It's my hair which is covered...but ahhh my brain is uncovered

Muslim Kuwaiti women in a changing world

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

Kuwait has changed dramatically over the last 50 years and simultaneously the world has changed in terms of economic and financial factors, globalization, technology, and religion. These changes have implications for the lives of women in terms of a range of factors such as clothing, relationships, sexuality, childhood, and parenting. This thesis aimed to explore how women make sense of themselves in the context of this changing world taking three different perspectives. In line with this, three inductive empirical studies were carried out in Kuwait using open-ended in-depth interviews as the methodological tool and thematic analysis as the analytic approach. Reported meaning making experiences were shared on culturally sensitive topics providing new insights to contribute academically in this under-researched field.

Study one explored taboo issues related to the women’s sexuality and relationships (aged 19-27). The aim was to examine reasons as to why young Muslim Kuwaiti women engage in pre-marital sexual relationships and how much their modernized thoughts influence their personal desires even if they are aware of the consequences in societal norms and rigid restrictions. Results indicated that women engage in romantic relationships and continuously feel the need to “balance” between their secretive personal sexual desires and the Islamic Sharia law of Kuwait. Having relationships in this changing world creates issues around sexual guilt. This creates tensions and implications for women including “a clash” of their two selves when managing two identities.

Study two involved a sample of unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women (aged between 22-55). The aim was to understand the causes of the increased rates of divorce and spinsterhood in an Islamic context that stigmatizes single women. Results indicated that
women demand to remain single for reasons such as the demand for independence in their patriarchal context and the desire for new marital expectations. Being unmarried in this changing world creates cultural rebound effects explained in women’s senses of social and family pressures, clothing, sexual liberation, and the Kuwaiti feminist roles in today’s changing world when transgressing taboo. Conflict is created when choosing between being socially invisible because their desires for “women’s independency” is neglected in Kuwait, or being socially visible in a “negative light” for choosing to remain unmarried within their Islamic context. Yet still, they are not willing to give up their independent identities in order to fit in with traditional or marital expectations.

Study three looks at the views of religious, traditional, and modern Muslim Kuwaiti mothers today and their relations with their children, specifically in raising daughters (aged between 5-13). The aim was to explore socio-cultural patterns of change allowing a richer understanding of Muslim Kuwaiti mothers in current generations in comparison to the past. Results indicated that mothers are continuously normalizing cultural taboos and social stigmas in terms of emotional and intellectual aspects. Tension was apparent when reflecting on the veil, education, and social life in a changing world. The mothers did face some challenges by living in an “old” traditional space, yet in a “new” modern time. With that, they desired stronger daughters (with a future that does not mirror theirs).

Overall, this thesis shows that living in a changing world in Kuwait challenges women’s identities when reflecting upon social identity approach and self-categorization theory. This creates tension of self and identity. Women when describing their sexual relationships, being unmarried, or bringing up their daughters experienced a sense of clash of self and identity when balancing between desired selves and social identities.
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(1) Chapter one: Introduction

This introduction sets the scene for the story in the remainder of this thesis. Kuwait as a context is introduced exploring issues such as the origins of Kuwaiti society, historical and political situations, economic and financial contexts, religious discourses, and Kuwaiti culture as a whole. This is followed by recent research of the changing world today. The world has changed economically and financially, and in terms of globalization, technology, and religion. Changes in general are described then linked back to Kuwait highlighting how social change specifically affected Kuwait. This then leads to the focus of this thesis: implications for these national and international changes on women in terms of religion, clothing, sexuality, relationships, marriage patterns, childhood, and parenting.

This thesis consists of three empirical studies focusing on the experiences of Muslim Kuwaiti women within this changing context (from three different unique angles). Study one explores the lived experiences behind sexual relationships outside marriage. Study two examines the social stigmas when Muslim Kuwaiti women demand to remain unmarried (divorced and spinsters). Study three looks at parenting and relating to the next generation, specifically notions of “mothering Muslim daughters” in a changing world. The studies can further be understood by drawing upon psychological theories (social identity approach and self-categorization theory) and exploring the ways in which women’s lived experiences and identities can be understood in terms of social constructionism. The following section introduces the literature.
(1.1) Literature review

Over the past 50 years, the world has simultaneously changed. This is particularly the case in Kuwait and there are specific psychological impacts for women and their relationships with men. Understanding the Kuwaiti culture’s nature would be important in this research when linking the Kuwaiti society in the past with women today. The aim of the following sections is to provide a detailed account of Kuwait’s society, its history, and how it has developed, as well as reasons for the social changes that are happening. This will show us the gradual causal patterns of how Muslim women became aware of “modern change” in their restricted Islamic context.

The global research question and psychological theories are then introduced as a means to understand Muslim women’s sense making when living in the Middle East, and notions of their self and identity. These are highlighted when investigating secret keeping, Islamic stigmatization, and marginalized relationships. The academic contributions and structure of the thesis are then stated.

(1.2) Introducing Kuwait

The name Kuwait is derived from the Arabic word “Kut”, meaning a centre of secure trade port, was the humble beginning of the country now established as Kuwait (Slot, 1998). The State of Kuwait or “Dawlat Al Kuwait”, as described in Arabic text, is a modern contemporary society but with a strong Islamic tradition (Abdulmoati, 2004).

The origins of the Kuwaiti society

As quoted by Kuwait’s Emir (leader) Al-Sabah (1995):

"There is no hope without work, no fruit without planting, no honour without struggle, and no prosperity without sacrifice” (p. 49).
Kuwait existed for many years before it industrialized and has a rich, if seemingly subdued history in terms of adapting to new transitions (Slot, 1998). The origins of Kuwait began with settlements established on the coast of the Arabian Gulf (Al-Sabah, 2011). Nomadic tribes, constantly struggling against the arid and hostile climate and geography of Kuwait’s interior, migrated to the coast in order to establish settlements that became centers of social life and trade (Al-Sabah, 1995). These villages became fortified enclaves of civilization that set the standards for Kuwait to eventually emerge as a nation many years later (Kaboudan, 1988).

In comparison to its neighbours, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, Kuwait is geographically small, but economically large, due to its oil rich economy (Al-Sabah, 1995). The country is mainly desert and reaches extreme temperatures in excess of 58 degrees during the summer months. It is surrounded by large sandy plains with no discernible high grounds, such as mountains, or fresh water sources, such as lakes and rivers (Slot, 1998). According to the statistics in the Kuwait Demographic Profile (2015), Kuwait has an estimated population of 3,996,899, around 69% of which are expatriates (non-Kuwaitis) with many in the workforce. Kuwaitis are therefore only 31% of the community.

Formerly, Kuwait was under the protection of the Ottoman Empire before the British became the dominating force post-1918 and shortly after, in the 1930s, oil was struck whilst still under the protection of Great Britain (Al-Ghunaim, 2007). It was not until 1961 that Kuwait gained its independence, becoming a sovereign nation and immediately focusing on the development of its petroleum industry, so vital to attaining rapid economic growth and setting the country on a clear path to further development
(Casey, 2007). Understanding Kuwait’s historical and political situations are therefore very central aspects.

*Historical and political situations*

Political ideologies look at how societies should work and explore the ideal ways for a society to reach its optimal arrangement (Hassan, 1999). In addition, political ideologies look at many aspects within a culture and share a specific set of ideas and beliefs: for example, when looking at the government, the society’s cultural standards, and the economic system (Alagha, 2006). Social progress in every state rises from many factors including the dignity of its people, the development of its wealth, and the solidarity that dominates its society (Slot, 1998). Kuwait developed because of its vast reserves of oil and as a consequence has travelled quickly through a process of modernization to become the industrial nation that we see today (Abdulmoati, 2004).

The small, but wealthy Sheikdom of Kuwait, once establishing its independence, began to increase in power and strength at an extraordinary rate, thus drawing the attention of the neighbouring Iraq (Allen, 1991). After much arguing over alleged drilling, price hiking, and all manner of disagreements that created general ill feeling, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2nd August 1990 (known as the Black Thursday) threatened the country’s economic position and wealth (Long, 2004). However, such is the importance of Kuwait on a global stage, regarding its crude oil supply, the USA and the Western powers intervened (Al-Sabah, 1995).

With the destruction of the oil fields after the Iraqi-Kuwaiti invasion by Saddam Hussein (Iraq’s leader) and the now infamous oil fires, Kuwait looked like its facing some major and disastrous set-backs to its economic rise (Kaboudan, 1988). This was not
to be the case though as the fires were extinguished and the Kuwaiti infrastructure was back to its full power within only two years as the government conducted a full-scale rebuilding programme aimed at maximizing production (Long, 2004). Kuwait continued further to reach the ambitions of an increasingly confident and emerging nation on the global economic stage (Hassan, 1999).

The constitution of Kuwait has established the system of rule and as such limits the country to a system of hereditary rule (Al-Sabah, 1980). The direct descendants of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah will reside as rulers of the country even in the future (Rush, 1987). The ruling figure of Kuwait, “The Emir”, elects the prime minister who then further on chooses his sixteen cabinet ministers (Assiri & Al-Manoufi, 1988). The parliament is made up of fifty members (two selected from each of the 25 election areas in Kuwait) for the traditional term of four years (Rush, 1987). Kuwaiti women were permitted to be economically and financially involved, vote, and become active parliament members on 16th May 2005 (AlSaddani, 2006). The following section describes economic and financial contexts.

**Economic and financial contexts**

Kuwait was a country known for its cultured pearl industry and through the leadership of a resourceful leader, Sheikh Al-Sabah, the country was led through the difficult times of the early 1900s (Al-Ghunaim, 2008). By the time the 1930s were drawing near, Kuwait had become a serious world trader of cultured pearls, albeit at the expense of the time honoured trade of natural pearl diving in the Gulf (Al-Sabah, 1980). However, with the onset of a struggling world economy in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Al-Sabah began to listen to the rumours of black patches found in the desert (Al-
He set up an investigation, being fully aware of the oil industries in the neighbouring countries (Chisholm, 1975) and Kuwait began in its infant journey to becoming one of the world’s wealthiest and most important oil producing nations (Al-Sabah, 1980).

Kuwait’s economic fortunes and future prosperity began with Sheikh Al-Sabah signing a document of paramount importance on December 23rd 1934 (Al-Sabah, 1995). This placed Kuwait onto the international stage and announced the country’s arrival as a world producer of oil (Chisholm, 1975). The industry began to succeed with the emergence of Kuwait as an industrial nation when the first shipment of oil left Kuwait on June 30th 1946 (Al-Sabah, 1980). Sheikh Al-Sabah released a silver wheel to begin Kuwait’s first ever oil export aboard (Al-Sabah, 1980). At this stage, the Kuwaiti oil industry gathered momentum and began to carry the nation forward into a new era of prosperity (Al-Ghunaim, 2008).

In December 1975, the country of Kuwait entered a new era of important modernization and global establishment with the nationalization of their oil industry (Alnajjar, 2000). The rise to recognized wealth and global independence moved Kuwait in the direction of establishing itself as a powerful nation (Crystal, 1995). At that period, post the discovery of oil, Kuwaiti women started to fight for their rights in terms of receiving higher education, voting and being active in the parliament, having equal career opportunities to Kuwaiti men, and freedom from religious clothing (many rejecting the veil) (Thomas, 2013). Kuwait can also be understood in terms of its religious ideologies and culture as described in the following section.
Islam and the Kuwaiti culture

The concept of one homogenous Islamic world is an "illusion" in today's more globalized world and although the Islamic sources are fixed, Islamic societies do vary according to state apparatus, religious ideologies, education, and development, as well as how they interpret the Quran (Shaheed, 1994). Kuwait’s society and socially acceptable norms and values are all deeply rooted within Islam, though the country is considered as moderate when compared to traditional ideologies in neighbouring Islamic states (Casey, 2007). However, in-line with Islamic teachings, Kuwait has retained a strong sense of family and the extended family is the basis of the country’s social structure and individual’s identity (Al-Sabah, 2011).

The customs, holidays, marriage ceremonies, and observed traditions are central to Islam (Al-Qudsi & Shah, 1990). Kuwait still retains a family orientated society adhering to many values that have become outdated in the Western societies (Casey, 2007). However, with over half the population being expatriates and with the emergence and saturation of Western and modern media, the old traditions and observed customs of Kuwait are starting to shift away (Al-Sabah, 2011). Kuwait has therefore advanced in many ways (post the discovery of oil) and researching the core aspects of the changing world is therefore very important.

(1.3) Researching the changing world

New technologies have affected the world in various ways (Ramey, 2012). For example, companies are continuously developing which in return is leading to a changed world in terms of economic and financial positions all around the globe (Doole & Lowe, 2010). The business environment is also affected. As described by Doole & Lowe, (2010)
new platforms for competition today mean that new technological methods such as social media have dramatically boosted companies (in comparison to the past).

Newer technologies are emerging to benefit the health system in many ways. For example, according to Tahini et al., (2015) the field of medicine would be problematic without the use of technology because the demand for machine usage (as a result of technology) is prime for many diagnoses. Technology is a tool that is used to enhance people both intellectually and physically in terms of economic, financial, and educational factors (Gagnon et al., 2014). Another example would be in schools. Holden & Kash, (2009) researched how the E-learning system in schools today is saving a lot of time. E-mails and websites are vital platforms to notify students about the latest of events in institutions (Hone et al., 2004).

Hutchby (2001) on the other hand discussed how technology has improved the communication system in many beneficial ways. The growth of economies today is a result of technological advancements, which in many ways had worldwide financial advantages (i.e. saving costs, efforts, and time). Technology created a safer environment and even socially, transportation continues to improve (Ramey, 2012). The social media and networks today houses millions of houses (Gagnon et al., 2014). Use of technology has enriched lives and improved living standards in many ways (Patil, 2015). There isn’t much in the current world that has not felt the wave of technology (Ramey, 2012). Such advancements in terms of modern technology will show us how changing roles are shaped in the lives of Muslim women today. With technology, a globalized world is made more possible (Gagnon et al., 2014). Globalization and social change as they reflect on Islam are described in the next section.
From isolation to globalization: Social change

Several studies have been conducted on globalization in terms of Islamic societies by examining different views (Harcourt & Arturo, 2002). Studies on cultural and social changes are concerned with globalization and how modernization is a form of cultural shift in which non-traditional cultures influence the activities of traditional cultures (Fargues, 2005). Globalization started taking place in the Middle East only two decades ago when developed societies were involved (Najjar, 2005). Najjar (2005) completed a study that looked at the Arab Muslim world and the challenges that future generations could face. Arabs are concerned about "maintaining their cultural identity" when globalization and cultural influences are largely taking place (Najjar, 2005). Najjar’s (2005) paper viewed three groups of Muslim Arabs and their perspectives and attitudes of globalization and Western influences.

The first perspective rejects "cultural invasion" describing it as a threat to their beliefs, values, and ideologies. The second view welcomes globalization with the belief that advanced technologies and global communications are essential as it is not possible for people to be "cocooned" within their own boundaries, without even being merely aware of the other developments. The third attitude argues that globalization in Islam cannot be totally rejected or accepted. The paper focuses on cultural implications on globalization and Islamists who seek to promote an Islamic "universalism" which is superior to any cultural paradigms. Assessing the relationship between globalization and ones cultural heritage creates psychological and cultural conflicts in many ways.

Conservative religious Islamists define globalization as the "Dawa", the new call that eliminates the boundaries between the domain of Islam, "Dar Alsalam", and the
domain of infidelity, "Dar Alkufr" (Moallem, 2005). They believe that globalization seeks unrestricted freedom, which will cause conflict to the Sharia laws and expectations, creating Fitna (social chaos) and a threat to the Islamic social order. Other Islamists such as Said Al-Lawindi defines globalization as a nightmare, "Kabus", and that all it brings is threat to one's Islamic identity. Islamists insist that globalization invades the "Khussusiyyat" (peculiarities) of Arabs and their national culture and undermines Islamic morality (a cultural invasion of their traditions) (Najjar, 2005).

Adil Husayn, an Islamist leader, argues that the deception of modern media brainwashes Arabs and Muslims identity (because the modern Western world control the media) (Najjar, 2005). By controlling the media, he claims, Westerners spread immorality and danger to the Islamic identity. His perspective is that it is a mistake to say that globalization brings the world together, as one culture, and one world, because based on Surah Alhujarat, (49, 13) it says that Allah has made mankind into "nations and tribes" implementing that globalization must not be accepted. Recent research on globalization has focused primarily on Islamists and their views on globalization, whilst giving no attention to Muslim women, women’s views, and modern Muslim women’s perceptions of modern influences and globalization (Fargues, 2005).

Many different frameworks have been used in conceptualizing globalization and social change. General theoretical explanations explain this rapid social change in terms of geographical, biological, economic, and cultural structures (Irwin, 2000). For example, the economic theory of social change conceptualizes that change exists due to its relationship to other things (Craib, 2015). With that, social change cannot be understood as a separate phenomenon without its relation and interconnections to other existing
properties. Looking at social change from another insight, conflict theory theorizes that conflict is a necessary condition when societies are in any changing transition (Niedenzu, 2015). This means that conflict is associated in societies whether changing or unchanging. Furthermore, the technological theory refers to material instruments (i.e. machines or other technological services) that contributed to a changing world and a developed human's nature (Verbeek, 2015).

As described by Shepherd, (2015) changes in this technologically advanced world corresponded to a vast change in the arrangement of social relationships. Today, there is a significant rapid change in terms of mobility or transportation and communication devices (as elaborated earlier) that influenced all aspects of the social life. Modern ways of living are altered due to space and time being substituted with speed and reduced costs in terms of individual lifestyles, production systems, electronic communication, and social organizations. Although change is very gradual in Middle Eastern societies, the stages of change are very visible and continuous (Aquil, 2011). For example, the lives of Muslim women (explained in the later sections) transformed as a result of this changing world (Moghadam, 2003). Parenting as well as partnering are processes altered to continuous changing patterns as a result of globalization and social change (as this thesis examines in-depth). Due to the powers of a globalized world, bi-cultural identities (individuals coming from two different cultures) are widely increasing.

Being bi-cultural

Bi-cultural identities, according to Stroink & Lalonde (2009) are prone to face some identity conflict when trying to adapt to different societies. There have been some studies on challenges observed by Muslims living in non-Islamic societies such as the United
States for example, and issues such as discrimination, stress, identity negotiations and conflict are often raised (Sirin & Fine, 2007). Furthermore, social and psychological tensions are created when such conflict exists in terms of combining two cultures (Sirin & Fine, 2007). Cultural characteristics include beliefs, shared behaviours, systems, ideologies, and customs within the society (Rice & Al-Mossawi, 2002).

Identity conflict is defined as the condition in which an individual is trying to assimilate and manage to focus on two different cultures, hence finding difficulty weighing out other cultural ideologies and characteristics (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). In contrast, there are certain advantages to bi-cultural identities such as having more linguistic abilities, competency, and flexibility (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). There are numerous studies done on bi-cultural identities, such as British Muslims for example and how they relate between and focus on their identity processes (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). With that, the process of acculturation has become more popular.

**Acculturation**

Acculturation explains the situation in which an individual is in a process of cultural and psychological change when adapting to the standards of two different cultures, thus affecting both their personal lives and social lives (Berry, 2003). Cultural changes include the level in which individuals alter their group customs and economic life (Berry et al., 2006). Psychological changes look more into the individual's cultural identity, attitude, and the normative fit when mixing between two opposing ideologies (Markus & Kityama, 1991). Culture is one part of the self, flowing with other dimensions on one's self hood, thus culture is not a homogenous attribute and is always interactive with other cultures (Rice & Al-Mossawi, 2002).
Sirin & Fine (2007) highlighted that Muslims living in different cultural contexts are bound to deal with cultural and global challenges in their identity formation process. It must be noted that not all Arabs are Muslims identified as one homogenous group (Binghalib, 2007). For example, several studies such as Saroglou & Mathijisen (2007) have been done on Europeans born in European cultures, but come from Islamic societies and how they face several challenges such as multiple collective identities and identity complexity when trying to belong to two different cultures or more. Other studies focused on Muslim women's acculturation experiences when looking at cultural and religious perspectives. For example, Tessem & Nizar (2008) looked at Muslim women's experiences living in Western cultures such as Canada and how married women also face some challenges when trying to raise their children in a non-Islamic context. Challenges include the adaptation to contrasting values of sexuality, feminism, and gender.

Notions of sexuality, feminism, and gender

Notions of sexuality and feminism are multi-faceted, therefore defining what sexuality and feminism mean in this context is important. In "Theorizing Sexuality", Jackson & Scott (2010) stated that:

"Sexuality does not denote a pre-given entity; it is a product of the social definition and ordering of erotic life, encompassing all desires, practices, and identities deemed to be erotic. This does not mean that it is not "real"; it is very much part of our social landscape. Yet the concept of sexuality remains rather slippery and fluid because what is deemed erotic and hence sexual is by no means fixed" (p. 2).

What is more, sexuality is not restricted to sexual intercourse or sexual identities; it includes other outlooks and interactions. For example, the manner in which we tend to
be, or do not tend to be determined as sexual by others, and the manner in which we so
determine ourselves (Jackson & Scott, 2010). With regards to feminism, Delmar (2010)
produced a new classic piece "What is Feminism", and the following Delmar's "baseline"
definition of feminism will be used in this thesis when referring to the concept of
feminism.

"It is certainly possible to construct a base-line definition of feminism and the
feminist which can be shared by feminists and non-feminists. Many would agree that at
the very least, a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because
of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that
the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (some would say a
revolution) in the social, economic, and political order” (p. 8.).

By evaluating gender, Massey’s (2013) book of “Space, Place, and Gender” defined
gender as a term used when relating to cultural distinctions linked to the given biological
sex. Usually gender roles are socially constructed. The socio-cultural phenomenon of
dividing gender roles in terms of “cultural definitions” of what is considered a norm and
what is considered a cultural taboo when making sense of gender identities. Gender roles
include social behaviour, appearance (in terms of clothing), and gender stereotypes to a
given culture’s patterns of living.

Notions of sexuality, feminism, and gender are correlated in many ways when
examining the modern lives of Muslim Kuwaiti women throughout this thesis. Feminism
and gender reflect upon women’s roles (demanding an independent identity) when
transgressing taboo and choosing to terminate marital relationships or engage in pre-
marital sexual relationships in a patriarchal context. Gender roles in an Eastern context
will also show us cultural expectations of what is right or wrong in a rigid traditional context (precisely on women) on issues such as the value of one’s social self, reputation, and modesty. Therefore, cultural definitions are key when assigning “women’s roles”. Sexuality in terms of Islam is described further to offer an understanding of cultural (sexual) expectations in Kuwaiti women’s lives.

**Sexuality in terms of Islam**

Sexuality according to Islam, is a given by Allah and must be expressed only between husband and wife (Barazangi, 2004). Sexual relationships outside marriage are therefore strictly forbidden. As described in the Quran (Surah Albaqarah, 2, 187) when describing sexuality: *They are your garments, and you are their garments.* With that, husbands and wives are described as garments to one another. As defined in the illustrations of Surah Albaqarah: A garment is naturally close to our bodies, which indicates that only husbands and wives must be very close with one another in terms of sexuality. A garment also protects, and shields, and is put on at any time. This means that a husband and wife must be readily available to one another at any time. In addition, a garment adds to one's beauty, which also means that marriage in Islam is a beautification for the man and woman.

All major world religions discourage sex outside marriage, but not all are equally effective in shaping such sexual ideologies within their cultures (Dialmy, 2005). According to Dialmy, (2005) multilevel models are used to examine the relationship between micro religious beliefs and macro religious cultures are combined in a sense that shapes an individual's sexual beliefs and morals. Several studies are indicating that although parents are struggling to maintain Islamic ideologies and standards, the younger
generations in the Middle East are moving away to a more modern lifestyle (Sidaya, 2010). The changing (globalized and technologically advanced) world has introduced new modern concepts of living even in traditional Islamic cultures.

Modern concepts of living

Over the past five years, traditional societies are adapting to accept young male-female interactions since the Internet (and the increased modern technological advancements) has made it easier for these two groups to interact even without the knowledge of the community (Dahleberg, 2005). In the modern world, there is a lot of focus on Western cultures that largely advocates for behaviours that Islamic societies try to restrict women from, such as consuming Western clothing or mixing with the opposite sex (Peek, 2005). Technological has influenced the streamlining of communication, social, political, as well as economic organizations across the globe (Ramey, 2012).

In return, this has affected the way Islamic nations approach various issues (Najjar, 2005). For instance, through the enhanced rate of globalization, gender-specified roles in every aspect of the societies are highly changing (Dahlberg, 2005). In the contemporary environment, globalization along with the social advancements offered new opportunities to young Muslim women to debate in their rigid Islamic cultures (Moghadam, 2003). Additionally, the changing world created influences in the traditional context of Kuwait. These have had major impacts upon the lives of those living in Kuwait. These will now be described with a focus on Kuwait in the midst of social change.

(1. 4) Kuwait in the midst of social change

With the heavy influence of modern ideologies and consumerism building over the past 50 years in Kuwait, what is evident is that this is “today” largely influencing the
Kuwaiti culture and as such will be almost impossible to ignore. Prosperity in Kuwait, known as “The Golden Era” by the year 1952 was the period when Kuwait became the largest exporter of oil in the Arabian Gulf (Al-Sabah, 1980). This attracted many foreign workers from abroad (Al-Sabah, 1995).

In the 1960s, Kuwait was the most developed country in the Middle Eastern Arab region (Chisholm, 1975). Many Arab writers and journalists migrated to Kuwait for “freedom of expression” (Al-Sabah, 1995). Kuwait, at that period, was known to be embracing the most liberal attitudes in the Gulf (Al-Sabah, 1995). In the 1980s, Kuwait was a source of science and technology within its context (Al-Sabah, 2011). Specifically, the lives of Muslim Kuwaiti women had the most apparent changes in the midst of this changing world. The next sections focus on impacts and implications on the lives of women as a result of the recent transitions.

(1.5) Implications for women

The continuously advancing world has a huge impact on the lives of Muslim women in many different ways. For example, in the 1970s, most Kuwaiti women gained their rights to stop wearing the Hijab (hair veil) and Abaya (black robe) (AlSaddani, 1985). At that time, women’s education also increased dramatically (AlSaddani, 1985). During those years, women started to demand independence as opposed to their lives in the past (Al-Mughni, 2013). Today, Kuwaiti women are the most emancipated in the Middle Eastern region (Al-Sabah, 2013). In the Global Gender Gap Report, (2014) Kuwait was ranked the first from the Arab countries and 53% of women were in the labour force.

Prior to the discovery of oil, women relied on men for a living because income in Kuwait came from pearl diving (Al-Sabah, 1980). Women were not permitted to “pearl
dive” due to modesty in clothing and traditional customs. In particular, the lives of Kuwaiti women changed after the discovery of oil (Almulla & Kmietowicz, 2006). Women themselves pushed for the educational, social, and economic changes in their lives (as opposed to only learning from the Quran in the past) (Al-Mughni, 2001). Today, Kuwaiti women are equally competitive to men in the economic force (as opposed to restricted housewives in the past) (AlSaddani, 2006). In this changing world, Kuwaiti women were the cause for an immediate improvement in their lives today. This is evident by highlighting the most notable Kuwaiti women in Kuwait’s history in the following section.

**Breaking the silence: Kuwaiti women that ‘changed’ history**

Some of the notable women that had the first “steps on the thorn” fighting for a change in Kuwait are briefly described in this section. Those remarkable Kuwaiti women were responsible for removing “the bars” in the traditional Kuwaiti context (Al-Sabah, 2013). The earliest actions of the feminist movements in Kuwait date back to the 1950s when the government approved "women's education" (AlSaddani, 1985). By 1953, a group of young women advocated unveiling, calling their meeting, "The Conference of the Veil" and challenged the country’s rigid rule of being Muhajibat (veiled women) (AlSaddani, 1985). During those early years, Kuwaiti women continued to fight for their educational rights (in having equal opportunities as men) (Al-Mughni, 2013). As described in Noureya AlSaddani’s (1985) book, the “Pressure Group”, Noura AlFal ah, Foda AlKhaled, Shaikha AlAnjiri, Fatima Hussain, Najiya Jumaa, Laila Hussain, and Nouriya AlHumaidi were the first Kuwaiti women to protest their rights for education.
In contrast, demanding political equality, Miss Noureya AlSaddani born in 1947 struggled to lead the first women’s organization in Kuwait (AlSaddani, 2006). In 1971, this was a success through her proposal to the National Assembly granting women’s political rights (Fattah, 2005). An author of 17 published books in defending women, a historian, broadcaster, and director, Noureya AlSaddani was responsible for many of the changes in the lives of Kuwaiti women today (AlSaddani, 2006). During the year of 1971, she wrote the first political paper debating the demand for women’s political rights and submitted it to the Kuwaiti parliament (Al-Sabah, 2013).

Kuwaiti women gained their political rights on 16th May 2005, which indicates that women (after being turned away) continued to battle to reach their present political rights and prosperity (from 1971-2005) (Al-Mughni, 2013). This was a success even with the religious authority being against it (Al-Sabah, 2013). As described by Al-Sabah, (2013) although it is difficult to define feminism because of the many groups and sub-groups, (and even Islamists having different groups) yet still, socio-political factors led to the emergence of feminism in the restricted traditionally orientated Kuwait, having huge effects on the society’s structure of gender roles. In the midst of social change, Kuwaiti women stood for themselves; to reach the situation they are in today. Other notable figures (that contributed to a change in Kuwait) include:

Known as the most liberated woman, Lulwa AlQatami (1960) was against gender segregation, and so during the 1960s, she stood in public in Kuwait, took off her Abaya (black Islamic veil and robe) and burned it in front of everyone in the street, including the opposed males. She claimed "this segregation took it to the streets"… Being the leader of her protest group, she battled until reaching her goals after three years (Al-Raida, 2003).
Lulwa AlQatami was the founder of the Women’s Cultural and Social Society in 1963 (Kuna, 2005). She was active in many women’s associations with the aim to continuously raise awareness (AlFarsi, 2013).

Lulwa AlQatami, the leading women's rights activist explained that the society's aim is to organize efforts through a social and legal entity, which can achieve women's aspirations (Kuna, 2005). Her rise of social and cultural changes that embraced Kuwaiti morals and principles protested a demand to favour Kuwaiti women and help them play “proper roles” as citizens in the society (Al-Raida, 2003). The Women's Cultural and Social Society was organized and officially registered by 1963 to raise women’s rights, awareness, and change their statutory laws that violate their rights as individuals (Kuna, 2005).

Asrar AlQabandi, born in 1959 was the popular woman martyr of the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait (Al-Sabah, 2013). Known as the “fearless heroine” with a “brave heart” in Kuwait’s history, she helped people flee, smuggled weapons to help Kuwait destroy the Iraqi troops, and saved many lives (including 15 targeted children from the Emir’s family) (Al-Sabah, 2013). She described the need to fight for Kuwait rather than live in chains (Khaleejesque, 2015). During her 5:00 am prayers, she was caught by the Iraqi troops (AlSaddani, 1992). Refusing to betray Kuwait and join the Iraqi troops, she was repeatedly tortured before her death in 1991 (Al-Sabah, 2013). Her nails were torn off, eyes gauged out, head continuously drilled with a sharp cleaver, she was shot on her stomach, and her body was shredded with a saw before throwing her remainders on the street in front of her father’s house (Khaleejesque, 2015).
Asrar left a huge mark in Kuwait’s history by believing that she was strong enough (equally able as men) in aiding Kuwait during the tragedy of war rather than to wait at home with other women (AlSaddani, 1992). A school was established (Martyr AlQabandi Bilingual School of Kuwait) in the year 1997 by the Emir of Kuwait that focuses on both English and Arabic because Asrar was always strong about women learning English, and spent her earlier years studying in England (Khaleejesque, 2015). Asrar AlKuwait (Asrar AlQabandi) is a published book reflecting upon Asrar’s life story (AlSaddani, 1992).

Known as the “firefighter” for being the only woman participating in the Kuwaiti team that “put out” the fire of the oil fields; which was led by Saddam’s army during the invasion of Kuwait, Sarah Akbar, the chemical engineer, “physically”, going against the norms, entered the field (Al-Sabah, 2013). In addition, Laila AlOthman, the popular author in writing stories and novels to challenge the traditional norms (writes and debates until the present date) (Al-Akhbar, 2011). Not only protesting their rights to be educated (rather than only rely on the Quran), Kuwaiti women continued protesting in order to enter the work place (Al-Mughni, 2013). For example, the first Kuwaiti woman University Dean was Doctor Faiza AlKhurafi (between 1993-2002) (Kuwait University, 2009).

On the other hand, Massouma AlMubarak was the first and only woman Minister in 2005 (the period when women gained full political rights) (Al-Sabah, 2013). She was followed by: Aseel AlAwadhi, Rola Dashti, and Salwa AlJassar being the first women to obtain seats in the Kuwaiti Majlis (parliament) by the year 2006 (Al-Sabah, 2013). Today, Kuwaiti women enjoy full political rights, education and economic opportunities, and the freedom of whether to veil or unveil (Al-Sabah, 2013). Kuwaiti women are also
permitted to express notions of love in writing (Dianu, 2002). Kuwait, as an advancing society today, continues to adapt to women’s voices and women are heard more frequently than before (Al-Mughni, 2013). This thesis will show us the psychological implications (in the three empirical studies) as Muslim Kuwaiti women continue to seek modern change (in terms of relationships) in a traditionally orientated culture.

**Challenging Islamic norms**

Islam is the dominating religion in Kuwaiti society and as such influences all levels of Kuwaiti life (Casey, 2007). However, modern ideologies are fast emerging as an equal force and challenging many aspects of Sharia (the Islamic law) to expand and broaden its effective reach within society (Cleveland, 2008). Typical challenges that women entering the working community might face will be the social contact and freedom of expression, both physical and mental, such as shaking hands with men or discussing family matters that are contrary to social and Islamic upbringing (El-Solh, 1994). Islamic societies view the position of a woman in the workplace as not one that is impossible, but rather one that might threaten the Islamic and traditional social identity of a woman (Al-Mughni, 2001).

If any form of work or socialization prevents the Islamic viewpoint of prayer or modesty then it is to be rejected (Caner & Caner, 2009). The influence of developed and modern cultures in modern commerce and industry cannot be ignored and is now starting to alter the expectations of a new generation of Kuwaitis, in particular the younger women (Tetreault, 2001). Women in the modern Islamic states are beginning to seek individual status and equality with men (Rizzo, 2008). It is education and subsequently employment that is seen as the pathway to greater liberation within Kuwait culture (Al-Mughni, 2001). For example, a woman in Kuwait might no longer want to fulfill the
expected roles of a wife, mother, or family manager (as the only permitted roles), and instead want to become an active member of the workforce for her own reasons and own incentives (Hasan, 2013).

As a result of so many dramatic changes in the world of employment and the expectations of personal advancement, the drifting away from traditional Islamic teachings is also becoming more evident (Almull & Kmietowicz, 2006). The opportunities for increased and often foreign education are leading to a broader spectrum (Pfeifer, 2002). On the other hand, women are also demanding education and independence as more Kuwaiti women are choosing to defer marriage for their education and career (Rashad et al., 2005). Consequently, the question that remains is whether or not the two conflicting ideologies of Islam and modernity can co-exist and still allow the state to function to its maximum potential (Al-Mutawa, 2011). Those contrasting values can also be understood in terms of clothing as described further in the next section.

Women, social change, and clothing

As quoted in the Quran:

> And abide quietly in your homes, and do not flaunt your charms as they used to flaunt them in the old days of pagan ignorance; and be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed into Allah and His Messenger: for Allah only wants to remove from you all that might be loathsome, O you members of the (Prophet’s) household, and to purify you to utmost purity (Surah Alahzab, 33, 33).

Even though Muslim women may wear ornaments in public, they should not walk or appear publicly in a manner intended to cause their ornaments to jingle and thus attract the attention of other men (Rizvi, 1994). As Kuwait is one of the most liberal of all the Islamic Gulf countries, fashions among the Kuwaiti women are in continuous transition,
reflecting their environment, traditions, heritage, religious beliefs, and their society (Al-Mutawa, 2011). Some women may choose to wear modern branded clothes and others have maintained the costumes of their ancestors such as the Hijab (veil) or Abaya (loose black robe) (Tapper & Ingham, 2000). Others feel comfortable with blending between the traditional forms of dress and the more fashionable and diverse forms of women’s attire (Al-Mutawa, 2011).

Young Kuwaiti women feel that they are now free to express personal choices as a result of Kuwait embracing modern global cultures and ideologies in many areas (Bruzzi & Gibson, 2000). Yet, there are limitations to the experimentation and freedom of expression that is demonstrated by even the modern Kuwaitis as prudence is still a major factor in any Islamic society, however modernized it has become (Al-Qudsi & Shah, 1990). In Islam, style and self-expression still remains respectful of the Islamic expectancy of women, in particular when it comes to clothing, which is very much linked to the social identity (Kandiyoti, 1991).

However, Kuwaiti Islamic society feels that it is exactly this casual sense of fashion that is leading to a more casual and non-Islamic approach to daily life and social relations with men (Entwistle, 2000). The overriding concern is that there will be an irreparable shift away from traditional Islamic values (Tapper & Ingham, 2000). It is this moral dimension of clothing that can also be argued by the Islamic community. For instance, if this is how the modern Kuwaiti women feel when wearing traditional clothing, are we to assume that when wearing Western-styled branded clothing, women feel free of social constraints and in particular Islam?
It is this choice that is often seen as the key to freedom of expression and regarding the Kuwaiti women, the freedom to become an equal member of their society (AlSaddani, 1995). It has been said that the clothes we choose to wear represent a compromise between the demands of the social world in which we belong, and our own individual desires: a combination of imitation and differentiation (Al-Mughni, 2001). This means that when clothing, culture, and context are coherent, achieving this compromise is less of an issue (Entwistle, 2000).

**Controlling women's bodies**

This section briefly looks at the use of sexuality and feminism in terms of social identities. In Islamic cultures, women’s sexuality is recognized as active, an acknowledgement that has threatening implications for social order (Mernissi, 1975). The security of social order is linked to that of a woman's virtue and consequently to the satisfaction of her needs (Ali, 2004). Social order, therefore, requires male control of women's bodies and sexuality…The collective mechanisms aimed at controlling women's bodies and sexuality continue to be one of the most powerful tools of patriarchal management of women's sexuality, and a root cause of gender inequality in the Islamic regions” (Ilkakaracan, 2002 p. 157).

In today's globalized world, women's bodies and sexuality are becoming arenas of debate and conflict, especially in the Middle East (Naomi, 2004). Conservatives are trying to maintain traditional Islamic foundations, and even create new ones, to hold the Islamic ideologies in shape and avoid other “modern” cultural influences from creating more effect towards younger women in the next generation (Najjar, 2005). Within this context, global change is having more effects and numerous traditional Islamic practices
such as honour crimes have been largely reduced in areas like the Middle East (although still some might be not reported due to the fear that this publicity will damage family honour even more) (Ilkkaracan, 2002). For Islamic cultures, women's sexuality is starting to be seen as a major threat to the social order and Islamic discourses (Howard, 2000). According to Islam, if women’s sexuality is not controlled, it could lead to social chaos or "Fitna" as described in Arabic text (Ali, 2004). The stability of Islamic society and women expressing their wants and personal desires is also seen as a threat (Engineer, 2008).

It should be noted that before the modernized concepts related to sexuality started gaining access within the Middle East, women remained in their own homes and produced their personal social based network within the home setting (Read & Bartkowski, 2000). In the past decade, with many parts of the Middle East growing to be more modernized, women's lifestyles nowadays have turned out to be more public. In "Women, sexuality, and social change in the Middle East and Maghreb", Ilkkaracan (2002) provides an illustration of social networking amongst young women in an Islamic dominated Egypt:

"The school of Hakimahs, which was established in the early nineteenth century and was the first modern state school for women in Egypt, aimed at replacing local midwifery practices with modern female professionals. The local Egyptian midwives performed circumcision on girls, thus implementing patriarchal control of women's sexuality" (Ilkkaracan, 2002, p.7 61). Nowadays, educated women in the Middle East have produced a position for themselves as a result of feminism (Ghosh, 2005). In addition,
feminism has transformed into something distinctive from its original goals to aid women to be openly and politically engaged in the Middle East (Howard, 2000).

