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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF SOCIOLOGY, SOCIAL POLICY & APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES

Social Sciences

**Between Obedience and Rebellion: A Field Study on the Young Women of
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**

by

Sahar Aljaouhari

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2013

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIOLOGY, SOCIAL POLICY & APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES

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BETWEEN OBEDIENCE AND REBELLION: A FIELD STUDY ON THE YOUNG WOMEN OF JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA

Sahar Aljaouhari

This research explores the perceptions young Saudi women in Jeddah have of their lives. It seeks to uncover the role and different degrees that obedience and rebellion feature in the everyday lives of the young Saudi women in Jeddah. The subjects of the research were young Saudi women aged 16–21, all living in Jeddah at the time of the study and studying at either high school or university. The study employed a qualitative methodology to identify the extent of obedience and rebellion and their manifestations in the young women's daily lives.

The research relied on in-depth semi-structured interviews as the principal data collection method. By analysing the data derived from this process, I sought to explore the range, subtleties and continuum of rebellion and obedience in terms of three major themes: Hijab, gender relations, and young women's private spaces.

The study found that the participants associated Hijab with high social and religious values and had great respect for it. The conceptualization and practice of wearing Hijab, was associated with freedom and access to 'the public sphere' for many participants.

In contrast, the study found that *Qiwama* (Guardianship), a religious Islamic concept that regulates family life, was much less respected by the participants, at least in its traditionalist incarnation that prevails in Saudi Arabia. The traditional *Qiwama*, per the findings, is a patriarchal structure that results in the reproduction of the social reality that marginalizes women, relegating them to follower status. The female participants rejected this as an incorrect interpretation of religious text.

A majority of participants also pointed out that the definition of rebellion differs from one generation to the next. In fact, the participants noted that the actions of young Saudi women that are often classified as rebellious are actually demands for personal rights and an attempt to remove some of the restrictions they face in a subtle way that does not directly clash with family, religion and state policy.

This study is important because it represents the unique contribution of giving a voice to young Saudi women to narrate their experiences and explore their ways of subtly negotiating with or conforming to social realities and by so doing enables the examination of the connections between obedience, rebellion, or subtle negotiation.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Sahar Aljaouhari

declare that the thesis entitled:

Between Obedience and Rebellion: A Field Study on the Young Women of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

and the work presented in the thesis is my own, and has been generated by me alone as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

- none of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published as:

Signed:

Date:

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Glossary

Abaya: Cloak worn by many Saudi women as part of their Hijab. The Abaya is usually black, but occasionally has other colours.

Al-Asheikh: Family name borne by the descendants of Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism. It literally means "The family of the Sheikh".

Al-Falah :The first formal institute of education in Jeddah. The name literally means "the success" school. It was established with private funds in 1905 when Jeddah was under the rule of the sharifs of Mecca.

Allah: Arabic for God, the sole deity in Islam.

Bid'a: An innovation in religion.

Dar al-Hanan: Literally the "House of Affection", the first female school in Saudi Arabia. It is located in Jeddah, and was started in the 1960s by Iffat Al-Thunayyan, wife of King Faisal.

Diriyah: An ancient city located in the central region of Saudi Arabia; Diriyah was the capital of the first and second Saudi states. It also served as the centre of Wahhabi teaching in the mid-Eighteenth Century.

Faqih: Representative of Islamic jurisprudence.

Fatwa (Pl. Fatawa): A religious ruling issued by an Islamic scholar.

Fiqh: Islamic jurisprudence.

Grand Mufti: The head of religious scholarship in any Islamic country.

Hadith: Sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Hanbali: The most conservative of all four major schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam. The Hanbali School is the one closest to the ultraconservative Wahhabi and Salafi groups.

Haram: Acts forbidden in Islam.

Harem: The segregation of women as a group; it is not unique to Arab or Muslim civilisation, but existed previously and was adapted according to etiology appropriate to the Arabs and the Muslims.

Hejaz: The region in western Saudi Arabia in which Mecca, Medina and Jeddah are located.

Hijab: Conservative Islamic women's clothing that varies in form.

Ijtihad: Independent judgment, meaning literally to struggle with one's self using reason, logic and deep thought. In law, Ijtihad is a method of legal reasoning that does not rely on the traditional schools of jurisprudence, or on rigid interpretations of sacred texts.

Ikhwan: "The Brothers", the name given to the settled Bedouin who fought alongside Abdulaziz ibn Saud in his conquest of Arabia, from around 1912 until 1926.

Imam: Religious leader of a community or religious institute.

Imamates: A country borne of tribal allegiance led by an Imam; usually a pious leader with good tribal connections. The first and second Saudi states, as well as the former northern Yemen and the former Imamate of Aseer are all examples of Imam-led, tribe-based countries.

Ird: Chastity.

Jeddawi: Native of Jeddah, a city in the Hejaz located on the Red Sea.

Mahram: A male relative whom a woman cannot marry. Conservative Muslims stipulate that a woman has to be accompanied by her husband or by a mahram when travelling.

Masjid Al-Haram: The holy mosque in Mecca.

Mufti: An Islamic scholar who is an interpreter of the laws of Sharia. The grand mufti is the supreme religious figure in Saudi Arabia.

Muslim: An adherent of Islam or one who submits to God's will.

Mutawwa (Pl: Mutaween): Saudi Arabia's religious police, known officially as the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. They are tasked with eliminating behaviours considered un-Islamic by the Saudi authorities.

Niqab: A face veil worn by some conservative Muslim women.

Qiwama/ Qawwamun: A Quranic concept imploring men to defend and uphold the interests of women and to support them financially. "Qawwamun" is the Quranic word meaning supporters, defenders and maintainers.

Quran (or Koran): Islam's central text, the divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammad.

Sahaba: Those believed to have lived, interacted with, heard or seen the prophet Muhammad. In Sunni Islam, they are considered to be the most authoritative sources of information about the conduct of Muhammad and normative examples in their own right, immune from major sins and beyond criticism.

Salafism/Salafi: An ultraconservative Sunni religious group dominant in Saudi Arabia and closely related to the goals of Wahhabism. Salafis, who are the members of this group, seek to revive the way of life followed by the earliest Muslims.

Sharia: A far-reaching term encompassing all correct Islamic practices. Sharia can also be defined as the correct way of practicing religion, a roadmap to a pious society that includes methods of worship, legislation and human interaction.

Sharif: A person who claims lineage to the prophet Muhammad, through his daughter Fatima and his cousin Ali Ibn Abu Talib. This is usually through one of Fatima's two sons; Al-Hassan or Al-Hussain. In the case of the sharifs of Hejaz it was the latter.

Sheikh: Religious scholar.

Shi'ism/Shi'ite: The second largest sect in Islam. A Shi'ite is an adherent of Shi'ism. Shi'ites assign special importance to Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. The sect is also known as Shi'at Ali, meaning the Partisans of Ali. The Shi'ites form the majority of the Muslims in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Lebanon, Yemen and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

Shirk: Polytheism.

Shura: The use of dialogue and consensus-building in decision-making processes. Especially applicable in politics, but can be applied in other fields as well, such as marital relationships.

Sunna: The traditions of the Prophet Muhammad– The things he did himself, or were approved of by him, or that were done in his presence without earning his disapproval.

Sunnism/ Sunni: The largest sect of Islam, which accepts the traditional order of succession to the Prophet, and which seeks to emulate the beliefs to which the Prophet ascribed. Adherents of Sunnism are called Sunnis.

Takleef: In Fiqh, a duty of responsibility.

Tashreef: In Fiqh, a gift intended to honour or elevate a person or a group.

Thawab: A reward in the afterlife for a righteous deed.

Ulama: A body of religious scholars who interpret Islamic law for the community.

Umma: The worldwide Islamic community.

Umra: Minor Hajj: a ritualistic visit to the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, which can be performed at any time during the year.

Uyayna: A village in central Saudi Arabia notable for being the birthplace of Muhammad bin Abdel-Wahhab, the founder of the Wahhabi movement.

Wahhabi/Wahhabism: A puritanical, ultraconservative movement founded in the 1740s, in what is now Saudi Arabia, by a preacher named Muhammad bin Abdel-Wahhab. The movement is championed by the Al-Saud family and prevails in Saudi Arabia today. Women under Wahhabism are denied many rights considered due to them according to mainstream readings of the Quran and Hadith. Backed by Saudi oil wealth, Wahhabi teachings are becoming increasingly influential throughout the Islamic world.

Wali-ul-amr: The male guardian.

Definitions

The use of Western political terms in the study:

- Islamism/ Islamist: Describes a wide range of political and social movements that support a leading role for religion in executive and legislative politics as well as in public life. Conservative Islamists is a term used here to describe those elements with an Islamist political tendency that uphold strongly conservative social values and literalist interpretations of the faith, especially regarding gender roles.
- Islamic: Describes articles pertaining to Islam as a religion and an element of culture, rather than as a political system.
- Muslim women: They believe in the five pillars of Islam (reciting the Muslim profession of faith, performing prayers five times a day, alms-giving, fasting during the month of Ramadan and undertaking pilgrimage to Mecca).
- Liberal: Used to describe revisionist scholarly attitudes toward Islam, socially liberal political tendencies, especially with regard to gender roles (including more liberal elements within Islamism).

1. Chapter One: Research Aims and Procedures

1.1 Significance of the Study

This study researches the deep recesses of the young female's life in what is a male-dominated society resting upon the foundation of control of certain social groups by others. This power to control has been granted as a result of inherited customs and traditions and is investigated in the context of the city of Jeddah in western Saudi Arabia.

Many factors justify the researcher's decision to conduct this study. Firstly, the researcher herself is a Saudi woman who has lived in the long shadow cast by male-dominated society, which espouses severe social traditions and an interpretation of Quranic doctrine that cannot be opposed or debated. She has felt the weight of the cultural restrictions imposed upon her in school, at university, in her home, and even in the street. At home she was restricted by the need to maintain her reputation, honour, and good manners. Her role throughout her life was also clearly defined: she was required to be an obedient daughter then an obedient wife and a good mother. In school she was subject to restrictions on her clothing, boring overstuffed curricula, a lack of physical activity, and the challenge of wearing a black Hijab under the scorching sun. After her education was complete, she faced a noticeable lack of employment options available for women, a reflection of the fact that she was expected to be a wife and mother. Inside the state, the Saudi woman encounters apathy with regard to her interests and problems, and she cannot rely on government officials to resolve her concerns. This brings us to the question of whether these factors which still exist have resulted in contemporary young Saudi women starting to rebel, or like me and my

generation– are they continuing to live in silence, without protesting against the conditions imposed on them throughout their lives.

In Saudi Arabia the situation is no different. What is different in Saudi Arabia, is that there are few studies concerning criminal deviation among females, and no studies on young Saudi females in the context of non–criminal rebellion in general (Al–Askah, 2005). Therefore, this study is unique in its themes and concerns, attaining additional significance, since it is an exploration of a wholly unknown genre of studies relating to Saudi Arabia.

This study is not focused on criminal deviation; rather it is a study that investigates the young Saudi woman’s perceptions of her daily life. The study seeks to uncover just how free the young Saudi woman feels she is, and examines her perceptions of her obedience or rebellion. Thus, the study examines the extent of the range of obedience and resistance in young women’s everyday lives in Saudi Arabia.

The researcher believes the subject of this study is extremely important in a society undergoing rapid social change, as discussed in chapters Two and Three. These changes pose formidable challenges to Saudi society and affect many others across the Arab region, pitting older traditions against newer, much more youthful mind–sets.

According to the latest census, over 30% of the Saudi population is below 14, and the average female age is 23.9 years. The youthful nature of the population demands alternative policies to those that exist at present (e.g. gender segregation in work places, a ban women from driving and traveling abroad without a guardian) (Arab, 2010), if the government is to address this and the next generation’s needs and demands. This first–of–its–kind study

could pave the way for exciting new prospects for future studies in the country (Central department of statistics and information, 2010).

1.2 Research question

This study aims to answer the following question: What is the role of obedience or rebellion in the everyday lives of young Saudi women in Jeddah?

1.3 Aims and objectives

This study has seven main aims, and these are listed below:

- To explore and understand young Saudi women's lives in education, in public life, and in familial relationships.
- To recognize the impulses that lead young women to obedience or to rebellion.
- To depict the freedoms and restrictions in the lives of the young women surveyed, and to describe their methods of dealing with them.
- To describe the actions that have been categorized as 'creative resistance' or 'subtle negotiation' under the previous objective.
- To seek out the reasons behind the restrictions imposed on Saudi women, and to explore the gap in interpretation between the rebelling girl and her society– from the young women's perspectives.
- To reveal the relationship between religion, customs and traditions and the oppression of women– from the young women's perspectives.
- To provide suggestions for future studies on the topic, based on the conclusions presented in this study.

This study is concerned only with university and high school female students aged 16–21 and residing in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The decision to limit the investigation to the female perspective was not the researcher's, but was in fact due to Saudi Arabia's ban on gender mixing, which makes a similar and complementary investigation of the corresponding male segment of society a near-impossible task for a female researcher.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Several factors have affected the scope and limitations of this study. As evidenced in the study's title, the study has been limited to the city of Jeddah. This is because Jeddah is the researcher's home city, making it easy to conduct fieldwork there. No studies exist on female rebellion and obedience in any Saudi city, and so there are no pre-existing data to consult as a complement to this work. The study has also been limited in the gender of its participants; only females took part because, as stated above, gender-segregation in Saudi Arabia makes it very difficult for a female researcher to access male participants.

The data was gathered in the time period between June and September 2011. This study is solely qualitative and applies no quantitative method whatsoever. Lastly, the study has only addressed young women's perception of their own inclinations towards rebellion or obedience; this is a self-imposed limitation that could easily be redressed in future studies.

1.5 The Structure of the Study

This study has been organised into eight chapters. The first chapter (this one) forms the introduction to the study, and contains a general overview its topic,

significance, goals, scope and limitations. It provides insights into the conceptual framework. The second chapter presents a background to Saudi Arabia in general and the city of Jeddah in particular. This presents both historical and geographical information, and contextualises the place of the Saudi woman herself, as viewed from legal, religious, and educational perspectives, as well as her role and status within society.

The third chapter is a literature review showcasing literature on the issues faced by women in the Islamic world; it covers feminist perspectives, and the impact of cultural factors on the young Saudi women's daily lives. A number of studies discussing "female deviation" in Saudi Arabia are also presented. Concepts of rebellion and obedience for young women are discussed, as well as the methods of negotiation that young women employ within the context of the male-dominated Saudi society. In this chapter, the key concepts allowing the researcher to capture the everyday coping strategies, that young women employ to deal with the situations in which they find themselves, were discussed. Also outlined are the broader theoretical framework that supports the researcher's exploration of the extent to which the young women's acts of individual and collective agency can present a challenge to the hegemonic patriarchal order.

The fourth chapter concerns itself with the methods used to conduct the study and the tools employed to ensure its validity, reliability and 'objectivity'. The position of the researcher with relation to the participants is also discussed, and so is the research sample, the method of data collection (interviewing), the pilot study, the limitations, ethical considerations and the data analysis.

The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters are dedicated to the analysis of the data. The fifth chapter deals specifically with Hijab as a major theme. It explores

participant viewpoints on Hijab, its relevance in their everyday lives, and whether/how it should be worn.

The sixth chapter is primarily involved in exploring negotiations revolving around gender relations, including concepts such as *Qiwama*, the mediator role played by mothers in the family, and the ban on women's driving. The participants' perspectives and experiences concerning these concepts are also explored.

The seventh chapter delves into the young Saudi women's private spaces. As part of this, their friendships with other young women fostered in the private space are examined. The chapter also reveals the role that friends can play in influencing the young woman toward obedience or rebellion. The absence of familial support and unity is explored here as an impetus for young women to seek security by joining friendship circles.

The eighth chapter serves as the conclusion to the study, discussing and interpreting the findings. It revisits the research question and answers it. Additionally, it highlights the strengths and the limitations of the study, presents suggestions for future studies and offers closing comments.

2. Chapter Two: Background to the Study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of Saudi Arabia in general, and women's issues in particular. This overview is designed to equip the reader with a solid understanding of the research context, in particular women's status in Saudi Arabia, to understand the aims of the study better. The background offered includes basic geographical, historical, demographic, economic, religious and legal information, with a distinct focus on women; all of which help place the reader in the context of the study.

A brief exposition on the city of Jeddah, particularly, its culture, is also presented, as Jeddah is the study location. In summary, the goal of the present chapter is to orient the reader, by establishing a solid background before moving on to the literature review.

2.2 Geographical Background

In 2010, at the time of the most recent census, the population of Saudi Arabia was 27,136,977. Of these, only 18,707,576 were Saudis, the remainder were foreign residents (2010 Census). The country is located in the Eastern extremity of Asia, and occupies around eighty percent of the Arabian Peninsula. Riyadh is the capital city of Saudi Arabia and its largest city, whereas Jeddah, the subject of this study, is its second largest city and is a principal port. Iraq, Jordan and Kuwait border the country to the north, the Arabian Gulf,

the United Arab Emirates and Qatar lie to the east, Oman and the Yemen to the South and the Red Sea to the west.

Financial disparities exist within the kingdom. In a 2003 survey by the Ministry of Social Affairs, forty percent of Saudi families were found to be living on less than 3,000 Saudi Riyals (£500) a month. The same survey reported that the very poor, about nineteen percent of Saudi families, live on less than 1,800 Riyals (£300) a month (House, 2012).

2.3 Historical Background

At the turn of the twentieth century, Arabia entered new territory, both literally and metaphorically. The exiled chieftain, Abdulaziz Ibn Saud, had returned, and slowly but surely, was conquering the peninsula. In doing so, he walked on what was untrodden ground, for although his forebears had twice before conquered the vast expanse of Arabia. Both these first and second states can best be described as offering a loose tribal allegiance (to the al-Saud clan of Al-Diriyah, in the central region of Nejd) and a religious affiliation to the Al-Asheikh. These were Bin Saud's key allies and provided religious legitimacy to the ambitious clansman. They were the descendants of Muhammad bin Abdel-Wahhab; an eighteenth century scholar from the village of Uyayna who had encountered Muhammad Bin Saud, Ibn Saud's ancestor, in Diriyah. To summarise, Muhammad, the then ruler of Diriyah, vowed to implement Abdel-Wahhab's ideology and theology (which was strongly opposed to *bid'a*-religious innovation and *shirk*-polytheism), if, in return, Abdel-Wahhab settled in Diriyah and spent the remainder of his life teaching religion there (Lacey 2009).

Ibn Saud had been born in exile in the then British protectorate of Kuwait in January 1876. His father was Abdelrahman, the last ruler of Nejd (central Saudi Arabia, including Riyadh) and he had been exiled after the rival tribe of Al Rashid of Hail (a region in North–East central Saudi Arabia) had ended the second Saudi state (1819–1891) by defeating the loyalists of Abdelrahman bin Turki (Ibn Saud’s father). The Sabah house of Kuwait took the now country–less royals in. It was from amongst Al–Sabah loyalists that Ibn Saud’s army of 1902 was comprised; it also included some of his clansmen (notably his brother, Muhammad bin Abdelrahman) (Al–Rasheed, 2002).

Ibn Saud had victory in mind when he entered Riyadh in 1902 after an arduous journey from Kuwait, yet there was surprisingly little fighting. After proclaiming to the people of Riyadh that “governance is to God then to Abdul–Aziz (Ibn Saud’s given name)”, he set about fulfilling what Saudi textbooks today claim was “his dream of reclaiming his forebears’ dominion”, invading region after region of the tribal kingdoms (notably the Hashemite kingdom of Hejaz in 1924) and the religious *imamates* (such as Aseer’s case in the south–east). The Al–Asheikhs were by his side, imploring him to go on. It was not until 1927 that anyone dared to rebel against Bin Saud’s semi–demonic descent on the peninsula. The rebellion came from a rather unexpected side; Bin Saud’s *Wahhabi* army, the *Ikhwan* (literally the brothers). Many of the rebels were seeking power for themselves. However, by early 1928, Ibn Saud had violently suppressed the mutiny with assistance from the British Royal Air Force, and the rebel *Ikhwans* who survived then either surrendered or fled. In 1932, Ibn Saud decided to put his name to the loose alliance he had created in Arabia, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was born (Ibid).

2.4 The City of Jeddah

Whilst the modern history of Arabia is certainly unique, the city of Jeddah has its own individual character. It is located on two trade routes, between Yemen and Ethiopia on one side, and the Indian subcontinent on the other. Its location, coupled with its political stability, has helped the former port town to maintain general prosperity despite many internal areas of the peninsula experiencing financial and political turmoil.

The annual pilgrimage has also contributed to Jeddah's finances and demographic profile. Many pilgrims passing to Mecca later returned to Jeddah and settled there. Over the years, Jeddah has seen an accumulative rise in the number of settling immigrants. It remains the main journey point to Mecca and Medina for pilgrims and the main entryway to Hejaz (Abdu, Salagoor and Al-Harigi, 2002; Al-Farsy, 1990). Jeddah's history reflects the indisputable fact that it has been the most significant metropolis on the Red Sea for the last quarter of a millennium. During the 1800s, its connection with the developed world was far stronger than that of any other city in Arabia. Trade marked its earliest interactions with the West, leading to the establishment of the first foreign institutes of representation in Jeddah in 1801, in the form of the British consulate. The French and Russian consulates followed suit shortly after. The first formal institute of education was *al-Falah*, literally "the success" school, established in 1905 with private funds (Tarabulsi, 2006).

Jeddah prides itself on having housed the first bank, hospital and airport in the Kingdom. With its rich and diverse history, it is relatively unsurprising that Jeddah has come to harbour the most diverse community in Saudi Arabia. According to as-Siba'i, a local historian, immigration to Hejaz in general, and to Jeddah in particular, has historic roots in pilgrimage and trade (Altorki,

1986). In modern times, immigration from small towns was seen as a steadily growing trend, with townfolk settling in the bustling metropolis of Jeddah to work and rear their children. The same can be said for the phenomenon of increased immigration from neighbouring Arab countries, as well as from central and Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent; people arrive in Jeddah looking for better work prospects and comfortable living (Jeddah Municipality, 2010).

Today, on the streets of Jeddah, it is possible to find a multitude of different nationalities. Aside from Saudis hailing from across the peninsula, Pakistanis, Indians, Sri Lankans, Indonesians, Filipinos, and others have settled in Jeddah. People from different Arab nationalities (most notably Yemenis, Palestinians and Egyptians) have also taken up residence there. While approximately 19 million Saudis reside in the country today, a further 8.5 million foreigners also call it home. Most of these 8.5 million are foreign labourers (mainly from Southeast Asia) working as drivers, maids, and construction workers (Arab, 2010).

The political history of Jeddah was relatively uneventful in the 19th century. The *sharif* of Mecca controlled Jeddah for close to four hundred years. In 1916, with British aid (as evidenced in the Hussein–McMahon letters of correspondence and the role of T.E. Lawrence in supporting Hussein and advising him in military matters) Hussein bin Ali proclaimed himself King of the Kingdom of Hejaz and rebelled against the ailing Ottoman Empire. After bombing a train station at Medina and blocking the routes into Hejaz, he proclaimed himself the leader of the Arabs, the commander of what he called the “Great Arab Revolt”. He hoped to establish an Arab state spanning from Aleppo in Syria all the way down to Aden in the Yemen. However, fate took a

cruel turn: the British and the French made an agreement to colonise the regions previously controlled by the Ottoman Empire, putting all hope for Arab unity on hold; he had been used by his supposed allies. During this period, it seemed safe to say that Britain was a supporter of the newly founded Kingdom of Hejaz as long as it did not meddle in its newly acquired colonies (Al-Rasheed, 2002).

Hejaz was unique in Arabia with its statehood. Having been generally spared the craze of *Wahhabism*, it remained secluded under the successive *sharifs* of Mecca. However, in 1924, Jeddah fell to the besieging Saudi forces and the King, Hussein bins Ali, fled to Aqaba, Jordan, where his son, Abdullah, had established (with British supervision) the Kingdom of Jordan (Ibid).

2.5 Wahhabism

Saudi Arabia is officially identified as an Islamic state, with Islam being the state religion and determining the law. This means that the enshrinement of religious ideals is the cornerstone of political legitimacy (Sayyid, 1997).

There are two main geohistorical proclivities that establish Islam as an immutable facet of the state's identity. Geographically, the House of Saud presides over the holiest sites of Islam, Makkah and Medina; thus, making the country the epicentre of Islamic worship. At the historical/political level, a deal with Abdul-Wahhab himself granted Muhammad bin Saud and his first Saudi State religious legitimacy. In the same vein, when Abdulaziz's Saudi forces set about restoring Saudi control over the peninsula in the early 20th century, they relied on the support of Abdul-Wahhab's descendants (Katan, 1992).

Thus, Wahhabi doctrine, having been the steadfast ally of the House of Saud's many revivals has been carried over into the present as a staple of Saudi discourse. Contrary to the assertions of many scholars, it does not exist merely as an indicator of Saudi–Wahhabi alliance (Holden and Johns, 1981); rather, it is now an indicator of the piety of politicians and the general public. Through centuries of inculcation, Wahhabi standards have become the gold standard for religious practice.

Thus, Wahhabism has come to be described as a “Saudistic nationalistic element of Saudi discourse” (Abu–Khalid, 2001). The more visible Wahhabi zeal, the more concrete social piety. Meanwhile, this results in the invisibility of women. It would not be hyperbolic to assert that the visibility of Wahhabism correlates directly with the invisibility of women. Wahhabism relies on a literalist interpretation of the Quran and Sunna. In this climate, matters which many other Islamic societies consider trivial (women's work, gender mixing, women's driving etc.), become the subject of major debate, with a necessity for public expression of piety barring meaningful social progress.

2.6 New found wealth and the advent of education

The new arrangement of territory under the al–Saud dynasty was difficult to maintain, as the country did not have a large source of income. National bureaucracy was increasing, albeit at a very slow pace, and King Abdul–Aziz, as Ibn Saud became widely known, faced the strenuous and challenging task of maintaining the stability and union of the new nation. However, something happened in 1938 that changed the fortunes of Saudi Arabia forever.

Oil was discovered in large volumes beneath the country in commercial quantities and quality. The considerable wealth that oil brought to the country

through the newly established ARAMCO (the Arab American Oil Company), fuelled the swift rise in governmental bureaucracy and supported the centralisation of Saudi Arabia's government (Lacey, 2009). Among the new bureaucracies was the Directorate of Education. In accordance with *Wahhabism*, for the next eighteen years education was granted to boys only and was strictly forbidden to girls.

The increase in the number of Saudi men receiving education (and higher education abroad) posed a social challenge to the government: Many educated men avoided marrying Saudi women. They cited their ignorance, which they saw as detrimental to building a family, and preferred to marry more educated Lebanese, Syrian or Egyptian women (AlMunajjed, 1997).

However, in 1956 Iffat Al-Thunayyan (King Faisal Bin Saud's most prominent wife) challenged the long-term ban on female education, opening the first female-only school in Jeddah, *Dar al-Hanan* (the House of Affection; an allusion to a Quranic verse describing the relationship between men and women). For the first few years, female students had to be escorted by armed platoons to and from the school to protect them from the rage of the *Wahhabi* zealots. The official religious establishment meekly backed Iffat's efforts after it received pressure from King Faisal, her husband. "It is permissible for women to read and write," came the rather sombre official religious statement from the council of the *Ulama*; the highest body of religious scholars of the country under the *grand mufti* (supreme religious scholar). The austere King Faisal was to become as much a fervent, as he was an unexpected, supporter of this campaign. "Is there anything in the Quran that forbids it?" he would query forcibly, whenever a religious scholar grumbled about the prospect of female education (Hamdan, 2005).

Yet the approval of the scholars was extremely measured. They expressed certain conditions that they required to be met if their approval was to be sustained. To this day, girls' schools are surrounded by high walls and watched over by elderly male guards. The gates of the school have to remain shuttered throughout the day. Physical education is banned (*Wahhabis* believe that physical education for females is sinful). Since driving is illegal for women throughout the Kingdom, an elderly male does all the bus driving, and a female relative of the driver almost always accompanies any school trip (Ibid).

The majority of the general public initially refused to entertain the notion of sending their girls to school. Parssinen (1980) noted that a large demonstration took place in Buraida, a small city in the conservative region of al-Qassim, when the first girls' school was opened there in 1963. The incident was of a magnitude significant enough for the authorities to call in the National Guard (Parssinen, 1980). This led Faisal to transfer all control of female education into the hands of the newly established General Presidency for Girls' Education (GPGE), which was staffed by conservative men. Public opinion on the topic was still generally negative (Hamdan, 2005), but that gradually changed with time. Faisal was assassinated by his nephew in 1975, yet his policy of slow and gradual change would pay off. By 1981, female enrolment in schools was almost equal to that of boys (Alireza, 1987).

2.6.1 The Saudi Female Education System Today

Although Jeddah has its own unique identity, this autonomy still correlates with the status of Saudi Arabia, its culture, and its conservative society. The culture of Saudi society generally emphasises a traditional role for women as mothers and housewives. Consequently, the education of women in Saudi Arabia is a

conservative one, as it has been since its inception. This has served to entrench *Wahhabi* doctrine and propaganda at the heart of Saudi Arabian society. Following on from the advent of general education for females in the Kingdom in the late 1950's, the education system gradually morphed into one that included higher education. Today the education system provides free education for girls (still segregated from men at all levels) from elementary (primary) school through to PhD level (Sabbagh 1996; Yamani, 2000).

In 1997, during King Fahd's reign, there were seven universities in Saudi Arabia, four of which accepted female students (AlMunajjed, 1997). During King Abdullah's reign (since 2005), the number of public universities accepting women has increased to eight, and the total number of higher educational institutes for women in the country currently stands at 38 (Ibid). The number of females enrolled in higher education was 5,310 compared to 21,127 males in 1975. In 1986, the number of females in higher education had risen greatly; standing at 50,434 females to 80,490 males (Ibid). Today, women account for around 58% of all Saudi university students. The total number of Saudi females seeking a bachelor's degree in the academic year 1995–1996 was 93,486. This number had more than tripled by 2005–2006, rising to 340, 857 (Ibid).

Notably, events on March 11th 2002 shook the GPGE's iron grip on girls' education. Fifteen girls perished in suspicious circumstances in Mecca. A fire had developed in a girl's school, and the fire brigade arrived, but was physically barred from entering the school by religious zealots. The most sustained claim was that they worked for the GPGE. Others claim that they were part of the *mutawwa*; Saudi Arabia's infamous religious police. This prompted Crown Prince Abdullah (who was, at the time, acting as prince regent) to

remove the control of girls' education from the GPGE and place it under the direct control of the Ministry of Education (Hamdan, 2005).

There are still many limitations to female education in Saudi Arabia: for example, girls follow a different curriculum, with physical activity and geology replaced with home economics and embroidery (Al-Rawaf and Simmons, 1991). Schools are still segregated, and textbooks continue to emphasise the woman's traditional role in society as a housewife and mother. Women still must meet social expectations, despite their educational accomplishments, and most of these involve domestic responsibilities.

Today women do receive a free education. However, as mentioned, despite the dissolution of the GPGE, this education is severely hampered by the restrictions imposed by the religious establishment. Interestingly, obstructions to the education of females also come from unexpected corners: for example, the budget for women's education is 15% less than that for male education. This has led to the grim situation experienced by many today, whereby school and university facilities for women are much cruder and noticeably inferior to those provided for men (Al-Mohsen, 2000: 22).

Add to this the fact that women do not get the same quality of education compared to their male counterparts due to understaffing, and the result is a rather unbalanced delivery of education for both genders. More than 34% of Saudi male university academics possess a doctorate, compared to 2% of female Saudi university academics (AlMunajjed, 1997). Saudi women have no access to the two hundred libraries attached to the public universities and colleges, or even to the seventy public libraries, unless they are accompanied by a *mahram* (male chaperone). Even when they are granted access, their visiting windows are restricted to a few hours each week. Libraries attached to

women's educational facilities do not usually have a large capacity and most are ill-equipped to serve the needs of the enrolled students (Arebi, 1994).

2.7 The restrictions placed on women's lives in Saudi Arabia

2.7.1 Religious Law in Saudi Arabia

Law in Saudi Arabia is officially based on *Sharia*, and specifically the *Hanbali* school of jurisprudence. *Sharia* is a far-reaching term that encompasses many of the principles upheld by Islam, and extends to affect all aspects of the life of the individual and the society. Bashatah (2011) argues that *Sharia* is not a rigid set of laws and penalties, but rather a roadmap leading to the creation of organisational power in society and a generally pious atmosphere. She supports her claims with Quranic verse;

“Then We put thee on the right Way of Religion: so follow thou that Way, and follow not the desires of those who know not.” (Quran, 45:18).

In this verse of the forty-fifth chapter of the Quran, we find the only use of the word *Sharia* that occurs in the whole Quran. *Sharia* is used to refer to the correct way of practicing religion; the path that all Muslims are urged to follow. We find no hint of associated legislative implications in this verse. *Sharia* seems to be merely an all-encompassing term employed to cover correct Islamic practices.

Mtango (2004) suggests that the law that is widely claimed by Saudi authorities to be verbatim *Sharia* is only what the *Hanbali* school of jurisdiction thinks is

the best interpretation of this ill-defined concept. Furthermore, he adds that the issue with *Sharia* is that it is not codified singularly in one document; rather it is left to scholars to extract the relevant passages from hundreds of thousands of sources from the Quran and *Sunna* (practices and deeds of the Prophet), to then interpret these passages as accurately as possible and apply them correctly. Therefore, Saudi Arabia cannot be said to be a good example of *Sharia* execution, because there are no standards to compare it against (Mtango, 2004).

In 1992, Saudi Arabia brought a constitution-like charter into effect. This document, known as the Basic Law, is still in force today. The charter defines *Sharia* as the decrees of the Quran and *Sunna*, and commands that “the courts apply the rules of the Islamic *Sharia* in the cases that are brought before them, in accordance with what is indicated in the Book and the *Sunna*, and statutes decreed by the Ruler not contradicting the Book or the *Sunna*.”

Indeed, law in Saudi Arabia is predicated on the *Hanbali Fiqh*, and champions tribalist patriarchal stances that curtail individual rights. This is especially true for women, for whom the amalgamation of tribal patriarchy and *Wahhabi* puritanism serves to subordinate them within the family, the workplace and in public life, as well as hamper their freedom of movement (Abu-Khalid, 2001, Mtango, 2004).

The charter is not specific with regard to the civil rights of the population, which it discusses in the “Rights and Duties” chapter. It merely stipulates that citizens have the right to employment, education, welfare and healthcare, as things provided for by the state. Yet it is silent on the rights of women. The Supreme *Ulama* Council is vocal in its opposition to gender-equality, seeing it as “an insult to Muslims” and a path to “perversion”. This extreme

interpretation led Mtango to conclude that the problem is not one that rests with *Sharia* in and of itself, but in the appointment of official interpreters who warp texts and use them to establish their opinions as unassailable truths, effectively silencing attempts at reform (Ibid).

When the jurisdictions of Islam are discussed in relation to women, a line has to be drawn between Islamic scripture, which is subject to interpretation, and between *Wahhabism's* puritanical readings of scripture, which combine their specific religious readings with that of the former tribal patriarchy. Islam is consistently criticised for what many regard as its unjust subjugation of women. Yet, in reality, Islamic tradition displays great respect and recognition of the rights of women. Women in a number of Islamic states have gained rights as well as social and political prominence, to a level comparable with that in many of today's so-called advanced countries (Ragab, n.d.).

2.7.2 The Relationship between women and Al-Faqih

Mohammed Al-Jabiri stated that, if it were correct to name Islamic civilisation according to one of its products, then we would surely name it a civilisation of *Fiqh*. *Fiqh* is the science that seeks to organise social life according to the framework of *Sharia*. The *Faqih* is the representative of the *Fiqh* institution. His duty, according to Al-Razi, is to organise social affairs by legislating all of society's members in accordance with religion. Thus, the concept of *Fiqh* runs parallel to the concept of culture in the general sociological sense, as culture is a way and manner of life associated with a certain group and environmental issues created by the individual and the encompassing material and immaterial products inherited by successive generations (Bargouth, 2002).

For this study, I researched the relationship between the woman and the *Faqih*. It became apparent that religion materialises in a certain cultural framework to reflect the human examples of the religion, and to expose the scope of human character that religion intends to create in reality.

We might then ask: Why is the relationship between the woman and the *Faqih* understood to be a one-way relationship? The answer to it, it is primarily because the *Faqih* deals with women solely from the perspective of preventing sin. We can take this to mean the *Faqih's* active adoption of the rule "don't plant grapes so no one makes wine." The consumption of alcohol is considered a sin in Islam, and by this understanding, any action that can lead to this sin is sinful, including the retail of glasses, Bashatah (2011) proposes.

From this perspective, and out of fear of the Quranic sin of adultery, women venturing outside of their homes are sinners, women uncovering their faces are sinners, driving is deemed sinful, and women's dealing (not to mention working) with men is an unspeakable sin. According to this rule, the woman's life has become extremely restricted, for everything that may in any way whatsoever lead to the occurrence of a sin is forbidden in itself. Abiding by this stringent *Wahhabi* standard, Sheikh Bin-Baz, the former *mufti* (head scholar) of Saudi Arabia, declared women's driving to be a forbidden practice (Doumato, 1992).

Instead of "preventing sin" from befalling all social groups, the *Faqih* puts greater pressure on women. Men are left to their own devices. Thus, women's driving is deemed forbidden and women watching TV sinful; these are wild exaggerations lacking religious foundations. These exaggerations have impacted negatively throughout Saudi society, in the form of policies, laws and practices that have become entrenched over time in the collective conscience.

To give an example from the context of the young Saudi women, one can look at the ban on female sporting clubs (except for those that take the guise of spas and health resorts). The ban is, as might be expected, a way of preventing sin and keeping women at home. This leads to the question; if women are lacking in intellect, as religious authorities consistently claim, and if their only purpose is to bear children, then why are women not allowed to strengthen their physiques to enable them to bear children? This exposes the notion of the prevention of sin as scarcely more than an effort to persuade and pressurise women to stay at home.

