

Eman, a 27-year-old woman, observed:

A man, even though he is a man, is relational. There is not a complete separateness. He must be connected to his family and his mother.

Muaad discussed his caring role for his own siblings, as well as his parents, and he knew that one day he would take over his father's place within the household. When he mentioned caring for his parents, he referred to a customary male role in Arab culture that involves caring for ageing parents, a role that would not be familiar to a Western reader, where caring for parents is predominantly performed by women (Cohn-Mor, 2013). Custom dictates that a daughter's allegiance is to her husband when she marries (and where a mother's relationship to her son is close and strong), although a daughter legally remains part of her father's descent group, and submission and credit are devoted to her father, as we touched upon earlier. According to Cohn-Mor (2013), due to the extended and patrilocal nature of the traditional Arab family, a newlywed

couple resides in the home of the husband's family. Hence, only the son keeps on living with his parents, whereas the daughter leaves her parental home upon marriage and joins her husband and his family – unless she is married to her paternal cousin, *ibn 'amm*. I want to argue this is the norm in Saudi society, though women in Saudi society do devote care to parents, especially when they have an independent income.

Although Salem's narrative was preoccupied with freedom, yearning to be free from the demands of other people contradicts the pleasure of the security that others provide. This was also the pleasure that Sami lost when he moved to study abroad:

Being away from family is not easy, especially in Saudi society. Families are very close to their children. Travel abroad has an impact on one's independence, and because of that, here in Saudi Arabia, there must be a familial commitment. (Sami, 27-year-old man)

Salem's and Sami's narrative contradicts the normative assumption of liberal thought about freedom; that is, every human being has an innate desire for freedom from constraint (duties and responsibilities) (Mahmood, 2005). According to Joseph (2012, p.19), being relational essentially entails claims on others and responsibility, and "to be unclaimed is to be outside of the society" (Joseph, 2012, p.19). Indeed, As Lawler (2014) informed us, freedom would solve these issues experienced by these men in terms of being responsible. However, freedom would undermine identity, as Lawler (2014, p. 169) said: "if the identity is forged on the basis of the pain it inflicts, to take away the pain is effectively to remove the identity." In this context, what Brown (1993) called "wounded attachments" leads to misrecognised identity. The difficulties experienced by these men does not reveal their true identity (Lawler, 2014). According to Lawler (2014, p.169), Brown (1993) suggested that a political claim shifts from "I am" to "I want". As

Brown (1993, 407) put it: “I am” – with its defensive closure on identity, its insistence on the fixity of position, and its equation of social with moral positioning – with the language of reflexive “wanting”?”

In addition, Salman’s and Sami’s understanding of obligation is different from repression, which simply forces the individual to obey. Salman said:

I feel our freedom in our understanding is *al’iinsania* [humanity]. By this, I mean that when someone has grown up, they want to be close to their parents. I feel that both Saudi sons and daughters are 100% convinced that they are free, but still, they are surrounded by their parents and give *ber* to them. (Salman, 29-year-old single man)

Our customs govern us in some matters. I am currently living in my father’s house. My father is a big part of my life, so I am not independent. But this is my tradition and my custom, and this is what I want. I want to be close to him. (Sami, 27-year-old married man)

Salman and Sami articulated that they were liberal while still being close to their parents. More importantly, this position is based on their choice. Their narrative echoed by Wafa, a female participant who said that:

I am not saying disobey your parents: No, you should respect their decisions. But there should be dialogue and negotiation within families. The Prophet advised parents not to educate children as the parents were brought up. It is difficult to live in the past. (Wafa, 33-year-old single woman, Master’s degree)

This narrative suggests that a comparison of the power dynamic between parents and child does not literally mean “equality” or resisting the parental order. As Al- Ruwaitea (2014) explained, obedience does not mean disclosing an individual’s freedom, even if it is dedicated to parents. Obedience within a family cannot be classified as “negative” and damaging to the individual; instead, it represents humility, acknowledgement and the mercy of their parents, albeit with a “polite” power asymmetry and not from fear or vulnerability (Al- Ruwaitea, 2014). This moral behaviour is important for understanding participants’ ethical formation as relational, and the substance of moral ethics is “positive”, as Mahmood (2005) articulated.

Sami, Wafa, and Salman believed they could develop their freedom, despite subordination to their parents. To *ber* parents is an ethical position that requires attending to their needs and being kind to them. Kindness, according to Philips and Taylor (2009), is seen as “bothering” if it is forced, whereas it is a moral commitment we are not bothered of unless we are forced to. As Phillips and Taylor (2009, p. 53) stated, “We are therefore twofold: first, our genuine kindness makes us unobliging, less susceptible to moral coercion from within and without. By refusing the extortion of kindness, we allow it to be a pleasure. And second, once we allow it as a pleasure, it makes us more porous, less insulated and separated from others.” I argue, as informed by a psychological analysis on kindness, that humility towards parents and voluntarily attending to parents’ needs is a moral obligation that these participants were not bothered to attach to parents. Arguably, this position is helpful for understanding identity formation not only regarding how it is embodied by the individual but also in terms of the power of individuals to disposition themselves (Mahmood, 2005). Thereby, norms become a way to appraise behaviour and construct appropriate individuals, or what Abu-Lughod (1986) called *agel*, a social since of an honourable, mature person (as explained in Chapter 5). *Agel* can be understood, as Foucault

(1995) argued, as the observing of a norm that is a means of power through which the norm is established. According to Mahmood (2005), Foucault's understanding of ethics encompasses the activity of practice and desire that is required for a certain way of life and embedded as virtues. Ethics are not an "idea" or fixed "regulatory" norm that implies a universal understanding and validation of a "good life". We should think of ethics as specific and local, and considering particular procedures and discourses through which profoundly explicit moral subjects are framed (Wadud, 2005).

In this context, freedom is compatible with subordination with parents, a notion through which the participants like Salman "transform the self into willing subject of particular moral discourse" (Mahmood, 2005; p. 28). Ethical conduct is not judged by accomplishing social objectives but enacts objectives in a way that it is supposed to. This way of inhabiting norms as "an effect of modality of power through a set of moral codes that summon a subject to constitute herself in accord with its precepts" (Mahmood, 2005, p. 28).

6.4. Performing masculinity

Building on Kandiyoti (2014) and Lindisfarne (2017), in relation to problematising hegemonic masculinity, I argue that it is time to contextualise the theoretical move on less circular abroach to treat gender as a contested discourse. Lindisfarne (2017) suggested that people make gender themselves and that gendered identities may be reified to express differences between men and women while simultaneously defining inequalities within these categories. In this section, I aim to raise questions that arise through treating "honour and shame" as concepts understood aspects contributing to men's domination and exclusive power over women.

I want first to outline the components of the code of masculinity in Arab culture. The origin of the code can be traced to pre-Islamic honour compromises, as Patai (2007) has mentioned. It encompasses bravery (*hamasa*) in battle and manliness (*muruwwa*), which comprises traits such as patience in misfortune, seeking revenge, protection of the weak and defence of the strong. Loyalty, fidelity and generosity (*diyafa*) are also traits of *muruwwa*. All of these attributes add up to a man's honour, which he is supposed to defend regardless of the sacrifice required. According to Al-Ruwaitea (2014), reputation has two sides: one (shame) is very negative, while the other (privilege and worth) is positive. Patai (2007) stressed that all these traits have continued to occupy a central position in Arab ethics and are regarded as the most highly prized personal qualities.

This section focuses on troubling emotions of shame, while masculinity is addressed in relation to family prestige and femininity. This section also raises the question whether, if a man is “independent” and has a secure position in his family, should he feel shame?

6.4.1. Masculinity in relation to protecting honour

The pressure of not being masculine enough leads men to conform to the code of masculinity, overriding any other consideration. This is because a man's honour is tied to protecting his family's reputation or adding upward mobility to family (Al- Ruwaitea, 2014). Sarah and Muaad informed us about situations in which men are subjected to shame:

I'm sure that my father did something that he did not want to do. But he, for sure, he did not want it. [...] There are traditions and customs that he is not satisfied with, but he does them because he has to do them so that he will not be criticised. For example, how we marry. There are many people who, like my father, conform to traditions that they are not

convinced about. My husband got his sister to marry in the same manner that my father would have done. He must do it because, if his father were alive, he would have got his daughters to marry in that way, even knowing that three of his sisters are divorced from their husbands because of this tradition. (Sarah, 32-year-old married female, bachelor's degree)

Sarah narrated how her father and her husband, as male guardians, feel pressured to conform to the social norms of how men should protect their honour through tribal endogamous marriage. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 4, this form of marriage involves the violation of a woman's religious right to see her suitor before agreeing to proceed with the marriage, which would risk losing the family's reputation. Shame complicates the lives of men and their failure strips away their family's pride and their prestigious status. Shame was demonstrated in this example, when Sarah's father and husband wanted to be confirmed among men who are in the same class as them (Lindisfarne, 2017; Kabesh, 2013). This means men must make a painful choice between safeguarding their honour or losing the ability to restrain their female dependants. Avoiding humiliation can explain why masculine subjects conform to moral codes to avoid exclusion. This was evidenced by Muaad, who said:

We would conform to the moral code and take it into consideration in everything we do to avoid social stigma. (Muaad, 22-year-old man)

When I asked him to explain why he holds this position, he said that humiliation imposed by others should be avoided:

For example, if someone had daughters and he was very relaxed with his daughters, they would flaunt not wearing their hijab or not covering their faces when they were old

enough, or even his son would be seen in bad places or wearing bad clothes or having a bad hair style. If the father did not have a say, he would have to take action, or he would be criticised. People would preach to you. If you have someone preaches to you, this means that you made a huge mistake. (Muaad, 22-year-old single male, bachelor's degree)

“Preaching”, as understood by Muaad, is embarrassing, and leads to shame and comments that a man is not good enough because he is unable to control his subordinates according to socially prescribed conduct. In such a situation, as described by Bourdieu (1966, p. 2012), a “true man cannot be other than a man of honour”. Bourdieu (1966) specified that in groups whose members are well known to each other, people are constantly exercising control in the light of public opinion, and community sentiment is experienced with the greatest possible intensity. Within this closed circle, in which everybody knows each other (Saudi society is based on families and kingroup) and there is little chance of escape to live with others, one is always under the gaze of others, and thus every individual experiences deep anxiety about “people’s words” (Bourdieu, 1966).

Pleck’s (1981) new paradigm to reconstruct masculine identity is relevant here in analysing the strain resulting from gender roles that leads to over-conformity rather than the rejection of social norms related to masculinity. This kind of conduct, according to Pleck (1981), is ascribed to the overwhelming uneasiness or even dread resulting from someone not adjusting to social expectations. Violation of gender roles provokes sanctions ranging from public embarrassment and social judgment to exclusion. Sami’s, Muaad’s and Sarah’s father’s narratives derive impetus from the notion of “hegemonic” masculinity, but they also portray a nuanced interpretation of honour. According to Lindisfarne (2017), men’s domination over women (and

men) is twofold: a man's commitment to the ideal of honour as judged by others (relatives, neighbours, etc.); and the man's honour as he sees himself, not in relation to a woman's conduct (and apparently not in these examples above), but in relation to those men who would challenge his authority as a surrogate father and brother (Lindisfarne, 2017). Hence, the idea of honour or dishonour is connected to the public face of masculinity, where violence and power may be the means by which they can reassert an illusion of wholeness. However, violence or exercising power over women becomes a painful way to restore the imagined ideal, and contradicts the basis of honour itself whereby an honourable man should care for women and children, Nor does the reasoning deal with women as competition in Bedouin ethic should be held based on equality (Bourdieu, 1966). Bourdieu (1966, p. 212), in his study on honour in Algeria, wrote that:

The fear of collective reprobation and shame, [...] the negative aspect of the point of honour, is such that it compels a man most lacking in self-esteem to conform, with constraint and necessity, to the dictates of honour.

This builds on what I highlight in Chapter 5, that women are complicit with patriarchy, evidenced by Sarah's words, "a daughter does not say no to her father". I want to argue that women submit willingly to family law, and willingly submit to their father and brother because of sharing the family's honour and saving face. As Spelman (1988, p. 105) stated, "it is necessary to reintroduce [race] when describing the differences [...] between men and women". Women celebrate their relationships, class, ethnicity and nationality. Reflecting on Spelman's (1988) Chodorow (1978) analysis of domination, I argue that if gender is separated from other identities – class and ethnicity – how can we explain the attitudes of those who enjoyed these privileges, and understand honour as a discipline for women? This narrative may suggest that honour and conformity are characteristics of a society in which the relationship with others,

through their intensity, intimacy and continuity, takes precedence over the relationship one has with oneself, hence the individual learns the truth about himself through interconnectivity with others (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014; Bourdieu, 1966). Truth and self-actualisation become inseparable from being and truth, which others acknowledge as being inherent in masculinity (Lawler, 1999; Bourdieu, 1966).

However, Muaad, Salman and Amal considered how social judgment was harsher at the time of *Sahwah*, which adds further weight to shame. They specified that religious authority was expressed in symbolic forms by imposing styles of clothing (for both genders), in family law and in denouncing social and entertainment activities, such as music and cinema. They became symbols that informed members about their identity as a group (as a national identity) and that helped the group live together cohesively. Muaad, Salman and Amal narrated, respectively:

My parents' generation was stuck on stressing *ada'* and *tagalied* to the degree that they [tradition and custom] led to a fear of people more than to a fear of *rabah* (their God). Listening to songs; in the past, it was forbidden. But when you were by yourself, you listened and were happy. They have to fear *Allah* first of all. (Muaad, 22-year-old single male, bachelor's degree)

The environment where we were, our familial surroundings, included my *amta* (aunts from father's side), *amm* (uncles from father's side), *khalat* (aunts from mother's side), and *khawal* (uncles from mother's side), and the school was really conservative. This resulted in my having two personalities: one personality in front of people so that I [can] fit into the society and all that was acceptable; another personality for my family [mother

and father], who accepted anything and there were no complications. (Salman, 29-year-old single male)

We travel with my father without covering our faces, even in the Gulf. There is no problem. But I know this has [a] high value. We know that previously, we did not have our faces uncovered inside the country because of him. (Amal, 33-year-old divorced female, Master's degree)

Muaad and Salman referred to the separation of the public and private lives of men, who projected two types of personality: one to the outside, his family, and community; and the other to himself. This is because the symbolic elements of religion became symbols of identity, distinguishing between who belongs and who does not. Hence, people feel flexible in their practices either with their close, intimate family members' who are not in public' or when they are outside the country, as in the case of Amal's father³³, far from the public gaze.

This narratives show the power of the duality of shame and honour in regulating masculine behaviour. The regulatory instrument is conformity to the moral code, and they will change their behaviour when outside the group because the controller, that is, the other: family in-group, or relative or even national citizens because these precise reduced to social folklore, thereby, has symbolised national code for honourable citizens. Al-Ruwaitea (2014) argued that honour and shame in a collectivist society, such as Saudi Arabia, are obsessions that make people predict others' behaviours. According to Al-Ruwaitea (2014) in a collectivist society, the "others" and what they think and perceive about "me", as a person, are crucial and related to self-esteem.

³³ My focus here is not the veil, but Amal's father's stance of being flexible outside the country unlike his position inside the country, where he insists on conforming to the moral order.