This suggests that feminism in the Middle East will be developing in the near future. First of all, the more political changes seem very likely to take place, allowing women in the Middle East to have more privileges and rights in comparison with men (Moghadam, 2003). Although feminists have generally contended for gender equality, and to certain extent, for intimate freedom, Islamic conservatives have intentionally tried to utilize their influence on matters associated with sexuality and the control of women’s bodies (Ali, 2004).

**New relationship perspectives**

In a changing world, issues related to the Muslim women’s relationships with men are also in transition. For example, virginal facades, as defined by Ozyegin (2009) are the ambiguous identities of young women's state of virginity and their complex contradictory implications. The researcher, Ozyegin, (2009) highlighted that sexual guilt takes place when a non-married woman loses her hymen outside marriage, thus moving in the transition from girlhood to womanhood prior to marriage. In this case, such women are seen as having no place in societal classification. Women’s responses according to Ozyegin’s (2009) study varied from: “Our parents’ generation as a normative sexual model only defines selfless femininity” and “Over protective masculinity is something we cannot accept”. The paper identified situations in which relationships are described as a "false sense of self”.

In the context of this continuously developing world, not only issues related to virginity, sexuality, or sex education were raised when looking at Muslim women, but
marital patterns are also largely affected. A number of social change conceptualized theories claimed that there is a significant change in social connections emerging in the context of wider economic and cultural shift (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Such changes include a shift or inclination towards greater fluidity and choice in personal relationships (Sidaya, 2010). Again, Eastern contexts have also been adapting to such fluidity (Marks, 2013). Along with this, there has been extensive academic support for the idea of individualism as an essential explanation of family change (Simon, 2010).

Women are now able to access higher education and work in areas that were traditionally left to men in the past (Golkowska, 2013). Consequently, women are now more independent and do not have to rely on marriage for economic protection or as a means of satisfying their financial needs (Simon, 2010). Today’s Muslim women are enjoying more freedom when it comes to marriage (Howe, 2011). For example, Muslim women are opposing traditional marriages (Saleh, 2014). Overall, Muslim women that engage in pre-marital sex or choose to terminate or defer marriage are socially stigmatized and prone to face social stress.

Social stressors

Externalized social stressors inflict upon internalized self-perceptions in many different ways. Stress, derived through individuals' understandings of their societal norms is defined as a state of imbalance between social demands and the person's ability to cope with these standardized demands (Brooks, 2015). Therefore, social factors and forces play a significant role when defining and making sense of stressful situations (LeBlanc et al., 2015). Although much of human's behaviour could seem very "individualistic", yet still, the notion of stigma is a deliberate causal factor resulting from the social
environment and people's perceptions of the normative fit (Hornsey, 2016). For example, interpreting social stress in terms of personal relationships, Kelly & Yip (2006) explained that secret keeping and relationship distress are shaped by larger socially constructed norms. This shows us that in order to understand individuals' behaviour when making meaning of their hidden lifestyles or feelings of stigmatization means that the broader social standards and social constructions are crucially important.

As described by Lehmiller & Agnew, (2008) people are prone to face a degree of emotional conflict when engaging in marginalized relationships. For example, although homosexuals enjoy and explore sexual relationships by freeing themselves from gender-specified roles (Riggle et al., 2008), LeBlanc et al., (2015) study shows us that: minority stress could be experienced by same-sex couples when making sense of status-based and role-based domains. This reflects upon the nature of the reflexive self, being too dependent on socially constructed norms (even in terms of sexual identities) when one defines feelings of social acceptance and in-group belongingness (Hornsey, 2008). Similarly, Balsam (2001) looked at homophobia in terms of homosexuals and bisexuals, and how this inflicts upon stigma and prejudice when contrasting sexual orientation to social stress.

Stigmatization is therefore defined as behaviour or reputation, which is socially discrediting in a particular way (people feeling classified or rejected in a certain way) (Saleh, 2014). Several researchers in the Gulf examined social stigmatization in terms of divorced Muslim women living in patriarchal societies in which marriage is half of Islam (Rashad, 2015). Focus has been given to the social aspects with minimal attention on the personal feelings of stigmatization and negative visibility when in public discourse (as
this thesis will examine).

Furthermore, originating from the social stress theory, minority stress is a widely acknowledged framework when examining social stress. Minority stress theory focuses on the stressful experiences when people belong to socially discouraged groups (LeBlanc et al., 2015). Feeling stigmatized in the culture one lives in creates anxiety in public discourse, internalized conflict, or even the adaptation of undesirable behaviour in order for the individual to "fit in" and feel socially accepted (AlKhatib, 2010). Kimmel et al., (2005) for example focused on gay men's experiences when confirming to masculine norms in terms of the physical bodily image. This again reflects upon the notion of the self; being part of a wider constructed social environment and an individual’s identity being influenced through society rather than solely to one-self.

In other situations, people try to avoid the feelings of stigmatization by adapting to "secret keeping" or secretive sexual lifestyles. In this situation, it would be difficult to define implications of secret keeping as being healthy in terms of satisfying personal desires, or psychologically unhealthy due to the distress when people relate to self-reflection, inner conflict, alienation, or even living a lie (Flowers & Buston, 2001). Overall, heterosexuality and the "normative marital fit" are very central in the socio-cultural contexts and this accounts to our understanding of minority stress and identity construction (Flowers & Buston, 2001). Although limited research focuses on the effects of prejudice and discrimination when reflecting upon different formations of romantic relationships, it is very evident that prejudice on different types of relationships widely exist, putting individuals at risk of emotional, social, as well as behavioural conflict (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2008). Therefore, external and internal factors are both vital when
making sense of sexuality and relationships.

Furthermore, other researchers investigated the influences of interracial relationships and discrimination, which again creates social stress leading to various consequences. As described by Brooks (2015), the percentage of interracial relationships has dramatically increased in the context of this globalized world. For example, Merlino et al., (2015) looked at the significant impact of racial diversity in high school and how this could shape adult romantic interracial relationships. The study examined diverse social interactions in explaining assortative matching in interracial love and the social stigmatization behind such commitments. Gullet & West (2016) on the other hand responded to the psychological difficulties and interpersonal processes that interracial couples are prone to face. Analyzing satisfaction and dissatisfaction implications have been reviewed in line with society and minority stress (Brooks, 2015). Additionally, intersectionality has become a widely used key framework to generate an understanding of race, class, and sexualities (McQueeney, 2015).

Finally, non-traditional relationships such as same-sex relationships, relationships with a large age-gap, interracial relationships, romantic relationships with a married spouse (i.e. in case of a mistress), and even any sexual relationships outside of wed-lock (in Islamic restricted contexts) are cultural taboos and stigmatized when in public view (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2008). This creates impacts and implications when making sense of social identity and self-categorization. This thesis will contribute further into sexuality and relationships in terms of secrecy in an Islamic culture (having an impact on one's sexual well-being), unmarried women's notions of sexuality in Islam (in which single women are socially stigmatized), and self and identity are also core aspects when framing
sexual relationships and linking valued aspects of the social self to parenting roles in an advanced changing world.

**New social structures and old Islamic attitudes**

Muslims tend to be described as "Others" or "Them" due to their opposing views and Islamic norms (Engineer, 2008). Muslim women are seen as "a vision of heavily veiled, secluded wives, whose lives consist of little more than their homes, their children, and the other women in the harem or immediate kinship circle" (Howard, 2000). Such description is true in the past, and might yet be true in some existing societies today, but it is of limited relevance in understanding the true lives of contemporary Muslim women (Moghadam, 2003). The image of the Muslim women is still seen as oppressive, submissive, and that their desires are hidden within their layers of clothing (Sandikci & Ger, 2010).

Issues about women and Islam continue to be dominant in the Islamic world (Engineer, 2008). Although there have been some developments towards women in Islam within some Islamic societies, yet in general the concept of the "old age laws" are still predominate (Barazangi, 2004). How fair is it to still contain the women's subjugation in patriarchal societies and keep the natural law of women being inferior to men and abiding to the natural family life? With new social structures, it is becoming difficult to maintain the "old" attitudes and expectations towards Muslim women (Engineer, 2008).

There is very limited research done on Muslim women’s new identities and other intrinsic desires on a higher personal level (Moghadam, 2003). Therefore, this thesis contributes with the aim to focus on the contemporary “personal” and “social” identities of Muslim women. Issues raised include women’s responses to this changing globalized
world and how Muslim Kuwaiti women manage to weigh out between traditional and modern ideologies, and still maintain the expected social identity. The global research question for this thesis is addressed below. This primary question guided the exploitation of the three studies in this thesis.

(1.6) Global research question

How do women in Kuwait make sense of relationships and sexuality in a changing world?

To date, no research has directly explored how Muslim Kuwaiti women make sense of their relationships and sexuality in the context of this changing world. This global research question can be understood in terms of psychological theories.

(1.7) Psychological theories

This thesis aims to explore how Muslim women make sense of themselves in the context of this changing world. This can be extended by drawing upon psychological theories as a means to explore the experiences of women in the context of Islam, the Middle East, and the implications for their notions of self and identity. These theoretical perspectives will be utilized as frameworks at the different stages of the thesis in line with the focus of each individual empirical study. They will then be used as a means to integrate the findings across the empirical studies in the final discussion chapter which culminates in an integrated and theoretical informed model.

Notions of ‘self’ and ‘identity’

Theoretical frameworks help to create a conceptual understanding of certain issues, such as reasons why people behave in certain ways (Stets & Burke, 2000). Theories provide researchers with the necessary "lens" through which one can see specific
dilemmas and societal complications, focusing on salient aspects of the given data, thus creating a framework in which the analysis could be conducted (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For the purpose of this thesis, a social identity approach was applied. The social identity approach compromises of both: social identity theory and self-categorization theory (Hornsey, 2008).

Social identity theory in study one was used to understand how and why young Kuwaiti Muslim women behave in certain ways when transgressing taboo and what aspects of the self may lead to certain motives. Using the lens of social identity theory, personal tension and social conflict could be understood when researching women’s lived experiences in a changing world, yet in a traditional context. Study two on the other hand used the social exchange theory to understand how women weigh out marital costs and benefits within their Islamic culture. Guided by the insights of social identity theory, self-categorization theory helps further when understanding how and on what basis do Kuwaiti Muslim women categorize themselves in “group processes” in study three (i.e. modern, traditional, or religious identities).

**Social identity theory**

As defined by Hogg and Abrahams (1988, p. 3), social identity theory focuses on "the group in the individual", and assumes that one part of the self-concept is defined by our belonging to social groups. According to social identity theory, the “self” is categorized as "reflexive" and it takes itself as an "object" in the sense that it can classify, categorize, and name itself in various social categories and social classifications (Stets & Burke, 2000). Hogg & Abrams (1988) explained that individuals place themselves in social categories in which they themselves feel part of this specific structured society and
exist in relation to other existing categories. Social identity theory is used in study one because several research studies done on the Middle East clarified how the family honour and social identity are very important for women (Ismail, 2004). The social identity must be protected no matter what one's personal desires are.

Identities dimensions are not flat or fixed, but are constantly questioned and debated (Edross, 1997). They could emerge or adjust through numerous factors; which include: gender roles, religious values, personal lifestyle, and cultural expectations (Ismail, 2004). An example of identity expression by religion would be through the Hijab (hair veil) and Islamic attire (Read & Bartowski, 2000). Much of the exposed research on Muslim women focuses on Muslim women's social identities and how they behave within society and in Islamic societies, where a patriarchal system is the way of life; women's identities are "assigned" rather than selected (Howard, 2000). Little research has focused on their personal lives and desires beneath the Islamic roles and expectations.

There is a fundamental difference between social motives derived from personal self-interest and those derived from concern of the interest of others (Stets & Burke, 2000). This theoretical framework is used in study one, for example to understand how young Kuwaiti Muslim women balance their social and personal identities in a context that values a woman’s Islamic reputation. In addition, study one draws on this theory to understand further how Muslim women make sense of their private relationships within Middle Eastern context, and how the importance of their social identity and Sharaf (honour) plays a role in that.
Social exchange theory

Study two used the social exchange theory to make sense of women’s marital choices. Humans are likely to avoid relationships, feelings, and interactions that are dissatisfying or costly (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Instead, they are likely to seek out experiences and situations that are pleasurable, gratifying, or rewarding (Saleh, 2014). Consequently, marital relationships can be conceptualized as exchanges of valued resources, which are tangible or intangible, between partners and the costs and rewards associated with such exchanges (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007)). Due to these relationships, some people desire to enter marriage while others seek to terminate it (Kreider, 2005).

The social exchange theory portends that individuals who are in relationships are motivated by the goodness of outcomes that the relationship is expected to bring (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Marital failure or success is dependent on the benefits of a relationship, barriers to terminating it, and the availability of alternatives to the relationship (Sidaya, 2010). In addition, barriers to leaving marriage may encourage people to stay in the marriage (AlAwadhi, 2007). Therefore, a marriage that has little benefits, few obstacles to terminating it, and attractive alternatives to the union is likely to end in dissolution (Justin & Thomas, 2012). This theoretical approach is used as a framework when evaluating the marital problems in a Middle Eastern Islamic context (Kuwait). Costs and benefits are weighed out to understand women’s choices in terms of marital competing, the independent identity, and feelings of stigmatization when adapting to new gender roles and self-categories.
Baray et al. (2005) argued that self-categorization theory creates social influence within groups and group members perceive themselves in relation to others in terms of shared stereotypes relevant to out-groups. Self-categorization theory describes "categorization of the self" as a key feature (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The "self" must not be looked at as a mere aspect of cognition (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The self must be expressed as the product of the cognitive system processes (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The theory was developed by Turner; guided by social identity theory and it formed questions about the individual's social identification (Brown, 2000).

Self-categorization depends on social consensus and interaction in forming personal and social identities in relation to one another (Brown, 2000). The theory looked at the individual's position within a public social environment, and within the person's "personal" self-concept and definition regardless of the environment (Ford & Tonander, 1998). This describes the case in which Muslim women create their new sense of identity when owning modern products and appearing more fashionable for example (El Saadawi, 1995). In those cases, the "self" is assimilated within collective group members and a perceiver will have the perspective of relating to other group members and adapting to their values and behaviours through an in-group process of self-stereotyping (Ford & Tonander, 1998).

As described by El Saadawi, (1995) some Muslim women would even wear big earrings allowing them to appear in size and brand name even with their Hijab on to portray an image of what they possess. Some Muslim women would wear branded oriental veils to represent what they call, their "authentic Islamic identity" (Dwyer, 1999).
Finally, groups of people are distinguished and identified only when compared with other groups (Brewer & Pierce, 2005). In study three on Muslim Kuwaiti mothers, this theoretical approach is used to understand which factors create saliency in the different levels of self-categorization when exploring issues related to parenting the next generation (within an Islamic context) in this globalized world today.

(1. 8) Contributions to the literature

This thesis adds to our knowledge by exploring the lived experiences and meaning makings of Muslim Kuwaiti women in the context of a changing world. Several studies (such as Ali, 2004, Rizzo, 2008, or Rashad, 2015) examined the social aspects of Muslim women, yet still, limited attention has been given to their personal selves and desired identities. In sensitive restricted Islamic contexts, cultural taboos and social stigmas are rarely acknowledged. This creates a missing gap in the literature on the understudied lives of Muslim women in today’s modern world. Therefore, this thesis contributes by researching implications for Muslim women in this technologically advanced world when living in their restricted Islamic context. Kuwaiti women are chosen for the purpose of this thesis because Kuwait is the fastest country (in the Gulf context) to move into transitions of social change with modernized influences (Al-Sabah, 2013). With that, Kuwait is still “stuck in transition” in terms of sexuality and relationships.

It would be an interesting and unique contribution to see how the contemporary Muslim women fit into such narratives of change (when reflecting to culturally sensitive issues). This thesis is unique in its context (being the first to examine sexuality and cultural taboos in the Gulf) when looking at young Muslim Kuwaiti women in romantic relationships and how they cope with a secretive sexual lifestyle when living under the
rigid rules of Sharia law. This thesis also highlights the causal patterns as to why older Muslim Kuwaiti women demand to remain unmarried in a society that stigmatizes unmarried women and values marriage. Recent studies (such as AlMunajjed, 2010 or Saleh, 2014) focused on social aspects of marriage and divorce in the Gulf with limited attention to the personal lives of women when divorced or in spinsterhood.

Therefore, this thesis offers a rare glimpse into the lives of unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women with the focus on personal aspects. Finally, the challenges that Muslim Kuwaiti mothers face when raising their daughters in this globalized world are elaborated. Although some studies (such as Wartella et al., 2013 or Vossen et al., 2014) addressed the positive and negative influences of modern technology on children for example, limited focus has been given to the roles of Muslim mothers in the midst of such change. A discussion of how mothers manage to raise their daughters by living in a traditional space (Kuwait), yet in a modern time (a changing world) is elaborated. Finally, theoretical contributions have been made to the social identity theory, social exchange theory, and self-categorization theory after examining and analyzing the relation between Muslim women, the Middle East, and the changing world.

And tell the believing women to reduce some of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which necessarily appears thereof and to wrap a portion of their head covers over their bosoms and not expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women that which their right hands possess, or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers that you might succeed (Surah Alnur, 30, 31).
This Quran verse presents the idealist stereotype of Muslim women generated from a sole focus on Islamic texts. Muslim women are expected to guard their modesty, draw their veils over their bosoms, abide quietly in their homes, and not flaunt their charms. In reality, the entrance of modern cultures in Islamic societies through media such as movies, music, books, magazines, fashion etc., has introduced modern lifestyles into Islamic cultures, specifically notions of romantic dating and sexual freedom that are despised by in Islamic contexts. In a changing world today, Muslim women may play different roles in their social lives and adhere to Islamic customs and clothing publicly in order to gain social acceptance in their cultures (without necessarily reflecting upon their personal desires).

Our knowledge on the new lives of Muslim women today and psychological implications as a result of new transitions is limited. Therefore, this thesis aims to move away from the stereotypes that focus solely on the Muslimat’s social selves; and contributes academically by examining the effects of the advanced world on women’s desired personal selves. Therefore, this thesis examines lived experiences of modern, traditional, and religious Muslim women. The studies fit into the literature, and benefit it in different ways (as explained in each study and introduced in the next section).

(1.9) The structure of the thesis: 3 studies

Study 1: How do young Muslim Kuwaiti women make sense of romantic relationships in the context of a changing world and culture?
Overall aims:

1- Looks at the sexual side of women by examining how Muslim Kuwaiti women respond to a taboo topic in a rigid culture in which sexuality and relationships are outside the norm.

2- Assesses reasons as to why women in a naturally segregated context desire change in terms of sexual liberation and how they can still maintain their social reputation.

3- Develops knowledge on how women disclose information about sexuality and how social change could happen even in the most restricted areas.

Study 2: How do Muslim Kuwaiti (divorced or spinster) women cope with the personal and societal pressures (if any) of being unmarried and the impact of cultural rules and rigidity?

Overall aims:

1- Explores the causal patterns in terms of the dramatically increased rates of divorce and spinsterhood in an Islamic context that values marriage as half the religion.

2- Provides insights on the “personal” self and meaning makings of unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women.

3- Weighs out the costs and benefits of women’s choices in terms of social stigmatization, sexual relationships (barriers stemmed by the culture on women), and further on comparing Western and Eastern motivations.

Study 3: What are the challenges Muslim Kuwaiti mothers facing when raising girls in a context of transitions of social changes and influences?
Overall aims:

1- Negotiates the challenging identities of Muslim Kuwaiti mothers when relating to their daughters (next generation) in a changing globalized Kuwaiti culture.

2- Makes sense of shared stories by women living in a traditional space, yet in a “new” modern time.

3- Focuses on emotional, intellectual, and physical aspects of Islamic motherhood in the context of a technologically advancing world.

The following chapter discusses the methodology and how it links to the remainder of the thesis when making sense of the three qualitative studies.
(2) Chapter two: Methodology

The research methodology of this thesis is elaborated in the coming sections. The links between theory, epistemology, and methods had important connections when reflecting upon the methodological decisions made in this thesis. It is very crucial to understand what people make of the world around them, how they interpret their own experiences, and what meanings or values they give to certain events. Following the roots of social constructionism, the concern in this thesis is the "lens" in which women view specific events and experiences. As described by Stets & Burke, (2000) social identities in every culture are socially constructed in terms of what is accepted and what is not. With that, intergroup behaviour depends on the person's beliefs about the nature of intergroup relations. The analysis of social identity perspectives and intergroup relations rests on a cognitive and self-conceptual definition of the social group and group membership.

In intergroup contexts, people are prone to face conflict when balancing between the self-structures of personal and social identities (Sirin & Fine, 2007). For example, are all identities linked together? Does one identity prevail more than another? Or can multiple identities be simultaneously silent? This thesis weighs out the notions of self and identity in terms of three socially constructed aspects: individual (personal self), relational self (related to other persons), and collective self (defined by group membership). Values, motivations, and cultural ideologies all inflict upon a society's definitions of right and wrong (Hogg et al., 2004).

As described by Browne, (2016) analysis methods are chosen not only in line with
the research questions, or the type of data collected, but also highly depending on the philosophical assumptions in the studies. The analytical phase involves an intense understanding of how to make sense of text, in order to form conclusive findings to the research questions. Patterns of themes and patterns of generalized overarching themes are therefore relationally important.

For example in this thesis, a variety of philosophical approaches are possible in the social science phenomenon. It is vital for the researcher to use the most appropriate approach that creates a satisfying link between philosophy, methodology, theories, and the research problems (Gordon, 1991). There are numerous significant questions that require attention and consideration by the researcher. For example, as elaborated further by Remenyi et al. (1998), “How to research?” and “What to research?” are central aspects of research but what is more important are the answers behind “Why research?”

How to research involves a deeper analytic response to “Why research?”, which includes the philosophical solution (Gordon, 1991). For what does not exist, research implements and creates “truth” behind new reflections and senses of meaning aspects (Remenyi et al., 1998). The development of a philosophical perspective means that the researcher must consider the nature of society and the nature of science (Burell & Morgan, 1979). The sociology of radical change defines society as being in a situation of constant conflict as humans face challenges to free themselves from dominant societal structures (Burell & Morgan, 1979).

On the other hand, science involves a subjective or objective approach to research. These two main philosophical approaches have a number of core assumptions such as knowledge, human nature, and the appropriate choice of methodology (Gordon, 1991).
Therefore, it is important to be aware that philosophical approaches could have an impact on “What to research?” This research uses a subjectivist approach focusing on qualitative and humanistic interpretations. Subjectivists focus on “meaning making” of social phenomena rather than its measurement (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997). The goal in this case is to understand and explain a research problem within “its context” and how individuals attach meaning to a given situation (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991).

In general, applying the most suitable methods to match the research problem is very important. Findings should be viewed as building bricks, which help enhance our cognition of the world (Gordon, 1991). Qualitative research is mainly judged by its freshness and the ability to discover “new explanations” rather than “generalizing” (Hogg & Banister, 2001). In this thesis, women constructed their own understandings of their social world and interpreted it accordingly. Participants’ voices and interpretations are very prominent. Through one-to-one in-depth interviews, women were asked about their experiences and reflections on the socially sensitive issues: sexuality and relationships. The understanding of social construction approach is therefore relevant.

(2.1) Social constructionism approach

Having many roots in psychology, social constructionism approach views that a great deal of life exists due to human, social, and interpersonal influences (Gordon, 1991). With that, this approach focuses on social influences on the individual’s life. It places emphasis on the complexity and interrelatedness of numerous facets of people within their communities (Connell & Nord, 1996). “Causation” could exist between different cultures, yet still, intensive research must be done (Shotter, 1998). For example, to what degree people are individual or collective and what aspects differentiates them
from “others” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Emotions derived through thoughts are not solely inflicted from “one self” towards “one self” because we (humans) are part of a “shared” society with specific values and norms that define our attitudes (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Philosophies differ with respect to what is significant to research, what must be known, what tools should be used, and what standards are used to judge the research quality (Remenyi et al., 1998). Research is always prone to be concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997). It questions knowledge and how it can be fairly acquired. Relating the connected notions of truth, belief, and justification is therefore a central aspect when conducting academic research. For example, as defined by Gordon, (1991) social constructionism focuses on the meaning makings that are created through interactions of a group. In contrast, social constructivism focuses on an individual's learning that takes place because of their interactions in a group.

Differences in philosophies influence the stages of research from the literature review to the final write-up process (Brannick et al., 1997). For the purpose of this research, the literature is examined carefully and social problems that need further investigation are pointed out. The paradigm of this thesis focuses primarily on the importance of the context, complexity, and the situation. It is important to understand what people make of the world around them, how people interpret their own experiences, and what meanings or values do they give to certain events (Stirling, 2001).

Following the roots of social construction, this thesis is mainly concerned with the lenses in which women view specific events and what expectations and meanings do they perceive when defining notions self and identity. Self and identity (in terms of being socially constructed phenomena) adapt to different cultural standards depending on the
context explored (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Similarly, gender-specified roles are fluid when defined in line with a culture's normative fit (Massey, 2013). This is relevant in understanding and even discovering societal problems (Gordon, 1991). Researching the “invisible” qualitatively in this thesis provides research insights for definitions of norms and cultural values.

(2. 2) Qualitative research: Individual interviews

Qualitative research is very appropriate when studying under-researched topics (Hogg & Banister, 2001). In this thesis, a qualitative approach was the most suitable because there was no previous research to build upon. Limited knowledge was available in the areas of this thesis, which makes such academic contributions very understudied with no existing findings. The three empirical studies were exploratory in nature. Following an inductive qualitative versus a deductive approach, there was no hypothesis to test and research insights had to emerge from the data. The aims focused on trying to find out how people think and precisely explore women's feelings and sense making. Theories were used to frame the three studies without trying to test them.

In-depth interviews are a productive tool for analysis when exploring new areas (Smith, 2004). Interviews focus on the respondents reflections (rather than quantitative measurements), thus providing rich data if conducted effectively (McGivern, 2006). The studies in this thesis use qualitative methods, as they are most suitable for understudied topics. Qualitative methods also help gain insightful data, as opposed to quantitative studies that focus mostly on numeric data (Smith, 2004).

The face-to-face interviews were carried out in quiet places, mainly my private office, Kuwait Palace Hotel lobby (a seaside hotel situated in the centre of Kuwait’s city),
or a home setting (according to the participants’ preferences). They lasted between 50-160 minutes each (depending on how the conversation ran). Participants gave consent to the research by signing the consent form prior to the interview. The details of the research documents are mentioned in each study’s chapter separately. As a Kuwaiti woman myself living in Kuwait, my “insider” status helped in gaining direct access to potential participants relatively fast and easy through a team of modern, traditional, and religious gatekeepers (after social network based advertisements).

**A consideration of alternative methods**

Other common examples of qualitative methods are participant observation (naturally occurring behaviours within their context) or focus groups (gathering data on the cultural normative fits of a group). Selecting the appropriate method depends on the research problem and must also suit the audience approached (Browne, 2016). Participant observation and focus group methods were not used in this thesis for a variety of cultural precautions. Participant observation as described by Taylor et al., (2015) is very beneficial in the sense of gaining close familiarity to the studied community through intensive involvement in that particular culture in line with the area being researched. There are many advantages to participant observation methods such as viewing people in their "normal behaviour", being deep within communal interaction, and no fixated questions need to be prepared in advance.

In contrast, participant observation cannot be repeated for reliability, the results are prone to be more biased, and the researcher won't have the chance to ask relevant questions. Oral communication in this situation may risk the researcher's active role. This can raise ethical concerns in Kuwait, as there isn't informed consent in the process.
Furthermore, this method could be risky and cause me (as the researcher) serious legal issues when visiting suspicious locations (especially in the case of study one) and observing women's behaviour in a hidden way. Risking my reputations is also a huge cost if seen in the very discouraged areas of the Kuwaiti society.

On the other hand, a focus group involves interactive questions asked to participants in a "group setting" (Browne, 2016). Such method is very useful when identifying insights for example in terms of measuring people's reactions to a new marketing product. In this thesis, such method would be almost impossible to consider. This is not because of cultural risks as in participant observation, but due to the notions researched being sensitive or taboo. Muslim women in stigmatized situations are naturally expected to be "hidden" and not willing to risk their identities in the presence of a larger focus group. Additionally, in comparison to individual interviews, focus groups are not as in-depth and women may be hesitant to express their personal thoughts (moderator bias) or lived experiences (due to their sensitivity to criticism on a larger scale). Women were comfortable in one-to-one interviews after reading the documents and ethical approvals (presented in the appendices). Rapport and trust came gradually when women were very much aware that their identities would not be harmed or intend to be exposed in any sort of way. With that, prior to the recruitment process, determining the sample size was very important.

(2. 3) Sample size

For the realization of the research aims in this research design, 20 participants was the starting quota for the sample size for each study. Sample size could increase if the data given was not rich and fulfilling (Silverman, 2013). Rich and saturated data includes
clear patterns of repetition in the researched areas. Data collection ended when the responses seemed to be repetitive and saturation took place. Also as explained earlier by Bertaux’s (1981) guideline for qualitative studies, it has been estimated that 80% of the qualitative papers use 15 respondents as a quota. Other methods such as introspection for example could reach saturation with a small sample size such as 2 participants. This is mainly because the method of introspection focuses on self-introspection and a very small sample is estimated to reach saturation (Hixon & William, 1983).

For the purpose of this thesis, rich data cannot be reached with a small sample because according to the aims and research questions, a larger sample of human subjects is required to fulfill the diversity needed in terms of heterogeneous samples. Qualitative studies and research designs should be generally considered as "reflexive" and for this reason, this thesis uses 20 participants (per study) as a minimum and not just 15 to "validate" the findings of the initial 15 participants (optimal size as described before). This is done to ensure that nothing new or seemingly different is added to the given data identified from the initial participants (Smith, 2006). The main idea is to learn more about issues raised in the studies from the participants’ lived experiences and sense making. The diverse participants self-defined their identities in terms of social class and categories

**Social class and categories defined**

The participants come from different social classes. Different social classes mean that women come from the upper, middle, and lower classes. The sampling process involved individuals incorporating different class backgrounds in order to widen the perspective for a richer saturation to take effect. Social class is very important in Kuwait; therefore, having a diverse sample with different social classes can help in understanding
individual differences within women rather than selecting "high or low class" only.

High, medium, and low classes of Kuwaiti citizens are classified according to the purity in terms of family orientation and lineage, high economic income and financial position, well-educated members, and a social prestige with a well-recognized family reputation (Al-Sabah, 2011). Social class is one of the most important aspects in this thesis when making sense of the self and social identities in terms of Muslim women. Although in Islamic patriarchal societies women's classes and identities are a "given" rather than "selected" (Howard, 2000), women in this thesis self-defined their identities according to their lived experiences and also depending on where they fit in terms of self-categories. Self-categories discussed in this thesis are defined as:

- **Modern**: women with a “Westernized physical appearance”, involved in mixed social environments, and do not relate themselves to traditional or religious (Islamic) discourses.

- **Traditional**: women with a “Hijab” (veil), involved in mixed social environments, and relate themselves to traditional discourses (with minimal relatedness to religious (Islamic) discourses).

- **Religious**: women with a “Hijab” and a “Neqab” (face veil) in many cases, involved in mixed social environments, and relate themselves to traditional and religious (Islamic) discourses as a part of defining their selves and identities (unless the family group pressured them to appear in a certain way).

In line with the nature of this thesis, protecting women’s true identities is one of the most important aspects. Muslim women’s social identities and honour are huge assets in the Islamic Kuwaiti context. I constantly feel responsible about data protection,
protecting my participants’ identities, and that no reputations of family names are harmed in any way.

(2.4) Ethical risks

In order to protect the participants’ privacy and confidentiality, the collected data must remain protected and only used confidentially where necessary (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Participants were ensured that their data is transcribed and analyzed by myself only and their identities will remain unknown. The most serious damage from the participants' behalf is the exposure of their personal information and personal desires, especially when it is a sensitive topic in Islam, thus could ruin reputations and social identities. The three research studies had ethical approval from the University of Surrey and the Kuwaiti authorities (through Al-Tamayoz Group Legal Consultants and Attorneys). Data was securely stored in a code-locked external software, only accessible through my personal computer. An additional back-up storage was used in order to keep the data safe for at least 10 years after the research.

When entering the Islamic field and studying Muslim women, there might be difficulty in communicating openly and freely in terms of language. Not enough research has been done on Islamic taboo topics in the Gulf region, thus no advice on how to handle the data collecting. Building a positive relationship is very important when interviewing a participant. In addition, if a participant felt pressure at any time during the interview (even after signing the consent form), she was reminded that we can end the interview and in her presence, the audio tape recording will be destroyed immediately. It is important to be able to assess participants’ comfort or discomfort during an interview especially when discussing culturally sensitive in nature (Borochowitz, 2004). When
dealing with human subjects, the ethical considerations must always be central in order to reduce risks and dilemmas (Orb et al., 2001). Data was stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Research equipment**

Equipment used for the three studies included a tape recorder, a personal MacBook Pro for transcribing and translating (in some cases), and WD Passport Hard Drive Digital Software to store data. Not only securing participants’ identities and data were large ethical considerations, the challenging role of the researcher is always a question (when examining sensitive issues). Qualitative researchers must always identify their personal stance and influencing dynamics regarding how their experiences and individual backgrounds could shape a role in data interpretations made throughout the coding and theme process. The following section reflects upon my role as a researcher.

**(2. 5) Reflexivity statement**

I am a Kuwaiti woman but I come from a fairly non-traditional family and I went to an English “mixed school” in Kuwait with mostly Western people. I was brought up seeing the two very different sides of Kuwaiti women were there are less traditional women like myself and women that are more traditional. I've read a lot of romantic novels and in Kuwait; lots of novels are illegal or banned so the only novels we read in terms of women are about how the society wants us to see women's lives. Muslim women in the Gulf were portrayed as hapless wives or religious women and nothing else is seen in public view with the exception to their traditional stories. Silencing the notions of "romantic sexual lives" in Kuwait actually stimulated (rather than repressed) further
interest which led me to be interested in learning more about secret keeping and cultural taboos, social stigmatization, and marginalized relationships in an academic level.

After purchasing a few of the banned novels, such as Desperate in Dubai and Girls of Riyadh, I realized that a hidden secretive lifestyle could exist when making sense of sexuality and relationships. I was interested to find out more about secretive sexual relationships and how Muslim women balance between Islam and still free themselves from sexual constraints. I went to the academic literature and discovered that such Islamic "sensitive" cultural taboos are also missing there, limiting our knowledge in terms of psychological implications in the lives of Muslim women today when making meaning between two contradicting ideologies (traditional and modern).

Having brought up being able to see those two worlds and in the literature being aware that I wasn't able to access these two worlds, I decided to academically research the hidden worlds of Muslim women in the context of a globalized changing world. The recruitment process was very challenging and also needed a great deal of ethical considerations. As an insider in the Kuwaiti society, I am very much aware that Kuwaiti women fear criticism and therefore I had to be very careful in terms of language barriers and issues related to the confidentiality of women when publicizing data.

*Connected notions of ‘truth’*

The way we know about things, or the nature of knowledge, possibility, and general bias are dependent on how we locate truth. The many meanings of the veil, social identity, and gender roles in a patriarchal Kuwaiti culture are all integrated in this thesis when making sense of the connected notions of truth. With that, the theoretical frameworks in this thesis are used to understand the socially constructed notions of
sexuality, self, and identity in an Islamic society such as Kuwait. Differences exist in terms of cultural norms because of social constructionism. For example (as discussed in chapter one), Kuwait is still stuck in transition when looking at sexuality and relationships due to the religiously constructed ideologies.

Being very aware that I'm supposed to be unbiased in my research and ideally, science would be truth and objective, but it's very clear that being a Kuwaiti woman myself and growing up in Kuwait means that there's bound to be bias about some issues. Although any study we do is influenced by whom we are, I tried to limit bias and reduce research errors when approaching each of my three empirical studies.

Research errors

When carrying out interviews, there are many research errors that could be made by the gatekeepers, respondents or the researcher (interviewer) and this could bias the results in many different angles. My objective was to reduce the likelihood of bias. In terms of participants, developing rapport was central to avoid having the participant unwilling to share their lived experiences or even failing to give sufficient responses (if the questions were poorly addressed). Yet still, my interview questions were always clear without "changing the wording of a question" when clarity was needed.

I also always had to balance out my emotions. Being too sympathetic to women's problems could affect the remainder of the interview and the overall results negatively. Therefore, being neutral was always key when approaching women. To limit bias, I make no reactions or "notes of surprise" to any of the women's responses. This could easily create bias in the remainder of the interview. I always responded with a uniform interest or even agreement to the given values and opinions.
**Influencing dynamics**

My role as an insider in the research field influenced the research process at all different stages. I naturally had pre-existing perspectives and when I analyzed the data, I was interested to look at certain areas because of my own life experiences, as well as the missing literature that I read (in terms of Muslim women's sexual lives outside marriage). Yet still, my influencing dynamics had to be very minimal when engaging with the participants, and more importantly, when interpreting the data.

To reduce bias, I had long conversations with my supervisors about my clothing when I interview people. Being modern in nature, and being aware that my participants are diversely selected (ranging from modern women, to women with a Hijab, and to women with a Neqab) was one of the most significant challenges I had to weigh out. Whatever image I give to the participants would influence what they say. The puzzle therefore was whether to match my clothing appearance to the standard of the participant (which could make her hide her true self if she was religious) or be myself with a risky chance that some women may feel Othered, and therefore, uncomfortable to reveal their stories. I had to continuously balance my appearance in moderations depending on who's to be interviewed being aware that the dynamic of two people may be biased depending on who's interviewing.

In addition, bias had to be reduced in terms of how I interact with the respondents, being very careful not to guide them in their responses. Validity is important regardless of the research methodology and it relies on the evidence that supports the data interpretations. To control bias in such terms, I was very fluid when carrying out the interviews. In study one, I approached women by describing the popularity of romantic
relationships and love marriages, yet still, the threat of a "ruined reputation" when engaging in such relations in Kuwait.

In study two, I presented literature to women showing them how divorce could be a solution to abusive relationships and that divorce is a global issue rather than a personalized one (with the hope to build a healthy rapport on such sensitive issue in Kuwait). But again, I showed them the other side of divorce in Kuwait, which is the increased percentage of aggressive and depressed children due to the family structure being the most important social group in Kuwait. In my third and final study, the discussion with the mothers enabled them to see how globalization and the social media could benefit their daughters in many different ways. At the same time, I reminded them that such new ideologies in Kuwait could hinder their daughters' Islamic identity and attachment to the Islamic religion. With such tactics, I try to present to women many different angles without guiding them to a specific focus when they made sense of their lived experiences.

Aiming to reduce bias furthermore, I had to be very neutral when analyzing the data. My standpoint could have influenced interpretations of the data and the analysis process. The recursive stages of thematic analysis were fully discussed with my supervisors (as described in the next section). The selected themes linked back to the research questions and reflect on the missing academic literature from a variety of different aspects. With that, I knew that bias was to its minimal. I actually realized that much of the saturated findings included in my write-up process were notions that I wasn't even aware of them existing in the Kuwaiti community, wasn't necessarily interested in, and at times I did not predict that women could be facing such extremes. Overall in this
thesis, I included the many different meanings of the socially constructed Islamic identity, the veil, and the specified gender-roles in terms of sexuality and relationships.

Finally, as I travel back and forth between Surrey and Kuwait in the early days of 2011 was a new experience that by time I got adapted to. I learned to adapt to a different social life, the question of men “as friends” in public space, new materials to read from (in which I quickly transgressed much of our taboos), and to what extent I have the freedom in thinking out loud (after being used to rigid barriers in Kuwait). Shifting between the roles of being an “insider” and an “outsider” was very challenging in terms of being my local Kuwaiti self and my researcher self in Surrey. After successfully migrating on three separate occasions to collect data, the analysis process was the next stage. The following section describes the analytic approach used in this study: thematic analysis.