In a book by Mohammed Al-Saif, entitled: "Introduction to the study of Saudi society" (2003), a typical Saudi girl, aged between 18–24 years of age was found to spend a lot of time chatting on the phone, surfing the internet, watching TV, listening to music, and going to the mall with no intent to shop. Unsurprisingly, sport was mostly absent from her agenda, since the number of female sport venues is very limited (Al-Saif, 2003).

The means of entertainment made available to women are diminutive in number and mostly lack entertainment value. Besides, the *faqih* has found a way to forbid most of them, labelling them as unnecessary "fooling around". Society has consistently ignored the female youth's need for ethical and friendly amusement, and thus she has been prevented from reaping the fruits of such amusement, something that would support her capacity and expertise to facilitate her transformation into a more productive member of society (Bashatah, 2011).

The adoption of the doctrine of preventing sin sits well with the culture of many regions in Saudi Arabia. These are regions that have grown familiar with applying this policy when dealing with women, who are largely seen as a group

of inactive persons in their midst. They go even further than this, battling any attempt to rectify the position of Saudi women and hampering their freedom, despite their knowledge that the Quran has granted her inalienable rights in inheritance, education, independence, finance and the right to formulate her own opinions and make her own decisions.

The main reasons used to explain some people's rejection of women's participation in Saudi society are customs and traditions. These are often found to be intertwined with religion, and thus have become unassailable. Even if all Saudis comprehended the need to include the woman in the public arena, it would be difficult to surmount the religion-based barrier.

Alarmingly, these problems have not been limited to the social context, but have also spread into official circles as well. Many government circles have stood against women's employment in the retail of women's clothing, abiding by so-called Saudi values, or have firmly opposed women's employment in supermarkets as cashiers, alleging gender-mixing to be a sin. Such controversial positions expose the truth behind many of these efforts; that they are part of a general trend seeking to undermine female independence and entrench the man's rights to guardianship and superiority. All of this is taking place under the veil of religious values and the so-called uniqueness of Saudi identity.

It is interesting that Saudi Arabia boasts tens of thousands of female Masters and PhD holders yet succeeds in undermining so many of their rights (Bashatah, 2011). The issue does not reflect ignorance of the rights extended to women in the Quran; rather an unwillingness, on the part of those in authority, to allow women to participate in public life, out of a strict adherence to customs and traditions. The holders of patriarchal authority, from the head

of the State to the head of the family, justify the exclusion of women by declaring women's participation in public life to be a slippery slope to social degeneration. Even if, for argument's sake, we were to believe that among the political, legal or religious elite there are those that sincerely believe in women's full participation, then the weight of culture and tradition has so far been too heavy a burden for them to displace. Despite the openness to the foreign media, globalisation and travel, many women still feel so inferior that, for some of the participants in this current study, inferiority has become a natural and innate defining characteristic.

To escape from this predicament, Al-Ghazali, former *imam* of the Al-Azhar religious institute in Cairo, argued that "it is a problem in understanding and interacting with the Quran. It is a crisis of misunderstanding. Thus, efforts have to be concentrated on understanding, re-examining, and liberating religious understanding from the inheritance of the forebears" (Al-Ghazali, 1998).

2.7.3 Women's role and status in Saudi society

Over the course of many hundreds of years, a set of social codes and traditions evolved in Arabia (Jawad, 1998). Many of these undermined gender equality and install the man as the default chief of the family or community. These continued subtly after the rise of Islam until they came to be accepted as an integral part of Islamic law. Such restrictions on women play a huge part in informing their status in society. This section inspects the status of women in society and considers the elements that may be serving to undermine that status.

Women in Saudi Arabia participate in many areas of life professionally, as educators, health professionals, creative writers and journalists. Although these activities remain confined to areas associated with traditional work for women, their involvement in the workplace still represents progress in a strongly conservative state. Barely three generations ago, within living memory, women rarely worked outside their homes, and yet now women have received the opportunity to participate politically. A royal decree issued in the reign of King Abdullah in 2011 has given women the right to vote and stand for elections in the local municipalities in the year 2015. In addition, they will be eligible for appointment to the Shura Council (a parliament-like organisation with very limited legislative power) (Buchanan, 2011). As stated in the Guardian (2011), this announcement represents a "major symbolic victory for Saudi women". However, it is an opportunity wrought with contradictions; in an interview conducted in late 2011, a woman from the coastal city of Jeddah confirmed the paradoxical nature of the situation facing contemporary Saudi women, saying this to The Guardian: "So I can vote, but I cannot get a driver's license"; also adding, "If I disclose my name, I will be disobeying my *Wali-ul-amr*" (Chulov, 2011).

An idea steeped in *Wahhabi* doctrine is that the woman must always be under the command of a man, and that certain fields of study and occupation are unsuited to the nature of women. Both of these views are present in academic institutions and impact on the status of women.

In terms of women being under the command of man, the female academic is a good example, always subordinated to her male counterpart within the Saudi university setting. The female teacher must always request permission from a male academic before making any additions or amendments to her teaching

curriculum. This reflects the entrenchment of the idea of male superiority in Saudi society, and it effectively undermines women's status (Joseph, 2000 and Al-Gamidi, 2005).

To many scholars, the discussion of a fully autonomous education system for women seems to be a catalyst for what they deem to be moral decay; a path they vehemently oppose. Thus, they employ religion to bring female education under male authority (Jawad, 1998).

As to certain studies and occupations being unsuitable for women, the education curricula are significantly different for girls and boys. Boys are schooled in topics, which are seen as being "masculine" such as geology, and these are considered unsuitable for girls and so are substituted for subjects such as knitting and home economics, to prepare the young Saudi female to assume the traditional role of being exclusively a wife and mother. Higher education is also distinctly different for females compared to males, with subjects considered unsuitable for women substituted out of the curriculum and certain fields of study, including most branches of engineering, not being open to women (AlMunajjed, 1997).

Running contrary to the claims of necessary subordination of women or their exclusion from certain fields, Islam emphasised the need for educating both men and women. Islam gave women the right to work in farming, trading, and manufacturing, as long as their work did not have a detrimental impact upon them or their families (AlMunajjed, 1997). Islam also encourages female participation in public life. The prophet explained the nature of dress codes, yet did not discuss the face veil (Yamani, 1996). The wives of the prophet did not usually cover their faces (AlMunajjed, 1997).

Suzanne Al-Mashhadi is a social worker employed at a drug rehabilitation facility in Jeddah. She presents a metaphorical narrative describing gender discrimination in Saudi Arabia. She wrote an article critical of Saudi traditional values, under the title "I am black and you are white", in the Al-Hayat daily newspaper. Speaking to an imaginary male reader, she wrote "You are the first dream of every father, who wants a son to boast about", she wrote addressing an imaginary male listener, "and the first love for every mother, compared to you, I simply do not exist" she finished (cited in Lacey, 2009: 275). Through its exploration of the status of women, Al-Mashhadi's article highlights the inequalities inherent in Saudi gender dealings.

Reaction to Al-Mashhadi's article saw much hate mail sent to her, much of it, she claimed, from women. Criticisms included accusations of ageliberalism and secularism (Lacey, 2009). While Al-Mashhadi's frustrations are understandable, her manner of expressing her anger put her directly at odds with the women whose rights she is upholding. To use Minces' (1992) argument, the feminists who directly oppose society become westerners, neutralised in the struggle and attacked by the very women they defend. The response to Al-Mashhadi's article shows that homegrown methods of resistance, which involve quiet negotiation and which are infused with religious rhetoric, are the only methods that can save their authors the wrath of traditionalist forces in society.

Fatima Naseef, a prominent female religious scholar and Saudi human rights activist, has campaigned for women's rights both in transport and in education, but did not fall into open animosity with dominant culture. Naseef possesses a doctorate in religious law and so was able to base her campaign on religious knowledge effectively; this judged positively by the Saudi public. In a private interview dating back to 1994, Naseef said; "Yes, we have female

professors and deans here, but all decisions, regardless of whether they are substantial or minimal, are made by authorities in male sections of universities” (Goodwin, 1994: 216). Despite them fighting along more or less the same line, Naseef’s use of religion (a proven weapon in a pious society) and gentle negotiation, spared her the ire of conservatives which Al-Mashhadi drew. Over the course of this study, young Saudi women will be shown to have heeded this lesson.

Wahhabism, in its ultra-conservative interpretation of religion, declared that the mixing of genders is *haram* (forbidden), except in conditions of extreme need; for fear of immoral behaviour, should men and women be allowed to mix freely. A woman is not even allowed to travel into or out of the kingdom without the companionship or consent of her husband, or, if unavailable, her closest male relative, while the Saudi man is allowed to travel freely with virtually no hindrance (Jerichow, 1998). Such rulings pose massive challenges to women’s freedom of movement, something American journalist Geraldine Brooks faced on a visit to Dhahran.

Brooks was unable to book a hotel room because of her gender and because she did not have a male relative as her companion. When she asked the receptionist why that was, he replied; “In Saudi Arabia ladies don’t travel alone. There is no reason for it, unless she is a prostitute” (Brooks, 1995). After being treated poorly, Brooks was escorted to the police department (Ibid). Brook’s predicament exposes the challenges that the lack of freedom of movement poses to women’s status in the Kingdom.

While Brooks, a foreign journalist, was simply abruptly treated as a minor, Saudi daughters face much rougher treatment. Indeed, *lrd* (chastity) is a very

important theme in Saudi Arabian society. A woman has to be subjugated by her family in order for her to retain her innocence. *Ird* is of such great importance to Saudi Arabian society, that a whole way of life has been built around it; it is seen as the foremost way of preserving a family's reputation and good name (Mackay, 1987). Such intense focus on *Ird* has seen women's freedom of movement curtailed, with a ban on women's driving and a lack of public transportation. Women's driving has been officially condemned by the *Ulama* as a gateway to 'grave sins'. This can be linked to the preservation of women's chastity, which as previously indicated, has seen many freedoms curtailed.

Suhaila Zain-al-Abideen, a Saudi activist, stated that officials have to reconsider this ban because women, like men, need a reliable method of transportation. It is the obligation of the state to rectify this injustice dealt to women in urban areas (women tend to drive in desert areas where police patrols are almost non-existent), since there is no religious or state law that deems it sinful or illegal (Medina newspaper, issue 17555 on May 17th 2011). King Abdullah stated in an interview on American TV channel ABC, on October 14th 2005, that; "I am dedicated to women's rights. The woman is my mother, my daughter, my sister and my wife. I believe that the day will come when (this ban) will be lifted and women will drive in Saudi Arabia. In rural areas you will find that women drive freely without hindrance or obstruction. I request patience, because only time will change this current situation and render it possible and feasible to permit women to drive legally in the country."

As shown in the discussion on *Ird*, Saudi society views adolescence as a very risky period; particularly for females.

It is widely believed that understanding of the period between the ages of 12 and 20, as a culturally and ritualistically distinct life stage, arose in the late nineteenth century (Abercrombie et al., 1994). Academics, educators and the media have come to view this stage of life as being characterized by struggle, crisis, and resistance (Cohen, 1997; Wyn and White, 1997; Lesko, 2001). In lieu of this understanding, a more expansive view on the teenage years arose. This view, dominant in much of the discourse on the teenage period, casts the latter as an intermediary period between childhood and adulthood, when the responsibilities of adulthood have not been fully established, and when individuals must shed the skin of childhood by experimenting with relationships and identities that are distinct from those of the family.

When addressing young women, youth literature consistently brings the issue of independence to the fore. Counterintuitive as it may seem, the pursuit of independence for young women is often played out within the family setting, where questions of control and freedom, trust and loyalty are negotiated (Kostash, 1987: 124).

The resistance of young Saudi women has not taken the shape of political advocacy among such groups. Saudi women, and especially Saudi female youths, lack this apparatus for advancement. They are therefore being denied the opportunity to use social organisation for advancement, through campaigning, debate and open promotion.

This kind of social organisation was highlighted in the work of Avtar Brah, who used the example of Asian-British women as a model for resistance and self-advancement. Brah stressed the need for unity in the ranks of the oppressed, as a prerequisite to their advancement, when discussing the problems they

faced in the UK. At length she discussed what can be termed “survival methods”; present in these women’s organised quest to alleviate their repression. Although their attempts did not always meet with success, they led their communities in the face of a growing hostility towards them. Chief among the problems they experienced were racism and the limited job opportunities associated with it (Brah, 1987).

Brah’s work also gave a glimpse into society’s darker side. An individual can fully integrate herself into the fabric of society and lose many aspects of her previous culture, but could still be rejected as inferior by her new society. When this occurs, the individual is forced to formulate a new dynamic attitude to represent herself and her peripheral interests and to negotiate new boundaries to assist her social involvement (Ibid). In this vein, the young women in my study used tactical negotiation to negotiate subtly with society and avoid open confrontation with the dominant traditionalist culture.

2.7.4 Conclusion

I have previously spoken of Jeddah’s location as a port city, which might suggest to the reader a cosmopolitan nature. Whilst it is true that Jeddah has greater diversity than other regions of the kingdom, this openness does not extend to women’s issues.

I have discussed the cultural restrictions constricting women’s lives, and articulated the factors that gave rise to those restrictions, including local customs and traditions. Additionally, I have explored Wahhabi thought, to which the vast majority of the Kingdom’s leading scholars ascribe, and its view of women’s issues. Through discussion of Islamic law, I have attempted to

distinguish between the stance of the Quran and the *Sunna* on women's issues, and that of local customs and traditions.

In Jeddah, like all other regions of Saudi Arabia, women are subordinated to men in education, work, marriage and divorce. The misunderstanding and misuse of Quranic texts to justify discrimination against women is the primary reason for this subordination, along with the entrenchment of tribal customs and traditions.

3. Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

As Saudi Arabia emerges as a global economy, strides onto the world stage, and embraces complex technologies, its women remain invisible. The invisibility of the Saudi woman, as detailed in this study, does not result from her absence or lack of contribution; rather it results from the fact that she simply cannot be visible. Saudi women are 'working ghosts', and where they emerge, it is often as unapologetic eyesores. One notable paradox of female employment is that those well-educated women who are present in the workplace (although hidden from view behind their Hijab) do not hold management positions. The women of Saudi Arabia are faced with an inherent contradiction regarding how to be performers in the economic, academic and other spheres, whilst remaining invisible in public life.

Saudi Arabia, despite its oil wealth, has a poor infrastructure and a resource-reliant economy that means certain regions within the country are still best described as 'developing'. Along with its economy, Saudi society is continuing to evolve. Amongst the social upheaval, contradictions in the treatment of women have emerged. More universities and higher education facilities are being built for women and the percentage of female graduates recently exceeded that of male graduates. In addition, there is increased participation of women in the labour sector as a result of 'Saudisation' – a policy of selecting Saudi employees, regardless of gender, in preference to foreigners; it is argued that "Most Saudi Arabian women work to share in the responsibilities of family related spending, and not only for the motive of self-satisfaction" (Bin Saud, 2001:16). This involvement in the workforce has led to a debate that extends

beyond mere issues associated with the physical appearance of Saudi Arabian women. It has resulted in a need for practical action to validate and offer recognition for the contribution of women. One working Saudi Arabian woman stated that: "When Saudi women demand equality and recognition, it does not mean that we ask for what is contrary to Islamic law because we are not effective without it" (Ibid). It is these expressions that inform the condition of the contemporary young Saudi woman, placing her in a position in which she must negotiate different perspectives in the search for her own identity.

This chapter discusses the conservative and feminist discourses regarding the Muslim woman. This helps us to clarify how these discourses, whether liberal or conservatively Islamic, relate to the young Saudi women's views and the general framework of their lives in Saudi Arabia. It also enriches this study by offering an insight into readings of diverse feminist viewpoints on women's issues in Muslim societies. Building on this, this chapter helps to present a better understanding of whether and how young Saudi women relate to conservative Islamic, Islamic liberal feminist and Arab liberal feminist thought. Additionally, this chapter enables us to use feminist thought to explore the effect of power relations on women's role and status in Saudi society.

3.2 Conservative Islamic Thoughts

Before we begin this section it should be noted that the use of the term "conservative" here is imprecise because it depends on two elements: the first one being relations between the two sexes, and the second being a singular and specific interpretation of both the Quran and *Sunna* texts. An understanding of this term is provided with reference to generalised political thought to provide a clear separation between what is local and general. Here

the conservatives are those who assert that Islam holds men to be superior to women, whilst maintaining that the classic, medieval interpretations of the Quran and *Sunna* are accurate and suited for application today.

To illustrate the vagueness of the term “Islamic,” Abu Al-Majd gave an example of what he called an “Islamic perspective.” This perspective assigns a lower status to women and firmly establishes men as the dominant gender. This, argues Abu Al-Majd, is just one of the facets that can be used to define Islamism, due to the obscurity enshrouding the term (Abu Al-Majd, 1988). The Islamists label the female as a member of the weaker half of society; stating she should be subjugated for her own good, and watched over by males to ensure she remains safe in the confines of her house.

Conservative Islamists are firmly opposed to all forms of feminism, believing it to be an obtrusive and exotic concept alien to the Muslim community, aimed at dismantling its unity and directing women out of their homes. Conservative Islamists believe that when women leave their homes they will be exposed to sexual harassment due to the likelihood that they will mix with foreign men (Al-Ibraheem, 2001). This opinion stems from the traditional Islamist notions of the woman as a weak and vulnerable, being fit only for confinement at home, and in need of protection by the more “powerful” man.

The lowly opinion that the conservative Islamists hold of feminism can be read in their reaction to a female Saudi journalist who, writing in the *Al-Watan* daily, demanded driving rights for women. In their reaction, carried by the same newspaper, the Islamists criticised this journalist for being a puppet in the hands of feminists. Aside from the obvious bullying tactics employed against journalists Suzanne Al-Mashhadi and Hussein Shobokshi, who both received hate mail, death threats and defamation at the hands of Conservative Islamists

(Lacey, 2009) the suspicion of all things non-Islamist can be read in the wild overestimations; such as accusations of “agency for the West” and harbouring ideas that “have nothing to do with Islam, but are rather feminist ideas exported by colonialism to the Muslim world” (Al-Watan Newspaper, 2001 # 118).

The reason that the conservatives give for rejecting feminism is that women are weaker (both mentally and biologically) than men. This impression is based on a literal interpretation of a tradition accredited to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), which was only aimed at preventing women from praying during their menstrual periods and when having postpartum bleeding. Another *Hadith* on which the conservative Islamists base their argument is one that states that women are more mentally capable of taking care of children than men are. Contrary to what the Islamists believe, the *Hadith* does not in any way state that this is the only thing that they are mentally capable of. However, the Islamists sustain a contrary view; that the *Hadith* implies child bearing and childcare are the sole actions to which females are suited (Abu-Khalid, 2001).

The researcher and the women interviewed for this research recognise the use of the proposition that men are rational and women are emotional and a source of temptation and sedition. This belief can be used as a justification to oppose feminist ideas; thus, conservative Islamists continue to represent the differences between men and women as evidence of their inherent inequality. Such beliefs have resulted in the construction of Muslim communities in the form of a pyramid in which men are given a higher status than women. Among other ideas expressed about women is the assertion that Islam protects the woman, as queen of her home, distanced from the "evil" Western man with the right to be protected by her *Wali-ul-amr* or by a judge (Wahba, 1991). The

guardian protects "his" woman and as a consequence has the right to interfere in all affairs pertaining to her life; she has to request his permission with regard to marriage, education, work, travel, and even to go out to do the groceries (Abu-Lawz, 1999:15). Conservatives also believe that the veil, which must cover all the parts of the female body including the hands and face, is compulsory because women are a source of seduction and need protection. Moreover, they deem gender segregation essential in all spheres of social life and in all locations, even in places of prayer. Thus, the inception of *Sharia*-based laws in all matters, including marriage, divorce and child custody, must be referred back to its origin, which conservatives interpret as predicated on the privileging of men over women (*Qiwama*) (Al-Booti, 1996:98-105). Salvation for women is then to be found in returning to their "original role in life" as mothers and wives (Al-Qady, 1986:135).

These versions of conservative Islamic ideology outlined emphasise the pyramidal construction of Islamic society, with men wielding paramount power and authority, and women remaining subordinate; obedient followers of men. This ideology also rejects alternate interpretations of Quranic and *Sunna* texts.

This line of thought envisions the Saudi woman in two ways: either as a follower, adhering to the standards set by conservative Muslims, gaining a reward and a *thawab* in this world and the after-world through strict obedience; or as a rebel, who deviates from the standards of conservative Islamists, and so faces the threat of losing out both in terms of the material and the spiritual. The enforcement of gender segregation and inequality between the two sexes, according to the conservative Islamists' viewpoint, is the only safe way to maintain social and political stability. Any attempt to

discuss the status of women is therefore considered an attempt to undermine the foundations of Saudi Arabia's Islamic society.

3.3 Criticisms of Conservative Islamic Thought

In his book "The Role of Women in the Islamic Society", Tawfik Wahba (1991), a conservative, asserted that the aspects of femininity that all societies recognise, and the one that conservative Muslims identify with as the most important aspect of femininity, is the ability to become pregnant and have children. He also distinguishes women from men with regards to their emotional instincts as mothers. He elaborated further on this point by referring to the *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). The text, narrated in the two most noted *Hadith* compilations of *Sunni* Islam, reads: "A man came to the Prophet –Peace be upon him– and said: "O Apostle of God, who of all people is most deserving of my good companionship?" The Prophet answered: "Your mother," to which the man replied: "And then who?" and the Prophet said: "Then your mother," to which the inquirer replied: "And then who?" and the Prophet, yet again, said: "Then your mother". When the man enquired again, saying: "And then who, O Apostle of God?" the Prophet finally said "then your father". This tradition clearly favours the mother over the father, and identifies the moral and economic commitment of children towards their parents. Wahba (1991) argues that this special position afforded to women by Islamists is often ignored by non-Islamists, who he accuses of turning a blind eye to its positives. What Wahba fails to note is that the Islamists themselves fail to guarantee the mother's rights.

Najla Hamadeh discussed this issue, under the title "Mothering and its muted right". In her discussion of this point, she indicated how the rights of mothers

in Islam were denied when the issue of child custody and motherhood become linked; as Islamist family law favours the father for child custody. The conservative Islamist discourse emphasises the role of women in seduction and temptation and mutes the rather obvious meaning of motherhood and its rights and privileges (Hamadeh, 1997:340–344). So, though Wahba, himself an Islamist, failed to note the paradoxes inherent in his own ideology, Hamadeh started where he left off and exposed the lack of tangible laws that give women their rights, particularly in child custody, within the Islamist context.

The second point to be made with regard to the work of Wahba (1991) is that it aimed to draw on a critique of western feminism and its views over the liberation of women. Wahba criticises the Western liberation of women, and argues that it has led to women's enslavement. The problem with the West, he insists, is that the West liberated the woman whilst providing her with no means of protection, causing her to become easy prey for men. For Wahba, liberation without protection is enslavement. He also criticises the West for giving the woman no "special" position; no honorific place as a mother, as child bearing is the ultimate honour for any woman (Wahba, 1991).

In recent years, several critical discussions have emerged to challenge these claims, that were described as valid when seen from the perspective described above (Obaid, 1988: 46– 47). For example: in Saudi Arabia, many men and women have started to question the prevalence of the neutrality of this view in the face of the continuing exclusion of women from public life. Writing in Al-Watan newspaper, Saudi journalist Saleh Al-Zahrani stated:

“For all who look at women only through their bodies; to those who distorted the legitimate Islamic law to be consistent with their objectives and readings of Islam; and to those who deprived women

from their Islamic rights and idolised the social traditions and norms to repress women, we ask this question: who assigned them to be the guardians of Islam? We want to ask them, who is responsible for representing Muslim women as weak and vulnerable? To them we say; women were, throughout Islamic history, active participants in their communities, especially in early Islam and during the life of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)" (Al-Watan Newspaper 2001 # 105).

A long standing problem that characterises conservative Islamists is their presentation of themselves as the sole legitimate representatives of Islam. This criticism, as seen in previous metaphors, did not emanate from opposition to this perspective itself, but more importantly, was directed towards their claims to present the final word in Islam. The fact remains that the principle criticism directed towards the conservative approach can be summarised according to a series of questions derived from the works of Muslim scholars, in a work aimed at criticising the Islamic conservative approach through an Islamic framework. Abu Al-Majd (1983) raised the following questions:

"Have the conservatives, in their defence of Islam, realised its humane value and its culture as a global civilisation by elaborating an example of a society based on justice and equality? Did they realise that Islam has been an historical establishment on cultural exchange in equality with other civilisations? Is their resentment of other cultures, including the western culture, aimed at developing impartial criticism?

Alternatively, does it just aim to create trends to justify the defects of today's Muslim societies by not looking to other cultures except to find violence and sex? Do conservatives believe that, by projecting divinity

on their readings of Quran and *Sunna*, they can erase the rights of Muslims to search for other interpretations?" (Abu Al-Majd, 1983).

A similar reaction was that of Mir-Hosseini, who questioned conservatives' exclusivity over interpretation, particularly in Islamic family law, and pointed to a thirst for power as a potential explanation (Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

The conservatives tend to avoid answering questions such as those raised by Abu Al-Majd, because they consider them to be a potential path for deviation from the "true meaning" of Islam. The issue of power has therefore become crucial when silencing or refusing a response to such questions. Politicisation of the issue of women, and their incorporation into the dominant political discourse has become an essential mechanism by which to maintain the caste system of authority and power relations, including the existing relationship between the two sexes. Unequal gender relations are considered to typify an imbalance in the construction of power. Thus, whilst conservative Islamists focus on invoking criticisms of the economic and political control of the West, they use women's bodies as a mask to hide their pent-up resentment of this control. Thus, there is an associated irony that, whilst the West uses women's bodies to justify the theory of racial inferiority in other cultures; conservatives use women's bodies to confirm their superiority against the culture of domination. In the same vein, women's bodies are often used to show the power balance between different political forces, and to disguise or at least mitigate disputes over other issues – whether political issues or social struggles.

Another author who questioned the singularity of interpretation is Saudi female author Fowziya Bashatah (2011). She criticised the classic conservative interpretation of Al-Zamakhshari, who stated that "God prefers men to women

in terms of intelligence, physical strength, and self-confidence.” Al-Zamakhshari’s interpretation of the Quran is an important example of pro-conservative literature on the Quran. Bashatah criticises this interpretation for merely stating that God prefers men, while not quoting any Quranic verse to that effect. Egyptian Islamist thinker Al-Aqqad supports Al-Zamakhshari’s viewpoint, and adds that “men deserve superiority to women.” Bashatah voices her opinion that, though these men believe that the Quran endorses social justice, they do not believe women to be a part of this plan. Instead, they view women as unequal to men. Bashatah debunks this viewpoint by giving the example of three important Quranic figures: Moses’ mother, Mary, the daughter of Imran and Balqis, the Queen of Sheba. She notes that the Quran clearly states that the Mother of Moses was inspired by God; illustrating that women, like men, receive divine inspiration. Mary is the only female to be named in the Quran. Indeed, she is the only figure out of the circle of angels, prophets and their enemies, and devils to be named, aside from a single mention of the notable companion to the prophet, Zayd. The Queen of Sheba is a prime example in the Quran of wisdom and good leadership. Bashatah notes that this is in contrast to the lamented Quranic unbelieving (male) leaders, who are usually shown to cling hopelessly to their forefather’s faith and violently crack down on Prophets and their followers. Balqis responds positively to Suleiman’s call to monotheism, and converts peacefully to his faith when Suleiman convinces her in debate (Bashatah, 2011). So, contrary to the conservative example, Bashatah shows the Quranic women to be good leaders, as being individuals who receive inspiration and provides positive examples to believers of both genders (Ibid).

3.4 Feminist Perspectives

3.4.1 Introduction

This section focuses on feminist perspectives with regard to the exclusion of women from the public sphere. It discusses the main ideas associated with each perspective and describes how these diverge and converge in reference to the reality of women's exclusion. To achieve the researcher's aims, the work focuses on linking associated different perspectives, rather than on discussing feminist literature in general.

There are many reasons for the presentation of these feminist perspectives. First, they expose the complexities that have been experienced and continue to be experienced by Arab women. It also helps provide a critique of how feminists are dealing with the reality of the Arab woman, helping to bolster understanding of the complexity of her experiences and the need to see her reality contextualised in her local culture.

The intention behind the choice of perspectives here was to provide examples of the different approaches associated with the feminist paradigm and was not designed to explain feminist literature itself.

3.4.2 Islamic Liberal Feminism

This research recognises the fact that one cannot easily label the modern, Islam-based, women's rights ideologues as 'liberal'. The gulf in lifestyle between the West and the Middle East, between the developed and less developed, and the conflict of moral values associated with both cannot be discounted. An encompassing example would assert that if an activist were to claim the *Niqab* (face veil) to be an unfounded innovation in terms of religion

(as the supreme leader of Egypt's Azhar Islamic institute did in 2009), they would be considered liberal; this is different from the extent of reasoning based on the wider horizons presented by the feminist movements of the 1960's. Thus the liberals of the Middle East, although staunchly so by local standards, might be considered moderate at best when presented against the backdrop of the western social and political spectrum.

Liberal attitudes emerged in 1835, fifty years prior to the British occupation of Egypt, in the era of Muhammad Ali. During this period, economic, industrial and military development was evident, and Al-Tahtawi appeared to support the idea of women's education in the Muslim community as a foundation for its strength and progress. In his book, the author defended the rights of women to education and the recognised their equality with men in terms of mental ability (Ziyadeh, 1987: 199). In his famous book, "Liberating the woman", Egyptian thinker Qasim Amin outlined his ideas on female liberation. As a liberal nationalist, he recognised the need for female education and its role in advancing the nation. On this subject he wrote: "There can be no improvement of the state of the nation without improving the position of women" (Philipp, 1978).

Despite being more radical than most of his contemporaries, Amin was still reluctant to engage on such issues as voting rights for females. Whilst he seemed more receptive to the argument favouring voting rights for women, he still offered no concrete approval. He did, however, praise women's voting experiences in the United States (Ibid). Amin's more radical ideas mainly tended towards the debate over marital rights; he criticised the rights of men to unilaterally divorce their wives, and the practice of polygamy, which he viewed as socially destructive (Amin, 1970).

Therefore, I contend that the international popularity of Qasim Amin's views on the liberalisation of Muslim women, especially in reference to western feminism, dwarfed all other theories presented in the nineteenth century. These views blacked out earlier efforts of Islamic origin for women's enablement, such as those presented by Abduh and Al-Afghani in the nineteenth century (Abu-Khalid, 2001).

The foundations of an Islamic feminism, which has attempted to establish female education and participation in public life within the Islamic context, can be dated to twenty years prior to Amin's famous publication "Liberating the woman" in 1899. At this time, awareness of the differences between the counter customs and social traditions that could be discarded if half of the population were to be excluded, arose in tandem with reverence to the teachings of Islam and Islamic law in light of the Quran and *Sunna*. Jamal-al-Din Al-Afghani and his disciple Muhammad Abduh supported political Islam and the provision of Islamic conservative thought. These were scholars who framed Islamic discourse and the concept of feminism within it, and so contributed to present day Islamic feminism in three ways. Firstly, they made an attempt to establish an alternative Islamic feminist perspective in order to counter the dominance of the western feminist paradigm. Secondly, they distinguished between conservative literary readings in Islam and their relation to women, detailing how Islam excluded women from public life. Also included were otherwise unstated possibilities, such as consulting the Quran and *Sunna* to search for alternative readings. Thirdly, they provided a discourse that responded to the needs of Muslim women and the Muslim community as a whole. Then, finally, they based their theory on Islam, which they viewed as a source of freedom. They defined Islamic liberal feminism as a religion-based tool for women seeking to free themselves from ignorance, injustice, violence

and subordination, or any other prejudice arising from their gender identity as women (Abu-Khalid, 2001).

Muhammad Abduh instigated a discussion to clarify the concept of Islamic feminism by detailing the distinction between Islamic law and the jurisprudence of worship. This in turn identified the critical differences between the theoretical position of conservative Muslims and the reforming position of such scholars as Abduh himself. The argument of Abduh in this regard was that the jurisprudence of worship was eternal and all-inclusive, and that all Muslims regardless of their gender should enjoy their spirituality. Applying this argument in relation to the field of jurisprudence made it necessary to acquire new, more permissive interpretations that did not clash with the needs proceeding from each age and place. Abduh rallied for opening the door to *Ijtihad*- religious rulings based on scholarly intellect and reasoned debate, rather than on rigid textual foundations (Stowasser, 1994:132). Accordingly, the concept of Islamic feminism was not only limited to challenging the disappearance of the institutionalisation of women's right to education and other female rights, but it also became an arena from which to debate other potential religious reforms.

Confirming an Islamic context when reconsidering the role of women in Muslim society, Muhammad Abduh argued that, since the beginning of Prophet Muhammad's mission, Islam admitted women's right to equality with men. The majority of Quranic verses dealing with personal rights give women the same status as men. Abduh referred to a Quranic verse equalising men with women in the reward for spiritual obedience. Referring to the Quran (33:35) he wrote: "Women and men are equal in the issue of reward before God, when equal in work therefore, there is no difference between them in humanity or in business

superiority” (Omara, 1973: 365). These early contributions to the development of a theoretical, independent Islamic feminist paradigm helped to present a new perspective that was dissimilar to both the western feminist paradigm and the conservative Islamic paradigm. Issues such as polygamy, the unilateral right to divorce, child custody and veiling, were raised as anti-female institutions, and Muslim women related to the new Islamic liberal movement because they felt that the topics discussed touched their lives profoundly. An additional factor that may have contributed to the popularity of the movement is that it actively pursued a religious solution to problems, rendering itself palatable to ordinary Arabs, and particularly Egyptians, of whom many were devoutly religious.

Women have also contributed to the discussion of women's issues in the Arab Muslim world. One of these was the work of Nazira Zin Al-Din, the Lebanese Muslim scholar, who developed a foundation for modern Islamic feminist thought based on her study of the Quran and *Hadith*. She wrote about gender relations and the veil in two books – "Veiling and Unveiling" (1928–2010) and "The Young Woman and the Sheikhs" (1928–2010). In these books, she presented the best interpretations of Quranic texts and the *Sunna* with regard to women's issues. One typical example was her assertion that, "there is no Quranic text which prefers men over women, but that preference is rather based on piety. The current interpretative efforts focused on the Quran and *Hadith* rarely involve female scholars, and so it is necessary to amend the laws following the active participation of female scholars in interpretation efforts” (Shaaban, 1995: 65, 79).

Another female contributor was Bina Shah. In a scientific paper she authored, entitled “In a Different Voice: Interpretations of the Qur’an by Women

Scholars”, Bina Shah (1998) indicated the need for female scholars to read Quranic interpretations in line with the lives of Muslim women today, and to present interpretations that agree with modern life in order to clarify the confusion and contradiction disseminated in the West and amongst some Muslims that there is a preference for men over women in Islam. This is untrue, she argues, as men and women are equal in nature and configuration; although social values have fostered concepts and cultural forms that identify men as protectors and women principally as carriers of their children. Therefore, there is a need to re-clarify Quranic concepts with regard to gender, because the many (all male) scholars interpreting them have sought to sustain the idea that there is a preference for men over women, citing the concept of *Qiwama*. This concept, she argues, is abused to justify the separation of ethical and economic responsibilities, the first being for women’s benefit and the second for men’s. They also use this to find justifications for imposing the veil on Muslim women. These issues illustrate a difference in interpretation between scholars throughout history and finally impose a single conservative explanation that elevates men to a place of superiority and relegates women to one of subordination (Shah, 1998: 79–81).

The concept of the veil, as presented by Nazira Zin Al-Din in her book "Veiling and Unveiling", explained the situation of women in Saudi Arabia, by interpreting the veil from a single conservative perspective; confirming the dominance of males over females and excluding women from public life in Saudi Arabia. However, when Zin Al-Din studied various interpretations of the Quran, such as the interpretations of Al-Baydawi (1968) and Al-Tabari (1972), she found ten different interpretations of the verses referring to the veil, two of which were directed only to the wives of the Prophet, and two toward women in general. The first two verses concerned the Prophet's wives because they are

the mothers of all Muslims in Islamic society, with the note that the Prophet's daughter, Fatima Al-Zahra', had been teaching *Fiqh* to men and women alike in the lifetime of the Prophet. The other two verses were directed to women in general and nothing in them indicates that women must be fully covered; indeed, it is not even prescribed to cover the hair or face (Zin Al-Din, 1928: 37): "God states in the Quran: 'Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty' (Quran 24: 30); had the verse ordered women to cover themselves, there would be no need for men to lower their gaze", she states.

The research conducted by Gobiesy into the history of urban communities uncovered the fact that the veil is connected to the customs of the wealthier classes and not to rural women who typically worked in agriculture. Therefore, when discussing Hijab in Islamic feminism, it is necessary to distinguish between the reasons for its presence and its various uses. The veil may be used to distinguish between different social and cultural classes, or even to clarify the economic situation in the Arab countries (Gobiesy, 1995: 125–150). Alternatively, as in the case of Saudi Arabia, it can signify the adoption of a conservative image and the practice of excluding women from public life (Ebrahim, 1983). It is also the case that the veil worn by women in Saudi Arabia is donned to uphold traditions and social customs, through which the individual woman complies with the culture of her community, according to the social status of her family (Altorki, 1986:36–37).

Lebanese writer Mona Fayyad has described the Islamic liberal feminist perspective as one of active resistance and revivalism. Through the example of Southern Lebanon and *Shi'ite* Muslim resistance against the Israeli invasion, Fayyad offered an explanation for wearing the Hijab. She claimed it to be a tool

of resistance against the proliferation of western cultural values, and that the return of *Shi'ites* in Southern Lebanon to wearing Hijab during their resistance against Israeli invasion was intended as a symbol of national sovereignty.

Fayyad continued by presenting the Hijab as a means of liberation. She stated that it can give women an opportunity to participate fully in public life while avoiding being viewed as “consumer goods”. Fayyad’s understanding has shed new light on interpretations of the Hijab as a revivalist cultural symbol. She has further claimed that women were enabled by Hijab to participate in what was essentially a national duty in support of military resistance. The importance of Fayyad’s views on the role of Hijab is that they have repositioned it from being a tool of repression to one of active liberation. They have also shown the scope for dissent within Islamic Liberal Feminism, a privilege sorely absent in conservative Islam (in Hijab, 1988: 54–55).