Thus, an individual's behaviour conforms outwardly to the ethical demands of social norms, but the substance of the behaviour is neglected (Cohen-More, 2013). Indeed, Muaad, Salman, and Amal specified the local concept of saving face (*hefiz mae alwajh*), a concept related to shame-honour, which Patai (2007) explained as the outward appearance of honour where a man in all circumstances must be wary lest his name be blackened. He should consistently endeavour to uphold his name and that of his kinship group. This "tyranny of the face", that is, the strain of persevering to save face at all costs, is imperative in gauging one's activities and words.

Subsequently, what motivates a person to obey the rules, according to Al-Ruwaitea (2014), is 'Ayb, avoidance of guilt, or even more if something is religiously forbidden (*haram*), which is taught to a man using shaming techniques in his socialisation process. Al-Ruwaitea (2014) argued that the motivation here is collectivism versus religion, as the former is used mostly for controlling behaviour and defining inclusion and exclusion. Shame and honour are the most controlling instruments and can become obsessions, curbing spontaneity and providing censorship, which a person practises both on himself and on others.

Al-Ruwaitea (2014) argued that shame-and-honour, which emerges from the importance attached to others (in understanding and evaluating), produces sensitivity to criticism, arrogance and an insistence on not admitting mistakes, limiting the development of a more socialised type of human relationship and fostering hypocrisy and obstinacy. Al-Ruwaitea (2014) and Nydell (2006) argued that this kind of human behaviour, of not admitting a mistake, leads Western-minded people to understand "untruthfulness" or "lying" as acceptable behaviour in collectivist cultures that prioritise saving face or helping the in-group, but they neglect the fact that this behaviour is a cultural product, the function of which is to demonstrate belonging to the in-group. As Nydell (2006, p. 29) stated, "Arabs will rarely admit to errors openly when doing so

will cause them to lose face. To Arabs, honour is more important than facts”. This suggests that honour considerations render it impossible for a subject to assert his own individuality without calling into question family honour and possibly that of his nation as well.

Although the country has now moved towards moderate Islam, Muaad noticed that public opinion and sensitivity from criticism remains significant:

Reputation is serious even now, but in the past it was harsher. It creates a stigma that is difficult to clear. (Muaad, 22-year-old man)

Building on the work of Al-Shuqir (2020) and As Al-Ruwaitea (2014), I argue that it is easy to understand that rigidity in Saudi society is attributed to what it is called “religious establishment” as an identity marker for Saudi society. Al-Ruwaitea (2014) has discussed sensitivity to public opinion caused by people’s desire to avoid uncertainty in potentially contradicting the “old” familiar and acknowledged appropriate behaviours and norms. This avoidance, for Al-Shuqir (2020), became clear in the period of change after the oil boom, when the Islamic movement took on the role of maintaining the moral standing of society and upholding its strict ideology. According to Al-Ruwaitea (2014), it is a fallacy to associate “strictness” with ideology; as we can see, people who claim that they are liberal still embodied a “state of strictness” that appears from their rejection to others. Salman and Muaad, male participants, described a sensitivity that emerged regarding the discussion on “new things” and what is nationally considered religious:

The society is *munqaliq* [conservative]. But honestly, this state of being, honestly, is becoming lighter than before. There were things in the past, I feel, that were socially unacceptable. Say, for example, you cannot talk about anything, such as customs and tradition. This is a chance to talk about it now [in the interview]. Talking about these

things, they [the society] almost forbid it. [...] I talk [speak] here in general about religion, tradition, customs and thoughts on new things. (Salman, 29-year-old single man)

I was thinking, If I tweet every day to express my opinions, what will happen to me? People will be more aware of my opinions, and maybe some of my relatives will talk about it with me to preach to me. On Twitter, as it is a well-known platform, people's irritation rises very quickly. Any tweet may be incorrectly understood, and accordingly, a person could say you were offensive to me. But I'm expressing my opinion, and I did not say that something is anomalous or incompatible. Some people are straight-up offensive and may classify you as a liberal. (Muaad, 22-year-old single man)

In the interview, Salman and Muaad described how it was precarious to discuss new ideas that clashed with common thoughts. As Salman viewed it, he should not shy away from expressing his opinions provided he does not harm anyone or any entities. But Muaad preferred to silence his opinions because others would take them subjectively. As Al-Ruwaitea (2014) explained, this sensitivity is due to the personalisation of any debate when someone specifies that a person has made a mistake in front of others. This is viewed as a reduction of his being and as an insult to his dignity (honour and reputation).

Clearly, in a collectivist culture, the sentiment "I am because we are" is clear in most situations. This is how people like Salman and Muaad adapted their behaviours according to the context. To elaborate on the idea further, Muaad specified that when someone expresses his opinions on controversial topics, such as segregation in public spaces, everyone becomes worried about him:

I remember a person who photographed and posted a photo at a restaurant where the partitions were all closed. And he commented, “What is this country?” People got worked up about it, though some agreed with him.

Al-Ruwaitea (2014) explained that when someone values others’ perceptions of him, he will not admit his opinions on controversial topics unless he will be positively evaluated. Not only will he not state his opinion, but he may also say or do something that contradicts what he believes, if his true opinion might lead to him being negatively evaluated. Therefore, upholding honour is akin to submitting to the name and renown of one’s ancestors, which must remain pure and unsullied and must be protected from offence (Bourdieu (1966). ‘*ird* (honour) is “the cardinal virtue, the basis of the whole patrilineal system, is indeed essentially a respect for one’s lineage, one is proud, and of which intended to be worthy” (Bourdieu, 1966; p. 220). The greater the virtue of one’s ancestors, the more one justifies being proud and showing great attention to correct behaviour to achieve a good reputation and social prestige (Bourdieu, 1966). The character of honour is no less important than the purity of lineage (which women hold). Hence saving honour is not a privilege, but it a duty (Al- Ruwaitea, 2014; Bourdieu, 1966). The next section considers participants’ commentary on their duty to nurture family’s moral worth.

6.4.2. Masculinity and showing honour

From the perspective of gaining social privilege, such as the significance of generosity, present regardless as to whether the recipient is indigent or the giver is protecting a refugee (*aldakheel*), even when the refugee is turning to his enemy (or the enemy’s relative) (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014; Abou-

Lughod, 1986), and even to the extent of “negative” conduct, such as mediation (*wasta*). This seemed to be true for participants Salman and Fahad:

Hosting a guest is a good tradition; it is not an obligation, but it is a good tradition that I wish would last among Saudis forever. (Salman, 29-year-old single man)

If I saw a foreign person, what I inherited from my father and grandfather is that this person is a guest, and I feel that I would have to host him because he is our guest. This is all good; therefore, we inherited it. (Fahad, 27-year-old single man)

Salman and Fahad viewed generosity as a good tradition. When Fahad moved from his birthplace in the southern region of Saudi Arabia to Jeddah, a city in the western region of Saudi Arabia, to study at the university there, Fahad started to look at generosity in a critical way:

When my friend and I went to dine in a restaurant, when we finished, while my friends were washing after they had finished eating, I went straight to pay the bill. I did it many times until my money was gone, but as soon as I had money, I paid for it all again. [...] My friends were criticising me because what I was doing was wrong. (Fahad, 27-year-old single man)

Fahad was critical of extra generosity. In his view, generosity as a value is welcomed, but generosity can be maintained without certain social rituals, such as serving a feast to a few people. But as Muaad and Amal stated, exhibiting extravagance, practised in the form of hosting guests and serving others food and gifts, is a way to boast of the worthiness of the hosts are.

Tribal habits, which they favour with pride or colloquially [the increasing idealism in tribal customs], are what we see among tribes on special occasions. We see wedding

ceremonies in Riyadh, big events and how to present gifts to the groom. How a man swears to divorce his wife, who has lived with him for many years, he abandons her within one minute for a person – sorry – for a certain logic so that the person will accept a specific gift, or for him to have a feast, or for lunch or to dine with me. (Muaad, 22-year-old single man)

Amal also said:

When I thought about generosity in our family, I viewed it as over-generous. But when I thought about it in the cultural context in which my father lived, I felt it was a necessity; it was not an extravagance or luxury. But no one will repay my father lower than the value of his gifts. (Amal, 33-year-old woman)

Muaad and Amal were critical of rituals associated with generosity. But Amal was aware of how these rituals play a social and economic capital role in privileging her family. This reflects how people invest to gain capital not only to gain a reputation, but also to invest in their economic status when it involves material things. This is because, according to the logic of honour, exchanging gifts involves the point of honour to challenge someone to get better of him. Hence, a man is obliged to respond in kind to a gift to avoid being insulted (Bourdieu, 1966). “Thus, communication is effected in a promise between contract and conflict” (Bourdieu, 1966; p.213). The conflict of honour is always implicit in exchange.

As Muaad perceived:

They view these practices from a manhood perspective; the more they do to show their worth, they feel that their prestige and weight among people increases.

The insistence on gaining honour leads men to swear of the most sacred point of honour: “a man ‘swears to divorce his wife’ a temptation to challenge a guest to put him in difficulty to accept a gift or invitation, which can be understood as ‘I am insisting that you appreciate my query to the degree that my reputation (worth) is in danger of being ruined (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). Therefore, accepting the gift or invitation shows that the recipient is honourable because he protects the sacred point of honour.

The key point of honour is not charting inequality or overcoming it; rather, it binds people and provides solidarity, social cohesion, and integration (Anthias, 2007). Hence, honouring kinship in this manner became a form of social capital due to its transferability and expected return.

Subsequently, shame is an important mechanism whereby one’s position in the hierarchical order is based on symbolic and cultural resources, which themselves provide access to the form of life that are valued and provide an opportunity to access social life (Anthias, 2007).

Indeed, relationality has reinforced solidarity and support for family members. Whereas Sarah was disappointed because she was not allowed to see her suitor, she viewed her relative as a means by which she could gain social capital:

If I talk to you as a disgruntled person about those customs and traditions, I would say it is bad and backward. But if I speak as an ‘*agl* [social] person, I will say that relatives have positive aspects. For example, when someone has a problem, all people help him to overcome it. (Sarah, 32-year-old woman)

Sarah narrated how her relatives supported family members when they had crises, recalling a story about when her sister-in-law was ill and had to leave the country for treatment. Men in her family showed solidarity by getting all the paperwork processed for her. This suggests, as Joseph

(2005) stated, that the relationships and rationalities of family/families are the most powerful kind of morality behind the ease of movement between/among social/domestic spheres that are discursively constructed as separate. According to Al- Ruwaitea (2014), mediation (*wasta*) does not mean absence of law, but there are cultural gaps between writing laws and culture. We can argue that, in collectivist cultures like Saudi Arabia, where face-to-face relationships still have value (in cities as well as rural), individuals could easily approach those who occupy a certain position or who are close to them (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). Insofar as state-organised family ties are reinforced by a structure of family morality, along with religious obligations to relatives, people find it appealing to show their solidarity to their families to avoid shame. Although they can follow a bureaucratic process to access services, they can alternatively access state services by tapping into a relative's network. That Arabic adage, "I against my brother; my brother and I against my cousin; my cousin and I against [the stranger]" (Joseph, 2003, p. 196), reflects the collectivist mindset towards justice.

Muhannad and Amal investigated the fluid movement of relationships and resources among public/domestic domains.

Informal face-to-face relationships make people build informal relationships with those who occupy a position to take advantage of public services. (Muhannad, 28-year-old single man)

Honesty and sincerity are values of solid religion. Work needs values such as these to be successful. These values are acknowledged, and all call for them, and they are Islamic values. But these are rarely practised. (Amal, 33-year-old woman)

There is now a government agenda to fight corruption and abuse of power, and to safeguard the public good on the grounds of the Islamic principle of rights. Building on Al-Shuqir (2020) and Mahmood (2005), I argue that this negotiation reflects their agency to submit their everyday life to an indigenous approach: a tradition of Islam to respond to local needs and aspirations in contemporary Saudi Arabia. Therefore, religious framework here is not merely a matter of the past; it is still a vital part of the discourse on modernity and is compatible with law and formal relations.

Muaad stated that investing in these rituals is irrational because a Bedouin's nomadic life has faded away and they no longer need worth to lend them more power/status as against other tribes:

I see that everyone has become non-nomad; all are residents of villages and hamlets.

Basically, when a person kills another person, how does the victim's family trade on his neck. I mean, by asking for high *deyah* [blood money], what can be said about him is myth. An amount exceeding 20 million to pardon the murderer – as if their son was a commodity. (Muaad, 22-year-old single man)

Muaad implicitly understood that under the national state, tribes do not need to repay for an insult on their kin blood. This is because, according to Muaad, “there is a defined amount of blood penalty in Islam”. But what is practised, family or in-group, ask for a high blood penalty. This would be because, normatively, tribes refuse *deyah* because the insult directed on the most sacred ‘the blood’; whoever accepted it is said that such a man accepts to eat his brother's blood. Hence, asking for an unattainable amount of money to insult and challenge the murder's family (Bourdieu, 1966). This suggests that the duty of blood-revenge was abandoned with the change from Bedouin society to modern states and with it what is regarded as proud manhood. As with

honour killings, a man winds up stuck in an impossible predicament, experiencing a tough choice: “either to safeguard his honour and lose his humanity or to safeguard his humanity and lose his honour” (Cohen-Mor, 2013, p. 50).

This ritual practice would be impossible for Sami, who felt, as explained in Chapter 4, burdened to meet the demands for a luxury wedding ceremony, and Muna, a female participant, who referred to women’s tendency to ask their husband to give them more luxurious products to show off their status and how worthy they are. The foregoing narratives show that many norms of masculinity, as in the case of this study, are difficult to live up to. As Cohen-Mor (2013) summarises, the male gender roles of provider and protector are upheld with paradoxes and contradictions. The participants found that their masculine identity was torn between being an autonomous “man” and conforming to moral codes of masculinity, personal aspirations, family obligations, patriarchal ideology and objective reality. At times, the masculine normative role requires a response that conflicts with a man’s own judgment and humanity. Should he protect his honour at all costs? Should he allow his wife to work outside the home or stoically carry the heavy burden of being the sole breadwinner in the family? Such ambiguities and stresses, conflicting demands and expectations, can generate feelings of inadequacy, frustration, rage and alienation in Arab men (Cohen-Mor, 2013). What adds to inconsistencies in the moral code of masculinity is changes in the landscape of the labour force and what happens as a consequence of changes in organising families, which have made it difficult for men to secure masculinity, such as conforming to a code of shame and generously serving others more than they can afford, and the burden that men feel to meet demands to pay a high dowry for their bride, luxury gifts for their wife, and maintaining the livelihood of their own family, as well as their natal family if the father has died (refer to Chapter 4). However, almost all women in this study returned to the

position that men should be the breadwinner. To cope with this complexity, male participants sometimes brought the moral code of masculinity into their critical scrutiny. This is the narrative in the following section.

6.5. Strategies to navigate through honour

Male participants narrated how shame avoidance associates with lack of progression. The participants instead call for the adoption of a religious framework to remedy problems associated with gender relation and submission. Narrative in this sub-section provides an insight into how male participants looked at religion as a holistic framework based on which rights and obligations should be given.