(2.6) Analytic approach

Thematic analysis was the analytic approach for the three studies after transcription was completed. Thematic analysis was used because of its appropriateness and flexibility in terms understudied topics (Stirling, 2001). Thematic analysis, according to Roulston (2001) is a widely used tool for analysis in psychology qualitative research. Braun & Clarke (2006) described thematic analysis as an approach in which after collecting data, it is clustered into themes and sub-themes to analyze and explore further similarity in feedback and details of reported data. Qualitative approaches are diverse and complex and using thematic analysis in the methodology will help even when conducting further studies, as it has the prime skills for research (Holloway & Todres, 2003).
Thematic analysis organizes and defines the data in detail and in a very rich efficient manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, this method also explores further carious aspects within the research topic being carried out (Boyatziz, 1998). Although not made explicit, when using thematic analysis, a number of choices have to be made (Taylor & Ussher, 2001). Organizing and clustering the themes and sub-themes is one of the most significant parts as it must reveal what is going on in the texts and enhance the meaning and significance of a broader theme (Stirling, 2001). The selected themes focused primarily on the participants’ sense of meaning making and lived experiences. According to Coffy & Attkinson (1996), coding data is essential until nothing new seems to be added to the existing patterns of themes, and at this point saturation will take place (Spiggle, 1994).

As defined by Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is a useful qualitative method; which offers flexibility for identifying, analyzing, and reporting given themes within the data. Themes as quoted by Ely et al., (1997, p. 205-6): “Can be misinterpreted to mean that themes 'reside' in the data, and if we just look hard enough they will 'emerge' like Venus on the half shell. If themes reside anywhere, they reside in our heads from thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them”. Thematic analysis was used because of its flexibility in qualitative studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Selecting themes

Themes and sub-themes were revealed throughout the transcribing and coding processes. As described by Stirling, (2001) the selected themes represent a degree of patterned meanings from the women that joined the studies, and also relate to the research question. The prevalence of a theme depends on the space within each data item
in line with all the data set without considering frequency as a prime target in selection. Although the frequency of a pattern or theme is vital to our understanding, but a higher frequency does not necessarily mean that it's more important. In addition, the main research question remains central when creating codes (or highlighting the different levels of sense making), but still, codes in many occasions emerged and provided important examples from the data to explain the bigger picture.

Differentiating between themes and codes is very important when engaging in the analysis process (Spiggle, 1994). In this thesis, the selected themes are considered to be the results of the coding (not precisely what was coded). Coding simply involves identifying the text that is linked by one common idea with the aim to establish a framework of thematic ideas. For example, "Guilt" can be one code, but "Balancing sexual desires with the Islamic Sharia law" can be the main theme.

As described by Braun and Clarke (2006), the theme is captured within the data and is related to the research question, thus, creating a level of "pattern" within the participant's responses, so the question would be to examine carefully what counts as a theme. It is important to judge what is considered a theme, noting that it is not the percentage or the percentage within data responses that counts (Boyatzis, 1998). After finalizing the themes, the write-up involves a "story" of the data providing a coherent and logical account within the selected themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This could for example include extracts or examples that capture a point trying to be demonstrated in the study (Ely et al., 1997). Although thematic analysis is useful in the sense that its flexibility enables a wide range of analytic options, the research must still not be poorly carried out (McLeod, 2001).
Identifying other analytic approaches

What makes thematic analysis useful (for the purpose of this thesis) is that it is not theoretically bounded such as IPA and grounded theory for example (Boyatzis, 1998). IPA focuses on the individual's experiences, whereas in grounded theory, the aim is to generate the theory grounded within the data collected (McLeod, 2001). In thematic analysis, there is no need to subscribe for theoretical commitments (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Compared with IPA or grounded theory, thematic analysis is not "wed" to any pre-existing theoretical framework and this method could be used within different variations and flexibility (McLeod, 2001). In this case, this means that thematic analysis could report lived experiences of participants, or it could explore how experiences create an effect within society, which makes this method possibly reflecting on reality or unraveling the surface of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Furthermore, IPA was not chosen because the three studies require larger data sets and larger samples than what is appropriate in IPA for example and the research questions go beyond the person’s experiences, allowing themes and categories to emerge from within the data (Ely et al., 1997). The research sample sizes (for the purpose of this thesis) are not considered small whereas IPA studies are conducted on smaller sample sizes. The analysis in IPA involves individual transcripts and takes a long time to provide details about perceptions and understandings of the particular group being studied (Smith, 2006).

The three studies aim for a very diverse sample with different types of women to be participating in order to widen the perspective and have a better understanding of young
Kuwaiti Muslim women living in Kuwait. The participants therefore are not similar, nor do they have to share commonality as explained in IPA (Smith, 2006). Grounded theory wasn’t a chosen method because the main focus in this method will be collecting data prior to establishing the theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, discourse analysis for example is more concerned about semiotics of individual narratives and how this relates to the real world whereas in thematic analysis focuses more on people's temporality and how they tell their stories. Overall, thematic analysis was the most suitable approach in view of the three studies.

*My role in the analysis process*

Feelings of women and their sense making linked to the notions of self and identity with the aim to locate the many meanings of truth, for example in terms of the veil or gender-specified roles in an Islamic culture. For all the three studies, the analytic approach involved beginning with a set of empirical data, seeking patterns within the data, and then theorizing about those patterns. Initially, I looked for patterns across the interviews and then tried to make sense of those patterns by theorizing them.

I did not hypothesize about what I might find, but instead inductively analyzed the interview data, looking for patterns that tell something about women's sense making in terms of sexuality and relationships. This included being analytically involved in women's experiences, their perspectives of those experiences, and their stories in relation to such experiences. Due to the analytical approach being very recursive in nature, I was always alert about the "missing voices" and what group of women need next to be interviewed when conducting purposive, convenient, as well as snowballing sampling (as described in each study's sampling section).
The interviews were all fully recorded with the permission and consent of all women involved in this thesis. The audio recordings were very important as they enabled me to closely interact with the data in terms of a non-linear qualitative process when making sense of opinions, values, and behaviours. I had to be careful when taking analytical decisions in terms of data corpus (all thesis data), data items (each women's individual data), and working with the data chunk (each women’s coded interview). The process of chunking involved taking single items of information, and recoding them on the basis of similarity, or some other organizing principle. With that, concepts were developed to help us understand social phenomena in a natural setting when drawing out patterns from insights in women's sense making and interaction.

The themes were selected for their transparency, and not necessarily generated due to their quantity, but due to their quality and how they reflect upon the research question. Although I was not following a statistical approach, I therefore tried to always indicate the intensity of the theme by using words such as "a few, some, many, or all women" when referring to the shared stories during my write-up process.

Using the appropriate research methods is important when reflecting upon the research aims and questions. First of all, I carried out in-depth semi-structured interviews to give the participants a great deal of interaction and involvement when making sense of their individualistic experiences. After tape-recording each woman's interviews, I then had to transcribe the audio recording whilst still in Kuwait in order to ensure I am satisfied with my saturated points before leaving the research filed. In some situations, were women preferred the interviews to be conducted in Arabic, I had to transcribe and back-translate (as I am bilingual myself). Once I transferred all interviews on paper, I had
to then get closer with the rich, detailed, and complex data. Although the analysis was a very recursive process, I followed the six main stages of thematic analysis (as identified by Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The first stage involved familiarizing myself with the data. This involved immersion or repeated reading in an active way. I then had to index all my transcripts to quickly locate my data for the second stage of initial codes generation. Generating initial codes involved a recursive phase between re-reading and highlighting in order to draw upon new research insights. Thirdly, searching for themes and overarching themes becomes a very core step in thematic analysis. Thematic maps were organized when clustering themes and sub-themes that link back to the research aims and academic objectives. The selected themes (after saturation point) linked and emerged from the data and captured something important about the data related to the research paradox. Although as mentioned earlier, themes were not in quantitative measures, I had to carefully use my judgment on the size and relevance of a selected theme.

The fourth step involved designing thematic maps to show particular themes and how they connect with one another in order to review the selected themes. A number of decisions have to be taken such as the transparency of the theme or considering whether the themes are enough to link coherently in terms of telling the story. This step is very much recursive alongside stage three (searching for themes). After mapping out all the themes and sub-themes, final tables of themes and sub-themes were created. Each of the three tables prepared the themes’ definitions and named them to be ready to fit in the broader overall picture. After successfully completing the final table of themes and sub-themes, I would leave the research field (Kuwait) and migrate back to University of
Surrey to discuss the findings with my supervisors, use the library to engage more with the academic literature, and prepare for the final sixth stage of thematic analysis: producing the report.

During the final write-up stage (for each of the three empirical studies), the theoretical approaches (social identity theory, social exchange theory, and self-categorization theory) were used as frameworks when guiding the selection of relevant data, as well as proposing explanations for causes of influences. Notions of self and identity were very significant to understand things that cannot be pinned down. For example, such notions were causal factors to gain knowledge about how societies work and why people act in certain ways. Using the theories as frameworks provided my role as a researcher with the "lenses" to view complicated research problems and social issues with the aim to explain how women give meaning to social phenomena in their everyday lives. The theories examined a range of contexts and derived insights to guide the research, and to offer a narrowed understanding of the research dilemma. Linking and relating theories, to research questions, and even the methodological process is therefore a central aspect.

The next chapter illustrates the findings and insights of study one. It starts with a brief introduction and the rationale for this academic contribution, followed the process taken prior to the analysis. The analysis of Muslim Kuwaiti women’s sexuality and relationships in a changing world is then presented, followed by discussion, theory, and conclusion.
(3) Chapter three-Study one:

By the way, don’t let my veil fool you: Sexual relationships of young Muslim Kuwaiti women

(3.1) Introduction

Over the past 50 years, the world has changed in terms of economic and financial factors, globalization, technology, and religion. This is particularly the case in Kuwait and there are specific implications on women and their relationships. The aim of this qualitative study is therefore to examine how Muslim Kuwaiti women make sense of their sexuality and relationships within the context of this changing world. Although Kuwait fits with many modernized advancements, yet still, some dimensions have remained traditional with the pace of this changing world. As researched in this study, Kuwait has not progressed in terms of women’s sexuality and relationships. Such culturally sensitive issues remain a social taboo in the rigid Islamic Kuwaiti context. The conflicting situation in this study includes how Muslim women make sense of sexuality.

Sharaf is the Arabic term used to describe “honour” which is the highest virtue for man in Islamic societies (Menon & Bhasin, 2011). Since this study focuses on women, it looks at women’s sexuality and relationships in relation to maintaining the family’s Sharaf. Maintaining family honour is one of the main reasons as to why women do not date men publicly (Rashid & Michaud, 2000). Dating men or having sex outside marriage is the most serious Islamic violation and results in harm for Muslim women’s reputation and social image (Rizvi, 1994). Zina, which is sexual interaction outside marriage or any
other illicit sexual acts are punished through stoning or honour killings in Islamic countries that follow Sharia law (Ilkkaracan, 2002).

Sexual relationships outside marriage are seen as one of the biggest Fawahesh (sexual threats) to a woman’s virginity, reputation, and family’s “face” (Menon & Bhasin, 2011). Muslim women have limited personal freedom and their identities are given rather than selected (Ali, 2004). According to ElSaadawi & Moghissi, (1998) academic research on the lives of Muslim women is neglected, focusing only on their social identities, and creating limited knowledge on their personal lives and desires today. Therefore, the intention of this study is to explore Muslim Kuwaiti women’s personal identities, beyond traditional and Islamic expectations. It is of interest to see how they manage their traditional selves with their desires for a modern, sexually liberated lifestyle in a changing world today.

In addition, the study looks at "reasons" behind those desires in an Islamic context and how young Muslim women in Kuwait learn about sexuality (a very sensitive and cultural taboo in Islam). Understanding the variable nature of the “self” in terms of young Muslim Kuwaiti women in pre-marital relationships is important in this study. Social identity theory is used to help predict and explain the behaviours of Muslim women. For example, how Muslim women maintain their reputation socially, and on what basis do they locate themselves within different social groups. A stronger sense of self-identity is created for the individual of the in-group meaning there is a stronger sense of connectedness since they share the same perceptions and beliefs (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). An unanswered question in contemporary literature is how social change can affect specific cultural factors such as sexual beliefs and attitudes influenced in the media, sex
education, and the increased use of the Internet (Smerencik, 2010). The technologically advanced world has introduced modern ideologies in many ways within the Kuwaiti context. In today’s changing world, what are the expectations of young Muslim Kuwaiti women when going against the long held traditions (along the lines of gender segregation)? The breaking down of traditional rules with the growth of new rules and ideologies influences the values of cultures and individuals (Moghadam, 2003).

(3.2) Contributions to the literature

Indeed, “the phrase Arab woman conjures up heavily veiled, secluded women, whose lives consist of little more than their homes, their children and the other females in the harem or immediate kinship circle” (Golley, 2004, p. 522). In a globalized world today, such ideologies are almost impossible to hold on to in the Islamic Kuwait. Thus the paradox of this research is that while young Muslim women are seen in public to adhere to all the correct social protocols that are expected of Muslim women, in private, they lead a secret life where they can express their sexual desires.

The questions raised then: why do Muslim women oppose the traditional order of their society and indulge in their very modern pursuits when the costs of doing such are so high? This research is unique in its context because it looks at a culturally taboo topic in an Islamic Middle Eastern country. Kuwait is the chosen context because it is an Islamic naturally segregated country in the Gulf that follows Sharia law, yet moving into modern transitions today (Al-Sabah, 2013). Contributing to a new angle, the study explores the sexual side of Muslim Kuwaiti women and their dating experiences with men prior to marriage.
Furthermore, this study will be informed by social identity theory. The social identity is important because the Kuwaiti culture puts importance on the opinions of others, reputation, family name, honour, modesty, and social acceptance when it comes to women (Rizzo, 2008). Limited research focused on the relationships of the social identity alongside the personal identity (and intrinsic desires) when exploring the intimate lives of Muslim women in today’s contemporary world.

(3. 3) **The main research question for the first study was:**

1: How do young Muslim Kuwaiti women make sense of romantic relationships in the context of a changing world and culture?

(3. 4) **Design**

This study used qualitative methods, as they are most suitable for understudied areas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In-depth interviews took place in a private location in Kuwait (my private office, hotel lobby, or home setting) to ensure confidentiality. Observational methods were not carried out because of the risk in attending places that may be considered risky and suspicious within Kuwaiti context. The initiating gatekeeper guided the recruiting procedure through social network advertisements.

Earlier in the recruitment process, I organized a seminar to be carried out in Kuwait (titled “Modernity and relationships in Kuwait”). The aim was to create awareness on this study. After researching the minimal academic studies (on how to target “hidden” human subjects in Islam), I then judged that this approach would not be successful. This was due to the belief that women engaging in secretive private sexual relationships would not agree to willingly participate in this specific study after being seen in “public view” attending this seminar. Furthermore, the assumption that the only interested women to
join (if so) would be the students in that university, hence, the results will be biased to a certain group of women only was another reason to cancel the seminar.

Targeting the “hidden women” to discuss such culturally sensitive issues was carried out through virtual advertisements in line with the code of ethics (from University of Surrey), with the aim to select a heterogeneous sample of Muslim Kuwaiti women. Facebook was used to promote the study, allowing potential participants the option to contact the researcher (myself) or the initiating gatekeeper (as described further) through private WhatsApp and Instagram accounts. With that, communication was made immediately and on a “personal level” as assumed to be more comfortable when exploring such hidden notions.

The study was advertised in terms of “Romantic relationships and love marriages” to allow a transgression in taboo (when including marriage in the process). The notion of love marriages naturally included pre-marital romantic dating. With that, linking the two made it easier when presenting this culturally sensitive study to Muslim Kuwaiti women.

A number of challenges existed in the recruitment process when carrying out a taboo study in an Islamic country. Maintaining the ethical standards and still addressing the details of the study in an efficient manner were equally important. Ethical approval was gained through the University of Surrey and Al-Tamayoz Group Legal Consultants and Attorneys in Kuwait. Research documents are presented in the Appendices section (A1-A3) including the Arabic versions.

**3.5 Participants**

With advertisements placed around the Kuwaiti social networks being a success, 20 participants took part in this study (aged from 19-27) and were very diverse in terms of
different religious (extremists and moderates) and social class (high-medium-low) backgrounds. Participants categories included Muslim Kuwaiti women that are veiled, unveiled, modern, traditional, religious (different Islamic paths), in segregated Islamic/schooling, migrated for studies, bi-cultural upbringing (through grandmothers lineage), sexually active, and some could clearly fall into more than one category.

Women that joined included: one (Farah, 26) in a love marriage (willing to describe the process that lead to her marriage), one (Worood, 27) engaged to her dating partner (willing to share her never ending struggles trying to escalate to marriage), and eighteen in the midst of secretive romantic dating personal lifestyles (as elaborated in the demographics sections).

**Building rapport**

Not only building rapport with the gatekeeper is essential, successful rapport with the participants is also very important (Punch, 2002). According to Sandoval & Adams, (2001) the ability to communicate effectively and build rapport stands as one of the most important interview skills (in order to gain trust and encourage the participant to provide information). Establishing rapport during each interview was very important, especially when discussing sensitive topics that are taboo within societal standards and norms.

Rapport and comfort were built but gradually (and for that reason some interviews lasted much longer). The first few minutes of the interviews included women’s “views” and “perspectives” on modern ideologies, relationships, and sexuality. Recent academic literature on sexuality and sex education was presented in order to “normalize” this cultural taboo and break language barriers as much as possible. It is important to note that some women (that have not migrated for studies) still feel sensitive in using words such
as “learning about sexuality”. A balance between normalizing culturally taboo language without offending or offering discomfort to the women during the interview was key. Women were gradually happy to share how they “fit in” in relation to the issues discussed.

(3.6) Procedure

The targeted age group for the sample was originally between 18-28. The rationale for such age group was because in the context of the Gulf, many women over the age of 28 are married (and if divorced, had the marital experience) (Rashad et al., 2005). In this study, the focus is on young women in the midst of secretive romantic relationships.

Targeting the younger population in today’s generation (influenced through social change) was more suitable for the purpose of the research question and aims. Women under 18 were not suitable due to the complications of having them engage in a taboo related conversation (against the ethical standards) and the law in Kuwait. In addition, women under the age of 18 were not involved in this study due to assent versus informed consent which could have created ethical risks due to the sensitivity of the researched areas.

The role of the gatekeeper

To reduce bias, selecting the gatekeeper had to be dependent on her skills in terms of diverse accessibility to Kuwaiti women. Gaining access to potential participants is a crucial point in any study (Want, 2008). The role of the gatekeeper in qualitative research is to provide the researcher with access to potential participants. The gatekeeper must be positive in terms of control, power, and ethical responsibility to avoid any research difficulties that can occur. Conflict can arise when putting “trust” in the picture. Again, I
needed to ensure that the gatekeeper would not disclose identities of women that joined in this study.

The initial gatekeeper for this study was a married 45 years old Kuwaiti woman, a computer engineer, semi-traditional, yet very open in raising cultural taboos, and has open views on issues such as normalizing relationships in Kuwait. Although a veiled woman, she is against societal restrictions on women and the gender segregation in Kuwait, but still believes a woman must value her social self and reputation. In addition, she comes from the high class in Kuwait, has strong ties in the Kuwaiti community, and migrates frequently to Dubai and France. She also speaks fluent Arabic and English, and basic French. After receiving responses from a few potential gatekeepers, this gatekeeper appeared to be most suitable in terms of experience and language barriers. The gatekeeper was very satisfied with the ethical approval documents, understanding the purity of this in terms of academic research and was encouraged to be recruited.

*Gatekeeper-Participants: The critical side*

In contrast, the addition of a gatekeeper to the research process increases ethical considerations or even dilemmas because the researcher's responsibility will be extended to not only the participants involved. The responsibility can be understood in terms of "gatekeeper's power over the participant" or the "level of trust" in sensitive exploratory areas. The gatekeeper had to also protect the identities of the "researched selves" that joined in this study. Not only protecting integrity of research is vital, protecting the participants is equally important to ensure ethical qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). I had to be careful (monitoring the gatekeeper's ethical ramifications) because I was aware that the identities of the women involved would remain my responsibility even
with a gatekeeper involved in the process.

With that, weighing out the level of trust was a huge concern at the starting point and rapport (an intense positive relationship) had to be fully established before recruiting participants. The gatekeeper had to be fully aware of the risks of vulnerability or taking advantage of "women's family names" in any sort of way. Furthermore, the gatekeeper's role can influence the research endeavour in a number of ways (Bound, 2012). "How far is that influence" is a core dilemma to be reduced early on. For example in this study, the gatekeeper might have been biased when defining the problem area of study to the participants, hence, influencing their standards.

This in return can create a barrier or "limited access" to participants, especially when the targeted sample is available in the context, but the gatekeeper chooses not to access a certain group (Want, 2008). The concerns in this situation are: restricting the scope of analysis, directing the overall analysis, and as a result, biasing even the overarching findings. Therefore, the role of the gatekeeper is crucial in the sense that she (even if indirectly) can always exercise control, power, and influences throughout the research process. Power in this situation is how the gatekeeper and participants willingly cooperate.

To reduce bias in such terms, I guided the gatekeeper through a number of sampling methods (discussed in detail in the next two chapters). This was done to eliminate the gatekeeper's authority in allowing or denying access (if she indirectly chooses women she knows will be favourable to the study and withholding access to others). My central role as a researcher means that I must reduce or even eliminate the controlling influences from the gatekeeper's side. Initially, I chose this gatekeeper as the principal gatekeeper because
of her maturity to conduct such role ethically and safely. She understood that maintaining an aspiring standard of professionalism is important regardless of any conflicts of interest. Additionally, to ensure the participants fully understand the nature of the study, I designed participant information sheets and consent had to be informed (as presented in the appendices).

Being aware that the participants of this study exposed themselves in a vulnerable situation, the ethical considerations must be strictly adhered, to protect these women. This complexity of exploring private lives and accounting them to the public can raise legal and moral ethical issues for both: researcher and gatekeeper. In addition to the ethical considerations from University of Surrey Ethics Committee, my standpoint as a researcher had pre-conceived notions of personal ethics (as an insider in Kuwait).

**Snowballing technique**

Snowballing technique is the process when participants identify other participants interested and willing to take part in the study (Noy, 2008). According to Browne, (2005) snowball sampling is often best used when the targeted sample for the purpose of the research is actually “hidden” due to the sensitivity of the area researched with the specific context. This method was used when the gatekeeper needed more awareness of the study. She then used her knowledge, experience, and judgment to select according to the given diverse criteria required (i.e. diverse in social classes, religious sects, educational experiences etc.).

The gatekeeper was the initial source of contact until the interview date, time, and location have been arranged. During the earlier stages, the gatekeeper faced a few challenges in terms of explaining “the basics of research” for some potential participants.
She ensured all women were comfortable to join before the interview takes place. The women that took part enjoyed the nature of the interview (normalizing the long held cultural taboos) and how they were allowed to explore on sensitive issues without being judged or punished in anyway. With that, the advertisements along with the snowballing technique largely started to increase (women contacting other women from their acquaintances). This suited the study furthermore in terms of reducing bias.

Within almost 2 weeks, the study became popular and many women willingly volunteered to take part in the study and share their romantic dating experiences. It was very important to limit the numbers down. To control the snowball, the many volunteers, and the sample size, women were clustered and selected (again according to the research target sample) as to who fits best as next. Women were still selected according to the diversity aim of the research (i.e. modern, desert orientated, students, etc.). The age group also required a diverse fair range. This was done to incorporate many meaning makings.

Farah, Noura, Manal, Raneen, and Bibi (5 of the participants) were the main contributors in the snowballing technique. The following table highlights some of the demographic information for each woman that joined this research. Pseudonyms are used to conceal the participants’ identities and ensure confidentiality.

(3. 7) Demographic information

Participant details are shown in Table A1.

Table A1: Contact author for details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>SOCIAL CLASS</th>
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<th>VEILED</th>
<th>EDUCATION/EMPLOYMENT</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP STATUS</th>
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(3.8) Interview schedule

This section highlights the questions discussed in this study. The interview was open ended and the interview schedule was just a start off point.

Describe the romantic relationship you are in?

What restrictions do you have imposed when engaging in a romantic relationship?

Where about do you meet potential dating partners and at what stage do you consider a man to be a potential dating partner?

Where about do you spend time together in a context such as Kuwait?

What kinds of conversations do you engage in with your partner?

What is your motive behind pre-marriage dating?

Have you had more than one dating partner?

Do you intend to get married to a dating partner (or choose to enter a traditional marriage) and why?

What made you leave the previous partners?

What is an unsuccessful relationship to you?

By dating prior to marriage, are you intentionally avoiding an arranged marriage?

Would you have accepted an arranged marriage?
Why yes or why not?

How do you express your personal desires in society (e.g. dating before marriage and other personal desires restricted in Middle Eastern context)?

Can you express the lived experiences you had with male encounters (non-kin and relationships)?

Do you consider yourself to be modern by such behavior?

If not modern, in which group do you feel a sense of belonging (e.g. traditional or religious etc.)?

What made you say that?

What in your opinion is the difference between a Muslim traditional woman and a modern Muslim woman (in general)?

Describe a modern Muslim woman in comparison to a religious one?

Where did you first learn about sexuality?

With whom do you talk about sexuality?

Why those people?

Do you use social networks to learn about sexuality?

How?

How do you obtain and share information about sexuality?

Do you consult your male friends about it?

Why yes or why no?

Is there anything else you would like to share?
(3.9) Data Analyses

The study used open-ended interviews lasting on average any time between 60-150 minutes. All the women that took part signed the consent form approving that the interviews were fully “audio taped” by my personal recorder. I then transcribed the interviews in full (back translated was needed). The full transcripts were the basis of the analyses. The interviewing process came to an end after approximately 8 weeks. I transcribed and coded whilst still in Kuwait (the research context) to be sure saturation is effective before leaving the field. Saturation took place after 15 women (data revealed becoming almost too repetitive in nature). I still continued interviewing until 20 in which then using my own judgments, I decided that the interview phase should come to an end.

Thematic analysis was the method used after transcription was complete. Thematic analysis was used due to its appropriateness in understudied areas (Stirling, 2001). Furthermore, it offers theoretical freedom and is a flexible approach that helps creating rich and detailed data (Boyatiz, 1998). After data collection, the transcribed interview transcripts require further examination in the coding process in order to identify and pinpoint patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Saturated themes and sub-themes (repetitive patterns associated with the specific research question) are then highlighted (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A final table of themes and sub-themes (illustrating the bigger picture) was then created for a broader focus within the write-up process (Coffy & Attkinson, 1996). Overall, for the purpose of this study, the stages (prior to the final report) included: familiarization with the data, initial coding, a search for major themes and sub-themes, a
review of the selected themes, and definitions of themes organized in the final table, which then lead to the analyses write-up process.

**3.10 Summary of results**

This is a brief overview, which leads to the themes and sub-themes. Women talked about how they manage their relationships in a changing world in terms of five main key themes and sub-themes. For example, the results show that women make sense of their relationships in terms of balance. Overall, young Muslim Kuwaiti women tend to face conflict when trying to balance between their Islamic identity and cultural standards with their personal (desired) identity. The data indicates traditional women in today’s globalized generation can maintain a religious public image but hold on to modernized views. Results indicated that when pressured to wear the veil, women are more prompt to be engaging in behaviour that is considered socially unacceptable and even risky.

In contemporary Kuwait, traditional clothing does not necessarily mean traditional “thinking”, as a large number of the heavily secluded participants shared stories reflecting on their “desired identity” beneath the Islamic veil. This indicates that the more oppression results in the desire to exert freedom secretly in a culturally risky fashion. Women categorize themselves as traditional only by clothing and outer appearance, yet on the other side of their lives, their desired selves include dating and engaging in pre-marital sexual activities as much as the modern (unveiled) women. This research presents evidence that women today in Kuwait are influenced through the modernized media and cultures.

Having relationships in this changing world (yet in an Islamic context) creates issues around identity and emotional conflicts (i.e. multiple contrasting identities, shame, fear,
and guilt). They described a number of strategies that helped them cope with the negative emotions and senses of shame after sexual conduct, for example in their psychological senses of the Islamic veil as a mask to conceal their real identities. Traditional or Islamic clothing is worn by many of the women to portray a “proper” image, maintain their “good” reputation socially, and at times “to cover up” for their Islamic sins or regret.

The social identity and family’s honour were continuously described as important. Women’s representations of men they dated showed that “Muslim men” too fear the cultural risks of public dating and the larger risks for being responsible in ruining the “woman’s Sharaf”. Modern technology and the use of Internet (as a source of communication) have together influenced new lifestyles in Kuwait. Women manage their relationships in the context of this changing world in terms of secretive strategies and places. This links to the social identity theory in understanding the basis for conceptualizing the role of social and romantic relationships when examining reputation, public image, honour, and the social standards of the ideal Muslimah’s proper image.

Although Kuwait is an Islamic segregated context, participants still exposed their personal secretive places in which they meet their dating partners. Women explained ways in which they date secretly (i.e. private houses, stables, yachts, chalets, cinema theatres, secluded car parks, restaurants with cabinets, or even meeting abroad), yet manage to keep their social identity protected. Even if aware of the Islamic and social consequences, women have justified their behaviours in terms of secret keeping. Results indicated that reasons women engage in such relationships to avoid the social norm of arranged marriages and to feel a stronger sense of gender equality in their descriptions of sexual freedom.
Finally, results show us that women talk of their sexual relationships in terms of sex education. This makes them feel guilty and they rely upon unreliable sources. Women shared experiences of illegal abortions, which could be a result from lack of education about prevention. Promoting awareness on a taboo topic is believed by authorities as explained by all the women to “influence behaviour” (outside marriage) whilst results in this study showed that “silencing” this taboo topic is creating more sexual conflict and more desires to engage in this culturally sensitive behaviour. In the following table, the major themes and sub-themes are illustrated.

(3. 11) Table of final themes and sub-themes

Table A2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Theme 3</th>
<th>Theme 4</th>
<th>Theme 5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balancing sexual desires with the Islamic (Sharia) law</td>
<td>Strategies and places for women dating secretly in Kuwait</td>
<td>Reasons for secretive dating</td>
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(3.12) **Themes and sub-themes**

**Theme 1: Balancing sexual desires with the Islamic (Sharia) law**

This theme draws upon the situations in which women “balance” between their sexual freedom and the Islamic norms. Furthermore, the sub-themes examine how they cope with pressured veiling, sexual guilt, and representations of Muslim men they dated. The ideologies of women’s chastity and honour represent the moral system in the Islamic Kuwaiti society. Shifting from the transition of the "sexually active women" to the "traditional women" in their family group caused anxiety in many ways. This shifting phase was described as a "frightening situation" by many women. For example, Farah, for example was secretly engaging in a long-term private relationship. She described that even if talking to a stranger male could sound “normal”, yet she constantly feels she is contradicting herself by being modest, yet “breaking” an Islamic rule on “women’s chastity”. She “normalizes” her behaviour by explaining how she does everything her religion asks her to do, except for that “one sin”. Making sense of her conflicting identity, she said:

I thought Allah would forgive me for this one sin only because I am perfect in everything else (Farah, 26).

This comment implies on the task of creating a balance between two contradicting ideologies. Many participants explained other ways in which they express sexual freedom but protect their social identity and “ideal Islamic image” in terms of secret keeping. For example, modern Nawal, engaging in a secretive sexual relationship explained how she is seen by her family group (the most important group in the Kuwaiti culture) as the “role model” for her younger sisters, hence, she creates a balance between her own desires
alongside the other socially constructed cultural standards. For example, in her talk, she shared:

\[I \text{ have to satisfy both sides. Like I do not go out daily so }\]
\[\text{as not to bother my family, mainly my older brother so }\]
\[\text{ahh I read Quran at home but I love fashion and dating }\]
\[\text{and my other female needs you know (laughs)} \text{ (Nawal, 24).}\]

The notion of balance will now be explained in terms of the key sub-themes.

Sub-themes

i) Repression through the veil

Balancing between the Islamic veil and pre-marital sexual freedom created conflict and tension when women appear in a certain way, yet contradict their physical appearances by socially stigmatized behaviours. In some cases, Muslim women exposed how they were forced by their religious households to wear the veil. This means that when women are forced to adapt to a certain lifestyle, they tend to exert their freedom in ways that are culturally unacceptable (Haram or taboo) to satisfy their desired self.

Religious Islamic clothing would be worn at times in order to main the ideal image of the Muslimah, but women that were pressured to dress in a certain way explained how they “revenge repression” by doing what is socially undesired for a Kuwaiti Muslimah. With that, the “repressed veil” can affect appearance but not behaviour. For example, Fouzia said:

\[\text{That is why when I travel I feel happier and comfortable.}\]
\[\text{I throw my veil like in Paris for example with my friends.}\]
\[\text{Nobody will know me to judge me out there and my reputation is still safe (Fouzia, 21).}\]

Dalia, on the other hand spoke about her suffering in being forced to veil during her early junior years (year 3) at school. She described the tragedy of that morning when she
reached puberty (her first menstrual cycle began) and was forced by her grandmother (who shares the same house) to veil. She explained:

I woke up in the morning and they had a veil for me with a long school uniform and they wanted me to immediately wear it (sighs) my grandmother beat me and I still hate her for that (Dalia, 22).

Dalia mentioned the many negative emotions she had by wearing the veil, such as constant crying and embarrassment when in public space. This was due to her lack of choice and self-control. This created tension between herself and her Hijab as she later on explained how she went against such pressures and “threw” her veil permanently when she grew up. Dalia later on described (at that stage in her life) she deliberately wanted to do things “behind her parents’ backs to revenge them”.

During that phase, Dalia started to create a balance between her family pressures and her own desired self. This is when she started “talking to boys” over the Internet, which continues to be more possible in a technologically advanced world. She admitted that what made her date men reflect back to her “anger” and “negative relationship” towards her Hijab. At a point in her interview, she said “they could not stop me from using the Internet” and “the real cause of my 8 years long romantic relationship was a revenge to my veil”.

Similarly to her story, Noura and Fida were forced to wear the veil since the age of puberty and in their talk about their experiences, much of their sense making and rebellious behaviour links back to their forced Hijab. As described:

I meet my boyfriend secretly. He plays with my hair, so obviously they forced me for no reason as I break the veil rules in private (Noura, 20).
But I really do not even respect my veil, I show my hands to elbow and use bright lipsticks and heels ahh jewels nail polish (Fida, 21).

The participants that were forced to veil expressed their sexuality and looked attractive by the consumption of luxury products. This again implies on their task of managing a balance between the pressures to veil and appear in a certain way with their feelings of wanting to still look sexually attractive (expressing femininity even with their hair covered). Furthermore, Noura explained why she made it “ok” to be in relationships with men prior to marriage and her reasons for being against the traditional way of marriage in Kuwait:

*It’s ok because you cannot trust a person without seeing him. These days a mother could knock on your door and say “oh my son is a sweetheart from the Masjid (mosque) to the home and from home to the Masjid (mosque)” (imitating an older Kuwaiti women’s voice) like who would believe that honestly (Noura, 20).*

In addition, in much of their speech, women illustrated various thoughts between different social groups of Kuwaiti women. Women could appear traditional, yet are very “advanced in their thinking”. Clothing as only material does not necessarily “mask” one’s thoughts. Examples of how women define social groups in terms of traditions and modernity are illustrated below:

*Umm, ahh, I don’t like dividing people because a traditional woman would look traditional, she’s covered, she’s wearing Hijab, but she could be dating and going out with guys and another woman could look modern and not wearing Hijab, but she’s not dating any guy or having sex outside marriage (Worood, 27).*

*The truth is I see no difference between the traditional and modern women today. They both are dating and doing things behind closed doors but the difference is the*
way they dress and choose to appear publicly (Sabika, 21).

Women are also negatively judged if they decided to “unveil” after “veiling”. Wearing the Hijab (hair veil) at a point in life and then “removing the Hijab” in the presence of male strangers is one of the biggest threats to a Muslim woman’s social identity. It would be more appropriate to “never veil” than “unveil the veil” at a point in life. In Kuwait, Muslim women are allowed to remain unveiled publicly (unlike Saudi Arabia for example) yet some households have forced or pressured women in their kin to veil as evident by some participants. Farah is one of the very few young women that unveiled after veiling (for 6 years). She explained her experience in shifting from being very religious (as discussed in her speech earlier) to being very modernized:

*I started to feel like I’m suffocating in this kind of dress that I have to wear every single day, and because of this feeling, this negativity when I put my Hijab on, I actually went out and started reading, I was accessing different books, during that time I was studying in the UK* (Farah, 26).

Exposure to reading material that was blocked and unavailable in Kuwait pushed Farah to “re-consider” the rightness of being veiled. At that time, she was living in the UK to complete her Masters degree and started questioning cultural oppression imposed strictly on Muslim women. She described how she feels “a shift” in time when moving back home during holidays. After spending time in the library to “read for her own pleasure” as she described, she then started to feel negativity towards her veil, and described it using negative emotions such as “it started to become so hard to do it”, “I can’t stand it anymore”, or “I hate the way it looks on me”. People can learn and change
through time and in such cases, their personal choices are the causation of the described situation.

Farah defends herself from “societal judgments” by explaining that the Quran only mentioned that women must cover their “breasts” (as they never used to in the past) and the word “hair” was never mentioned. This implies that the veil is more of a socially constructed cultural norm than being an Islamic one. In her view, when trying to make sense of the veil, she explained that the lengthy Quran could have used the word “hair” if covering it is a must. Islamic scholars would argue that Islam requires “women’s beauty” to be covered when in public; hence, hair is an obvious beautification for women.

Aware of the sensitivity of the Kuwaiti culture, she does not always share her views in the open. Farah explained how she has to remain “silent” in order to fit in with her social in-group and generally to be accepted by her cultural standards. This reflects to the notion of social conformity. She later described how at a point in her life, she even stopped conforming to the Islamic religion but cannot speak out loud to avoid a cultural dilemma, as well as to maintain her reputation and social image because she comes from a high-class family in Kuwait. Creating a balance between her desired self and the social rigid rules, she said:

But I have to keep my view private because I can’t go around and say: “I don’t believe in religions, I don’t believe in Allah lalalalala” (Farah, 26).

In contrast, Dalia also took a daring step and unveiled after forced to veil, although she was not educated abroad, neither exposed to the Online material that Farah accessed. She explained how she deliberately stood against her grandmother’s choices inflicted by force upon her in year 3 of junior school. She managed to unveil at the period when her
mother divorced “her religious father”; hence, she escaped the strict rules from her grandmother. The generation gap in this situation and husband influences are evident. In this situation, the religious husband’s family lineage (Dalia’s father) was the immediate cause of tension. In Dalia’s description of her first day out after unveiling, she said:

\[ \text{That day I felt liberated liberated liberated, my dream came true, the ten year suffering ended, and my hair finally can see the sun (Dalia, 22)}. \]

\( ii \) Muslimat and sexual guilt

Sexual guilt was expressed by women that fit in the religious social group yet engaging in behaviour that is considered sinful according to Islam and the Quran. For those that identify strongly with the religion of Islam, guilt was most apparent. They described numerous techniques when balancing their lifestyles in order to cope with the guilt, regret, and “negative thoughts” after experiencing pre-marital sex and intimacy. This shows us another side of the veil when making sense of sexual identities. These women are religious because it’s their personal choice and not pressured by families. The experience of Islamic and sexual conflict has created some psychological implications and participants spoke about their negative emotions.

Some women find it more difficult to weigh out such balance (in terms of Islam and sexuality) when expressing sexual freedom. This heightens sexual guilt, and has huge impacts on healthy living (i.e. feeling miserable or unhappy with oneself), hence, affecting one’s psychological well-being. Women identified numerous coping strategies. For example, by spending extra time with the family or praying and reading the Quran, women tend to overcome sexual guilt and tension.