Fayyad claims that true liberation for women is self-confidence, strict adherence to culture, and the giving of equal value to house work as to work outside the home. Her opinions are close to those expressed by many participants in this sample: that the Hijab-wearing woman, through choosing to preserve her culture and “humanity”, becomes the manifestation of what a liberated Muslim woman may look like. This is a woman who rejects Western consumerism and holds on steadfastly to her indigenous, culture (Ibid).

In the course of attempting to reconcile political Islam with gender equality, many Iranian scholars have also discussed this issue. Prominent among these is the female scholar Ziba Mir-Hosseini, who has walked a path through the stilled waters of gender relations. There is a trend in Iranian politics referred to as the reformist wing, and Mir-Hosseini, speaking in favour of reform, asserted that women’s position in Iran could be improved. She has called for uncoupling

Sharia and *Fiqh* to enhance women's position. Hosseini argues that, while *Sharia* is holy and eternal, it also has to be subjected to interpretation agreeable to modern legal practices. In the case of *Fiqh*, she states that it is man-made, and intended to suit the time and place of its application. Thus the *Fiqh* of today, according to Mir-Hosseini, has to reflect the realities of twenty-first century life, and thereby provide women with broad education choices and employment in any field that is open to their male counterparts (Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

A key characteristic of the Iranian reformist current is the competition between the secular wing and the liberal Islamist wing for the position of the recognised opposition. In the past, this competition has fractured the opposition and allowed conservatives to gain autonomy over all aspects of the Iranian women's lives. However today, considerable efforts are being made to reconcile the two wings, particularly on the issue of women's rights (Ahmadi, 2006). This has been linked to Brah's views relating to unity for a common cause, specifically regarding the issue of female advancement.

Fereshteh Ahmadi, another Iranian writer, argued for the adoption of a new perspective regarding the revelations in the Quran, using the arguments of Abdolkarim Soroush. Soroush, a reformist Iranian thinker, argued that the social laws revealed in the Quran pertain only to events encountered by the Prophet Muhammad. This led him to challenge the view that social commands in the Quran should be applied in every situation, regardless of variables. Soroush also argues that the Quran and other religious texts should only be used in their historical context, and then interpreted back-to-back with the events to which they relate. Soroush's key argument regarding women's rights

is that they are time-appropriate, and cannot be exported from Quranic events to situations that do not fit the context of the original events (Ahmadi, 2006).

It was also apparent from the research undertaken that attempts have been made around the world to rejuvenate Islamist discourse with more gender-egalitarian scholarly work. This was certainly the case with the work of the Progressive Islamist Movement in South Africa, led by the notable anti-apartheid activist and renowned scholar Farid Esack and that of African-American scholar Amina Wadud and feminist scholar Fatima Mernissi. In the case of the first two, they spearheaded efforts to re-interpret the Quran in general, while Mernissi produced much work discrediting the Hadiths (oral traditions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad) which she sees as violent and oppressive to women and other social groups (Badran, 2001). For Amina Wadud, reinterpretation must start with the acknowledgement that no one interpretation holds an absolute truth. Instead, Wadud claims that the Quran delivers a universal message, and that each society and period should interpret it to suit its context (Wadud, 1992).

Referring to *Qiwama*, Wadud sought to establish that, firstly, the Quran specified that *Qiwama* has two tenets. The first is that the man must be endowed, in terms of breadwinning ability, more than the woman. The second is that the man must be able to and willing to support the woman financially. Additionally, Wadud questioned whether *Qiwama* should be extended outside of marital life. The evidence, she claimed, points to the contrary: The latter half of the *Qiwama* verse (as verse 4: 34 is popularly known), refers exclusively to the marital home in obvious linguistic continuation from the previous portion of the verse. Wadud, thus argues, that there is a case for restricting *Qiwama* to

marital relationships in fulfilment of the two above-mentioned requirements that are set out in the same verse (Ibid).

As a diverse social movement, it is hard to pin down the tenets upheld by Islamic liberal feminism. However, a number of generalities can be discerned with relative ease. Islamic liberal feminists assert that there are no Quranic texts declaring men to be superior to women, and that God will reserve his reward for the righteous, regardless of gender. Another tenet of the movement is that it claims Islam to be based on the freedom of thought, will, speech and action, and that the Quran places great emphasis on logic and debate. Consequently, Islamic liberal feminists assert that no Muslim should be allowed to exert control over another individual, irrespective of the gender of the "other". In the same context is their assertion that no scholar has the right to hold their opinion as above those of other Muslims, or to suggest that his understanding is an unassailable truth. For Islamic liberal feminists, the cause of the low status of women is not related to Islam as alleged by some Orientalists (Bashatah, 2011). They consider the real cause to be wrongful interpretations of the Quran and *Sunna* by narrow-minded religious scholars or political agents. The Islamic liberal feminists believe women's participation in interpretative efforts to be the most effective way to fight repression, because they believe that women are fitter to recognise their own interests than men are. They uphold women's right to education and participation in public administration and consider women to have equal rights to men within the family and the community (Abu-Khalid, 2001).

3.4.3 Criticisms of Islamic Liberal Feminist Thought

The opinions of Islamic liberal feminists regarding women's perceptions of gender roles are the cause of much debate. This section examines current criticisms of liberal Islamic feminist thought.

To address the concerns raised effectively, the feminist experience throughout history, in conjunction with national political liberation movements, regardless of intellectual origins (i.e. left, right, Islamist) must be taken into account. In the case of the majority of political national liberation movements, despite their slogans with regard to women's liberation, women's participation and any associated recognition; campaigns were suspended after war time. An example of this trend was evident during the Algerian revolution. Women participated as part of the Algerian resistance during the period of French colonialism; and despite their great contribution, which, in numerous situations, outweighed that of many of their male counterparts, they were sent home without being granted any legal rights or guarantees of gender equality (Gobiesy, 1995: 92).

A set of questions, articulated by Fayyad in Hijab's (1988) *Womanpower: The Arab debate on women at work*, have been raised to address the development of the Islamic feminist perspective. These are: Would women be willing to exploit all their rights as human beings in order to achieve equality with men? Would they seek to gain more involvement in politics, law and the governmental positions? Would they gain an equal position as civilians in order to allow them to obtain their legitimate status in any field? These questions highlight the revolutionary implications of Fayyad's ideas, which were simultaneously seen by conservatives as a departure from "true Islam", and yet as cowardly and submissive by other liberals (due to glorification of the Hijab, which they view with great disdain) (Hijab, 1988).

The second criticism of the liberal feminist perspective relates to observed deficiencies in the provision of outstanding contributions with respect to family law and its relationship to Islamic law. Women still suffer from intolerance and inequality in gender relations as evidenced by their legal situation with regard to marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance and the continuing recognition of the practice of polygamy. With the exception of numerous scattered attempts to establish grand legal pretexts based on the re-interpretation of the Quran and the *Sunna*, the rallying cries of Islamic feminists go largely unnoticed. These attempts are only part of an initial process that is seeking to influence the dominant legal system as well as the practices in Muslim societies that allow women to defend their rights on issues pertaining to their daily lives.

It is clear from the research undertaken thus far, that the Islamic feminist perspective has to a certain extent clarified its standpoint through the adoption of firm critical examples absorbed from western liberal feminism. However, when discussing the provision of alternatives to Islamic feminism that fit the context of present day Islamic society, in light of the power relations associated with gender and the state's relationship with society, the weaknesses of western perspectives are apparent. Gender relations form just one dimension of the socio-political network associated with the state and its relationship to the power it derives from society. Therefore, despite the existence of extra dimensions that affect the role of women in Saudi Arabia, the impact of gender relations and the power wielded by politicians is heavily invested in the exclusion of women from the public sphere.

3.4.4 The Modern Arab Liberal Feminist Perspective

The Modern Arab Liberal Feminist perspective has been present in the Arab world since the fall of the Ottoman Empire and dates to the fall of Arab Nationalism. According to many social analysts, the emergence of this perspective throughout the Arab world and in other Islamic societies resulted from western cultural influence, which deliberately attempted to erase other cultures to confirm the superiority of the Western model (Ahmed, 1992; El-Solh and Mabro, 1994; Shaaban, 1995).

Talal Asad, in his analysis of the Western narration, criticised non-western writings for absorbing western narration and regurgitating it (Asad, 1993:34, 48). The emergence of an Arab liberal feminist perspective was therefore judged to be a consequence of influence from the west. This could also be seen as related to the theory of Sayyid with regard to Kemalism, Ataturk's aggressive secularization and nationalization of Turkish politics and culture. He argued that the liberal ideology of Kemalism in Turkey provided the region with a modern liberal paradigm based on the western model. In accordance with this, it was argued that only through 'a perfection framework' could women emerge as either Islamic or non-Islamic symbols (Sayyid, 1997).

However, others such as Keddie and Beck (1978) established a different argument. They contended that the development of the liberal feminist perspective in the region was due to the birth of new social forces in society, which reflected the direct political and economic interests proceeding from the adoption of this perspective. As the economic transformation, from traditional forms of production to a capitalist economy, required the participation of women in industrial work outside of the home (as teachers, nurses and low-wage labourers), there was a need for a new system of social values to

facilitate this transformation. Liberal feminism, as a product associated with western capitalism, was most concerned with supporting this transformation. Regardless of its roots or the factors leading to its emergence, Arab liberal feminism is generally accepting of the discourse of western feminism. It has been less apologetic of the Hijab than Islamic liberals, a key example being Huda Sha'rawi's public removal of Hijab.

To comment that Arab liberals have been significantly disadvantaged by the fall of Nasserism would be truthful. However, the debate regarding the establishing of liberal feminism in the Arab world, its impact on Muslim women and the enforcement of or resistance to western dominated views, is only one among the many critical multi-dimensional debates that have been taking place since the mid-1970s; all of which questioned the universality of western modernity in general.

Nawal El-Saadawi, an Egyptian liberal feminist organizer, commented on the absence of organizations pursuing the clear objectives of establishing, advancing and upholding women's rights in Egypt (El-Saadawi in Afshar, 1993). This holds true for Saudi women as well, as previously mentioned in the commentary on Brah's work. El-Saadawi adds that, for a true advancement of their rights, Arab women need political power to advance their cause. Political power, she points out, cannot be gained without coordinated activism.

El-Saadawi's argues for a global feminist drive toward women's liberation, but cautions that "the chains enter the mind and souls of women (and) they become invisible", and that those traditionalist elements that have permeated many women's thoughts must be eradicated first (Ibid: 144).

3.4.5 Criticism of Modern Arab Liberal Feminist Theory

Despite the contribution of liberal feminism to emphasising education and equal opportunities for women within employment, these two fields remain under discussion and debate by feminists. There have been political proposals and oscillating feminist views, including complete objections to proposals for change from the outset. In spite of its success in the mid-twentieth century, there has been resentment expressed in the case of Hijab, making it a controversial topic remaining in need of a resolution.

Similarly, in reference to issues such as the right to vote, voting practices, decision-making and more importantly the issues of legitimate law, especially with regard to family law, problems and reservations remain. Arab liberal feminism has continued to face criticism, based on an assumption that it not only seeks to transform confrontation from a regressive and progressive force, but that it can introduce conflict between men and women. Accordingly, this has led to an aggressive aversion to debate and a widening of the gap between the sexes; whereas, for a resolution to be reached an improvement in the relations between the two sexes is required. There has been a resulting description of women as hostile, and political-social-psychological frustration has compounded the desire to take revenge for the suffering and frustrations wrought by men. This hostility between the two genders has originated from the borrowing of arguments from western liberal feminism. The inability of Arab women to adopt a western perspective, even after liberation in the Arab world, rests on the fact that they remain unable to succeed without the help of their male relatives: fathers, husbands or brothers (Abu-Khalid, 2001). The notion remains that feminism represents an adoption of western values at the expense of an Arab cultural heritage that supports the subordination of

women. This is despite the reality that the vast majority of Arab women have dismissed the idea of achieving liberation through the abandonment of Arab culture; moreover, they most certainly do not adhere to western values.

A significant portion of the criticism levelled at Arab liberal feminism can be ignored; liberal feminist experiences have demonstrated throughout history that radical-minded women typically enjoy a strong bond with their male relatives (Ahmed, 1992). For example, a strong bond existed between Huda Sha'rawi and her brother, and Nawal Sa'dawi and her husband. In addition, such criticisms cannot continue because there are strong historical ties between feminism and national political projects, which make it impossible for Arab liberal feminist perceptions to trigger open confrontation between men and women, even where this might be desired.

A further criticism has been that Arab feminism has only penetrated the upper and upper-middle classes. In the course of discussing Arab liberal feminism, Saudi writer Nora Al-Saad theorised that the principles of Arab liberal feminism appeal to, and continue to appeal to, women who have adhered in their physical appearance and moral origins to the principles of the West; as a consequence change fails to penetrate the pious lower classes (Al-Saad, 2001:16). It should be emphasised that whilst the progress of this perspective has been contrary to national political projects, it has also been in conflict with colonialism; as typified by the boundaries to political power affirmed in the former colonial era. In addition to all the points of criticism delineated by this theory, there has been a recent criticism, mainly voiced by conservatives, that liberal feminism is un-Islamic, and therefore cannot be adopted by Muslim women.

Many defenders of Arab liberal feminism have pointed to what they perceive to be hypocrisy on the part of conservatives: Islam is not represented by any organisation, and so cannot be limited to a single perspective. To illustrate this point, Abu Al-Majd provided an example of a perspective described as the "Islamic Perspective". Its position with regard to the inferiority of women in relation to men was based on a reading of certain sections of Islamic texts in specific contexts relating to power and tradition. He claimed that, by submitting them as a single interpretation of Islam, its holders had used vague or general passages in Islamic texts to constrain Islam in support of their judgment. He denounced such exclusionary practices as unwarranted and inaccurate; as seeking to present Islam to prove the value of one particular view over another, without specifying the nature of that view, or how it was formulated (Abu Al-Majd, 1988).

In the present study, the participants generally seemed to gravitate toward conservative Islamic thought, which was discussed in the third chapter. Regarding the three concepts of hijab, reinterpreting the Quran, and *Qiwama*, the young women's thoughts differed in some important ways from those expressed in the feminist literature I reviewed.

Most participants viewed the hijab as having the potential to be a tool for greater autonomy and freedom of movement, and an indicator of national and religious identity. This runs contrary to some of the feminist literature cited, which characterised hijab to be a form of oppression or restriction imposed on Muslim women (Ahmed, 1992; Mernissi, 1985; Khan, 1995).

Secondly, most participants saw little need to reinterpret the Quran, an undertaking which some feminist writers argued for (Wadud, 1992; Shah, 1998). The Quran, they opined, does afford women substantial rights. The

error, they argued, is in the execution by the male-dominated authorities, and not in the textual interpretation; adding that the modular execution of Quranic directives is that of the Prophet.

Thirdly, on the issue of *Qiwama* and authority in the family, the participants repeatedly asserted their support for inclusive decision making. Most upheld that the *wali-ul-amr* is the husband, yet argued that males and females should complement each other in the family, rather than competing for authority. Thus, they viewed *Qiwama* as an entryway to greater complementariness and inclusion, rather than as a tool for women's subjugation, as some feminist literature has pronounced it (Afshar and Maynard, 2000; El-Saadawi, 1993; Stowasser, 1998).

3.5 The impact of cultural factors on the young Saudi woman's daily life

3.5.1 Introduction

Deviation is a culturally and contextually relative term. In the context of this study, the word deviation is used to describe any departure from accepted social morality and decorum, and the entry into a position of opposition to certain social practices. This study depicts a situation in which society is the culprit and the rebelling individual is the victim. In his definition of deviance, Becker (1963) states that it is a much more inclusive term than crime, since it encompasses non-criminal, albeit rebellious, actions. He also adds that sensitivity to deviance can alter or vary over time and between different societies.

This study focuses on participant narrations, which reveal an understanding of how rebellion differs between generations. The current young generation is experiencing a different culture to that encountered by previous generations. Furthermore, the participants themselves differ in their understanding of rebellion. Some participants see rebellion as manifest in simple acts like not wearing the Hijab, whilst others see rebellion as violating the law, such as when breaking the ban on women's driving. Therefore, the cultural concepts recognised by the younger generation possess great variety and play a key role in shaping their perspectives.

Cultural and social values often intertwine and can be difficult to distinguish. Giddens (2001) asserts that culture is a broad term encompassing social values. He maintains that culture includes all the acquired knowledge and symbolic components recognised by those individuals affiliated with it. Other equally important components of culture are norms and values that govern the conduct of culturally affiliated individuals. In social science, "culture is all that in human society which is socially rather than biologically transmitted ... culture is thus a general term for the symbolic and learned aspects of human society" (Scott and Marshall, 2005: 133). In other sources, culture is described as the way in which individuals "handle the raw material of their social and material existence" or: Culture is the distinctive way in which group life is given shape and meaning (Clarke et al., 1993: 10).

The actions of the young Saudi women that might be understood as rebellious may be better explained as attempts at handling the raw material of their existence.

Culture can be thought of as a body of regulations determining what behaviours are appropriate and acceptable (Haviland, 2000). Therefore, culture

can be said to have many constituents, including learned concepts that include gender communication norms, decision making processes, and roles (Arab, 2010).

Therefore, to understand the behaviour of young Saudi women, we must understand their culture. A cross-cultural study conducted by Frydenberg and others (2003) offered a poignant comparison of Colombian, Australian, German and Palestinian adolescents (Frydenberg et al., 1993).

To adopt a general perception of culture to underpin this chapter, we shall adopt the perspective of Linton (1936), regarding its organisation. Linton theorises that culture is broken down into three tiers. The first tier, the outer tier of cultural construction, is composed of generalities which he termed universals and which all people, or at least a vast majority of them, hold. These universals, according to Linton, lead to the presence of shared interests between members of society and help maintain its cohesion. They also provide members of a social group with a sense of belonging and cooperation. It has been observed that groups are consistently keen to maintain these generalities, and usually punish those who disregard them. The second tier is composed of specialties; those that are unique to certain members of society but not to all society. These specialties are the customs and traditions that govern the actions of members of certain sub-groups within society. The third tier describes cultural aspects, which are not subject to any generalisations: they are not shared by society or even by sub-groups; rather, they are unique to each individual. These are mainly composed of varied responses to different situations, or different routes to a common goal. It should be noted that it is universals that lead to social unity, whereas alternatives maintain variety and

difference without detracting from social harmony (Kutubkhanah, 2008; Kluckhohn, 1958; Linton, 1965).

Linton's concept can be linked to the above reference to the interpretation of young Saudi women's behaviour as an expression of personal reality. The variety of experiences in the sample lead to a plethora of responses to the dominant culture. Each one is different from the next but, as Linton put it, they do not directly assail social harmony. Rather, they use subtle negotiation and tactical obedience to reach their goals.

Linton's three tiers model of culture is exhibited in Saudi Arabia in the form of religious conservativeness. Conservativeness is a norm expected and practised by an overwhelming majority of Saudis, and so can be termed a generality and socially unifying force, uniting all social groups under one banner. This speciality can be exemplified by the Hijab, which is prescribed for only one social group (women), and adhered to by the majority of that group. It stands out as a speciality; an exhibition of social belonging expected of one gender but not the other. Beneath this layer we find women's "different routes" to realising a common goal; that of social conservativeness and adherence, through engaging with the different forms of Hijab. Some women conceal their bodies fully, while others conceal only their hair. Variations are often governed by region and the woman's family's degree of conservativeness, but its only consequence is variety, and generally it does not create serious rifts within society (Al-Kayyal, 1997). Through these tiers it is possible to view Saudi Arabia as a society enforcing conservativeness as a means of projecting unity to the outside world by driving one gender away from power and into rigid social submission (Papanek, 1994).

The actions of the individual transcend these three tiers, therefore we will look at all three collectively in particular in reference to the social response to the rebellious actions of Saudi girls. The actions of young Saudi women can only be said to be criminally deviant if their culture is regarded as representing a perfectly fair society and legal system. However, since social norms are often inherited and unjustified, the deviations of Saudi women are not criminal deviations in any legal sense, even according to the ultra-conservative form of *Sharia* that governs the Kingdom. We therefore arrive at a stage when deviation can mostly be termed as creative resistance to overwhelming external influences (Al-Otaibi, 2008).

Thus, the first portion of this section of the chapter explores the reality of Muslim women's lives, with a particular focus on Saudi women: the reasons for and effects of their behaviour. The second part deals mainly with non-criminal forms of resistance: through ideology, ritual and deceit. The third part, begins the discussion of cultural criminology, providing some theoretical background to the examination of the most common forms of youth deviation in Saudi Arabia and their peripheral patterns.

3.5.2 The Conceptual Framework

Through different interactions, actors can apply regulations and resources that inform Giddens' (1991) understanding of structure. Regulations, which can also be termed rules, are "generalizable procedures" and "methodologies". Rules can be processed and utilized by agents as "formulae" that inform conduct within "social systems". Structural rules, in Giddens' understanding, possess some intrinsic characteristics: These are widely known though not

formally codified, and are brought up often in conversation, utilized in ritual, social interaction and mundane daily life.

Applying Giddens' (Ibid) approach, the structure of Saudi society with regard to women can be seen to be one predicated on rules intended to exert control and direction. According to Abu-Almajd (1988: 54), this predilection for control is attributable to "traditional Islamist notions of the woman as weak and vulnerable." Therefore, the Saudi woman is held, informally as per Giddens' postulation, to be more suited to home making, less capable of breadwinning and in need of protection from the male, whom the informal rules of society consider superior.

This is also evidenced through Al-Turki's lens; who, in a 1986 book on women's lives in Saudi Arabia, stated that Saudi society enforces a number of rules on women. Chief among them being the compulsory nature of hijab, the need to care for close relatives and consider other people's opinions, the virtues of arranged marriages, and man's standing as a more logical counterpoint to women's emotionality (Altorki, 1986).

Now, to apply Giddens' understanding to frame Altorki's (Ibid) conclusions, these social standards can be viewed as a body of knowledge. Saudi women were raised in adherence to this body of knowledge and "structure rules". The latter are the medium through which Saudi women deal with society. As Turner puts it, structure also involves the use of resources that are the "material equipment" and organizational capacities of actors to get things done (Turner, 1986: 972).

In this light, we see that young Saudi women have resources that enable them to wield some power. They derive this power through accessing the limited

means they have. Their use of the bedroom as a space for self-discovery and expression is an example of this. It is, however, an unconventional way for young women to express themselves.

Their behaviour within their bedrooms is very similar to that of the young British women studied by McRobbie and Firth in the 1970s. Their behaviours include smoking, trying on make-up and clothing, and gossiping. A key difference, however, is the time period (1970s vs 2010s), and the associated revolution in communication technology. I would argue that these practices, which the young women indulge in away from parental oversight, are expressions of identity and independence.

What this shows is that structural rules can, at least to some degree, be subverted by those they are responsible for control. The young Saudi women use what their parents give them (the bedroom), and the privacy they enjoy within it, to escape some of the restrictions enforced upon them, to entertain, and to assuage their boredom.

The bedrooms, as shown in this study, can also be used to form and strengthen friendships, either through social media or through physical gatherings inside the bedrooms. Both manners of communication grant the young women some control and therefore greater confidence.

In light of this, this study considers the participants as active agents. They are not the living embodiments of the social regulations described by Giddens, but use regulations to achieve a modicum of flexibility and freedom for themselves. They flexibly accommodate and acclimatise to conditions, unfavourable as they may be, and use outlets such as bedrooms to express themselves and alleviate restrictions imposed upon them.

Another important concept introduced in this study to understand the young Saudi women's lives is Bourdieu's (1977) notion of habitus. Habitus helps clarify the intellectual frames of mind of the participants, and some of the mechanisms involved in their daily lives. It describes the ways in which not only is the body in the social world, but also the ways in which the social world is in the body (Ibid). The habitus, therefore, is a socialized body. It encompasses the structures of the world and constructs how this world is perceived, as well as structuring the action that occurs in that world (Bourdieu, 1998: 81).

However, in this study, despite the habitus being a key player in determining the options open to the young women in their everyday lives, it does not unilaterally define their options or their existences. I argue that the young woman herself plays an active role in determining her life course and shaping her responses to events. She may exhibit any of a wide spectrum of responses, ranging from complete obedience to opposition. In the latter, she usually chooses to achieve her goals through concealed or quiet negotiation.

In any case, the participants produce varied responses to similar and disparate conditions. Some participants choose to obey, others to rebel, and those that obey may be more or less obedient, and those that rebel may be more or less overt and vociferous in their rebellion.

Thus, the participants' actions, while inevitably impacted by the social constructs that comprise habitus for all, involve a significant degree of individualistic determinism and conscious decision-making. The differences in responses can also be explored through Bourdieu's (1977) habitus. He argued that each person possesses her or his own history, replete with familial, economic and other variables. This he termed an "individual trace of an entire

collective history,” and elaborated on the differences may arise in those belonging to the same cultural grouping.

Therefore, the actions of young Saudi women can be widely divergent, despite all of them coming from a similar class background. To quote Bourdieu: “No two individual habituses are identical.” (Bourdieu, 1990: 46). This clearly applies to the participants in this study.

As to the concept of the “field”, Bourdieu explains it as a system of social relations that is a) competitive, and b) functioning according to internal, specific rules. A field, put simply, “is a space in which a game takes place” (Bourdieu, 1984: 197). Operating on this understanding, the present study considers the home, the school and the bedroom all as places in which the young woman plays the game. In these locations and others, the young Saudi women explore their identities, experiment with independence, and tinker with freedom away from parental oversight. Therefore, these places can all be accurately described as fields, as they are areas of competition and contention, wherein the young women, being active agents, strive to increase their power and experience dominance.

Indeed, every space in which young women live and contend for the betterment of their standing, is an exercise in acquiring and expressing a “feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 1990: 61). However, as each young woman possesses unique faculties and abilities that allow her to navigate the field with greater or lesser success, the picture is not as deterministic and concrete as one might be tempted to think. Here the participants have been educated and exposed to the world, in different measure. This knowledge and experience provides young women with the ability to change, modify, re-evaluate and, perhaps most noticeably as we will come to see, negotiate.

This “feel for the game”, which means different things to different people, characterizes it as a unique sort of chessboard, whereupon an infinite number of moves can be made. No two people will play the game in the same way, or even experience the field the same way, because, to reiterate in Bourdieu’s words, “no two habituses are the same” (Ibid: 46), and so “the different positions of different players in the field will require different strategies” (Ibid: 9). This works in tandem with Giddens’s theory which states that identity is becoming increasingly reflexive. The individual nowadays, he opines, has “no choice but to choose” (Giddens, 1991: 81).

In other words, identities in the earlier phases of modernity were much more secure and static, shaped largely by gender, class and identity. In recent times, however, fragility and ambiguity have led to “ideological identities” (Maffesoli, 1991: 15). A natural extension to this argument would be to assume that constructing personal identity now involves individuals themselves. People make choices on a daily basis, and these are, at their most basic level, decisions that shape who they are and how they want to be construed by others (Sweetman, 2003).

To convey these ideas through this study, we observed that the participants constantly make choices when dealing with other forces in society. Some espouse obedience with constant dialogue to gently improve their conditions. Others employ deception to achieve their wants, without exposing themselves to necessarily damaging confrontations with more dominant social agents. Still others use intermediaries, mostly family members and especially mothers, or push the boundaries of the acceptable by flaunting the austere dress codes expected of Saudi women. These actions represent largely independent efforts

as social agents to, whether consciously or unconsciously, construct an identity and face to show the world.

Wagner argues that consumption has now divorced itself from the question of class, becoming a vehicle for self-expression. Through their consumer habits, consumers have choices, and are “deemed to have chosen their self-images” (Wagner, 1994: 165).

Adopting this view, the young women in this study can be thought of as consumers; they have a range of options to select from in their daily lives, and to utilize when constructing their self-images. Bedroom culture is a good example of this; i.e. young women creating independent areas for recreation in the domestic realm (Kostash, 1987, McRobbie and Garber, 1997).

Negotiation is a recurring concept in this study. We find that negotiation techniques vary greatly among participants. Mediation, negotiation, deviation, creative resistance, subtle negotiation and deceit are all employed as tactics for young women seeking to construct their self-images, to assert their independence, or to simply do as they wish.

Tactics, as explained by de Certeau, differ markedly from strategy. An agent employing a strategy must be able to assume control over a place, and use it to formulate relations with exterior entities. A strategizing entity has at its disposal, a foundation from which it can assert control and plan its moves.

Consumer tactics are limited: “it has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence.” Since, unlike strategy, it has no circumscribed, proper space in which to act, a tactic must be reliant on time. It must be opportunistic and

recognise appropriate conditions, as soon as they arise, to expand and affirm the self.

Whatever tactics gain, they cannot be retained indefinitely. Rather, an agent utilizing tactics must be ever vigilant for opportunities. The weak, at these opportune moments, “are able to combine heterogenous elements” and use them to their own advantage.

An example of this in the present study is bedroom culture. Here, the young Saudi woman takes the opportunity (the absence of parental supervision), to contact people via the internet, meet friends in private, smoke, listen to loud music, dance; all being behaviours that she would not normally be able to exhibit in her parents’ presence.

Many everyday practices can be viewed as being tactical. In the context of this study, the form of hijab worn, interaction with parents, attendance at educational institutions and behaviour within them, going out with friends, and recreational activities in the bedroom, are all tactical: They are ways for the underpowered to score victories using clever tricks (and) knowing how to get away with things.

An example of tactics in hijab wearing can be found in some participants using the veil to conceal their identity from acquaintances in public, thus keeping their families ignorant of their true whereabouts. When going out, some young women use clever tricks and deceit, going out with friends when they are believed to be at university. When interacting with their parents, the young women may utilize tactics, using their mothers as intermediaries to mellow their fathers.

This study's stance on strategy and tactics is influenced by de Certeau's discussion of these concepts. Applying his views, patriarchal authority is vested in dominant males laying down "strategy", and determining the playing field. It is a slanted field, as fathers routinely choose where their daughters live, who they can interact with, what they can study and even when they can go out (de Certeau, 1984).

Young women, therefore, as described in this study, use tactics to scale this incline. As de Certeau puts it, tactics "can only use, manipulate and divert these spaces" (1984:30) which are enforced by the parents. Young women pick the moments to use tactics use wisely. They are careful to avoid all-out confrontation with parents, educational institutions and society as a whole, recognizing these agents as much more powerful than themselves. Thus, they are pragmatic tacticians who take chances when they know that they can disguise their little transgressions.

3.5.3 The Reality of Arab Muslim Women's Lives

Arab Muslim women have been participating in a general discussion about social change for hundreds of years. The two genders have debated, especially in Islamist-dominated countries like Saudi Arabia, the use of Islamic scripture as a framework and, often, as a weapon.

Some, including Saudi Arabia's government-backed *Ulama*, have sought to legitimize their traditionalist conservative position on women's role by referring to scriptures. Liberals, on the other hand, have also backed up their revisionist interpretations of faith with passages from Islamic scripture, especially regarding women's empowerment (Ahmed, 1992).

According to Leila Ahmed (1992), Islamic feminism arose concurrently with the struggle against colonization. Thus, it was swept aside, as were the women's issues it raised, by nationalistic and militaristic fervour.

The confrontation between local, colonized cultures and the alien cultures of the colonizers generated a crossroads in the minds of many 20th century Arab social and political elites; they either clung stubbornly to every facet of local culture, or replaced it, in its entirety, with secular Western models.

Ahmed suggests that, contrary to what this standoff indicates, there was and still persists an indigenous tradition of feminism in the Arabian Peninsula. This "organic" Arab feminism enables local women to identify and challenge patriarchal oppression.

In this study, while we find that most of the participants do desire equal rights to men, they wish to achieve these through the vehicle of religion, and by negotiating the current cultural framework.

In conservative Islamist literature, considerable emphasis is placed on the Muslim woman's traditional role in protecting the stability of the family and transmitting knowledge to the new generations. However, Arab Muslim women are in the unenviable position of having to choose between personal rights and social respect. This is because conservatives view the Muslim woman as the standard-bearer of traditional Islamic culture. When Muslim women adhere to cultural and societal expectations they face restriction. If they do not, they lose respect because they are viewed as un-Islamic. Thus the reality of the Arab Muslim woman, especially the Saudi, revolves around her role in the family (Altorki, 1986). Thus, the role that the Islamic framework plays in the woman's daily life is considerable. Islam constitutes part of the practicing Muslim

woman's journey to finding her "self" and her identity, as Lila Ahmed (1992) put it.

While women view Islam as part of their identity, Islam has largely grown to view women as a symbol of its values in the face of Western secular thought. Lila Ahmed opined that traditionalist, conservative Islam is in retreat, as it seeks to defend its values in the face of the west. Naturally, the defence of traditional values impacts on the reality of those that symbolize them: Muslim women. Thus, women are an integral part of this struggle against western cultural and economic domination (Ahmed, 1992).

This struggle influences the reality of Arab Muslim, including Saudi, women's lives in multiple ways. The Saudi woman's movements are restricted by the ban on women's driving and the absence of adequate public transportation. Women's position in the family is undermined by a *Sharia*-based, conservative family law, which upholds the man's unilateral right to divorce, gives husbands authority over their wives and fails to punish violence against women forcibly. In the workplace, opportunities for women's employment do exist, but are limited. Indeed, women are restricted in fields such as engineering, to options that are deemed "feminine" enough by the religious authorities.

As part of the reality of this struggle, Kandiyoti (1996) points out that Islam has become so entrenched a marker of cultural authenticity that emancipation has to be pursued, at least partially, through Islam. To elaborate, feminists are forced to argue that Islamic laws are not oppressive, or that oppressive elements of traditionalist understandings of Islam themselves un-Islamic. To pursue the first avenue of argument, feminists seek to paint the Muslim woman as honoured and truly emancipated, and position her in contrast with

the allegedly sexually exploited western woman. Traditionalist practices, when seen through this lens, become emancipatory rather than oppressive. As to the discourse that argues that oppression is not down to Islamic laws, it paints traditionalist Islamic attitudes toward women as a departure from the “true soul” of Islam, which demands a search for equality and emancipation.

In Saudi traditional culture, there is a preference for the first argument: the claim that traditionalist conservative practices are in fact positive. This is exemplified in the prevalent social notion, echoed by some participants in this current study, that the Muslim woman is a “protected, precious pearl”. This view idolizes the isolated, patronized woman and denotes her isolation as care and protection. This significantly impacts on the reality of the young Saudi woman, as well as Muslim women of other countries’, daily lives (Kandiyoti, 1996).

The reality of the Muslim woman is strongly affected by state policy. Initially, reforms carried out by military strongmen in many Arab countries halfway through the twentieth century promised greater gender equality. Social liberals sought to reinterpret Islamic scripture to make space for a more progressive, socially liberal version of the faith, thus deferring to the second view, that restriction of women is not part of Islam’s message. In this, their efforts were similar to contemporary reform-minded feminists like Mir-Hosseini (Haddad and Esposito, 1998).

The rise of Islamism in the latter half of the century, and the constitutional concessions provided to women still affect the reality of Muslim women in the region today. While Saudi Arabia, where my study is focused, does not have a constitution, neighbouring Muslim countries, all less fundamentalist, do

possess constitutions. The constitutions of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries do not seek to empower women. Rather, they prescribe to women the roles of the mother and housewife, whose main duty is to look after the family. The constitution of Egypt, while it guarantees women's participation in public life, restricts her participation to activities that do not subvert the Islamic *Sharia*. Since the constitution does not specify which understanding of the *Sharia* (e.g. Al-Azhar's, the Muslim Brotherhood's, the liberal political parties') will be enforced, the clause renders Muslim women's participation in public life dependent on the party in power (Ibid).

As Nadia Hijab (1988) stated, women have come to indicate a nation's modernity; thus, by using the Saudi woman as a lens we can examine her nation's modernity. In this context, the woman is seen to adopt a role of agency that is constrained and defined by society's traditional values. Subtle resistance may occur, but women's roles are generally limited by traditionalism. If we are to look at Saudi women, as mentioned before, as a mirror of their society, we will find Saudi society is dominated by traditionalist conservative discourse. To illustrate this point, the aforementioned Suzanne Al-Mashhadi, who had written an article critiquing gender relations in the Kingdom, claimed that the majority of opposition came from women who opposed her "liberal" outlook. The avowed conservatism of many women who had sent Al-Mashhadi hate mail as recently as 2006 reflects a primarily traditionalist society.

The criticisms levelled at Al-Mashhadi link to El-Saadawi's aforementioned view that the battle must be won in the minds of women first; the ground that traditionalist discourses permeated. In this, El-Saadawi agrees with Al-

Mashhadi: that many women oppose their own liberation and those that seek to establish their equality (Lacey, 2009).

3.5.4 The Concepts of Obedience and Rebellion

Linguistically, obedience and rebellion are antonyms. The first implies heeding authority, whilst the latter indicates rejecting authority and opposition to it (Neama, 2000; Badawi, 1993).

Saudi society, ascribes great value to obedience to cultural norms. This is especially true for Saudi women, who are traditionally considered bearers of the family's honour. This expectation of perfection leads Saudi society to impose many restrictions on its women.

Thus, the concept of obedience for the young Saudi women, as studied in this research encompasses much restriction. An example is restricted movement, by which I mean that women cannot go out of the house without the express approval of *wali-ul-amr*. By extension, a woman cannot receive guests in her house, including her family, without the approval of her husband. Fuqaha across the jurisprudence spectrum, has long held that restrictions such as these are intended to protect and honour women. The widespread use of honour and protection as justification for restrictions imposed on women plays a key role in entrenching patriarchal power in Saudi society (Al-Hibri, 1997).

In Arab countries, national family codes traditionally set limits for obedience. For example, women are usually allowed to go out without their husband's approval to visit family. Some codes allow women to go out for loosely-defined "legitimate work". The Jordanian code states that "domestic violence and maltreatment" are legitimate reasons for women to leave the conjugal home.