Viewing the self as relational and submissive to parents, as informed by religious and familial honour discourse, does not mean that repression forces individuals to obey parents. As Gary (2005) convincingly argued, Islam and the honour order may intersect in several ways, but these also provide contradictions. The idea here is that Islam provides higher rules that indict the manipulative quest for honour and oppressive rule (Gary, 2005). Although Islam continues to preserve patriarchal beliefs about respecting seniority and ritual practices, it still urges individuals to adjust to its framework of creating human being as agent. In participants' understanding, matters should be guided by the Islamic ethic of the mature self, of "giving the self over to God and subordinating the self to doing and being good" (Kabesh, 2013, p. 105). In Muaad's and Sami's narratives, alongside the relation of submission, there is a powerful injunction towards personal responsibility. They said:

You must consider the religious side at first, and then your parents. (Muaad, 22-year-old man)

Frankly, I mean the person has his principles [ethics]. I mean, it is not necessarily the conditions and customs that we experienced when we were children or were raised by. I see that everyone fulfils his demands, but because our society is Islamic, it is governed by the Qu'ran and the Sunnah, and we must live by these. (Sami, 27-year-old married male, Master's degree)

Muaad and Sami believed that Islam values independent and individual judges based on their own conduct. A fundamental truth that serves as the foundation for a system of belief and a chain of reasoning should not be an obsession with customs. Alongside surrender to *Allah* (God), there is powerful injunction towards independent reasoning in finding a solution to daily life questions (Kabesh, 2013; Wadud, 2005). Al-Ruwaitea (2014) explained that individuals are held responsible in Islam based on their individual conduct. Individuals are governed by their intellectual integrity, emotional independence and self-evaluation to position themselves in changing socio-cultural circumstances. Islam balances extremes of a collectivist culture that excludes individual integrity and selfish individualism. This balance takes from the collectivist feelings of others and altruism (*Alethar*), without transcending social justice (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). Hence, *Alethar* and interdependence in the state of intellectual independence is voluntary submission motivated by individual-self attitudes that are not forced by social norms. Islam urges humility towards parents and being close to relatives, although simultaneously, it does not advocate for intellectual dependence of the group and submission to parents and relatives in the case of falsehood (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). What can be understood here is that “methods of subjectivation” powerfully impact masculine experience (Foucault, 1980). While Foucault

concentrates on an individual's effort that is not voluntarist, the subject is shaped within the limits of formative practices. I argue that Mahmood's (2006) injunction not to deny the nuances of being human, especially for Muslim subjects, who often refuse the complexity of inhabiting masculine identity. As Mahmood (2005) argued, different techniques used by individuals to establish connections with one's truth power are a vital component of ethical examination in that they comprise a way of depicting the constitution of the ethical subject and its way of transformation. In the case of Muaad and Sami, they realised themselves within a pious framework where "power relations centre on knowledge of the self and the ability to articulate and understand one's inner being" (Kabesh, 2013, p. 70). In this nexus of the ethical affirmation of faith, the outer self is not separable from the inner self (Mahmood, 2005).

Men's narratives reflect the anxiety of being caught in failing to keep up and thereby being left behind—of being past one's use-by date. Fahad provided an example of how Arabs' obsession with their feuds and their dreams about past glories closed women wishes. Fahad told us that:

Idolaters worshipped idols because they saw this as their custom and tradition. Because our family used to do it, we did the same. There were wrong things. (Fahad, 27-year-old single man)

Fahad told us that Arabs refused to submit to Islam out of uncertainty avoidance and fear of shame for changing the religion of their parents and grandparents. Submitting to Islam was considered a violation of power relations and submission to the father's and grandfather's glory. It is self-defence to assert superiority. The discussion here is not about individual honour but about insulting the group's (e.g. tribe, kin group, family) honour by changing commitment to a social belief. What Fahad is negotiating here is whether to take the past as a blanket that covers

our eyes and insists on living according to what the past dictates or returning to history to learn the lesson that insisting on the past closes our mind like our eyes and leads us to lose out.

While the emphasis was moving beyond past glories, which apparently demonstrated its unusefulness, anxieties also exist that the individual will not be fit for purpose. Masculinity (as protector), rather, becomes not a source of pride but rather a cause of shame for male participants like Muhannad, Musa and Fahad and they discussed how masculine code was a barrier to women's independence in the past, casting women as representing the collective honour of the society. Musa and Muhannad, respectively, observed:

Now, we are starting to see several things being investigated. I mean that women seemed to be liberated from things that were, unfortunately, guaranteed by religious rights and these rights were abused. The closest example of what happened nearly a year ago was allowing women to drive. I see that this has been one of her rights for ages. Women used to ride camels; this was not forbidden in *Shari'a*. Unfortunately, some consider the negative consequences of driving a car. But the ban does not have to be due to these negatives. If something is a person's right, he or she must take it even if it has negative effects. I see that the negatives are attributed to the person who does this for positive reasons. (Muhannad, 28-year-old single man)

Musa explained:

I see there are people who do not accept women driving. They say it is *haram*. There is no evidence that it is *haram*. This is not my business to decide. Because driving is a new thing and was not allowed in the past, it is like when the education of women in the Kingdom started; it was *haram* and then it became normal. It is a matter of time. Not

everything new is *haram*. The things that contradict the *Qu'ran* and the Prophet's sayings indicate what *haram* is. But if the thing is without proof indicating it is *haram*, it is not *haram*, and has no relation to *religion*. (Musa, 22-year-old single man)

Praise to *Allah*, there is greater awareness. I see those bad things about what I observed are being swept out. Women should not be banned from education, from having a job, from driving a car, from taking her own decisions in her life, like about marriage. (Fahad, 27-year-old single man)

Muhannad, Musa and Fahad informed us that women's matters, such as education, driving and working, were disputed over in Saudi Arabia. What they recognised was that there was no legal base in *Shari'a* to ban women's desires. The narrative here attracts our attention to how religious practice is coloured with the background of the Arab culture. Al-Ruwaitea (2014) specified that women have not only become a sensitive issue because of their association with ('ird, *Sharaf*). Uncertainty-avoidance is also a strong factor for understanding the motivation for saving women in Saudi Arabia. This is because any new matter disturbs customarily convictions, and therefore the old ritual rules become rafts to escape ambiguity (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). According to Muhannad and Musa, this is not a sufficient reason to stay with what was familiar just only because it saves the ritual convictions. Muhannad referred to a juridical principle in *Shari'a*: preventing mischiefs is better than bringing benefit is valid when there is clear evidence of *haram* in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (prophetic sayings). But banning women's wishes just to avoid uncertainty, according to Muhannad, contradicts Islamic principles of integrity of human beings as agents according to which individuals judge their own conduct. This narrative showed that religion is a holistic approach to solving the problem the Muslim subject faces. How they solve

this contradiction, according to Mernissi (2011), is by subordinating the secular to the religious authority. With men's negotiations concerning their role as protector and defender of honour, they are refusing to adopt stigmatised behaviour. They stress the difference between what is not forbidden by religion but is forbidden by society. Men stigmatise what they see as outdated customs, emphasising the importance of conformity to Islam as a source of their moral conducts. This is because if customs related to protecting women do not reflect historical reality then it is a product of a past imagined. This can explain why participants draw a difference between religion and tradition and use words like *halal*, *haram*, *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, since, according to Mernissi (2011), this is an acknowledgement that in the Muslim world—like the case of Saudi Arabia—there is no legal system in the Western sense of the word; family law is connected to religion and, therefore, is still ruled by *Shari'a*. Hence, the rights discourse has a different genesis from the secular human rights discourse. There are conceptual differences between Islamic perspectives on 'what' and 'how' rights created (Wadud, 2005).

The participants' negotiation for achieving their true destiny rests on their Islamic framework. The matter here is more complex than what can be reduced to a strict judgment either of "collectivism" or "individuality", where humans use their intellect and awareness to alter their lives. This narrative conveys uncertainty, disappointment and the endurance of the shards of the past. Above all, this narrative was driven by ethical concerns of constantly seeking truth. The participants internalise, though, that acquiring agency requires them to make an obligation to others (e.g. parents and relatives) that necessitates, to use Young's (1997) phrase, asymmetrical reciprocity.

The participants were aware of their complexity in being constructed at the intersection between Arabs' old glories and *sahwah*, with its enduring pattern of the masculine code as a protector and

provider for women. Men in this study negotiated the attributes defining masculinity. They wanted to dismiss their role “protector” as a redundant concept, wanting to abdicate responsibility from the relations of inequality in which they and the women of this study are positioned differentially. Their negotiation was a context-specific one underpinned by political changes that brought about mobilising the country to moderate Islam. This narrative leads me to believe that there is no “hegemonic” or socially dominant masculinity, and that masculinity that is hegemonic at a particular time would involve a particular institutionalisation of patriarchy and a particular strategy for the subordination of women, which coincides with my epistemological position.

This narrative reflects that these men’s position can sufficiently justify how they are active in negotiating masculinity as being a protector, defender and considerably a provider and a supporter of women, unlike Kandiyoti’s (1994, p. 140) stance that men who are reflexive are “rebellious against their lack of emancipation from parental control”. Following Mernissi (2011), I argue that because men in this study see how it is difficult to meet the demands of this code of masculinity, especially in the changing economic and political landscape, they understand how the oppression of women works against men, and they work at liberating women because they view Islam as a holistic approach to life that is compatible with the ontology of creation of the human being as an agent (Wadud, 2005). In other words, to quote Al-Nowaihi (1999, p. 262), these men navigate “with and against family”. Within this, there is a tension between the individual and being relational, and the importance of gender as a category for self-definition (Al-Nowaihi, 1999).

Besides this, what leads me to believe that this is a generational conflict rather than gender is what emerged from Chapter 5, where the women's reference point is not the global international discourse on gender equality but Islamic rights. As Mernissi (2011, p. 36) viewed it,

Whereas the West focuses on women and their claim for equality with men, in Muslim countries, it would tend to focus on the mode of relatedness between the sexes and thus would probably be led by men and women alike.

Hence, if men support women because they are different and complementary, then changes will become the destiny of the different sexes.

Summary

“Patriarchy” and familial structure are what Western feminists’ tend to consider as the source of women’s oppression (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Joseph, 1999a; Kandiyoti, 1994). Not only does such an understanding neglect historical change by representing patriarchy as timeless (Hopkins, 2003; Al-Torki, 1999), but also how men themselves experience the system and whether the privilege they have brings them security or undermines the development of their independence (Cohen-Mor, 2013). Just as men are the beneficiaries of patriarchy, they are also the victims of it, as young men situated at the bottom of the power hierarchy are dependent on “father” authority figures and learn to submit to family members (Cohen-Mor, 2013; Kandiyoti, 1994). However, again, men cannot be understood as simply powerless because their sense of self is relational, and they cannot “resist” relations of dependence (Barakat, 1993). We need to go beyond the normative assumption that men’s reconfiguring of their manhood is not pure for individuation (Al-Nowaihi, 1999). Therefore, I argue that men’s inhabiting gender norms within a changing context highlight the act of their free will to be related and carry their obligation to relational

others. Their reconstruction of masculinity reflects their indigenous religious approach to facing social challenges related to their role as “protectors” and “defenders”. The Islamic ethic, in their view, enables building of alternative social structures whose frameworks respond to their current complexity and acknowledge their heritage.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions: Narratives of Saudi Men and Women Inhabiting Socio-Cultural Norms

7.1. Introduction

This research was concerned with contemporary young Saudi men and women's relations to social norms, their families, religion and tradition. It explores the centrality of relations to family (parents, tribe), as well as religion in inhabiting social norms. Continuing Mahmood's work, the thesis explores how young Saudi men and women inhabit social norms, through their representations of marriage, work, religion and gender identities.

As I argued in Chapter (3), this question has been addressed in the research by drawing on narrative interviews on the urban middle-class in a contemporary context with a sample of 16 Saudi men and women. Therefore, the study is not pertinent to Saudi in general, and I do not claim that my findings which pertained to contemporary Saudi society are or are not relevant 5-10 years of time. I also make an explicit link to Vision 2030 and its temporal influence on power relations between genders, which might have an effect on the findings, although my study is not focusing on nationhood or national identity. However, the three empirical chapters (4, 5 and 6) have offered participants' experiences of marriage and divorce, women's work, sexuality and honour, masculinity and the family dynamic. In this chapter I argue that despite the dominant discourse of the detraditionalisation thesis, religious, tribal and national identities continue to persist. While this thesis does not aim to look for symbolic interpretation of culture, I offered a nuanced analysis of the performative acts of religious, kinship and tribal self-definition to allow

different readings of the subject's power and truth. I argue that participants' everyday experience of relationality reveals the social reality, inclusion and exclusion.

This concluding chapter highlights three conceptual themes on the basis of the empirical findings presented in the preceding chapters. The first theme, *inhabiting norms and relationality*, argues that relationality frames a sense of location and attachment, inclusion and exclusion. It is a context where participants understand "choices", wishes and desires to voluntarily conform to social norms.

The second theme, *the ethic of performative acts of agency*, argues that despite the dominant discourse on secularisation, Saudi men and women in this study believe their everyday practice, behaviour and conduct should be based on religion. This discussion follows with the third theme, *the construction of relational-self through embeddedness*, in which I argue that embeddedness as a descriptive theme is important to understand relationality to capture the balance between individuality and liquidity of the relations and how collectivity counterweights individuality.

After discussing the study's contributions in relation to research questions, I follow through discussing theoretical covering thematic discussion of the finding. This chapter then discuss the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

.

7.2. Contribution to knowledge

The design of the research was shown to be successful at gathering in-depth narrative data suitable for generating in-depth analysis. The research makes a significant contribution to demonstrate the applicability of a narrative research method to explore the lived experience of participants. This method helps to understand the participants' experience of inhabiting norms beyond fixed categories (e.g., nation/Islamic/religious 'traditions') of constructed norms. In light of that there is little research in the English language on Saudi Arabia, young people like this research, this thesis empirically has contributed to stretching the boundary bringing complexities to understand negotiations of norms. When I say the men and women negotiate in a consensual way inhabiting illiberal norms, I do not intend like Yamani (2000) claimed various belonging to regional, tribal, national, and class are complicating the task for younger generation to claim their individuality and status. I mean these participants negotiate with these entities that are not fixed. Relationality means that when individuals challenge or conform to traditions or to values of nationhood, these norms are changed as well, or some of them are. The relationships are symbiotic. All these structures are themselves constituted by the actions of the social actors. When I say an individual is embedded in the structure, they are also empowered by the structure to negotiate with norms. Rather than impose this typification, thanks to narrative methodology, I looked at the experience of the participants whereby I looked at their understanding of terms like *nation/Islamic/religious 'traditions'* beyond fixed categories. Through their negotiation they assert their belonging and distance themselves from those who are defined like others while assigned social status. Narrative methodology has helped us to understand the relationship between participants' negotiation and the social, political and economic context in which they lived, highlighting trajectory and contradiction. By this process of negotiation, the participants

go back and forth to contextualise their arguments, which helps to capture relationality and their embeddedness. I used their words of negotiation of these categories, and I looked at how they used them with the particular effect to understand their way of negotiating and to capture changeability of gender norms as well as continuity of upholding ideal gender norms.

Although the social norms in relation to marriage and asserting professional activity differ according to gender, bringing men's voices to the conversation underlines the social norms to which not only women, but also men, conform, and the importance of collective values for both groups. By bringing in men's voices, this study demonstrates an original contribution of understudied population from a gender perspective, but also contradicts Al-Rasheed's (2013) analysis of women's use of diplomatic negotiation and strong adherence to norms, to defend themselves in a masculine society. Chapter 4 reports men and women participants' experience of norms in relation to marriage. Whereas Chapter 5 and 6 report directly on the participants' experience of feminine and masculine norms. These chapters provide an original contribution to knowledge about the complexities of inhabiting and changing norms and power relations.