Bibi, for example is engaging in a secretive relationship (although religious and
heavily secluded), she is still following her desires by seeing her dating partner in secret and engaging in pre-marital sex. Managing her Islamic self with her behaviour that is considered sinful, Bibi tried to balance her way of thinking, she explained:

> Sometimes I feel so much guilty and think why am I doing all this Haram and Allah will punish me but I really cannot stop what I am into so I quickly change my thoughts and replace them with happy thoughts (Bibi, 26).

Similarly, religious Amal, coming from a desert orientated shared similar guilt and regret in her romantic relationship with her Bahraini partner in which she meets during her studies abroad. This “isolated self” away from Islamic ideologies inflicts a higher level of identity conflict. Balancing her Islamic religion with her sexual desires, Amal said:

> I paint my nails ahhh to look sexier upon arriving like to his flat in Bahrain but I ahh until today feel guilty afterwards for doing so and like I remove my nail polish and pray all night to feel better and sleep okay (Amal, 20).

Many participants experienced emotional conflict in the sense of shame, by acknowledging that they are aware that society views them in a different way than they view themselves. Weighing between social fears and personal desires, Zahra also said:

> I cry, and during my crying phase, I avoid bumping into someone to avoid them from smelling my fear and guilt (Zahra, 20).

When referring to self-mediated punishment, it is evident that in many occasions, the punishment of guilt is not effective from others (society’s in-group members) but from within the person to oneself. Women that felt negativity towards their sexual guilt, sins, and Islamic morals expressed conflicting emotions such as disgrace, fear, shame,
and even attempts for self-harm. This "separated self" away from the public view has a huge impact on women's psychological well-being. This concept of the "separated self" is used to define the dynamic implications and influences in terms of Muslim women's identity construction.

Not only unmarried women reported negative emotions related to sexual pleasure outside marriage, but also feelings of shame and disgrace after sexual pleasure run into marriage when shifting from the transition of girlhood to womanhood. This is a result from how socially constructed norms made sexuality extremely taboo, many women are not transgressing in a healthy manner. Therefore, sexual practice becomes difficult to be suddenly normalized after the belief that such practice is morally wrong. Farah, one of the participants that got married to her dating partner said:

*So in the beginning when he used to approach me, I used to feel bad, guilty, dirty, and cheap so it’s in my mind that I’m doing something wrong, it’s disgusting, but then slowly I talked to my mother about it and she consoled me. I now feel better after sexual intercourse with my husband most of the times (Farah, 26).*

***Women’s representations of sexually active Muslim men***

Reputation is very important in Arab Eastern cultures and a woman’s virginity is a social threat in Islamic cultures. In order to protect their social identity, young Muslim women are dating men secretly and their shared stories indicated that men too fear the risks of public dating (worries about being responsible for ruining a woman’s honour). For Raneen, spending her anniversary with her partner was not an easy task. Although at that time she was abroad, meaning complications of time (i.e. curfews) and the physical dimension of space should not be a huge barrier in comparison to being in Kuwait, Raneen and her partner still feared negative rumours or facial recognition. She balanced
her desires of staying by the beach that day yet within a limited period of time. She explained:

_There’s a lot of Kuwaitis so I call it Kuwait in California (laughs) and you know how Kuwaitis like to talk and spread rumours so we stayed a short while in the beach because my boyfriend said it’s not good if his Kuwaiti friends that study with us there see us together and talk (Raneen, 20)._  

Furthermore, Worood for example struggled to gain family approval to become engaged to her dating partner (since Kuwait values only traditional marriages). She shared how she used to meet her partner secretly before the engagement was made because although he wanted to meet her, he still feels it is important to balance his desires with their social identities. Unable to behave like their "true selves" on a social level creates social conflict when defining one's identity, as Worood said:

_If you care what people say here then you will suffer, if they see you with a man they automatically make it negative and link it with negative things so that’s why we always go to quiet places, still feeling tensed, because he cares what people say about me and he wants to put me in the best picture and make me his wife (Worood, 27)._  

Balancing between two extremes, participants explained how they would date men in terms of secret keeping. Fearing the social aspects more than the religious consequences, Noura and her partner balance between their social identity and secretive relationship. Noura only meets her partner within university context:

_He wouldn’t go out with me even if we are dating, not because of religion but because of the social aspect, the society, again you don’t know who you’re running into, you don’t want someone telling your dad “your daughter is with a guy” (Noura, 20)._
On the other hand, Sherouq sees her partner publicly, yet carefully to avoid an illegal social dilemma from happening. Balancing between her romantic relationship and reputation, she does it in secret:

*It is difficult to date publicly in Kuwait yeah but that does not mean that you cannot do it secretly and carefully you know away from the eyes of people just to keep the reputation in good shape (laughs) (Sherouq, 27).*

In a culture that views sexuality as a serious cultural taboo in all forms, expressing sexuality even if married is strictly not permitted publicly in any way. This indicates that a balance between sexual expression and societal rules applies even for married couples. Farah (the only married woman in this study) shared a negative experience. As described:

*It was dark, we were kissing, holding hands, like midnight, and then suddenly there was a flash light, it was a policeman, he flashed on us, he stopped us and he said “you dirty people” he cussed us he said “get out your IDs” I was very offended from the bad treatment that day (Farah, 26).*

In this theme, “balancing sexual desires with the Islamic Sharia law” was the concern for many Muslim Kuwaiti women sexually active outside marriage. With that, the issue of “location” and how or where women can secretly meet men in an Islamic rigid context was the next concern. The following theme focuses precisely on strategies and places for women dating secretly in Kuwait.

**Theme 2: Strategies and places for women dating secretly in Kuwait**

This theme highlights strategies and places for romantic dating in a segregated context. This means that women psychologically want to feel accepted to feel an optimal balance between the two contrasting selves (i.e. pleasing desires in terms of secret keeping and still fitting in socially in terms of traditions). The sub-themes elaborate on
women’s public image, social categories (Kuwaiti families), and a comparison between social classes (including bi-cultural upbringing). Breaking the society’s rules of rigid segregation, Shatha for example manages to spend social time with her partner. She said:

*I think we managed it quiet well that no one in my immediate family knows and we go to quiet places to train, to jog very early in the morning. We avoid going to crowded places so yes that’s our social time (Shatha, 25).*

Muslim Kuwaiti women are already born in a structured society, yet today with major social changes and influences, the societal structure is evolving through human interaction and the modern technology. Time and the physical dimension of space contributed largely in Muslim Kuwaiti women’s private relationships outside marriage. Manal (with a half British father) constantly expressed distress derived through her feelings of what her “religious side of family” from her mother’s lineage might think of her. She balances her desired self of an ideal image between different contexts (since she frequently migrates for studies). As shared:

*In Kuwait I wouldn’t be prepared to go out with a man in public because I might pop into my aunties and they would reproach my mum for bringing me in a different way and so to avoid such I save romance for America (Manal, 19).*

Notions of secretive dating lifestyles with considerations to time and space are illustrated further in the key sub-themes.

**Sub-themes**

*i) The Islamic social identity*

Several women reported a personal sense of wanting to protect their social identity. This means that they are not protecting their image due to the social risks but because
they desire to portray the socially appropriate image according to the constructed norms in Kuwait. For example:

\[
I \text{ wouldn’t want to jeopardize my family name and reputation by hanging out with him in public places (Deema, 27).}
\]

The relationship between women and society is seen to be deterministic and certain causal rigid laws explain the patterns and causes of their social behaviour. For example, when making sense of a private relationship, the social image and reputation remain central aspects. The younger women with less dating experiences tended to fear what others might be thinking of their romantic dating attitude, which is socially viewed as negative and undesirable in an Islamic country. Manal added:

\[
Secretly because the society is not allowing us but the society must be educated about it, parents must have a different idea and allow their girls with boys, they must allow them as they are already doing things behind closed doors and mistakes might happen (Manal, 19).
\]

In contrast, some women are protecting their reputation to avoid further consequences at home and not because they personally desire the ideal image of a Muslim woman. Finding this optimal line in terms of balance continues to be a challenge. For example, Fouzia and Aseel coming from traditional and religious households said:

\[
Ummm \text{ to answer this question, I don’t really care about societal or Islamic standards for women in Kuwait but ahhh I just don’t want issues rushing up at home bla bla bla brothers, uncles (Fouzia, 21).}
\]

\[
My \text{ family is religious so I really take lesser risks when seeing boys in Kuwait (Aseel, 19).}
\]

Women in the Islamic context are bounded by their personal space of thoughts and actions. Much of this personal space is immediately influenced by social others around
them. For example, expectations from within their societal standards mean that choice, value, and motivation are highly connected. The socially constructed identity and women’s social selves are more important than personal desires. This creates a clash between extrinsic influences and intrinsic motivations.

With that, the majority of the participants reported secretive places to meet men in a segregated context like Kuwait. By dating secretly and protecting one’s social image and social identity, the women are satisfying their sexual desires but carefully maintaining social standards. This shows us that women are avoiding the consequences of sexual shame and guilt in relation to how others in their social context would perceive them. Seeing men in secretive locations reflects not only on preserving one’s honour and reputation, but also to reduce the guilt that comes from how the others in the Islamic context would see those women. The damage of “face” in relation to women’s chastity and their wrong doings according to Sharia law is important. Examples of secretive places said by the participants included:

*We hide in restaurants with cabinets (Nawal, 24). It’s dark in the cinema, so we walk in separately then hold hands there (Dalia, 22). We stay behind closed doors in his private stable, away from eyes, and this is where he grills for me nice food (Deema, 27). My driver drops me in the mall, and from the mall I secretly get in his car then ahhh after my shopping curfew is over (laughs) I go back to my driver and back home (Fouzia, 21). Ummm mainly in his private yacht I enjoy it and feel safe there because I’m unseen (Fida, 21).*

Furthermore, by self-investigating the current ongoing social advancements in the Kuwaiti society, traditional Fida said:

*This means that men and women are not ready to face their families with such relations. We do those things but hide them, as we know our families won’t accept such*
relationships; and it would make our reputation ahh bad (Fida, 21).

Women discussed psychological, as well as physical challenges involved when dealing with the cultural stress imposed on their social identities. The question of “free will” is debatable in the lives of those Muslim women. Looking beneath the “meaning” women create from “meaning” (further on) resembles the question of whether those women are controllers of society or is society controlling them.

ii) Strategies linked to social class and categories

Women from different social classes and social standards tend to behave differently when examining further their relationships with men. Examples of women from the lower social classes and their reported lived experiences when making sense of fears, desires, and facial recognition included:

To be honest, my family is not really known here, nobody knows my face so ahh yeah as I was explaining, I don’t really care much, I see my partner as I wish, just escaping the police (Sherouq, 27).

I date for my own pleasure, let family aside I mean my face ahhh not so recognized so if I check my mum is dead asleep then I’m fine to rush out (Zahra, 20).

This illustrates that women from the lower social class have less desires to protect their social reputation in terms of fearing facial recognition in the very low-populated Kuwait. In contrast, Farah, from a well-recognized family in her descriptions of her dating experience explained:

Yes as I told you earlier I consider myself as an open minded Kuwaiti citizen that studies abroad so yes I don’t mind having a boyfriend but with everything there are limits so if I treated my boyfriend like a husband then there is no difference when it comes to marriage and might as well not marry (Farah, 26).
Altaf (from a high class family) is in a conflicting situation trying to balance “family name”, social class, and her reputation alongside her personal self. As explained:

"Like honestly honestly I would be more careful in Kuwait than France, why because my mum has a social status in the society that I represent her so whatever I do people would say “oh this is (said mother’s name) upbringing” and because I go out a lot with my mum, my face is very much familiar (Altaf, 20)."

In terms of facial recognition, the most crucial emotional conflict in this case is fear, and when fear is deliberately linked to women's desires. Emotions and feelings essentially play an important key role in shaping one’s identity in relation to social classes and categories. As apprehended by those women, their identities are not only defined by what they know, understand, or remember, but also by what they “care” about. Therefore, the notion of the self is expressed and represented by what emotions are most active and “in what situations”. This elaborates furthermore how they feel about certain experiences.

Islam could shape many aspects of Muslim women’s personal relationships with men. For some women, sexual guilt became part of their daily routine and they adapted to the transition from "the sexual self" to the "traditional self". As illustrated below, traditional/religious Bibi described how she used to “fear” her personal desires of dating and how she gradually became influenced from the “social environment” of her private modern university. She adapted to her intimate romantic relationship even as she entered the workplace. She shared:

"Eventually by time I started going out with my boyfriend and I was saying lies to my parents (Bibi, 26)."
iii) Influences of bi-cultural upbringings

Strategies when bi-cultural women described notions of space and time were less of a major issue. Women that come from bi-cultural upbringing surprisingly tend to have less sexual conflict and more open relationships at home when discussing their dating lifestyle with their bi-cultural parent. Data findings suggest that women from bi-cultural upbringings feel less of the psychological complications a traditional or religious Kuwaiti woman is prone to face. This is due to the more “openness” in discussing sexual related issues for example at home. Mona for example has a British Indian grandmother, which reflects on the way she was raised. She said:

*But once my mum invited him for dinner in our house she knows it all (Mona, 20).*

Facing lower levels of tension, Nawal, from Finnish upbringing, explained:

*Yes so that’s good for me and also I didn’t have to do behind my family’s back I told my aunt my grandmother knows my mum knows and his parents know also so it’s out there it’s not hidden from one side, but I still have issues from my father’s side (Nawal, 24).*

This implies on the task of behaving in certain ways depending on the atmosphere within one’s household. Similarly, Altaf added:

*It’s because my dad’s side are different, his mum is originally Irish and my dad is born in Scotland Edinburgh so yeah his upbringing has influenced his character so I am glad to have an open minded dad like him and with that I grew up barely have secrets with boys (Altaf, 20).*

Women described “strategies and places for dating secretly in Kuwait” regardless of the rules and rigidity within their context, they still managed to satisfy their personal selves in terms of a sexually liberated lifestyle. Aware that their behaviours contradict the
nature of Kuwait’s norms, women therefore explained reasons justifying why they engage in such culturally rebellious and even risky behaviours. The following theme highlights the reasons for secretive dating.

Theme 3: Reasons for secretive dating

This theme is about the justification of “causation” for the socially “undesired” behaviour. The sub-themes highlight on women’s views on traditional marriages, gender inequality, and sexual experience. Some of the participants felt that they are not engaging inappropriate behaviour, hence, the society is responsible for creating barriers on what could be seen as normal (i.e. falling in love). As justified by Worood:

*I feel it’s more comfortable to fall in love with the guy and then marry him, not the other way round (Worood, 27).*

And Deema, dating a married man, understands that her father won’t allow her to be a second wife, yet still continues with her marginalized relationship. In her definitions of social change, she said:

*It’s my life. I say who walks in and who walks out. Come on it’s not 1920, every woman knew a man one way or another unless she’s really weird (Deema, 27).*

It is important to identify “causal explanations” to understand regularities in women’s social behaviours (if going totally against the cultural norms). Again, this elaborates on the balance women create when weighing out secret keeping and the normative fit.

Women made sense of numerous causal explanations to justify their behaviours as illustrated further in the sub-themes.
Sub-themes

i) Negative views about the traditional arranged marriages that influenced romantic dating

Some women shared stories of their experiences in arranged marriage settings that they have succeeded in rejecting. This gave them a reason to date with the desire to escape the traditional norms in terms of marriage. Farah for example was secretly dating and at the same time forced to be seated in a traditional marriage setting and meet a potential husband. Describing her stressful situation, she shared:

They forced me and I had no other choice, so I was thinking in my head that when I sit with him I will say it in his face, “I don’t want to actually sit with you and my family is forcing me and I don’t want to marry you”. If I told him that, of course any man with self-respect wouldn’t want to be with a girl that just told him that (sighs) (Farah, 26).

In her speech, major “suffering” was evident due marital pressure from the family group. She had negative emotions from that experience as in much of her talk when sharing that story; she implied that she felt she was “cheating” her dating partner by sitting in a forced traditional marriage setting. Farah at a later stage in life faced huge conflicts with her parents in order to successfully marry her romantic dating partner. Social and family forces shape a role in women’s lives in different ways. For example, sharing a similar negative experience, Noura also projected her inner feelings about relationships:

His mum just saw me dancing in a wedding. I find it like weird why would she recommend a girl for her son just because of a dance. I could be a bad woman or just unsuitable. Ahhh so yeah as I was saying it was dreadful as my mum dressed me up for that silly engagement proposal (Noura, 20).
### ii) Making sense of gender equality

Kuwait is a male dominated patriarchal context. “...And men are a degree above them women” (Surah Albaqarah, 2, 228). Quiwama is the Arabic terminology used to describe this “degree” and this is what makes the Islamic cultures more patriarchal. For such reasons, women in Kuwait have lesser rights than men do. Women described romantic dating in terms of gender equality. As shared below:

*More reasons yes, so why would the men date like my own brother there is not a single thing he did not do (higher tone) and when I am late he makes a scene for me (Dyalaa, 20).*

In comparison, Shatha (without an older brother) said:

*Umm if I had an older brother I think it would be more challenging for me to be dating, no freedom, I still cannot understand why shame is only on our shoulders and men date all the time (Shatha, 25).*

The term “freedom” is difficult to define. Some participants described freedom as being able to do whatever they want to do. Others believe that freedom is easier and only makes sense within “societal rules”. In general, freedom alongside gender equality is important for many Muslim women today. With that, the externalized social stress can still inflict upon internalized self-perspectives.

### iii) Dating for fun, romance, and sexual experience

Furthermore, a few of the women interviewed described that they are dating as it is a “natural” instinct within them. Those women are not necessarily escaping arranged marriages, but dating for their own pleasure and sexual experience. For example, Raneen said:

*I need some sexual experience to avoid a shock on my wedding night (Raneen, 20).*
Zahra similarly explained her reasons for wanting to date, she justified:

*I want to have fun, men do it so ahhh we have cravings as well. It’s not fair that the burden of reputation is only on women; we want to enjoy life too* (Zahra, 20).

Furthermore, Altaf comes (with a half Irish father) shared interesting views about gender equality in Kuwait. She studies law in France, and visits Kuwait part time, hence, described the challenges she encounters in shifting between those two different societies. In her interview, she reflected upon “virginity and marriage”. Her comment implies negative feelings towards society only judging “women’s sexual status” whereas men are given freedom of choice without being judged. Altaf furthermore explained why she is against the idea of protecting virginity for marriage. She said:

*Why doesn’t society blame the man too…* (Altaf, 20).

Defending women’s sexual side, she added:

*I am saying if he wants a virgin wife, he must be virgin himself, why...because you cannot ask something from someone more than you could have done* (Altaf, 20).

By offering “reasons for secretive dating”, Muslim Kuwaiti women are escaping the negative inner conflict of feeling that they are going against the norms. Yet still, due to the traditional nature of Kuwait, secretive and marginalized relationships could fail for a variety of cultural reasons. In the next theme, notions of unsuccessful relationships are examined.

**Theme 4: Unsuccessful relationships**

This theme discusses why pre-marital relationships in many cases fail and do not escalate to marriage as intended in some cases. The sub-themes elaborate on religious differences (since there are different sects in Islam), dating non-Kuwaiti men, and the
“controlling partner”. Furthermore, not all relationships were successful due to many social class differences. In a country such as Kuwait, family approval is necessary when it comes to marriage. Regardless of such constraints, many women stayed in their romantic relationships even if the consequences were so dire:

*His social class like ahh his name is lesser than mine but no matter what people say I said I will not break us up* (Worood, 27).

On the other hand, although polygamy is allowed in Kuwait (and Islam), “second wives” are always neglected in society. Battling to make her relationship succeed, Deema, coping with her father’s strong words and intervention into her personal lifestyle said:

*My dad stresses on his social position so yeah he said even if I spinster I will never be allowed to marry my boyfriend and he rejected the ahhh proposal* (Deema, 27).

The next sub-themes explore the causes of failed and unsuccessful romantic relationships in Kuwait.

**Sub-themes**

*i) Muslim religious differences undermining the success of relationships*

Different Islamic sects include groups of people with somewhat different Islamic perspectives. Unfortunately, religious differences in Kuwait do have a large impact on how successful a relationship could be and whether it can escalate to marriage or not. Many women faced some anxiety and struggled in their relationships because of the religious differences when it comes to which Islamic path one follows.
Sherouq here describes her experiences as a modern young woman with her “socially religious” ex in which he also has a “hidden desired identity” on a personal level:

_He left me because of the veil, his mum said I am not good as a wife, but he is pretending to be something he is not_ (Sherouq, 27).

In contrast, Sabika has a religious father and is in a romantic relationship with a modern man. Again, the same issues were raised up (due to differences in Islamic sects).

She said:

_With that boyfriend, we had to break up because our religious sects largely differ. Now I am in the same trap again, seeing another modern man, but this time I won’t be a victim, nor drift us apart_ (Sabika, 21).

Reality in this situation does not merely exist outside the “self” but one’s mind creates the meaning making aspects of the outside world. Accepting social norms or marriage is necessary for many. Dalia said:

_I feel my family is against me just because of the social expectations and what people would say if I married a non-Sunni_ (Dalia, 22).

Sunna and Shia are both Islamic sects in Kuwait with different interpretations of the religion. They still both adhere to the values of the Quran and the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). In Dalia’s meaning making process of her feelings, the self is defined by “many selves”. The “self” is viewed as a social trait more than just “one self”. In this case, the concept of self is also debatable to define. Dalia’s comment indicated that her family put emphasis on the self within the social in-group more than the self as a belonging to the individual. Even with her behaviour being individualistic, yet still, the self is always at a state of distress when making sense of sexuality.
**ii) Interracial relationships**

Not only religious differences undermine the success of a relationship, but also nationality or interracial differences have a large impact when it comes to Kuwaiti women and their choices of their marital life. For example, women in this study that are in relationships with non-Kuwaiti men described how social stress could invade their personal lives when making sense of cultural conflict. For example, Iraq used to be in good terms with Kuwait until post the Kuwaiti-Iraqi invasion of 1990 (as described earlier in the literature). In Bibi’s case (being in an intense relationship with an Iraqi man), she explained:

*My father said he will not allow the marriage as he said the issue is completely closed, and he disrespected my dating partner with his family, but I will still date him and go to his flat because anyway what is marriage, I think it is just a piece of paper (Bibi, 26).*

On the other hand, Sherouq shares a negative experience that her younger sister faced a few months ago:

*She left Kuwait and does not even identify herself as a Kuwaiti woman after the pain they gave her for officially marrying a Jewish boy that she met abroad in New York in her art school ahh she got way too too pressured from the many interferences towards her private life (Sherouq, 27).*

**iii) Notions of control and gender dimensions**

A controlled relationship was a major cause for many women to separate. As described by some women, their dating partners would not wish to escalate further in the relationships due to the thoughts that if the woman was too “daring” to date at a young age then she is not proper “wife material” within Kuwaiti standards to keep in the long run. Women reported how much they suffered after they had to end their relationships.
Noura said:

*I know many women here that had sex before marriage like they would lose their virginity and the man would dump them right away because they’re not good enough to keep, to marry (Noura, 20).*

Similarly, Sherouq said:

*He’s two faced, so waaw it was amazing when he dated me, joining and engaging in such risky behaviour then suddenly as a wife I looked too threatening (Sherouq, 27).*

In contrast, some women reported that they were pressured to veil or change their clothing styles, and for such reasons they could not cope in a controlled relationship. The women talked about their desires for a more liberated lifestyle. For example, Fouzia’s only wish is to be allowed to remove her Hijab permanently one day (since she was forced to veil at an early age). Weighing out the costs and benefits, she ended her controlled relationship. Pointing to her hair veil with “distress”, Fouzia explained:

*I even regret wearing that thing. I do not want someone to cover me more, so walking out of this mess is best for me (Fouzia, 21).*

This theme noted the reasons as to why in some situations, relationships do not necessarily escalate to marriage or fail for different culturally related causes. Overall, in the given four themes, pre-marital sexual relationships were described by women; in different ways, offering minimal attention (or no understanding) to how Muslim Kuwaiti women learn about sexuality in a culture that makes sense of sexuality only in terms of a “cultural taboo”. The last theme (theme 5) discusses sex education in Kuwait.

**Theme 5: Sex education in Kuwait**

Finally, this theme refers to women’s perspectives on sex education. The sub-themes
point out how Muslim women learn about sexuality, issues such as illegal abortions, and
the need to promote such sensitive topics in Islam (with its influences) are reflected
further. In an Islamic country such as Kuwait that has not progressed in terms of
sexuality, the Quran is supposed to be the main and only source to refer to in terms of sex
education. However, in a changing world, it became apparent that “such culturally
created taboo” is the initial cause for much of women’s social stress. As illustrated by
Manal:

*There’s no education, women might get diseases (Manal, 19).*

It is of interest to link what those women know and how they relate it within their
shared stories. Deema explained furthermore:

*Sex is a normal thing for all humans just like ahh food, rugby, sleeping ahh studying, and even drinking water so
I mean come on why excessively shy out about this topic, it really creates like ahh negative feelings at times for us
as women (Deema, 27).*

Silencing sexuality shows us that many women are facing psychological issues such
as personal conflict, guilt, or even depression. This is because even though such issues on
sexuality are silenced in Kuwait, yet young women are still engaging in pre-marital sex,
but away from public view.

The sub-themes below examine how women learn about sexuality as well as health
issues raised due to silencing such issues in a changing world today.

**Sub-themes**

1) **Unreliable sources**

Proper sex education is taboo and not permissible in Kuwait as it contrasts with
many of the cultural ideologies. Promoting sex education is also a promotion that “it’s
alright” (as described by many Muslim scholars). As evident in this study, Muslim women desire the normalizing of this socially sensitive topic, hence, being more aware of it and receiving proper education. Education is beneficial in order to at least avoid the “total dependence” of unreliable Internet sources. Women described further how they share, learn, and disclose information on sexuality within their restricted context:

   So I search and ask my friends because my mum does not allow me to talk with her and I think sex is a natural thing humans do, like it’s a science we should talk about it (Noura, 20).

   No, until today Biology books are censored in school, I just depend on my boyfriend (laughs) (Dalia, 22).

Sabika described how she smuggled movies to see erotic scenes:

   Secretly, and I played it and I went to the scenes (Sabika, 21).

ii) Medical consequences

   It is evident that many health issues are rising due to the lack of awareness on sexuality. As shared below:

   I feel bad I know so many women that are sex illiterate and they start getting in trouble forcing themselves into abortions. One of my friends forced her self to undergo an abortion. It was because if she had a Haram (forbidden) baby, her family would abandon her so she cannot keep such Haml (a carry in the womb) (Nawal, 24).

Complications through virginity surgeries are also evident:

   She restored her virginity by a surgery see she did it just to avoid ruining her reputation or her family would be degraded or to become a decent wife but it’s not fair because men have sex and it doesn’t really show up. I am not against women with previous sexual relations because it’s not up to society to judge them (Altaj, 20).
In contrast, Fida explained that she enjoys an intimate sexual lifestyle yet without losing her virginity. In a culture that puts so much value on virginity, she worries that if she looses her virginity, she may not marry her current dating partner and risk or limit her future marital choices because she will be discouraged or neglected (by Kuwaiti men) for being a non-virgin. In her speech, she said:

*Men now here know this trick as it could be tested by a doctor so ahhh I do not want to risk my future and then be like others that get divorced after one night because men today can tell if a virginity surgery is done or the girl is really a virgin but ummm the other kinky stuff we do in the yacht nobody can really prove* (Fida, 21).

**iii) Sexuality as a social taboo**

Single in the eyes of society does not necessarily mean "not in any pre-marital relationship". This means that young women could be under large risks if solely depending on unreliable sources or even the friends social group. Therefore, this study tells us that promoting awareness on the culturally taboo topic creates more positive influences. With that, women's negative psychological consequences link to the society's definition of sex as a taboo. This indicates that the cycle of emotional conflict participants described came as a result of their feelings violating their in-group structured values, and adapting to such terms in of secret keeping (i.e. a separated notion of the self).

Amal, in her explanations of how sexuality was taught in her school days said:

*All I really know is that my virginity is similar to a “chewing gum” so ahh in my school I was taught if that piece of gum is chewed then it really cannot be in original shape ever again and no man will like to marry me so it’s such thoughts that I remember then feel guilty with what I’m doing* (Amal, 20).
This illustrates that sexuality is still a taboo in schools (since Amal graduated from school 2 years ago). Not only unmarried women are facing long-term psychological implications, but also married women are prone to face ongoing complications. Farah for example explained her sexual experiences during early points of her marriage. She found difficulty moving into “the sudden overnight transition” in terms of sex suddenly becoming an acceptable righteous activity. As quoted:

\[
\text{So this is what we learned aahh it didn’t put me in any encouragement to try it and even when I got married, I used to have so much difficulty I felt pain and even when my husband kisses me on the lips I would feel so guilty and dirty inside all through the night, and pretty much every night (Farah, 26).}
\]

Many women in their descriptions managed to balance between their social identity and personal desires. Guilt still was expressed in many ways during much of their talk. Guilt in this case is one’s expectation of how one should behave, than upon internalized standards. Feelings of sexual guilt in the women’s sense making embraced emotional distress that happened inside them. Yet, they still cope by balancing the social rigid rules with their desires in a changing world today. This means that guilt and desires are strongly linked (i.e. when strongly desiring what makes women feel the guilt) whether before or during marriage. In cases of pre-marital sex, women escape the notion of guilt by praying, reading the Quran, or spending time with the family group.

This last theme explored how Muslim Kuwaiti women are made aware of sexual related matters. In the context of this technologically globalized world, Islamic ideologies such as silencing or controlling women’s sexuality are almost impossible to hold on to. The following section is a discussion of this study and how it contributes to the existing literature.
(3.13) Discussion

This study explored how Muslim Kuwaiti women manage sexual relationships in their restricted context. A range of psychological consequences, as a result of pre-marital sexual relations in an Islamic culture were discussed. Findings showed five main themes that emerged. For example, the main theme reflects on balancing sexual desires with Islamic Sharia law. Women make sense of sexual relationships in a changing world in terms of constantly creating a balance of the self. The notion of balance was discussed in line with coping with the pressure to wear the veil (traditional clothing) and Islamic sins, meaning making of the religious Muslimat and sexual guilt, and women’s representations of sexually active Muslim men that they dated. Strategies and places for women dating secretly in Kuwait were frequently discussed.

Dating secretly and defining secretive tactics links back to women feeling a need to balance between their personal sexual desires and social identities. Stories related to Muslim women protecting their reputation, Islamic image, and social identity strategies linked to social class and categories and influences on bi-cultural upbringing were described. The changing Kuwaiti culture means that perspectives are also changing and women in that context raised reasons for secretive dating. By living with a continuous need to balance and adapting to numerous secretive lifestyles, women justified causal patterns for behaving in ways that contradict social norms. Meaning makings included negative views about the traditional arranged marriages that influenced romantic dating, a sense of gender equality, and dating for fun, romance, and sexual experience.

Yet still, women shared stories of unsuccessful relationships in a culture that abides by traditions in terms of sexuality and relationships. Although balancing identities,
approaching secretive strategies, and describing reasons for their dating behaviour, sexual relationships remain a cultural taboo and a challenge for many Muslim women. Muslim religious differences undermining the success of relationships, Kuwaiti women dating non-Kuwaiti men and cultural conflict, and notions of control and gender dimensions were some of the major conflicts women discussed.

Finally, even though shifting to transitions of modern change and accepting new ideologies, sex education in Kuwait is still illegal. Women therefore learn from unreliable sources and medical consequences arise as a result. Due to the sensitivity of the culture when raising such issues (sexuality as a cultural taboo), women feel tension and conflict including shame, guilt, and fear of facial recognition when in suspicious secretive locations (which is a threat to reputation). Women at times manage their guilt with the veil as a mask to conceal their emotional conflicts. Others explained that their “forced veiling” pushed them to engage in rebellious and risky behaviour. Some wear it to reduce vision in terms of the social identity being recognized when in socially discouraged behaviour, and many feel that their Islamic veil cannot be a barrier to their sexual desires and secretive romantic relationships. With that, women created many different meanings to the Islamic veil, contrasting the single truth behind the veil: worn to present an Islamic identity.

(3. 14) Linking it to the literature

This unique study links to previous studies and literature in different ways. For example, cultural taboos are based on one’s human desires or else there would be no need to prohibit that which no human desires. As shown in women’s meanings in this study, what is forbidden with greatest emphasis is a thing that is very much desired.
Furthermore, by prohibiting a certain activity, the Islamic Kuwaiti society is stimulating rather than repressing or abolishing the desire to engage in that certain behaviour. Behaviours of women in this study indicated that when there is strict adherence to a particular rule (Haram or taboo), there would naturally be an equal desire to violate that rule in the unconscious.

Historically, especially in religions, humans were concerned with “the control of sexual desires” (Correa et al., 2008). This study dealt further with women’s sexuality as a taboo in Kuwait. The focus was on young Muslim Kuwaiti unmarried women because unmarried Muslim women (who reached puberty) create a threat to Islamic social order. According to Ali, (2004) women’s sexual desires are seen as a natural threat and would be fulfilled in adultery if not married. In this situation, Zina is the voluntary sexual intercourse and sexual pleasure outside marriage committed with consent from the woman, thus a raped woman is not considered a “Zania” (sexually sinful and punishable) (Bennet, 2007). In Surah Al Furqan, 25, Zina is described as the biggest Kabaa’ir (most serious major sin) for a Muslim woman and Surah, Alisra, 17 explained further that it is a great sin to come near any deed that may come close to Zina which includes touching, looking, or even sitting with the opposite sex.

As quoted by the Prophet Mohammad’s Hadith, “if one of you were to be stabbed in the head with a piece of iron it would be better for him than if he were to touch a woman whom it is not permissible for him to touch…whenever a man is alone with a woman the Devil makes a third”. A woman pregnant outside marriage or witnessed by four men having intercourse outside marriage is a “Zania”, therefore, in this case it is permissible for man to clean his honour through an honour killing (Goodwin, 2012). Allah said in the
Quran: *The woman and the man guilty of Zina, flog each of them with a hundred stripes: Let no compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by God, if ye believe in God and the Last Day: and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment*...(Surah Alnur, 24, 2).

Although shifting to modern transitions of change, these rigid cultural and Islamic ideologies imposed strictly on Muslim women cause a series of guilt and self-punishment when engaging in sexual relationships. Such notion of guilt must be understood essentially as a social phenomenon that happens between people as much as it happens inside them (Baumiester, 1994). As defined by Mosher (1965), guilt may be defined as a generalized expectancy for self-mediated punishment, i.e., negative reinforcement for violating, anticipating the violation of, or failure to attain internalized standards of proper behaviour (p. 162).

Furthermore, sex education and sexual awareness continue to create new issues in the contemporary Islamic contexts (Ilkkaracan, 2002). For example, Smerecnik et al., (2010) clarified that the sex education amongst the Muslim youth in a non-Islamic context is an unsuccessful one due to the norms in Islam about a taboo topic and the rigidity of sexual norms and desires in Islamic societies. In addition, the students lacked respect to those views, thus creating an additional barrier to sex education. The data collected was discussing sexuality as it relates to Islam. This study is very important but was limited by only looking at sex education towards Muslims in a Western context and not living in Islamic countries.

Other Muslim scholars such as Rizvi, (1994) argue that sex education is necessarily not to educate young Muslim women about birth control or abortions, but about Islamic
issues such as virginity, chastity (until marriage), and Zina (illegal sex). This study indicates the importance of sex education due to other psychological long-term complications such as shame and guilt. Normalizing sexuality is important to minimize much of the emotional conflict and tension created as a result of the cultural weight on such taboo issues.

Middle Eastern cultures in general live constantly under the pressure of avoiding certain activities that may damage “face” or “head”. As a result, Eastern Islamic societies base their behaviour by putting too much consideration on what they believe is the expectation of “Others” (Ismail, 2004). According to ElSaadawi & Moghissi, (1998) women raised up in Eastern contexts tend to emphasize their social identities and what is undesired by other group members in their social context becomes integrated into one’s undesired self. This means that the self is interdependent with the surrounding context and so it is the “other” or the “self in relation to the other” that is a focal view in the Muslim women’s lived experiences. With that, the taboo of violating women’s modesty is seen as an “Islamic taboo”, hence, this is interlinked with family honour, a “social taboo”.

Muslims believe family honour is connected to Islam by women’s modesty (Nasir, 2013). As quoted in the Quran, They shall not strike their feet so as to reveal details of their hidden ornaments...(Surah Alnur, 24,31). The word “Zeenatahunna” is used in the Quran to refer to women’s “beauty spots” or ornaments that should be concealed to keep a woman protected (this would refer to women’s hair, breasts, thighs, etc.). Women’s modesty in Islam is defined by socially appropriate behaviour and clothing and by the avoidance of non-Mahram (non kin) stranger men (Ali, 2004). Violating modesty or
“Sitr”, the Arabic term to conceal, is a call for sex which is a cultural taboo in Kuwait and for such reasons, it is strongly believed that the more a Muslimah covers her body, the less sexual attraction she would offer to stranger men (Moghissi, 1997).

Mazhar (appearance) is considered essential in Islam for women and for such reasons many Muslim women put so much emphasis on the outer social appearance (Husain, 2013). Acts that may imply or hint sexual desires are also Haram (sinful) and are considered taboo in Islamic contexts. As evident by the Prophet Mohammad’s Hadith when describing perfumes, “if a woman leaves her house wearing perfume, she is adulterous”. Or when describing the man’s gaze to the woman, “the eye commits adultery and its adultery is the glance”. Qasim Amin, a Muslim feminist explained how women are more in control of their sexual desires than men; therefore covering up the Muslim women with modest clothing is a tool to protect men. This study suggests that the Hijab (veil) does not necessary portray the decency of the wearer. In fact, in this study, some women described how they use the Hijab to “cover up” for their sins and make it easier to transgress taboo.

According to Islam, (2011) the changing economical and globalized world has largely affected clothing industries in Islamic countries. This is especially the case in Kuwait as women in this study continuously linked their clothing to technology, which shape modern behavioural patterns. Adaptations to the modern ideologies were also discussed in terms of technology. As explained by Hamade, (2009) the Internet usage has become more popular amongst university students in Kuwait. This means that although Kuwait is a segregated Islamic context, the modern technology has made it easier for men and women to communicate and establish romantic relationships in a hidden way.
(secretive personal lifestyles). This shows us that globalization has an impact on women in terms of their clothing and relationships when linked to sexuality in different forms.

Furthermore, many studies such as (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009) have indicated that bi-cultural identities are prone to face some identity conflict when trying to fit in or adapt to different societies. Research also explained that social and psychological tensions are created between two cultures exist (Sirin & Fine, 2007). Therefore, a person with a bi-cultural root is in a state of balance between two different cultures and might find distress in that balance in terms of identity with other cultural interferences (Jaspal & Cinnirealla, 2010). Numerous studies on the bi-cultural identity have been carried out implying that identity conflict is apparent (Sirin & Fine, 2007).

In contrast, data in this study indicates that in some situations, bi-cultural identities are prone to face “less conflict”. Women in this study with bi-cultural upbringing had less sexual conflict and distress in comparison to the purely traditional Kuwaiti women. This is because this group of women described their modernized rearing at home. Much of the cultural taboos were normalized and discussed in their home settings. Therefore, they had less tension and conflict when engaging in romantic sexual relationships.