The Kuwaiti family code is even more relaxed about letting women leave the conjugal home. Women, the code states, are not to be treated as “objects of sexual enjoyment”. Marriage is predicated on love and cordiality, and the Kuwaiti code clarifies that this is what is expected from both spouses in the conjugal home.

The concept of obedience in Arab societies is built on the concept of *Qiwama*. Bennani (1992), a Moroccan law professor, argued that Muslim societies utilized *qiwama* as a tool to turn families into hierarchal structures led by husbands. She added that this hierarchy contradicts the more egalitarian positions espoused by the Quran.

In Arab societies, males are traditionally considered to be entitled to obedience from their wives and daughters. Disobeying the *wali-ul-amr* is socially unacceptable and rebellious. Therefore, the present study’s exploration of the concept of obedience involves exploration of hierarchal patriarchal constructs. I argue that absolute obedience to the *wali-ul-amr* in the family contradicts Islamic monotheism, which states that absolute obedience is owed to God alone, and that obedience to other persons must always be specific, narrow and limited.

Indeed, obedience to other humans is limited in religion, predicated on such prerequisites as consultation and consent. These requirements are immutable, both in public and private. Many participants in this study argued this point; asserting that they are entitled to a role in any debate and participation in decision-making regarding the important matters of their lives.

The nature of obedience, in religion, involves self-control and self-responsibility. While advice and consultation are promoted, strict hierarchy, oppression and violence are denounced.

The concept of obedience is symmetrical. Just as the *wali-ul-amr* expects his family to support and heed his decisions, he is compelled to respect his family's views and serve them. Contrary to these interpretations of obedience, patriarchal attitudes prevail in Saudi society. While men would never entertain the notion of requesting their wives' permission to do something, women must obey their husbands in all matters. I argue that this has long been the case in the name of Islam, drawing on religious concepts of obedience, despite the fact that, as we discussed earlier, there is no authentic religious basis for this treatment.

Rebellion, like obedience, is explored in the Quran. The Quranic story of Iblis (Satan), who refused God's command to prostrate himself before Adam because he believed the latter to be inferior, is a cautionary tale against arrogance, vanity and belief in the inferiority of others. Muslims who are arrogant and view others as inferior for racial, gender-related, economic or other reasons, therefore "engage in Satanic logic" (Al-Hibri, 1997: 26).

In the present study, many participants view rebellion as a nuanced concept. Some forms of rebellion, such as going out without permission, are viewed as lighter than others, such as alcohol or drug use. The levels of rebellion vary according to numerous considerations, such as the level of parental control exerted on a young woman, and the kind of friends she has. Rebellion may be total and open at all levels, or restricted and channelled toward addressing certain issues. The latter form of rebellion is explored extensively by participants.

The majority of the rebellion discussed here takes subtle forms. It may involve young women deceiving parents about their whereabouts or their actions. Elsewhere, rebellion may be averted, and replaced with negotiation. Here, young women would push for more rights, commonly using an intermediary such as their mother. These are all tactics that young women utilise, opportunely, because they are the weakest link in the hierarchal structure of the family.

3.5.5 Resistance through ideology

As mentioned previously, Saudi conservative culture deals with women as both biological and social individuals. Consequently, it enacts a lot of pressure and monitoring to control and protect the woman, who is viewed as “biologically weak”. Therefore, resistance to these pressures are to be expected; as Foucault stated “where there is power, there is resistance.” (Foucault, 1978:95–96).

In any society, heavy demands are placed upon the individual. These include cultural roles, associated with gender roles and/or age and seniority. Social status usually plays a part as a result of past traditions and as a variable in the juggling of cultural roles. Cultural roles assigned to women have generally followed conservative life patterns; they are expected to be obedient, dependent, compliant and moral. Such restraints, practiced by the forces affecting the young woman, discourage females from pursuing deviant (criminal or otherwise) lifestyles (Smith, 1995).

The definition of *Qiwama* is in no way straightforward. It is, in its contemporary incarnation, linked to traditional gender roles– wherein the male is the breadwinner and the woman the homemaker. In a religious sense, the word itself has been mentioned only once in the Quran, where it stipulated that “men

are maintainers of women with what Allah has given to some of them more than others and with what they spent of their money". The word commonly translated as maintainers is *Qawwamun* which implies support, maintenance and aid. The Islamic *Fiqh* of all four major schools of *Sunni* Islam (the sect dominant in Saudi Arabia and much of the Islamic world) stipulates that it is *takleef* (a duty of responsibility), not a *tashreef* (a gift intended to honour or elevate a social group). *Qiwama* was intended to be an aid to women, but it has become a large obstruction for them (Bashatah, 2011). They are subjected to great subjugation as part of the *Salafi* understanding of *Sharia* family law. "This notion has been expanded to limit women's movement within and outside Saudi Arabia; within the country, women are banned from driving, and they are also not allowed to travel without the permission of their male guardian, and in the company of a *mahram*" (Mtango, 2004).

Part of the problem with *Qiwama* rests in its one-sidedness. The male perceives himself as leader of the Islamic family because he has control of the finances. Ignoring the inherent problems implied by such materialism, the question of role-reversal naturally arises. Such a situation was widely observed in Malay peasant society, as discussed by Ong (1987). Here, while the women of the family actively worked and earned a large portion of the family's combined income, the men of the family still believed that their orders should be heeded and that the women of the family must do everything possible to avoid displeasing them. Naturally, the same question of role-reversal now applies to the working Saudi woman.

The working women of peasant Malaysia actively contributed their monthly wage packet to the family finances. They said this helped them gain slightly more influence within the family, but not outright independence (Ibid). Their

working status also gave them increased influence when choosing their spouses. Almost all factory women chose their future husbands directly, either through correspondence or by accepting a suitors' proposals. The relative freedom and control over their lives helped change the focus of their existence from their menfolk to their own persons instead (Ibid). The need for autonomy, however limited, is also exhibited by some of the young Saudi women in this study and, for the same reason, the need to remove themselves from an orbital relationship with men.

Altorki defines resistance through ideology as presenting dominant cultural practices as a vehicle to advance personal interests. In the case of Jeddah, traditional ideology includes male dominance, women's follower status and seclusion, children's obedience to parents, attention to kinship circles, veiling for women, the attribution of rationality to men and emotionalism to women, pre-arranged marriage and male-favouring property inheritance. (Altorki, 1986). Any attempt at cultural resistance would thus have to employ this ideology as a vehicle for advancement, or deceive the system through unconventional application of norms. Thus this will be an area to investigate during the interview process; that is, the use of deception and subtlety as a tool for resistance.

Altorki commented on a pattern in *Jeddawi* society related to resistance through culturally accepted norms. In a society where women are thought to reach their intellectual peak at seven years of age, women of the younger generation argued that their early-acquired rationality entitled them to greater participation in decision-making, their intellect being on a par with men in many things until men reach the age of forty (when they are traditionally thought to become far superior in intellect to women) (Altorki, 1986).

Brooks (1995) commented on ideology and negotiation in wider Arabian society. Through their negotiation of tribal ideology, which has traditionally been strong in the peninsula, Emirati women earned the right to serve in the UAE army as reserve troops during the Gulf War. Despite this being met with horror by many members of society, their competence, achieved in less than sixty days of training, drew praise from many American trainers. Brooks, however, does comment on the irony of women not fighting to earn the right to live equally to men, but for the right to kill and be killed.

Similarly to the female soldiers of the UAE, Saudi youths living in confined conditions (especially young women), have been prompted to channel their capacities for resistance in an unconventional way. Through an unlikely combination of ritual resistance and resistance through ideology, a new construct of “bedroom culture” has emerged (Al-Otaibi, 2008). As in other parts of the world, it is a characteristic part of female adolescent culture (McRobbie and Garber, 1976). McRobbie argues that the development of bedroom culture arose from a desire for autonomy and isolation: the bedroom is an enclave for the girls’ use only, away from the family’s control. For British girls taking part in McRobbie’s study, the use of the bedroom as a retreat did not represent open hostility to mainstream culture, rather a way of gently undermining it (Ibid). In my view as a social researcher, the constraints placed upon young women in Saudi Arabia have seen the bedroom become part of ritual resistance, as will be shown in the fieldwork analysis later on.

3.5.6 Deceit as a Form of Resistance

What may fall under the category of ideology is resistance through deceit, or as Scott puts it: “stretching the truth”. For Scott, deceit is a strong weapon if

employed correctly, but it can also hamper one's advancement if employed in a cruel or offensive way. In Scott's work, *Weapons of the Weak*, he describes the instances in which "the strong find tolerance and the weak find indifference". The strong, according to Scott, seek to assert their authority subtly, while the weak silently but diligently work to undermine the authority of the strong (Scott, 1985). This can be seen as occurring widely in Saudi Arabia, in the form of resistance in examples that will be explored shortly.

In their study of surveillance in malls in Saudi Arabia, Alhadar and McCahill (2011) exposed an intriguing phenomenon linking deceit with resistance. Surveillance carried out in a Riyadh shopping centre, Crescent Mall, centres on preventing flirting and courtship; however, the monitored group exhibited some inventive and deceitful methods of resistance. The women were observed giving single men their phone numbers on pieces of paper (Alhadar and McCahill, 2011), and the single men (banned from entry to the mall) would use "piggy-backing" techniques to get in the mall, paying women to pose as family members (Ibid). While any "suspicious" behaviour on the part of the males attracted the unwanted attention of the camera operators, the actions of females largely remained unnoticed. Indeed, in Crescent Mall 95% of surveillance is directed at males (Alhadar and McCahill, 2011). By teaming up with the religious police, the operators were able to crack down swiftly on any deviant males, but due to the complex *Salafi* doctrine governing the interactions of unrelated men and women, women presented a much larger dilemma to the operators and the *mutaween* (Ibid). The efforts of these young men and women appeared to be focused primarily on "getting by in the face of monitoring", rather than getting rid of the nuisance altogether (Ibid; Haggerty and Ericson, 2006). Thus, here we see deceit being employed as a weapon of the weak; principally, as a method of resistance.

Other examples drawn from the heart of the Saudi Islamic scholarship scene paint a different picture. In these, we see deceit actively employed as a weapon of the strong, proving Scott's warning that deceit is a two-way road. In circulation in Saudi mosques (and particularly in women's prayer areas) are anonymous booklets urging women not to depart from their "kingdoms" (i.e. their homes) and not to desert their "thrones" (i.e. status as housewives). The exaggerated vocabulary helps transform the subjugated housewife into a "queen", exemplifying the deceptive propaganda used by the strong to hold the weak at bay (Abu Abdul-Rahman, 2012).

3.5.7 Cultural Criminology

As a result of the previous exploration of social restrictions on young women, a section on cultural criminology is called to assist in the explanation of young Saudi women's possible rebellion.

Cultural criminology places crime and control in the context of culture (Hayward and Young, 2004). It focuses on the role of crime and its controlling agencies as cultural products and creative constructions. As such, it must be contextualised by the meanings it bears. Moreover, cultural criminology seeks to shed light on the interplay between crime and control. It studies the effect that this interplay has on the creation of rules, the breaking of rules or the continual shift between ethical initiatives, ethical innovations and violations.

Cultural criminologists should not, argues Ferrell (1999), concern themselves with subcultures, criminal cases, or the indirect interpretations of crime, but rather they should concern themselves most with the confusion and convergence of these categories related to crime in everyday life and in this 'hall of mirrors' of cultural criminology. The essence of cultural criminology lies

in its continuous attempt to understand the world through the screen, which displays and documents the street and vice versa, where the dividing line between the real and virtual seems deeply entrenched and irreversible.

Now, according to Bourdieu (1977), rebellion is a reaction to domineering social factors that restricts the individual's life, and may manifest itself in creative resistance.

As a sociologist interested in culture, I can understand the young Saudi woman's impetus to rebel. She might view her life as boring, defined by household chores, the absence of public entertainment amenities, repetitive school curricula, and intense parental monitoring. Thus, she may 'understandably rebel' and refuse to conform to parental or social demands by way of change and self-determination. These rebellious acts are rarely severe enough to be considered deviant.

Control is regarded by Ferrell (2004) as a main catalyst of rebellion. In Saudi Arabia, women often find themselves subjected to unyielding control within the family, the educational establishment, at work, and even in public places. Strict gender segregation is enforced, female schools are locked during the school day, their windows closed by steel bars, and women often find themselves subordinates to men, both in the family and in the workplace (Lacey, 2009). Amnesty international reports that "the lives of women in Saudi Arabia are regulated by a web of mores, rules and *fatwa*. It is the will of the state that controls every aspect of women's daily life, from their right of movement to the right of redress for violent assault" (Desphande, 2001:198). Strict *Wahhabi* family laws forbid women from going out without the explicit permission of the male guardian and the accompaniment of a *mahram*, further restricting

women's freedom. This tight control and subjugation still exists years after King Abdullah promised that "the woman is a first class citizen (who)... has rights... duties...and responsibility" (Ibid).

The young women's behaviour, when subtly or overtly flaunting dress code or other unspoken social contracts, can be framed in terms of Matza's "Becoming Deviant" (2010). Matza speaks of an "invitational edge", which he defines as a borderline, grey area between being outside or inside an active portion of a rebellious activity.

I argue that, when a young Saudi woman challenges social norms, she is in fact enjoying the titillating sensation of being on the "invitation edge". This concept was previously explored by Lofland (1969), who stated that an individual "playing with the invitational edge of defiance" experiences "adventure... excitement and enchantment" (Lofland, 1969: 104). Humans, he argues, tend to label threatening, unpredictable and possibly overwhelming social conditions as exciting challenges (Ibid).

Additionally, the young Saudi women's actions, when standing on the aforementioned invitational edge of deviance, can be seen through the lens of Lyng's (1990) work on "edge-work sensations". These young women seek thrills, possibly alongside self-affirmation, through taking on so-called exciting challenges.

Thus, while society, parents and school administrators might see some of the study's participants' behaviour as deviant, I interpret it as a form of challenge and recreation; the entertainment being supplied by the inherent sense of fear and anxiety. These "edge-work sensations", as Lyng termed them, provide a

small sense of self-affirmation, identity and control over one's own life, a kick of independence.

A rebellious act on the part of some young Saudi women, as published by Al-Watan (3504, 2010) is dressing and behaving in a traditionally masculine manner. These young women, labelled as "boygirls", suffer from feelings of anger and frustration, typically due to the lack of a warm and affectionate family atmosphere, often with continuous parental abuse and/or violence as well as oppressive male domination over their affairs. They claim that these factors have contributed to them choosing to dress in a masculine way and behave "boyishly", to experience feelings of power, self-dependence and control. This supports Ferrell's aforementioned argument that rebellion may be sparked by control. Yet they are careful to do so away from home, wary of parental retribution. The choice is chiefly emotional, and is apparently due to their need to experience some sense of emancipation and power – a kind of role reversal – where they are in control and others can do nothing to prevent it.

The actions of these young Saudi women can also be linked to Stephen Lyng's (1990) study on dangerous actions committed by individuals (dangerous driving, motorcycle racing), where he talked about pushing oneself to the edge of danger and excitement as a kind of metaphor for reality; "losing control to gain control" (Hayward, 2002: 6). Katz (1988) explained how individuals transform themselves from non-criminals to perpetrators of crime in a moment. He developed a conceptual construction of the sensual and creative appeals of crime, in which he stressed that deviation gives the perpetrator a sense of self-excellence. Katz also noted, through studying criminal activities amongst teenagers such as vandalism, theft and fighting, that these acts do

not bring material benefits, but rather are pleasure-seeking efforts committed by over-excited individuals. Here, Ferrell's (2004) previously discussed perspective on boredom is rather significant. His ideas exhibit parallels with Lyng's (1990), in that the perpetration of dangerous acts is a way of losing control to gain control, and a way of showing resistance to the dominant forces in society (Ferrell, 2004).

According to Katz, therefore, it can be argued that these Saudi young women, through their dancing parties, for example, exercise personal freedom and experience pleasure through rebellion. Therefore, their socially outrageous actions are both a response to the aforementioned male control and a way of achieving satisfaction through, to use Hayward's wording, "losing control to gain control" (in Presdee, 1994: 182). The motive for deviation is not mundane, but rather rebellion against what is mundane. Rules are broken simply because of their existence; because they are a challenge to individual independence (Morrison, 1995). The gradual increase of authority, as described by Presdee (2000: 159), rarely passes without notice, and is more likely to provoke aggression rather than compliance. This links with the previous discussion of the notions of preserving stability currently prevalent in Islamic legal debates. In this context also, the increase in control does not lead to stability, but rather sets the scene for a confrontation.

To put Katz's theories in a broader theoretical context, O'Malley and Mugford (1994) attempted to explain them. In an article titled "Crime, Excitement and Modernity", they clarified Katz's notions of pursuing excitement in these modern times. They highlighted the subject in a process of transition, and stressed how the increasing need for moral trespass is the result of social situations so immense in scale and magnitude that the individual feels the

need for a more drastic response than mere emotionality. Deviation, for an individual in such a state, is easily justifiable and desirable.

Within the context of Saudi society, such dramatic retaliation can almost always be traced back to the aforementioned male overbearance: i.e. what Muqrin (2008) asserted to be the reason for much of the resistance of Saudi girls. It is easy to see how, having been elevated to the position of natural guardian, man can become a tyrant, seeking to enforce his command upon his daughter, wife, sister and even mother. It is such guardianship that ensures that the Saudi women adhere to their uncompromising dress code, one allegedly designed to “protect” them. It also serves to protect the women from themselves, allegedly purging them of any earthly desires that may deprive them of heavenly rewards. Saudi women experience the unjustness of being subjected to male-biased interpretations of the Quran’s and the Sunna’s texts; interpretations that seek to cement male superiority as an unalterable requirement of Sunni Islam (Muqrin, 2008).

O’Malley and Mugford (1994: 199) offered an explanation of the concept of the modern self in its relation to excitement through three avenues: alienation, consumer perspective and leisure time. They form the characteristics that create situations in which violations largely appear. By applying this to Saudi society, especially in the city of Jeddah with its multicultural nature, we find that the Saudi girl lives in a constraining patriarchal society. Dominated by men who run all her affairs and determine what she can and cannot do, a sense of unfairness may lead the girl toward the attractions of self-determination and fulfilment promised by rebelliousness. Where the culture of the first world permeates the third world and carries the concepts of equality, meritocracy and civil freedoms in complete contrast with Eastern traditionalism,

irregularities are bound to emerge. These manifest themselves in tension between heavy-handed idealism imposed by religion, law, customs and traditions on one side, and non-compromising realism on the other, which opposes such idealism and harbours the socially-reforming notions of freedom and gender-equality (Martin, 2009). Such a clash of ideals may bring with it much upheaval and chaos, as suggested by Young.

For Katz, offending behaviour is fuelled by a need to escape the vulgarity of everyday life (Hayward, 2002: 4). From this perspective, one can argue that the rebellious acts committed by young Saudi women are merely emotional responses against what they perceive to be unjust practices directed against them, consistent with Becker's description of deviation as a wider term than mere crime, often describing even perfectly legal acts (Becker, 1963).

In his book "Soft City", Jonathan Raban (1988) illustrated the difference between two imagined cities, one being the titular "soft city", in which meanings of creativity are indulged, dreams are given free reign and a real encyclopaedia of subcultures as well as different lifestyles is formed. The second city, on the other hand, has a conventional, vulgar form; a space for "consumption, planning and production... an iron cage in which humanity is refined and directed" (Hayward and Young, 2004). Michel de Certeau (1984) offered a similar narrative of city life. He depicted a city of planning, production and consumption; a rigid structure in which human ability is channelled. He presented what he considers the polar opposite of such rigidity; the "commercial city", a city that is based on interaction at street level, where various personal experiences and lifestyles intersect, away from the authority of plans and maps. They are ideas parallel to Bakhtin's (1984) perception of "the second life of the people" which is, as Presdee explained it, the only arena

where one can express one's feelings towards life. Here one can speak the truth, paying no heed to abject rationality and ignoring the objections of logic against emancipated thought. Only the living framework of city life is considered, while physical divisions and demographic splits are relegated to having less importance (Presdee, 2000:8). To society, crime is merely an act of rule-breaking (Hayward and Young, 2004), and deviation, regardless of whether it is criminal or not, is a direct threat to its existence.

Lacey (2009) spoke of this phenomenon of "social crime" in Saudi Arabia with great amusement. He stated that the men who criticise the Saudis' non-adherence to Saudi values abroad (Hijab, gender segregation etc.) are the same ones who spend their summers in Europe with no adherence to Saudi norms whatsoever. Being viewed unfavourably by peers may be even more damning than being punished by the legal system. Thus the people living in the rigid city have to be wary of social opposition of any type.

In this context, the deviant act is not just a marginal concept, but rather subtle underworld flowing beneath the surface of an outwardly-projected normalcy. It is a world in which every instinct of the individual is entertained, every whim is fulfilled, where rules are bent and life is lived. It is a world that arises when oppressive laws are imposed to regulate citizens' lives. Presdee referred to such a life as "a second life that is lived in holes and cracks in the formal society structures. It criminalises and transforms he who was not a criminal in the past into a criminal" (Presdee, 2000: 9).

I would describe the conditions of the young Saudi women, using Raban (1998) and de Certeau's (1984) terminology, as living in an 'iron cage' of monitoring, protection and cultural restrictions. Therefore, the young Saudi woman looks

for another reality that affords her greater freedom of choice, change and entertainment. She lives in the cracks of dominant culture, and forms a subtle underworld in her private space with her friends, especially in bedrooms.

Albert Cohen (1955) identified the delinquent juvenile as one who spends a lot of his time at school causing trouble and chaos, and responds to the teacher with ridicule and even spite (Cohen, 1955:28). Some high school young Saudi women's behaviour can be described in a similar way; they resent the teacher whom they view as unqualified due to her lack of professionalism, are frustrated by the seven-hour (and in private schools, nine-hour) school days and the endless (and often nonsensical, they say) curricula. Added to the burden of household duties and chores, they feel they have a tiresome existence. The girls feel pushed to evade classes by any means possible, or to obstruct them through disruption or unruliness

In the contemporary world, crime and violation may be explained as attempts to achieve emancipation, immediate self-gratification and reaffirmation of identity and existence.

It is possible to list bedroom girl-parties in Saudi Arabia under this latter category: they are an immediate response to the longing for freedom and self-determination, made by girls who seek to escape the shackles of social and parental control. Dancing, smoking hookah, exchanging obscene jokes and talking about boys, all unthinkable practices to a conservative society, are merely an act of rebellion against male repression. These girls were brought up conservatively and are still limited in public life and in the home. Their families impose more control over them than they do over their brothers who are given greater freedom and encouraged to be aggressive, ambitious and outgoing.

Such a divide in expectations is deeply embedded in many contemporary societies, and paramount to the upbringing of children in Arab societies (McRobbie 2000).

Jock Young argued that, in advanced industrial societies, the principles of merit and the people's sense of social identity play a major role in determining life choices. When we look at late modernity in terms of merit and social identity, we find a high degree of uncertainty, and even obscurity, in relation to the distribution of rewards (Young, 2003). Labour markets have collapsed and the service industry has emerged with its various offerings. Investment in the real estate and financial markets has also increased and the distribution of rewards is predicated on the basis of whim rather than merit. A sense of injustice has thus developed, and this negativity allows prejudice to emerge and stereotype to take the helm. Thus, the process of change can give rise to violence. It is a mobilisation of aggression that involves a sense of economic injustice and the feeling of insecurity, which allows the individual to blame others for his misfortune and form perceptions of "the other" as evil or inhumane (Ibid).

Culturally, globalization affects the traditions and cultures of the Third World (Baqader, 2005), undermining facts that were previously taken for granted and destabilising identity, especially amongst women and economically and politically marginalised people, who feel ignored socially and physically. This is the case for the Saudi woman, who lives in a cultural world that excludes her from public life and stresses the importance of keeping her at home in the roles of mother and wife as an acceptable pattern of the 'Saudi social identity' (Khater, 2001: 102–103). The notion of control is glaringly evident here, for the Saudi woman is forced to choose from a limited set of options, her

movements are restricted and her actions scrutinised so as to keep her under active, watchful control.

Debates on globalization often reference two mutually antagonistic viewpoints. The first critiques what is described as the emergence of a “global mass culture”, an internationalist construct dissolving national identities and local cultures, consolidating culture into a single global mould. The other holds fast to the belief that the global media and its products are most often adopted by, and adapted to, local cultural frameworks.

In the present study, I work from the viewpoint that globalization’s effect on the lives of young Saudi women is unrelated to concepts of cultural fixity in relation to global culture, as it rather an indicator of the rise of a hybrid culture.

In this climate, young women can find themselves socially compelled to accept the hijab, the ban on driving and the company or consent of a *mahram* when traveling. They do, however, possess some degree of agency when it comes to choosing the form of the hijab, the field of study and/or work they choose to go into, and their choice of a friendship group. Additionally, some use some vehicles of globalization (such as the internet) for communication and entertainment purposes. In light of this, I view these young women as active negotiators, rather than passive pawns in the face of cultural globalization.

Nowadays, traditional ties are facing a steady decline, whilst individual-driven consumption patterns grow steadily (Warde, 1994: 881). A byproduct of this change has been that identity has become more and more a subject of choice. Truthfully, the “de-traditionalization”, that many societies have undergone, or

are undergoing, has meant that monitoring individual actions by other members of society has been, largely, phased out in favour of self-monitoring, or reflexivity (Lash, 1993: 5). Indeed, individuals must fashion their identity from a range of options (Giddens, 1991).

If we refer to other interpretations of cultural criminology, the Saudi girl's deviant practices appear to be a mechanism through which she tries to control her own destiny in order to highlight her identity (Hayward, 2004: 157). From the aforementioned, we note that there is an implicit challenge of the standard symbols related to the emotional behaviour rules of the girl. We must understand the emotional responses of girls in Saudi society as a form of resistance against patriarchal oppression, and that they are not abnormal responses, but rather rational responses to life and the need to express desires. As described by Butler (1999) in "Gender Trouble", parody is a highly efficient means of undermining feminine repression. Women master this kind of drama as a result of learning it. It is shaped repeatedly within the culture through training and through positive education. De Beauvoir also pointed out that one is not born a woman but becomes one (Naffine, 1997: 114), or is taught how to become one. The emotionality and sentimentality of women is seen as a means of social communication and expression, and as a positive tool used by girls in Saudi Arabia to deal with their experiences of social injustice (Muncie, Mclaughlin and Hughes, 2003).

According to Sato (1991), moral confusion and social anomaly, exacerbated by the growth of wealth, contributed to the spread of previously atypical youth groups in Japan. These youth groups flaunt their deviant lifestyles, and, according to Sato, have encountered excessive public outrage.

Sato claims that these “Kamikaze bikers provide a rich ethnographic account of these delinquents, who are the ‘other’ young people of Japan” (Creighton: 1993: 887). They are “others”, because, as Sato puts it, the media usually ignores them. They are not compelled to attend school, and, even when they do attend, they do not prepare for college entrance exams nor possess lofty career ambitions. Thus, these groups are composed largely of high school dropouts or mediocre graduates. They work “low-paying, low-status jobs” (Ibid).

The members of these groups walked the streets in pursuit of excitement, with Sato terming them “the Boso-zoku”, who “wear uniforms named after Kamikaze pilots.” Their pursuit of excitement led them to rebellious behaviour, such as speeding “through the city at breakneck speeds, disturbing the peace, defying police and terrifying bystanders” (Ibid).

Despite the panic centred around the Boso-zoku, Sato explained that these youths were usually embroiled in only low-level crime, and their reckless behaviour was normally a threat only to their own wellbeing. The Boso-zuki, through losing control and speeding in tough driving conditions, tested their skills and released themselves from the shackles of boredom. This allowed them to “lose self and merge with a seemingly powerful collective identity” (Ibid). They engage in reckless behaviour with full awareness of the potential consequences of their actions, and did so in order to lose awareness of normalcy and their inhibition of personal risk. As Sato poignantly puts it, they erected their own drama, riddled with symbolism, where they were the ones that “write, direct, and star in” (Ibid).

According to Sato's perspective, we can describe the behaviour of some Saudi girls, including nudity, and driving recklessly (and illegally) on the shores of Jeddah, as living in a state of "loss of self-awareness". There is a feeling that the relations of means and ends has become very simple, and that the girls' rebellious behaviour is a means of evading the vulgarity of the everyday.

3.5.8 Studies into Female Deviation in Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, research into juvenile deviation has focused almost exclusively on criminal deviation. These studies have focused mainly on juvenile delinquency in children aged eighteen years or less who have been placed in correctional facilities.

A study by Al-Qarni (2003), entitled "The Impact of the Example's Deviation on Deviant Behaviour among Female Adolescents", examined the impact of the behavioural patterns of fathers, mothers, and teachers on the behaviour of three hundred and twenty female students from intermediate schools in the city of Mecca. The researcher studied their behaviour in terms of religious commitment, bearing responsibility, moral integrity, and the measure of aggressiveness. Al-Qarni concluded that, if the example before the adolescents was a deviant individual, then there will be an increased likelihood of her being deviant herself (Al-Qarni, 2003: 89-92).

In the context of internet use, Al-Hajiri (2003) conducted a study entitled "The Internet and its Impact on Saudi Youth"; it involved fifty young men and fifty young women and studied the impact of the internet on Saudi youths. According to Al-Hajiri, the results reveal demand for pornographic subjects on the internet, was the most important and most dangerous use of the internet by Saudi youth. It also revealed that 55% of young people use pseudonyms

when chatting online, and that for the most part, conversations were romantic. It was also discovered that, of the 100 respondents, 51% stated that their reason for using the internet was to seek out a romantic relationship with the opposite sex. 40% of the sample browsed pornographic sites. This rate was higher in the case of high school students and university undergraduates (Al-Hajiri, 2003: 244–245, 253–274).

A recent study investigating this topic was conducted by Baqader (2005), entitled "Youth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia". He revealed patterns of youth behaviour, which are considered abnormal in Saudi society. Western styles have spread among young people such as fashion, haircuts and western music. The researcher attributed the emergence of these western traditions to the impact of advertisements and modern technology, such as the internet and satellite channels, which have established a so-called consumer ideology among young people. The study highlighted some of the related deviant patterns, such as: defamation of certain individuals, blackmail, or revenge. In this regard, the researcher cited an incident involving the rape of a girl, the details of which were broadcast over the internet. He also stated that the Cyber World had helped to break down the separation between young people of both sexes, and this had happened through online chatting, which is a means of communication between the two sexes that is secure from monitoring (Ibid: 120–123).

The researcher highlighted the fact that traditional patterns of deviation have not disappeared or lessened with the emergence of new forms of deviation, but rather have increased. Some young men, for example, persist in joy-riding. Much heroism has always been attached to such irresponsible behaviour, and this continues to enhance its appeal. According to the study, some deviant

practices have also emerged at educational institutions, such as drug abuse, escaping from school, dropping out and violence, whether among students or directed towards school staff (Ibid).

The researcher attributed the deviation of young people to the social and economic transformations experienced by Saudi society in light of globalisation, and the consequences of such transformations, such as the disorder that has arisen in the standards of informal social control, whereby some of the values and traditional behavioural determinants have lost their effectiveness. Despite the changes, no new determinants have arisen to determine proper codes of conduct, due to the fact that Saudi society is still in transition and has not yet fully stabilised (Ibid: 134–135, 215–217).

In this study, despite the profound changes that Saudi society is undergoing, there is not a complete loss of traditional values. On the contrary, young Saudi women are still mainly traditional and conservative, although they do seek gradual change to improve their position in society.

Additional literature, based in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has addressed deviation as one of the problems or issues associated with young people but without a focus on issues of delinquency in particular. One of the most prominent pieces of research into this topic was a study conducted by the King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue (2005), "Youth Issues: Reality and Aspirations". This study focused on a range of topics, including violence, and sought to explain the reasons behind violence. The research sample consisted of 2,114 young men and women, and the findings of the study were summarised to produce a definitive list of the causes of youth violence. According to the study, unemployment, the abundance of free time, and the spread of *Salafi* radicalism were the most influential factors driving young

people to violence. The respondents contributed their ideas for methods that should be employed to combat these militant views, and foremost in their suggestions was the propagation of moderate religious understanding and creation of job opportunities (King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue, 2005: 52–53).

I view the young as key drivers of social change. Young people require care and attention from all sectors of society. Disregarding young people wastes their potential to contribute to society. Therefore, it is this study's position that young people of both genders need to be engaged with dialogue, care, and trust, for the benefit of society as a whole.

3.5.9 Conclusion

The goal of the current study is to thoroughly investigate and comprehend the life of the young Saudi woman and her inclination towards rebellion or obedience. In this chapter, a number of cases associated with girls' subcultures, rebellious thought in society, theories regarding women in Muslim societies, and previous studies regarding female deviation in Saudi Arabia have been presented. Previous studies looked at female deviation from various angles; considering cultural and religious factors, social changes related to globalisation, and factors pertaining to unemployment and free time.

The researcher has gathered together these studies on deviation in order to gain a broader perspective on the subject, and to understand the factors fuelling female deviation in Saudi society. This has helped shed light on the various aspects of the Saudi woman's life and the catalysts that may drive her to rebellion and disobedience.

The chapter also explored the feminist literature related to these women's conditions. As Lugones and Spelman (1990) have pointed out, feminist theory, in all its incarnations, presents real life and real stories of life in women's own voices. Consequently, the researcher used feminist studies as a means of understanding all facets of women's lives by presenting their personal opinions and experiences. A comprehensive understanding of women's lives is vital to the study, as women's experiences include gender and power relations. Thereby helping to expose the restrictions placed on the Saudi women.

I have spoken previously about cultural criminology, specifically when exploring the links between control, boredom and crime. This formed part of this study's investigation into the root causes of young women's rebellion. I utilised the work of several leading researchers in this field, including Cohen, Katz, Sato and Young, to explore rebellion source of pleasure, excitement, and self-affirmation for the study sample.

This study employs a qualitative method, namely through use of semi-structured interviewing. This presents a break with previous studies, which made heavy use of the questionnaire method when studying female deviation in Saudi Arabia. The semi-structured interview has much more flexibility, especially when compared to other methods (Smith, Harré and Langenhove, 1999). It encourages the participants to speak freely and elaborate upon their lives and personal experiences. This is a result of both the gender of the researcher and the flexible and natural structure of the interview, which helped put the participant at ease and eliminated issues of power and authority.

As for the limitations of the study, foremost among these is the fact that the participants, numbering thirty in total, do not perfectly represent the social backgrounds of every region and city in Saudi Arabia, as they are all residents

of the city of Jeddah. Nevertheless, it is believed that they voice issues that touch the lives of average Saudis, particularly women. The researcher hopes that this study, despite its limitations, will pave the way for similar studies across the country, helping to shed light on the concerns of young Saudi women and providing a stepping stone towards resolving these and making desirable improvements to the status of women in Saudi society.

4. Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

It is vital to explain the methodology employed to reach the conclusions of this study, if the findings are to be understood. Strong reasons for why the data collection method used was adopted in preference to other options will be presented. This chapter opens with a revision of the philosophical assumptions about the nature of research in the domain of the social sciences in reference to the nature of human behaviour. Following this the method used is detailed, including all aspects of the interview process, the issues of ethical responsibility, reliability, objectivity and subjectivity, and the challenges posed by the researcher's position, as well as the questions of sampling, data collection, surveying, data analysis and the entire research procedure.

4.2 Assumptions about the Nature of Social Science

Research and the Nature of Social Behaviour

Many writers choose to adopt certain philosophical and theoretical assumptions as a reflection of their understanding that the world is an arena comprised of diverging views and perspectives (Hopper and Powell, 1985). Assumptions have to be clarified to determine a foundation for this study. The role that these assumptions play extends to a clarification of the methodology followed in the research, which in turn informs the methods of data collection and analysis.

4.2.1 Ontological Considerations

Ontology is the study of what exists in reality. Flew (1979) defined ontology as “the assumptions about existence underlying any conceptual scheme or any theory or system of ideas” (Flew, 1979). Two scientists, Burrell and Morgan (1979), declared that ontology is split according to two distinct traditions. The first, which they termed realism, is based on the assumption that there is material existence to any entity that is detached from human entities and their periphery of speech, emotion and action. In this vein, Bhaskar (1975) stated that “science, then, is the systematic attempt to express in thought the structures and ways of acting of things that exist and act independently of thought” (Bhaskar, 1975: 250). The second ontological is termed nominalism, and assumes that social work depends on how people understand it, it is subjective because there is an assumption that reality depends on context. Therefore, the reality of the phenomena being investigated is (soft), as it depends on human observation (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

When it comes to the concepts of obedience and rebellion considered in this thesis, a question needs to be asked: Can these two phenomena be looked upon as pre-existent? This researcher’s assumption is that the two are subjective. To give an example, we can explore the social perceptions of obedience and rebellion among British females and compare this with those for Saudi females. A huge gulf exists between the two perceptions, because they have developed (and indeed, continue to develop) in radically different social contexts. Thus, my reading of the question of obedience and rebellion prioritises the perspectives of Saudi female youth, since it is their obedience and rebellion that is being studied.

4.2.2 Epistemological Considerations

Epistemology refers to “the theory or science of the method or grounds of knowledge” (Blaikie, 1993). There are two philosophies used to garner knowledge. The first path, termed “positivism”, relies on the execution of an epistemological approach that is similar to that employed in the natural sciences, and which is used to explain the social world. It assumes that social reality can be explained by analysing the relationships between variables as “value free”; i.e. as autonomous constructs free of foreign influence (Bryman, 2008). The other strand places itself in direct opposition to the first, as is perfectly illustrated by the term given to it: “anti-positivism” (also called “interpretivism”). Partisans of anti-positivism argue that articles pertaining to the social sciences are extremely unlike those pertaining to the natural sciences, and that methods used in the latter cannot be used indiscriminately with the former (or vice versa). Knowledge is subjective, and understanding depends on one’s beliefs and actions. Thus, the researcher must examine the topic in depth, rather than in breadth, and investigate interactions among participants (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). In order to explain individual actions within the framework of a social entity, the social researcher must grasp popular common sense thinking and use this as a basis to generate an understanding of the social world from people’s points of view (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975).