Similar to Le Rand (2014), I highlighted that these women still use consensual discourse to negotiate more rights such as self-help and self-development to transform norms of femininity. They contributed to delegitimising family order / reinscribe this order simultaneously. Through a set of modernising policies (education, work, Internet users, change gender policy, segregation level, and economic need for participation), women were influenced by and reinscribed new femininity norms and no longer accept single interpretation of Islamic femininity. Whereas gender hierarchy was highest among urban women in the mothers' generation whose domestic work was strictly horizontal and segregated, the women in this study did not understand gender hierarchy vertically and their relations to the formal institution had become direct. Ideal

interpretation of Islamic femininity does not encounter poor conditions of work for women or abuse of power. This contradiction grounds contemporary contestations among this generation of women. Some adopted these conditions and became educated housewives, reflecting mothers' attitudes, while others break down the ideal women model involving mixed gender workplaces, businesses and aspirations for more public leading roles. The women in this study (as with the men) captured the heterogeneity of the Riyadh population and national substitutes for tribal identity, and the diverse interpretation of Islam as an aspect of social solidarity. Although the current study substantively captures the relational side of inhabiting illiberal norms, it contends that the extent to which women still use self-help discourse and negotiation strategies with families depends on their tendency to value family class, tribal belonging and how they value relationality. This study (unlike A-Torki, 2000 and Kandiyoti, 1988) suggests that women may need less bargaining ability since gender order has become less institutionalised. Thereby, this study argues that political empowerment for women along with women's strategies of negotiations and persistence in taking advantage of newly available choice has been essential to eliminate barriers to women and to the emergence of urban middle-class women as a central group in the reform project. This has an implication on gender boundaries, enabling women to occupy leading positions, and on what it means to be Saudi. Thereby, I argue that gender is reproduced through historical configuration of power relations.

This thesis's narrative contributed to the original capture of historical change in relation to women interviewees. The image of educated women from upper- and middle-class families dominated the representation of Saudi women (Al-Torki, 1986; Al-Munajjed, 1997). However, these views would apply to professional educated women of boom generations and cannot be applied to educated women in this study, especially under the current economic contraction, who

are encouraged to become involved in the labour market due to various political policies, high education, an increased cost of living impacted by consumerist femininity culture, who unlike the boom generation work to fulfil their needs. This image cannot be applied to poor, lower-class and rural women. I hope that the thesis analysis of transforming Saudi women's femininity, which explores the complexity of changing norms, hierarchy and power relations, will help to point out that women's experience is diverse based on generations, class, tribal origin, level of education, and geographical location.

Following on from these issues of specific negotiations of norms helped to answer the first research question, whereas the remainder of the research questions were addressed in each chapter through the participants' negotiation of norms under changing circumstances, in relation to various contradictions of religious, national and family discourse. Within this negotiation they configured their agency through embeddedness and upholding illiberal norms valuing relationality while asserting their individuality using Islam as a framework for modernity. Through all these chapters, these participants linked their experience with their parents' generations which captures different experiences, claiming changing power relations and gender hierarchy, though the beliefs and values of ideal gender norms.

This thesis has theoretically contributed to contesting universalising desires for acting on free will, an assumption embedded in autonomous and individuated subjects based on Western models of liberation and secularism. The thesis's findings offer a lens by which we can understand acting on free will based on voluntary submission to religion and family and kin relations. This is in line with Abu-Lughod (2013), Le Renard (2014); Joseph (2012), Mahmood

(2005), Joseph (1999a) and Abu-Lughod (1986), who argue for exploring agency beyond progressive politics, and to looking closely at complexity of family dynamics about politics, history and economics.

The overall narrative, which is bigger than just answering those research questions. In the following sub-sections, I rise above the questions to take the thesis' empirical and methodological contributions to pushing the boundary of this thesis' theoretical contributions. In the following sub-sections, I draw on exploration of three theoretical key themes: inhabiting norms and relationality, the ethic of the performative act of agency, and the construction of relational selves through embeddedness

7.2.1. Inhabiting norms and relationality

Scholars like Le Renard (2014), Abu-Lughod (2013), Joseph (2012) and Mahmood (2005) are critical of simplistic interpretations of “resistance” in the search of agency. They call for looking at complexity of cultural, social and economic characteristics to think beyond simplistic explanations of men and women as a subject of culture. As argued by Abu-Lughod (2013) (and others, e.g. Susser, 2012), how can we interpret the resistance of Muslim Arab people without attributing it to politics that would not be part of their experience? We need to look for performative practices of norms that are, according to Mahmood (2005, pp. 22–23), more than “consolidated and/or subverted”, or “done/undone”, but people experience and inhabit them in various ways. Whereas Mahmood’s (2005) approach was built mainly on the women’s Islamists movement in Egypt, this framework is useful for to understand how “choices”, “wishes” and “desires” voluntarily conform to social norms that reveal relationality.

Equating resistance with agency set the idea that resistance is the act of one's free will and autonomy. This solidifies the conviction that rights should be defined by choice and freedom, which are considered absent in the Arab world. This obsession with constraints is shared not only by Western liberal feminists but also in regional analysis that analysed people as a subject of politics. It is expressed in persistent worries that Islamic and Arab heritage is mixed with subnational, regional and tribal roots complicating choice for Saudi men and women (e.g. Yamani, 2000). However, far from simply internalising the structure, the participants have demonstrated that they are conscious in their effort to inhabit norms.

In essence, they go through a process of reflection and construction on what is workable and can be carried out as an ethic for their life. In other words, they were navigating through and against the honour order and subordinating family rules to the religious framework which is similar to Le Renard's (2014) (mainly on women). Their main concern is to weigh their desires with their obligation and continuously maintain their status and stability. Even though the participants religiously internalised their right to choose and decide on their personal matters (e.g. marriage and women's *hijab*), they voluntarily decided to submit to socially prescribed moral conduct. Relationality to kin group, sharing history and emotional attachment underpin the participants' negotiation of choices. In this connection, sociologist Smart (2007, p. 36) persuasively argues that:

Sociology has never taken as an imperative that it should direct its gaze exclusively or predominantly towards what matters to people, yet it seems strange that so much of what matters in everyday family life has sparked so little interest in the discipline.

The point that I want to embrace from Smart (2007) is to consider a range of concepts such as memory, embeddedness, relationality and imaginary to show how they may be linked to form a new perspective. I will draw my inference on two examples that emerged from the participants' narratives to demonstrate the connection between the interiority of the social actor and his/her practices. The first example pertains to the participants' choice to involve their families in the process of selecting spouses and aligning their marital choice with the preference of their parents about equal family tribal lineage to their own family (Chapter 4). They continually view marriage as a family-shared matter that is related to how they understand who they are, provoking shared memory and identity reproduction of social capital, inclusion and exclusion (Lawler, 2014; Smart, 2007; Lawler, 1999). Indeed, as Smart (2007, p. 36) said, the rise in interest in family lineage captures "an understanding of the past through people unmet yet personally meaningful show the workings of an active family imaginary in the population at large". This highlighted the coexistence of intimacy and valuing of the interdependence of kin, genders and forms of collectivism (Jamieson, 2011). The same can be said in the second example: women participants choose to freely submit to socially prescribed pious conduct about appropriate women *veil* because these women view their actual self as relational to family kin group and tribe (Chapter 5).

Significantly, thesis' narrative expresses layers about how participants view they should negotiate their choices. They, for example, view that they should extend their marital choice within their national boundaries of other equal families (Chapter 4). Whereas pertaining to women's negotiation of modesty, they view that they should follow their own national and Islamic perspectives to define the boundaries between themselves and liberal feminism (Chapter 5). Indeed, this was clear from their differentiation between positive and negative freedom

(chapters 5 and 6). By acknowledging relationality, freedom for these participants does not mean acting on one's free will (negative freedom, as Mahmood (2005) understood it); rather, it suggests a certain condition of engaging critically with assessing one's wishes and desires and determine the social possibility and strategies for acting on them, emphasising collectivity. This reflection of relationality hints at choices and desires due to sharing historical and social contexts with others that entail feelings of obligation (Smart, 2007).

This kind of justification tells us more (similar to Thompson, (2017)) about the nature of relationality that extends beyond simple kinship to broader sharing of nation and history and how this plays a substantial role in self-defining. Smart (2007) indicated in this respect that relationality not only in this context is exclusive to close kinship. Relationality incorporates people who are in the same position as kin in terms of emotion, culture and location that can be formative in people's lives. As Smart (2007, p. 49) put it, "[t]he term 'relationism' conjures up the image of people existing within intentional, thoughtful networks which they actively sustain, maintain or allow to atrophy". Apparently, this process of negotiation reflects emotions and desires that are far from being rational or conscious in a sense of disembodiment (Lawler, 2014; Smart, 2007; Lawler, 1999).

These examples, I argue, refer us to the crux of the matter: that family provides the context of what we remember. As Abu-Lughod (2013, p. 18) put it:

Born into families, we all find ourselves in particular social worlds. We are placed in certain social classes and communities in specific countries [...] Our desires are forged in these conditions and our choices limited by them.

Submitting to social norms in these examples is, to borrow Abu-Lughod's (2013) language, "voluntary submission", a social sense of an honourable, mature person that is motivated by individual-self attitudes. While I acknowledge Bourdieu's (1977) valuable contribution of the importance of cultural analysis of social capital, especially in his explanation pertaining to the power of social capital in internalising norms, I would not agree it is unconsciously internalised. It is the agent's disposition towards what is possible and permissible and what can be carried out to achieve a good life (Kenny, 2021).

This narrative is loaded with beliefs about the extended family and kinship relation that remain common configurations in Saudi society and play a significant role in raising children and emotional support, although the nuclear family is gaining ground. The narrative more importantly highlights the continuity of tribal identity for self-definition. Therefore, while this finding confirms others' observations of Saudi Arabia (Maisel, 2014; Al-Khateeb, 2007; Al-Torki, 1986) about the continuity of extended family and tribal identities, I want to also emphasise what these participants prized for a worthy life.

Along with Mahmood's (2005) insight I quoted earlier about the "binary logic of doing/undoing norms", I want to highlight how the participants are constructed ontologically. Being relational to family and belonging to tribes and wider kinship catches up with shared memory. These participants did not engage in individualism and self-mastery, not because they were not available but because they value trading power and being relational instead. I want to emphasise that relationality is a mode of thinking and a context that informs choices and desires and it requires a process of reflection and practices (Smart, 2007). Thereby, I return to the earlier point I made about the interiority and exteriority of the subjects to argue that they are not separated and family obligation and commitment would not occur without thought.

Following Mahmood (2005), going beyond the binary of “consolidated and/or subverted”, and “done/undone”, freedom would not simply refer to acting on free will to individual choice, which would render these participants as disavowed of agency, but instead to inclusive collective endeavours through connection and relation to others. What is at the heart of problematising choice is autonomy to enact the ethic of freedom. Following Mahmood (2005), I argue that if autonomy is the necessary condition for enacting the ethic of freedom, there is no problem associated with one taking a non-liberal action on their own accord.

Mahmood (2005), Abu-Lughod (2013) and Joseph (2012) correctly argue to incorporate the questions of race and class, which may not fit the stories told by Western liberal feminist theory. Little attention is devoted to the cultural and historical dimensions of family and kinship (Al-Shuqir, 2020 and Le Renard, 2014). One key salient contribution to the narrative of this thesis that appears quite strongly in connection to the participants’ negotiation is social capital as a construction site highlighting experience and history, which constitutes the classed subject. This has been under-theorised as an area of feminist analysis (Joseph, 2012; Skeegs, 1997). It is my argument that the ways in which social capital exists in Saudi Arabia is through cultural mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, normalisation and pathologisation, which shape the participants’ choices and desires. It is perhaps the value that society gives honour and humiliates those who break social norms that are deeply embedded in gender relation issues in the country. This intersection has implications for researching Arabs as diverse and complex instead of theorising Arab men and women as subjects of “patriarchy”. Joseph (2012, p. 3) questions feminist tendency:

[W]hat is often missed in the study of patriarchy is the study of family. Arab families are highly diverse, [with] varied systems and sets of relationships and dynamics that cannot be described or defined by monolithic models of gender relations.

Given that those desires and choices are forged in the condition of the habitus one belongs to, this does not mean that some societies have choice and others do not (Abu-Lughod, 2013). It is precisely this submission to culturally prescribed social conventions that evokes the critique that Muslim men and women reproduce and reinforce the patriarchal order and do not act from a place of free will (Mahmood, 2005).

More broadly, we need to reflect on the limits of choice beyond sex and culture. As Abu-Lughod (2013, p. 19) told us, quoting Brown's (2012) conviction about lack of choice overlooks "the extent to which all choice is conditioned by as well as imbricated with power, and the extent to which choice itself is an impoverished account of freedom". We need to think about the fact that most religious traditions are based on the premise that people do not fully control what happens to them (Abu-Lughod, 2013). When participants (Chapter 4) were not certain about how to decide on prospective spouses or how the future intimacy will be, their reference *Alnazrah Alsareah* to replace customary trusted ways for gender relations. Women participants, they also gave their consent on the marriage contract and specified their condition in the contract as prescribed by *Shari'a*. As Abu-Lughod (2013) questioned with empirical evidence of her study on Egyptian Bedouin society, I argue: on what basis do we freely choose or consent?

This narrative does not draw on free choice idealised in Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of equality between men and women, nor simply on reforming family law on intrinsic of Islamic tradition. Abu-Lughod (2013) told us that consent

hardly tells us about the future of intimacy and might not be at the centre of liberal values but is part of the dream of autonomy. Participants' practices tell us about "higher force, not inner feeling; fate is, after all, God's will" (Abu-Lughod, 2013, p. 212). Arguably, for most of our life we do not decide on our religion, family, culture and way of life, which are largely decided for us as being part of a social, historical and cultural community (Stevenson, 2012). The most important question is how do we think about those, like the participants, who find their freedom compromised by living up to the moral order, attaching to family and caring for parents (chapters 4, 5, 6)? These desires bring a nuanced understanding of rights and choice.

In addition, I want to argue that surrendering oneself to the divine does not have to be agency-reducing. In fact, it can be agency-enabling. This corresponds to narrative in Chapter 5 when the participants view their everyday behaviours and conduct related to the body should be based on religion. Indeed, narrative in chapters 5 and 6 tells us that religion provides them with resource for independent reasoning and enables them to generate meaning compatible with changeable situations. Surrender as they viewed it is an active choice and not passive—so it is an act of agency.