Reflecting back to the notion of balance, a woman’s identity in an Islamic context is not expressed socially according to her personal wish, but has to be adjacent to the cultural norms and expectations (Mojab, 1998). A Muslim woman’s identity is determined by Islamic discourses and social definitions of right and wrong (Shaheed, 1994). The “self” is defined as reflexive and takes itself as an object meaning that it can classify and name “itself” in a number of social classifications (Stets & burke, 2000). Hogg & Abrahams (1998) described how people place themselves in social groups
feeling that they exist in such structured society in relation to the Other. Whether the person behaves according to the personal and social identity depends solely on the cultural expectations and normative fit (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Therefore, the Kuwaiti women’s identities in this study are influenced through the existence of multiple identities on the “self”. This could lead to distress when different identities take place (Oaks, 1987). It also largely depends on how the individual locates himself collectively (Simon & Hastedt, 1999). Bullock (2013) explained that Muslim women today no longer desire to be oppressed victims living under patriarchal values. Furthermore, Syed (2004) said that Muslim women today do not wish to live as passive and unaware of their identities other than its relation to Islam. With the many social changes, it is becoming difficult to hold on to the “old expectations” towards Muslim Kuwaiti women (Engineer, 2008). This study moved away from old ideologies, focusing on women’s desire to lead a more liberated (sexual) lifestyle. Modern cultures and lifestyles have permeated almost every facet of the globe, both socially and economically (Ramey, 2012). It is no surprise to see that Muslim women are just as influenced by the image of what a modern woman would expect out of life.

However, in the Islamic world, a Muslim woman is severely restricted when it comes to the basic forms of self-expression, such as dating, romantic love, open discussion of their feelings, and a celebration of their sexuality, as these things can lead to shame and loss of family honour (Ozyegin, 2009). Now with the extent of change in the Arab world, the intervention of modern ideologies continues to grow (Golley, 2004). This means that psychological implications largely exist in the lives of Muslim women when making sense of sexuality and relationships.
(3.15) Implications for theory

The changing world has implications for the lives of women in terms of a range of factors such as clothing, relationships, and sexuality. Reflecting Muslim women, sexual relationships, and the Eastern context to the social identity theory helps in understanding the tension and conflict that women expressed in a culture that values the social self more than the personal. The psychological impacts on self and identity are important when examining notions of sexuality and relationships in a modernized Islamic culture that still has not progressed when making sense of sexual identities and relationships. Muslim women feel the need to balance their sexual desires (liberated self) and social identity (to gain in-group social acceptance) when challenging the society’s negativity in terms of sexuality. This will be explained using social identity theory. This theoretical contribution is simplified and illustrated in Model A.

Making sense of Model A

The activation of two salient selves is central when Kuwaiti Muslim women maintain their social identity and reputation in terms of sexuality and relationships. Oppression on women’s social selves creates oppression when making sense of their sexual identities. Women are not doing certain things in public discourse not because they intrinsically don’t want to, but because of externalized rigid cultural taboos and the society’s definition of freedom. With that, women can be contradicting clothing when appearing in a certain Islamic way that helps them conform to social ideologies and transgress sexual taboos. Overall, women are prone to face internalized guilt when desiring what they fear (i.e. the desired sexual identity contrasting the normative fit). This tells us that modern influences are creating new identities, and this in return challenges
Muslim women in a changing world when making meaning of a torn life between traditions and modernity. Today, although they face multiple challenges and various complexities as a result of the evolution within the various modern influences, Muslim women in this study are more attracted to a liberated lifestyle.

Overall, women talked about their sexual relations by making sense of two selves. As a result of constantly balancing the “two selves”, women experienced identity conflict or multiple identity complexity. Muslim women did not define just “one personal self”, but several selves in different group memberships. Conflict and tension increase when women continuously “weigh out” the traditional Kuwaiti expected social identity along with the desires of a sexually liberated lifestyle. As a result, an internalized clash of identities can exist due to the cultural weight on Muslim women’s social identities.

The identity clash is defined as an inner conflict driven through Muslim women’s motivations weighed out with the society’s expectations. Women fear group members in the society more than the religious consequences (i.e. afterlife punishment) when engaging in Islamic sins. With that, they derive their self and social concept from their knowledge about the group (i.e. the Kuwaiti society) and place value accordingly. Due to such distress, secret keeping or “hidden behaviours” become a part of their self-definitions.
(3.16) Model A: Balancing the “two selves”

Secret keeping/Sexual taboos

Social fears
Extrinsic influences

Personal desires
Intrinsic motivations

Clash of two contradicting identities

Traditional Islamic culture

Modern ideologies
Social identity theory

Social identity theory is derived from people’s understanding of their attachment to a social group and the emotional meaning attached to the membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This study is framed within the context of social identity theory because Muslim women’s identities are becoming influenced by social changes whilst still living in a culture that stresses on women’s social identity. To date, no study explored the social and health issues related to Muslim women managing a sexual life along with their rigid societal norms. A contribution to the theory has been made when linking the social self to the hidden self (away from public view) in an “Islamic context” that only values the social self in terms of women’s honour and reputation.

The social identity sets out expectations based on cultural norms, religion, and values. With that, Muslim women follow the “Eastern expectations”, do not communicate with men, and maintain their social image by being modest. In contrast, women adapted to a second social group related to their modern selves. They follow a “free lifestyle”, engage in sexual relationships, and satisfy their personal desires. Moreover, this study shows us that women’s sexuality is more open in modern cultures; hence, their identities are also more open. Sexuality is still oppressed in Islamic contexts indicating that women’s identities are also oppressed and hidden. With that, Muslim women are balancing between two selves that are opposing each other in terms of ideologies.

(3. 17) Conclusion

Over the past decade, Muslim women were less keen to “speak up” in their patriarchal context but today they relate to the pace of modern change (Golkowska, 2014). Linking back to the research aims and questions, this study demonstrated that
Muslim women could face emotional conflicts and a clash of identities (social identities weighed with desired self) when protecting their social reputation and balance that with new ideologies. This indicates that a woman’s identity in such context is not expressed socially according to personal desires, but has to be adjacent to the cultural norms and expectations. Moreover, an individual's identity is not a fixed trait, but a product driven through social and societal forces (Jetten et al., 2006). Therefore, these women living in Kuwait made sense of their sexual relationships by balancing the two selves in terms of personal desires and social identities.

Muslim women have come to realize that they can read and interpret the religious texts (Wadud, 1999). Reading of the Quran and the Hadith has enabled the Muslim women to understand more of the societal barriers (Nasir, 2013). As a result, many have come to realize that Islam has nothing to do with much of the oppressive practices of the Islamic societies (ElSaadawi & Moghissi, 1998). With that, cultural definitions (of right and wrong) alongside Islamic ideologies became debatable in women’s various views, especially when making sense of cultural taboos and social stigmas.

Further issues related to Muslim women in this globalized world are researched in the second research study (focusing on the socially stigmatized unmarried Muslimat). The following chapter presents the findings and insights of study two. It starts with a brief introduction and the rationale for this academic contribution, followed the process taken prior to the analysis. The analysis of divorced and spinster Muslim Kuwaiti in a changing world is then presented, followed by discussion, theory, and conclusion.
(4) Chapter four-Study two:

My voice and all us women is a threat to men: Experiences of divorced and spinster Muslim Kuwaiti women

(4.1) Introduction

Over the past 50 years, the world has changed in terms of economic and financial factors, globalization, technology, and religion. This is particularly the case in Kuwait and there are specific implications on unmarried women (divorced or spinsters), yet in a restricted Islamic context. The aim of this qualitative study is therefore to examine how Muslim Kuwaiti women make sense of their independency in terms of being unmarried (in a patriarchal culture) within the context of this changing world.

The previous study focused on cultural taboo relationships outside marriage for young Muslim Kuwaiti women between the ages of 19-27 in the Islamic Kuwaiti context. The results showed that young Muslim Kuwaiti women balance their social identities with their personal desires of a modern sexually liberated lifestyle. Due to such extremes with the balancing of their two selves, a clash of identities was a conflict for many. The main research queries in this study are: What causes Muslim Kuwaiti women to desire the unmarried status even though it is socially stigmatized in their society? How do older unmarried women make sense of their status in modern day Kuwait and what are their marital expectations?

Taleq, “set free” is the initiating word (pronounced three times) for divorce in an Islamic country like Kuwait (Saleh, 2014). As explained by Thomas, (2013) the Gulf has
undergone tremendous social changes in the past decade due to globalization and media influences. Women's lives in the Gulf have been largely influenced and their call for further rights is a continuing process since the discovery of oil (Al-Sabah, 2013). The discovery of oil meant that women could easily become economically and financially independent (in terms of individual wealth) as oppose to relying on men and pearl diving in the past (Thomas, 2013). With the overall changes in Gulf context, marriage patterns have been changing more often today (Rashad, 2015). For example, according to AlMunajjed, (2010) marriages like traditional arranged marriages or polygamy are no longer desired in the Gulf by many of the women today.

Marriage is very important in Islamic cultures, yet the divorce and spinster rates are dramatically increasing in countries like Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia for example (Abela & Walker, 2014). As defined by Osmani, (2012) Nikah (an Islamic marriage) begins with an “Aqd” (a contract) and consent from the woman and man involved must be orally given and signed on the Islamic Arabic contract. The presence of the woman’s male guardian (i.e. the father in most cases) is a condition for Nikah (along with two male witnesses). The Mahar (wealth and material depending on the groom’s financial ability) is given to the wife from the groom prior to the Nikah process (Al-Tuwaijry, 2000).

"When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion, so let him fear Allah regarding the remaining half.”

As quoted in the Hadith (Prophet Mohammad’s saying), marriage is “half of Islam”. This brings in the question as to why divorced and spinsterhood rates are rising in cultures that strongly relate to marriage (such as Kuwait). The aim of this research is to
explore further the causes for the dramatic rise in divorce and spinster rates and also how single Muslim Kuwaiti women manage to cope with the societal pressures. It examines rules and rigidity in cultural rebound effects beneath the religious discourses when living in a challenging patriarchal context, yet moving into transitions of social change. The study aims to capture ways in which Kuwaiti women experience such stigmatized phenomenon. The intention is therefore to offer a “rare glimpse” into such culturally sensitive topics that are not usually discussed because of traditional ideologies that “unmarried women bring shame” at a certain point.

Definition of concepts

It is important to note that this thesis focuses on the Arab Islamic context of Kuwait but different implications fall in each country with a need for differentiated analysis. Therefore, defining some of the central terminologies used for the purpose of this study is very useful. This will offer a better understanding of the Islamic Sharia law in terms of divorce. This section introduces some of the relevant key words.

i) Divorced Kuwaiti women

In the contextual frame of this study, Muslim Kuwaiti women experienced a recent divorce regardless of age or social status. Divorce is defined as a “final legal dissolution of marriage, that is, that separation of husband and wife which confers on the parties the right to remarriage under civil, religious, and/ or other provisions according to the laws of each country” (AlMunajjed, 2010).

ii) Spinster Kuwaiti women

Osmani (2012) explained that the age of spinsterhood varies from society to another. For the purpose of this research, a spinster is a Kuwaiti woman that never experienced a
marriage. Usually, the age of a spinster in the Gulf is “late 20s”, yet still the slightly younger unmarried women feel “targets of such definition or negative labeling” in a context that values marriage (Jad, 2009) (and a few were invited in this study). It is interesting to note that although a spinster in the Gulf (including Kuwait) is in her late 20s, yet surprisingly as Rashad (2015) added that today (with the transitions of modern change) the average age of marriage in Kuwait increased from 15-19 in the 70s to 28-31 today. This reflects back to the effects of the changing world on women and how the increased access to education, financial, and economic opportunities changed women’s lives and priorities today.

**Divorce in the Islamic Sharia law**

Divorce is a marital dissolution. This is made legally between spouses (whether wife or husband) (Al-Turaiji, 2000). For the purpose of this research, it is important to understand the Sharia ruling of obtaining a divorce.

*i) Types of divorce*

In Islam, both men and women have equal rights to initiate a divorce if there is a desire to end an unsuccessful marriage (Saleh, 2014). The Islamic Arabic terminology for divorce is “Talaq” when man initiates the divorce. In Arabic, the word “Talaq” means in English words “to set free” (Raza, 1998). In Islam, Talaq is either revocable or irrevocable (Sibulo, 1974). In contrast, Khula (extract) is the process a woman undergoes for a divorce if the husband is unwilling to give his Talaq.

*ii) Revocable Talaq*

As described by Saleh, (2014) this type of divorce happens when the husband utters the words “Inty Taleq” (you are divorced). A woman is expected to wait 3 monthly
menstrual cycles (Iddah) before divorce is official and before she can re-marry. This is done to ensure a pregnancy has not occurred (which might result in a change of mind) but the ex husband is expected to spend on the woman in full during that “waiting period” (alimony). In addition, the husband is obliged to financially support his ex wife throughout her life if she decides to remain unmarried and is rearing the children (Saleh, 2014).

iii) Irrevocable Talaq

This divorce is more serious and permanent. It is effective after the husband speaks out the pronouncements of “you are divorced” three times in a row. In this case, the man is not permitted by Islamic law to marry this woman again unless she experiences a second marriage (and ends it) (Raza, 1998).

iv) Khula

Khula (extract) is a form of divorce initiated from the wife’s side (Saleh, 2014). By that, she has full rights by the Islamic Sharia to divorce but is expected to return back to her husband all the (Mahar) dowry, wealth, property, jewelry, and other expenses he spent on her during that time (Raza, 1998). The mother is at risk of loosing full custody of her children if she initiated the divorce (Al-Tuwaijiri, 2000). The process of Khula is often harder and the husband must still offer his consent (although in Talaq, a husband can divorce a wife without her prior knowledge or consent) (Danka, 2013). It is interesting to note that by analyzing the Arabic words, Talaq (man initiating divorce) is defined as setting free, an easier process than “extracting” which is the definition of Khula (woman initiating divorce).
The Sharia’s reasons for making Khula a harder process

Danka (2013) explained that in patriarchal Islamic contexts, Khula has been made more difficult to achieve compared to Talaq due to the belief that women are weaker and emotionally sensitive (i.e. might not take the right decision due to emotional reasons). This indicates that men are more responsible in that sense. Therefore, in rare cases, women speak for Khula (aware that they will loose custody rights towards their children). In a changing world, Khula (although a difficult process) is seemingly increasing as women are more economically and financially independent (i.e. returning the Mahar, wealth, and the dowry easily). Divorced respondents for the purpose of this study fell in either of each these divorce types (all due to the causes highlighted in the table of themes further on). Emotional consequences related to children’s custody were also explored.

v) Faskh AlNikah

In some cases, the court has the right to terminate a marriage (judge dispensing the decision) (Danka, 2013). This happens in cases where emotional deterioration is evident and the wife hates the husband (there is a risk she might cheat if not divorced from him), he is not financially supporting her, he is harmful, or in cases where the husband is always absent, hence not pleasing his wife sexually (Saleh, 2014).

Custody of the children

i) In terms of Talaq (Muslim man initiating the divorce)

In some situations, a divorce of an unhealthy marriage is better for the well being of the children (AlMunajjed, 2010). Custody of the children is the mother’s responsibility if the husband initiated the divorce in terms of Talaq (with him financially supporting both, the mother and children) until the age of puberty, the children would be the father’s
responsibility (yet he is still required to spend on his ex wife if she remained unmarried) (Saleh, 2014). In situations were the husband can prove that the wife is immoral in any way in relation to Islam, custody of the children will remain the father’s responsibility permanently (Al-Tuwairiji, 2000). In a case as such, the girl (daughter) is her father’s responsibility (only) followed by her husband in her future (Al-Tuwaijiri, 2000). This permanently eliminates the mother’s roles and duties.

(ii) In terms of Khula (Muslim woman initiating the divorce)

In cases of Khula, as described by Saleh, (2014) custody is given to the father until the age of 18, the child then gets to make a choice. If the divorce occurred in a case where the children are already over the age of 18, they get to choose which parent to live with. In contrast, if the child was a new born during the process of divorce, custody remains with the mother for a few months as agreed upon. Such decisions are supported by the Islamic court; depending on the child’s best interest (e.g. staying away from an abusive father). In addition, custody rules are subject to change in unique circumstances. For example, if “Khula” took place (children are minors) but still the mother is seen as the best for custody.

(4.2) Contributions to the literature

Not only a social issue; divorce is a global issue addressed by a variety of academic scholars (Nakamura, 2013). Divorce rates in Arab countries continue to dramatically rise, having large effects on family ties and traditions (AlMunajjed, 2010). Kuwait is the chosen context for this study because Kuwait is an Islamic society, yet shifting into transitions of modern change (Al-Sabah, 2013). Although Kuwaiti women suffer from a number of challenges after a divorce, little research has been conducted on this culturally
sensitive issue when looking at the weight and “Islamic conditions” of such challenges. This study aims to contribute to the existing frame of knowledge by identifying the challenges. The results can also be a base for further research to set efficient solutions for the various emotional, behavioural, and social conflicts Muslim women may suffer from.

A few studies such as AlMunajjed (2010), Saleh (2014) or Rashad (2015) explored the women’s social aspects, marital norms, and divorce patterns in the Gulf (including new trends such as age of marriage and divorce or spinsterhood increasing rates). Limited studies focused on the implications for women (in their personal lived experiences) when making sense of their unmarried status. This study therefore aims to contribute by examining the personal lives of divorced and spinster Muslim Kuwaiti women. This research aims to examine how divorced and spinster Muslim Kuwaiti women manage to cope with their personal desires and the societal expectations from them as unmarried women. Issues explored and discussed will focus on cultural rebound effects, women’s freedom as a social taboo in Islam, and further psychological implications on the self.

Data results will extend the social exchange theory (used as the theoretical framework) to provide new knowledge on a cost-benefit analysis in the lives of unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women. Academic stereotypes present Muslim women as being oppressed and subjugated (Howard, 2000). Minimal attention has been given to Muslim women’s real personal identities and desires in the context of a changing world. This research will tell us how the world is changing even in the most restricted areas. Findings will help expand our knowledge on how “unmarried” Muslim women function in an Islamic society and more importantly, what lengths they will go to achieve their personal desires.
(4. 3) The main research question for the second study was:

1: How do Muslim Kuwaiti (divorced or spinster) women cope with the personal and societal pressures (if any) of being unmarried and the impact of cultural rules and rigidity?

Note: Unmarried is seen as single in the eyes of the Kuwaiti Islamic society, yet still, an unmarried Muslim woman is not necessarily single as issues on romantic dating and secretive sexual lifestyles were previously reported.

(4. 4) Design

Qualitative methods were used due to their appropriateness in understudied areas (Braun & Clarke, 206). In-depth interviews took place in a private location (private office or hotel lobby). During the initial phase (gatekeepers recruitment), the study was advertised through “Online social networks” with “Online directories” to present the research documents and ethical approvals. Divorced and spinster Muslim Kuwaiti women (within their restricted context) may feel sensitive due to the social stigmas around them. Through the advertisements placed around the Kuwaiti social networks for participants, the aim of the study was explained in terms of unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women living in Kuwait.

Describing the study in terms of “unmarried” was more suitable than using the words “divorced” or “never married spinsters” owing to the Kuwaiti culture’s social stigmas and women’s sensitivity to criticism (as highlighted in the literature). No age criterion was provided in order to target the younger divorced women too (with the aid of the gatekeepers to focus on a diverse selection). Ethical approval was gained through the University of Surrey and Al-Tamayoz Group Legal Consultants and Attorneys in Kuwait.
Research documents are presented in the Appendices section (B1-B3) including the Arabic versions.

(4.5) Participants

22 participants (11 divorced and 11 spinster women) in this study (aged from 22-55) were very diverse. Diversity included a variety of educational and job experiences, types of marriages, and types of divorces. Social classes and social groups were also heterogeneous. All the women invited to join were “full” Kuwaiti women (i.e. without bi-cultural influences) and some had migration experiences.

In this research, although the focus was on unmarried women, yet widowed women were not invited due to the clear assumption that their marital position was not one that they controlled (i.e. terminated a marriage in the case of a divorce or rejected one in terms of a spinster). Only one of the participants (Jehan, 46) was divorced (through Khula) and widowed right after succeeding in her Khula process. Hanan (49), Shoug (33), and Maha (47) were all divorced twice. All the divorced women had undergone Talaq or Khula (as defined in Table B1) from Kuwaiti men with the exception to Hanan (49) (her second divorce was with an American man that she met in Kuwait).

It was important to distinguish whether the divorce was undergone through the process of Talaq (initiated by man) or Khula (initiated by woman) to have a broader picture when reporting and linking causal factors. How recent was the divorce was also a consideration. According to much of the literature describing Kuwait (as mentioned earlier), divorce was almost absent until post the discovery of oil, and today dramatically increasing more than any period of time. The study aims to seek responses for changes in marital patterns in the current modernizing Kuwaiti culture.
Building rapport

Establishing trust and rapport is very important in order to encourage the participants in terms of sharing their stories comfortably (Sandoval & Adams, 2001). When discussing culturally sensitive issues, rapport is needed for a richer interview. After presenting to women statistics on unmarried women around the Gulf (whether divorced or spinsters), comfort was successfully and gradually built. This was done with the hope to “break barriers” of such social stigmas, encourage, and engage women furthermore to overcome sensitivity in such terms.

Women felt comfortable to engage more in the conversation and shared details of their personal lives (whether divorced or the reasons for never marrying). Comfort and rapport were apparent when divorced women stopped using the word “separated” and used the socially stigmatized word of “Mutalaqa” (divorced woman) when sharing details of their marital conflicts. In contrast, spinster women shifted from using words such as “I never married” to making sense of their age in relation to the Gulf context in terms of spinsterhood. They gradually explained their feelings in terms of an “Anisa”, which is the Arabic stigmatized word for a spinster.

(4. 6) Procedure

The targeted age group for that sample was difficult to determine during the initial phase. Older women were the targeted group. Yet still, due to the increased divorce rates in Kuwait, younger women are also experiencing a divorce (AlMunajjed, 2010). For a heterogeneous purpose, the age was not the main target as much as the woman’s experience (i.e. Talaq or Khula, how recent was the divorce, type of marriage (i.e.
traditional, cousin, or early), educational background, to what extent has she gained migration experiences, and economic stability).

*The role of the gatekeeper: snowballing and purposive techniques*

With the aid of the gatekeeper in study one (existing trust and rapport) access to older women (a team of gatekeepers and potential participants) was made effectively and efficiently. The gatekeeper was the initial source of contact in recruiting a team of gatekeepers through her ties to a number of unmarried women. The sampling methods used included snowballing followed by purposive sampling. Snowballing was used to create more awareness and the purposive strategy was used to select based on the research question and aims.

Also known as chain referral sampling, snowballing strategies are best used when gatekeepers and participants (already recruited for the purpose of the study) use their own social networks to advertise (Noy, 2008). For this study, women referred the research to other people that could be interested to take part. This was the method used to raise more awareness in Kuwait. With that being successful, the gatekeeper then used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative research. The process involved selecting participants according to the research criteria.

Women’s details were given to the initiating gatekeeper after short telephone calls to determine who fits best and arrange accordingly. Shoug, Nabeela, and Badriya (3 of the participants) were the main contributors in the snowballing technique. The following table highlights some of the demographic information for each woman that joined this research. Pseudonyms are used to conceal the participants’ identities and ensure confidentiality.
(4. 7) Demographic details

Participant details are shown in Table B1.

Table B1: Contact author for details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>VEILED</th>
<th>SOCIAL CLASS</th>
<th>EMPLOYMENT</th>
<th>MARRIAGE STATUS/TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CHILDREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Table B1: Contact author for details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>VEILED</th>
<th>SOCIAL CLASS</th>
<th>EMPLOYMENT</th>
<th>MARRIAGE STATUS/TYPES</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CHILDREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(4.8) Interview schedule

This section highlights the questions discussed in this study. The interview was open ended and the interview schedule was just a start off point for both groups of women.

*Can you tell me about your marital status now and a bit about your history?*

*Can you describe what factors made you wish to remain single (whether divorced or never married)?*

*If you are divorced, what initiated that divorce?*

*Can you tell me how this feels when you live in Kuwait?*
Can you tell me how you have relationships and why?

How does this fit in with living in Kuwait?

Can you tell me how you chose to dress?

How does this fit in with living in Kuwait?

How do you feel living in Kuwait influences the way you behave?

(4.9) Data analyses

The study used open-ended interviews lasting on average anytime between 50-120 minutes. All the women that took part signed the consent form approving that the interviews were fully “audio taped” by my personal recorder. I then transcribed the interviews in full and back translated where needed. The full transcripts were the basis of the analyses. The interviewing process came to an end approximately after 5 weeks. Saturation became clear after 20 participants (repetitive themes and stories emerging). The interviewing process ended after 22 participants (11 divorced and 11 spinster women).

Thematic analysis was the method used after transcription was complete. Stirling (2001) explained that thematic analysis is a widely used appropriate tool for understudied areas. In addition, the flexibility of this approach (offering theoretical freedom) helps creating rich and detailed data (Boyatziz, 1998). After data collection, transcribing and coding data are essential parts in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This leads to the process of identifying repetitive patterns and themes to the specific research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes and sub-themes are structured in a table revealing the participants’ meaning making and what is going on in the texts (Taylor & Usher, 2001).
A broader focus is now ready for the write up process (Coffy & Attkinson, 1996).

**4.10 Summary of results**

This is a brief overview; which leads to the themes and sub-themes. Women talked about their unmarried status in a changing world in terms of 3 main themes and sub-themes. Social changes have changed perspectives in the restricted Kuwaiti context. The present study aimed to explore how this has an impact on marital and divorce patterns. For example, the results show us that women make sense of their demand to remain single in terms of “marital competing”. Overall, with the massive economic and financial developments in Kuwait, Muslim Kuwaiti women described their demands in becoming more and more independent. This started to challenge their marital positions.

The notions of marital competing will be explained in terms of the independent Muslimah’s identity, marital conflict causing a rise in the Islamic taboo of marital cheating, and polygamy being a serious issue in the context of this changing world. Issues such as women desiring more economic and financial power, and the attractive educational paths were frequently discussed. Women feel that their increased access to opportunities (that were traditionally left to men in the past) threatens their marital positions and is the major cause linked to the demand to remain single (whether divorced or a spinster). Results show that women talk of their new marital expectations in terms of negative feelings towards traditional and arranged marriages, early marriages, or cousin marriages.

Women in some cases went through more than one divorce. Furthermore, data findings indicated that women not only want to gain economic and financial independence, but a feeling of control over their bodies (i.e. sexuality and clothing) is
strongly desired. Women in this study (being aware of the cultural taboos on relationships outside marriage) defended their rights to private relationships and sexual liberation. The participants explained how they managed and coped with cultural rebound effects. This was discussed in terms of social stigmas, family pressures, clothing outside marriage and feeling “visible” yet in a negative light. Women continue to transgress taboo when living in their modernizing, yet traditionally orientated culture. In the following table, the major themes and sub-themes are illustrated.

(4.11) Final table of themes and sub-themes

Table B2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme (1)</th>
<th>Theme (2)</th>
<th>Theme (3)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital competing</td>
<td>New marital expectations</td>
<td>Cultural rebound effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Themes</td>
<td>Sub-Themes</td>
<td>Sub-Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The independent identity</td>
<td>Avoiding traditional and arranged marriages</td>
<td>The socially stigmatized Muslimah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital conflict and cheating</td>
<td>Early marriages</td>
<td>Family pressure and personal freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polygamy in a changing world</td>
<td>Cousin marriages</td>
<td>Clothing outside marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual career building and financial power</td>
<td>More than one divorce cases</td>
<td>Feeling visible in a negative light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive educational paths</td>
<td>Private sexual relationships</td>
<td>Transgressing social norms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(4. 12) Themes and sub-themes

Theme 1: Marital competing

The first theme describes reasons for the increasing rate of unmarried women in Kuwait. The sub-themes highlight factors related to the independent Muslimah’s identity, marital conflict and cheating, polygamy in a changing world, personal financial control, and attractive educational paths. The societal shift with the desire for more freedom and equality to men is evident in many of the shared experiences. In her detailed interview, Kawthar for example explained that she never married and was focusing on her education and career building during her early years. She explained that she was against marriage when she was younger in order to avoid any chances of negative influences in terms of becoming independent. By valuing her choice, managing, and committing to her lifestyle, happiness became evident, she said:

*I feel I have no restrictions from a dominant man, I dress how I like, I travel alone, I return home at night, I go to work ahhh go to my clinic late at night, I am in control of myself, a strong strong woman, very powerful very independent, I feel women like me are the future crisis to Kuwaiti men (laughs) (Kawthar, 46).*

In Kawthar’s sense making, a sense of “comfort” was generated when implying that her “independent identity” inflicts “positive feelings” when she feels in control of her lifestyle. Words used in her speech such as “no restrictions”, “strong”, and “powerful” indicate happiness. Having similar desires, Maha explained that the initial cause of conflict and her request for a divorce were linked to her independent identity. Describing the situation as one that has become “out of control” when her husband panicked about her ongoing career progress, Maha said:
My husband ahhh my ex husband became jealous of my financial success, he even saw me as a competitor and not a wife. He cannot accept a woman with a mind (higher voice), you know the mentality of Middle Eastern men and I tried to give him a chance but it felt like a challenge I cannot face and you know what, when I went for the divorce, unmarried is better in this case. I did not care about society or my image, I cared about the custody of my kids, my three boys, my three amazing boys and their feelings, but my parents aahh my family were very supportive of my wish for that divorce (Maha, 47).

The notion of marital competing is described in terms of the sub-themes when making sense of tension in such context.

**Sub – Themes**

*i) The independent identity*

Marital competing in the context of a changing world created implications for women. For example, Muslim Kuwaiti women today expect a higher level of personal security and independence. Shoug’s initial marriage troubles initiated when she started to become independent after having enough from motherhood (from two marriages). She “fell in love” with the lawyer that divorced her from her first husband and married him (meaning she lost custody of the children with the first husband). Her desire for a career is what struck the second marriage to a divorce. She said:

> After delivering my twins from my second husband and they started going to school, I started having an appetite for an independent career, I wanted more spice in life than just being a mother so I started with my beauty salon with some of my own money that I saved from here and there, and at this point, his new ugly face appeared (Shoug, 33).

Moreover, Maha shared her negative marital experience as she stood for her career:
I did the marketing, I wanted the Western life. I started challenging him so real estate to him was a man’s job so as a woman I disrespect him if I’m there (Maha, 47).

Maha also lost custody of her children (three sons) for initiating the divorce through Khula. In this situation, the invisible identity (invisible for contrasting gender-specified roles) creates a sense of erosion within women's sense of identity. Discussing her bigger opportunities after the divorce showed that Maha was limited in such terms during her marriage (as she deeply discussed in her interview). With similar marriage complications, Wadha (with a pending Khula process) expressed in her interview how she feels her desires for an independent identity created marital tension:

Thirty years in my marriage he never allowed me to have an independent job, it was too scary for him that one day I will not need him or his money so I was silent for the sake of my children, but the war began recently when I fought for my right to be equal to him, to have a life, and to experience a job, so by then I could not resist the divorce (Wadha, 55).

Marital competing and specified gender roles are implied in many of women’s lived experiences. By making sense of their situation, many participants described that “resoluteness” only takes place after the divorce.

ii) Marital conflict and cheating

While some participants felt conflict when adapting to this "new situation" in terms of divorce, many felt relieved from mentally abusive marriages. Some faced a conflicting phase between adaptability and relief. For example, marital competing or marital pressures in many ways created marital conflict with further tension that resulted in marital cheating. One of the participants, Rasha, described her negative experience in “catching” her husband cheating on her twenty-five years after their marriage. She
explained:

*I will tell you two words aahh his shortages and bad habits I stood up with but his cheating and betrayal, no, never, I have self respect (Rasha, 47).*

Rasha faced large emotional conflicts such as depression, anger, and suicide attempts because as she said “*I used to love him deeply*” and then later on she added “*but he let me down after all my respect towards him and it shocked me*”. The "suddenness" of divorce at times has immense psychological impacts in women’s lives. Only two years ago she fully recovered from her depression after taking a long holiday from life as she expressed (migrating to Dubai). At first, it was difficult for Rasha to progress and adapt to such life change due to her emotional and physical attachment to her husband. In her new situation as an unmarried woman, custody of the children was hers (even though she initiated the divorce) because there was prove of improper morals linked with her husband other than marital cheating.

Some of the divorced women felt better after time had passed in terms of their adaptability to the divorce. Others experienced worsened conflict. Time or duration therefore plays a critical role in women’s psychological well-being. Another participant, Jehan, faced huge emotional conflicts as apparent in her long interview. Tension in her marriage started after she delivered their daughter and desperately wanted to return to her chemical engineering career. At that point, marital cheating also intruded her marriage. She described the pain she went through at different stages in her life when her husband started to physically abuse her for demanding a divorce. The court and Sharia law were on her side (again as defined earlier, the Islamic court takes the decision in abusive circumstances).
The divorce took place and her ex husband had a car accident (on that same day) and was deceased. As a result, until today (as apparent throughout her interview) Jehan suffers from psychological complications such as depression and regret (even though she strongly wanted that divorce). Divorced and widowed, she remains unmarried raising her only daughter. She said:

*He did it constantly and randomly, this thing is wrong for either spouse, he should have divorced me before cheating me. But all I will say is Allah Yerhama (may God rest his soul in peace) (sighs) (Jehan, 46).*

It is important to note that polygamous relationships are allowed in Islamic law as illustrated in the next sub-theme, but marital cheating is not tolerated. In contrast, cheating was also evident from the women’s side in situations of marriage being under pressure in a traditional way. Suha for example was pressured to marry her first cousin at the age of 19. She explained that her mother triggered that marriage because her mother has cancer, and her wish was to see her get married. By pressure, Suha accepted that marriage and went off giving consent without feeling any bond to her husband. She admitted that she was in a “secretive relationship” and she “continued seeing her boyfriend” even during her marriage to her cousin.

During her “waiting period” (as previously defined), in which a woman has to wait three menstrual cycles to ensure she is not pregnant (before the divorce), she was found to be pregnant (but had a miscarriage from the “family trauma” as she said) and divorce (Talaq) took place last year. She said:

*I am not lacking morals or meant to break his heart or be the cause for such embarrassment, but they really pressured me, nobody listened but I even tried to be patient (Suha, 22).*
Making sense of the family pressure she had and justifying reasons for her actions, Suha tried to justify her behaviour by continuously repeating and saying “situations made me be like that” and “I do not like to do wrong”. By evaluating herself and her situation, Suha tries to escape the negative societal consequences related to marital cheating in the Islamic context in her definitions of herself as a victim.

Feeling guilty that she caused tension within family ties, especially between her “ill mother” and uncle (since the husband was her first cousin), she is still comforted that the issue was closed up within their household and her social identity is “saved”. She only discussed her negative experiences after strong rapport was built.

**iii) Polygamy in a changing world**

Some women linked marital competing to polygamy in their meaning makings. Shared stories included the "polygamy crisis" in a world that is shifting away from traditions. Wadha earlier described that thirty years during her marriage, her husband frowned upon any act that relates to her desires of an independent self. What triggered her more to stand for that divorce was another correlating factor: polygamy. Polygamy (bringing in the second wife home) to her was “huge disrespect” to the many sacrifices she made in the past. Although her Khula process is still pending in court, Wadha rejects her husband in all ways. She said:

*What pushed me further for that divorce is the second wife he took so ahhh I hate to see his face since then (Wadha, 55).*

Lifting her “tummy” up, Wadha added:

*He never appreciated me for the five children I delivered for him (Wadha, 55).*
On the other hand, Nahed, a foreign media analyst and a feminist is strongly against polygamy. Still unmarried and reached spinsterhood according to the Kuwaiti culture, she explained:

*No way I would go for polygamy or accept to be part of it, when he’s mine, he’s mine* (Nahed, 31).

Similarly, Kawthar, the independent doctor feels that her independent identity is undesired by many Kuwaiti men and she described how the only marriage proposals she gets are polygamous relationships (ever since she built her career as a doctor). Similarly, many women felt that as they occupy an independent identity, they satisfy their desired selves, but become invisible for occupying the “man’s social identity”. As Kawthar said:

*When I was younger my main goal in life was a strong independent career and good foundation of education and as I grew I mainly got proposals from married men, like to be a second wife, but I go like “no ummm justify this for me huh, can you provide an equal life, a fair one between us two women or are you just greedy and have more desires” so this is how I see it and never accepted* (Kawthar, 46).

One participant, Deena, at the age of 28 was on the verge of accepting to be the second wife (after engaging in such secretive relationship). Coming from a high class family and has a stable career as a translator, she explained:

*I mean to be fair, all women involved must be equally happy. I recently broke a proposal off ahhh although I really loved the guy but no no, I suddenly quit the theme because I was wife number two to be and I felt that minimizes my worth and unfair on his kids from wife one* (Deena, 28).

Similarly to Deena’s views, Samar, the dentist (still unmarried at the age of 28) shared her meaning makings and questioned polygamy in the context of this changing world. She mentioned:
In the religion at that time polygamy was allowed if a woman was left like homeless without anybody to support her maybe like women left alone or widowed in Uhud battle (an Islamic battle on March 16, 625 AD), at that time it was ok because at least there will be a man to support this woman, aahh but in the modern age women can support themselves now, we don’t need a man for a living (Samar, 28).

Samar clearly argues that in this modern world, “ways of living” changed, meaning that polygamy made sense in the past. Her comment implies that today, such marital practices should not be within the cultural norms (even if permitted in Islam).

Anwar, the youngest unmarried student in this study, currently a student in the US, described how her family push her to meet men in a traditional way in her visits to Kuwait in order to avoid spinsterhood. Neglecting social norms on traditional marriages or polygamy, Anwar clarified:

*There are strict rules and conditions to have a second third or fourth wife but men here take advantage ignoring the rules (Anwar, 21).*

Worry about doubt and custody of the children continues to be a major factor for many women that initiated their divorces. Nabeela, a very professional lawyer, described how she started to “plan” the divorce:

*He then started threatening me of bringing a second wife home so I started to draw plans in my head for a divorce, my kids aahh custody and those things you know (Nabeela, 50).*

Additionally, not only children’s custody was a major issue to the respondents (in cases of polygamy). Wealth division; was discussed by women with second wives involved in their marriages. The women argued that the family wealth could be divided in
an “unfair” way towards them and their children. For example, Maha in her concerns about fairness when describing the “marital time span” said:

\[
\text{It is not fair even on my three sons, I married him all this time and this second wife who only now married him brings a boy that gets the same division of his property as my boys (Maha, 47).}
\]

In contrast, Nabeela (with one son and four daughters) was concerned about the possibility of the second wife having more sons than her. Kuwait is male dominated, hence, boys (sons) continue to be favoured as oppose to girls (daughters). According to the Quran, the wealth of a father is divided amongst his children (with the sons receiving a higher portion of that division because in Islam men are seen as the providers to women). At a certain point in life, fathers usually start dividing the wealth. Nabeela (the well recognized lawyer) said:

\[
\text{I want nothing to do with his wealth, but my boy, my one son, must and will (higher tone) have priority over whatever thing this other wife delivers (Nabeela, 50).}
\]

\textit{iv) Individual career building and financial control}

Women explained how much they demand a personal ongoing career whether it only includes a private salon or seeking higher education. Again, the notion of marital competing and the socially constructed gender roles continue to create tension and conflict. Existing in the economic force was important to many participants, even though such existence can create conflict in terms of cost-benefit analysis. Weighing out between the Kuwaiti traditional sentiments of marriage and an independent identity continues to be a challenge. Shoug for example described how her husband was giving her a “choice” between him and her career. Many women similarly felt that their husbands were intruding their personal space in terms of satisfying their desired identity. Being too
defensive from his strong words and the overall situation, Shoug finally took the decision:

*He cornered me and was like aahhh "look it's either me or that stupid salon business of yours". I woke up the next morning asking for that divorce and that’s my second divorce by the way. He wanted me home 24/7 so I was like “hell with this”* (Shoug, 33).

Many women felt that their economic and independent identity was heightened after their divorce. Facing similar conflicts, Maha said:

*He did not like it that I loved my career, to him it was like a question of who has a stronger career* (Maha, 47).