4.2.3 Assumptions about Human Nature

Burrell and Morgan (1979) discussed human nature. This nature is linked to previous assumptions about epistemology and ontology. It relates to the relationships between human and nature. Burrell and Morgan noted that

human behaviour can be understood through either determinism or voluntarism. Determinism decrees that human behaviour can be predicted if the external factors related to it are known. This suggests that external factors directly determine behaviour. On the contrary, voluntarism teaches that external factors are not the sole determinants of behaviour, and that behaviour must therefore be analysed, in and on itself, if its causes are to be understood.

In this present study, the researcher believes that the actions of the young women are not solely determined by external factors. While factors such as globalization, upbringing, familial relationships, religion and cultural customs may influence individual behaviour, the study argues that external factors are not the sole determinants of behaviour. The same factors may inspire different behavioural patterns in different people. As a result, I have adopted the voluntarist approach when trying to understand young women's behaviour and its causes.

4.3 Methodology

To reach a deeper understanding of the subject of the study, an appropriate methodology had to be utilized. This was designed to facilitate a better understanding of the goals of the study and to determine how best to go about achieving them. The previous assumptions on ontology, epistemology and human nature influenced the methodology of this study

Methodology can be subdivided into two branches: 'nomothetic' and 'idiographic.' The former considers individual action to have little or no effect on the environment, and knowledge and reality to be rigid entities. This understanding attempts to analyze all relationships and reach general conclusions about social phenomena. In other words, a nomothetic approach

investigates cultural contents with the intention of understanding cultural forms.

The latter approach to research methodology is often employed when the social phenomenon under study have an innate dimension. This approach requires researchers to study in-depth to truly understand a phenomenon and to provide concise explanations for their actions. In other words, an idiographic approach investigates cultural forms with a view to understanding cultural content.

The concepts of rebellion and obedience have wide-ranging implications.

There is no single absolute reality for either of these concepts. For example, what may be considered rebellious for a young Saudi woman may be completely acceptable from a young British woman. The reasons behind rebellious behaviour may differ widely among the young Saudi women themselves; therefore, in-depth research in an ideographic vein is essential.

Initially before beginning, I would like to clarify the difference between “method” and “methodology”. Cohen and Manion (1980) defined method as the tools of data collection that aid in interpretation, explanation and prediction. Methodology, on the other hand, was defined as the roadmap used to interpret and predict outcomes.

Research can be categorized according to the methodology it employs. Some literature further classifies methodology by study type; i.e. as “surveys”, “experiments”, “case studies” “testing and assessment” and “in-depth ethnography” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). Others, such as Verma and Mallick (1999), have identified three categories: “descriptive”, “historical” and “experimental”.

As we can see, the task of identifying and implementing an appropriate methodology can be a daunting one. The present study can be described as qualitative, inductive or case study research.

In its capacity as a qualitative study, it relies on “words, sentences and narratives” (Blumber, Cooper and Schindler, 2005). The study also relies on the inductive method that amasses data from interviewee narratives to reach logical conclusions (Raean, 2003). To obtain qualitative data, the researcher chooses to rely on one-on-one, and in-depth semi-structured interviews with all participants.

Raean (2003) found that 80% of published social research in the Arab World was quantitative. Even the limited literature on young Saudi women’s deviance was entirely quantitative. This underscored the need to employ a qualitative approach in the study, as it gave the researcher the opportunity to obtain a more in-depth look at an understudied social group.

Because the research question in the present study focuses on the daily lives of its participants, it can be described as taking a feminist standpoint in regard to epistemology. The concept of a standpoint attempts to understand social life through the different vantage points of those that experience it. It is based on Hegel’s concept that “the oppressed have developed a dual perspective: their personal perspective develops through experience and their perspective of their oppressors, which they develop to survive” (Hesse-Biber, Leavy and Yaiser, 2004: 15).

As Hartstock (1983) mentioned, the position of women in the sexual division of labour, and experiences with women’s oppression, provide researchers with

a better understanding of women's lives. In contrast, those in power may have a partial and biased understanding of women's issues.

As a result, achieving a standpoint comes as a result of the individual's position within the social order. Additionally, as Smith (1987) stated, creating knowledge about women must begin by understanding women's lives through their own lens, and drawing on their experiences.

The criticism levelled at this approach has mostly been centred around concerns regarding objectivity. However, proponents have counter-argued that the use of society's margins as a starting point further increases objectivity.

Through this method, they have asserted that knowledge can be produced for the marginalized, rather than by dominant, external parties, who seek to maintain their superiority in power relations, over the marginalized.

Conducting research into marginalized groups is valid, because underrepresented viewpoints offer a significant perspective on the human condition. Complex human relations can be better understood and illustrated by a study seeking to understand social hierarchy from the bottom-up, rather than top-down, as has been the traditional approach.

When the current study employs a feminist standpoint epistemologically and methodologically, various questions and topics of debate emerge.

Consequently, the nature of the social scientific enquiry changes.

To illustrate this, young women's lives at home, in school or even on the street have been largely ignored in social research in Saudi Arabia. This reflects wider Saudi society, which has generally marginalised young Saudi women's experiences. Standpoint research allows research to begin in earnest by

investigating women's own views and allowing them to portray their reality as they truly perceive it to be.

In summary, the decision to adopt this methodology was based on the intention to give the participants the ability to illustrate their own lives. This is a social group that has long been dominated by men, and which has had their discourse dominated by men as well. The use of this method here is an attempt to create socially just research (O'Leary, 1998).

4.4 Methods of Data Collection

Although research methods vary greatly in their defining characteristics, they have undeniable similarities. They are all driven by the need to collect data. This can be achieved by employing numerous different methods, including direct telephone interviewing, focus groups, surveying, recorded social interaction, field notes, and written questionnaires (Heaton, 2004: 37).

The sheer number of methods available to a researcher should not deceive the reader into believing that data collection is an easy task. It is complicated, and, from the first step (choosing the method), difficulties may be encountered.

O'Leary (2004: 150) said that "collecting credible data is a tough task, and it is worth remembering that one method of data collection is not inherently better than another." Therefore, in order to choose a method, the researcher must first identify the goals of their study, and then look to see which methods will optimally fulfil these (Ibid).

4.5 Interviews

The interview is the most widely employed qualitative data collection method due to the fact that it allows the researcher to investigate in great depth (Verma and Mallick, 1999). Many interview methods exist, and interviewing has also been variously categorised and defined. Some scholars define the interview as a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee; the aim of which is to acquire in-depth information that will serve as the basis for organised description (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Moser and Kalton, 1992; Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). Interviews can take various forms; either structured, semi-structured, unstructured or focused (Cohen and Manion, 1980). The method employed in this study is the semi-structured interview.

4.6 The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview sits halfway between unstructured and fully-structured interviews, combining elements of both. It offers far greater flexibility than the fully-structured type. Semi-structured interviews are more closely guided by the participant's views; offering them the opportunity to express and describe their experiences. The greater flexibility afforded by this method, combined with participant's active involvement often provides the researcher with more in-depth information (Smith, Harré and Langenhove, 1999). Another advantage of this method is that it may promote a positive relationship between the participants and the researcher. It allows the researcher to build trust and put the participants at ease, before encouraging

them to disclose valuable and useful information (Lovell and Lawson, 1970; Reinharz, 1992).

When conducting semi-structured interviews the researcher is freer than when conducting a structured interview, in that she does not have to adhere to a detailed interview guide (Kajornboon, 2004: 75). Patton (2002) urges researchers to "... explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject... to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined" (Patton, 2002: 343). An additional advantage of using interviewing for data collection is the option to request a follow-up interview to clarify any unclear points.

In spite of the advantages provided by in-depth individual interviews, several disadvantages are associated with the semi-structured interviewing method. Firstly, this method is usually very time-consuming to plan, and also to transcribe (Sarantakos, 1998). Secondly, inexperienced interviewers may find it challenging to ask concise questions and to prompt. In such cases, the information gathered is likely to be obscured by irrelevant points. In addition, inexperienced interviewers may not probe deeply enough into an issue, and this may generate incomplete data. These last two problems are true of any interviewing method.

4.7 Protocol for Interviews

The in-depth semi-structured interviewing method adopted in this study was based on the key question of the study (in chapter one of the study). The interviews lasted between forty-five and sixty minutes, and the researcher

interviewed each participant once. The use of a single interview, rather than multiple interviews, for each participant was intended to reduce the demand placed on the participants. This helped the researcher to avoid the potentially hazardous situation of “asking too much” of the participant, i.e. making substantial demands that would disrupt their daily life. When too many demands are placed on interviewees the result may be a lack of willingness to contribute, which would have a negative impact on the rapport between the researcher and the participant (Lee, 1993).

Ethical approval to carry out this study was obtained from the School of Sociology and Social Policy in the Academic Unit of Social Sciences at the University of Southampton. The participants all signed a consent form stating that they had agreed to participate in the study of their own free will. The researcher then contacted the participants to determine a time and date for the interviews. Before signing the consent form, the participants were made aware of the topic being studied, and the consent document was explained to them.

Seven of the interviews with university students took place on the King Abdul-Aziz University campus. For these interviews, it was not necessary to obtain permission, as the researcher is a member of the faculty. All the remaining interviews took place either in the participants' homes or at the researcher's home. This was done after receipt of the oral permission of the participants and their parents.

The researcher assured the participants that their identity and any personal information they gave would be kept confidential. The researcher also notified the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to, and during the interview the participants were made aware that they had the right to refuse to answer any questions, and to end the

interview should they feel the need to. To prepare for the possibility of the original participants deciding to withdraw, back-up participants were selected.

For some participants, follow-up interviews were held to clarify unclear points and to build upon those areas in which the initial interview had produced insufficient information. These typically lasted approximately 10–15 minutes.

An audio-recorder was used to record the interview: this method was used to help eliminate bias and avoid error as far as possible. The participants agreed to the recording, and their agreement was officially documented on the aforementioned consent forms.

4.8 The Interview Sample

Thirty Saudi Arabian females volunteered to participate in this study, and the snowballing technique was adopted to gather participants, whereby each participant is asked to introduce another person who is then invited to participate in the study. The participants were all female students at high schools and universities in the city of Jeddah. Most of the participants were from a mid-level income background. I took advantage of the fact that all the participants are from the middle classes, to investigate their use of the means available to them (e.g. their families' consistent income levels allow them to have separate bedrooms, private access to the internet), to deal with everyday challenges. although I did gain this valuable perspective, I was unable to investigate the working classes or the wealthy. This limitation arose from the fact that this study focuses exclusively on the middle classes, and this can be overcome in future studies. Due to the use of the snowballing technique, the participants attracted other persons of a similar class and education level into

the study. The participants were all single, Saudi and aged between sixteen and twenty one years.

Most of the university participants were students at King Abdul–Aziz University in Jeddah, at various stages of their undergraduate education; freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and senior undergraduates. A minority studied at private universities in Jeddah. This sampling contrast gave the researcher the opportunity to gain a broader view and a deeper insight into the experiences being investigated (Polkinghorne, 2005: 140).

4.9 Validity and Reliability of the Research

Validity and reliability are necessary components in all research, whether quantitative or qualitative (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Borg and Falzon (1989) defined validity as “the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure”. Validity, in qualitative research, often signifies that the researcher exhibits realism, logic and trustworthiness (Hagar, 2003). Winter (2000) defined validity as “the honesty, depth, richness and scope of data achieved, the participants approached, and objectivity of the research.”

It is well known that one of the main hazards relating to validity in qualitative research is researcher bias. Bias can lead the researcher to fall into the trap of making selective use of data, allowing personal opinions to influence data interpretation and conclusions.

In order to defeat potential bias in this study, the researcher used reflexivity. This is an internal self–search to identify the sources of researcher bias and then, once aware of these sources, to act consciously to suppress them (Hagar, 2003). The study also employed interpretive validity; accuracy in portraying the

respondents' understanding of the phenomena studied. The study depended on the researcher's ability to reach an in-depth understanding of the respondents' opinions, ideas and experiences in an abstract, objective way.

The fact that the interviews were female-to-female helped to avoid any association with a hierarchical order, which might have been the case had a male interviewer conducted the interviews. Shared female experience was used as a platform to provide a means of giving voice and to empower the oppressed group being studied (women in Saudi society). This is consistent with the advice given by Denscombe (2002: 36), who argues that feminist research provides a way for less powerful groups, namely women, to speak openly about their problems.

This study used the method of participant feedback to establish interpretive validity. The researcher asked the respondents to clarify uncertainties and to confirm that the meanings conveyed were faithful to their opinions. The researcher used parts of texts authored by members of the society from which the study was drawn for the same reason. Negative case sampling is the inclusion of 'statements that contradicts' the researcher's interpretations; this technique was employed here in order to provide better, more valid results (Ibid: 142).

The table below displays key information about the study participants. This includes their pseudonyms, ages at time of interview, marital status and whether they were in high school or university.

No.	Pseudonym	Age	Education
1	Samara	20	University student

2	Ruby	17	University student
3	Hadeer	20	University student and a part time employee
4	Azzal	21	University student
5	Nehar	19	University student
6	Majda	20	University student
7	Reemaf	21	University student
8	Mahar	19	University student
9	Samaha	21	University student
10	Imana	16	High school student
11	Basimah	17	High school student
12	Tuqat	17	High school student
13	Hadeeb	17	University student
14	Ranees	18	University student
15	Zainab	17	University student
16	Reen	17	University student
17	Maryam	18	High school student

18	Hanam	17	University student
19	Halat	21	University student
20	Alaas	18	University student
21	Reenat	21	University student
22	Asseej	21	University student
23	Ranat	21	University student
24	Lamyaal	19	University student
25	Rawaj	17	High school student
26	Amani	19	University student
27	Noor	21	University student
28	Dinya	21	University student
29	Hinadi	21	University student
30	Abeen	21	University student

4.10 Subjectivity, Objectivity and the Position of the Researcher

Positivists subscribe to the view that objectivity in social research occurs naturally when a researcher employs the techniques of natural sciences and quantitative research methods (Hagar, 2003). Subjectivity describes how the researcher is influenced by his/her own opinions and judgments. 'Objectivity, on the other hand, decree that we control our own emotions and opinions' (Al-Ghabra, 1998).

Al-Zoubie (1991) explained the objective differences between natural and social phenomena in the following way; natural phenomena interact unconsciously and follow a continuous cycle, while people who are subject to a social phenomenon interact consciously to achieve desired results. A social phenomenon is also distinct in that it has an ideological attribution adopted by theoretical thesis and practical applications expressing powers, concerns and aspirations.

It can be said that a subjective stance always arises with a qualitative approach, as the human is both the phenomenon studied and the one interpreting this phenomenon. This is assumed to lead to a lack of objectivity. Positivists are also critical of the dominance held by the qualitative approach in social research. They claim that the qualitative approach paves the way for bias and robs researchers of scientific objectivity (Hagar, 2003).

In this researcher's opinion, the qualitative approach is important in social research in spite of the risk of bias. The researcher has to intervene to provide an interpretation; he/she cannot produce an abstract display of data, since all social sciences have an ideological backdrop. The researcher must therefore

attempt consciously to uncover the rules of inner, intertwined social phenomena. The researcher has to be an innovative contemplator, capable of using his/her personal abilities to delve into the depths of the studied phenomena and explore its hidden aspects and complexities.

In the current study, the researcher worked in her home city, rendering her unable to attain perfect objectivity. She chose thirty participants previously unknown to her and about whose personalities, opinions and lives she had no prior knowledge. She therefore had no expectations of the reality of their experiences. A detailed description of the respondents, including their ages, education, family life and class has been provided.

4.11 The Pilot Study

Three pilot interviews were conducted, each with a different participant. One of the pilot interview participants was a high school student, and two were undergraduates at university. All three interviews were in-depth and semi-structured. As is always the case with piloting, the three interviews were conducted to enable the researcher to experiment with interviewing techniques and to acquire reasonable, relevant skills. They also provided a means for the researcher to understand different aspects of the interview better, such as the length of time needed, the questions to be asked, and how best to deal with the participants. The researcher concluded that the questions needed to be clearer in order to save time and to ensure that the participants gave appropriate responses. It should be noted that these pilot interviews do not constitute any part of the data analysed for the study.

Participants still in high school were asked one question about sport and one question about the school curriculum. Through this, I sought to investigate the

links between school, athletic activity, and boredom. University students were asked one question about their overall high school experience, and one about the ban on camera phones on campus. I asked these questions as part of my investigation of the factors that give rise to boredom, and the restrictions in the young women's everyday lives.

4.12 Data Analysis Technique

The literature review, while it did provide a comprehensive array of possible analysis procedures, did not suggest that there was any one best method to follow. Therefore, I tried to develop my own approach.

Permission was obtained from each participant to record the interviews. These were transcribed in the Arabic language. Then, each participant was given a pseudonym, by which her transcript would be immediately identifiable. Every transcript included additional background information on age and education. The transcripts were stored electronically.

Following McQueen and Knussen's (1999) indications that analysis of qualitative data is best begun immediately after the collection of data, the researcher began by reading each transcript twice. I highlighted new ideas as they presented themselves in the text, and used a column to make open coding.

Comparing between the interviews, I looked for similarities and patterns among the ideas I highlighted. I then listed all of these ideas on a separate page. As an example, I found that the idea of "avoiding attracting men's attentions" and "religious boundaries" to be recurrent.

The themes were born out of the heavily recurring, main ideas of the interviews. Then sub-themes began to present themselves as ideas falling under one main theme. For example, many participants discussed modest behaviour, the maintenance of honour, moderation in appearance and behaviour and attaining respect in society. All of these ideas were linked to hijab, and so I found them to fall, as sub-themes, under the main theme entitled "the nature of hijab".

Now with a rough framework to work with, I read through the transcripts again and wrote about each theme for each participant separately. Congealing these small writings, I collected all of the data relevant to the theme currently being investigated. I followed this procedure for all the themes, in order to produce a deep analysis for them that would enable me to draw appropriate conclusions.

4.13 Interview Questions

General questions were asked of every participant (please note that these questions are not ordered):

- Describe the ideal Hijab from your perspective.
- What does *Qiwama* (male empowerment) mean to you?
- What is the meaning of *Wali-ul-amr* (male guardian) in your opinion?
- Do you think that Saudi woman should be permitted to drive? Explain why.
- Do you feel that your parents discriminate between yourself and your male sibling? If so, is it because he is a boy and you are a girl?
- What are the sources of restrictions imposed on the young Saudi female?
- What type of activity do you enjoy in your spare time?

- What is your perception of rebellion?
- What actions within the young female Saudi population would you classify as being rebellious?
- What are the causes of rebellion in your opinion?
- What is your opinion on gender segregation between males and females? Discuss certain locations; e.g. public places, the workplace and education facilities.
- Let us pretend that I am your teacher or mother within the context of this question. What will you speak to me about? What will you say and how will you say it?
- To what extent should Saudi woman be liberated and why?

Questions for the high school students only:-

- Do you think sport should be a part of female schooling in lower education and why?
- Do you feel that the school curriculum assigns you to a certain place in society? In what way?

Questions for the undergraduate students only:-

- How satisfactory was your high school experience? What aspects of it were boring? What aspects were genuinely enjoyable?
- What do you think of the university policy of banning camera-equipped mobile phones and laptops from the premises? Why?

4.14 Methodological Issues and Limitations

The researcher faced difficulties when requesting a definition of rebellion: principally this stemmed from the participants' apparent discomfort, and they

preferred to avoid religiously or socially taboo topics. For example, one interviewee spoke briefly on the topic of homosexuality but was very swift to conclude. This is a direct result of the problems associated with speaking or writing about this topic in a conservative Islamic society, mostly because it is considered a crime by both society and in religious law, and is punishable in the Islamic *Sharia*.

The researcher attempted to use reflexivity to encourage the participants to respond more openly and candidly. The researcher responded to some of the participants' enquiries about her own personal life and experiences within the education system as a student. This was done in an attempt to reassure the participants and give them the self-confidence to share information, as the age difference between themselves and the researcher might have discouraged them from doing so.

Despite the researcher's efforts to bridge the generational gap (or maybe because of them), a new problem presented itself. Due to the fact that the researcher is from the same background, speaks the same language, and bears the same nationality as the participants, she became "too much of an insider". New colloquial words and expressions have evolved amongst the new generation of Saudi youths and the researcher was caught out by the linguistic challenge they posed when conducting the interviews as well as translating the transcripts. The researcher has therefore attempted to convey the meaning of the speakers' answers as closely and as accurately as possible.

Another problem arising from the age difference was a tendency on the part of some of the participants to 'polish' their image. The researcher's position in relation to the participants was that of an elder and her mannerisms may have reminded some of them of their mothers, leading them to express pro-

conservative views on topics such as Hijab, *Wali-ul-amr* and *Qiwama*; this may explain why the researcher noted several opinion reversals on the part of some participants. This is also evidenced by the repetition of certain terms in many answers, especially those associated with religious conservatism, and also the presence of self-contradictory answers in many interview transcripts.

With regard to the sample, the researcher was unable to meet with some of her intended participants, and therefore had to find replacements. Other participants withdrew from the research shortly after giving their agreement, often without disclosing the reasons for their withdrawal.

The intended timing of many of the interviews coincided with the holy month of Ramadan: this did not suit some participants as they had many social and familial occasions to attend and/or host. Ramadan is traditionally a time of strenuous chores and obligations; therefore, it was difficult to find a time that was convenient for both the researcher and participants. This caused many interviews to be constrained by a restricted time slot, often with no more than 35 minutes available when 45 minutes was the optimal duration.

The timing of the study posed further challenges; in particular seven recently graduated high school students, yet to commence their foundation year at university, insisted on labelling themselves university students and answering the university students' questions. This resulted in a proportional shift in the sample. 83.3% (25 participants) of the sample were documented as university students, with only 16.7% being high school students (5 participants). If the seven students were restored as high school students, then the proportion would be more balanced, with 60% (18 participants) university students, and 40% (12 participants) high school students.

A further problem emerged concerning interview locations. The researcher experienced difficulty in finding suitable, private meeting places. Thus, the interview locations ranged from the homes of the participants to cafés or the researcher's home, all after obtaining the permission of both the participants and their parents. Some parents refused to give permission due to the lack of an available driver. Another segment of the interviews was conducted on the university campus in a room managed by the sociology department. The timing of these interviews fell during the examination period and resulted in the on-campus interviews being rather brief and lasting approximately thirty-five minutes.

Translation was a particularly difficult process in this research; in particular colloquial Arab terms are often difficult to explain in English. Some colloquial Arabic words of the Hejaz region, particularly in the Jeddawi dialect, have no corresponding equivalent in English. The endeavour to achieve an accurate translation often resulted in an awkward, imprecise, outcome. As previously mentioned, the author had difficulty understanding some of the phrases and expressions used by the participants. To solve this problem, the researcher called upon the help of a young woman to explain these expressions to her. It is to be noted that the author did not expose any fragment of the interviews, but rather asked about the meaning of general, widely-used colloquial expressions. A professional translator was also employed and tasked with explaining some of the colloquial expressions, which were more difficult to interpret.

Introduction to Analysis Chapters

The upcoming chapters focus on assessing the role that rebellion and obedience play in the daily lives of young Saudi women. Recognising the behaviour of young women and the experiences in daily lives at home, with friends and in public spheres reveals the cultural structure of the society through which their behaviours and inclinations are expressed, and helps us to understand the ideas that surround and inform young Saudi women. This work examines the young Saudi woman in her reality as a female living in a predominantly male-dominated, patriarchal society. The concepts of rebellion, negotiation, resistance, deceit, adaptation and acceptance are all discussed within these analytical chapters. Authority is a concept that, on the surface, appears to indicate the power of the male, yet, in reality, also indicates the influence of customs, traditions and religion in the context of the cultural structure of Saudi society. This will be explored in the chapters that follow, by examining the young women's perspectives on concepts such as *Qiwama*, control, honour, modesty and decency.

From the literature review, it is apparent that feminist thought focuses on gender egalitarianism in all walks of life and at all levels. In the analysis, that follows, however, we see that the Saudi feminist position emphasises gender complementarity. This position accepts male superiority as a divine decree, rather than as a refutable secular norm. Also in the research and analysis, we notice an inclination to accept religion and religious law as a path to women's liberation from scholarly-imposed restrictions, and this too deviates from secular positions on female liberation. Thus, contrary to the suggestions in the literature review, the goal of young Saudi women is not found to be a full-

blown reinterpretation of religion, rather a return to the *Sunni* mainstream, which is viewed as correct and just to all elements of society. This discussion is presented and understood through the use of an interpretative discourse concerning young women's views on the Hijab, decency, modesty, honour, and respectability of appearance, and through the interpretation of young Saudi women's practices of freedom and negotiation in their private lives (and in private bedrooms), and friendships outside of their parents' sphere of influence. Furthermore, we will analyse the role of parental authority with regard to *Qiwama* and spending, and its relationship to the ban on women's driving in Saudi Arabia.

Bourdieu's (1998) concept of habitus is beneficial, especially for capturing the social boundaries around young Saudi women, and for explaining the methods that the young women use to negotiate the male-dominated and conservative culture in which they live. Rebellion, negotiation, acceptance and mitigation can all be seen as reactions exhibited by young women as they socialise within the cultural constraints that frame their lives. As Bourdieu puts it, socialisation and cultural factors are an inter-related biological and sociological body that are mutually affected (Bourdieu et al., 1999). The analysis in this study focuses on young women's personal lives in the context of their families and close friendship circle. Furthermore, the young women are also portrayed as part of a larger outside world. Saudi culture exhibits an interplay between rigidity and malleability. Consequently, young Saudi women alternate between conforming to cultural norms and negotiating the perceived and actual restrictions in society.

In many ways the young Saudi woman can be described as a mirror reflecting her constantly shifting cultural reality. This status allows for modification and

change according to the context of transpiring events. The young woman might pursue new methods of negotiation, or deceive and mislead the authorities; she might openly confront and rebel, or she might accept the status quo of the local culture. In all cases, the young woman is not static; rather she is flexible, changing, negotiating, and challenging in some cases. Or rather, as Sweetman (2003) puts it; young women apply a “pick-and-mix” approach in response to different social experiences, experiments, behaviours, and hostilities. As Goffman (1959) suggested, the young woman can be viewed as an actress playing her part in the “theatre of life”. Therefore, her role changes with each different event that she encounters. Individuals learn to behave/perform in particular ways in particular contexts and over time these learned norms are repeated in similar contexts.

Thus, each young Saudi woman is unique in her own experiences and her responses. Upbringing and education play a key role in formulating actions, concepts and values, as the analysis shows. This is what Bourdieu (1967) termed the “cultured habitus” or “the feel of the game”, and this is what appears in the analysis as past and present experiences, through which understandings of life are formulated. Young women continue to refine their perspectives according to the concepts, expectations and behaviours that impact on their lives according to the contexts they face. These narratives support Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus, as explained by Fowler (1996):

Habitus is how people construct the world and are constructed by it. More particularly, how people’s readings of their situation are founded on patterned socially generated classifications of the world with multiple associations of a moral and aesthetic kind.’ (Fowler, 1996: 11)

The use of Bourdieu's method allows me to venture deep into people's lives to study the effects of objective relations in depth. As a researcher, I do not intend to study each interview as an isolated, strictly individual narrative, but rather as evidence of a variable set of values, relations, and structures governing young women's daily lives.

This explains each participants' unique perspective, when introducing the concepts of decency, honour and respect. The analysis clarifies the different viewpoints and experiences in the young women's lives, and also denotes their opinions about true Islamic Hijab, as some have termed it, and what is expected of them, whether inside Saudi Arabia or abroad. The form and behaviour associated with Hijab differs from one location to another and from one person to another. For example, some understand the Hijab to be a covering for the whole body, including the face, whilst others understand it as dressing conservatively and exhibiting respectful behaviour when dealing with men to whom they are unrelated. These concepts and understandings vary according to each family's beliefs. The chief determinant is parental beliefs. Therefore, the first chapter, which discusses Hijab, is divided into three sub-themes: decency, honour and respectability.

The variety of viewpoints on Hijab, which are presented by the research participants, help to unveil multiple facets of cultural life and also link to the young women's decisions to accept traditional Hijab, negotiate new, more modern alternatives, or to reject Hijab completely. The chapter explores the various reasons behind young women's decisions to wear Hijab or otherwise. It also investigates young Saudi women's capacity for combining seemingly contradictory responses such as negotiation, self-determination and rebellion, as well as acceptance and obedience.

The second analysis chapter discusses gender relations within a patriarchal society. This is done through an exploration of young women's opinions on: parent-offspring relationships; the concepts of *Qiwama*; control and guardian; and how these concepts may/may not intervene in their private lives, especially in matters of financial spending and control. Additionally, this chapter explores the reasons behind the pragmatism exhibited by many young Saudis. This pragmatism is mostly subtle and often goes unnoticed. It appears as young women argue for private spaces with friends and speak of refusing or delaying women's driving for reasons of comfort and adaptation.

In addition, we analyse the close relationship between the young Saudi women and their mothers, in particular their views on their mothers as allies, that is, as active negotiators (as agents of conflict reductions) between fathers and daughters. These actions lead us to assume that young Saudi women act intelligently as they actively seek to advance their own interests gently under the radar. All of this represents an effort to gain trust and acceptance, which, in the long term, may be seen as an effort to gain the full rights that a young woman might reasonably expect from both her family and wider society.

The first two analytical chapters display a change of attitude on the young women's part. Whereas in the first chapter they are supportive and accepting of Hijab, they voice strong opposition to many aspects of *Qiwama* in the second. The participants view Hijab as a tool that helps them gain respect, access to public life, and protection. In voicing this, many forget that feminism is about celebrating difference and respecting women's choices (Afshar, 2008). Furthermore, it symbolises their superiority over men. *Qiwama*, on the other hand, is associated with inferiority and subordination. Although *Qiwama* gives young women some degree of protection and financial support, it takes a great

deal of freedom and independence away from them, and thus runs contrary to their particular brand of feminist empowerment discourse.

The third chapter analyses communication and intimacy in young women's private spaces. These carry different symbols linked to friendship and the freedom to express oneself within each young woman's personal bedroom. Furthermore, we analyse the negative emotions associated with boredom and routine, as well as the need to vary one's routine. This need often exhibits itself in private spaces, in which young women escape from the surveillance and control of their parents and society. In this analysis, we see that a sense of solidarity exists between young women in their private areas at home. It is in these spaces they entertain and proclaim their freedom and feel emancipated from surveillance, control and boredom.

5. Chapter Five: Hijab Theme

5.1 Introduction

Linguistically, Hijab may be interpreted in many ways. Mernissi (1987) interpreted it as being, as shown in the Quran, a curtain or wall between the Prophet's wives and the *Sahaba*; present for the sake of protection. Roald (2001) interprets the view that the *jilbab*, also mentioned in the Quran, was a single article of clothing that, usually but not always, includes a face cover. In this analysis, the participants' own interpretation of the word Hijab is used: A covering that conceals the hair, neck and ears but does not cover the face. The word veil will not be used as this is commonly used to refer to distinct articles of clothing. For the sake of clarity, "Hijab" here refers to head cover, whereas "*Niqab*" is used to describe a face cover.

Some local societies, like Saudi Arabia's, expect Muslim women to wear Hijab in a certain way. Some members of this same society also expect behaviour that is compatible with the clothing worn. In both cases, certain behaviour is expected from Muslim women. In this regard, the dominant culture expects that Muslim women will strictly adhere to Hijab in those cultures where donning the Hijab is the norm. In contrast, in secular societies, a Muslim woman may be deemed regressive if she chooses to wear the Hijab. This is shown in the writings of some orientalists who described the Hijab as a tool used to oppress women; and as a roadblock on the path to progress that must be discarded (Ahmed, 1992, Mernissi, 1985, El-saadawi, 1980, Khan, 1995, Maududi, 1972).

This chapter reflects on the varied experiences of young women and their

opinions regarding Hijab in both its classical incarnations and its more contemporary adaptations, as found both inside the Kingdom and abroad. Through the narrations of the young women interviewed for this study, we come to understand the significance of Hijab in their lives, be it as a method of attaining protection and respect, or for projecting honour and modesty. Its wearers do not describe the Hijab as a tool of repression, as some previous literature has noted (Afshar, 2008), rather it has acquired a new meaning as a tool for extending women's rights and citizenship in terms of education, employment and opinion. Most young Saudi women interviewed here claim Hijab to be on a path to liberation. Through wearing the Hijab, the young woman receives trust and respect from those in power in her society, be it from men or women. Based on these expectations, it is possible to explore the complexity and agency of the seemingly 'obedient' young Saudi woman. In all cases, the young woman subtly yet determinedly seeks to attain her rights and goals through mitigation, negotiation and (often imperceptible) rebellion.

Although the majority of respondents claimed that wearing Hijab is a personal decision, the freedom associated with this decision is determined by the contexts in which it is taken. These include social environment, education and the upbringing the woman received from her parents. These factors determine whether a young woman has a free choice about wearing, modifying or not wearing Hijab. Therefore, it is noticeable that what we understand as Bourdieu's concept of habitus here facilitates innovation, deceit and flexible negotiation with the dominant culture, but within the available windows of opportunity and according to the needs and deprivations found in each young woman's daily life.

Thus, experiences vary from one young woman to the next in light of the

differences in the environment, education and expectations of each family. Furthermore, the globalisation process and greater openness to the outside world are driving cultural change in Saudi society. This has resulted in a gulf of understanding regarding socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour between the patriarchal parental generation and the modernising generation, to which the young women interviewed belong. The habitus concept, determines the structure of society, because it is a traditional, patriarchal and conservative society, which expects women to follow men, however, remains important for explaining the behaviour expected from the young Saudi woman, living in a patriarchal Islamic society at the epicentre of the Islamic world. The respondents themselves are all young Muslim women; as such, they frequently mention Islam and Islamic identity when talking about Hijab. Most of the narratives of the participants are imbued with a strict regard for modesty, shyness and honour, rather than outward appearance, as the primary indicators of what constitutes a woman's observance to Islam. Therefore, the sub-themes used in this chapter are focused on modesty, respectfulness, acceptance, and finally honour and honour combined with protection.

5.2 Hijab as Modesty

The degree to which a young Muslim woman should cover herself is an area of heated debate between religious scholars. This is evident in the analysis, in which every respondent expressed her own unique take on Hijab. For most participants, Hijab manifests itself as a head covering and *Fiqh*, whilst for others it is conservative dressing not necessarily incorporating a covering for the head. Hijab also manifests itself in modest behaviour. Therefore, the Hijab does not stop at merely covering the head and body; rather, many respondents claim that a woman needs to present herself modestly, not only in terms of

physical appearance. Because Islam commands women not to look *haram*, most of the respondents claim that, regardless of whether she chooses to wear a headscarf or not, a woman must behave modestly, as modest behaviour is the cornerstone of Hijab.

Dinya, for example, claims that Hijab is not merely about appearance: It is mainly about values, righteous behaviour and piety that autonomously govern a young woman's life. These values manifest themselves as self-respect when dealing with others. She believes morality to be a key aspect of Hijab, revealing that she sees Hijab as not only a material garment but also a belief with a moral foundation. She believes Hijab is a major part of her life and her own free choice. For Dinya, Hijab is the space that allows her to feel protected, respected, and confident. Hijab, in the Islamist context, offers protection and freedom while it also communicates women's identities to others (Droogsma, 2007).

The Hijab of the Muslim woman, before being apparent, I feel it is most importantly internal... I mean... it is true that the appearance is very important... That I must cover my hair as the Messenger (peace be upon him) recommended us not to uncover and all the other things... But... I mean... internally, to maintain myself, respect myself and to put Hijab between me and the one I am talking to... Not only in appearance. This is something moral rather than formal... I mean... The internal Hijab is given an external appearance that I am with Hijab... I mean identical from the inside and outside... This is my idea.

(Dinya, 21 years old university student)

Although they believe Hijab is a religious doctrine, some participants point out

that “everyone has her own opinion on the matter”. Asad (1980) refers to the fact that there are reasons why Islam did not explicitly and unequivocally state a dress code. He argues that human conditions vary from era to era, and that the Quran is a moral guide whose teachings are adaptable to changing times and social conditions. In a similar vein, Samara discusses the ambiguity in the jurisdiction of Hijab, as well as the manner in which religious understanding differs from one young woman to the next.

Okay as religious jurisdiction and that well I don't dispute that. But, from my point of view I don't think there's any need for it, like, it's not arbitrary... ummm... There's girls who think that (even) the veil is compulsory and there's (other girls) who view the scarf as something to be donned on the plane as she's coming back from her travels – a garment to be discarded when travelling abroad. I think that not wearing Hijab at all is the best (approach), and there's people who, if they don't wear Hijab, will be accepted regardless (by those around them).

(Samara, 20 years old university student)

Samara thinks that the Hijab is a religious requirement, yet one that can be adapted to the needs of each place, culture and nation. Indeed, people's clothing tends to differ not just between cultures but also within cultures. Clothing tends to evolve over time. Samara explains these concepts of flexibility and mitigation and voices her belief that Hijab can be modified to suit the needs of each era and context.

Samara expresses that, while some view Hijab as an indicator of Islamic piety and identity, and thus wear it whenever they are in public, others view Hijab as a symbol of Saudi state policy which enforces Hijab, and thus discard Hijab

whenever they are abroad.

The majority of participants viewed modest behaviour as essential. Several Islamic texts command women not to gaze at unrelated men, nor to attract men's gazes to themselves. For this reason, the majority of the participants pointed to the need for modest behaviour as a key aspect of Hijab. Hinadi, for example, said that Hijab is not limited to covering the head.

The most important thing is not to be attracting attention and to act normal... A girl shouldn't be wearing Hijab and something very tight; that has no meaning... She must be a human being in heart and mind, respected, not attracting attention or abnormal interest and that's all. **(Hinadi, 21 years old university student)**

Hinadi does not cover her head. Her concept of Hijab is that it should incorporate modest, conservative clothing that is not very tight. Furthermore, she believes modest behaviour is the most important factor associated with Hijab. This indicates that she does not view Hijab as a dress code, but as a moral value. Hinadi feels that, despite her shunning of traditional Hijab, she projects her self-respect and sets the same boundaries around herself as any Hijab-wearing woman. This reasoning runs parallel to Ahmed's (1992) in that it shows that there is opportunity for diversity in the interpretation and application of religion. Hinadi here rejects the traditional focus on outward appearance and chooses to focus on pious, respectful behaviour. This view challenges the feminist assertions in the literature review that claim Hijab is enforced by the male-dominated patriarchy (Mernissi, 1987). In Hinadi's narration, we find that she chooses not to wear Hijab and focuses instead on modesty by not attracting attention to herself and behaving respectfully.