Geertz (2017) says that the individual is culturally and historically specific and the best way to understand culture is to see it as a source of behaviour. Taking with this, the individualist construct in Western modern understanding of the self would not be the same as the collectivist construct of the self with a more grounded perception of inter-connection and relationality with others. Joseph (2012) argues that given that the self is a social being, this essentially entails claims on others and responsibility is often rooted in family, associated with morality and often sanctioned by religion. We should then, according to Joseph (2012, p. 19), pay attention to "why a woman might feel

obligated to care for, obey or love an authoritarian father, husband, brother [...]—and how that may or may not be different from a man’s sense of obligation to obey and love”. Indeed, based on participants’ narratives, while honour would be considered by Western liberal feminists as discipline for women, it is the code through which tribal members play certain roles based on gender and age. Narrative analysis in chapters 4 and 5 highlighted that honour lies in women’s bodies due to their power in carrying the ancestral blood line, whereas the narrative in Chapter 6 revealed that men carry the role of defending, protecting the family’s public face of honour. Regardless of family homogeneity, power differences are unavoidable within the family. The position within the family is also important, as the moral worth of a person is based on passing an appropriate role for their position: commitment, affection, submission for young men and women and independence regarding seniority based on demonstrating responsibility. To be outside societal bounds means, for both Lawler (2014) and Bauman and Vecchi (2004), to be out of a legitimate proper and admissible category defined by those who are in a power position, who can define themselves and who are denied such power. Democracy is not more neutral than inequality and hierarchy, and agency is bound tightly to obligation (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Joseph, 2012).

I would like to pursue this argument through examples about the domestic gender role divide. Some women prefer not to work and carry on their role as mothers and wives. Others work but feel that they are not obliged to be responsible for family expenses; men view themselves as the breadwinners and see women’s income as for their own consumption (chapters 4 and 5). Even though participants of both genders endured suffering of their gender division role, a good life for them was, as Jamieson (1998, p. 33) put it, “intertwined with and expressed through practical arrangements of who did which household chores, who spent what money”. Family interaction is based on affection and mutual obligation, not justice. This perspective directly challenges the

Western liberal feminist analysis of gender roles. Their analysis is not only simplistic or flattening family life and relationality, but more importantly it is not free from politics that affect the sociologically predominant interpretation and political processes that take the interpretation as a truth on which policy should be framed (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Mahmood, 2011, 2005; Smart, 2007).

Gender analysis in Western liberal feminism focuses on unequal relationship but failed to link the analysis with social production and how society works (Le Renard, 2014; Stevenson, 2012; Smart, 2007). Such an analysis links the domestic arrangement with wider forces, such as capitalism, patriarchy and globalisation. The problem is that family relations in Western liberal analysis are inseparable from the kind of individuated person who is chiming with the neoliberal ideology of Western policy (Smart, 2007). As Stevenson (2012) indicates, the role of a sociologist should look at how freedom's meaning differs in different social contexts, to look at the history of slavery, then the Enlightenment and neoliberalism, which all give us different meanings of freedom. As Stevenson (2012, p. 73) put it:

Freedom is less about the removal of external constraints than about understanding the wider society and historical change. Freedom is also less an abstract set of principles than it is having access to a historical narrative. The idea of freedom is intimately related to our ability to tell a story about who we are, what traditions are important and where we are currently headed.

One key norm related to autonomy is the ability of the individual to question society, institutions and laws that govern them. This clearly does not speak to participants' narratives; I argue that a question of who I am and how I ought to live seems to answer the question of freedom. Thereby,

choice can also be exercised and freedom experienced through connection and relationality with others.

Additionally, if agency is understood by Western feminists as acting on one's free will against "strong" traditions (e.g. tribal identities), this calls into question the ethics of humanity when the only bond among human groups is that they are only equal. Heelas (1996) questioned the extent to which the ethics of humanity provide the necessary conditions for the construction of the ethic. Would that not lean towards egoistical individualism, given that our ontological commitment is to those who we found are in relation to us? The degree of value attributed to the individuation is not compatible with relationality (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Joseph, 2012, 1999; Heelas, 1996).

This thesis' narrative has provided insight into relational being—defined through which participants negotiate and align their desires and choices with the ideal of kinship relation and tribal identities (e.g. marriage within compatible tribes, relationships with the opposite gender before marriage, sexual modesty and upholding the honour code; chapters 4, 5, and 6). Therapy narratives have revealed that being relational is the inner voice that guides these participants in the right direction because they view themselves and others as not separable (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Joseph, 1999a). Their voices' virtues explain participants' modality of actions, as argued by postcolonial feminists like Mahmood (2005) and scholars on identity such as Lawler (2014), that aim to continue the relationship and stability, which essentially contradicts the ethic of humanity. With this, I argue for paying cultural sensitivity to agency that might not locate individual autonomy at its core. This relates to how participants engage in ongoing negotiations and adaptations of socio-cultural norms considering importance of mutuality and reciprocity of

familial and kinship relations. Reflecting what Heelas (1996, p. 216) articulated, “‘I’, which is fundamentally differentiated from others because it *belongs* to a tradition”.

After conceptually discussing agency, I will proceed to relating agency to religion.

7.2.2. The ethic of performative acts of agency

This research has offered a nuanced analysis of the participants’ lived experience of religion in their negotiation of marriage and gender relation (chapters 4, 5, 6). Narrative in these chapters has revealed that religion is so prominent that it actually permeates all aspects of cultural life. This reinforces the argument that, in spite of the dominant discourse of the secularisation thesis, religious faith continues to persist (Heelas, 1996).

Ammerman (2007) and McGuire (2008) draw our attention to a left aspects of sociological analysis to religion that enacted spirituality in our everyday lived religion Although the empirical contexts of Ammerman (2007) and McGuire (2008) are different from this study, I still find it theoretically informative. Ammerman (2007, p. 2) argued that “the usual modernization and ‘rational choice’ variables were insufficient to explain the space between total commitment and total secularity in which we find religion today”. The lived religion, according to McGuire (2008, p. 213), “is evidenced less by avowed commitment to and participation in the activities of religious organizations than by the way each person expresses and experiences his or her faith and practice in ordinary places and in everyday moments”. Theoretical sensitivity allows us to see relationships that others might not recognise (e.g. Yamani (2000)).

In essence, religion in the participants’ narrative is about connection with *Allah*, then human beings (e.g. parents, relatives). In the participants’ internalising of faith, there is no contradiction between brain (reason) and religion, as indicated in chapters 5 and 6, in that Islam calls for

critical thinking. The participants offered a cultural critique to society preoccupied with honour and wish for illumination, which is the essence of religion. Although the majority of the participants are highly educated social-media users, some had experiences of education in Western universities and therefore we expect different things from them, as such an education provides students with diverse cultural cues. They believe their everyday practice, behaviour and conduct should be based on religion. These participants embrace religion and rationality to face changes and develop a meaningful modern society. This narrative confirms Bin Safran's (2011) findings that there are strong undercurrents among his men and women participants, their Islamic Arab Saudi identity is sufficiently robust to withstand cultural adaptation pressures, even as some worry that Saudi traditions will be lost. It also confirms research on how Saudis (empirically applied to men at university) manage what is offered by the internet and global connection embracing a "glocalised" version in which local-Saudi-and global-cultural forms merge into a mixed structure to manage the tension between tradition and modernity (Elyas, 2014; Elyas and Picard, 2010).

The Islamic framework is a ground for men and women's negotiation of honour order with their families. They would back up their arguments by *halal*, *haram*, the *Qur'an* and other religious sources. They stigmatised customs and emphasised the necessity of the Islamic framework as a proof of modernity and realising their aspirations in contemporary Saudi Arabia. Women negotiate their wishes, upholding moral distinction within their family order rather than subverting it. In terms of Men's negotiations concerning their role as protector and defender of honour, they do not want to be seen as backward. They emphasise the difference between what is not forbidden by religion but is forbidden by society. Men stigmatise what they see as outdated customs and emphasise the importance of conformity to Islam as a source of their moral conduct.

This normative reference which men and women have evoked can only be considered as long as these men and women stay relational to their families and connected to others with their national boundaries. During these negotiations, they delimited what is called ‘modern’, their convictions about what is good and bad, neither too liberal, nor ‘backward’. This negotiation reflects the reform discourse which upholds change while respecting Islam, customs, and the specificity of Saudi Arabia. Thus, it is never a story of totally rejecting the past/old and fully embracing the new. Change and continuity co-exist. This resonates with Heelas’ (1996) ‘coexistence thesis’.

Participants understand religion for its potential to enhance the meaningfulness of modern life. They view Islamic framework is compatible with different and changeable times and places (chapters 5 and 6). They promote religious interpretations to be more reflexive in light of their contemporary context to the pursuit of wisdom that neither surrenders to social custom about gender relations nor abandons it. Thus, religion is part of the story and, in spite of the usual modernisation understood as the separation between the sacred and the secular. Therefore, the portrayals of Muslims as “victims of their religion” do not coincide with the experiences of Saudi men and women participants who described their “freedom” as consequential to submission to religion framework, surrender to Allah. Participants’ everyday life infuses with religion, such as committing to marriage and communicating with the opposite gender before marriage, sexuality and submitting to parents and kinship and tribal rule (chapters 4, 5, 6, respectively). This point coincides with the argument of Mernissi (2011)—a Muslim feminist—that religious norms define individual responsibility and boundaries between Muslims and others, and their obligation to submit to parents and its limits, and the obligation of men towards

women and its limits. This challenges the conception of freedom in political liberal theory whereby individuals are only considered free when acting on their free will (Mahmood, 2005). This insight has also contributed to the debate on the coexistence between religion and its role and centrality in everyday life (Heelas, 1996). As noted in chapters 5 and 6, the voluntary submission to parents' honour code is linked to one's surrender to *Allah*, leaving the capacity to submit to the individual, nurturing empathy and solidarity.

The influence of religious institutions has been taken for granted for regulating individuals' conduct pertaining to gender and sexuality, in Western liberal feminist understanding and regional understanding (e.g. Yamani, 2000). However, in the context of Saudi Arabia the story is not simple. The rhetoric and practice pertaining to gender and sexuality are carried across institutional lines from family law and politics of inclusion and exclusion, which I will focus more on in the third theme. Social analysis needs to be serious and not only to focus on structure and religious institution (in this case political Islam) and its ability to produce and "enforce" the meaning, but more importantly to detect how individuals sustain alternatives. I will draw my argument here on sexuality about pre-marriage sex and about the issue of spinsterhood.

To many participants, suspecting pre-marriage sexual relations could only mean that they have been subordinated by a sex-negative religious norm, and their submission of sexuality in the context of marriage or other more adapted forms of marriage, such as *misyar*, is evidence of their lack of agency (Chapter 4). To understand—and respect—these decisions, I argue, building on Mahmood (2005), that we need to look beyond the dominant construction of agency as resistance. In these examples, the participants' narratives involve reflexive practice whereby they are balancing religious requirements with their sexual needs (in line with Bayat (2012) Singerman, (2011), bearing the responsibility of birthing children and legal identification, and obligation of

family, which emphasises Cohen-Mor's (2013) observation. Their view of intimacy maps their selves as relational to their shared familial responsibility rather than private emotions (Jamieson, 2011). We cannot restore government incentive for marriage as a response to national norms because Saudi society is primarily—before the state initiation—organised based on kinship relations that assign high value to purity of blood (Al-Khateeb, 2007; Al-Torki, 2000).

In fact, this practice gives us a much broader understanding of sexuality as related to social justice. As argued by Bhandary (2018), justice in society must respect not only the “autonomy” and “free choice” of relationships' spouses, but it must also consider the social arrangement of care. The rights of free sexuality clash with the rights of relational children and families. Therefore, we will arrive at a different principle of justice, framing a just arrangement compatible with tradition other than the Western value of freedom (Bhandary, 2018).

Justice in the participants' articulation in chapters 5 and 6 is inseparable from gender relations, given that they are created equal by *Allah* in terms of religious requirement and responsibility of their conduct. The individual in Islam is judged based on their own conduct. This narrative shows that religion is a holistic approach to solving the problems that Muslims face. According to Mernissi (2011), Muslims solve this contradiction by subordinating the secular to the religious authority. This view challenges the view that religion is a matter of the heart and does not engage with the public sphere (Mahmood, 2005, Wadud, 2005). In addition, this is an acknowledgement that in the Muslim world—like the case of Saudi Arabia—there is no legal system in the Western sense of the word; family law is connected to religion and, therefore, is still ruled by *Shari'a* (Mernissi, 2011). Hence, this rights discourse has a different genesis from secular human rights discourse on ‘what’ and ‘how’ rights are created (Wadud, 2005).

Considering the significance of nationalism and local culture in Saudi Arabia in shaping Islam, this research finding has significant implications for understanding how men's and women's negotiation within a national discourse. While the participants wish for more flexibility towards relations between men and women, such as accepting the diversity of women's styles of *hijab*, they view that they should maintain a generally acceptable dress code that reflects their nation identity. Thus, religion is not only individual spirituality but also a system of building society that connects people together. Indeed, religion as lived helps us to see religiosity tied to political and social solidarity and who belongs and does not belong, as religious identity is not separated from other forms of identity.

7.2.3. The construction of relational selves through embeddedness

Many scholars have lamented the uncritical casting of agency as contradictory with tradition (religion and tribal identities) in popular Western liberal feminist theory (e.g. Abu-Lughod 2013; Mahmood 2005; Joseph, 1990a, 2012). This sustains the view that any form of collectivity has nothing much to offer for the matter of gender, freedom and agency (Heelas, 1996). Vitally, this tendency does not recognise enactments of agency that do not fall strictly into the Western feminist conception. Although discussion of the agency of people in the Arab world in the literature has highlighted collectivity precedence over the individual (e.g. Yamani, 2000; Barakat, 1993), I argue that this is a simplistic story that does not elicit a nuanced understanding of relational dynamic. I will draw my argument first on family relations to highlight participants' sense of location and context of their past, and then on the connection between family relations and religion.

Although narratives of this thesis indicated the participants' experiences of many demands from kinship relations, avoiding submission to family is not easy. I contend that the best way to understand how the social actors make sense of the connection is to pay attention to how religion, tribal and familial identities inform one's relations to others and gender practices. Smart (2007) articulated the importance of embeddedness as a descriptive theme crucial to understanding relationality to capture the balance between individuality and collectivism. In Chapter 4, I discuss participants' emphasis on their roles to be present in selecting spouses and the marriage process; their views on spousal relations are more egalitarian and changing their perspectives about divorce. Moreover, the other perspective which they embraced, is that the enduring social norms for a good life pertain to the breadwinner, and for compatible-family marriages for long-lasting relationships. In other words, they argue that individual trajectories are meaningful when linked to their family.

I want to draw attention to the importance of kinship for emotional and how it is difficult to be free from family relations and expectations. This thesis has provided us with various examples on the importance of relatives and extended family for raising children (Chapters 4 and 6), continuous support for daughters after marriage (Chapter 4) and supporting family members for better or worse (Chapters 4 and 6). Some of these participants who were temporarily away from family to study abroad were nostalgic and emotional about their families (Chapter 6). This relationship then is hard to be free from on an emotional level and as an imaginary hunting power that is more related to blood relation. Emphasising a similar observation about the coexistence between individuality and relationality, Smart (2007, p. 45) asserts:

Embeddedness is therefore neither a good nor a bad quality in family or other relationships; it can take either form—and indeed many in between. But as a concept, it

seeks to reflect the tenacity of these bonds and links, sometimes even to the extent that family members and close kin or friends can feel as if they were part of one.