Another participant, Safa (the unmarried teaching assistant), self-investigating her marriage proposal, said:

*Many hints in that proposal meant that he will not allow me in the workplace anymore* (Safa, 39).

v) Attractive educational paths

Studying abroad for higher educational paths is attractive for many Kuwaiti Muslim women today and getting married could be a huge barrier to such motivations. Anwar is still a young woman but at the age of 21, single women still feel pressured to escape the social stigma and negativity from spinsterhood later. Anwar defended her situation by saying:

*I feel I am still young so no I do not consider accepting marriage now I need to build a strong career first ahhh so currently I study so I do not want to enter jail ahhh (laughs). I feel a husband might ruin my educational journey that I really enjoy like being in the States very often. So ahhh I might have babies then quit, so first comes first, I feel women today need education as much as men do* (Anwar, 21).
Defining marriage as “jail”, it was evident that young Anwar fears the risks arising from marriage. Having strong aspirations for her career, she implied that she hopes to complete her studies prior to marriage. Furthermore, the well-recognized Kuwaiti feminist, Sawsan (never married), moved abroad for a lengthy period of time to complete her PhD. Again, linking back to the issue of “marital competing”, she said:

The one benefit of marriage here is a free house from the government (laughs) but I chose moving abroad for a PhD as oppose to marriage in which then upon returning I looked less attracting for men because my higher degree comes to look like a competition of who’s better (Sawsan, 43).

Nahed, on the other hand, explained and enlightened many issues related to the correlation between social changes and women today. She said:

N: Women today are more aware.
G: Can you define that awareness furthermore like describe what you mean?
N: They are starting to make better choices and know their priorities so see ahhh our brains were watched to behave and think in a certain way when we were younger that women us women have a main role in life and that is to marry, to have kids at a certain age, but now we can see that we were in the past brain washed just to certain roles but there is more to a woman. We can learn, study, move abroad, gain a career ahhh there are other things you know (Nahed, 31).

This theme showed us that the notion of “marital competing” exists in many ways. These women were not prepared to “give up” their desires of independency in order to “fit in” with marital expectations in their restricted context (when weighing out their costs and benefits). Furthermore, the following theme elaborates on new marital expectations in the context of a continuously changing world.
Theme 2: New marital expectations

New marital expectations are explored in the sub-themes in terms of traditional, early, or cousin marriages, and it elaborates further on more than one divorce cases and relationships outside marriage (before or after). Many Muslim women get into marriages for cultural reasons or even traditional arranged purposes. Nowadays, most Muslim women enter in a marriage union without comprehending its rightful purpose. With that, divorce rates amongst Muslims have risen dramatically (as evident further in the literature) although the Quran teaches against divorce. According to Prophet Mohammad:

“The most hateful Halal (permissible thing) in the sight of Allah is divorce”.

Halal defines permissible which in terms of divorce is a “hateful permissible” action. Making sense of her situation, Fadia, a young teacher, initiated a divorce a few days before the wedding night. The wedding is only a celebration after the contract is signed; hence, “breaking up” days before the wedding meant that Fadia actually went through the full divorce course of action. Pressured to get married, in a traditional way in order to escape her nearing risk of spinsterhood, she said:

My marriage lasted only a number of days. I could not stand someone telling me wear this or put that or even worst of all, interfering in my private social life. So the thanks (sarcastic tone) goes to my dad for pressuring me in such marriage in order not to spinster but all he did was change my title from a spinster woman to a divorced one (Fadia, 27).

In contrast, Deena made sense of her views in terms of traditional marriages:

Today you really must know the man and feel for him before marriage so you can understand each other better (Deena, 28).
The following sub-themes provide a variety of reasons causing this rise. New marital expectations and preferences are highlighted.

**Sub – Themes**

*i) Avoiding traditional arranged marriages*

Defining this type of marriage, this usually happens in an arranged way through the family. For example, women seen in “women only parties” such as weddings could be targets. A number of participants fell into this category and discussed how they were pressured in a traditional setting that in many cases escalated to marriage. Sabika, a full-time bank manager shared her engagement experience. She explained how it was hard for her to communicate with her potential husband:

*I was engaged for a few months, it was like arranged you could say but he was too demanding, too controlling, even on the simplest decisions we were taking together to plan ahead so I broke it off (Sabeeka, 38).*

Illustrating family pressures, Rayan also was pressured to meet a potential husband in a traditional setting due to her family’s concern of watching her spinster soon. She felt that her relationships with her family had become very tense due to her thoughts in terms of marriage. Discussing family tension, she said:

*I broke down, I went crazy on everyone at home, I said “no, enough of such pressures” and we broke up after that proposal (Rayan, 25).*

In contrast, Najla was recently divorced from a traditionally arranged marriage. Searching for deeper meaning makings when making sense of traditional settings today, she said:

*The question is not how or why we got divorced, but how or why we got married (Najla, 33).*
Women explained that they understand the traditional context they “belong in” but still call for a marriage coming from their choice and their feelings of readiness. Many women described how the traditional marriage was the core reason for their divorce and “original consent” to marriage was a result of family pressure so that they are rescued from a chance of spinsterhood.

**ii) Early marriages**

Although early marriages are less apparent in Kuwait (as described later in the literature), yet some families still practice such marital preferences. Suha explained further what emotions she had during her early divorce from her early marriage (when she turned 19) to her cousin. As expressed:

_I did struggle ahh I got married at an early age with a painful miscarriage but I tried as much to see things in a positive way ahh and for the future I promised myself, I will chose marriage, I will not let marriage chose me (Suha, 22)._ 

Similarly, Shoug explains her feelings upon embarking in an early marriage (during her first marriage). She said:

_See with my first husband I married him early at the age of 17 right after high school. He was actually my dentist (laughs) and I had two babies with him, but then he went abroad for higher education and he left me here in Kuwait. He lacked taking proper responsibility of me and when he returned, I noticed that I cannot live with him anymore, like we think along different lines (Shoug, 33)._ 

**iii) Cousin marriages**

Cousin marriages still exist and are disliked by many women in today’s modern world. Owing to Prophet Mohammad’s actions, cousin marriages are allowed and encouraged. The Quran and the Sunna neither forbid nor discourage it. Therefore, cousin
marriages in Kuwait as well as other Gulf countries still largely exist. The Quran provides specific rules pertaining incest that proscribe men from marrying and having sexual intercourse with their mother, step-mother, mother-in-law, aunt, sister, half-sister, sister through breastfeeding, niece, daughter, or step-daughter. It does not mention cousins.

Today, family ties are lost as a result of “cousin divorces”. Madeeha married her first cousin at the age of twenty and suffered from numerous miscarriages. She explained that medical tests proved that the miscarriages were linked to genetic issues due to her close “blood relation” to her cousin (and that she can manage a healthy pregnancy with another distant man). By refusing birth control and giving Madeeha emotional tension (being a barrier to her fertility choices) in telling her “birth control usage is a huge Haram”, she had a strong reason to initiate the divorce. Madeeha explained that she feels happier after the divorce and so far neglects any social and family pressures in having her re-marry. She explained:

\[\text{With my ex, he was actually my first cousin and it was totally family arranged and I had 8 miscarriages with him. I never loved him, he was always rude and demanding and I initiated the divorce last year because he is refusing birth control and my doctor said my womb is worn out so aahh currently I am happy being single even if people say “ohh come on at 29 you are about to miss that train” (Madeeha, 29).}\]

In contrast, Samar described her feelings about cousin marriage. Even though it is a Kuwaiti cultural norm (meaning that such behaviour is normalized by many), she said:

\[\text{I did not accept it because come on there are millions of other men. I would feel disgusted sleeping with my cousin (Samar, 28).}\]

In Suha’s case, reflecting to the loss of family ties due to cousin divorce, she said:
I know my mother does not contact her brother anymore because of me (Suha, 22).

iv) More than one divorce cases

In some situations, it gets more complicated that women had more than just one divorce cases. Hanan for example battled with two divorce cases. As described:

I had many proposals after my divorce but none of those men wanted my daughter and I love my baby more than anything so I refused to re-marry until then I met this American soldier in Kuwait and he loved my daughter as much as loving me (Hanan, 49).

Shoug on the other hand made sense of marital competing (as described earlier) as the cause to her second divorce when she became motivated to start her career project:

After my divorce, I felt I was struggling and cannot depend on myself as I told you I stopped studying after high school so I thought the second plan is to marry again but be sure about it this time because even by being young and divorced, I faced some social pressures constantly so aahh I then got married to the lawyer that helped me get divorced from my ex husband (laughs slightly) and had twin boys with him until trauma started again when he made me chose between him and my beauty salon business (Shoug, 33).

Linking the previous sub-theme on cheating to this, Maha re-married after divorcing her first husband. She got divorced for the second time:

My second husband then cheated on me with my friend and she was married and cheating her husband too, so that was too much for me to accept (Maha, 47).

v) Private sexual relationships

Intimacy and sexual relations outside marriage exist in Kuwait today although such practices are hidden from the public view. Going back to Suha (who was pressured to marry her cousin and ended that marriage), she said:
When you love a person you can handle him in a better way and even if it’s hard to meet men in our country and people are very ahh talkative of reputation, I will still do what suits me because marriage is a commitment and I won’t fall in that old trap again (Suha, 22).

Similarly, Badriya is in a secretive relationship but with a non-Kuwaiti man. This creates social and family conflicts. Badriya said:

*I told my father I intend to walk full time in the path of spinsterhood if he shall not agree that I marry the man I want now ahhh my Turkish boyfriend and I continue to see him in private for eight years now (Badriya, 27).*

In many situations when it comes to spinsterhood, some women never married because their families stood in their way and interfered in their private relationships. Looking at the cultural norms when it comes to marriage in Kuwaiti context, marrying from the neighbouring Gulf countries (for example Dubai or Qatar) is accepted by many. In contrast, the Turkish context is very dissimilar in nature so for such culturally defined rigid rules, Badriya’s relationship is difficult to progress. Today, with the social changes and influences, Kuwaiti women marrying non-Khaleeji men (outside the Gulf) has started to be accepted by some families, yet not all.

Furthermore, Hanan from the high class, shared her experience of re-marrying to an American man 17 years ago (after engaging in a private relationship), which was something too “daring” at that time to marital traditions in a context like Kuwait. She said:

*I was honest with my mother although she is uneducated and not so open minded. I told her how Americans are nice (laughs) because they helped us in the invasion of 1990 from Iraq and my mum was very understanding and said “your guest is my guest, bring him over, I shall not step in your way”, so she accepted my marriage and even though we are divorced now, we are still friends*
and my daughter, the one from him, she is 13 now, aahh visits him in the States regularly as he left Kuwait (Hanan, 49).

Sexuality is a taboo in Kuwait and barely discussed. In a Muslim country like Kuwait, virginity is “a must” to be saved for marriage. This means that a spinster women is automatically linked to virginity (as culturally expected). Desiring a sexual life outside marriage is becoming more apparent in Kuwaiti women’s sense making. For example, Badriya (not getting family approval to marry her non-Kuwaiti partner) said:

I started to engage with him sexually ahhh couldn’t say I don’t (Badriya, 27).

Defending her sexual freedom and contradicting societal norms, Sohayla explained:

I do not need to be married to be sexually active, no not today (Sohayla, 22).

Her comment clearly implies upon the social changes today and expectations in terms of old ideologies losing shape.

By evaluating the situation in terms of sexuality and romantic relationships, Maha explained:

I think we are not aware or educated about sex, some women do not even know how to enjoy or nourish themselves and use sex as a tool or giving it to man as a favour (Maha, 47).

Experiencing sexual freedom is a fundamental right for every woman. Reported experiences by women in this study indicated that they have a greater say in sexual matters, provided they are economically independent. As discussed in this theme, women have new perspectives, which include “new marital expectations”. Today, women feel against much of the long held marital traditions and adapted to new lifestyles in defense
of their desired selves. With that, the notion of cultural rebound effects shapes an effect in various ways as shared in the following final theme.

**Theme 3: Cultural rebound effects**

Cultural rebound effects; in this theme refers to barriers stemmed from the culture (including societal expectations) and imposed on in-group individuals in terms of behaviour and lifestyle. The sub-themes make sense of the socially stigmatized Muslimah, family pressures and personal freedom, clothing outside marriage, feeling visible under a negative light, and Kuwaiti women transgressing cultural taboos. Unmarried Kuwaiti women are facing cultural complexity. Participants explained the challenges when trying to create a balance between cultural expectations alongside their unmarried status. Divorced and spinster women both discussed their meaning makings within such balance. Anwar for example said:

A: *Disregarding cultural pressures I will not get married before I find myself.*
G: *What do you mean by finding yourself?*
A: *I mean finishing my degree abroad, then maybe start with architecture or art even you know do something interesting, discover new things, because I like massive communications so maybe even work for a year to find myself in the professional life after continuing my studies ahhh be involved in sports in Kuwait the times I’m visiting here, see my opportunities you know so marriage has to wait longer (Anwar, 21).*

On the other hand, Rasha suggested that women in Kuwait do not intend to break the cultural values and norms. In her speech, she said:

*We as in we Kuwaiti women just want more freedom, nothing more, we do not want to cross red lines of our cultural standards but because men are too controlling here, women are preferring to be divorced and the younger ones are running away from marriage like aahh*
Today Kuwaiti women are stronger and traditions cannot stand in our way (Rasha, 47).

Culture rebound effects are described further in terms of the following sub-themes.

**Sub – Themes**

i) *The socially stigmatized Muslimah*

Social stigmas include how women feel society is viewing them for remaining divorced or spinsters at a certain age. Some women found difficulty in terms of adapting to the "divorced identity" label. With that, making sense of their interactions within the social sphere was a central issue that caused anxiety in different ways when feeling socially stigmatized. This indirectly affects women's psychological well-being. For example, Rayan described her inner feelings of distress. By making sense of societal pressures with her desires today, said:

*Why is it scary here if a woman will near her thirties and is still single, like I will be 26 in a couple of weeks and keep getting pressures on this issue but I still want to get a job first, travel around, and enjoy being free, I am not a loser for being still unmarried (Rayan, 25).*

More indirect negativity from the social environment is brought up to the single Kuwaiti women:

*Society judges me for still being unmarried at this age so I express to them that ok where is that perfect man, bring him over or else no sorry I shall let no man get in my life and ruin it, so the strong unmarried woman ignores what society gives her of feelings with respect to her marital status because whoever talks is actually jealous of her (Sabeeka, 38).*

In contrast, Najla explained the “indirect negativity” she feels in the workplace for being a divorced woman. Knowing that there is no escape from social stigmatization created psychological tension:
Indirectly I know they fear me because I am single and might steal their husbands so unfortunately it is frustrating even on simple things like applying for a new job they go like “ohhhhhhhh divorced” (Najla, 33).

Similarly, Fadia feels distressed in her definitions of the negative connotations linked to her divorced status (people constantly feeling “sorry” for her). Complaining about the social aspects, she said:

*I got to a point that I do not care as long as I am happy with myself, I achieved what I desire and do not care when like people here say “ohh may God help you” and sound sympathetic (Fadia, 27).

Jehan (divorced and widowed) remained single; neglecting any sort of relationships with men, and for years was medically treated for depression. Again, Jehan here explains how as a single woman, “social freedom” is an issue. The overall mood of many participants is deliberately linked to social discourse, and the need to "be accepted" even when going against the society's meanings of marriage. She said:

*As a divorced woman I still go out and drive, the way people here look at me isn’t so beautiful (Jehan, 46).

Whilst women feel that the society does not seem to stigmatize unmarried men, women are likely to experience the impacts of the spinster or divorce stigmatization. Single Muslim women face social and emotional conflicts. The social stigma still exists even though the rate of single Muslim women is largely increasing. Women feel that their marital status increases their “visibility” and “invisibility” in a big measure. In other words, single Muslim women face social pressures to conform to the traditional life and cultural norms in terms of marriage.

ii) Family pressure and personal freedom

The family group creates tension and conflict in many different ways. The sense of
being judged by the family group was common by all women. For example, Safa said:

_Sometimes my extended family here look at me like in a way indicating ahhh that it’s about time to agree on something because I am a spinster and it gets too frustrating_ (Safa, 39).

With similar pressure, Rayan planning to settle in her job plans added:

_My family keep on telling me “come on Rayan your age your age” but no I will not get married yet because marriage might interfere with my future job plans that I am in the process off applying now_ (Rayan, 25).

In contrast, Madeeha feels she is “the target of commenting” at home for being divorced (even though her eight miscarriages with her cousin were a good reason for so). She described her feelings in terms of always being vulnerable at home:

_I feel really very bothered when my aunts say “it’s about time to try again” or “someone asked about you for marriage” or call me if I’m late home because I’m divorced and walking around_ (Madeeha, 29).

Tension from the family group continues to be similar by all participants. Another example:

_My family would want me to marry anything, even if a shadow of a man (laughs) (Nahed, 31)._ 

**iii) Clothing outside marriage**

Many women explained how in some cases, their marriages constrained that personal choice. Women’s clothing in an Islamic context is still an important asset and in order to maintain the proper image of a Muslimah (Muslim woman), clothing must be of a decent and a modest standard. Kawthar, the doctor, for example illustrated the importance of clothing choices depending on the location and situation:
I could be professional looking in my job and in my social life wear a short skirt with full make-up (Kawthar, 46).

Linking back to the previous sub-theme on marital cheating, Najla described how she feels more freedom in her single divorced status when it comes to her clothing:

He literally cheated on me with my divorced neighbour, my best friend, and now after marrying her he lives meters away from me raising the daughter of this woman rather than ours. The divorce never shredded me as it does to many women. It’s better now, I actually live life all fun fun fun, I enjoy it, going out, dressing sexily without his rules, and life is amazing. And talking about morals, at least I appear modern but I’m not a cheater (Najla, 33).

Furthermore, Anwar described how she creates a balance between her modern desires of clothing alongside the Kuwaiti cultural context and her understandings that she must still maintain an ideal social identity as a Kuwaiti woman. Reflecting back to the notion of balance, Anwar said:

See I balance the two like I still wear modern clothing and show my arms and legs but sometimes I have to respect and put consideration to society like I do not laugh in a loud voice publicly (Anwar, 21).

Nahed also adapts to a “balance” when defining her clothing. Making sense of extrinsic influences, she said:

Generally speaking, my behaviour is a bit influenced by society, society matters to women here no matter what, you can say sometimes you have to give up minor things like add more clothing on arms and thighs, yet still I am not saying I will ever veil but like look modern and respectable at the same time (Nahed, 31).

In Safa’s case, dictating her clothing style meant that it was difficult for her to adapt to such notion of gender control in her life:
I broke off the proposal because of clothes. My clothes were the issue. He did not want me to wear trousers or jeans and I’m like ok I have self worth and self-respect, you cannot just come in and change my style and other life patterns (Safa, 39).

Similarly, linking “positive” connotations to her choices in terms of clothing and spinsterhood, Samar said:

Unmarried, unveiled, and never unhappy if my ears block out external pressures (Samar, 28).

iv) Feeling visible in a negative light

Unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women continue to feel visible, yet in a negative way.

Sawsan, who recently completed her doctoral degree in the UK, said:

Before in the 1980s when you have one family divorced with a divorced woman, they consider it a major crisis but now each family in Kuwait must have a divorced lady so now society is accepting it, but generally the social environment sees that a single or divorced woman is like a Maskeena (poor thing), so I think we need to have more of an open mind and see that a woman has a choice with respect to her personal marital status and there is no shame in that whatsoever, wherever she stands (Sawsan, 43).

Holding on to similar perspectives, Safa said:

In this culture if you are not married at a certain age people see you thinking something is wrong but being unmarried means achieving more of your big dreams (Safa, 39).

Wadha described the cultural pressures she is facing in feeling very visible:

I remember when I first initiated the divorce; I was depressed. I stayed a week with my mother may God bless her, but then I stood up to the blabber said behind my back and started telling ones that question me “it’s none of your business, I never asked you to lend me your husbands” (Wadha, 55).
Rayan, on the other hand (who newly completed her Masters and is currently unemployed) discussed how she’s holding on to the idea of marriage because many shared stories within her social environment pushed her away. Weighing out the costs and benefits in terms of marriage (by examining the negative marital side), she said:

*I actually was open to the idea of marriage now but after seeing and hearing ridiculous stories, it put me off like I totally changed my mind* (Rayan, 25).

In addition, in a context where childbirth outside a marriage contract is considered a social crime (noting that children are a valued asset in Kuwait), spinsters shared their feelings on motherhood. Whilst divorced women continuously worry about their children’s custody (as defined earlier), spinster women at times projected feelings of “missing out” on such experience (with such senses being the only difference between both groups of women). For example, Kawthar, thinking she won’t consider marriage and childbirth today, said:

*My nephew is my baby, I have been raising him since he was born but ahhh I know at the end of the day he’s not belonging to me* (Kawthar, 46).

In contrast, Samar desperately stresses on her desires to become a mother. Linking back to the sub-theme on cousin marriages, she said:

*I feel the need to start mothering, to experience motherhood, watch my children grow beside me, but my parents are restricting my choices and insisting that I marry my cousin so I’m holding back* (Samar, 28).

v) Transgressing social norms

Women continue to demand more equal rights with men. Again for such reasons related to women’s rights, women chose to wait on or re-consider marriage. Anwar interestingly defended Kuwaiti women’s roles today. Sharing her beliefs, she said:
He has to be fair, I believe in equality, marriage is like teamwork, we work together in everything, as in jobs, incomes, and raising kids (Anwar, 21).

Madeeha here explains how she feels there is no equality between men and women when it comes to initiating a divorce. She argued:

*I feel there is no equality in the treating of men and women when it comes to divorce, you will feel pressured and questioned constantly as to why you are single, or why you are divorced, but you can still live your life even without a man by your side* (Madeeha, 29).

In her concerns of the social stigma created by the society, Shoug first tries hard to hold on to her marriage and maintain the family image (before getting divorced for a second time). She said:

*Although I tried to cope, it got out of hand. With my second husband I married him at like 27 and you know the Arab mentality thinking like he can impose masculinity over me just because I had a divorce before marrying him so he kept making me feel weak and dependent of him and had harsh rules, he literally erased my personality, but I tried to cope because I was worrying about the social talk about me and people might say “ohh how many divorces is she up to”* (Shoug, 33).

Kuwaiti women continued defending their rights in terms of transgressing social norms. Nahed, protecting her feminism, explained:

*A single Kuwaiti woman is strong even if society gives the impression that it’s a pity she remained single but still see am not saying I confirm to remain unmarried forever, so I will give it a shot, but he has to be a man I choose, a man I love, a man that will not change me, a man full of respect to women and our rights, so see I define myself as a feminist even if I live in a male dominated culture, I can always swim against the waves* (Nahed, 31).
On the other hand, Fadia elaborated more on what triggered her divorce after a number of days in her marriage (her desires of self-control). She added:

“He was saying, ‘you will never travel alone not for any purpose’ I was like thinking ‘okay whatever we won’t last then’” (Fadia, 27).

When desiring self-control, both groups of women (divorced and spinsters) discussed similar patterns when making meaning of their unmarried status (in terms of a cost-benefit analysis). Sawsan, the never married university lecturer, said:

Specifically I speak for women and women’s rights in addition to my full time lecturing as a Doctor in economics. I also am part of a feminist community here in Kuwait ahhh the (said community’s name) defending rights of divorced mothers and custody of their children (Sawsan, 43).

And finally, Nabeela the lawyer said:

We are seeing even greater advancements today for the voice of a Kuwaiti women ahhh in comparison to the past 15 years. I know that not just because I am a female lawyer, but as a feminist activating larger equal rights because society at this stage still favours men over women although we cannot deny that the situation is improving (Nabeela, 50).

By demanding to remain unmarried in a society that stigmatizes single women and values marriage, women illustrated how they make sense of “cultural rebound effects”. Weighing out their visible and invisible selves at different heights (driven through their senses of a cost-benefit analysis) made those women go against long held traditions in order to feel a sense of resolution. The following section is a discussion of this study and how it contributes to the existing literature.
(4. 13) Discussion

This study focused on the lived experiences of divorced and spinster Muslim Kuwaiti women. Data findings showed three main themes that emerged on both social and personal levels. Marital competing was one of the most common issues discussed by all women. Economic and social changes in Kuwait created different views on marriage. This was described in terms of the independent Muslimah’s identity. Due to such marital tension (women desiring a liberated self) in terms of new gender roles, the notions of marital conflict and cheating were described and linked to the rejection of polygamy in a changing world. Women still placed more value on individual career building and financial power along with attractive educational paths, rather than continue to abide by traditional marital structures.

With that, new marital expectations were continuously raised. New marital expectations were described in terms of avoiding traditional and arranged marriages, early marriages, and cousin marriages. Transitions of change in Kuwait led to dramatic progress when making sense of traditional expectations. Women demanding modern (equally contributing) marriages meant that more than one divorce cases were reported. Furthermore, private sexual relationships were a causal explanation for either terminating or rejecting a marriage.

Finally, it appeared that the increasing rate of divorce has a correlating relationship with the growing number of spinsters and both groups of women expressed cultural rebound effects. Being unmarried; in culture that values marriage; made women feel visible and discouraged by society. This was discussed in women’s definitions of the socially stigmatized Muslimah, family pressure and personal freedom, clothing outside
marriage, and feeling visible in a negative light. Women were still unwilling to give up their desired identities in order to fit in with marital expectations and traditions. Transgressing social norms became more apparent in the context of this changing world and the gradually changing Kuwaiti culture.

(4. 14) Linking it to the literature

This study is unique in its context in terms of examining the personal lived experiences of unmarried Muslim women. For example, in this study, unmarried women made sense of social stigmas and similarly, AlMunajjed (2010) examined how divorced women in the Gulf, in particular, face social and economic discrimination. Rising divorce rates in the Gulf are caused by a series of fast-paced economic, social, and cultural factors that have shaped an effect on the institution of marriage (Thomas, 2013).

Social changes today are delivering the call for more modern welfare states (AlSaddani, 2006). The six countries in the Gulf are Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman (AlMunajjed, 2010). The rising rate of divorce in the Gulf region was almost non-existent in such cultures until post the discovery of oil (Saleh, 2014). For example, AlAwadhi (2007) found that divorce rates went up to 46% in United Arab Emirates in 2007. In the Emirates, most marriages are still traditional and in 2011 half of the divorces were arranged and 70% lived with the extended family (Ismail, 2011). Spinsterhood rates continue to rise as Emirati men choose to marry foreign women with the hope to avoid the excessive demands of the Emirati women (Thomas, 2013).

Other neighbouring Gulf countries to Kuwait have also seen a large jump in the increase of divorced rates as well as spinster women (Sidya, 2010). The lowest rates
include Bahrain accounting for 24% and Oman being the lowest in the Gulf with respect to divorce holds up to 12% (noting that Bahrain and Oman have the least income per capita in the Gulf) (Times Of Oman, 2013). This makes women more dependent of their husbands. Another example of high divorced rates would be in Saudi Arabia. In 2001, Saudi Arabia had the lowest divorce rates in the Gulf at 20%, being the most religious nation in the Gulf that values marriage surprisingly today has the highest divorce rate amongst the Gulf Cooperation Council (Kawach, 2012). Abdul and Sibai (2006) carried out a research on divorced Saudi women and their goal was to reveal social factors such as lack of awareness on spouse, parental interference, issues of social class, and dissimilar education levels. In addition, an average of 1.5 million of Saudi women are spinsters (Thomas, 2013).

Furthermore, AlGharibeh and Bromfield (2010) described how poor understanding of the other gender is due to strict gender segregation in the Arab world. It is therefore best to allow couples a sufficient period of engagement time to understand how well their mentalities match. Linking back to the second theme in this study, many marital conflicts were initially due to a traditional history. In addition, cousin marriages as described by Reily (2013) could be the cause of conflict within family ties. This was apparent in this study. This study also indicated that in some cases, a woman’s pregnancy is affected if married to a first cousin (with increased chances of disease inheritance). Surprisingly, the women in this study that went through miscarriages (with blood ties being the immediate medical cause as described) not only were married to their cousins, but their parents were also cousins. Family ties were immensely lost between kin members after divorce.

In addition, data findings in this study indicate that women feel marital competing
(economically and financially) was a causal explanation to their marital conflicts. Women today are crowding out traditional discourses that value marriage over possessions. AlMunajjed (2010) suggested that as women gain more economic independence in the Islamic Gulf, divorce continues to increase. This is apparent in this study when women described the notions of marital competing. In her article “Women’s socio-economic characteristics and marital patterns in a Rapidly Developing Muslim Society, Kuwait,” M. Shah explained that the two contributing factors of women’s education and work participation are the two real causes of a change in women’s behaviour and new appetites which reflects on marital decisions.

Since the year 2007, research data indicates that there is a strong relationship between women gaining education and divorce rates (with no similar effects on the husbands’ educational position). Divorce rates in the Gulf only average 1% if the wife holds primary education, 10% if the wife has intermediate education, to 18% if the wife has secondary education, 23% if the wife has post-secondary certificate, and dramatically increases to 48% if she holds a university degree (being equally competitive to her husband in many average situations). Such rates continue to increase today as women continue to gain access to proper education (AlMunajjed, 2010).

Not only education or economic and financial advancements have created a difference in the Islamic Kuwait, religion and sexual freedom, are also largely affected. This creates a new contribution furthermore that differs from recent academic research carried in the Gulf. In a segregated restricted context, communicating with the opposite sex is expected to be absent (unless made between Mahram kin members) which makes it
difficult to understand and communicate with each other in the lightly taken marital transitions (Rashad, 2015).

In terms of spinsterhood, as reported by Rashad, (2015) many Arab women do go under the marital pressure to avoid the stigma behind being spinsters. For example, in May 2008, Yomna Mokhtar, a young Arab woman was forced to get married to get rid of a possibility to spinster in a few years. Yomna established the facebook group “spinsters for change” to call for the rights of women who chose to remain unmarried. This links to women’s lived experiences in this study as younger women feel targets of the negative connotations related to spinsters, which made some (in this study) go under the pressure of a forced traditional marriage proposal. Interestingly, due to the social transitions in the Kuwaiti context, today the average age of marriage for women is between 28-31 in comparison to 15-19 in the past (Rashad, 2015). Therefore, women pushing marriage to a later age creates further challenges to the traditional norms and structure of the Kuwaiti society.

Women in this study made sense of their marital preferences in terms of new marital expectations when going against arranged marriages, cousin marriages, or early marriages. This reflects on current research conducted in the Gulf such as AlMunjajjed (2010) in her explanations of modernization as a challenging process to the traditional norms in countries in the Gulf such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates. For example, in the past, couples used to live with the in-laws, yet today, women are rejecting such out-dated traditional family structures (AlMunjajjed, 2010).

In this technologically globalized world, feelings about traditional clothing have also changed. Findings in this study helped us see new positions and new identities of Muslim
Kuwaiti women today. For example, one woman was particularly upset because the man that proposed to marry her dictated her clothing style, not permitting her to wear “jeans”. A Kuwaiti woman no longer desires that her identity is adjacent to that of her husband (as it used to strictly be in the past). Many explained that “control” on their desired identities triggered their divorce or their decision to avoid a “demanding” marriage.

Furthermore, as raised in this study, polygamy today creates huge marital conflicts and Kuwaiti women feel strongly against such traditional practice. According to the Quran, a Muslim man is permitted to marry up to four women:

Marry those that please you of woman, two or three of four. But if you fear lest you may not be perfectly equitable in treating more than one wife, then you shall be content with one.

It then at the same time indicates that the fairness of polygamy is impossible making it difficult to distinguish how acceptable such practice is:

You cannot be equitable in polygamous relationships, no matter how hard you try (Surah Alnisa, 4, 3).

In comparison to the past, Muslim Kuwaiti women today cannot accept living under the emotional distress of polygamy (i.e. husband introduces a second wife). As reported in The national (2010), Albawaba (2014), and other recent journals, going strongly against polygamy, a social crime (the burning of a wedding tent) was committed by a young Muslim Kuwaiti women after learning that her husband took a second wife (being the only woman in Kuwait to commit a crime and the immediate cause was polygamy). Reflecting back to women in this study, polygamy continues to be a serious marital problem in today’s changing world.

Although in the past Muslim Kuwaiti women accepted the emotional conflicts of
polygamy, today they are going against such Islamic traditional norm. Again, looking back at the changing world, Muslim Kuwaiti women today are more educated, economically independent, and financially stable which means a divorce will not threaten their lifestyle. Yet still, women explained that their worry within a divorce is the children’s custody. This links back to the Sharia law ruling and custody belongs to the father if the wife was demanding the divorce. Many participants explained how they had to make a choice between value (their children) and self-respect (living with the tension of a crowded polygamous marriage).

Finally, whilst societies in the West experienced change early in the twentieth century (Goode, 1963), Eastern countries underwent change much later within approximately the last four decades (Quah, 2003). In the Arab region, independence was gained in the 1950s or 1960s and societies since then continue to emerge economically, politically, and socially (Kazi, 2008). Such gradual change (increasing in large as Kuwait becomes more and more modernized) has large implications specifically on women. Despite the fact that all six GCC countries have applied the United Nations Convention on the Elimination off All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (EDAW), women still feel serious inequality in divorce-related laws (AlMunajjed, 2010).

(4. 15) Implications for theory

Linking Muslim women, divorce and spinsterhood, and the Eastern context to the social exchange theory helps in understanding changing perspectives in an Islamic society. Today, women are opposing the traditions in their society and even if aware that they are prone to face social stigmatization. Notions of self and identity in terms of Muslim women demanding to remain unmarried could be understood theoretically in
terms of desiring the undesirable social self. Model B illustrates the theoretical connections.

**Making sense of Model B**

When weighing between “marital competing” and the “independent identity”, divorced and spinster women are prone to face social stigmatization in terms of the structured cultural rebound effects. This shows us that the socially constructed gender-specified roles create contrasting notions of self because of women’s “many meanings” of desirability. Therefore, desired and undesired selves are correlated in women’s feelings of visibility (in a negative way) and invisibility (repressed for maintaining new social roles and identities).

As a result, unmarried Muslim women in this study could not escape social stigmas due to the connected (contrasting) selves when making sense of a cost-benefit analysis. Today, with the gradual transition of change in Kuwait, women are more educated, economically involved, and financially stable, and in return demanding to remain unmarried causes no distress in relation to such factors. Transcending this, this could be understood in terms of women’s feelings of visibility and invisibility when making sense of their correlated and contrasting selves.
(4. 16) Model B: Desiring “the undesirable” social self
**Social exchange theory**

Social exchange theory suggests that all individual choices are the result of a cost-benefit analysis (Corpanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to the theory, three factors affect relationships namely: cost-benefit analysis, comparison, and the availability of alternatives. This study contributes to and extends the social exchange theory by examining costs and benefits when remaining unmarried in an Islamic patriarchal culture. Women talked about their lived experiences by making sense of marital competing, new marital expectations, and cultural rebound effects. To avoid certain social stigmas, women feel that they are expected to conform to the existing societal rigid expectations.

During the initial phases of conflict, women tried to cope with unhealthy relationships to escape the imposed social stigmas or negative connotations that could threaten their social identity. Overall, data findings indicated that the costs of feeling socially stigmatized in their context outweigh the benefits of adapting to a traditional marital structure in this continuously transforming world. It is important to note that although the divorced women had the marital experiences whereas the spinsters had not, yet both had similar causal patterns when defining their marriage related choices.

Marital competing and desiring an independent identity were the initial sources of conflict as described by all women in this study. Women defined their “desired self” in terms of an independent identity. Feelings linked to that “desired self” made women feel socially invisible and discouraged for obtaining “the man’s identity” in a patriarchal context. This creates marital competing and marital conflict in many ways. Notions of gender roles in terms of femininity and “women’s expected social roles” in this case become debatable. With that, women choose to remain unmarried, which in contrast
makes them feel socially visible, yet in a negative light when reflecting to their meanings of the “undesired self”. Visibility in this situation is defined as women’s feelings of visibility in a negative light (socially stigmatized) for demanding the unmarried status. In contrast, feeling invisible is defined as the social and marital neglecting when women relate themselves to the desired independent identity (going against gender roles in terms of a patriarchal society’s cultural standards). The cost-benefit analysis in this case is analyzed and weighed out. Therefore, the desired and undesired selves are deliberately correlated when reflecting to visibility and invisibility.

(4.17) Conclusion

In the past, divorce was not an easy option to undergo (as evident in the literature earlier). With the discovery of oil along with introduced modern social influences, divorce and spinster rates in the Gulf continue to rise (Thomas, 2013). Data in this study indicates that women are demanding equality and calling for more social rights in their male dominated context. Bandow (2012) contends that for a long time, women across the Middle East region were powerless and could not make their own choices. Those who failed to adhere to conservative societal norms and ideologies would have to challenge the consequences (Ali, 2004).

According to Schirrmacher, (2011) women are now keen to overcome traditional repressive measures. Kuwaiti women are amongst the emancipated women across the Gulf region (Al-Sabah, 2013). According to the Global Gender Gap (GGG) report (Hausmann et al., 2010), Kuwait had the highest domestic women labour participation within the Gulf region. However as discussed by AlSaddani, (2006) social activism that
call for equal rights remains a question. In spite of the emancipation of women, this study showed us that traditional women roles continue to constrain their relationships.

The new era today creates new roles for women, and because such social change corrupts traditional values in the Gulf, new problems are created. This is reflected and described by data in this study. One aspect in the Gulf cannot be ignored and denied, it is that this region is in continuous transition and women continue to gain independence in different ways (AlMunajjed, 2010). With such changes in today’s world, women are normalizing the social stigmas behind being unmarried (as evident in this study).

With that, it would be interesting to find out how much of the traditions are mothers today “holding on to” when relating to the next generation in this globalized world. The following chapter presents study three focusing on mothers’ new insights when raising Muslim girls and relating to the next advanced generation in the context of this changing world. It starts with a brief introduction and the rationale for this academic contribution, followed the process taken prior to the analysis. The analysis of Muslim Kuwaiti mothers in a changing world is then presented, followed by discussion, theory, and conclusion.
I want my daughter to be stronger than me: Muslim Kuwaiti mothers in a changing world

(5.1) Introduction

Over the past 50 years, the world has changed in terms of economic and financial factors, globalization, technology, and religion. This is particularly the case in Kuwait and there are specific implications in terms of motherhood when relating to the next generation. The aim of this qualitative study was therefore to examine how Muslim Kuwaiti mothers relate to their children, specifically in bringing up their daughters. This study focuses on how mothers make sense of their Islamic motherhood and parenting in a changing world.

Tarbiya Islamia refers to the role of mothers in educating and raising their children with full adherence and guidance from Islam, the Quran, and the Hadeeth (Prophet’s sayings) as the only sources (Murphy, 2006). In today’s changing world, the queries are: How are such religious ideologies possible today in a technologically globalized world with modern media and influences? How can Muslim mothers limit their children (if so) to the sole reliance on the Quran in this changing world? Specifically, what are the expectations of Muslim Kuwaiti mothers when rearing a generation in an “old-new” conflict of religious ideologies? Are they aiming for “stronger” daughters, or are they holding on to their past traditions?
Globalization has an impact on how Muslim women make meaning of their relationships in different ways. For example, study one looked at Muslim Kuwaiti women’s pre-marital sexual relationships when torn between a balance of two selves: their sexual desires and the rigid structure of their society. Study two explored the sense making of divorced and spinster Muslim Kuwaiti women in view of this new modern world. Study three links to studies one and two by exploring the differences when relating to the advanced generation.

The rise of today’s social media and networks, for instance, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, and the noteworthy changes in conduct as well as attitude of the Kuwaiti young girls aged 5-13 years are discussed in this study through the voices of their mothers. Young Kuwaiti girls today are increasingly involved in the technologically advanced world (Internet World Stats, 2012). This makes it easier to become aware of the modernized world to a greater extent (Wheeler, 2003). This has entirely altered the way young girls in such an age group used to approach various issues such as Islamic customs (Wheeler, 2006). With the augmented usage of social media, a research study carried out by Hofheinz (2007) showed that the majority of young Muslim girls aged between 5-15, particularly those aged 12 to 15 years are progressively using social media platforms to compromise social control; social control that was conventionally put in place across Islamic nations with a focus on control of a woman’s body (Hamade, 2009).

Hamade (2009) furthermore explained that girls in Kuwait are now heavy users to today’s technology and precisely the use of the Internet. Through such platforms, young Muslim Kuwaiti women are crafting a path to connect, build affiliation, and even communicate with their dating partners without the restraints of the societal as well as
parental conflicts. With that, today’s technologically advanced world is a podium where women can get a prospect to escape conventional social norms. The augmented adoption of social media by this group of girls in Kuwait has heightened the socio-culturally unconventional practices amongst the girls (Wheeler, 2006).