Imana, the youngest participant, agrees in principle with Hinadi's viewpoints about modesty:

...I mean if a woman walks without a veil, she will not be attractive like when she wears *Abaya* and a coloured headscarf. The veil is also related to the purse she is holding and the shoes she is wearing. She shouldn't wear shoes with a very high heel and walk clicking the ground, and she shouldn't hold a much decorated purse as she will certainly be very striking.
(Imana, 16 years old high school student)

In the end, we notice a difference between the participants. Samara and Dinya agreed that Hijab is an Islamic tradition. However, they differ in that Dinya claimed that Hijab espouses appearance and behaviour, and is a beneficial practice. Samara, however, claimed that Hijab is not beneficial. She wears it of her own free will and discards it freely as well. It is not an indicator of her piety. Hinadi and Imana alleged that the Hijab is about not attracting attention, behaving modestly and as such is more than just external appearance.

5.3 Maintaining Honour and Resisting Sexual Exploitation:

Hijab, as some participants claimed, is a logical injunction for the Quran to make. Majda mentioned that Hijab places a barrier between men and women and prevents extra-marital sexual relationships, which are forbidden in Islam. She also claimed Hijab to be a factor lowering the risk of easy access to women, thus helping to safeguard honour. However, she argues that unmarried women have a responsibility to be celibate, as their honour will guarantee the virtue of all society:

Hijab is setting so many limits in so many areas. I mean percentages of deviation and these things in our country are relatively less than other communities, because of Hijab, and because the Muslim woman is different culturally, traditionally and religiously. So you can see the difference between her and women in other communities. **(Majda, 20 years old university student)**

It is quite obvious that, for Majda, the woman's foremost responsibility is maintaining her honour, and thus her family's honour, through wearing the Hijab. The reason is that the woman, especially the Hijab-wearer, is responsible for raising the future generations and is the pillar of the "ideal Muslim family". Thus the Hijab-wearer, for this participant, is the virtuous, modular "ideal Muslim woman", whilst the non Hijab-wearer is damaging her family's honour.

Contrary to Majda's viewpoint, Ranees believes that the Hijab protects the virtue of everyone within the society. Despite the fact that Majda's and Ranees's viewpoints on female attractiveness differ, they both link the Hijab to the symbolism associated with the female gender. This points to the fact that, within both narratives, the female body is deemed alluring and responsible for enticing men; thus, from this perspective, the uncovered body, if coupled with immodest behaviour, may lead to the ruin of society. As such, they have internalised the significance and regard associated with the female body in Islam, and considered it to convey an indication of the traditional values present in society (Davis, 1994). Therefore, according to both Majda and Ranees, the purity and honour of a society depends on the condition of women's bodies.

Because I feel Hijab protects women – after God I mean – safeguards them. There is no use and not good, that everybody may see you... You are more precious than being seen by everyone... I mean this is better for her. And for the whole society. **(Ranees, 18 years old university student)**

Hence, Hijab, in the Islamic context, represents goodwill and morality and is a symbol that one is “pure and unattainable” (Hessini, 1994). This discourse is reflected in the Saudi academy and in the findings of research conducted in Saudi Arabia by Madani, Al-Mazrou, Al-Jeffri and Alhuzaim (2004), which discussed HIV prevention measures and found that strict measures like Hijab and segregation helped to decrease the rates of HIV infection.

In the interviews I conducted, the theme of ‘protection’ was also mentioned. For example, Reemaf and Nehar both referred to the Hijab as offering them protection from strangers; also, as representing a behaviour that suggests piety. Their Hijab comes with *Niqab* or a face covering to avoid attention. Nehar also argued for dressing conservatively and avoiding perfume, hinting at invisibility both to the eyes and to the nose and to avoiding drawing the attention of men.

If a girl wears Hijab and covers her face, no one will look at her or flirt with her. On the other hand, if she attracts attention, wears tight clothes and makeup, she’s more likely to be molested. Hijab may be some kind of protection. **(Reemaf, 18 years old university student)**

Black *Abaya* covers all my body, not attractive... I mean it should cover my hair, my body and of course no perfume and

it should be long enough, and I believe women should cover their faces to protect them from strangers. **(Nehar, 19 years old university student)**

Thus, hijab is not just a covering; it is also perceived by wearers as a protective barrier. This parallels the experience of a British doctor who came to work in Saudi Arabia. Her friend, a long-time resident of the country, suggested she wear an *Abaya*, and this is her experience of wearing the garment.

Immediately, I felt safer. This veil would deflect intrusive male gazes. I was shielded, impregnable, and most importantly of all, completely concealed, the *Abaya* was easy to move in, I was enthralled at my total obliteration. (Ahmed, 2008: 38)

The participants often refer to Hijab as safe, comfortable and confidence promoting; for example, Dinya, claims her Hijab provides with much needed protection within all societies; Islamic or non-Islamic. Hijab is an essential component of her life and it is her choice to wear it. Hijab, for this participant, is the space through which she views herself and negotiates her femininity with authority.

If I feel that I want to be with Hijab for the sake of myself and to protect myself, I will put on the Hijab, cover my hair, not show my hands or my body... I mean... My Hijab inside the Saudi Kingdom and outside it will be the same. **(Dinya, 21 years old university student)**

Dinya's opinion is in agreement with El-Saadawi's (1980), in that they both view women as strong and not weak. El-Saadawi, however, sees Hijab as a symbol of female weakness. Conversely, Dinya, sees the Hijab as empowering

women by offering protection against men's encroachments. When analysing the participants' narratives, Hijab was found to impose both a physical and social distance between the two genders. Hijab enforces a physical gender barrier and enhances women's femininity, humility and modesty. Furthermore, the modest young woman is generally better received by society in Hijab, and her marriage prospects are increased as a consequence.

For an example of the above, we may look to Abeen's narrative of working at a mixed gender teaching hospital. Some of her colleagues, she claims, employ Hijab to talk to male colleagues and increase their marriage prospects by using anonymity to intrigue their male suitors and gain their respect.

One of my friends studies medicine. All of her friends wear Hijab and half cover their faces, they keep on joking with the male classmates. I mean, if you are wearing Hijab and cover your face you are respected. And if you are not wearing *Niqab* then you are not respected. **(Abeen, 21 years old university student)**

This opinion is in agreement with that of Schmidt (2004), in that Hijab-wearing young women are considered moral and worthy of respect by their friends and society as a whole. Thus, the young women mentioned in the previous example are employing Hijab as a tool: for protection, to gain respect, and to attain a greater freedom when conversing with men while keeping their identities concealed. The Hijab liberates the young woman from men's gazes and affords her a greater freedom of movement and gives them freedom to interact with men invisibly. Therefore, Hijab-wearing young Saudi women can move more freely in public places than their non-Hijab wearing counterparts (Siraj, 2011; Hoodfar, 1993).

It is apparent from what has preceded that, while there is discord over the material garments that should be worn as a part of Hijab, all of the participants agree that Hijab should project modesty, provide protection, and ensure honour and respectability. Their opinions stem from cultural values that reflect the religious or traditional values of Islamic society.

5.4 Hijab as freedom, respectfulness, and moderation

Five of the participants claimed that Hijab grants them freedom, and increases society's respect for them. Imana is the youngest participant. She is in high school and electively dons Hijab every day as she leaves her house. She claims that it is the most important symbol in her life, and is not an impediment to her. Quite the contrary, in fact: Imana believes the Hijab to guarantee freedom and respect for her as a Muslim girl. This runs contrary to the claims of feminists, including Ahmed (1992), who have claimed that the Hijab is a repression imposed on Muslim women. Imana believes that Hijab allows her to be who she wants to be, as it affords her both respect and self-expression.

From my perspective as a veiled girl, I never consider the veil as a restraint for me; on the contrary, I feel that the most important thing is the veil... I feel that it creates limits for me... that the things that happen to the unveiled girl will not be as the things that may happen to the girl who is veiled by a good veil, I mean with no makeup... I mean, with a properly tidy veil, there will be limits in dealing with her. **(Imana, 16 years old high school student)**

Majda claimed that Hijab raises her status as she feels that she is a queen inside of the house, and a hallowed, respected and protected person while

outside of it. Hijab, according to her, repels malicious men and guarantees society's respect for her identity as a woman and a Muslim. She believes that Hijab gives her the right to an education; and enhances her educational and social status. A woman who wears the Hijab can be active, engaged, educated and professional (Afshar, 1998)

This is in opposition to Amin (1970), who campaigned for Hijab's removal, stating that it is the reason behind stagnation in colonised societies.

I mean she lives like a queen in her house, if she's at home. And if she's out, I mean receiving men's respect is enough. If she's totally covered no one harms but respects her. Men lower their heads and walk away from her. I feel Hijab is not an obstacle, doesn't hinder anything a woman wants. It's okay to continue her studies while wearing it. **(Majda, 20 years old university student)**

Hijab, as Arthur claimed, plays a vital role in displaying one's identity to others (Arthur, 2001), and it acts as "a kind of visual metaphor for identity" (Davis, 1992: 25). Here, the participant does not consider herself compelled or constrained. She sees Hijab as a personal choice, and describes it as being harmonious with the Muslim society in which the young woman lives. This, according to Majda, provides happiness and comfort, and increases her pride in her identity as a young Muslim woman.

In contrast, the secular feminist position views Hijab as a symbol of male domination and female subordination (El Hamel, 2002). Thus, the participants choose an Islamic viewpoint, which is contrary to this feminist perspective. Through their Islamic lens, the participants have come to believe Hijab is a

symbol of identity rooted in their cultural and religious heritage. Thus, the participants believe that a Muslim young woman best represents Islam by wearing Hijab. This is in line with Algerian women's resistance to the French colonisers' claim that Hijab symbolises inferiority. Instead, they continued to don Hijab as a symbol of pride, tradition, custom and resistance to Western domination.

I don't feel restrained. Nothing stands in my way. I'm in med school, I wear *Niqab*, I'm free in my society, and everything is fine. It's enough that I walk with respect while wearing Hijab and it's not an obstacle. On the contrary, I'm proud of it.

Thanks Allah, it's a blessing from Allah. **(Amani, 19 years old university student)**

Samaha, the fourth participant, also agreed with Amani's thoughts on the religious identity granted by Hijab, in that Islam is a religion of freedom for women.

But I don't think that religion is a restriction... no... I mean I am totally against people saying our religion restricts women because in our religion, I don't see that religion restricts women. On the contrary, I see that it absolutely grants her full rights. **(Samaha, 21 years old university student)**

Samaha considers that using the Hijab, which is meant to be a protection and covering, as a form of decoration is unacceptable and contrary to local culture. She believes that clothing should be moderate and appropriate to the role played by women in life. She also refuses liberation from moral constraints, arguing that modernising efforts drive young women away from what is

culturally acceptable. Samaha suggests that not wearing Hijab modestly is a form of rebellion against the accepted and traditional character of 'the young Muslim woman'.

In Halat's narrative, we read a rejection for espousing eye-catching apparel and Hijab.

If there is a veiled girl wearing tight clothes, colours and a face cover and another girl wearing a T-shirt, trousers that are not very tight and unveiled, whose hair is apparent, in my opinion I prefer her, because the second one reckons that she is covering her face, but her veil is tight... Let alone those who cover their faces and show up their eyes with eyeliner and makeup and a tight *Abaya* (and she pointed to her body to explain the tightness of clothing)... even the underwear is obvious. **(Halat, 21 years old university student)**

Despite the absence of young women who professedly espouse the Hijab and eye-catching apparel from the sample, the participants voice their rejection of some young women's tendency to "hide behind the Hijab"; using the Hijab to attract attention. It is also apparent that the *Abaya*, in its modern reincarnation, is a subtle challenge to traditional Hijab, and an act of covert opposition to cultural, religious, and national traditionalism which manifest in the traditional *Abaya*. This is what Shimek (2012) also noted in her study about the modern *Abaya* common in the Gulf Area.

Thus, I argue that the young woman's adaptation to reality in any case, whether through moderation or decency, is a successful negotiation and tactic

by which to gain acceptance, prestige and respect. Tactics, as de Certeau puts it, can only play on alien terrain: the tactician does not declare the conditions wherein the interaction with “other” social forces takes place. Dominant culture, being the social “other”, is the power that draws up the terrain for interaction with young women, who devise tactics to deal with this “other” (de Certeau, Jameson and Lovitt, 1980). A young woman can reason that there is much to be gained by not clashing with the power of customs and traditions in a strictly conservative society that respects the Hijab and decency of women and sanctifies the modesty of women.

Freedom in Samaha's opinion is bestowed by the Hijab; thus, she contradicts the arguments of Huda Shaarawi that liberation lies in removing the Hijab (as happened in Cairo in 1923). Huda Shaarawi, from the viewpoint of many western and Arab scholars, is a symbol of the liberation of Women (Ahmed, 1992: 174–79). Samaha challenges the idea of Shaarawi, noting that Hijab is not for protection from nudity but rather intended for moderation and modesty. By wearing it, a woman can be respectable and gain high prestige in the society:

Wearing the veil as a decoration, I may consider that as rebellion against customs and traditions because they should respect the place in which they live... Because from my viewpoint no one has absolute freedom unless he lives for instance on Mars alone... I mean you live on Earth and so this country's customs and traditions controls you and you must adhere to same... I mean for instance, if I were a lawyer, I will not be able to practice such a profession wearing a bikini and say I am free to wear what I want... This isn't right... I must be

committed to and respect the place I live in. **(Samaha, 21 years old university student)**

The fifth participant, Hadeer, pointed out that some young women exercise rebellion and trickery through the use of Hijab. Hijab, for them, becomes the only way to attain freedom and be in public places without revealing their identity. This finding is in line with Hossaini's study of Moroccan women, who wear Hijab to ensure continued participation in public life (Mcintosh and Islam, 2010). This is also consistent with a recent study in Riyadh on women in a major malls. This study employed observational research and informal interviews at the Crescent Mall in Riyadh. The interviewees were officers from a private security firm and mall security managers. The study aimed to demonstrate the use of modern surveillance to enforce local customs and traditions, and promote capitalistic concepts of profit maximization and prevention of loss. The study found customs and traditional values affected surveillance operators' targeting of people. In fact, 95% of those singled out for attention were men; although operators stated that women were often engaged in courtship, traditional wisdom suggests that males are more likely to instigate flirting explaining the operators' rationale.

Interestingly, some of the young women used Hijab to avoid detection and identification by CCTV, and this meant wearing make-up went unnoticed. This is one way in which, young women resist and to control their Hijab and use it to suit their desires. Young women here are not negative and passive, but rather positive individuals who interact with and implicitly challenge authority, albeit in small ways, in malls or universities, thereby attracting attention from unrelated men (Alhadar and McCahill, 2011).

Girls who are leaving college without their families' knowledge, you find them covered totally in black, and when they sit at a table you see 3–4 girls without covering their face or makeup. When they go back to college, they cover their face up again. This contradiction is caused by oppression. I think they are fed up with covering the face all the time and they are not allowed to go out so they do this to change and try like girls abroad, why don't we live life like them? **(Hadeer, 20 years old university student)**

In Samaha's narrative, the young Saudi woman is smart for accepting the Hijab and "respecting the place she lives in". In return, she gains respect and the right to work, as shown in her lawyer analogy. For Hadeer, Hijab itself is the symbol of free choice, which the young women actively seek.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, and by analysing the participants' views on Hijab, we notice that Hijab's main role is as a tool of social enablement, to enable women to enter public life, as proposed by the participants. Hijab does play various other functions that vary from one young woman to the next, and this heterogeneity in experiences indicates the cultural changes that are occurring within the new generation as a result of openness to the outside world, via various means of communication (Yamani, 2000). Examples include: dialogue with those in power, women's employment as a pretext for greater participation, education for the sake of education itself, women studying abroad, the calls for female-only recreational amenities, demands for sport's classes in girls' schools, and

the demands for greater freedom to express oneself at the family and state level (Ibid). Therefore, we find that Sweetman's concept of "Pick and Mix" is a useful one for illustrating the diversity in the participants' experiences and beliefs. Since the choices are limited, and the social reality of Saudi Arabia does not permit direct challenges, the young Saudi woman is limited in her choices.

From the aforementioned, we find that the form taken by Hijab depends on different interpretations of the Quran and has various functions in the eyes of scholars. Accordingly, we find that Hijab has taken on different forms and dimensions for the participants; each according to what she reads or who she follows.

The analysis finds that in general, Hijab has three major dimensions that contradict the strands of feminist thought shown in the literature review. The first one takes Hijab to be a personal choice and interprets it by focusing on the decency of behaviour, and piety, in addition to the practicality of it being a means of covering the hair and body. It also depicts Hijab as something not compulsory but rather voluntary and rational for the benefit of the young Muslim woman. The second dimension depicts Hijab as a weapon through which the young woman can gain her power and identity as a female and as a human being, and defend her body against male exploitation. This is also contrary to feminist studies that depict women as weak and oppressed and vulnerable to harassment from men. In this study, the participants' stress that with Hijab, women gain control over their bodies and are able protect their honour from the eyes of weak men. Here, the male is seen as the sensual, lustful and vulnerable person and not women, as reported by Mernissi (1983).

The women feel empowered and superior when wearing the Hijab, which allows them to control their bodies. This is contrary to the image of it as described by western colonial scholars; that women are inferior because of Hijab (Ahmed, 1992). The third dimension adopted by the young women is that Hijab is a way to access public places and attain freedom, while hiding their identity. This perspective considers Hijab a kind of protection and a strategic tactic adopted by young women to fulfil their desires without confronting the customs and traditions of society or parental authority.

Young Saudi women are raised according to certain cultural standards that impose protection, chastity, modesty and decency on them. These principles are concentrated in the inner consciences of these young women. Saudi girls are raised to become feminine Muslim young woman who will be accepted in society. This is unquestionable for a Muslim researcher who holds Saudi citizenship and grew up on the same cultural values like myself. Perhaps for this reason, the participants spoke only briefly on familiar cultural subjects as they were fully aware of the researcher's awareness of Hijab and the associated conditions. From the above, it is evident that culture in Saudi society reflects a particular religion and set of perceptions about life. Religion should also be embodied in a certain cultural framework that reflects the human (that is the participants) as well as the civilizational model of the religion. Thus, the young woman became a mirror that reflects the human, cultural and intellectual personality of the religion, as it features in her real life behaviour (i.e. Hijab and the decency, honour and respect associated with it). There is an innate sense of necessity felt among young women, fostered by Saudi culture's espousing of malleability (by providing variable opportunities in education and work) and immobility (through restricting women to assigned roles of a mother or a wife sub-ordinated to her guardian). This mirrors the cultural structural

framework and pushes for her rights through subtle negotiation and tactical conformity. The mirror itself cannot be smashed: Outright rebellion is too costly.

6. Chapter Six: Gender Relations Theme

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss negotiations about gender relations. Islam interweaves the normative fabric of the entire region, thereby constituting a basic ideological and logical foundation to women's education and participation in public life. Although the correct interpretations of Islamic behaviour have had an impact on certain segments of society, the local habits, customs and traditions of society dictate the role of women and impose their influence via the family hierarchy. In recent years, these customs and traditions have been used to justify men's psychological and social authority over women. The authority of religious scholars continues to play a major role in determining political legitimacy, as well as the relationship of women with such legitimacy. While Islam establishes an ideological basis for social life in Saudi Arabia, the family plays a major role in determining the organisation of Islam and its role in society.

In Saudi Arabia, although the Quran is the basis of law and reform, Arab patriarchal traditions contribute to the subordination of women to men. In this analysis, therefore, it is argued that the concept of *Qiwama*, which means the authority of males over females, is in fact a traditional concept supported only by a skewed interpretation of an idea mentioned just once in the Quran. Characteristics of the Saudi family, especially the father's control; whose responsibility for the family's finances leads to the subordination of women to men. Also under examination will be the relationship with the mother, who is seen by the young woman as an intermediary to ease confrontation with masculine authority. Via their mothers, young women indirectly negotiate and

engage in dialogue with the authority figure; this appears to be a deliberate pragmatic strategy. The young women's perceptions of the ban on women driving cars in Saudi Arabia will also be discussed. The ban on driving is considered by some participants as positive and is associated with a luxurious lifestyle as it facilitates their lives, protects them and ensures that their traditional position of housewife and mother is maintained, while for others it is considered a restrictive state policy that should be lifted if women are to be further empowered.

This analysis focuses on a generation of young women born in the nineties; they are a generation who have not been subject to the tribal traditions witnessed by the previous two generations. They are young women who have studied at university or are still at school, and they are the first generation to be born during the Internet era (Al-Saggaf, 2004). These young women have greater knowledge of the world than their parents due to their education and exposure to the external world through different means of communication. However, this technological change has had the potential to create problems for this new generation, causing them to live in conflict with the social pressures set to preserve traditional values that are contrary to their personal desire to challenge authority and find their own path. In her book, *Changed Identities*, Mai Yamani (2000) described this new generation of young people as follows:

“The young people in today's Saudi Arabia are calling for greater freedom of expression, criticising censorship.....the youth, however, are not saying that they do not want moral rules but rather are demanding that the law be based on a more flexible interpretation of Islam. Their Islam is less

confined. Islam continues to be, for them, the basis of legitimate behaviour, but the way that it is enforced by the authorities is seen as too restrictive” (Yamani, 2000: 27).

In Arab societies, as in many societies, gender plays a key role in determining how a person is educated and treated by his/her parents, and how he or she conceives of himself or herself (Killian, 2006). However, social upbringing in the Arab world varies depending on gender, especially during the early stages of life. Young women are expected to stay at home, in accordance with traditional family values, which portray young women as helpless creatures to be preserved under the pretext of preserving familial honour. The young woman is believed to require protection, as discussed in the previous analysis of Hijab. Despite the fact that men and women are equal in their religious and moral duties, the traditional culture is stronger than Islam when it comes to defining the role of the young man or woman in society. Doumato (1992) pointed out that femininity is the defining feature of “the perfect Muslim woman” who is, in the eyes of Saudi scholars, a mother and wife, responsible for the unity of the nuclear family (AlMunajjed, 1997). This value is present in the participants’ narrations, confirming that the family is the foundation of life, even for the new generation. Reenat, for example, when asked about her daily activities, said that she has no need for friends because her family satisfies all her needs. She stressed that the family, and nothing else, is the foundation of life. Thus, the family is regarded by young people as the stable foundation of the personality.

My family is enough for me. It is one small community, my uncles. Their kids are the same age as me or a bit younger, so I

don't need anyone else. (Reenat, 21 year old university student)

In this context, this study will analyse the relationship between the patriarchal and hierarchical aspects of gender relations from a feminist perspective. The participants' feminism challenges modern feminist views, as the young women call for their experiences and desires to be integrated with men's, but they stop short of asking for absolute equality. This is a tactical negotiation on their part to obtain the rights to education and employment within a traditional conservative Islamist framework. Moreover, an analysis will be included, presenting the relationship between mother and daughter and the mother's impact on the daughter's awareness of the young woman's function and role in the traditional family. Also of interest is the role played by the mother in helping her daughter adapt to parental authority. Finally, this study will examine the young women's views on banning driving. It will also examine the reasons behind the ban on women driving as expressed by the participants, as well as presenting the opinions of those participants who oppose the driving ban and demand equality with other women around the world.

6.2 *Qiwama* and Control

The imperfect nature of women's rights in the communities of the Middle East is the result of outdated, self-serving interpretations of *Sharia* (Stowasser, 1994). Modern day political powers actively attempt to impose age-old interpretations, and thus subordinate women to men (Afshar and Maynard, 2000).

In Saudi Arabia, rights are obtained by women through their participation in the family and community, which in turn operates according to a patriarchal

logic that allocates certain privileges to males and deprives others (women and children) of their rights. Therefore, liberation and its standards must pass through the traditional social mechanisms of *Qiwama* and the *Wali-ul-amr*, to earn privileges and opportunities, as expressed by the participants.

The Family Code in the Quran identifies some of the fundamental social and economic rights of women. However, the law refers to the family system as a whole and does not recognise individual rights, whether for males or females. Among the many directives that relate to the institutions of marriage and parenthood, the Quran dictates that the power of the Muslim family is based on the authority of the male; the husband over his wife, and the father over his children, through his provision of economic support. In return, children and wives must obey the husband and father. This is what Bourdieu referred to when he described the habitus as a set of behaviours expected of each person, and noted that the individual does not represent a separate person but an “entire collective history” (Bourdieu, 1990: 91).

Islamic law has historically determined the behaviour of Muslims across time and generations. Thus, it can be argued that the text of the Quran determined the respective roles of men and women in order to empower the family. Therefore, the young woman is brought up in a domestic role, in preparation for motherhood and housewifery, while the boy is raised to be outward looking in preparation for being a husband, future father and economic provider. This difference in roles is supported by the differences in the biological structure of each gender, whereby the female is seen as the weaker party in need of protection and guardianship by the stronger party, i.e. the male. For example, this is clear in Reen’s description of the difference in parental treatment between brothers and sisters. She emphasises the biological differences that

allow discrimination between males and females. Here, Reen's opinion differs from the human rights groups that maintain that Saudi women are culturally constrained by customs and *fatwas*. She believes that a woman's status is one of privilege and protection. Reen opposes the viewpoint of Barazangi, the feminist activist, who demands a re-interpretation of the Quran with respect to women's rights and rejects the concept of the guardian, stating that "the female is an autonomous moral being who has a direct relationship with God as her only Guardian" (Barazangi, 2004: 78).

... I am a young woman... Meaning you feel that it's natural ... I am different to the boy because if he spends a long time out of the house it's different than the young woman when she spends a long time out of the house. The young woman is worried about much more than the boy, the boy can protect himself, meaning he's different. **(Reen, 17 year old university student)**

Here, this study argues that the influence of traditional culture in determining the roles of males and females is stronger than Islam's influence, the latter equating the two genders in their moral and religious duties. This is consistent with Doumato's opinion that the identification of a specific lifestyle as befitting a Muslim woman has been developed from the perspective of scholars and not Islam. This conceptualisation of women by scholars is found in Engineer's *Rights of Women in Islam* (1992):

"An ideal woman speaks and laughs rarely and never without a reason. She never leaves the house, even to see neighbors or her acquaintance. She has no women friends, confides in

nobody, and relies only on her husband and her parents.”

(Engineer, 1992: 57)

This example shows a conservative male writer's vision of the ideal Muslim woman. Despite the fact that the Quran focuses on human rights, faith, devotion and worship as the basis of Muslim life, the scholars' focus, as Stowasser (1994) argued, is on insuring virtue in both sexes in order to create an integrated society based on morality. According to Stowasser (1994), equality involves the provision of equal services to ensure the welfare of society as a whole. Unlike Reen, the participant Hadeer declares her objection to discrimination between young women and men in terms of freedom, control and education. She claims that Islam should guarantee her equality, whether in freedom of movement or education.

Things are completely different here. For example; going out, they don't know where my brother is, and my father only says, don't be late and asks him, where are you? He replies, I am with my friend, and will sleep at his house, but my father doesn't ask him who that friend is. This is not the same with me, I have restrictions and he is without any restrictions. Even in travel, the idea of travelling is OK for me, but if I travel, I must be with my brother or my father, i.e. with *Mahram*. My brother may travel, go out and come back, sleep alone at his friend's house, go to the club... All of that is allowed without restrictions because he is a boy; generally, the matters that are imposed by the father differ from those imposed by religion. In the old days, the Muslim woman was working and had

freedom, while now, customs and traditions prevails. **(Hadeer,
20 year old university student)**

Here, it is argued that the participants are aware of their rights. This is an indication that young women of the younger generation have begun to adopt a new type of thinking regarding gender and women's role in society. In contrast to the participants' appreciation of the protection provided by Hijab, in accordance with the traditions and norms of their society, the difference in treatment between males and females is seen as unfair. This agrees with Fakhr El-Islam (2000), who argued that cultural traditions are responsible for entrenching hierarchy in Arab families, granting males sweeping authority over females, and extending more freedoms and privileges to males than to females. In this context, rather than when Hijab-wearing women are enjoying mirroring the cultural preference of society, gender is no longer a secure or stable element in their identification, and the female's role as obedient daughter is now challenged as a result of expectations of greater equality, especially in education and perhaps also in freedom of movement and employment.

With regard to the concept of *Qiwama* or a guardian for young women, all thirty participants pointed out the male's primary role as breadwinner. They also referred to the expectation that women will be financially dependent on their father, who is expected to support them from birth to marriage/death. This concept is clear and consistent with the Quranic verse about *Qiwama* of men over women.

“Men are maintainers of women with what Allah has given to some of them more than others and with what they spend of their money.” (Quran, 4: 34)

The interpretation of this verse by Al-Tabari (1972) and Al-Baydawi (1968), two of the most renowned interpreters of the Quran, focuses on giving men the right to control women's lives (this is what they concluded from the word "more" in the verse) providing they meet all their needs, while women have a duty of obedience and taking care of the home (Sabbagh, 1996). A man may correct the behaviour of a woman if she makes a mistake. A mistake might include leaving the house without her husband's permission (Stowasser, 1998). Contrary to this interpretation, Samara, for example, believes the concept of *Qiwama* is often misapplied by men. She believes it is the father's duty to spend money on her. For her, acceptance of *Qiwama* stops at this point. She challenges the idea of dependency on men or the view that women are inferior and refuses to give men the right to control her personal life under the pretence of providing for her.

My definition? Restrictions! Like they say that *Qiwama* is spending and what not, and that someone is responsible; held accountable for your actions. But I'm of age- I'm twenty and can take care of myself. Like in foreign countries both (genders) are legally of age from 18 years they can live alone... Like, the *Wali-ul-amr* is usually the father. As to the *Wali-ul-amr* being the brother, the uncle- paternal or maternal- and the husband, I just don't recognise that. I grudgingly agree with the *Wali-ul-amr* being the father because in most cases he spends on his daughter from the day of her birth to the day of her marriage. Like, because he spends, he automatically has the right to order and forbid and approve and disapprove of personal matters because he spends... He thinks he is more adept at managing and he does not view spending as an

obligation when in fact it clearly is. **(Samara, 20 year old university student)**

Another participant, Reenat, claimed that Saudi men abuse the concept of *Qiwama* by using it as a license to control women's lives, and she attributes this to a wrongful interpretation by individuals of their rights as spouses. She also attributes marital problems to the traditional culture that supports the superiority of men over women. This is far removed from the teachings of Islam, she says, as Islam promotes the wellbeing of women and emphasises love and kindness between spouses. She objects to what Al-Tabari proposed: punishing women for going out without permission. This is further evidence of young women of the new generation's changing attitudes to their roles as women and their rights.

But here in Saudi Arabia, the case is different, and if the wife goes out without the permission of her husband or the husband is dissatisfied, he might create a problem for her, but the problem of *Al-Qiwamah* in Saudi Arabia is that our men say, "you women don't understand anything". **(Reenat, 21 year old university student)**

Based on this, it can be argued that the opinion of these two young women is consistent with Islamic Feminism in that the woman is seen to have a personality and a life independent of her male relatives (Waddy, 1980). This stems from the Western feminist notion that, in spite of the biological differences between men and women, the two genders complement each other in their social and cultural roles (Afshar and Maynard, 2000; Lemu and Heeren 1976). This also concurs with Denmark's view in which he states that

“Islamic feminism accepts that women and men have different roles in the family, but these differences do not make women inferior to men and do not preclude women from participating in the public arena.” (Denmark, 2004: 369)

This, in turn, is consistent with the participant Dinya’s concept of *Qiwama* as incorporating both financial support and caring, but not undermining the status of women. Rather, it imposes on men the duty to care for women and fulfil their needs. According to Dinya, men and women are complementary to each other. Neither gender is better than the other. Women have roles that suit them, as do men:

They complement each other... It is not that men are superior... Even the woman, there are things that she can do, while he cannot be like her... I mean... They have things that they can do and we cannot, and vice versa... They are integrated. **(Dinya, 21 year old university student)**

This study maintains that the new generation views women as being just as responsible as men. Women are better at certain things, while men at others. This concept is consistent with a study (Abdulla, 2005) that supported the existence of biological differences between men and women, and the fact that these differences affect their performance at work. Many in the new generation of young Saudi women support the notion that the man’s role is outside the house because he is the guardian and provides for his family, while the woman cares for her home and children. Thus, in their roles, each complements the other (Abdulla, 2005).

Analysis of Samaha's view, on the other hand, shows a link between the man's right to *Qiwama* or control in the family and his ability to wield financial power. In other words, if a man is unable to provide for the family, be he spouse or father, *Qiwama* will be revoked from him and may be granted to the woman if she is able to provide financial support. This is another indication of a change in young women's attitudes to authority and who is deserving of it. She presents a clear challenge to the traditional roles of men and women;

To my knowledge if a man does not spend money, trusteeship will be removed for him and he will not be a guardian... I mean, he has no right to be a trustee for his family... I mean... to control to issue orders... Because he hasn't performed his duty. **(Samaha, 21 year old university student)**

Similarly, Abeen, who works part-time and is a university student, endorses this view. Abeen immediately refuses to accept the superiority of men and subordination of women. She refers to herself as a moderate supporter of women's rights and open to the possibility of women becoming superior to men in role and status. She points out that a woman's power lies in the fact that she combines intellectuality and emotionality, which makes her a balanced leader. She also believes that women are fitter for *Qiwama*, in contrast with traditional conservative thought. She challenges the concept of guardianship and believes that women deserve to be afforded these rights and responsibilities. This is another indication of the intellectual rebellion of young women against the status quo of women's subordination and social constraints. This may be due to the improved education, which the new generation of young women have received; this has opened up many job

opportunities for them, giving them the ability to earn their own money and to be financially independent.

I'm always against leaving everything in the man's hands. Quite the contrary, actually: I always support women's rights. The woman has brains and is educated. That being the case, it is obvious that she would act rationally. I feel that women are stronger than men. I mean, she's the one who's being maintained, supported and protected (but) she has emotions and can feel, while men are always rational thinkers. Some issues need emotionality to be solved, and women are good at that, especially educated women. She'll know how to lead her life. Therefore, I strongly support the idea that women are stronger than men. **(Abeen, 21 year old university student)**

In contrast, Ruby, supports the traditional role played by men. Men deserve power in return for financial support, and they should also have financial control, she claims. They are more rational than women, and therefore must direct them. But she insists that dialogue with those wielding power in the family is essential. This is yet another piece of evidence that indicates the young women's awareness of their rights and their ability to negotiate and put forward opinions rather than merely obediently surrendering to subordination. Ruby believes that marriage depends on sharing and on a balanced relationship between the husband and wife. Abeen's challenge of male dominance is noticeable in her narrative. This supports what was previously mentioned in reference to habitus; that it does not unilaterally determine human behaviour. There is a degree of self-determination and choice present in human actions. Abeen voiced her discontentment with what she viewed as

women following men. She is not, however, openly and continuously rebelling against the traditional mould that confines her, but rather juxtaposes rebellion with adaptation to her reality. As we can see here, boundaries create obedience in a traditional culture and impose limits, which cannot be overstepped by rebellion or change. This is evident in Hinadi's description of Saudi women's social education and the traditional role expected of them in local culture:

It is put in her head that a woman stays at home, looking after home, cooking and raising her children, this was it. She should be a housewife, being under a lot of pressure made her feel vulnerable.

(Hinadi, 21 year old university student)

Many of the participants, like Ruby, see the man as a protector and financial provider, and deem him to be more rational than the woman. They also see themselves as men's partners in life; not subordinate, but rather participants in decision-making. This is consistent with Makhoul's (1979) opinion that responsibility should be shared between the two sexes. In a relationship, Ruby argues (below), the man represents the mind and the woman represents the heart; between them they have mutual interests and shared benefits. All of this falls within the legal framework, which has been guaranteed by Islam for women throughout history, evidenced by the participation of the Prophet's wives in governance and *Shura* (AlMunajjed, 1997). This is also consistent with the view of Ibn Abbas (the Prophet's uncle) that the degree of preference mentioned in the Qur'an deems the man responsible for being kind and caring to women as well as generous with his financial provision (Al-Qurtubi, 1967: 125).

I also think men have more brains and think more than women so I think he should guide her but not control her life. And he

should say 'come and ask me and let's discuss it', and everything will be resolved by discussion. **(Ruby, 17 year old university student)**

The following view expressed by Halat is another example which supports Ruby's view. Halat believes that the role of the guardian (the father), as defined by *Qiwama*, is not limited to financial provision, but should also include paying attention to, bestowing tenderness upon, and helping his daughter. This is closer to the concept of a compassionate and loving friend than an uncaring, detached source of money.

Al-Qiwamah? That the man spends money on me? ... Not only spends on me but ... I mean ... on the one hand to spend on me and on the other hand to pay attention and care for me, and he is the one to whom I will refer concerning my problems I think. He has the right of course, of course to say to me, "this is right and this is wrong," and to guide me. **(Halat, 21 year old university student)**

These opinions are similar to those expressed by Bartkowski and Read (2003) who explained, of the concept of obedience in evangelical Christian women, that it is a traditionalist religious concept that religious women should adhere to certain principles to demonstrate the differences between themselves and secular women. This does not mean, however, that the man is completely superior to the woman, or that the woman is "dormant"; the woman can discuss and give recommendations regarding key decisions but should not take them unilaterally. This perspective views dialogue as the best method for decision-making in a household. The statements of participants Ruby and

Halat echo these sentiments, particularly in the belief that dialogue is better than unilateralism.