Now I turn to discuss how religion counterweights individuality and collectivity, mainly here about honour code. My argument about embeddedness is in line with Mahmood (2005), who argues that the dominant understanding of agency contains progressivist bias that fails to capture the experiences of religious actors. According to Mahmood (2005), modalities of power may not lead to the resistance of subordinating norms. Process of “ethical self-formation”, may lead to the subversion of a subordinating norm, and reinscribe other subordinating norms. As Mahmood (2005, pp. 14–15) puts it:

[I]f the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific (both in terms of what constitutes “change” and the means by which it is effected), then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility and effectivity. Viewed in this way, what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view may actually be a form of agency—but one that can be understood only from within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment.

Mahmood’s (2005) argument is reflective of the participants’ experience, but I pursue Joseph’s (2012) approach to look for complexity and nuance in understanding agency in the Middle East as inseparable from history, and from religious, socio-political and economic contexts. The discussion of agency is highly relevant to this research context, precisely due to its religious and collectivist background, which are understood as limits to agency. Careful analysis of

participants' negotiation about gender relations, relations to parents and kinship and bodily practices among them helps to illuminate that it is not simply participants' submission or subordinating norms.

Indeed, some (e.g. Yamni (2000))—in their exploration of Saudi identities—may consider participants' continued association with Islamic and Arab heritage contradictory with their wishes and desires that are informed by education and professional identities. If one accepts that identities can be understood as intersectional, it is then highly surprising to not take the next step to see how these identities intersect, are lived out and how their meanings compel the social actor to continue submission. I argue, drawing on Al-Shuqir (2020), that through the inter-relationship between these forms of identity we can draw a line to understand agency of the social actor to navigate through these capitals to generate meaning and to reveal who they are and what they want.

Drawing upon Mahmood's (2005) quote above, I have aimed to demonstrate the existence of modalities of agency beyond equating agency with resistance, which are based on one's submission to religious instructions. I specifically paid attention to the embeddedness of religious identity to a nuanced understanding of religious identity's intersection with tribal and kinship relationship. Within this, I do not aim to look for symbolic representation of religious identity or tribal capital. I have looked at the meaning of participants' performative practices to highlight how interiority of the subject is not separated from exteriority and exteriority is a reflection of the subject's realisation of truth. I would like to focus on three examples that emerged from participants' negotiation of honour to illustrate this.

First, when participants view that their sexuality and relation to the opposite gender should be guided by religious requirements, they do not see it as imposing on them. They view conforming to religious gender norms as part of their religious self-definition (see Chapter 4 and particularly Chapter 5). The same can be said in the second example: When male participants in Chapter 6 negotiated being responsible for women, they argued that their role should not undermine women's wishes and desires. They view their responsibility towards women as based on a religious framework that defines the boundaries of men's responsibility, especially during a time of political and economic changes where the social masculine role is difficult to attain. This insight coincides with Mernissi (2011) and Wadud (2005) that Muslim men work at liberating women because they view Islam, not gender, as a holistic approach to life compatible with religious self-defined creation as agency. In the third example, while some participants acknowledge their obligation to obey their parents and respect seniority, the participants religiously believe that they can assert their individuality even while submitting to their parents. Such a view confirms Al-Ruwaitea's (2014) analysis of the intersection between religion and social norms in Saudi society on submitting to parents. Islam, from participants' views, provides them with independent reasoning and intellectual integrity.

These examples could mean that these participants are subordinates to Islam and social norms, and their submission to their religious instruction is evident in their lack of agency. However, as Gary (2005) convincingly argues, Islam and honour order may intersect in several ways, but these also provide contradictions. Indeed, the examples illustrated above are helpful in understanding the power of individuals to disposition themselves on how rights and obligations should be given. These participants internalise religion as a holistic framework, guiding their commitment as explained in the previous theme. However, to understand this narrative, we

should—as Mahmood (2005) argues—look beyond a dualistic interpretation of agency. These examples are illustrative of ethical formation, navigating social norms based on their internalisation of religion. Despite being empowered by Islam, they voluntarily choose to submit to parental and family-kinship relations. In fact, this position offers a broader understanding of embeddedness and agency, which does not prioritise their individual interest. Thus, this crafting process should demonstrate agency beyond simple resistance or embeddedness.

How then should we address the complexity and process of asserting agency while embedding the social structure? I would argue that in line with Mahmood (2005), Lawler (2014), Skeggs (1997) and Brown (1993) that it is important to recognise how one makes choices with how intent and emotions reveal the collectivist meaning and identity. I argue that we should move the political claim from “I am” to the language of reflexive “wanting” (Brown, 1993, 407).

Based on this narrative, the next section highlights this thesis’ recommendations.

7.4. Recommendations for future research

Due to the changeability of social life, the account presented in this thesis is provisional and based on a relatively modest piece of work involving a limited sample of Saudi participants. Therefore, the generalisation claims made by this research can only stretch as far as to argue that given similar participant profiles, the results are likely to reflect similar outcomes. This claim is strengthened by the congruence and convergence found between some of the findings in this study and other similar works conducted previously. This suggests that the findings are likely to be replicated.

I proceed by discussing two key bearings on which future research could be built. One is the direction related to the participants’ strategies to negotiate gender relations that I present in the

data chapters shaping the ever-evolving process of continuity and change in contemporary Saudi Arabia. The rapidly social transformations in light of Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia is critical for future research on the evolving of identity. Although the role of social media was not foregrounded in the aims of this thesis, debates about the role of social media seems to represent an exciting and fruitful area for future research on the role it plays in informing the latest changes in social policy pertaining gender relations in Saudi Arabia.

Another line of research related to the role of Islam in everyday life is on the adaptations to new matters and negotiations that may be contributing to developing alternative portrayals of Muslim people as lacking agency. This would be helpful to broaden understandings of agency from both theoretical and empirical approaches, transforming the merging of agency with resistance, which I have scrutinised throughout this thesis. This research route could draw upon “lived” experience to the study of religious lives that pay attention to the co-existing between individuality and relationality.

7.5. And then...

Although thesis intends to communicate Western academic liberal feminist, I was conscious of the diverse readership who may be interested in the themes covered in the thesis, including politicians, media professionals and the participants themselves. I hope this thesis constitutes a ground basis for accessible publications in the future. This is because the research has allowed voices of Saudis that are rarely heard by Western audiences to discuss their insights, which I hope to dispel some of the myths about universalising desires, freedom and choice. This is important not only for Saudi people but touches on issues of difference and diversity of meaning.

Although this thesis has generated a nuanced picture of the lived experiences of Saudi participants, my attempt has also left some questions unanswered.

References

- Abebe, T. 2019. "Reconceptualising Children's Agency as Continuum and Interdependence." *Social Sciences*. 8.3: 81.
- Abu Odeh, L. 1993. "Post-colonial feminism and the veil: thinking the difference." *Feminist Review*: 43 (1), pp. 26–37.
- Abu-Lughod, L. 1986. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Abu-Lughod, L. 1990. "The romance of resistance: Tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women." *American Ethnologist* 17 (1), pp. 41–55.
- Abu-Lughod, L. 1991. "Writing against Culture." In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. R. G. Fox, 137–162. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Abu-Lughod, L. 1998. "Introduction." In *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. id., 3–31. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Abu-Lughod, L. 2002. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others." *American Anthropologist* 104(3), pp. 783–90.
- Abu-Lughod, L. 2008. *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. 15th Anniversary ed. California: Berkeley.
- Abu-Lughod, L. 2013. *Do Muslim women need saving?* London, SAGE Publications.

- Adely, F. 2016. "A different kind of love: Compatibility (insijam) and marriage in Jordan." *The Arab Studies Journal*, 24(2), pp. 102–127.
- Ahmed, L. 1982. "Western ethnocentrism and perceptions of the harem." *Feminist Studies*. 8(3), pp. 521–534.
- Al-Abas, M. 2013. *Made in Saudi Arabia*. Original as 'Sinea fie Alsaydia'. Jadawel.
- Al-Alosi, M. 1857. *The history of Najd*. Originally as: Tarekh NaJd. Beirut, Al-Warrak Publishing.
- Al-Asfour, A. Tlaiss, H., Khan, S. and Rajasekar, J. 2017. "Saudi women's work challenges and barriers to career advancement." *Career Development International* 22(2), pp. 184–99.
- Al-Gazami, A. 2005. *The story of modernity in Saudi Arabia*. Morocco, Arabic cultural institution. Casablanca. Originally as: hikayat Alhadath fe almamlakah Alarabeah Alsaudioh.
- Al-Gazami, A. 2009. *Tribe and tribalism: postmodern identities*. 2nd edition. Morocco: Casablanca publisher. Originally as: Al-qabilat wa Al-qabayiliat 'aw huiaat mabeedad alhadatha.
- Al-Haydary, M. 2011. "Asking about your daughter's suitor, do not hurry to respond." Originally as "alsyah an kateb bentek, la tatajal fe alrad." Riyadh Newspaper, 15867. [Available online] <http://www.alriyadh.com/688293>.
- Ali, S., 2013. "Where is Saudi Arabian Society heading?" *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice* 5, pp. 141–157.
- Alkhader, A. 2010. *History of Saudi Arabia's State and Society*. Originally as: "Al Saudiah Sirat dawlah wa Mujtamae.". 2nd edition. Beirut, Lebanon: Arab Network for Research and Publishing.

- Al-Khateeb, S. 1998. "Women, family and the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia." *Marriage and Family Review*: 27 (1/2) pp. 167–89.
- Al-Khateeb, S. 2007. *The oil boom and its impact on women and families in Saudi Arabia. In the Gulf family: Kinship policies and modernity* (SOAS Middle East Issues). Saqi.
- Al-Khateeb, S. 2008. *Anthropological Introduction*. Originally as (Muqaddima fi 'ilm al-anthrubulujiyya). Riyadh: Al-Tiba'a al-misriyyali-khadmat al-tiba'a.
- Al-Khateeb, S. 2009. "Social changes and its impact on increasing divorce rates on Saudi society from women's perspective." *Arts and Humanity Journal in King Abdul-Aziz University*. 17(1), pp.159–222.
- Al-Lily, M. 2020. "Signals exchanged between potential spouses in the Saudi Arabian arranged marriage market." *Society*, 57, pp. 185–194.
- Almadani, W. (2020). *Agreement and Disagreement About Social Changes Regarding Saudi Women on Twitter*. In: Smith, A. *Gender Equality in Changing Times*. Palgrave Macmillan
- Al-Malah, W. 2014. Saudi women work in small home-based businesses in Riyadh city: a field study. Master's dissertation. Social Studies. King Saud University.
- Al-Munajjed, M. 1997. *Women in Saudi Arabia today*. New York: Springer.
- Al-Nasr, T. J. 2011. "Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) women and misyar marriage: Evolution and progress in the Arabian Gulf." *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 12, pp. 43–57.

- Al-Nowaihi, M. 1999. "Constructions of masculinity in two Egyptian novels." In: Joseph, S. ed. *Intimate selving in Arab families: Gender, self, and identity*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Alnuaima, A. 2014. Life quality for Youth sample in Riyadh. Originally as: "Gawdat al-Hayat lada auinah men alshabab fie madenat al Riyadh". *Art Journal*, 26, 167-198.
- Al-Rasheed, M. 2013. *Most masculine state gender, politics and religion in Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- AL-Remaih, S. 2011. "Social Attitudes of the Female Divorcee, Social Vision." *Art Journal in King Saud University*. 21(2), pp. 506–475.
- Al-Ruwaitea, A. 2014. *In Saudi personality* (Original: *fei AlShakseah AlSaudiiah mabyen Alhanzel Wa AlSahd*). Riyadh: King Saud University Press.
- Al-qahtani, R. 2012 Social change and women work across three generations in Abha, Saudi Arabia. PhD thesis, Sociology, faculty of Arts and Human Sciences. University of Surrey.
- AL-Saif, T. 2014. "Political Islam in Saudi Arabia: recent trends and future prospects." *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 7, pp. 398–420.
- Al-Shuqir, A. 2020. *Collective memory: social historical reading of everyday life in Saudi society*. Orriginally as (fe Alzakerah Al-Sabeah: qurah ejtimaeah le masader alwaea altariki almahale wa almontag altagafie fe al-Hayat alyawmeah lelmughtama alSaudi). Beirut: Ibn Al-Nadeem.
- Al-Siaf, M. 2015. "The marital upbringing and its relation with divorce problem in Saudi family." *Sociological Journal. Imam-Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University*. 9, pp. 259–326.

- Al-Subaie, A. and Jones, K. 2017. "An overview of the current state of women's leadership in higher education in Saudi Arabia and a proposal for future research directions." *Administrative Sciences* 7(4), pp. 1–15.
- Al-Tirmidhi, M. General Behavior (Kitab Al-Adab). 43, Hadith 171. Available at:
<https://sunnah.com/abudawud:4943>
- Al-Toaimy, L. 2018. "Driving change on Twitter: A corpus-assisted discourse analysis of the Twitter debates on the Saudi ban on women driving." *Social Sciences* 7(5), pp. 81.
- Al-Torki, S. 1999. "Patriarchy and imperialism." In: Joseph, S. ed. *Intimate selving in Arab families: Gender, self, and identity*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, pp. 214–234.
- Al-Torki, S., 1977. "Family organization and women's power in urban Saudi Arabian society." *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 33, pp.277–287.
- Al-Torki, S., 1986. "Women in Saudi Arabia ideology and behaviour among the elite." New York: Columbia University Press.
- Al-Torki, T. 2000. "The concept and practice of citizenship in Saudi Arabia." In: Joseph, S. ed. *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East 1st ed.* [Print]. Syracuse: Syracuse UP.
- Al-Wardi, A. 2018. *Sociological analysis of Ibin Khaldun's theory: a study in sociology of knowledge*. Bagdad: Almada Press. Originally as: Fe Elm Egtima Almarefah.
- Ammerman, N. (2007). *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Anthias, F. 2007. "Ethnic ties: social capital and the question of mobilisability." *The Sociological review* (Keele), 55, pp. 788–805.
- Antoun, R. 1968. "On the modesty of women in Arab Muslim villages: A study in the accommodation of traditions." *American Anthropologist*. 70(4), pp. 671–97.
- Assaf, L., 2018. "Who is the right one? the meanings of (marital) love in the United Arab Emirates." In Fortier, A. Kreil and I. Maffi (eds.) 2020. *Reinventing love? Gender, intimacy and romance in the Arab world.*, Bern: Peter Lang.
- Back, L. 2007. *The art of listening*. Oxford: Berg.
- Baez, B. 2002. "Confidentiality in qualitative research: Reflections on secrets, power and agency." *Qualitative Research*. 2 (1), pp. 35–58.
- Bakhtin, M. 1986. *Speech genres and other late essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Barakat, H. 1993. *The Arab world: Society, culture, and state*. California: University of California Press.
- Bauman, Z. and Vecchi, B. 2004. *Identity Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bayat, A. 2012. "Reclaiming youthfulness." In: Khalaf, S. and Khalaf. R. *Arab youth: Social mobilisation in times of risk*. Saqi.
- Berger, R. 2015. "Now I See It, Now I Don't: Researcher's Position and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Research*: 15 (2), pp. 219-34.
- Bhandary, A. 2018. "Arranged marriage: Could it contribute to justice?" *The Journal of Political Philosophy*. 26 (2), pp. 193–215.