As explained further by Benn et al., (2011) diverse ways exist in which Muslim women try to manage their Islamic identities (roles and social lives) alongside participating in sport activities within their context. In the early decades, when the effects of social media were minimal, many young Muslim girls always abided by the Islamic teachings and cultural norms (Wheeler, 2006). However, in the current globalized world, much has changed (Najjar, 2005). Despite the strict restricted laws, it is increasingly possible for the young girls to be exposed to Western fashions that encourage for example the wearing of skirts and dresses (Khaled, 2014). This illustrates how social media has brought about greater personal freedom, thus altering the general older ways of living. Additionally, the social transitions tell us that the current generation can transgress the gender-specified roles in terms of traditions and social identities. Such changes are largely transforming the way Muslims used to carry out their activities (Al-Sabah, 2013).

(5.2) Contributions to the literature

This study contributed by offering new knowledge on how young girls in an Eastern culture are raised in the context of this changing world (i.e. mothers thoughts about their daughters). A contribution has been made to the self-categorization theory to understand the role of motherhood when adapting to new ways of living, and how they define, locate, or make sense of their cultural identities. Research has explored the potential impact of the changing world on the lives of young girls in a number of ways. For example,
Thomas (2005) or Wartella et al. (2013) examined childhood phases in relation to the media usage. Others such as Vossen et al. (2014) focused on the media’s negative effects in childhood. Studies on Muslim women’s clothing were also carried out. For example Benn et al. (2011) looked at the relationship between the Islamic clothing and women’s desire to be active in public sports activities. In addition, Wheeler (2006) and Hamade (2009) explored the frequency of Internet use amongst young Muslim Kuwaiti women. Furthermore, many recent studies engaged in research related to bi-cultural identities or acculturation. Ahmed (2007) conducted a case study on Muslims in Germany adapting to new social ideologies.

Social changes are examined in terms of bi-cultural identities or acculturation with minimal focus on the traditional contexts being the initial research field. The roles of mothers are very central when examining such issues to help understand how they manage with the discursive challenges of living in a traditional space, yet in a new modern time. Therefore, this study fills in a unique contribution to academic literature as no previous research has been conducted within that realm. The aim is to provide new insights on the impact of a globalized world in terms of young girls and how much of the traditional ideologies are a challenge to Muslim Kuwaiti mothers.

(5.3) The main research question for the third study was:

1: What are the challenges Muslim Kuwaiti mothers facing when raising girls in a context of transitions of social changes and influences?

(5.4) Design

Qualitative methods are best used for understudied areas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study used a qualitative approach; which included the process of interviewing for
data collection. After the research design has been decided, the recruitment process must be carefully selected. This not only includes raising awareness on the research, but also targeting gatekeepers, considering the sample size, and deciding on the most suitable sampling technique. Planning the process of selecting participants for any research is very important.

The study was advertised through social networks during the initial phase in order to draw the attention of women interested to be recruited as gatekeepers. It was easy to recruit gatekeepers not only because of my “insider” status in the Kuwaiti community, but also because studies one and two gained popularity in Kuwait (a low populated context that had limited engagement with academic research or data collection).

Advertising study three came as no surprise to Kuwaiti women involved in the social media and social networks. With that, many used the given contact details to raise their willingness and interest to take part in the last study. Ethical approval was gained through the University of Surrey and Al-Tamayoz Group Legal Consultants and Attorneys in Kuwait. Research documents are presented in the Appendices section (C1-C3) including the Arabic versions.

(5.5) Participants

In this research, 3 of the participants were divorced (with children), 1 was divorced and re-married (with children), and 16 were currently married (with children). The focus in this research is on “motherhood” social groups rather than marital status (as in the previous study). From the 20 participants, 10 defined themselves as traditional, 4 of which had a Neqab “face veil” (which makes them traditional and religious). The other 10 participants defined themselves as modern (unveiled) Kuwaiti mothers.
There were no specific exclusions with the exception to the mother having at least one daughter aged between 5-13. Mothers with sons (as well as daughters in the targeted age group) were also selected to respond to the few questions that compare boys’ upbringing to that of girls’ in the modernizing Kuwaiti culture. Furthermore, all the mothers had to be full Kuwaiti citizens to avoid the influences of a direct modern culture involved (i.e. bi-cultural identities).

Building rapport

The relationship between the researcher and the participants is one of the most important skills in the data collection process (Punch, 2002). This relationship not only involves the participants’ comfort to be interviewed, but also trust is very much vital for effective results (Sandoval & Adams, 2001). In this study, strong rapport was gained early during the first few minutes of each interview. Rapport was fully established for optimal results.

Although this study still included culturally sensitive or even taboo questions, the mothers were still confident in discussing such issues (with some even raising such issues even before being questioned). Not only women felt comfortable and trusted the process, they even willingly shared details of their personal relationships with their daughters (as well as their husbands) with many leaving the interview indicating that the engagement in such discussion made them even think further.

(5.6) Procedure

The targets of this research (mothers) with daughters aged between 5-13 were selected to reflect upon the next generation of Muslim girls. Participants came from modern, traditional, or religious social groups. The participants were diverse ranging
from heavily secluded with a Neqab (face veil) to very modern mothers with Western clothing (and unveiled). Modern, traditional, and religious gatekeepers were needed for the recruitment process. Mothers were selected on a basis that they have daughters aged between 5-13 (or at least one daughter in that age category).

Interviews took place in quiet locations (depending on the participant’s preference) and arrangements were made three days in advance. Women with a face veil (Neqab) preferred a “home setting” since they feel more comfortable removing their face veil. Busier mothers with younger children also preferred a home setting, during a later hour, in which they already ensured their children were asleep. Other mothers with more time flexibility were invited in the lobby of Kuwait Palace Hotel (with an area reserved for the purpose of confidentiality). When interviewing the selected sample, appropriate language was used to be sure all participants are at the same level.

The role of the gatekeepers: snowballing and convenience techniques

Although this study had the least ethical considerations (in comparison to studies one and two), yet still, drawing the attention of the religious mothers (with a face Neqab) was a huge challenge. After immediate contact due to the intensive “Online advertisements”, one traditional and two modern gatekeepers were recruited. The initiating gatekeeper, a traditional 47 years old mother was engaged in the physical process (being involved in the Kuwaiti Islamic institute) of recruiting the religious mothers (due to their absence in the active media on a daily basis).

Modern (Westernized) and traditional (with only a Hijab) mothers were quickly recruited in comparison to the traditional (yet religious) women (with a black robe and a full face veil). Mothers were categorized in terms of how they define, distinguish, and
self-categorize themselves in relation to raising their daughters. Grouping them as modern, traditional, or religious also depended on their clothing and schooling preferences (i.e. unveiled mothers with daughters in mixed schools were compared to veiled mothers with daughters in Arabic segregated schools). The process of recruiting suitable mothers in this research involved Online arrangements, snowballing, and convenience techniques.

The process of Online arrangements involved immediate contact from the participants with either one of the recruited gatekeepers or myself (the researcher). The snowballing technique, which according to Noy (2008) involves the participants contacting women from their social groups and introduce them further if they are willing to take part in this study. This technique was used to target mothers with older daughters (aged between 10-13) since women that got attracted (or were frequently active Online) to the advertisements had mostly younger daughters (aged between 5-9). A variety of the daughters’ ages was required as much as the diversity of the mothers’ backgrounds.

The initiating gatekeeper was responsible for a heterogeneous sample selection in terms of social group, social class, and daughters’ age groups and arrange further accordingly. Towards the point were saturation was almost evident, the idea of blending religious mothers was carefully examined (to target mothers with a face Neqab). With that, the initiating gatekeeper was involved in the Islamic institute in Kuwait (targeting women in that institute that also have daughters in the age criteria suitable for this study). This process involved convenience sampling when selecting mothers with a face Neqab. Convenience sampling involves the selection of participants based on their interest,
willingness, and availability (Marshall, 1996). These were the women that not only defined themselves as traditional, but traditional and religious.

Faten (32) and Hadeel (35) were involved in the snowballing technique and Sama (34) guided the gatekeeper when selecting more mothers (with the face Neqab) from the Islamic institute. The following table highlights some of the demographic information for each woman that joined this research. Pseudonyms are used to conceal the participants’ identities and ensure confidentiality.

(5. 7) Demographic information

Participant details are shown in Table C1.

Table C1: Contact author for details

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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>TYPE OF MOTHERHOOD</th>
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(5. 8) Interview schedule

This section highlights the questions discussed in this study. The interview was open ended and the interview schedule was just a start off point.

*Tell me about how you see your role in bringing up your daughters.*

*Do you have a sense how your daughters’ future will be?*

*Do you try and shape your daughters to prepare them for the future?*

*What kind of life would you want for your daughters in the future?*

*Can you tell me about your feelings about girls being educated and what type of schools (i.e. mixed or segregated)?*

*Can you tell me your feelings on how girls should dress?*

*What are your views on social media and technology?*
What networks do you allow your daughters to use?

How would you want your daughters to get married?

How do you speak to your daughters about relationships?

How do you speak to your daughters about boys?

How do you speak to your daughters about sex?

What do you feel about the social networks such as Facebook?

What do you feel about the social media, for example romantic movies or Western music being easily accessible by children?

Do you think the social media has an effect on the clothing of young Muslim girls, which could represent sexual temptations more than preserving the Islamic identity?

How challenging do you feel it is to raise daughters in a globalized generation that differs from yours?

Would you still want to maintain the same traditional ideologies?

The world is changing at the moment, how do you feel about your daughters being modernized?

How does that differ from your maybe traditional generation?

If you have any boys, what similarities or differences do you have in rearing up both genders within your Kuwaiti context?

We come to an end now, would you like to add any points?

Although the interview was structured in a specific sequence for a fair comparison (in the overarching meanings) between the different groups of mothers involved, the flexibility of the interview still used an open-ended approach in which women were free to engage at a greater extent.
(5.9) Data analysis

The study used open-ended interviews lasting on average anytime between 50-130 minutes. All the women that took part signed the consent form approving that the interviews were fully “audio taped” by my personal recorder. I then transcribed the interviews in full and back translated where needed. Since I am bilingual myself, the translating process was completed confidentially. The full transcripts were the basis of the analysis. The interviewing process came to an end approximately after 7 weeks.

Saturation takes effect when issues raised in the data collection process become repetitive in nature (Taylor & Usher, 2001). I transcribed, translated where needed, and coded the interviews whilst still in the research context (Kuwait) to ensure effective saturation takes place. Saturation became clear after almost 16 in-depth interviews. The interviewing phase came to an end after 20 interviews (to even confirm saturation).

This qualitative study used thematic analysis with the aim to offer a stronger feel for the examined behaviours and situations. Themes (in this study) are groups of codes (with coding being one of the most essential parts in the process) that are constantly repeated in a patterned way (Coffy & Attkinson, 1996). Thematic analysis was used as it offers theoretical freedom and is a flexible approach that could help create rich and detailed data, especially when exploring understudied areas (such as sensitive topics related to Muslim women). Themes and sub-themes were discovered throughout the interviews after transcribing.

(5.10) Summary of results

This is a brief overview of the key ideas; which leads to the themes and sub-themes. Women talked about how they manage their relationships with their daughters in a
changing world in terms of five main key themes. For example, mothers are “changing” priorities for their daughters in their definitions of new meaning makings. This was described in terms of a later age in marriage, education, and independency, and less pressures on a traditional marriage. Mothers also feel that in the context of today’s world, “normalizing” cultural taboos is healthier for young girls. Negotiating the romantic media and sexuality, the Online social life and traditions, globalization, social media, and social networks were issues continuously discussed in this study. In addition, mothers feel that they are “challenging” a traditional space (i.e. Kuwait) in a modern time (a changing world). This was described in terms of the next advanced generation, the rejection of “bottling up” Muslim girls today, and raising stronger daughters.

As described above in the illustrations of the first three themes, Muslim mothers interestingly “fit in” within much of the narratives of the modern ideologies when raising their daughters. Yet still, there are some individual differences within women’s self-definitions as described in theme 4. For example, mothers that self-define themselves as traditional or religious are advanced within the pace of this changing world in their meaning makings of a “head cover” but not a “brain cover”, yet still, holding on to their Islamic identity (defined by the veil). Physical aspects in such cases shape no role in Muslim women’s cognitive attributes. This overarching theme (theme 4) describes the ways in which different women feel and express their relatedness to their daughters in the context of this changing world. This was discussed in terms of clothing, education, and mothers managing their daughters’ social life. As a result, much of the intellectual and emotional aspects are very similar (to a higher or lesser extent) when making sense of the mothers’ self-definitions.
The final theme focuses on other influences. For example, mothers described the roles of their husbands in terms of parenting and how much at times this could shape different perspectives (i.e. in schooling or clothing preferences). Mothers (with sons) also discussed their notions of upbringing young girls and boys in a changing world. Issues explored included social norms in terms of reputation. In the following table, the major themes and sub-themes are illustrated.

(5.11) **Table of final themes and sub-themes**

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(5. 12) Themes and sub-themes

Theme 1: Changing priorities for girls

This first theme discusses social problems by examining the expectations of mothers today towards their young daughters in terms of the changing priorities. The sub-themes discuss a later age in marriage, girls’ education and independency, and new marital ideologies. For example, mothers feel that it is important for their daughters to secure a stable independent future for themselves prior to giving consent to a marriage. New motherhood ideologies in the Islamic Kuwaiti context are explored in terms of a changing world today. Marriage is highly desired and recommended in Islamic cultures for both men and women.

As quoted in the Quran:

“Marry the spouseless among you” (Surah Alnisa, 24, 32).

The Quran quote began with “Ankihu” in Arabic terms, which means “marry”. Based on that, the Prophet Mohammad said:

“Whosoever likes to follow my tradition, then he should know that marriage is from my tradition”.

Generally, marriage is significantly recommended as evident in the Quran and Prophet Mohammad’s sayings, but some factors today are holding Kuwaiti women back as evident further in this section when modern and traditional/religious mothers described other priorities. By making sense of modern change, modern Ghada, (married right after high school and currently in the midst of huge marital conflicts) said:

Women today need more empowerment so I want my daughters to be fully strong by themselves, leaving marriage as the last tour as I feel it is an accessory and not so necessary (Ghada, 34).
In contrast, traditional and religious Sukayna (that lives beneath a face veil) and teaches in an Islamic institute, lifts down her Neqab (face veil) to answer the first question. Defending women in terms of social roles, she strongly said:

*I always teach them to have motives beyond being mothers in their future, beyond marriage and motherhood, and the importance and benefits of education to society today ahhh motherhood is nice, yes, but not the only nice, they need proper degrees first, proper jobs, and their own income (Sukayna, 35).*

The notions of the changing priorities are discussed further in the sub-themes below.

**Sub-themes**

1) *Later age in marriage*

Mothers discussed the changing priorities when relating to their daughters. Lamya, the modern mother, faced emotional (marital) conflicts and intends to ensure that her daughter has a different experience. She only received a “proper degree” as she described after her divorce. Neglecting old traditions and the ideal social identity, Lamya explained:

*I do not put consideration about society and the public view as much as my daughter’s well-being, so with respect to her marriage, I want her to wait till after her thirties better and only marry the man she loves because look at me, I married at a very young age and could not own a proper degree ummm my marriage was traditional, arranged by the family, and now I cannot take it anymore and got divorced a short while back. I feel it is better for her to marry past her thirties as she will be more mentally stable once married late and will be satisfied and had enough fun from dating, and ahh other experiences, so she is more mature and serious once older (Lamya, 35).*

Her detailed comment clarified that she is against having her 11 years old daughter fall in a similar trap as hers. Additionally, Lamya mentioned the notion of “dating” which
shows that she is “open” to that idea in raising her young daughter. Her comment also implied that she isn’t willing to risk her daughter suffering in a “controlled” or “arranged” marriage just to fit in with societal norms. Similarly, defining her early, arranged marriage (when she was 16) as a “trap”, Ghada (ending her educational dreams after high school), made sense of the independent identity. She explained:

I want both my daughters to be stable before getting married and not to repeat the mistake of early marriage I was trapped in. I want them to be comfortable ahhh settled and not depending on the money of not even their dad or husbands, they need their own career to be fully independent and in control (Ghada, 34).

Holding on to similar views, modern Rania has the same desires when discussing the future of her daughters:

I am from the mothers that would say ahhh surely today marriage is not a priority the way it used to be, if I am to set out a hierarchy, education comes miles ahead of marriage (Rania, 48).

Ghala, in her definitions of social change, marriage age, and spinsterhood said:

A Kuwaiti girl today becoming a wife below the age of 26 is chaos (higher voice) spinsterhood age here needs a shift (Ghala, 44).

All the mothers in this study had similar views when discussing the age of marriage. Aliaa continued strongly defending her marriage views for today’s generation. Going against the long held normative fit, she added:

What is this marriage that still backward people follow today, what is it, copy paste or mix and match, so no no this does not work in 2015, you cannot tell girls today who to marry as the results could be terrible later (Aliaa, 39).
ii) Education and independency

Changing priorities today were also described when mothers linked education to marriage. For example, Aliaa, a modern mother from the high class was married three times throughout her life (to finally then settle). She initiated the divorce for her first two marriages (luckily there were no children for custody dilemmas). Currently married to her third husband with four children (three daughters and one son), she explained how she continuously teaches her daughters that education is very important. Aliaa said:

*I would wish for them a strong independent career like dentists for example, so when I take them to the dentist I tell them “see how this lady is trusted by patients because she is properly educated, she studied well in her early years in school so this is why you must study well now”* (Aliaa, 39).

Similarly, traditional mothers also shared stories that reflect upon the importance of education and an independent professional life. Even the most traditional and religious mothers supported a later age in marriage and will stand guide their daughters in building up an independent future. The heavily secluded Sukayna continued to defend women’s rights to put education as a priority before the notion of early marriage:

*I want my daughters to be doctors, I wish of course, and that they are not wives until settled in a satisfying job and I will push them through that as long as I live* (Sukayna, 35).

Traditional and religious Sama, also wearing a Neqab (face veil) was married early at the age of 17 and regrets ending her education at a diploma level. Defending the future of her daughters and defining education as their “sword” in her definitions of today’s changing priorities, she strongly said:

*I do not want their future to mirror mine. I love reading so I always take my daughters to the library, as I feel*
education and literacy are important for girls today ahhh it’s like a permanent sword for them in their future. I will refuse their early marriage if it comes one day (Sama, 34).

Describing the struggles she faced, Sukayna discussed her early transition to motherhood:

This is because I do not want my daughters to face my similar struggles. In my early marriage like ummm pregnant during my first year at university and I remember I battled hardly and my mother used to tell me “beat the university before it beats you” (Sukayna, 35).

Hanouf, a very traditional mother (veiled but unlike Sama and Sukayna, does not wear a face Neqab) shares similar views about the importance of education. Coming from the low class (yet married to a man from the high class families in Kuwait), Hanouf explained that “marriage age” is the decision of her daughters (yet she encourages a degree first). This tells us that traditional sentiments continue to change. She said:

The marriage age is their decision as long as they are over the age of 21 and already settled in a university, but I will encourage the graduation ceremony is before the wedding ceremony, yes that is the proper order, so my guiding will be clear but they can decide later on. I tell them even if we are wealthy, their father is wealthy, but the wealth of the mind is more beautiful so I encourage my girls that way (Hanouf, 45).

Modern Lamya (with similar beliefs) is a divorced mother (one out of the three divorces in this study). She comes from a Bedouin tribe (desert orientated) but from the high social status (and she actually succeeded in achieving her Bachelor and Master degrees only after the divorce). Lamya deliberately “linked” the importance of education today with her divorce experience. Similarly to Sama’s illustrations of education as a sword, she described:
A degree is a weapon for girls today, something irreplaceable, her degree is her weapon as you never know tomorrow she might get married and then get divorced and her husband might just slap her on the ass telling her “byebye Habeebti (baby)”, so her degree is her future security you could say, she will gain a stable financial position and be strong in a career of her choice (Lamya, 35).

Uncertain about the future of this world, mothers feel the need to prepare their daughters to have a strong identity in many different ways. Traditional mothers are also aware that overprotection of kids could curtail freedom of thought. Mothers also feel that “physical maturity” is necessary for marriage, but “maturity of the cognitive mind” is also vital. Today’s mothers raise their daughters to be academically and financially stable prior to marriage. This is clear in much of their desires although Islam recommends “the sooner” marriage even if it meant that the parents spend on their children’s marital life until they are more financially stable. Mothers are overcoming the challenge of raising their daughters through the use of stories from the Quran only. Mothers today are making sure that their daughters understand that their primary role is not to get married. Instead, they are preparing their daughters to have new changing perspectives in life.

iii) Less pressures on a traditional marriage

Mothers today are shifting into changing transitions of modern advancements and adapting to newer ideologies. Going against the norms and long held values (to such extent) did not matter to those mothers if the benefit of such costs would be the “happiness” of their daughters as many described. Such meaning makings define huge changing perspectives in modern Kuwait. For example, traditional Hadeel, a lawyer from the medium class, said:
For sure I will not mind her knowing her spouse and falling in love before marriage. I want her to be open, more open than how I was brought up, it is best for her to feel happy in her marriage rather than have her enter a pressured marriage and have kids then decide to get a divorce which we see happening a lot today (Hadeel, 35).

This shows us that mothers today are more tolerant of their daughters choosing their marital spouse in the future. This implies on the “generation difference” and social change when reflecting upon old and new ideologies in Kuwait. Mothers have different strategies on how to relate to their daughters in this changing world. Yet interestingly, none were against love marriage (a cultural taboo in Kuwait because the process naturally involves pre-marital romantic dating and interaction between both sexes). Taking into consideration the disadvantages of “pressure” on girls, Nouriya explained:

I raised my daughters in ways that I trust them so if one of them loved a man and wanted love marriage, I will let her open up to me and tell me about her relationship, so why not go for love marriage if she really has serious consent for it (Nouriya, 47).

Traditional Ebtesam, a teacher (in an Islamic school) with a Neqab (face veil), defended her daughters and said:

They can chose their marriage partner as they like but I care that the man of their choice has proper morals and nothing more, so I do not care about prestige and status or family origin as much as the fact that he is a kind man that can please my daughter (Ebtesam, 43).

Similarly, the heavily secluded Sukayna with a full Neqab, going against societal norms, said:

I will support my daughter’s marriage regardless if her love was wrong, I will stick with my daughter regardless of traditions and society (Sukayna, 35).
Many mothers (from both groups) had similar values when making meaning of romantic relationships. Another participant, modern Nadia (a divorced full time lawyer) with similar perspectives, said:

_Nothing comes by force today, we cannot force girls anymore (laughs) so I guide, I listen, I trust, I offer advice, but at the end of the day her studies and marriage are her choice so even if she went against the traditional arranged marriage or even if she wanted a traditional one, it is entirely her choice, because dating can be pure and done in a correct clean way (Nadia, 32)._ 

This theme illustrated much of the changing priorities by both groups of Muslim Kuwaiti mothers. New perspectives were defined with the pace of this changing world. With that, mothers have adapted to modern ideologies. The following theme elaborates furthermore on the relationships between the mothers and their daughters when defining cultural taboos.

**Theme 2: Normalizing cultural taboos**

The second theme elaborates on issues related to sexual and cultural taboos and mothers’ roles in such terms. The sub-themes illustrate the negotiation of the romantic media and sexuality, the Online social life and traditions, globalization, social media, and social networks. Stories about the new technological advancements easily accessible in the Kuwaiti context were raised by many of the mothers. Accessing the social media was not seen as a negative influence. Mothers illustrated many positive influences when making sense of the social media today. In addition, mothers were not against their daughters being active in the social networks of today (such as Facebook, Twitter, or WhatsApp). It was interesting to hear the views of the “new” Muslim mothers of today when discussing issues related to the modern virtual world.
For example, Ghala (a modern business analyst) discussed the positive aspects of the social media:

*Media today can lead to inventors and creators so we cannot eliminate girls from such advancements. I still want her to be up to date with new world advancements (Ghala, 44).*

In contrast discussing the social “networks”, Hadeel (a lawyer from the middle class) worries about the “negative” social influences that might have an impact upon her 8 years old daughter. Defining such influences as “mind pollution”, Hadeel explained:

*I feel sometimes young Kuwaiti girls abuse the social networks, like Facebook or Twitter, by showing off their wealth ahhh clothes, bags, so really I feel my daughter is too young for such mind pollution, so it is not about forbidding her or anything, she is still a kid and she needs to put her time on school work (Hadeel, 35).*

In her concerns of the negative social influences created by other young girls, Hadeel continued discussing in detail reasons that justify her views. Linking back to the earlier sub-theme on the importance of education, she added:

*I keep telling her “ok if these girls in your school wear brands and they display themselves Online, you study hard so that one day you are the brand itself and they will be nothing more than public display” (Hadeel, 35).*

Issues related to the notion of normalizing taboos are discussed in the following sub-themes.

**Sub-themes**

*i) Negotiating the romantic media and sexuality*

In reality, mothers wanted their daughters to understand notions of love and sexuality to avoid possible health consequences. For example, girls might have never ending thoughts of shame and guilt when it comes to their sexuality (as a result of the
weight on such cultural taboos). Mothers today are always open with their daughters if they question such culturally sensitive issues that are still not taught in schools (again as evident in study one). It is interesting to note that mothers were also adapting to new technological advancements alongside their daughters. For example Hadeel in her ways of normalizing taboos said:

I love the romantic novels and the romantic media. Ahh I started talking to her about sexuality and never tell her “ohh this is Haram (sinful)” as I do not want her to be affected in the long run thinking sex is bad, which could bring distress if she’s to get married one day, so I make her feel confident about such sensitive issues whenever she questions, and whatever it is (Hadeel, 35).

Being fully aware that silencing such issues are a causal explanation for an unhealthy sexual lifestyle later, Hadeel succeeds in building up a positive environment at home when culturally taboo issues are discussed. Normalizing the idea to be “allowed to talk about sexuality” is beneficial at an early age as she described (being fully aware that this contradicts cultural norms in Kuwait).

Family support in this study (when discussing sexuality and relationships) indicates the gradual social transitions in view of the "new motherhood meanings" today. For example, Sukayna, the heavily secluded woman has her ways when talking about changes of the woman’s body when discussing puberty to her eldest daughter (that started menstruating three months ago). She described further:

She does not understand about sexuality yet anyway, but I teach her, I tell her, this thing happens to older girls not the younger ones and the idea behind her period now. I even teach her at home what happens in marriage and the role of the male’s sperm, I teach her this way, it’s better ahhh make her more aware, I don’t see why not, because it’s better she learns from me, her mother, rather than others. Today it is different than my days,
girls are more ahhh more alerted about such issues and this is something mothers cannot control (Sukayna, 35).

Although coming from an extremist traditional and religious family, Sukayna’s comment implies on “openness” in discussing a culturally taboo topic at home today. Sukayna was also very aware of the social changes and the generation gap between her and daughter (when describing her relationship with her own mother during her teenage years 20 years ago).

Illustrating social change in terms of technological tools and describing furthermore how girls today are more aware, Sukayna added:

On her day one menstruating, I told her this is no more than a red liquid, I felt this is better because she had exams so I did not want her mind to only think of this transition, but on that same night she came up to me, calling me a liar (laughs) because she read Online that this red liquid is actually blood (Sukayna, 35).

Again, although very traditional and religious (with a face Neqab), Ebtesam is not against educating young girls about sexuality or their bodily transitions of growth. She also described how she is not against “love marriage” versus a traditional one, but in both cases, she feels that virginity remains sacred for the husband. Traditional women today are in a “new phase” of shifting away to new Islamic/modern ideologies. Ebtesam said:

She questions where the babies come from so I tell her about the woman’s body and how the baby’s head comes out but I also explain to her that this part of the body is very sensitive and remains sacred for her husband and that she can choose her husband when she grows up (Ebtesam, 43).

Normalizing issues related to sexuality are gradually becoming less of a taboo today by Muslim Kuwaiti mothers. For example in her definition of sexuality, modern Nouriya explained:
I think sexuality is a beautiful thing to learn about ahhh when I travel abroad, I attend courses about such issues and open up such conversations with my eldest because you need to educate girls today in this generation about such issues actually to protect them (Nouriya, 47).

Both modern and traditional/ religious mothers monitor what their daughters access within the media by viewing the log history between time to time. Yet still, they all believe that they cannot prevent girls from sex awareness in today’s technologically advanced world. Describing the current changes within the Kuwaiti context, Lamya said:

* I cannot tell her not to be active in the social media or have proper access to the social networks with the worry that she might see naked boys or boys showing her their stuffs (laughs) because even if our society censor much of it, children today are almost smuggling the media (Lamya, 35).

Having other sexual concerns, Ghala explains how she teaches her 12 years old daughter (that newly reached puberty) how to distinguish between men and other sexual related matters. Worried about sexual harassment from the family’s driver that her daughter grew up with his presence in their household, she explained:

* I teach her why it is different now that she is grown and what risks might happen if she is too touchy with our family driver, and that now she cannot hug him, kiss him, or sit on his lap because he is a stranger man, not like her Baba (dad) (Ghala, 44).

**ii) The "Online" virtual social life and tradition**

Mothers, on many instances, worried that the electronic tools consume their daughters’ time away from sleep, school work, and being present (and active) in family gatherings which is one of the traditions almost impossible to fade away. Looking at the media as an entertainment source of leisure was encouraged, but with certain limits. Negotiating time related aspects with the children was therefore challenging for many
women. As illustrated below by Sama (in her concerns of time management):

For example, to control their time when using their technological ahh electronic devices I tell them “see you have your fully charged iPads for the entire week”, so I give them the devices freely but take away the charger so they understand the value of time and their studies and not just waste their time on the media or Turkish series like Hareem Alsultan. They even reached a limit wanting the chargers without the iPads (laughs) (Sama, 34).

Routine, as described by many mothers is important when managing the time of their children, (which links to children's psychological health). On the other hand, Maram, a traditional mother, intends to implement something on her young girl other than the typical stereotypes of a young housewife. In her example, reflecting back to the earlier sub-themes on education and marriage, and linking it to the technologically advanced world, she said:

I like to build up unique talents into my daughter and have her build ahhh strong self confidence, I want her to see there is more in a woman than just getting married and delivering babies and for me to discover her interests, I must allow her to be technologically active (Maram, 38).

Ebtesam is concerned about “time loss” if her daughters constantly laze around the “fun media”. A number of the participants had high hopes that their daughters would have more opportunities than they had "as the mothers", but still they feel that some of the traditional norms must be valued by their children. As Ebtesam explained:

I bought for my girls smart phones only after they felt left out. I feel the mobile is not necessary and a waste of time at an early age so I teach my girls time management and the importance of our Yama’a (family gathering) (Ebtesam, 43).
Yama’a is the Arabic term for the “weekly full extended family gathering”. This usually takes place on Friday, in which families create value for the “family social time”, and they spend the full evening mainly in the grandparents’ house. Usually families divide the weeks by having a week for the “mother’s family side” and the next week for the “father’s family side”. The long held traditional ideologies that such family gatherings bring closer bond and ties in the Kuwaiti community still exist.

Moreover, although mothers were very positive when coming to terms with a globalized world, but a degree of conflict and tension was apparent in some situations. For example, Lulwa (a traditional woman from the high class) described how the media (specifically music) could confuse or influence girls in an Islamic context if they are raised to specific standards at home then see other ideas virtually. Yet she still copes with it in a very normalized way:

*Crazy girl, one day I put her to bed and she was talking for long hours about how she feels ready to wear the veil, then not even before the week comes to an end, she suddenly wants the hot shorts of Miley Cyrus* (Lulwa, 48).

In addition, in their accounts of the “influencing aspects” related to mobile phones, many mothers deliberately linked the mobile phone with “safety”. The smart phone in this case was described as a must for the “security” of the girls and a sufficient source to stay in touch with them. Social activities like meeting friends were approved by many mothers, but the notion of social security was the concerning point for many. All groups of mothers illustrated how a smart phone is a security source. Traditional Lulwa added:

*Today it is different than my generation in which we barely went out alone. Today it is very wrong for girls not to have a private mobile phone in her age so what if she’s going to the mall and may God forbid I sense*
something wrong is going on so how can I get in touch with her then (Lulwa, 48).

And similarly, modern Aliaa said:

She has to own a mobile for security reasons when she is away from me and because she is in a young sensitive age, I still have to keep an eye on her phone and contacts (Aliaa, 39).

Mothers were also concerned about the “protection” of their daughters and whether or not the question of social networks such as “Facebook” is really a “good idea” for girls under 13. As shared below:

I think they are still young for Facebook. You never know young girls could be lied at easily so my job as a mother is to protect them, so it’s not that I do not trust them, but unfortunately I do not trust the world (Sama, 34).

Privacy exposure was also another worry if young children cannot differentiate or distinguish between what is publishable and what is not. Teaching their daughters a balance between the Offline social life and Online social life has been a concern for some mothers. As described by Lamya:

The media is all hers but I taught her not to private images or videos of our natural life at home, or I am in my pyjamas and publish them by mistake (Lamya, 35).

iii) Globalization, social media, and social networks

Mothers described how globalization and modernization is a benefit today. Ghada stated:

This development in 2015 is the right thing and the right way for women to live today (Ghada, 34).

Feeling optimistic in terms of this changing world, Ghada continued saying:

Actually roles are switched (laughs) when discussing technology. My kids teach me rather than me teaching
them because in school now everything is computer based ahhh emails, E-learning (Ghada, 34).

Similarly, Lulwa made sense of the opportunities in terms of this globalized world, she argued:

*No no of course I do not have a problem, let her view the world, as much as some Islamic scholars say media influences can be corruption but never I see a problem with our beautifully globalized Kuwait (Lulwa, 48).*

Maram, another participant with a face veil gave an example in which she linked social media to the health of her youngest daughter (who never eats vegetables). Describing the positive effects of allowing her daughters to have Internet access, she explained:

*By presenting an attractive ice cream to her younger sister, which is actually spinach but in an ice cream form (laughs), she actually started eating it and even her health got much better than before (Maram, 38).*

The changing world was discussed in many terms ranging from normalizing sexual taboos to the mothers’ feelings about the globalized Kuwait. The mothers had a few concerns linked to social media and social networks. This included time loss with the lesser attention on studies, protecting their daughters from contacting strangers, publishing private photos and videos, and the value of the family’s social life (not to be substituted with an Online virtual life). None of their concerns were heavily linked to influences on the Islamic traditions. In the following theme, the challenges of living in a traditional space, yet in a new modern time are discussed further.

**Theme 3: Challenging a traditional “space” in a new modern “time”**

The third theme compares ideologies of the past and “the effect of shaping them” towards the next generation. Challenging aspects are continuously described in the
process of motherhood. The sub-themes discuss the advanced generation, the rejection of bottling up girls today, and raising stronger daughters. Both groups of mothers try to maintain certain values related to a girl’s reputation but without having the old fashioned rules (ideologies those mothers were raised upon) enforced on their own daughters. Some mothers even mentioned that their mothers (grandmothers of the young girls) interfere in ways to try to maintain much of the old traditions.

In defense of the current generation and the notion of a changing world, Rania illustrated an Islamic example that represents the generation difference:

	*Even in our religion it clearly says and explains that we shouldn’t stress that we raise our girls the same way we were raised, and aahh that is because they are born in a different time, umm like a different new generation, our Prophet Mohammad clearly says so in his Hadith (Prophet’s sayings) (Rania, 48).*

Similarly, defending her feelings and meaning makings of the social changes and influences today, Afeefa, aware of the generation difference said:

	*I shall never raise my girls to the standards I was raised in (Afeefa, 34).*

Challenging a traditional space (Kuwait) in a modern time (the changing world) was a notion described by the mothers in the next sub-themes.

**Sub-themes**

*i) The advanced generation*

Religious, traditional, and modern mothers are still prone to face a number of challenges when relating to the advanced generation of today. Lamya, a traditional mother, said:

	*I do still feel some challenges and differences within our generation but then I remember the hard times I had with*
my own mother during my early years so I become less strict on her (Lamya, 35).

In contrast, Ghala added:

It is beautiful that girls today are more advanced, more developed than us their mothers. I feel this is power more than it is a challenge (Ghala, 44).

Moreover, in her understanding of their generation differences, Ebtesam, although wears a Neqab (face veil) defends her daughters from their extremely religious grandmother’s involvement:

My own mother gets too much involved in their lives and at times I have to stand against my mother alongside my daughters because I understand that her generation is much more behind so she cannot expect my girls to abide by rules she raised me upon like over 40 years ago (Ebtesam, 43).

Hadeel on the other hand explained that she is also “jumping in” the newly advanced world alongside her daughter and adapting to modern changes:

Not only she is more technologically advanced, I also jumped in with her in this developed world (Hadeel, 35).

 Mothers from both social groups believed in the “benefits of such challenges”. For example:

Yes trust me their generation differs much from mine but they are the better aahh um the more aware (Rania, 48).

In addition, some of the Kuwaiti traditions (as mentioned earlier) were preferred to be kept even though the younger girls try to escape them. Again, the weekly extended family visits (Yama’a) are a must as many mothers agreed:

The Kuwaiti traditions are the reason for the strong ties and connections in our society so I believe some traditions like weekly gatherings or cultural celebrations
must never be lost not even by today’s generation (Maram, 38).

ii) Cannot “bottle up” girls today

Mothers that took part in this study feared the negative consequences as a result of pressuring their daughters, repressing them, or forcing certain out-dated values upon them. They were aware that pressuring households had the most evident complexity, emotional conflicts, and other psychological tensions. Illustrations of some shared stories were described. For example:

*I cannot lock my daughters in a closed room because by the end of the day I cannot totally control them* (Nouriya, 47).

Similarly, Hanouf argued:

*Boxing a girl today even in a rotten sealed box won’t stop her* (Hanouf, 45).

In addition, Ghada explained:

*The world is different now, so I cannot raise them up with standards of the past then have them do things behind my back* (Ghada, 34).

The changing world has brought about changes in the Islamic ideologies and the way mothers view them today. Ghada’s comment implied awareness of the negative consequences when their daughters live another life (in terms of secret keeping) if balancing between their liberated selves and the rigid societal norms.

iii) Raising stronger daughters

Raising stronger daughters (stronger than themselves) was a desired feeling by all the participants. All the mothers wanted to raise “strong women” and intend to avoid their daughters from falling into some of their similar traps (such as early marriages,
arranged marriages, and low educational level). For example, Basma had major conflicts with her mother before getting married at her early age of 19. She said:

*I battled with my mother but will not let me daughter face the same war with me. So yes definitely education is important and must be done in the proper place so I placed her in a school better than mine as I want her to be better. My school was the Arabic government school because of my mother’s past generation mentality, so I will not let my daughter experience similar struggles* (Basma, 28).

Similarly, Hadeel (although an already strong independent lawyer) said:

*I want my daughter to face me, even be stronger than me, and be smarter than me* (Hadeel, 35).

Ghada was an “early married” mother and was unable to continue studying after delivering her two daughters (post high school). Today (facing many complications in her marriage), at the age of 34, she battles hard to get back on the educational path in order to feel stronger and more independent. She does not want her daughters to face similar distress. In her worries about their suffering and future, she said:

*I want my daughters to have a better future than mine. I do not want either of them to get married early and not go to university because I do not want them to suffer what I suffered. I want them to enjoy childhood, teenage years, experience a university life, grow up to then become wives and enjoy motherhood. Every stage is separate. My suffering is a result of mixing my teenage years with the roles of a wife and a mother and now my problems with my husband come as a result of me insisting to register in the American University of Kuwait and enjoy the experience before it gets too late* (Ghada, 34).

Reflecting on the notion of an independent identity, traditional and religious Sama (a mother with a Neqab) said:
Sometimes they depend a lot on me in many choices but I say no no no, let them build stronger self confidence and take choices by their own ahhh I want them to have a strong personality (Sama, 34).