None of the diverse views of the participants regarding *Qiwama* dispute the view that the man should be responsible for financial spending. They all agree that the main role of the guardian responsible for *Qiwama* is to provide for the family. However, some of the young women's views on the role expected of them in return for the father's financial support appear to challenge tradition. Some participants believe that gender roles are complementary rather hierarchal. One goes further, and suggests giving women the right to *Qiwama* because they deserve it more than men. This is a clear challenge to the cultural traditions passed down by the previous generation. It is also apparent that increased education, broader career opportunities and foreign travel are having an effect on young women's awareness of their rights. This is what Noor expresses relative to the status of young women in Saudi Arabia;

People in Saudi Arabia became aware and are experiencing a renaissance. There are still more steps to take, but fewer than before, because people are travelling abroad and returning with different ideas and a different way of life. **(Noor, 21 year old university student)**

While challenging some traditional concepts of *Qiwama*, young women also disagree with Western feminist thought, in that they do not call for the re-interpretation of the concept of *Qiwama* in the Quran, but rather demand participation in all spheres of life; they are arguing for what traditional sources claim was the case in the Prophet's time. Some of the participants also indicate that *Qiwama* is conditioned by the man's financial support, and if he fails to provide this for any reason – unemployment or disease, for example – *Qiwama*

will then be withdrawn from him and granted to the woman if she is the breadwinner.

This was the study's findings on the relationship of the young woman with her father or guardian. In the next part, an analysis will be made of the relationship between the young woman and her mother. This relationship is different from that with the father, as will be illustrated.

6.3 The mother–daughter relationship

The more strongly a child is attached to his/her parents, the more strongly he is bound to their expectations. Therefore, he is also constrained by conformity to the legal norms of the larger system in which they live (Constans and de Leonardis, 2003).

Rastogi and Wampler (1999) studied adult daughters' perceptions of mother–daughter relationships. They stated that communication with parents forms the foundation of conformity, since the relationship of a young woman with her mother is usually the closest of the relationships between the different generations (Fischer, 1991). The relationship between mother and daughter has a considerable influence on the young woman (Chodorow, 1978; Arcana, 1979; Boyd, 1989; Wahers, 1988). This part of the analysis focuses on the intimacy between a mother and her teenage daughter to examine the active and passive effects (if any) of this relationship on the younger woman's life and behaviour, both at home and outside of it. This study will also analyse the young woman's opinions regarding her mother's role in her life and how she uses this role to her own benefit; also bearing in mind the existing attitudes and possibilities which are permitted within the cultural framework. Bourdieu's concept of the "Habitus" will be employed as a basis for determining the

possible limits on the life of the young Saudi woman, as well as the negotiation space she is afforded.

Jay (1969 cited in Chodorow, 1995) believes that the mother is the “primary figure of confidence and support” in her daughter’s life. Wisdom (1990) also believes that the mother plays a crucial role in the young woman’s personal life. The relationship is not one that begins in childhood and ends in adulthood when the young woman becomes independent, as in the West; but rather lasts until the daughter moves in to her marital home. Fischer (1991) depicts the intimacy between mother and daughter as the most important relationship in the young woman’s life, and as the strongest intergenerational bond (Fischer, 1991). Feminist studies, with their focus on woman–woman relations, have noted that the mother–daughter relationship has the potential to provide solidarity and support and is significant to all women (Webb, 1992). The secure attachment with the mother from childhood to adulthood leads a young woman to become disciplined and adaptable (Bowlby, 1988).

Feminist studies consider gender roles to have a social origin rather than biological inclination. This explains the lower deviation rates among young women when compared to young men. The young woman is subjected to social norms that block rebellious behaviour more than the young man, who is afforded access to street culture either for leisure or work. Thus, the culture of confining the young woman to family life seems to limit any deviation (Adler, 1975).

By analysing the young women’s narrations, we find that the majority of the sample confirm the vital role of the mother in the young woman’s life, and that the mother–daughter relationship is based on love, trust, care and attention without the imposition of power or provision. This stands in contrast to the

father who, as mentioned in the previous analysis of *Qiwama*, imposes his authority over his children, especially his daughters, using their need for his protection to legitimise his control. Sharidah referred to the role of the mother as that of an emotional support and the role of the father as an economic support; saying:

“Traditionally, Saudi values are very strong for their families. The family signifies assurance, kindness and security to its members... traditionally also the Saudi father is the head of the family and the breadwinner. The Saudi mother is the emotional leader whose responsibility is to foster the children and care for everyone besides the responsibility of the homemaker” (Al-Sharideh, 1999: 99).

The following participant’s statement illustrates the importance of the mother. Her mother is described as a close friend and confidante. She is also a reliable friend and advisor, who does not coerce her daughters but rather gives them the freedom to make their own personal decisions. It appears that she is the parent with the subtler and more caring parenting style. Most participants note that the mother is the family member least likely to push her daughters to rebellion or violence (Pettit, Bates and Dodge, 1997).

This study also finds that a mother, who adopts a parenting style based on listening and providing advice without judging or evaluating will allow her daughter take decisions while supervising her and monitoring her actions remotely. This is consistent with the theory that remote parental control reduces the likelihood of negative influence from deviant friends (Lahey et al., 1999).

In the narrations of the two participants, Majda and Reemaf, there is evidence of the importance of security and confidence between mothers and daughters, as a basis for friendship. Also apparent is the absence of direct interference. Another participant, Mahar, also discusses the importance of advice for enhancing the connection between mother and daughter. Leaving personal decisions in the hands of the young woman is an indicator of her independence. It is also an indication of the emergence of a more educated generation, which differs from the mothers' generation. Independent decision-making is a new emerging feature of young Saudi women, whereas emotional dependence on mothers for support and counselling is still widespread.

She is the cornerstone of everything; discussing, guiding.

Indeed, she is everything. She is my close friend and I can tell her anything without any fear and she will keep my secrets. If I ask her for advice she will give me the best suggestion because she is my mother and she cares about her children more than anything. **(Majda, 20 year old university student)**

My mom is everything to me, my friend, and my secret keeper. I tell her everything without hesitation or fear. And if I tell her about something wrong, she understands and advises me.

(Reemaf, 21 year old university student)

The most important thing to me is that she advises me. Just advice, she never interferes with my life. I am against that. I don't like someone imposing his/her opinion on me. It should only be suggestion and advice. Whether I take it or not it is up to me. I make my own decisions. **(Mahar, 19 year old university student)**

Unlike these three participants, Amani's narrative presents an example of coldness in mother–daughter relationships. Her experience is an example of the alienation which can occur between the young woman and her mother, one which may lead the former to seek solace in a tight–knit group of friends. The reason behind this alienation appears to be a lack of trust and understanding between the mother and daughter, as evidenced by Amani's narrative below.

Mama, I don't tell her everything, because she doesn't understand me and doesn't accept discussion... she always sees me as mistaken. For example, I once told her something and she told it to my father... Of course it was an experience that will not be repeated. It is true that sometimes I need to talk to anyone and my sister is still young, and so I go to the university, tell everything to two of my friends and cry... but I need an understanding mother at this age. **(Amani, 19 year old university student)**

These examples show the importance of having a compassionate mentor and listener throughout the young woman's life, especially at university and before marriage. They indicate the deep connection that is possible between mother and daughter and the importance of security and stability in the young woman's life. Mahar's narration emphasises how a young woman needs her mother to show her independence of opinion and give indirect, non-judgmental advice.

Previous research studies have indicated the importance of the mother–daughter relationship in developing the young woman's personality with regard to gender roles and identity; they have also highlighted the role the mother plays in instilling self–confidence (Leober and Farrington, 1999;

Cashwell 1995; Tappan, 1949). When the young woman moves from adolescence to adulthood, the mother becomes an example of womanhood. She becomes a source of information and a guide on matters of character, emotion and behaviour (Sabbagh, 1996). The paternal ideology teaches the young woman that her place is in the house with her mother and that the place of the young man is at work with his father. The mother and society expect the young man to leave his family and be somewhat independent in his work. The woman, on the other hand, senses something wrong if she becomes independent.

Therefore, taking into consideration the father's absence from the home, it is entirely predictable that his relationship with his daughters will be distant. Family here can be seen as a field, habitus, practice or disposition; despite the fact that the Saudi family and social life have changed in recent times. Young Saudi women (and in many cases their mothers) have entered into the fields of education and employment, yet in spite of this they still feel subordinated in their society, or even their families, in comparison with their male counterparts. According to Silva, people who live together continuously review the construction of life based on give-and-take structures. They are careful to consider what is appropriate and what is not, in response to the requests of other people (Silva, 1999). This is similar to the Saudi families in this study. The young woman's requests are the least likely to be considered, so she uses her mother, with whom she (for most participants) enjoys a strong relationship, as a mediator between herself and her father. In the eyes of these young women, the mother can converse easily with her husband without being embarrassed or afraid.

The young women use their mothers as intermediaries, as a tactic to interact with their fathers. The reason for this is that the Saudi family is typically constructed in a hierarchal fashion, with the male patriarch at the helm, and a gulf between him and the other family members (Al-Ruwaithea, 2008). An example of this can be found in the narratives of Rawaj and Ranat. Both participants appear to be reliant on their mothers for conversing with and making demands on their fathers. Also noteworthy is the high esteem in which the daughters hold their father's advice and orders, and the participants' acceptance that this is for their own benefit, rather than motivated by the intention to control or constrain them. Thus, young Saudi woman can tolerate orders and obey them. This is something expected of the young woman and of her father by traditional culture. Young women conform but also may engage in diplomatic negotiations with their mother, who most respondents viewed as more flexible and understanding. Ranat's narrative also indicates the importance of subordination to a leader and referral to him for final decisions, which is, traditionally, what society expects of young Saudi women. The young women's faith in their parents' life experience lends their parents' decisions more credibility.

Mama may play a role as a mediator between me and my father to accept. .. I mean ... she creates flexibility between me and my father. **(Rawaj, 17 year old high school student)**

I mean I may get mad if my father doesn't allow me to go somewhere, but eventually I know he wants what's best for me. He knows more than I do. And actually mom is the mediator between me and my father. **(Ranat, 21 year old university student)**

Based on the aforementioned examples, this study argues that the mother supports the young woman's emotional and personal life, and that the relationship between them needs to be built not on need, but rather on trust, security and non-judgmental motherly advice if it is to be successful. If the mother does not allow her daughter independence in making personal choices, the young woman is likely to turn to close friends instead.

Also of relevance to this study are the participants' opinions about women driving, the nature of the education they receive, and the degree to which young women should be allowed to choose their field of study or profession. These opinions are associated with gender issues, as well as representing personal decisions for or against driving. This study will examine the young women's stance towards the ban on women's driving to examine to what extent they actually oppose it.

6.4 Personal Choice

From the sample, it is evident that young Saudi women's self-perception is changing. Their views on their "limits" as women are certainly different to those of their mothers and grandmothers (Yamani, 2000, Altorki, 1986). Unlike the previous two generations, the new generation of women want to broaden their educational prospects, and many choose to study abroad. Young women also want broader employment opportunities. Regarding driving, young women's views are not shaped by religion, in contrast with scholars who deem driving *haram* and ban it to protect women (Hundley, 1998).

Halat and Hinadi responded similarly to the question about the extent of freedom young women need in Saudi Arabia. They are both aware of the importance of making personal decisions relating to education, work or

driving, as well as the importance of having the freedom to choose which tasks suit a female individual mentally and physically. Halat also refers to the unclear rationale behind the requirement to have a *Mahram* with her when travelling abroad. The countries that are open for government scholarship are all quite safe, she claims. This shows awareness on the young women's part of the need to adapt to modern times. Hinadi's narration, on the other hand, confirms the importance of young women's independence, while affirming the need to respect parental authority. The young Saudi woman should be restricted in her choices by the traditional frameworks under which she has to respect her parents.

If the girl wants to study something that doesn't suit her and is not suitable for her physique as a woman I think that is ok... She is free... even if she wants to be an archaeologist and sit under the sun and in the deserts... Ok... As she likes... And if she chooses to study in the fields of petroleum...I think it is ok... As for studying abroad or even travelling... I don't see any need for *Mahram* and I don't know the source of that... is it religion or the state? I see that there is no need for that. **(Halat, 21 year old university student)**

To the extent that it is sufficient for her to feel her independence... I mean... I feel there should be more freedom for travelling... and I, concerning driving cars, I mean... to reach an age when she can take her decisions alone... parents will still have her respect, but to reach an age that is enough to take decisions for herself. **(Hinadi, 21 year old university student)**

It is argued that the participants are representative of young contemporary women who seek self-development through education and employment. There are three obvious trends: education with the goal of employment; education for the sake of education itself; and education combined with social and familial considerations. In all cases, the participants, regardless of their different experiences, consider education, whether at home or abroad, to be their right as Saudi citizens. However, employment seems to depend on Saudi social norms (Al-Gahtani, 2004), according to AlMunajjed (1997) these discourage women, irrespective of class, from working outside of the home. The participants present themselves as conscious young women who conform to the limitations imposed on them by society. They make their own life choices, but only within the limits of what is deemed acceptable.

Smith (1987) is a Western feminist who wrote that women's public silence is a root cause of gender inequality. When Saudi women are viewed through this lens, the similarities are easy to see. Society, argues Doumato, teaches girls "enough to buy into an assigned role, a role in which they were subordinate to men, but not enough to challenge it" (Doumato, 2000). Being schooled to accept subjugation insures women's public silence, and therefore invisibility.

Indeed, as if mirroring Doumato's statement, Saudi curricula openly seek to normalise gender differences from a young age. Traditional ideas have become embedded into curricula, after gaining power by wedding themselves to religious teaching. The natural outcome of such entrenchment is that Saudi women, were, until the year 2001, legally seen an extension of their *wali-ul-amr* (Hamdan, 2005).

I argue that women's lives in Saudi Arabia have been affected by many socio-economic changes. Education and employment levels have improved, but the

majority of women are still limited to their traditional roles as wives and mothers. This is partially because of constraints on women's employments and partially because of the prevailing social norms. Even after the increase in education and work opportunities, women in 2002 accounted for just over 10% of the Saudi nationals in the labour force (Arab Human Development Report, 2002).

The next participant, Ruby, views the ideal young Saudi woman as one who wears both the Hijab and *Niqab*. Women can be educated, but only if this does not involve mixing and travelling abroad alone, and if it is compatible with women's traditional roles as wives and mothers. She also restricts the young women's job opportunities to those that suit their biological make-up. Being a wife and mother comes before working. A Muslim woman's work should not interfere with her traditional role as a mother and wife, Ruby claims. Her views regarding marriage and motherhood appear to stem from personal religiosity rather than from cultural traditions.

As for education, I don't know. I feel that it would be difficult for the Saudi woman to be a policewoman and to stand in the sun and heat and wear trousers in front of men; that is not acceptable (for me). Then she'll go back home. If she's a mother she'll have to work some more, make lunch and help her children with their homework. **(Ruby, 17 year old university student)**

Maryam notes that her options are limited in terms of jobs opportunities, due to the restrictions on gender mixing. She understands that there are objections to the employment of young women due to gender differences. This means that she understands the conflict between modernity and traditionalism. She

opposes restrictions, however, and wants the young woman to be able to work in any field she wants. She also refers to the power of change, which is occurring as a result of young women working in spite of traditional constraints. She stresses that the eventual freedom to work in any profession will depend on society's continued development.

As for studying and a profession, I see that all fields must be open to them. At the beginning, they objected to medicine and nursing as careers for young Saudi women, but eventually there were people who accepted that a young woman could be a nurse, and there are people even now who do not accept this idea, except for being a physician... I mean, there is no difference and nothing may preclude that... all involve studying, learning and effort in each field of specialisation.

(Maryam, 18 year old high school student)

Samara's enrolment on an engineering course was regarded as a rebellious act, as the state only opened this field to young women very recently. Samara is a young woman who has finished high school and is determined to succeed academically. She refused the constraints placed on young Saudi women and wants to be an example for others. Therefore, she has chosen to specialise in engineering, a field of work traditionally limited to men, because she believes in gender equality. She expresses her hope and desire for a better future for young Saudi women under Saudisation. Thus, she represents an example of open rebellion.

I suffered a great deal until I managed to study what I wanted (engineering). Nobody has the right to decide my future; maybe that's true until I am 18 or 20 but then you're of age. A

woman should be equal to men. Like every human being... study whatever she wants, i.e. even geology; stuff that is currently only for men in Saudi Arabia. **(Samara, 20 year old university student)**

All the participants are aware of the limits imposed on them by the traditional paternal system. Their views range between acceptance and compromise, with a minority tending towards rebellion. The participants' views on women driving shows their understanding of the state, scholarly, traditional and familial limitations imposed upon them. Some uniformity and commonality are evident in the viewpoints of the participants in relation to this issue. There are also differences of opinion according to their socio-economic background, education and knowledge of other cultures. Therefore, some accept the ban and try to explain it, whilst others oppose it. An example, of when it is accepted is where the family has a high income, and can hire a driver. Another, is women's employment, and their contribution to the family's income.

Reen is a participant who formulates her own argument for a practical solution. She believes that women should drive, as this will mean that the state will be forced to enforce traffic laws and improve the infrastructure. If women can drive it would help the policy of Saudisation, as it would reduce number of foreign workers who are regarded as an economic and social burden. She voices concern for the country, yet she uses this to gain more personal freedom.

When women drive I feel that the traffic rules will improve and decisions will be made. Meaning that I feel that roads will have to be fixed and the additional foreign workforce... half of it will go or it will disappear, like private chauffeurs and unemployed

people in the street, meaning that the country will improve, and a woman won't need anyone to drive her. **(Reen, 17 year old university student)**

Basimah wants to postpone the issue of women's driving. On the one hand, she connects women's driving with flirting; however, on the other, she does not mind women driving, provided that the streets are safe and free from any possible harm from men.

I am against it not for any reason, but for me... if they allowed me to drive, I would wait 5 years and then drive, because I know that during the first 5 years, there would be lots of problems... For instance, I once logged in the Facebook and found a man saying, "If I found any young woman driving a car, I would flirt with her". **(Basimah, 17 year old high school student)**

Reen agrees with Reemaf that laws should be established to protect women, but then connects not driving with cultural restrictions, parental refusal, religious barriers, and the slander that may result from a woman driving. Thus, she is aware of the limits imposed on the young woman in Saudi society and adapts to reality rather than confronting it.

I am against it out of fear of chaos and uncontrolled situations when young women go out alone; for example, men clustering around young women's cars or flirting. Today we face flirtation even though we're not driving. Initially there might be problems, like parental refusal, people talking about the wrongness of it, maybe accidents, flirtation and things like

that. When people get used to it, these things might decrease. And the government must set rules. In addition, our religion doesn't allow the young woman to go out alone at night. In the end, it's up to the young woman. **(Reemaf, 21 year old university student)**

Unlike the last two participants, Mahar answers differently. Driving would prove that the Saudi woman can take on responsibility. Flirting is natural, she argues, and will occur regardless of whether a woman drives or not. Mahar believes women driving will offer a solution to traffic congestion. She supports Islamic feminist thinking, which calls for the contemporary treatment of women to equal that in the time of the Prophet, when women rode camels and horses without any objection from the Prophet (El-Solh and Mabro, 1994).

I definitely support it... because... I mean why shouldn't I? In all the countries of the world, I mean all of them, women drive. So why aren't we allowed? Is it because of the traffic? Ok, if you were allowed to drive you wouldn't need your driver... so traffic will decrease. It is the same. I mean, every young woman has a driver to drive her around. OK, if she could drive, she wouldn't need a driver; in other words, no traffic. In all countries, women drive and there is no traffic. And if it's about flirtation; this will happen anyway, not just when we drive. Rules are supposed to be set. And I think women drive better than men. Women are responsible and fear for themselves more than men do. **(Mahar, 19 year old university student)**

The next participant, Hadeer, is a university student who works part-time and suffers from lack of drivers to take her to where she needs to be. She believes

driving would allow women to be independent in work. Indeed, shortly after the entrance of women into the labour market, working women began lobbying for driving claiming it was a necessity.

I support the idea because I struggle to find a driver. I may have a fear of driving but I could try. Why not? Especially when I am working and my whole life centres around is my driver free or not, or will he drop me or not? My life is connected to this human being. **(Hadeer, 20 year old university student)**

The final example is of a participant who refuses to drive and adopts the traditional perspective of the young Saudi women as weak and needing male protection.

I think the Saudi woman should stay at home to be protected by her guardian, so if she needs anything from malls or shops she should go with her father to get it, and I think our society is not ready to see women driving cars in the street, I mean this will end with disaster and deviations...moreover, accidents. **(Azzal, 21 year old university student)**

Azzal's opinion resembles that of the feminist activist Mernissi (1996) in her study on Moroccan women's Hijab:

"Streets are spaces of sin and temptation because they are both public and sex-mixed" (Mernissi, 1996: 67).

It is also consistent with Murdock's (1965) view that women in the Arab world are brought up in a way that ensures they believe they need protection and that exclusion offers this:

“Societies of the other type... attempt to preserve premarital chastity by secluding their unmarried young women or providing them with duennas or other such external devices as veiling, seclusion in harems or constant surveillance.”

(Murdock, 1965: 273)

6.5 Conclusion

From the participants' statements, the conclusion can be drawn that they form a new generation, who are more receptive to change than their parents' generation and have been exposed to foreign cultures; a generation with diverse experience and expertise, which differentiates it from previous generations. However, despite the changes occurring in the world around them, my study suggests that young Saudi women remain committed to the conservative feminine mould in most life situations. Young Saudi women subtly attempt to gain their rights in all fields in their professional and personal lives, yet only pursue goals within the acceptable range of social standards.

Some minor differences in this adherence are evident in the participants' perceptions of freedom, *Qiwama* and their relationship with authority, both at the level of the family and the state. They are young women who make their choices within a conservative framework, but reject control and oppression and call for dialogue and debate. The new identity of the young Saudi woman also manifests itself in her demand for independent decision-making, bearing the consequences of such decisions, whether in education, employment or driving. She claims to be equal to the western woman in freedom and to have the right to make demands; although she discusses and negotiates within traditional social constructs. She also rejects some of the culturally imposed limits, but

with extreme caution. She negotiates with authority, but through indirect means; for example, via her mother. She deals with the constraints positively, not negatively, and tries to trigger change without colliding with authority. She wants flexibility in the application of regulations as guaranteed by Islam and she wants to share the right to education and employment with men, while maintaining a legal or traditional framework. She also wants to retain her traditional role as a wife and mother, but enhance it with education and learning as a way of developing herself, her family and society.

7. Chapter Seven: Young Women Strategies

Theme

7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the strategies young women employ to discuss their identity, negotiate their condition, or openly rebel. This was discussed above in relation to Hijab, gender relations and young Saudi women's personal choices with regard to driving, education and work. The next perspective for analysis offers an exploration of the young woman's private space and her communication with friends. From this perspective, this chapter will relate the concepts of rebellion, negotiation, and relief from repression. The focus will be on the young woman's private space in her bedroom; a space both she and her family view as safe. I will explore the role this personal space plays in helping the young women achieve freedom and practice rebellion, independence and survival. Through the young woman's friendship choices and her behaviour within her friendship circle, we will investigate the effect that young women have on each other's lives. This may manifest in emotional and behavioural support, even when the young woman's behaviour contravenes social norms.

The environment in which a young woman resides offers mixed opportunities and options, and any young woman is likely to employ these, subtly, to her benefit so as to avoid clashes with her parents or with society and conservative authorities. The young woman attempts, through the limited means afforded to her, to play a dynamic role in adapting to her social conditions, so that they can become more favourable to her. She attempts to adapt to a changing reality, whilst still following old traditions. She is a pragmatic personality,

dexterously manipulating, negotiating, obeying or rebelling according to the context in which she finds herself. As Foucault (1978) explains, the power exerted upon the young woman not only plays a negative role by denying, restricting or repressing her, but also a positive role, in inventing forms of pleasure, and methods with which to negotiate (Abu-Lughod, 1990). As Foucault stated:

“Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.” (Foucault, 1978: 95–96)

This chapter seeks to understand how young women’s reactions shift relative to changing cultural contexts, and how they pragmatically adapt to social realities. These aspects were previously alluded to when discussing Sweetman’s use of the term pick-and-mix to describe the young woman’s tendency to pick from what is available to her to modify or reconstruct her identity.

“Girls negotiate a different leisure space and different personal spaces from those inhabited by boys. These in turn offer them different possibilities for resistance.” (McRobbie, 2000: 24)

McRobbie and Garber’s (1976) conceptualisation of “bedroom culture” suggests that private spaces are used to negotiate with parental authorities. McRobbie pointed out that the bedroom plays a key role in its capacity as a private space in which the young woman has freedom. Thus, discussions of a personal space for women, such as the young woman’s bedroom, feature prominently in feminist studies.

Here, we focus on the bedroom as a symbol of how the young woman’s private

space can be the location of her rebellion. The role that this space plays when alone, or within the context of her group of friends, will be explored. It is vital that we understand the concepts of identity, independence, and freedom as expressed by young women in their relationships within the private spaces. We will also analyse the young Saudi woman's understanding of rebellion, the forms it take, and the causes, and variances in understanding that exist between each of the young women interviewed. This will result in a 'collective' understanding of rebellion and conformity for participants. The presence of parental restrictions on young women is an important notion when clarifying their understanding of repression and its relationship to either rebellion or resistance.

7.2 Young Women's Spaces

Livingstone (2007) defined bedroom culture as being:

“Especially for young people, a set of conventional meanings and practices closely associated with identity, privacy and the self has become linked to the domestic space of the child's bedroom in late modern society.” (Livingstone, 2007: 1)

According to this definition, the bedroom presents a young women with a convenient space in which to engage in activities away from parental monitoring. In this space women can freely express themselves without fear of being criticised. In light of contemporary technological advancement and its widespread adoption by youths, the term “digital bedroom” will be used here to describe the modern bedroom, in which the participants play cyber games or surf the web using a home computer (often located in the bedroom) (Sefton-Green, 1998). A recent study on women's Internet usage in Saudi Arabia found

that the average Saudi woman uses the internet for thirty hours a month. The study also showed that the most prevalent users of the internet are young women between the ages of eighteen and thirty (Al-Sadhan, 1983).

The young woman resorts to digital media and gatherings with friends to entertain herself and to gain respite from familial responsibilities. In her bedroom, the young woman affirms her identity by choosing her own furniture, arranging it as she wishes and behaving how she chooses. Most young women attempt to keep their private spaces free from parental interference. The space becomes the young woman's haven: a private entertainment space away from the family. Recreational activities include listening to music, smoking hookah, and watching movies. Through engaging in these practices, the young woman can fit in with her friends, and her friendship circle grows close and familiar. These activities occur in a safe place (the home) but away from parental intervention.

Hadeer said that her favourite activity was spending time with her friends in her bedroom. She implies that the reason is that her parents, in respect of traditional views, do not allow her to go out to restaurants and cafes. Thus, the bedroom and the activities it houses offer a place to adopt slight resistance. This resistance is found in listening to loud music and smoking hookah, as these are unacceptable behaviours to parents and cannot be done in their presence without criticism. Hadeer also referred to technology as a method of communication or entertainment and also for watching movies.

Most importantly to meet my friends away from the family in my bedroom... we prefer to sit at home and feel comfortable... Usually we dance, listen to music, smoke hubble-bubble these things... Or we hear loud music and act silly and enjoy these

things, instead of going out. My dad says no, no going out with your friends and my friends' mothers say no, you don't go out alone. I don't know what to say to this! We may want to go out for lunch or dinner, but our parents say no. So we stay at home and watch movies on YouTube or use Facebook. **(Hadeer, 20 years old university student)**

Similarly, Azzal expressed her opinion that online entertainment and watching TV are both practices specific to her bedroom. She expresses her identity and independence through what she chooses to watch in her recreational space.

Fashion interests me a great deal... I watch fashion shows, I watch them on TV and on YouTube. I enjoy style programs and I watch all of this in my bedroom. **(Azzal, 21 years old university student)**

The young women's behaviour reflects Flichy's (1995) assertion that families are often "living together separately". Bedroom culture emerges as a reaction to the exclusion of young women from public places (or the absence of public recreational facilities) (Bashatah, 2011). It may also appear as a result of the social and cultural pressure on young women to stay in the home, which is deemed a safe environment. This is the opposite of the situation for young men, who can go out and enjoy themselves free from supervision.

Therefore, the behaviour of the young women appears to have adapted to their constrained social reality, which is subject to continuous parental surveillance. Despite this, the young woman exerts her independence at home with her friends: watching TV, engaging in online recreations or smoking. These are the practices of a new generation that wishes to live independently and express

the oppressed self. Therefore, the young woman plays a dynamic role in wielding power in the face of familial supervision. This is what Bourdieu (1990) referred to as “the feel for the game” (1990: 61).

Here, we can consider the young woman’s actions as informed by a reasoned, logical thought process. The actions of the young women within the bedroom can be understood as a change from the boredom of everyday life. In this context, the young women passively resist the traditional fabric of the limitations woven around them and negotiate with men regarding their place in society (Kandiyoti, 1988).

An example of this is Hadeer’s previous expression of her desire to go out with friends, but her weaker position in traditional culture does not allow her to do so. She uses loud music and social interaction (face-to-face or online) with whomever she wants as an alternative. Thus, she transforms her bedroom into an imaginary world in which she constructs her own “club”. It is a space for singing and dancing and in this way the young woman uses music to create and mark off cultural and personal spaces (Willis et al. 1990: 71). This paper argues that, when a young woman raises the volume of her music, she does not mean to insult her parents, but rather to state her presence. It can be interpreted as an act of discontentment with being marginalised by patriarchal society and annoyance at her subordination to males. For example:

The problem is that girls in Saudi Arabia are not important... they don’t recognise women as something very important and will not listen to them whatsoever... the state’s thought of women is that she has a role subsidiary to the men. **(Imana, 16 years old high school student)**

The young woman, as Harris (2003) puts it, gently manipulates the limits

imposed by traditional culture. They do not seek radical change; rather they are attempting to express themselves (Harris, 2003).

It appears that the primary methods for showing this aforementioned discontent are smoking, music, and fashion choice. These are ways to experience pleasure within a girls' friendship circle. Online recreation is especially popular for the young generation. For example:

Most of my spare time is spent on the laptop, and I play games in addition to Facebook. I also watch films, but not on the TV, and I may sit at the end of the week on the laptop for hours. I may sit from 4:00 in the afternoon until 12:00 a.m. **(Amani, 19 year old university student)**

It is a reaction to exclusion from society and the feeling that they are being discriminated against as young women in favour of their male siblings. In line with the previous discussion, Eva Farrell views cyberspace as "a reality of constantly shifting virtual truths: identity, language, talk, programmes" (Kaplan and Farrell, 1994 in Harris 2003). Therefore, I argue that when young women of the current generation do speak out, their voices emerge from the margins of society in the spheres of music and digital bedrooms. Young women, as mentioned previously, gently and dexterously manipulate the cultural limitations through which they access online communication and engage in recreational activities. They do not seek outright confrontation with traditional society: They attempt to "manipulate the borders between inside and outside" whilst adhering to traditional values. (Harris, 2003). The young woman enjoys independence and privacy when using the internet, as she remains at home where her parents feel assured of her safety.

In Majda's narrative, we find another reason for young women to rebel. Majda states a feeling deprived of dialogue, she feels controlled, and repressed and notes that this can push a young woman to rebel, disobey or even to go out without her parents' knowledge. This concurs with Elliott et al.'s (1979) opinion that families that restrain their children run the risk of them pushing them into deviant behaviour. This is because these individuals have no outlet for their personal opinions. The individuals in this study lean towards following their peers, thereby exposing them to deviation. They also attempt to flee the forced care that is repressing them to become independent (Elliott, Agenton and Canter, 1979).

As a result, young women need, in Majda's opinion, to enjoy a good, communicative relationship with their parents and to be subjected to moderate yet adequate surveillance and counselling. These measures, she claims, will protect young women from deviation. Additionally, this participant points to the young woman's role in debating peacefully with her parents to get what she wants.

A girl who goes out without her parents may think that her mother doesn't understand her and she's alone. On the contrary, I don't support this way of thinking. Personally, I managed to communicate with my mother promote a mutually understanding relationship. Indeed, I told her it's okay for me to come and go. Many of my friends are in similar situations. I go places after college but never without my mother knowing my whereabouts. It is very common that young women have to convince their parents when you are out with a group. I mean, thank Allah I managed to convince them. It's okay to stay at

home. **(Majda, 20 years old university student)**

Majda's narrative illustrates the lives of young Saudi women who dream of change and insist upon having it. Change is embodied in her right to go out, engage in leisure activities, study and work. The young Saudi woman, however, often collides with a male-dominated reality that enforces guardianship.

This is why, to attain a sense of her own independence and identity, the young woman isolates herself, alone or with her friends (in person or via the internet) in her room, away from her parents and the pressures of life (Bovill and Livingstone, 2001; Livingstone, 2005). Alternatively, she may elect to go out without her parents' knowledge. This signifies rebellion against authority, a declaration of her existence and emancipation from constraints.

According to the participants in this study, the young Saudi woman who rebels is one who has been deprived of affection and dialogue. She may have had experiences that have led her to feel marginalised by society, and so she has sought to express herself. This concurs with Al-Areefi's (a Riyadh newspaper journalist's) opinions about the reasons why many young Saudi women flee the home. She explained how authoritarian parenting, repression and the absence of dialogue pushes young women to flee (Al-Shaie, Riyadh Online, 2006).

Kamal Imran (Ibid), another journalist writing for Riyadh newspaper, points out that there are difficulties facing the young Saudi woman, due to the nature of the patriarchal, male-dominated society. He argues that Saudi girls are under pressure from birth until adulthood. Thus, in adolescence and early womanhood, a time characterised by rebellion and vitality, the young Saudi woman attempts to escape from her reality. This links to the participants' views, that uncaring families are a primary reason for offending and other

deviant behaviour perpetrated by young women in Saudi Arabia (Ibid).

Tuqat and Basimah are two participants who use this line of reasoning to justify the rebellious actions of young Saudi women. According to these two participants, young women want to vent their frustrations regarding their lowly place in the family hierarchy. According to Hofstede (1997), this is a hierarchy that does not permit any individual to directly challenge the rules. Thus, the young woman seeks to challenge the rules by making her own decisions, which may manifest as rebellious behaviour. From the young Saudi woman's perspective, it is natural that she should seek freedom and self-expression away from hierarchal control.

The cause of resistance of young Saudi female is suppression by the mother and the father... Yes, surely, and so they express themselves through rebellion... Of course, the excessive deviation from societal norms... for example; girls now cut their hair and wear boy's clothes and feel that this is something outstanding... **(Basimah, 17 years old high school student)**

Maybe girls feel that this is freedom, that in this way they are relieved, and maybe it is due to suppression from their parents. In this way, girls feel that they challenge the laws and restrictions. **(Tuqat, 17 years old high school student)**

Similarly, Samaha says that rebellion is merely a form of self-expression, a rejection of parental repression, or an act of resistance to social pressures. Thus, rebellion is a relative concept; the young women themselves may not perceive their actions as rebellious; this is merely the impression of the older generation. The older generations view rebellion as present in every new form

of behaviour exhibited by the young; whereas, the behaviour itself may only be natural.

Samaha makes a link between rebellion, suppression and repression, and customs and traditions. As is the case with all cultures, societies change and concepts develop with every passing generation. Therefore, the young woman needs to find a role and space to explore this for herself.

I feel it is normal but it is called rebellion because society has made it rebellious. If it happened in a less overbearing environment it would only be slightly odd. The term would change. Here it's rebellious because there is repression... there is the law and there are customs and traditions and she has decided to break all of these things and do what she wants that's why (it's called rebellion). **(Samaha, 21 years old university student)**

Samara also does not recognise the existence of true rebellion in the acts allegedly carried out by young women and labelled as such. For her, acts that are commonly characterised as rebellion are in fact a collection of reactions by young women to the rigid social conditions imposed upon them. Samara negotiates, chooses, and raises her voice to demand her rights; rights which her society considers unusual and unacceptable.

I do not have a concept of the rebellious girl because I do not recognise the concept. Rather, her behaviour is a normal reaction to what occurs in Saudi society: oppression, suppression, outdated, regressive customs and traditions; as if we are living in the Stone Age. Now we have advanced tech like

Internet, iPhones, BlackBerries and other things, yet we still have closed minds. This is regression. So, the girl is not rebellious, rather she is (merely) demanding her rights and seeking to live normally – yet society stamps her with rebellion.
(Samara, 20 years old university student)

7.3 Support, communication, and rebellion:

Researchers believe that rebellion or hostility do not arise as a response to a single factor; rather, they are provoked by a combination of multiple factors.

As Farrington (1989) stated:

“There is no shortage of factors that are significantly correlated with offending; indeed, literally thousands of variables differentiate significantly between official offenders and non-official offenders and correlate significantly with reports of offending behaviour by teenagers and their peers, parents, and teachers.” (Farrington, 1989: 362)

The unity of the family is a vital contributor towards psychological health (Taylor et al., 2001; Arab, 2010). Moreover, everything that a child learns originates from his parents or family. If a child is not raised according to moral criteria or religious education, he or she might become behaviourally deviant. According to the participants, recurring problems for many families include weak oversight, rough treatment, disjointedness, divorce, poverty, or an excessively large size. The indicators of risk that may provoke rebellion include influence from the family, school, friends and society (Farrington, 1989; Al-Askah, 2005).

The participants classified a wide range of activities as rebellious. The majority of the participants labelled all activities at odds with family, state or religious criteria as rebellious. These range from the petty, such as disobedience to one's parents, to the profound (e.g. drug use). The participants do not differentiate between non-criminal rebellion, and criminal deviances. For them, deviance should be treated with guidance and rehabilitation, not criminal punishment.

When the youngest participant in this study (a sixteen year old high school student) was asked about the reasons for young Saudi women's rebellion, she gave many plausible reasons. She talked about parental repression, inappropriate friends, unscrupulous parental treatment, lax parental oversight and broken families. Primarily, rebellion, or lack of it, is dependent on how well the family raises, directs and protects its children. This is consistent with the findings of Haskell and Yablonsky (1978) who point to the familial environment as a primary determinant for deviation in children. The family is the first institution for socialisation; it determines the social and economic class of the child and is significant in sculpting her individual personality (Wright and Wright, 1994). According to the study participants, all these factors play a key role in obedience and, conversely, rebellion. For example, Imana, claims that the family environment plays a key role in sparking rebellion.