- Bickham, M. and Wolf, D. 2012. "Feminizing global research/globalizing feminist research: Methods and practice under globalization." In: Hesse-Biber, S.N. ed. *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis*, 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Bin Safran, A. 2011. A sociological study on a sample of university students in Riyadh. Ph.D. Alexandria. Originally as:
 "aleawamil alaijtimaeiat walsiyasiat almuatharat fi thaqafat alaintima' alwatanii lilshabab alsaeu dii".
- Bin Sunitan, M. 2014. *Saudi, Politician and Tribal*. Originally as: "Al Saudiyah, Alsiyasy wa Alqabilah". Beirut, Lebanon: Arab Network for Research and Publishing.
- Boddy, C. 2016. "Sample size for qualitative research." *Qualitative Market Research*. 19 (4), pp. 426–432.
- Bourdieu, P. 1966. "The sentiment of honour in Kabyle society." In: Peristiany, J.G. ed. *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1990. *The logic of practice*. trans. R. Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bowen, W. 2008. *The History of Saudi Arabia*, London, Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Breteau, M. 2020. "Pixel outlines of intimacy. online love among young people in Muscat." In Fortier, A. and Maffi, I. eds. 2020. *Reinventing love? Gender, intimacy and romance in the Arab world*. Bern: Peter Lang.

- Brown, W. 1993. "Wounded attachments." *Political Theory* 21 (3), pp. 390–410 .
- Bryman, A. 2016. *Social research methods*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Byrne, M. 2001. "Interviewing as a data collection method." *AORN Journal*.74 (2), pp. 233–235.
- Caldwell, K., Fisher, T., Ramirez, R. and Siu, L. 2009. "Collectivity and comparatively: a feminist approach to citizenship". In: *Gendered citizenships: transnational perspectives on knowledge production, political activism, and culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chodorow, N. 1978. *The reproduction of mothering: psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print.
- Choy, L. 2014. "The strengths and weaknesses of research methodology: Comparison and complimentary between qualitative and quantitative approaches." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 19 (4), pp. 99–104.
- Cleary, M., Horsfall, J. and Hayter, M. 2014. "Data collection and sampling in qualitative research: Does size matter?" *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 70 (3), pp. 473–475.
- Clifford, J., and Marcus, G. 2010. *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. University of California Press.
- Cohen, L. 2017. *Research methods in education*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Cohen-Mor, D. 2013. *Fathers and sons in the Arab Middle East*. New York: Springer.
- Creswell, J.W. 2014. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

- Creswell, J.W. 2018. *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. London: SAGE.
- Crotty, M. 1998. *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: SAGE.
- Curtis, S., Gesler, W., Smith, G. and Washburn, S. 2000. "Approaches to sampling and case selection in qualitative research: Examples in the geography of health." *Social Science & Medicine*. 50 (7-8), pp. 1001–1014.
- DiMaggio, P. 1979. "On Pierre Bourdieu." *American Journal of Sociology*. 84 (6), pp. 1460–1474.
- Dodd, P. 1973. "Family honor and the forces of change in Arab society." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 4(1), pp. 40–54.
- Dwyer, S.C. and Buckle, J.L. 2009. "The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 8 (1), pp. 54–63.
- El-Haddad, Y. 2003. "Major trends affecting families in the Gulf countries." College of Art, university of Bahrain.
- Elyas, T. 2014. "Exploring Saudi Arabia's EFL Student Identity: a Narrative Critical Approach." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 3 (5), pp. 28–38.
- Elyas, T., Picard, P. 2010. "Saudi Arabian educational history: impacts on English language teaching. Education, Business and Society." *Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues* 3 (2), pp. 136–145.

- Eriksen, T. 2010. *Ethnicity and Nationalism Anthropological Perspectives*. 3rd ed. New York : Macmillan.
- Fernandez, R.S. and Griffiths, R. 2007. "Portable MP3 players: Innovative devices for recording qualitative interviews." *Nurse Researcher*. 15 (7), pp. 7–15.
- Foley, s. Datta, s. 2015. Legitimizing Transformation without Calling it Change: Tajdīd, Iṣlāḥ, and Saudi Arabia's Place in the Contemporary World. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 2, 55-70.
- Fortier, C., Kreil, A., and Maffi, I., 2020. "Introduction." In: Fortier, A. Kreil & I. Maffi (eds.), *Reinventing Love? Gender, Intimacy and Romance in the Arab World*, Bern: Peter Lang.
- Foucault, M. 1980. *Truth and power*. In *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972–1977*, ed. and trans. C. Gordon, 109–33. New York: Pantheon Books.
- De Bel-Air, F., Safar, J. and Destremau, B. 2019. "Marriage and family in the Gulf today: storms over a patriarchal institution?" *Arabian Humanities*. 10.
- Frowe, I. 2001. "Language and educational research." *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. 35 (2), pp. 175–186.
- Galletta, A. 2013. *Mastering the semi-structured interview and beyond*. New York: New York University Press.
- Gary, S. 2005. *The Middle East: A cultural psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Geertz, C. 2017. *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.

General Authority for statistics. 2019. Available at:

https://www.stats.gov.sa/sites/default/files/marriage_and_divorce_statistics_2019_ar_0.pdf.

Given, L. 2008. *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. London: Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Grix, J. 2010. *The foundations of research*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gubrium, J. James, H. Amir, M. Karyn, D. 2012. *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Hamadeh, N., 1999. "Wives or daughters: Structural differences between urban and Bedouin Lebanese co-wives." In: Joseph, S. (Ed.). (1999). *Intimate selving in Arab families: Gender, self, and identity*. Syracuse University Press.

Hammersley, M. 2008. *Questioning qualitative inquiry: Critical essays*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Harding, J. 2006. Questioning the subject in biographical interviewing. *Sociological Research*. 11 (3), pp. 1–10.

Hashemi, M. 2017. "Aspirations, Poverty and Behavior Among Youth in the Middle East: Some Theoretical Considerations." *Muslim World* 107(1), pp. 83–99.

Hatem, M. 1987. "Toward the study of the psychodynamics of mothering and gender in Egyptian families." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 19 (3), pp. 287–305.

Health guide for pre-marriage medical test, 2015. Available at:

<https://www.moh.gov.sa/Ministry/About/Health%20Policies/004.pdf>.

- Heckathorn, D. and Cameron, C.J. 2017. "Network sampling: From snowball and multiplicity to respondent-driven sampling." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 43, pp. 101–119.
- Heelas, P. 1996. "On thing not being worse, and the ethic of humanity." In, Heelas, P. Morris, P. and Lash, S. 1996. "*Detraditionalization.*" *Critical reflections on authority and identity*. Cambridge: Blackwell publisher.
- Hoffman, M., Jamal, A. 2012. "The Youth and the Arab Spring: Cohort Differences and Similarities." *Middle East Law and Governance*, 4(1), pp. 168–188.
- Hopkins, N. 2003. *The new Arab family*. American Univ in Cairo Press. Vol. 24, No. 2.
- Ibin Kholdoon, A. 2013. *Muqadimat Ibn Khalidun*. Lebanon: Almaktabah Alasreah.
- Ibin Manzure, M. 1984. *Lisan alarab*. Beirut: Dar Sader.
- Ibin-Mahfooz, G. 2012. "Stereotyping divorced women in Saudi culture: an empirical study on Jeddah city." *Umm Alqura university journal for social science*. 5(1), pp. 11–33.
- Jamieson, L. 1998. *Intimacy: Personal relationships in modern societies*. Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Jamieson, L. 2011. "Intimacy as a concept: Explaining social change in the context of globalisation or another form of ethnocentrism?" *Sociological research* 16.4, pp. 151–163. [Online: access at: 21.05.2021]
- Johnson, R., Onwuegbuzie, A. and Turner, L. 2007. "Toward a definition of mixed methods research." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*. 1 (2), pp. 112–133.

- Joseph, S. 1999a. *Intimate selving in Arab families: Gender, self, and identity*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Joseph, S. 1999c. "My son/myself, my mother/myself: Paradoxical relationalities of patriarchal connectivity." In: Joseph, S. ed. *Intimate selving in Arab families: Gender, self, and identity*. Place of Publication: Syracuse University Press, pp. 174–190.
- Joseph, S. 2000. Civic myths, citizenship, and gender in Lebanon. In: *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*. Berkeley: Syracuse University Press.
- Joseph, S. 2003. "Among brothers: Patriarchal connectivity and brotherly differences in Lebanon." In: Hopkins, N. ed. 2003. *The new Arab family*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, pp. 165–179.
- Joseph, S. 2005. "The Kin contract and citizenship in the Middle East." In Friedman, M. ed. *Women and Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Joseph, S. 2012. "Thinking Intentionality." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 8.2: pp. 1–25.
- Joseph, S., 1999b. "Brother-sister relationships: Connectivity, love, and power in the reproduction of patriarchy in Lebanon." In: Joseph, S. ed. *Intimate selving in Arab families: Gender, self, and identity*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, pp. 113–140.
- Josselson, R. 2011. "Narrative research: Constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing story." In: Wertz, F.J., Charmaz, K., McMullen, L.M., Josselson, R., Anderson, R. and McSpadden, E. eds. *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Julian, G. 2016. *Postcolonial Sociologies: a reader*. Bingley: Emerald Limited.
- Kabesh, A. 2013. *Postcolonial masculinities: Emotions, histories and ethics*. London: Routledge.
- Kandiyoti, D. 1988. "Bargaining with patriarchy." *Gender & Society*, 2(3), pp. 274–290.
- Kandiyoti, D. 1994. "The paradoxes of masculinity: Some thoughts on segregated societies." In:
Cornwall, A. and Lindisfarne, N. eds. *Dislocating masculinity*. London: Routledge, pp. 185–200.
- Kandiyoti, D. 2014. "The Paradoxes of Masculinity: Some Thoughts on Segregated Societies". In
Cornwall, A., and Nancy, L. eds 2016. *Dislocating Masculinity : Comparative Ethnographies*.
London: Routledge. Print. Male Orders.
- Kanuha, V. 2000 "Being" Native versus "Going Native: Conducting Social Work Research as an
Insider." *Social Work* (New York) 45.5 (2000), pp. 439-47.
- Kenny, A. 2021. "Aristotle. *Britannica Academic*." Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/levels/collegiate/article/Aristotle/108312>
- Khalifa, H., Alnuaim, A., Young, R., Marshall, S. and Popadiuk, N. 2018. "Crafting continuity and
change in Saudi society: joint parent-youth transition-to-adulthood projects." *Journal of
Adolescence*. 63, pp. 142–52.
- Kim, K. 2004. "Critical theory criticized: Giddens's double hermeneutic and the problem of language
game change." *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*, 4 (1), pp. 28–44.
- Kimmel, M. Messner, M. 1992. *Men's lives*. Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.
- King Khalid database. Available at <http://www.kingkhalid.org.sa>. [Accessed 10th October 2021]

- Kramer, A. 2011. "Telling Multi-Dimensional Family Histories: Making the Past Meaningful." *Methodological Innovations* 6.3: 17-26. Web.
- Labie, T. 1987. *Arab courtship sociological perspective*. Arabic organisation publisher. Originally in Arabic as "Sociologia Algazal Alarabi: Alsear Alazery namozaga."
- Lacroix, S. 2010. *Les Islamistes Saoudiens Ine Insurrection Manque'e, Universitaires de France*.
Translated by Zamory, A., Buriel: Arab Network for Research and publishing.
- Lawler, S. 2014. *Identity: sociological perspectives*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity Print.
- Lawler, S., 1999. "Getting out and getting away: women's narratives of class mobility." *Feminist Review*. 63(1), pp. 3–24.
- Le Renard, A. 2014. *A Society of Young Women*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Leder, S. 2015. "Nasab as idiom and discourse." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 58(1-2), pp. 56–74.
- Lerner, D. 1950. *The passing of traditional society: Modernizing the Middle East*. New York : London.
- Limbert, M. 2007. "Marriage, status and the politics of nationality in Oman." In: A. Alsharekh, *The Gulf Family: Kinship Policies and Modernity*. London: Saqi. pp. 167–179.
- Lindisfarne, N. 2017. "Variant masculinities, variant virginites: Rethinking 'honour and shame'". In: Cornwall, A. and Lindisfarne, N. eds. *Dislocating masculinity*. London: Routledge, pp. 185–200.
- Lund, T. 2012. "Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches: Some arguments for mixed methods research." *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*. 56 (2), pp. 155–165.

Mahmood, S. 2001. "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival." *Cultural Anthropology*, 16 (2), pp. 202–236.

Mahmood, S. 2005. *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mahmood, S. 2006. "Feminist theory, agency, and the liberatory subject: Some reflections on the Islamic revival in Egypt." *Temenos-Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion*, 42(1).

Mahmood, S. 2011. "Religion, feminism, and empire: the new ambassadors of Islamophobia." In: Alcoff, L. and Caputo, J. Eds. *Feminism, sexuality and the return of religion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Maisel, S. 2014. "The New Rise of Tribalism In Saudi Arabia." *Nomadic Peoples*, 18, pp. 100–122.

Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A. and Fontenot, R. 2013. "Does sample size matter in qualitative research?" A review of qualitative interviews in IS research. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*. 54 (1), pp. 11–22.

Mason, J. 2018. *Qualitative researching*. London: SAGE.

May, T. 2011. *Social research: Issues, methods and process*. Maidenhead, UK: McGraw Hill.

McGuire, M. 2008. *Lived Religion*. New York: Oxford.

Mernissi, F. 1991. *Women and Islam: an historical and theological enquiry*. London: Basil Blackwell.

Mernissi, F. 2011. *Beyond the veil male-female dynamics in Muslim society*. London: Saqi.

Mills, C.2000. *The sociological imagination*. Oxford University Press.

Moen, T. 2006. "Reflections on the narrative research approach." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 5 (4), pp. 56–69.

Moghadam, V. 2003. *Modernizing women: gender and social change in the Middle East*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Molly, A., Shelley, D. Sclater, C. and Treacher, A. 2000. *Lines of Narrative Psychosocial Perspectives*. London; Routledge Studies in Memory and Narrative.

Muhammad, A. 2018. "Divorce in Arab Saudi society: a social perspective." *Human Science Journal*. University of Dongola. 19, pp. 81–104.

Nasser El-Dine, S. 2018. Love, Materiality, and masculinity in Jordan: "doing" romance with limited resources.. *Men and Masculinities*, 21, pp. 423–442.

Navarro, Z. 2006. "In Search of a Cultural Interpretation of Power: The Contribution of Pierre Bourdieu." *IDS Bulletin*. 37.6 : pp. 11–22.

Nawar Al-Hassan, G. 2004. "Is feminism relevant to Arab women?" *Third World Quarterly*. 25(3), pp. 521–536.

Nydell, M. 2006. *Understanding Arabs: A guide for modern times*. Hachette UK: Intercultural press.

Oakley, A. 1974. *The Sociology of Housework*. London: Robertson. Print.

Oakley, A. 1998 "Gender, methodology and people's ways of knowing: some problems with feminism and the paradigm debate in social science." *Sociology*. 32.4: 707–31.

Oakley, A. 2016. "Interviewing women again: Power, time and the gift." *Sociology*. 50 (1), pp. 195–213.