Maybe suppression from the mother or father; maybe bad friends; maybe the environment in which they live. I mean... The same environment as their parents is not good; maybe problems between the mother and the father, and so they violate the laws as they found nobody to direct them. **(Imana, 16 years old high school student)**

One participant, Zainab, pointed to the effective role that dialogue between a young woman and her parents' plays in preventing rebellion. The participant also highlighted the importance of self-confidence and social trust. Methods of achieving this confidence and trust include allowing young women to make decisions, and abolishing the strict hierarchal structures common in Saudi society. This correlates with Wright and Wright's (1994) opinion that neglected, abused and repressed children are more likely to become hostile and delinquent. Furthermore, this is concurrent with Glueck and Glueck's (1964) study, which was based on a sample of five hundred delinquent boys and five hundred non-delinquents. The study found that one of the primary contributors to delinquency was disjointedness and a lack of warmth in the family. Indeed, Glueck found that boys who came from an unloving familial background, or those devoid of a fatherly role model, were much more likely to turn to delinquency. The young women in our study did not differentiate between delinquency and rebellion, and twenty-nine of them stated that a hostile family environment and rebellious friends were the primary drivers of rebellion.

I mean if a girl does not feel free to talk inside her house or to take her own decisions in anything – this will make her feel oppressed and rebellious. **(Zainab, 17 year-old university student)**

Abeen, who hails from a nine-member polygamous family, pointed to what she believes as the solution. While she suffers from a lack of love and dialogue from her father, she proposes that the other family members should stand by the young woman and make her feel loved, cared for, free and independent. Similarly, Al-Jaafri (1999) highlighted this in his study on family size and its

relationship with socialisation; he found that small, monogamous families care more for their children than larger, polygamous families. Abeen's family is the only polygamous family in the sample, and she is the oldest of all of her siblings.

This is due to oppression in the family itself and being denied everything; eventually these girls need to feel free or to attract attention from others. And I believe if the parents listen or talk to their daughters more this will resolve the problem. **(Abeen, 21 years old university student)**

The study by Al-Mufleh (1994) on a sample of seventy-six boys from social care homes and a number of schools found that boys who had been abused by their fathers tended to form inappropriate friendships and were inclined towards delinquency and hostility. Boys who had been deprived of love and affection by their fathers were also found to be more likely to deviate. In the context of the young Saudi woman, according to the participant narratives presented above, young women who are loved and cared for by both parents are less likely to rebel than those that are not. In this context, the participants voiced their opinions that young Saudi women would not turn to rebellion or deviation from social standards if they found open ears in their family.

According to the majority of the study participants, the family is the reason for young women's rebellion. This confirms the assertions of Arab (2010), who stated that friends are the primary source of social support for young people.

The role of friends, which in the Saudi context are groups of people of the same gender and a similar age with similar interests, is also considered important. A friend may influence others in her group to smoke, go out with young men, drink alcohol, or disobey her parents and go out without their

knowledge. Tappan (1949) pointed out that friends can play a key role in pushing an individual toward delinquency, and this view is supported by a number of studies (Al-Askah, 2005).

“The influence of delinquent associations in producing misconduct has been stressed by the criminologist; exposure to unwholesome companions, particularly to those who carry the habits and attitudes of law violation, may easily spread patterns of delinquency.” (Tappan, 1949: 146)

Adolescents grow attached to their friends because they understand each other, share similar tastes and ideas, and have common interests. Therefore, in situations where communication with their parents deteriorates, they seek out their friends. Whilst, friends may play a positive role in young people’s lives by helping them further their academic performance and alleviate social pressure, there is evidence that supports the claim that deviant friends can increase anti-social behaviour, leading to higher deviation rates (Felson, 1994; Hartup, 1996; Nezlek and Allen, 2006).

As an example, Dinya states that the young woman imitates her friends in order to gain sympathy and membership of the group. Dinya associates this with familial repression and deprivation. She explains that repression in the family and the absence of communication prompts young women to resort to her friends and imitate them as a pretext for getting support. Therefore, control and hierarchy within the family are two reasons why a young woman might seek out her friends and engage in rebellious activities. Dinya also points to the importance of moderation in the rules imposed by families, so that the young woman can be obedient, have freewill and be influenced simultaneously.

The surrounding and the friends are all doing certain activities and they are considered normal. So, the girl will certainly feel that she is wrong and that she is the only one who doesn't do that, and thus, she does it! For instance, parents that are very conservative and limit the girl and prevent her from going out even with her friends... And everything is no, no, no...

Therefore, naturally she will dislike this and drift to that thing or to something else like rebellion... that is very wrong... They induced her to that thing... I mean... Everything must be moderate in life... **(Dinya, 21 years old university student)**

Thus, female networks allow women to exercise power and independence within society; or as Stolen and Vaa (1991: 223) stated: "the feeling of community is important for strengthening confidence in one's abilities, and in establishing a common solidarity and consciousness"; as Dinya noted.

In Samaha's narrative, we find her rejecting control and hierarchy in the family, and reaffirming the positive role of her friends. She expresses delight in the similarities between them and their shared interests and cultural values. She also voices her rejection of the restrictions and hierarchy enforced by the school management.

The best thing I liked was the school environment such as my fellow girls, people and the community in which I lived... The community was very sophisticated... I mean... Limited to a sophisticated class... I mean all of us were from a certain class, the same families, the same customs and traditions and the same religion to the extent that you don't feel at all that there is inequality among us. And the bad thing was the restriction

and the exaggerated rules in order to keep discipline and of course this was the role of the manager of the school.

(Samaha, 21 years old university student)

Another participant presented the experience of a group of young women who were forced to lie to go out during university hours. Their families had barred them from going out, so they felt compelled to deceive them. This participant comments that fear and worry are thrilling sensations that might push young women to further rebellion. Thus, rebellion itself is enjoyable, thrilling and causes an adrenaline rush. Katz termed this as “delight in being deviant” (Katz, 1988: 312).

I go out in the morning during the day job and I see these forms a lot and we call them (college girls), they go to college then they go somewhere else, yet when you see how they are sitting nothing is wrong with it, they're not even sitting with boys and they're not doing something wrong. We find it fine, but others find it rebellious and say they are bad girls. If my family saw us they won't say a thing, but if you discussed it with them they refuse it instantly because society denies it. For your information, girls do that for pleasure and find it absolutely fine and I see it as the best day of my life because we did something without our family's permission. But if the patriarch is okay with it and I did it, it won't be as exciting as when he doesn't know. I mean the enjoyment is it's behind his back and not following orders is so fun (she laughs). **(Hadeer, 20 years old university student)**

However, the behaviour exhibited by the young woman is neither criminal nor

rebellious. It is social strictures that label them as such.

When analysing Halat's narrative, we find that the young Saudi woman yearns to participate in common recreational activities, including going out with friends or getting tongue piercings. In Western society, these behaviours are considered normal. Yet, in Saudi Arabia, the young woman is constrained in her movement and behaviour. Thus, she resorts to verbal and behavioural deception to fulfil her desires. The young Saudi woman exhibits resoluteness when it comes to fulfilling her desires, yet she goes about doing so in a deceptive way, to retain the favour of the authorities.

I will tell you about what I see... if the girl wants to go to the seashore (laughs) and her parents didn't accept... then she goes to the seashore behind her parents' backs... Just like that... and says to them, "I am going to my friend's house" and goes to the seashore... Just like that... I mean... That's all... I want to go to the seashore, and so I will go to the seashore. She may also want to pierce her tongue, and she did pierce her tongue with a crystal earring, it is supposed not to be visible (she laughs). (Halat, 21 years old university student)

7.4 Conclusion

The preceding discussion reveals that the socio-cultural constructs in Saudi Arabia play a key role in determining what is permissible and what is not. Rebellion is a relative concept that varies according to personal experience, and the reasons for rebellion might primarily be parental restrictions that are enforced on young women but not on their brothers. The theme of feeling slighted or discriminated against is clear here. The new generation of young

Saudi women refutes male superiority and hierarchical parental treatment. So, as a form of resistance, the young woman attempts to become an independent decision-maker and express herself freely, using the bedroom as a safe, private space away from surveillance.

The family represents an important pillar in an individual's life. It is a primary group that provides protection and support to its members in the social sphere. In the context of this study, the family plays a vital role in the participants' lives. The participants opined that the lack of parental love, care and trust is a key driver for young women's rebellion, while love, care and trust leads to more contented daughters.

Friendship groups, some participants said, represent secondary support groups. A young woman who is discontented with her family might become dependent on support from belonging to a friendship group. Some friends, the participants continued, may incite others to rebel.

The participants therefore concluded that contentment within the family is paramount. Contentment can be derived from parental trust, love and dialogue. Stable, loving families decrease the likelihood of rebellion.

Furthermore, young women also express resistance by deceiving their parents in order to go out and experience enjoyment and thrills or to imitate their friends. In all cases, they are young women searching for their own unique identities and seeking scope for pleasure within a conservative cultural framework. The restrictions on the young woman's freedom and her movement are also imposed at school and on the street. Therefore, the young woman seeks alternatives while still observing social restrictions. Thus, she is resisting, yet in a way that is invisible to the authorities. The changes occurring

in the new generation are evidence that young women are seeking to gain their rights in a peaceful and pragmatic manner. Their methods are not revolutionary, but diplomatic: the young woman plays a positive role while adapting to both the modern and the traditional culture. She seeks an alternative identity and a life that allows her to be both modern and respectful of traditional culture.

8. Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to bring together and explore the themes examined in the previous three analysis chapters. The chapter on Hijab investigated the various conceptualisations of Hijab and the Saudi dress-code as expressed by the interviewees, which reflect negotiation via a blend of discussion and obedience.

The chapter on gender relations focused on the relationship between the young women and their fathers. This involved consideration of the concepts of *Qiwama*, guardianship and financial support. Here the participants described their mothers as moderators, intervening between themselves and their fathers. The ways in which these relationships affect the decisions the young women made in their personal lives were examined, as were the ways in which these decisions impacted on their ability to negotiate and establish their identities.

Finally, the “Young and the Restless” chapter focused on the behaviour of young women in their private spaces, with their friends or in cyberspace. Through this, I examined the significance of solidarity within young women’s friendship groups, as an indicator of whether they are more inclined to follow their friends or obey their parents.

This discussion chapter will explore the role played by habitus in controlling young women’s lives, the options available to her, and the impact of these on rebellion/obedience patterns.

Saudi society is characterised by collectivism, a feature that dominates its hierarchal and social relationships. These social relationships exercise hegemony over individual behaviour and place the values of conformity, obedience, and reliance ahead of concepts such as independence, self-reliance and innovation. This is evident in the narrations given by the young women, whose views are reported in the thesis; they are generally more inclined towards conformity than to rebellion and challenge.

However, this is not to say that the young women were totally passive. They often employed subtle tactics to subvert or negotiate some of the restrictions imposed upon them while, as de Certeau, Jameson and Lovitt (1980) stated, 'playing in enemy territory'. In the case of the young Saudi women, the enemy territory is an entrenched dominant culture largely hostile to their actions.

Examples appear throughout the thesis of the tactics employed by the participants to negotiate subtly with authority. These examples help clarify the extent of rebellion and obedience in the average young Saudi woman's daily life.

8.2 Hijab, Decency, Respect and Honour

Hijab is a major theme in this study. The participants all agreed that Hijab serves a religious purpose; it is not a restriction imposed by male authorities. The Hijab that some of the participants chose is intended as a symbol of their Islamist revivalism. For them, Hijab is a liberating, not an oppressive force. It allows young women to become the observers, not the observed. In the context of the patriarchal structures that frame the lives of these young Saudi women, Hijab becomes a tool they can employ to evade sexual harassment, increase participation and garner respect.

All the participants agreed that Hijab is a cultural norm, which, along with prudish and modest behaviour, is expected of the Muslim woman. Wearing it is a way to attain respect, trust, and, thus, higher social status. The participants disagreed, however, about how to wear the Hijab, in particular in terms of wearing or not wearing the *Niqab*, and choosing to wear colourful headscarves, the extent to which Hijab should dictate the course of a young woman's life, and whether it should be worn both inside the country and abroad. This may imply to the reader that Hijab-wearing is voluntary for Saudi women. This is not strictly the case. As previously mentioned in chapter 5 the young woman can be likened to a mirror that reflects social reality. By wearing the Hijab, the young woman reflects her own religiosity and conservatism, and that of society. Although Hijab is a religious matter, no penalty is ascribed in Islam for not wearing the Hijab. However, as one participant mentioned, not wearing the Hijab in Saudi Arabia can lead a woman to be disrespected by certain members of society. The associations of Hijab with values held in high regard by society: honour, respect and reputation, exercise subtle pressures on young women, compelling them to wear the Hijab. This in part explains why those young women who wear the Hijab to appease society, take it off when they are abroad and away from this social pressure.

The participants also agreed that Hijab is a personal choice and a way of mitigating the demands of a conservative and constantly monitoring society. This concurs with Al- Ruwaithea's (2002) study regarding the uniqueness of Saudi society. Saudi society closely observes the behaviour of its members, and does so in an aggressive and sometimes critical way. Thus, a young woman, who has grown up as a member of this aggressively watchful society, is likely to feel compelled to acquiesce to social expectations and to cast off individualistic aspirations (Al- Ruwaithea, 2002).

These findings differ from the conclusions reached by Orientalist thinkers (Mernissi, 1985; Azim, 1997; El-Saadawi, 1980; Ahmed, 1992; Ebrahim, 1983; Amin, 1970; Daly, 1985; Shah, 1998). Their studies found that Hijab is a tool used by the patriarchal male authorities to oppress women, representing an obstacle in the path of women's participation in public life. In reality, and in contrast, the participants in this study view Hijab as a tool enabling dialogue and adaptation. The participants use Hijab to clarify their cultural identity. The young woman believes that through wearing the Hijab she attains respect and meanwhile she has the right to negotiate the form of her Hijab. Hijab is a means of entering public life and accessing many different fields of education and employment. Therefore, Hijab should be seen as a tool that can be utilised to counteract marginalisation by male-dominated society. The use of Hijab as a vehicle for empowerment also occurs in Muslim communities living in Western societies (Dwyer and Shah, 2009). The notion that Hijab can serve as a tool of enablement is in agreement with the viewpoints expressed by Fanon (1989), Hoodfar (2003), Bowen (2007), Bullock (2003), Contractor (2012), Bailey and Tawadros (2003), Tarlo, (2010) and Hijab (1988). They all asserted that the Hijab worn by Muslim women in the west is an expression of Islamic identity in a western/secular society and/or a rejection of Western values.

The findings of this study agreed with those in other studies that highlight the fact that Hijab is understood to protect the chastity of the woman, making the woman the standard-bearer of the family's honour. Women resort to wearing the Hijab as a sign of chastity, ensuring the maintenance of personal and familial honour. The number of hijab-wearers in Britain also witnessed a marked increase, in a similar expression of Islamic identity, piety and honour (Dwyer and Shah, 2009). Additionally, the participants in this research used the Hijab to show adherence to religious values that are prevalent in Saudi society.

The participants view Hijab as a “liberating invention”, which enables the young woman to move freely and invisibly in a watchful, male-dominated society. In a society, that strictly segregates males and females in the public sphere; the young woman fulfils the demands for morality and prudery placed on her by wearing the Hijab. This finding is consistent with the studies of Hoodfar (1997), Schmidt (2004), El Guindi (1999), McIntosh and Islam (2010) and AlHadar and McCahill (2011).

Despite the young woman’s adherence to the expectations of social authorities (the family and the state), she also plays an active role as a free agent in her choice of what to wear as Hijab; her Hijab plays the role of a “social mediator” for her as a woman. She seeks to appease the expectations of all whilst maintaining some semblance of personal freedom of choice. This refers to the concept of participation and “the feel of the game” in the work of Bourdieu (1967). We can provide an analogy of the life of the young Saudi woman using the game of Snakes and Ladders: If the young woman behaves in a certain way acceptable to society, she is permitted to climb the “ladder”, or to improve her status. Conversely, if the young woman behaves in a way that is contrary to what is expected of her, her status may fall, similar to slipping down a snake.

What this means is that Saudi women are generally in a weak social position. They are permitted to strengthen their position within the hierarchy and improve their conditions if they negotiate on society’s terms. As mentioned above, the tactics of the young women, when they negotiate subtly while adopting conservative behaviour, is a way to struggle against society’s terms without seeking outright confrontation, which would be socially unacceptable and see their position undermined.

This also links to Bourdieu's social field, wherein various agents attempt to maintain and improve their social standing (Bourdieu 1986: 241). These social agents, including young Saudi women, compete according to certain social rules to gain a stake, and greater empowerment in society (Schultheis, 2008: 35). This can be linked to young women avoiding outright confrontation with the dominant culture through their willingness to obey the rules as a pretext for subtly negotiating their positions.

Her behaviour is governed by the social expectations that she is raised to adhere to and, once she grows up, she attempts to negotiate and reshape these expectations. This is a task in which she may succeed or may not. Her success or failure hinges on the degree of strictness of social standards and authorities. Thus, in young Saudi womens' variant of feminism, they use the Islamic legal framework to challenge their status and negotiate their rights and place in society. They do not do this explicitly; they work subtly, from "behind the veil", both figuratively and literally, to advance their cause.

This can be viewed in light of Bourdieu's habitus. Bourdieu (1998) asserted that habitus operates mainly at the subconscious level. When individuals are confronted with certain social conditions, the habitus tends to shift to the conscious level, whereupon the individual then begins to choose to uphold empowering discourses and disown the disempowering. Sweetman (2003) elaborated on this concept with what he called the "reflexive habitus": A concept that enables social shifts in late modern societies. Norms in fields such as employment, community fashion and media become unstable under this reflexive habitus as people scrutinise and choose the values that improve their positions. Thus, the choices available to Saudi women fall under the

banner of reflexive habitus, as women analyse and choose the options that will be beneficial for them.

8.3 Gender Relations and Negotiation or Rebellion

Linked to what has just been discussed in reference the habitus, when moving from the topic of Hijab to the topic of *Qiwama* and *Wali-ul-amr*, I noticed a shift in the participants' attitudes. Whereas the participants generally spoke in favour of the Hijab and its perceived positive impact on their lives, linking it to religion, they were critical of the male-favouring version of *Qiwama* prevalent in Saudi society and they distanced this from religion. The young Saudi women scrutinised both Hijab and *Qiwama*, and viewed the former as empowering. The latter, which is disempowering, is either reinterpreted or otherwise debunked.

It could be argued the conflict in interpretations of the verse of *Qiwama* may be an artificial one; the result of a viewpoint that perceives its meaning to be universally applicable. If one attempted to view the Quran in a context which it came to be in the seventh century AD, one would understand that *Qiwama* was, at that time, used to denote the man's responsibilities within the patriarchal family. This links to Mir-Hosseini's argument that *Fiqh* is human and relevant to its context, and that it must be adapted according to different contexts (Mir-Hosseini, 2006). To explain *Qiwama* within the context of its revelation, we need to revisit the Prophet's era; a time when tribal life was disintegrating and a new merchant class was forming in urban areas. This social upheaval and absence of the social security that the tribe provided impacted on women and children more than on any of the other sectors in society. The Prophet's persistent attempts to shift the focus of personal loyalty from the tribe to the

family (and thus to the Umma) made women, who had not, generally, worked professionally in pre-Islamic times, dependent on men. The notion of women's subordination and status as a housewife and mother arose from these historic social conditions.

When observing the participants' responses to the question of *Qiwama*, we notice a vehement rejection of male control on their lives. According to Saudi law, the Saudi woman is a follower of her husband, father, or brother. She cannot make a decision without the approval of her *Wali-ul-amr*. Even in cases where the *Wali-ul-amr* is unable to provide for her and her children and the woman is the breadwinner, the woman remains a follower of the *Wali-ul-amr*. In Saudi law, women do not have the right to hire labourers from overseas except with explicit permission from the *Wali-ul-amr*. The woman does not have the right to own or drive a car or undergo a medical operation without permission from her *Wali-ul-amr*. These are all policies that deprive women of their citizenship rights, as mentioned by Saudi civil rights activist Wajeha Al-Huwaider (2009).

These policies are largely irreligious, and thus draw the ire of female activists. Despite the recent participation of women in the Shura council, the council itself is criticised for failing to address the issues facing Saudi women. Indeed, the official view on *Qiwama* is derived from Quranic exegeses that focus on motherhood and housewifery while denying a woman her citizenship rights, a role in decision making or freedom to participate in the workplace. Conversely, the young women in this study expect care, dialogue and financial support from their *Wali-ul-amr*. From this finding a particular impression of young Saudi woman can be produced, namely that of clever negotiator, selecting

those elements that suit her most from religious concepts, accepting care and justice as a God-given right; while rejecting control, sexism and injustice as male-attitudes that are historical and social, and not of religious origin.

The participants argue that returning to the roots of Islam will be beneficial to them. They believe that Islam views the woman as the partner of the man; regardless of her role as a daughter, sister, wife or mother; the two genders are complementary. The young women argue that Islam respects women and affords them the ability to study, work and still have a family. They allege that Islam, unlike western feminism, respects the life-cycles of women and thus assigns different responsibilities to women at different stages in their lives. Islam, according to the participants, provides a plethora of female role models for women to follow, in the form of the Prophet's wives Khadija, the businesswoman, and Aisha, the religious scholar. The participants do not voice a need to re-interpret the Quran, they have their own ways to negotiate a better position for themselves. Forms of feminism employing an Islamic framework are not restricted to Saudi Arabia. They are present in other regions of the Arab and Islamic Worlds. For those young women that adopt this perspective, the only genuine ideal followed is that of the early Muslim woman: the wives of the Prophet and the female *Sahaba*.

The participants accepted aspects of *Qiwama* that were favourable to them (spending and care), and rejected the downside (control and oversight). The reason given for this is the imbalance in familial treatment between males and the females in the family. Young men are allowed complete freedom, with little or no oversight. Families and society, on the other hand, restrict young women. According to Al- Ruwaithea (2008), the reason for the different treatment of the young men and the young women in the Saudi family can be

attributed to tribal cultural thought. The values of the tribe are reflected in the differences between genders. The man is the face of the family and its strength, while the woman is its honour and weakness. Thus, the man becomes the protective chevalier, while the woman requires someone to defend her and her honour.

Since any damage to the young woman's reputation will have a considerable impact on her family's reputation, various restrictions have been put in place to protect her. Women are seen as the bearers and conveyors of culture, and the norms that regulate their behavior become a means of determining and defining group status and boundaries (1989; Afshar, 1994). In Saudi society, these restrictions include her spending the majority of her time in the home, having her friends carefully chosen for her, and not driving. In all cases, these standards reflect traditional, cultural values, distinct from religion. As Yamani (2000) pointed out, youths in Saudi Arabia tend to opine that religion is more flexible on the issue of gender relations than culture. Islam enforces gender complementarity and an equality of responsibilities and rewards, irrespective of gender.

In light of my study's findings, I argue that the problems and imbalances that have arisen are a result of biased interpretations and enforcement of religion by those at the top of the hierarchal structure of male dominated Saudi society (Alhibri, 1997; Mir-hosseini, 2006; Bashatah, 2011). As Hofstede (2001) described it, Saudi society possesses the cultural belief that distance must exist in all power relations. Here, the man is elevated above the woman, who is considered subordinate to him. This, in turn, ensures 'her' subordination and 'his' power. Young women reject this reality, and seek to transform their

hierarchical gender relationships into individualistic egalitarian relationships, similar to those found in many Western countries.

It is apparent, in my analysis of the young women's perspective on rebellion, that the participants consider disobeying their parents' rules to be rebellious behaviour. The reasons behind such rebellion include feeling distanced and excluded from the decision-making processes that impact on their lives. This is due to the influence of the dominant culture, which forces the individual to forsake his/her aspirations in favour of the perceived wellbeing of the masses. Fearing exclusion from society, the young woman feels compelled to walk a middle path, living how she wants in the safety of her bedroom, yet adhering to social standards when in public. Therefore, the young woman sequesters herself with her friends in a private environment – one viewed as safe by her society – and expresses her wants and opinions within its confines. In these spaces, the absence of outside oversight and criticism affords these young women some freedom and personal space.

McRobbie and Garber's (1976) study on investigating bedroom culture involved much younger participants than this one. However, there are many similarities between my participants and McRobbie and Garber's. This is in part because, even as 21 year old adults, Saudi women are treated by their parents as adolescents. Parents' authoritarian treatment of young Saudi women stems from concerns revolving around reputation, shame and honour, and fear of slander (Al- Ruwaithea, 2004; Chaleby, 1987). Society acts as a watchful sentry tracking the young woman's every move, protecting her by placing her in closeted bedrooms, restricting her education (and thus employment) opportunities and banning women's driving.

Concerning the last restriction, some participants have alleged that the right to drive is not something they wish for and that women should be afforded the “luxury” of being driven around by chauffeurs. Other participants, however, viewed driving as essential to women’s independence and unhindered participation in public life. For some women who scrutinised driving, they found having a driver to be more comfortable, and thus accepted being driven around, whilst for others, a thirst for empowerment or limited resources led them to support women’s driving. The demands of the young women who do want to drive arise out of a thirst to be held equal to all of the world’s women, rather than a desire for gender equality. For example:

Saudi Arabia is not different to any other country and like every country we have positives and negatives. In Saudi we have positives and negatives and driving won’t affect that, we’ll be like any other country we aren’t abnormal or inventing anything new. **(Reen, 17 year old university student)**

However, in all cases, regardless of their personal preferences, the participants did not link the ban on women’s driving to religion; they cited over-protectiveness by the family, society and religious scholars as the reason behind the ban. These are all traditional social standards not based on religious texts.

8.4 The Young and the Restless

When the participants defined rebellion, some commented that young Saudi women’s behaviour is only considered rebellious by the older generation, because it involves actions that are alien to Saudi conservative thought. In this context, the young Saudi women are shown to be seeking to adapt within a

reality characterised by limited opportunities. All young Saudi women attempt to realise as many of their goals as possible. Each young woman uses different “survival methods”, which Afshar explains as being methods used by the marginalised to secure their place in society (in Brah, 1986).

In the young Saudi women’s case, survival methods include: the use of the Hijab as a key to social acceptance; the role their mothers perform as a mediator between the young woman and her father; and the role of friends with whom to relax and entertain (and possibly, to accompany them when they go out without the parents’ knowledge). In all cases, the young Saudi woman seeks entertainment, enjoyment and self-expression. She feels poorly in her home as a result of her parents’ preference for her male siblings. She feels marginalised by hierarchal, male-preferences that deem the young man to be “logical” and elevate him to positions of authority, while dismissing the young woman as “emotional” and thus excluding her from authority. These cultural concepts of male superiority and female inferiority are deeply woven into the very fabric of Saudi society.

We notice this in the female education system curriculum that focuses on home economics, child rearing and housewifery, thus reinforcing the idea that these are the axis of a female’s life. In contrast, the male receives a large portion of instruction in a plethora of applied sciences that prepare him for professional life. This denigrates the importance of women’s employment and relegates the young woman to the pursuit of an education that does not clash with her traditional role as wife and mother. Thus, due to these limited opportunities, young women seek refuge and self-expression in private spaces away from monitoring. These are all actions which the young woman considers normal if

expressed in front of her friends, but which will be considered rebellious by outsiders should they witness them.

The new generation, through their tactical negotiation, their tactical negotiation and obedience, seek to improve their living conditions in the face of traditional thought. Some called for broader educational opportunities to afford women wider employment options. Others called for lifting the ban on women's driving. Still others sought refuge in online courses, in fields of study such as art and fashion design. These are active young women seeking change, but only within the restricted range acceptable in Saudi society.

The participants claimed that there is inadequate legal protection for women, or repercussions for men, in the event of transgression. This leads to greater familial pressure on the young woman to adhere strictly to cultural norms. For the young women in my sample, social insecurity generates familial instability. Consequently, the participants identified the absence of parental love and integration in the decision-making process as a key impetus for young women striving to subtly push back against pressure.

The participants sought to justify the 'deviance' of some young Saudi women as a product of parental carelessness, marginalisation and subjugation, which leads young women to seek refuge with friends who might themselves be deviant. To compensate for not feeling valued and not having a sense of belonging to the family, the young woman may choose to belong to a group of friends, and emulate their attitudes and behaviours to become accepted. The young woman wants to participate in dialogue and voice her opinions in the family, at school and in other settings. She seeks respect and treatment that is appropriate to her femininity and status as a productive member of society. She does not seek a revolution similar to women in neighbouring Arab

countries. Rather she seeks equality in responsibility, self-determination and reward, irrespective of gender or social status. Equality in rights and responsibilities, according to the participants, is a religious right that any professedly Islamic society must uphold.

Either intentionally or unintentionally, these young women are seeking a sense of purpose or recognition. Put simply, they are pursuing the authority to legitimise their behaviour within society. By reverting to the basis of *Sharia*, they employ religion and religious law as a tool for liberation, such as when they use Hijab as a tool for empowerment, shown in chapter 5. Essentially, they work to forge a negotiating space within cultural contexts that will allow them to negotiate for complex power relations.

8.5 Conclusion

The participants in this study feel that Hijab empowers them and are complicit with its restrictions, as they see it as a mechanism to further their participation in public life, including education and work, whilst avoiding a direct (and, inevitably) losing battle with the entrenched forces of traditionalism. So, hijab, despite its restrictions on female appearance, facilitates the young Saudi women's desire to be more independent.

In contrast, *Qiwama* is viewed as a disempowering discourse. The participants view it as financially beneficial yet harmful in that it assures female dependency on males. Thus, they hope to transform *Qiwama* so they are no longer trapped in a dependent state. The young Saudi women, therefore, seeks greater autonomy and empowerment through Hijab, whilst simultaneously attempting to negate the disempowering *Qiwama*.

There is a strong sense of relativism in the participants' understanding of rebellion and obedience, hinging on the context in which would-be rebellious acts are committed. Nevertheless, the participants agree that the root causes of rebellion (whatever its specific definition) are to be sought through tribal cultural norms which are often restrictive to the female.

None of the participants profess absolute rebellion or complete obedience. Rather, their interaction with their culture revolves around subtle negotiation and tactical adaptation. In the former, they seek to push for certain rights and privileges, whilst being careful not to incur social anger, whereas in the latter, they give some concessions in order to gain rights and empowerment.

8.6 Recommendations

Young women are an integral part of society. As such, steps must be taken to adapt social policy to positively impact on young Saudi women's lives more profoundly. Although this study does not paint an overwhelmingly negative image of young women's lives in Saudi Arabia, significant disadvantages and complaints were raised by many of the participants. Alleviating some of the restrictions imposed on young Saudi women will help to increase their sense of belonging in society and also lead to greater social stability.

I recommend that the state open up more fields of education and employment for young Saudi women. Women's professional training programs are also recommended, as these will lead to stronger female participation in the market.

Saudi Arabian women would also greatly benefit from women-only sport and recreational facilities. This will permit all Saudis to pursue a healthy lifestyle, while staying true to state conservatism.

I recommend the establishment of secure, free of charge public transport services in all regions of the country. This may provide an alternative to women's driving, if the ban cannot be lifted. In any case, it will remove the need for private chauffeurs.

For future studies, ideally I would like to conduct a large survey capturing the experiences and aspirations of thousands of young Saudi women, unfortunately the current political climate in Saudi Arabia would make this endeavour extremely difficult. I would like to conduct further research on young Saudi women in future years, but I would also like to find out more about the young Saudi male's experiences and his perspectives on gender relations too. Therefore, I recommend that future research focus on young Saudi men's daily lives in the changing Saudi society. Such a study would give voice to young men to explain what social pressure they experience and their potential for obedience, rebellion or negotiation.

From this comparative study, we could explore whether a gap exists between the young women and men in terms of social pressures and their ways of dealing with them. This study would also present recommendations on how to better young Saudi men's lives and afford them greater social empowerment.

8.7 Research Contribution

When referring to previous studies about Saudi youth, we notice that they are almost entirely focused on the study of deviance and its factors. The studies

have also tended to focus on the male population rather than balancing attention between the two genders.

This study is unique in that it focuses on neither deviation nor males, rather it seeks to give voice to young Saudi women to explore their daily life experiences, challenges, and their response to potential social pressures.

This study sought to examine the range, subtleties, and continuum of obedience and rebellion in the young Saudi women's daily lives. In exploring the vagaries of rebellion and obedience, the study explored the young woman as a tactician and subtle negotiator, someone silently pushing the boundaries of social acceptance whilst avoiding open confrontation with social and political authorities.

8.8 Strengths and limitations of the study

This study comprised a number of strengths. First, I used the qualitative approach, as my gender enabled me to interview the participants face to face. This enabled me to delve into the depths of the young Saudi woman's daily life. Some of the participants spoke more openly than others, while others participated in feedback interviews to clarify uncertain statements in their original interviews. I would have been unable to do this had I used a quantitative approach.

Previous studies have indicated that the qualitative approach was being underused. Indeed, Raean (2003) said that 80% of published research in the Arab World was quantitative. Qualitative research is thus undervalued. In this study, the use of the qualitative method was necessary to give the young Saudi

women voice and facilitate better understanding of their viewpoints, as, according to Corbin and Strauss (2008), “qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables” (12). Additionally, this study is the first to consider obedience and rebellion in a non-criminal sense among young Saudi women living in Jeddah. This may open the door for similar studies nationwide.

Despite the aforementioned strengths, my study naturally has its limitations. The use of 30 participants means that the findings are not necessarily representative of all young women in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the participants were all from affluent (middle class) families living in Jeddah, thus, the experiences and aspirations of less affluent and non-urban young women were not included in this particular study.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Consent Form

Sahar Aljaouhari

Postgraduate Research student

Division of Sociology and Social Policy

School of social sciences

University of Southampton

Tel: 0530580919 (KSA)

E-mail: saa1g09@soton.ac.uk

Research project title: Tug of War: The young Saudi female's struggle between obedience and rebellion.

The study is an effort to understand your opinion on how free the Saudi woman feels within the predominantly conservative society of Saudi Arabia. Your opinion will be essential in establishing an understanding of the activities of the young Saudi female within the framework of society and what classifies as rebellion. Another key aspect that will be central to the objectives of this study is to understand your opinion on how far liberalisation should go (or whether it should happen in the first place) in regards to the Saudi woman. Interviews are being carried out with young Saudi women from Jeddah.

I will learn your opinions through one-to-one interviews. All interviews will be completely confidential and anonymous.

I, -----, agree to participate in the research, *Tug of War: The young Saudi female's struggle between*

obedience and rebellion. Semi structured interviews, conducted by Sahar Aljaouhari as part of her PhD qualification.

Please tick each box below to demonstrate your consent to participate in this research:

- I consent to participate in an interview for the above study.
- I consent to the interview being audio-recorded.
- I consent to anonymised quotes from the interview being used in the researcher's thesis and future publications.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or refuse to answer particular questions.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.

Please contact the researcher (telephone and email details above) with any questions or to request a summary of the research findings.

The project is under the supervision of:

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Appendix 2

Information Sheet

Title: Between Obedience and Rebellion: A Field Study on the Young Women of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

The study is an effort to understand your opinion on how free the Saudi woman feels within the predominantly conservative society of Saudi Arabia. Your opinion will be essential in establishing an understanding of the activities of the young Saudi female within the framework of society and what classifies as rebellion. Another key aspect that will be central to the objectives of this study is to understand your opinion on how far liberalisation should go (or whether it should happen in the first place) in regards to the Saudi woman. Your participation will be a central contribution to my MPhil/PhD Sociology and Social Policy dissertation and it may provide a starting point for future publications and research in this field.

This study is an attempt to represent the young Saudi female's relationship with politics, culture, and religion. This relationship will be scrutinised and analysed to understand the scope of rebellion against elements that hinder progression within society. The researcher will seek to investigate from the participants' perspectives, in order to draw from their experiences and beliefs. My thesis is important because it sheds light on a remarkable phenomenon in Saudi society in terms of women's rights, by giving voice to the participants themselves. In the early 1970s, feminists criticised traditional and modern youth studies; that criticism was directed at the fact that the issues of women's rebellion or deviation (in general) have been neglected (there are more studies on males), as if women were insignificant (Adler, 1975). In terms of theoretical importance, it can be said that this study is the first to delve beneath the surface of the daily activities of young Saudi females as a starting-point for giving voice to the marginalised elements of Saudi society.

It is also important because it is an attempt to analyse the construction of the potential social problems in young females' lives through the cultural context of

Saudi society. In order to obtain a clear understanding, the researcher will rely on the feminist standpoint, which examines the gender role in constructing female social and biological behaviours. Thus, in reference to the cultural criminology path this research explores the cultural background as a fundamental factor in any potential rebellion behaviour in these young Saudi females' lives, in order to understand or explain their attitudes and activities (Riener, 2000). Here, we can say that if we refer to the interpreters of criminology, the picture of a Saudi girl and her rebellion against the surrounding culture may appear to be not only due to excitement (Katz, 1988), but also due to her desire to take control; to escape from herself in an attempt to control her own destiny (Hayward, 2004).

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Appendix 3



Mrs Sahar Aljaouhari
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SO17 1BJ

RGO Ref: 8213

27 July 2011

Dear Mrs Aljaouhari

Project Title Tug of War – The Young Saudi Female Struggle Between Rebellion and Obedience

This is to confirm the University of Southampton is prepared to act as Research Sponsor for this study, and the work detailed in the protocol/study outline will be covered by the University of Southampton insurance programme.

As the sponsor's representative for the University this office is tasked with:

1. Ensuring the researcher has obtained the necessary approvals for the study
2. Monitoring the conduct of the study
3. Registering and resolving any complaints arising from the study

As the researcher you are responsible for the conduct of the study and you are expected to:

1. Ensure the study is conducted as described in the protocol/study outline approved by this office
2. Advise this office of any change to the protocol, methodology, study documents, research team, participant numbers or start/end date of the study
3. Report to this office as soon as possible any concern, complaint or adverse event arising from the study

Failure to do any of the above may invalidate the insurance agreement and/or affect sponsorship of your study i.e. suspension or even withdrawal.

On receipt of this letter you may commence your research but please be aware other approvals may be required by the host organisation if your research takes place outside the University. It is your responsibility to check with the host organisation and obtain the appropriate approvals before recruitment is underway in that location.

May I take this opportunity to wish you every success for your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martina Prude".

Dr Martina Prude
Head of Research Governance

Tel: 023 8059 5058
email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk

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