- Östlund, U., Kidd, L., Wengström, Y. and Rowa-Dewar, N. 2011. "Combining qualitative and quantitative research within mixed method research designs: A methodological review." *International Journal of Nursing Studies*. 48 (3), pp. 369–383.
- Pande, R. 2015. "I arranged my own marriage: Arranged marriages and post-colonial feminism." *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 22(2), pp. 172–87.
- Patai, R. 2007. *The Arab mind*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Patton, M. 2002. *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. London: SAGE.
- Philips, B., Taylor, A. 2009. *On kindness*. London: Penguin.
- Pleck, J. 1981. *The Myth of Masculinity*. Cambridge: The MIT press.
- Riessman, C. 2008. *Methods for the Human Sciences*. Los Angeles; London: Sage.
- Ritchie, J. 2014. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: SAGE.
- Said, E. 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin classics.
- Saleh, R. and Luppicini, R. 2017. "Exploring the challenges of divorce on Saudi women." *Journal of Family History*, 42, pp. 184–198.
- Samin, N. 2012. "Kafā'a fi l-Nasab in Saudi Arabia: Islamic law, tribal custom, and social change." *Journal of Arabian Studies*, 2, pp. 109–126.
- Sandelowski, M. 1995. "Sample size in qualitative research." *Research in Nursing & Health*. 18 (2), pp. 179–183.

Saudi Press Agency. Available at: www.spa.gov.sa [accessed on 5 February 2020].

Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J. and Kitzinger, C. 2015. "Anonymising interview data: Challenges and compromise in practice." *Qualitative Research*. 15 (5), pp. 616–632.

Schiff, B. 2013. "Fractured narratives: Psychology's fragmented narrative psychology." In M. Hyvärinen, M., Hatavara & L. C. Hydén, L.C. (Eds.), *The travelling concept of narrative* (pp. 245–264). Amsterdam: John Benjamins

Sharabi, H. 1993. *Neopatriarchy: a theory of distorted change in Arab society*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Sharma, S. 2008. "Young women, sexuality and the church: empowerment or oppression." *European Journal of Women's Studies*. 15(4), pp 345–359.

Silverman, D. 2006. *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*. London: SAGE.

Singerman, D. 2011. "The negotiation of waithood. the political economy of delayed marriage in Egypt." In: Khafalf, S. and Saad Khalaf, R. *Arab youth: Social mobilization in times of risk*. London, UK: Saqi Books. pp.67–79.

Skeggs, B. 1997. *Formations of class and gender becoming respectable*. London: SAGE, Theory, Culture & Society.

Smart, C. 2007. *Personal Life: New Directions in Sociological Thinking*. Cambridge: Polit press.

Smith, B. 2016. "Narrative analysis." In Lyons, E. Coyle, A. Eds. *Analysing qualitative data in psychology*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

- Spelman, E. 1988. *Inessential woman: problems of exclusion in feminist thought*. London: Beacon Press.
- Stack, C. 2003. "Frameworks for studying families in the 21 St century." In: Hopkins, N. ed. 2003 *The new Arab family*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, pp. 5–19.
- Stevenson, N. 2012. *Freedom*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Susser, A. 2012. "Tradition and Modernity in the 'Arab Spring'. Strategic Assessment", [online] 15. Available at: <http://www.inss.org.il> [Accessed 3 June. 2021].
- Susser, A. 2014. "The contemporary Middle East: The resilience of traditional society." *Telaviv Notes, an update on Middle Eastern Developments*.
- Swidler, A. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51.2 : 273-86.
- The Basic Law on the Political System. 1992. Available at: <https://laws.boe.gov.sa/BoeLaws/Laws/LawDetails/16b97fcb-4833-4f66-8531-a9a700f161b6/1>.
- The Council of Economic and Development Affairs. 2016. Vision 2030. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Retrieved on May 15, 2019 from <https://vision2030.gov.sa/download/file/fid/417>.
- Thompson, M. 2017. "Societal transformation, public opinion and Saudi youth: views from an academic elite." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 53 (5), pp. 834–857.
- Trotter, R.T. 2012. "Qualitative research sample design and sample size: Resolving and unresolved issues and inferential imperatives." *Preventive Medicine*. 55 (5), pp. 398–400.

Turner, B. 2007. "Religious Authority and the New Media." *Theory, Culture and Society*. 24 (2), pp. 117–134.

Twohig, P. and Putnam, W. 2002. "Group interviews in primary care research: Advancing the state of the art or ritualized research?" *Family Practice*. 19 (3), pp. 278–284.

Uskul, A. Oyserman, D, Schwarz, N. 2010. "Cultural Emphasis on Honor, Modesty, or Self-enhancement: Implications for the Survey Response Process." In Harkness, J. Braun, M. Edwards, B. Johnson, T. Lyberg, L. Mohler, P., Smith, T. Survey methods in multinational, multiregional, and multicultural contexts. In *International Conference on Multinational, Multicultural, and Multiregional Survey Methods, Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Berlin, Germany; This book is based on research submitted to the aforementioned conference*. Wiley-Blackwell: US. pp. 191–201

Vision2030.gov.sa

Wadud, A. 2005. "Citizenship and faith." In: Friedman, M. ed. *Women and citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Walsham, G. 2006. "Doing interpretive research." *European Journal of Information Systems*. 15 (3), pp. 320–330.

Welchman, L. 2007. "The marital relationship." In *women and Muslim family laws in Arab states: A comparative overview of textual development and advocacy* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. pp. 89–106.

Yamani, M. (2000). *Changed identities*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Young, M. 1997. "Asymmetrical reciprocity: On moral respect, wonder, and enlarged thought."

Constellations 3:3, pp. 340–363.

Young, R. 1990. *White mythologies: Writing history and the west*. London: Routledge.

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Introduction Script:

Thank you for taking part to speak with me today about your experience. The interview should take about 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. Please remember that everything you share with me will be kept strictly confidential. None of your information that you share about yourself will be shared to anyone outside of this study. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, I am only interested in your opinion. If you find any of these topics difficult please let me know. If you wish to withdraw, you have the right at any time and without giving a reason. If you need to take a break at any time, please let me know. If you have any questions, please let me know I will try and answer these at the end of the interview. Before I begin, do I have your permission to audio-record our conversation? Do you have any questions before we begin the interview? (START AUDIO RECORDER) This is interview (interviewee ID#) on (date) and he/she understands that this is interview is being recorded. Is this correct?

Themes

Lived Experience

- Can you firstly tell me about yourself? [*Probes: Do you study, work? / single, married?*
How this affect your life in general? Examples?]

- In what ways does (X) affect you? [*Probes: can you please tell me a little more about this? Examples?*]
- Is there anything affect your life in particular way?
- What are factors that inform what you are now [*Probes: religion, family, friends, social media etc. How does it impact on you? Why*]
- In what ways do you think your experience compere to your parents' generation?
- In what ways does the present economic opportunities compare to that of your parents' generation. [*Probes: how do you see yourself? How do you see your generation? How can you compare this from your parent's generation? Probes: How, Why, example if there any*].
- What do these things mean to you [*Probes: work, leisure, study, friends*] ? Why?

Only for England

- Why are you in England?
- Tell me your experience of being in England.
- How has this experience impacted you?

Tradition and modernity

Tradition

- What does traditional living mean to you? How do you think this is compared from to parents' generation?

- In your everyday life, how does your (X) tradition effect on fateful decisions? [*Probes: e.g. the marriage, study, work, relationship with the opposite sex*]. How do you think this compared to your parents' generation?
- What does kinship mean to you?
- Could you please tell me your position about tradition? How?

Modernity

- What does non-traditional living mean to you? [*Probes: Could you explain a little more*] How do you think this is compared to your parents' generation?
- In your everyday life, how does your (X) non- traditional living effect on fateful decisions? [*Probes: e.g. the marriage, study, work, relationship with the opposite sex*]. How do you think this compared to your parents' generation?
- What does freedom mean to you?
- What does independent mean to you?
- How do you link your tradition with values as? [*Probes: freedom, independent*] How do you think this is compared to parents' generation?

That is the end of our discussion. Thank you very much for your time. Do you have any questions for me? And would you have any suggestions?

Appendix 2: Ethical Approval



**University of
Nottingham**

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

**Faculty of Social Sciences
School of Sociology & Social
Policy**

University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

08/10/2018

Reference: 1819-003-PGR

Dear May

Your application for ethical approval from the School of Sociology and Social Policy

On behalf of the Research Ethics Sub-Committee, I am pleased to confirm that your project "*Understanding Saudi youth identities*" has been reviewed and approved and you are now welcome to begin your data collection.

If you propose to make any amendments to the approved project or supporting documentation, you must first send details of the amendment along with any supporting documents to the Research Ethics generic email address, LQ-ResearchethicSSP@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk for approval. Please do not use any unapproved or amended documents or procedures before these have been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Sub-Committee.

If you have any queries during your project, please contact the Research Ethics administration team or your academic supervisor.

Good luck with your project!

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Mohr'.

Dr Alison Mohr
Research Ethics Sub-Committee Officer

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Date: 19.09.2018

Title of Study: Understanding Saudi Youth Identities

Name of Researcher(s): May Hamad A Alhusayni

We would like to invite you to take part in our research study. Before you decide we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. One of our team will go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to shed light on contemporary youth identities in Saudi Arabia by examining the sources of that identity, how it is negotiated, and how Saudi youth see the future, including their role within the broader social context.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to take part because you are one of Saudi youth community and I would like to know more about your experience. I am inviting 30 participants like you to take part.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. This would not affect your legal rights.

What will happen to me if I take part?

When you decide to take part in this study, we will arrange for convenient time, and place or via Skype to conduct the interview. The interview approximately will take 1 to 1.5 hours, and with your permission it will be audio-recorded.

Expenses and payments

Participants will not be paid to participate in the study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I cannot promise the study will help you but the information I will get from this study may help better understand current challenges to Saudi youth identities.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the School Research Ethics Officer, and/or my supervisors. All contact details are given at the end of this information sheet.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

I will follow ethical and legal practice and all information about you will be handled in confidence.

If you join the study, the data collected for the study will be looked at by authorised persons from the University of Nottingham who are organising the research. They may also be looked at

by authorised people to check that the study is being carried out correctly. All will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant and we will do our best to meet this duty.

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential, stored in a secure and locked office, and on a password protected database. Any information about you which leaves the University will have your name and address removed (anonymised) and a unique code will be used so that you cannot be recognised from it. Anonymised data may also be stored in data archives for future researchers interested in this area.

Your personal data (address, telephone number) will be kept for a year after the end of the study so that we are able to contact you about the findings of the study *and possible follow-up studies* (unless you advise us that you do not wish to be contacted). All research data will be kept securely for 7 years. After this time your data will be disposed of securely. During this time all precautions will be taken by all those involved to maintain your confidentiality, only members of the research team will have access to your personal data.

Although what you say in the interview is confidential, should you disclose anything to us which we feel puts you or anyone else at any risk, we may feel it necessary to report this to the appropriate persons.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without your legal rights being affected. If you withdraw then the information collected so far may not be possible to extract and erase after we conduct the interview this information may still be used in the project analysis.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results are to be written up as part of PhD qualification and you will not be identified in any report/publication. It might be discussed in an academic conferences.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being organised by the University of Nottingham and is not being funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

All research in the University of Nottingham is looked at by a group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Sociology and Social Policy Research Ethics Committee.

Further information and contact details

Researcher: May Hamad A Alhusayni,

Room A35

School of Sociology and Social Policy

University of Nottingham

University Park

Nottingham NG7 2RD

UK

MAY.ALHUSAYNI@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors:

Professor Andrew Yip

Dr. Christian Karner

Room B26

Room B36

School of Sociology and Social Policy
Policy

School of Sociology and Social

University of Nottingham

University of Nottingham

University Park

University Park

Nottingham NG7 2RD

Nottingham NG7 2RD

UK

UK

Andrew.yip@nottingham.ac.uk

Christian.Karner@nottingham.ac.uk

Research Ethics Officer: Dr Alison Mohr, alison.mohr@nottingham.ac.uk

Tel: 0115 84 68151

Appendix 4: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Date:

Title of Study: Understanding Saudi Youth Identities

Name of Researcher/s: May Hamad A Alhusayni

Name of Participant:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected. I understand that should I

☐

withdraw then the information collected so far may not be able to be extracted and erased and that this information may still be used in the project analysis.

3. I understand that relevant sections of data collected in the study may be looked at by authorised individuals from the University of Nottingham, the research group and regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to have access to these records and to collect, store, analyse and publish information obtained from my participation in this study.

☐

4. I understand that the interview/focus group will be recorded and that anonymous direct quotes from the interview/focus group may be used in the study reports.

☐

5. I understand that the information collected about me may be used to support other research in the future, and may be shared anonymously with other researchers.

☐

6. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

May Hamad A Alhusayni

Date

Signature

2 copies: 1 for the participant, 1 for the project file

Appendix 5: Glossary of Arabic Terms

Arabic terms	Description
<i>Alhayah</i>	The Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice is never called the “religious police” in Arabic. The name derives from the Qur’anic principle of “the promotion of virtue and the repression of vice” (al-amr bi-l-ma’ruf wa-l-nahi ‘an al-munkar), according to which each Muslim must encourage those around him or her to live according to religious precepts. (Le Renard , 2014)
<i>Alnazrah Alsareah</i>	It “a religiously sanctioned fleeting glimpse whereby a man can see a woman’s face before marriage provided that the right familial context is prepared for the display” (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 261).
<i>Mahr</i>	This is an Arabic term that refers to the Islamic practice of payment to which a wife is entitled from the husband in consideration of marriage (Al-Torki, 1977; Al-Khateeb, 2007). Although in some cases the father accepts the property, it is used to purchase the bride’s trousseau, the cost of which often exceeds the <i>mahar</i> received. In this sense, it is different from a “bride price”, wherein property is given to the bride’s father or her lineage head (Al-Torki, 1977).
‘Ayb	The shame of socially unacceptable behaviour. The term refers to any act which would cause shame for one’s self or family.
<i>zawaj jam’ iyya</i>	collective weddings which the government funds collective weddings for men who are unable to afford marriage costs, in which up to 50 young spouses are married at the same ceremony.
<i>Misyar</i>	secretive marriage
‘urfi	A customary informal marriage that is unofficially registered. The marriage is based on an oral contract that requires two witnesses and is carried out in secret (Bayat, 2012, p.63). In terms of religious requirement of marriage, the marriage contract must involve

	a proposal and an acceptance of the proposal between the spouses whereas the requirement of women's guidance by men is contested between the four Islamic doctrines.
<i>Istiqamah</i>	the groom's observance of a religious commitment, such as praying in the mosque as a Friday prayer and not drinking or gambling
<i>Nafaqah</i>	ability to fulfil social and religious wealth norms to perform the financial duty of a husband towards his wife and their children
<i>'ird</i>	Concentrating on the pre-Islamic period (<i>jahiliyya</i> , meaning 'of <i>'ird</i> , not exclusive to women's sexual misconduct', it includes feeling jealous that a man does not assault bashful women, defends his relatives and defines whoever seeks refuge (Al-Ruwaitea, 2014). <i>'Ird</i> can be understood as a controlling value that organises family structure and the modesty required from both men and women. The meaning of <i>'ird</i> connects with <i>Sharaf</i> (honor), but <i>'ird</i> is the spot of pride and shame, both as it relates to a man and his ancestor and to those whose management of affairs are incumbent upon him. It is also the side that a man protects of himself and his genealogy; he must fight so it will not be reduced or taken. This linguistic definition of <i>'ird</i> explicitly refers to women's virtue under the phrase "those whose affairs' management is incumbent upon him", and <i>'ird</i> in this definition is an individual matter not for the group (Dodd, 1973).