In addition, modern Rania, sharing a similar perspective, said:

*I always stress on the fact wanting my daughters to build up a strong character. For example when it comes to decisions, I may offer guidance, yet they must learn at an early age to be independent and make their own decisions* (Rania, 48).

Muslim Kuwaiti mothers continuously shared their feelings about the challenges of living in a traditional space, yet in a new modern time. The meaning makings indicate that traditional and religious mothers share similar perspectives as modern mothers. Yet still; some mothers appear publicly differently in terms of clothing (veiled or unveiled) and how they self-categorize their identities. The following overarching theme highlights on the notion of a “head cover” not being a “brain cover” discussed in terms of tension.

**Theme 4: Tension**

This overarching theme of tension describes the different ways in which different women (with individual differences) feel and express their relatedness to their daughters. Many mothers reported experiences about how they maintained traditions and created a balance to the “Islamic modernity”. As Sama said:

*See even if I am veiled and ahhh or wearing my Neqab, I follow some traditions as a mother, I teach in the Islamic school, but this does not mean that I am against the strength or ahhh the voice of a woman. My daughters will almost look like aliens if I only raise them with traditions of the past (Sama, 34).*

Similarly, traditional Hanouf implemented that her traditional mind cannot become a barrier to her daughters’ desires and interests (i.e. in her example of what is commonly
known as “boys’ sports” in Kuwait). This means that participating in horse riding challenges the boundaries of a traditional identity and is seen as a threat to the respected feminine identity. As illustrated:

*I definitely am traditional and my rules are as so, I guide my daughters, but never stop in their way or jail their desires and minds. For example like my second daughter loves horse riding and even if it is seen as a boy’s sport here, I still registered her in the mixed classes and the eldest of mine insisted to enroll in the private American university of Kuwait so even if it is mixed, I raised her with morals, I trust her, and so I cannot get in her way or break her heart (Hanouf, 45).*

Adaptation to the changing world was very much evident in Hanouf’s meaning makings when relating her traditional self to her young daughters coming from the next generation. For example, Hanouf explained that a few years ago, her daughters being in a girls only Arabic school to her was the most of a social environment they could mobilize in without her supervision. Today, Hanouf explained how “things changed” and she gradually allowed her second daughter in the horse riding sessions, the eldest in a mixed university, and the youngest active in the British council after school to learn English at a higher level.

In contrast, modern Muslim mothers made sense of religious/ Islamic discourses in different views. For example, Basma said:

*No, I do not care as I am totally against complications. I do not like stories of ohhh ahhh girls are in a separate school, or to be very religious in our behaviour. I never even consider or have a thought passing my mind to place her in a segregated school. I am against the close minds, I want her to build up a normal life since an early age and not study in a segregated school then realize that this whole world is actually mixed (Basma, 28).*

And Ghala, in her illustrations of the veil said:
The reputation is more important than the veil because you can be veiled and have the worst morals or unveiled with richer values and respect of others. So decency is in actions and not how you dress or look (Ghala, 44).

The notion of tension is illustrated further in the sub-themes when focusing on the veil, education, and mothers managing their daughters’ social life in a changing world.

Sub-themes

1) The veil

Traditional and religious mothers are veiled themselves unlike the modern group of mothers. Although they remain veiled, they still do not “pressure” or “force” their daughters to veil. This reflects back to mothers’ earlier discussions when relating to the generation difference. For example, Sukayna (a mother with a face Neqab) made sense of emotional conflict in terms of the veil:

*I convince them but do not show them like “ohh you are forced on something” because I do not want them feeling anger or taking revenge after. I feel the veil is a beautiful Islamic commitment only when it comes deeply from the inside, her comfort, her wanting, her true consent, otherwise she will only grow up hating it if worn through ahh me forcing her which is Haram (sinful) (Sukayna, 35).*

In addition, the participants with a Neqab (face veil) described that they do not encourage a Neqab towards their daughters as long as they hold on to decency and modesty. For example, Sama said:

*I have been living with my Neqab for sixteen years now. I got used to it. It became part of me. But this does not mean that my daughters should adapt to such lifestyle. I actually discourage it, and only encourage decent clothing to Islam with the hope that one day they cover the hair yes, but not their faces (Sama, 34).*
Traditional Hanouf here shared that her youngest daughter is actually willing to cover her hair with a Hijab, but she is suggesting otherwise:

*I love it that my youngest daughter wants the veil but I am holding her back a few years. I need to be sure she is a bit more ready ahhh convinced and mature* (Hanouf, 45).

Some mothers described revealing clothing such as the “ripped jeans” being in the modern fashion today and desired by many young Kuwaiti girls. As evident in one of the shared experiences from traditional and religious Ebtesam (a mother with a face Neqab) in her traditional concerns of modesty:

*I guide my girls how to control their desires and temptations. For example my eldest daughter desperately wants you know ummm the jeans, the style the ones with empty patches and ripped and stuff like that, so she really really nags for one but I feel this is against proper modesty so I convince her it is not suitable in our society and it is not even nice, although I love them (laughs)* (Ebtesam, 43).

In contrast, the clothing here is used to “mask” one’s personal conflict and desires against the culture or societal wants. Self-identifying her situation, Maysoon said:

*I admit I do have a personal problem myself in which sometimes my own wants and desires contradict with the societal and Islamic expectations, which I feel I need to stick to. For example like in my clothing in order to maintain the proper image of a Muslimah (Muslim woman) (Maysoon, 39).*

Another participant, Maram was interestingly married through a love story in Kuwaiti culture (although being a traditional woman) that later on “veiled her face” after marriage with a Neqab. She is never against romantic relationships. She said:

*I married my husband through a long love story (laughs) yes even if I wear the face veil but my ideas are very
open even towards my daughter when I teach her about relationships (Maram, 38).

Furthermore, in her response to her daughters’ concerns about the public image and clothing, Sukayna shared:

But that does not mean that my daughters sometimes question the veil and say “Mama (mum) these girls look prettier than you because they are unveiled so why can’t you be the same” when we walk in the mall or so, but I explain to them that this is the choice of these people and our choices differ but this certainly does not mean the unveiled are bad or wrong (Sukayna, 35).

Traditional mothers ensure that their daughters feel comfortable about the veil and very much adapted naturally into the idea. Adaptation and acceptance are important to avoid emotional conflicts. For example:

I guide her about these ideas from now so she naturally fits in later, but I also tell her covering your hair does not necessarily have to mean that you will be the girl in black ahhh she can still wear nice clothes with girly colors (Maram, 38).

Hala on the other hand does not consider the veil as a rule but is very modest as she used to wear a face veil (Neqab) in the past but slowly shifted to believing in more modern ideologies. She falls between being traditional and modern and has conflict shifting between the two social groups. She said:

I admit. I am a bit confused. It’s hard for me but I try to push my daughter into the modern side of me (Hala, 34).

Islamic meaning making of clothing and ideas take form in many ways as Lulwa stated when discussing modern ideologies and cultural differences. By valuing religion and the “Islamic identity”, Lulwa added:

I manage well, I tell her see this is here and this is there, you chose, you can distinguish between what is right to
wear and what is not so aahh I like to ensure her Islamic identity is not totally lost yet without forcing her to appear publicly in a certain way (Lulwa, 48).

Moreover, the modern (unveiled) mothers described that their daughters are “free to dress however they like but with respect to the society’s norms of modernity. In addition, the veil was not encouraged. Basma explained how culture created a meaning making for clothing. She described:

*I believe modern does not have to mean slutty as our society believes or gives us such impression and revealing does not necessarily mean seducing (Basma, 28).*

A number of modern mothers described that they dislike being minimized to only sexual beings by making sense of the socially constructed meanings in terms of clothing. This means that they are against only being identified as to whether their clothing is Islamic or not, having this as the only predictor of their thoughts and behaviours. Muslim Kuwaiti women feel that for a stronger sense of gender equality, the culture must not put too much emphasis on their sexuality. Ghada drifted on and said:

*I feel it does not matter what you wear, I hate it when women here are only defined by their clothing appearance as if there is nothing more to us other than looking sexually appealing or not (Ghada, 34).*

**ii) Education**

Mothers described their feelings in terms of education in different ways. For example, most traditional/religious mothers preferred the Arabic schooling system. Many still enrolled their daughters in the British council in Kuwait (after school) to learn the English language. As described by Sukayna:

*I prefer schooling with a stronger base in Islam and Arabic teaching, that’s why, and I feel the Arabic*
language is more of an art, so I want them to be strong in it (Sukayna, 35).

In contrast, interestingly below is another second view on schooling coming from a “developing” traditional mother who believes in a proper preparation for a mixed future. In her response, she elaborated:

*The world’s biggest mistake is that girls grow up in a segregated setting because segregating them from the boys will only mean that they will grow wanting and desiring to be around boys more than anything in this world so I teach my daughter that behind this school fence, the boys here are your friends (Hadeel, 35).*

Another example, Lulwa here tries to build a balance between Islam and a modern identity (adaptation to modernity). She placed her only daughter in an Arabic schooling system that also focuses on the English language. She said:

*It’s also bilingual so she will be able to learn the two languages and I am happy with it because it is segregated (Lulwa, 48).*

Rather than placing their daughters in Arabic schoolings and having the English language as an after school activity (as explained by some of the traditional and religious mothers), modern mothers have already placed their daughters in the modern schools in Kuwait. “*We live in a mixed world and schooling must be mixed too*”, was a meaning making illustrated by many modern Muslim mothers. Mixed schools, in the past, had a majority of expatriates or “Kuwaiti boys”. Today, the number of girls in mixed (English IGCSE or American) schoolings is becoming more apparent (as the modern mothers described). Therefore, modernized mothers in this research strongly believed in “the blending of a mixed environment” at an early age to adapt and be more prepared in this mixed world. For example, Ghada, Nadia, and Manar said:
The world is all mixed, so if we live in a mixed world, why segregate the schools; this makes no sense at all to me actually. Even the Hajj (Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca) is mixed (laughs) (Ghada, 34).

Not only going over the syllabus, I feel the British system schooling teaches you manners as well as attitude (Nadia, 32).

Their school is their second role model after me so ahhh I believe segregation is not a good idea today to better teach both sexes how to naturally communicate without barriers or wrong thoughts about it (Manar, 34).

Mixed and modern schools are seen by those mothers as good platforms for preparing the boys and girls to communicate naturally. Modern mothers feel that mixed schools provide boys and girls an opportunity to develop their friendship in a natural way. This is because the mixed schools are associated with diverse activities, giving the boys and girls room for interaction. Such friendship extends into the classroom environment and enables the students to share their views in an open way.

Furthermore, in her discussions of girls studying abroad, Nouriya said:

Yes yes yes, let them go, but in university age I prefer after age 18. Let them get such beautiful experience and bring it home; it’s good I feel (Nouriya, 47).

Linking back to the literature review presented earlier, Kuwaiti women in the past battled to gain their educational rights “inside Kuwait”. With gradual progress, Kuwaiti women migrated to other Arab countries for educational purposes. Today, in the context of a new world, many Kuwaiti women are migrating abroad to Western societies to gain their educational degrees.
iii) Managing the social life in a changing world

Negotiating the social life in terms of religion, traditions, and modernity was discussed in different ways. Participants worried that by limiting their daughters to traditions, the daughters will deliberately not "fit in" in this changing world and could discriminate, or discriminated against. For example, traditional and religious mothers are advanced in the way of thinking even with the heavy secluded clothing. In Ebtesam’s talk about respecting the “Others”, she said:

*I teach my daughters that prayers are important and for example they never tease or make fun of other people or other beliefs and religions, or even looks and colours of people, and how they decide to dress whether modest or not, they must understand everybody makes their own choices differently and we respect people the way they respect themselves (Ebtesam, 43).*

Traditional mothers are flexible with their daughters. Maysoon for example explained:

*I cannot tell them everything is Haram Haram Haram (sinful sinful sinful). I let them explore within this world but within limits of course (Maysoon, 39).*

Similarly, the advanced (traditional and religious) Sukayna with an open mind said:

*Yes of course in our way even if we are traditional and value cultural customs but her way of life can be open she has the right to question me as much as I question her (Sukayna, 35).*

In contrast, Muslim mothers with modern self-definitions such as Ghala discussed issues related to modernity, yet within the Kuwaiti social standards:

*She has guy friends from school, I allow her, but at the same time I teach her a bit about our culture and traditions so she does not become a totally odd Kuwaiti girl when grown up (Ghala, 44).*
And Aliaa feels that there is no such thing as total freedom in any societal context:

*I trust them, but even freedom must always have its limits*  
(Aliaa, 39).

In terms of freedom, Ghada feels that if foreigners (expatriates in Kuwait) can manage an unsupervised social life, her daughters can be raised in the same way with the ability to protect themselves. In her discussions of social freedom, she said:

*I want them to grow up being able to protect themselves, so this means girls should be left alone at times. If one day they got harassed in a mall for example, they should know how to deal with it. W’Allah (I swear) the foreigners here if harassed they step on the man’s belly, so let’s put such courage in the Kuwaiti girls too*  
(Ghada, 34).

Furthermore, Rania raised issues related to the Love Street. The Love Street is a culturally “made up” name for a street in Kuwait where young men and women go to flirt, by driving with their cars, and not raising suspicion in the Kuwaiti community. Being concerned about her daughters abusing freedom and by assessing the relationship between herself and her daughters, she said:

*My relationship with them is very open, even beyond your imagination. Freedom, yes, given in all ways, but last week for example my 14 years old daughter was out with her 18 years old cousin supposedly going to the cinema but then I found out that her cousin who recently started driving, was driving around the Love Street for three hours and this angered me because she is teaching my daughter to lie to me so I explained to my daughter the line between me giving her freedom and her abusing such trust. Now she knows if she lies about her location again, her feet will only move if beside mine*  
(Rania, 48).

As discussed in this overarching theme, Muslim mothers encourage a free lifestyle in terms of the veil, education, and the social life. They still feel that freedom must have a limit to be in line with cultural norms (i.e. the limit as to how much boys in school are
friends after school for example) and to what extent they set their daughters free without their supervision (i.e. when discussing issues such as location or safety). Overall, traditional, religious, and modern mothers had similar meaning makings when relating to the next generation. With that, all the women in this study at times described other influencing dynamics. A number of examples are illustrated in the following final analytical section.

**Theme 5: Influences**

This final theme looks at the roles of husbands within the lives of Kuwaiti Muslim mothers in terms of influencing behaviour. A comparison between boys’ upbringing and girls’ upbringing was also discussed when making sense of the social identity and reputation. For example, Faten (the modern mother explained that her husband was a barrier to her choices) and Ebtesam (the traditional and religious mother) were both held back in schooling decisions by their husbands:

*I love the British mixed schooling but I placed them in the British segregated school as it’s the wish of my husband, Prince (said husband’s name in a sarcastic tone), or else I want them in the mixed one* (Faten, 32).

*My husband insisted on the segregated schooling so I went along with it* (Ebtesam, 43).

The notion of influence is illustrated further in the concluding sub-themes when discussing husbands’ views, boys’ upbringing, and social norms in terms of reputation.

**Sub-themes**

*i) Husbands’ views*

The husbands’ views were discussed in a number of ways. For example, Sama related the veil to her husband’s feelings:
The father ahhh my husband is even stricter with girls when it comes to the veil; as this is a must in Islam; he believes (Sama, 34).

Furthermore, unlike Saudi Arabia, Kuwaiti women by law are permitted to drive with a small minority that are not permitted by family and not law. Sukayna illustrated:

My own father raised me in a strict way and even never allowed me to drive and made my husband follow so (Sukayna, 35).

In contrast, Ghada warns that she will not allow any involvements in the modern way of her daughters’ rearing (as mentioned earlier, she is facing marital complications from her religious husband, hence, considering to initiate a divorce with the cost of loosing custody). She strongly said:

The veil is not a force, no, never, they know from now that this is their decision so even if their grandpa is religious, way too religious, father’s side not my dad, but no no, not any pressures I will allow. Being sure my daughters remain happy is the reason why I am not stepping for that divorce, because I want them, I want to be the one protecting them (Ghada, 34).

On the other hand, Nadia, the divorced lawyer from the high class (satisfied with the custody of her 5 years old daughter) said that her husband could not influence her character in any way. Explaining that although he is operating with the Islamic Kuwaiti police force, he still smuggles illegal substances (process made easier due to his occupation):

I did not let him influence my character in any way. I actually used the Islamic law to my side, to defend myself, and my daughter. I said “this husband of mine, who is a heavy drinker, he’s no angel from the sky, he pretends to be, like many others, and now apply the fair law because I will divorce him, and I will still take my daughter” (Nadia, 32).
And Maram, discussing her physical appearance and her husband’s influences:

*I think I mentioned it earlier, we married through a long love story, top secret huh (laughs), so see when he married me I was already covering my hair and convinced with it, but after delivering my first child, he started to constantly talk about the Neqab (face veil). He did not force me, but he was always jealous and I cannot enjoy my outings with him because he was always concerned about who’s staring at me, and at a later point I noticed he avoids taking me to crowded places like Avenues (the largest mall in Kuwait), so only because I love him and respect his wishes, I surprised him with my consent to the Neqab. I am used to it now and it does not make me feel paralysed in any way (Maram, 38).*

**ii) Boys' upbringing**

Some mothers in this study (with teenaged boys) shared the discursive challenges when comparing both sexes. For example, Ebtesam and Hanouf said:

*Boys are harder to rear and control in the long run (Ebtesam, 43).*

*Boys over ten cannot be controlled. I gave up (laughs) (Hanouf, 45).*

Similarly, Sukayna, a mother with a face Neqab, has deep worries when her son prefers to visit other Duwaniyat, rather than invite his friends in his Duwaniya. Duwaniyat (plural) or Duwaniya (singular) is a reception area with a spacious hall (usually equipped with what interests the boy) found in Kuwaiti houses (in the lower grounds) and the purpose is that Kuwaiti men gather and enjoy their social life away from the immediate presence inside the house (to avoid mixing stranger men with the sisters or the mother). A Duwaniya is a fundamental part of Kuwaiti life, being a mark in Kuwait’s traditional life, and found in every house for either the sons or the father to invite friends
in. Making sense of the boys’ social life in terms of her son and the Duwaniyat, Sukayna said:

_I have to always monitor my boys too, especially my 14 years old son as he could click with the wrong groups in his friend’s Duwaniya (reception hall) and it will be even harder to control him after. Today ahhh I feel even some Muslims are dangerous to mix with and I want my boy to only mix with the clean ones. So now no matter how much he grows, he is still my baby, I am the mother, my rules apply as long as I live, if I say he leaves his friend’s Duwaniya at eleven pm, he leaves it even if it’s the weekend, no discussion, I cannot rest my head to sleep if he’s not home, even though my husband reminds me that too much control could break his personality in the long run as he is now in a sensitive age, I still feel he’s young, too young_ (Sukayna, 35).

**iii) Social norms in terms of reputation**

Finally, mothers with sons shared stories and lived experiences related to the raising of their children in terms of reputation. Mothers described the differences in how they cater their daughters and sons. As illustrated:

_Girls are harder to guide with respect to reputation issues in this society you know_ (Lulwa, 48).

Similarly, traditional and religious Sama said:

_A boy’s chastity is never damaged but a girl’s chastity is her entire future_ (Sama, 34).

In contrast, some mothers had a strong sense that both sexes are equally challenging when making sense of the future. For example, modern Nouriya feels girls and boys need similar attention in terms of social freedom, sexuality, and relationships. In her concerns about her 17 years old son (soon to migrate to the UK for higher education), she said:

_Even a young man needs intense monitoring and guiding. Today the difference between the two is becoming less umm ahh my girls’ safety is everything to me indeed but_
also my boy must understand that he should not play
around with girls’ and their feelings because those girls
have families that love them too. Whatever he does not
allow man to do to his sisters; he shall not do to other
girls even if he is travelling away from my eyes (Nouriya,
47).

Although issues related to husbands and sons were not an immediate aim in this
study, much of their notions were described by women in different ways (whether
positively or negatively). This tells us that the changing world has an impact on how
mothers make sense of the next generation in different ways. The following section is a
discussion of this study and how it contributes to the existing literature.

(5. 13) Discussion

This study provided insights on Muslim Kuwaiti mothers when managing their
relationships with the next generation (precisely their daughters). Data findings showed
five main themes that emerged. Changing priorities for girls was the initial discussion by
all mothers. In the context of a changing world, mothers are adapting to modern
ideologies when relating to their children. This was described in terms of a later age in
marriage, education and independency, and less pressures on a traditional marriage.

With that, mothers feel that normalizing cultural taboos in the upbringing of their
daughters creates a healthy environment. In this technologically advanced world, mothers
were aware that they couldn’t restrict their daughters or alienate them from the changing
world in order to “fit in” with traditions. Therefore, negotiating the romantic media and
sexuality, the “Online” virtual social life and traditions, globalization, social media, and
social networks were encouraged by mothers.

This indicates that mothers are challenging the notions of a traditional space in a
new modern time. Mothers feel that the challenges had more positive influences and
more of a “power” than a threat to traditions when making sense of this globalized world. Positive influences included the advanced generation, mothers rejecting oppression and cannot “bottle up” girls today, and a clear desire of raising stronger daughters.

Individual differences still existed when mothers defined themselves as modern, traditional, or religious. The overarching theme of tension raised issues around the veil, education, and managing the social life in a changing world. Mothers feel that a Hijab cannot be a barrier to their cognitive responses when reflecting to this modern world. Finally, mothers discussed other influences when discussing their parenting roles. For example, husbands’ views had an impact on some decisions related to the raising of girls. Boys’ upbringing at times was compared to girls’ showing us that expectations are becoming similar between both sexes. Notions of social norms in terms of reputation were reflected in many ways in a society that widely stresses on such issues.

(5. 14) Linking it to the literature

This final study revealed new insights after exploring how mothers made sense of the next generation (i.e. in terms of their relatedness to their daughters). As described by Aquil, (2011) even with their faces and bodies covered, Muslim women are active in many public spheres such as education and work. This is especially true in this study. This study differs from recent studies when examining the lives of Muslim Kuwaiti women today in terms of intellectual, emotional, and physical aspects. For example, results indicated that Muslim mothers normalize notions of sexual taboos and relationships when raising their daughters, with the hope to avoid emotional conflicts and health consequences that could continue further into the marital transiton.
Furthermore, existing literature focused in large on what Muslim men feel about globalization and views of Islamic scholars were constantly illustrated (Najjar, 2005). Limited focus has been given to Muslim women and what are their feelings about this globalized world today. In addition, the discussion about the impact of the media on Islam in mass media and scientific arena has always involved the negative effects (Moallem, 2005). The positive effects of the process of increased use of media are ignored. This study linked and described Muslim women’s feelings about globalization, the social media, and social networks when relating to their children. This study found out that whether gradual or rapid, economic, social, educational, and technological changes have all created positive effects in the lives of Muslim mothers today. Thomas (2013) similarly claimed that technologically based changes specifically have touched on the lives of Muslim women, making them more aware of their rights and opportunities.

Schooling systems were also described in this study. Islamic ideologies prefer that girls attend segregated schools for a variety of religious reasons such as physical education and sport (Golkowska, 2013). Muslim girls are prone to face conflict when challenging the tension of rapid modernization and cultural traditions that control the woman’s body regardless of “social change processes” (Benn et al., 2011). Today (as this study suggests), mothers feel it is healthier for their daughters to attend mixed schools (as well as migrate abroad for a higher level of education). This shows us the different dimensions of modern transitions in terms of motherhood. As described earlier, globalization has allowed the international community to detach the Islamic world from being isolated.
(5. 15) Implications for theory

The world is continuously advancing and implications for Muslim Kuwaiti women include how they relate to the next generation. Changing priorities for girls, the normalizing of cultural taboos, and challenging a traditional space in a new modern time (in this study) showed us that mothers today are shifting with the pace of modern change and adapting to new ideologies. Physical tension and influences still exist when women made sense of their self-categories (i.e. raising their daughters to standards that differ from theirs’ in a globalized world). Islamic motherhood in a changing technologically advanced world could be understood by drawing upon self-categorization theory. Model C shows the contributions made by women’s behavioural and social patterns when defining self and identity in an Eastern Islamic context.

Making sense of Model C

It is through globalization that a new transnational Islamic identity has been formed, a concept accompanied by development of its related ideologies. This explains why it is easy for “new Muslim mothers” to emerge in this changing world as shown in this study. Data in this study indicated that intellectual and emotional patterns were similar between all mothers regardless of physical tension in terms of the veil, education, and the social life (creating individual differences between the defined self-categories). Therefore, the notions of space and time are major contributions when challenging identities and self-categorizing oneself in a traditional orientated space (i.e. Kuwait), yet in a new modern time (continuous transitions of social change).
(5.16) Model C: Adapting to “new ideologies”
Self-categorization theory

Self-categorization theory focuses on social cognitive processes that make individuals identify themselves and manifest group behaviours (Hogg & Reid, 2006). The activation of different levels of saliency in this study is crucial. Self-categorization theory was used to analyze why certain groups of women define themselves as part of a specific group and not another (i.e. in-group processes in terms of religious, traditional, or modern). Contributions to this theoretical approach showed us how women distinguish, define, and categorize themselves in relation to raising their daughters (in-groups and out-groups) when living in an Islamic society and transgressing social norms.

To date, no study examined the discursive challenges when making sense of Muslim mothers’ roles in a changing world. Results in this study suggest that even with their Hijab (hair veil) or Neqab (face veil), mothers today project no pressure towards their daughters to veil. This shows us that clothing is not a predictor of behaviour. With that, women feel that their relatedness to a “head cover” is not a “brain cover” and they “fit in” with the intellectual and emotional aspects of this changing world in terms of cognitive responses. Overall, by negotiating traditions and modernity onto the Muslim woman’s body tells us that traditional roles and self-categories in an Islamic context are re-negotiated as a result of modern transitions and globalization in a technologically advanced world.

(5. 17) Conclusion

By making sense of the main research question in this study, Muslim Kuwaiti mothers today are shifting to transitions of social change when raising a new generation and self-defining their challenging identities. For example, clothing values such as the
Hijab being less worn is becoming more acceptable. Technological evolution is increasingly changing the way people used to live in Kuwait (Hamade, 2009). The emergence of modern social platforms has in a huge way influenced the lifestyles as well as behaviours of women across the country. The most affected group by these platforms is the new generation, mainly Muslim girls aged 5-13, who have “adapted” to much of the new modern ideologies. Modern transitions in Kuwait today as well as the globalized media are introducing new issues into the Islamic society of Kuwait (Al-Sabah, 2013). This could confront traditional ideologies within the Kuwaiti context and have an impact on societal living norms.

Mothers in this study fear that their daughters would be very alienated or Othered if only raised to traditional ideologies of the past. Therefore, adapting to new social and technological advancements was encouraged. New Muslim mothers; creating new meanings when relating to their children is now possible as a result of changing world. With new social structures and social change today, it is becoming difficult to hold on to the “old expectations” towards the next generation of Muslim Kuwaiti children.

In the following final chapter, a general discussion of the thesis is illustrated, highlighting the narrative of this thesis, women’s psychological well-being, the overarching model with its meanings as it links to the three empirical studies, and the overarching themes of the veil and identity conflict. This then leads to the methodological limitations, implications for research, and the overall conclusive points. Finally, a detailed glossary followed by the appendices and references are included.
(6) Chapter six-Discussion

The narrative of this thesis explored how Muslim Kuwaiti women (from three different perspectives) relate to world advancements, as well as how much they “fit in” with the pace of social change. Study one drew attention on women’s pre-marital sexual lives and how they made sense of secret keeping and taboo relationships. Study two examined the reported lived experiences of unmarried women (divorced and spinsters) and emotional conflict in terms of social stigmatization in a man dominated society. Study three looked at the process of motherhood in a changing world, precisely mothers’ “challenging identities” when relating to their daughters (i.e. a more modern generation).

Women that took part in those three studies described their satisfaction for being allowed to discuss such taboo and culturally sensitive issues out loud. For example, towards their concluding points, Bibi (sexually active outside marriage), Jehan (divorced through Khula), and Sama (a mother with a face Neqab) said:

*I feel very happy today for talking about it loudly, sharing my private sexual life without being judged negatively or threatened to be punished (Bibi, 26).*

*First time in my life I am not seen as a bad women after claiming my divorce story in detail. I have always wanted to let those things out (Jehan, 46).*

*Thank you very much as this research enlightened me and got me thinking thinking thinking more about my girls’ future in this new world (Sama, 34).*

A total of 68 Muslim Kuwaiti women were interviewed (interviews lasting on average anytime between 50-160 minutes) during the process of data collection. Six of the interviews were called off for ethical purposes (due to the judgment that women were
feeling uncomfortable in their participation). 62 in-depth interviews were used in this thesis as a base for analysis after tape recording, transcribing, and coding the data (in search for patterns of themes). In the overall sense, women feel a heightened degree of saliency in their meaning makings when relating to the activation of self and identity constructions within their restricted Islamic context. With that, the majority of women described that their “true selves and identities” at times could not “stand out” as they desire in order to be accepted within their society’s rules and rigidity.

Transcending themes

Transcending the individual results from the three empirical studies are three overarching themes; which can be seen across the thesis. These relate to women’s psychological well-being, the meaning of the veil and conflict. These overarching themes will now be described in turn and then integrated in a final model.

(6.1) Overarching theme 1: Women’s psychological well-being

Psychological well-being has no single form of measuring. By narrowing it down in this thesis, the context and the identity construction are the core aspects. By assessing Muslim women's well-being in terms of emotional feelings and cognitive responses, it became evident that women's "good feelings" when engaging in a certain behaviour (i.e. romantic relationships) are limited. For example, the positive feelings of enjoying an intimate relationship are replaced with conflicting feelings when women shift in a different context (i.e. the social sphere or family group). The intensity of this transitional phase causes anxiety. In light with the compounds of women's feeling, emotions are not stabilized (at higher levels). Being true to one's social identity could reduce such distress, yet it's difficult when making sense of the complexity of this changing world.
Women's psychological well-being therefore cannot possibly be satisfied from within due to the external influencing dynamics from the social environment. Happiness in this situation is linked with women's intrinsic and extrinsic senses of how they feel the society is viewing them. The negative influences from society makes women continuously judge themselves, which has an impact on the many meanings of "being well". Furthermore, women's psychological well-being links to their physical aspects (i.e. the veil) as discussed later in this chapter. In addition to the physical and social dynamics, the family tension also shaped negative implications in women's patterned thoughts. The stability of women's moods and emotions (i.e. increased levels of discomfort, depression, sexual guilt, or nervousness) are dependent on (even threatened by) society.

Overall, by evaluating women's meanings and abilities in terms of self-acceptance when managing this complex environment to suit their already established personal desires and values, results in this thesis suggest that the intrinsic happiness along with a "positive society relationship" creates an unhealthy construction of interconnected identities. By viewing the context from such angle, women can "feel good" when doing something, and feel "distressed" during the same time span (as illustrated in most of their contradicting sense makings). Although the need to be accepted by social others is very much desired, there still is a stronger desire to satisfy the liberated notion of self, outside societal boundaries. This challenges the traditional aspects of identity construction in terms of Muslim women's adaptability to new lifestyles. Transcending this, the instability and saliency of identities showed us that Muslim women are prone to risk their psychological well-being. The overarching psychological impacts are discussed in the coming sections.
(6. 2) Overarching theme 2: Many truths beneath the Hijab

The way we understand things, the nature of knowledge, and peoples’ meaning makings are dependent on how we locate truth. The many meanings of the Hijab in a patriarchal Kuwaiti culture are all integrated in this thesis when making meaning of the connected notions of truth beneath the commitment to a Hijab. The Hijab (the Islamic veil worn by Muslim women) was discussed in different ways. With that, it is important to understand the socially constructed notions of the veil alongside the variations in women’s senses in terms of adapting to the veil and a modest appearance as part of their identity in a changing world.

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, according to Islam, the Quran, and Prophet Mohammad’s sayings, the veil must be integrated in a Muslim woman’s social identity for the purpose of protection (i.e. a woman’s body is not at risk of sexual harassment) and also to keep women away from sexual sins (i.e. saving body parts that arouse sexual desire to the husband). By committing to veil, Muslim women are also expected to cover the rest of their bodies (with the exception to the face and hands) when in the presence of non-Mahram (non-kin) men.

A Muslim woman's physical body is therefore not to be seen playing role with social paradigms. Taking care of her appearance must not allow the Muslim woman to fall into the trap of Tabarruj, which is the trap of wanton display of her beauty (Al-Hashimi, 2005). Her beauty must remain concealed to her husband (Khoei et al., 2008). In the Quran, Surah Alnur directs Muslim women to cover their bosoms and their jewelry. In Surah Alahzab, Muslim women are recommended to wrap their black robes around their bodies in order to not be recognized or bothered in public. It is of interest to note that
even in the Quran, it states that women urge to pull their garments over their faces to express that they are free women, and therefore won't be harassed. The Prophet Mohammad said: *Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of believers to let down upon them their over-garments. This is more proper, so that they not be given trouble. And Allah is every forgiving, Merciful.* This implies that the freedom of a woman in Islam is described through her "hiddenness".

An ideal Muslim woman is therefore covered fully from head to toe in order to hide her Awra, which is the Islamic term for the body parts that arouse sexual desires in men, or the "shame" of her. A woman's sexuality in Islam is seen as shameful, and therefore the appearance of her sexuality whether in clothing or attitude is also seen as shameful when defining her social identity and self-categorization. Although linking the veil to sexuality and the social identity (as described in Islam), women in this thesis discussed different meanings for their “commitment to the veil” contradicting the Islamic/traditional meaning of the veil, but still made sense of it in line with sexuality and identity. The "overarching" many meanings of the veil showed us that the veil has no single truth in today's complex world.

For example, women at times defined the veil as a source to cope with sexual guilt (in terms of satisfying the Islamic side of them). Others made use of the veil or even the Neqab (face veil) to "mask their identity" or facial recognition when in suspicious places (i.e. secret keeping and romantic dating). This indicates that the veil worn by many Muslim women could represent many levels of social and emotional meanings. Some women may wear the veil to gain respect in a male dominated society. Others would wear it to avoid sexual harassment and also to avoid society’s judgments about women’s
presence in public space. For some, the veil is a good way to show that they care about traditional norms and issues such as sexual purity. Those women are influenced by the collective or religious social identities. Others wear the veil in terms of negotiating gender and demonstrating how they fit in with womanhood and traditional lifestyles. In addition, this thesis showed us no relationship between the veil and sexual purity, as most of the veiled participants were the ones with emotional conflict and sexual guilt (by wearing clothing that contradicts their behaviour).

In addition, many women feel that the veil could be worn in a fashionable sense that in return is actually diminishing the whole process of veiling. For example, by wearing the veil and still consuming modern (or attractive) clothing (wearing it in public space with the veil). This creates conflict furthermore as it contradicts the value behind the traditional meanings of the veil: worn to appear less attracting and avoiding the stranger man's gaze. On the other hand, some women made sense of their rebellious behaviour (when going against long held traditions in terms of sexuality and relationships) because of the repressed veil imposed on them by the family group. By being pressured into this "forced identity" of a repressed veil, a degree of powerlessness and identity conflict increases. Women in some occasions feel the need to wear a veil in order to be "more" socially accepted as ideal Muslim women by a certain group.

Other women committed to the veil with the intention to attract "a good husband". With that, they can show their ability to raise children to Islamic standards. All groups of women (with their different interpretations of the veil) faced physical tension in this changing world. Even with a consensual veil, women for example described their tension when relating to the next generation (their young daughters). Conflict could be also
heightened when a woman's public image (i.e. veiled woman) is combined with Islamic sexual sins. Identity conflict in such situations becomes more apparent. Therefore, clothing and behaviour are not necessarily related (i.e. Islamic clothing and Islamic actions).

A modest Mazhar (physical appearance) is one of the most important assets a Muslim woman could hold on to. With that, many women feel that such modest appearance is a necessary reflection to their Islamic social identities, but they still feel that they fit in with the narratives of the changing world. Results suggested that all women (modern, traditional, or religious) made sense of intellectual and emotional aspects in the same pattern. This means that physical tension was the main contributing conflict. Overall, this shows us that the veil has no relationship to traditional concepts of living.

The renegotiation of women’s identities and the new constructed boundaries mean that a Hijab is also coming to terms with this changing world. Such overarching meanings of the veil (contradicting the Islamic meaning of its usage) means that Muslim women are prone to face identity conflict (due to the connected relationship between the veil and the social identity). To date, no studies reported the overarching experiences and many different meanings of the veil as it relates to identity conflict in terms of this complex changing world. This is elaborated further in the next section.

(6.3) Overarching theme 3: Identity conflict

"It's all on our shoulders" was the phrase used by many women in this thesis when implying on the heaviness of the "idealistic social identity" enforced on them by society. To maintain such ideal image, women need to live by the socially constructed standards
in terms of physical appearance (i.e. clothing) and household's reputation (with women being careful not to rupture if going against cultural norms). This reputation includes many considerations such as maintaining modesty, a very limited social life (when away from the family group), and preservation of virginity until marriage.

Erikson (1968) described identity as being located in the "core" of the individual as well as the core of his "communal culture". This clearly states the validity of balancing personal and social identities within the person as evident in women’s senses (in this thesis). Our social identities naturally link to normative fits of value and thoughts influenced by choices of the society's members. Social norms could be defined as the framework to identify standardized behaviours. Due to the complexity of this world, conflicting identities continue to be a concern as a result of shifting away from the cultural rebound effects (barriers stemmed by one's culture). This in return produces anxiety, which can affect women's psychological well-being (as described earlier).

Women's identity dimensions shift in different contexts, having important implications when exploring interaction, influencing dynamics, and the solitary approach. The identity conflict derived through women's senses includes a loss of continuity in terms of balancing roles. This makes their inner sense of identity very fluid, and elastic to negative extremes that affect healthy living, heightening the risk of psychological complications. Women's inner conflicts therefore make it difficult to define a consistent meaning of their identity. For example, by linking the veil to the social identity, veiled women are in a conflicting phase: the separated self.

This separated self (away from social judgments) means that women create their own meanings of the veil (pulling their selves from norms). Tension as a result arises
when portraying an image of a veiled woman that clashes with one's own values. Due to the conflicting situations, women feel that they still cannot totally isolate this separate self away from the social identity. With that, women also defined parts of their identity through their connections to others. This increased tension in their identities primarily because at times, women realize that others in the society "see them" differently as to how they "see themselves". The central issue in this situation is transitioning from living with this separate self, and shifting to socially acceptable versions of women.

By such confusing transitional stages, women described many meanings in terms of their identity, for example, when making sense of connectedness. The complication of connectedness to society along with how women choose to present themselves (whether in line with the sexual identity, the independent identity, or the traditional identity) remains a challenging process (as presented further in the interconnected identities Model D). Different Muslim women's identities are formed through the groups they belong to. This thesis highlighted what factors motivate them to behave in certain ways to maintain their social status for example and avoid the socially unacceptable ideologies. This explains better how people view social issues and ideologies (Brown, 2000).

Therefore across the three empirical themes consistently emerged relating to women’s psychological well-being, the meaning of the veil and identity conflict. The final model now attempts to pull these different ideas together.

**6.4) The final model**

Results show us that being a woman in Kuwait is about the limit in which those women could “hide” or “reveal” their true selves and still be socially accepted in line with Kuwait’s normative fit. Women described secretive strategies in terms of secret
keeping, romantic dating, and marginalized relationships. Findings showed us that women balance their “two selves”: driven from their social identity and personal desires. This creates a “clash of identities” and emotional conflicts such as continuous fear, depression, anger, regret, shame, or sexual guilt.

Furthermore, when making sense of insights discussed by unmarried women, results indicated that women were willing to be socially stigmatized (cost) over remaining married, but unable to hold on to their independent identities. Social conflict included the society’s negative judgment on single women (i.e. stigmatizing the never married or the divorced in all age groups) and women feeling vulnerable and pressured by the family group or in their social lives due to their desires to reject or terminate a marriage. Women feel that their visibility is heightened from a negative conflicting angle. This creates psychological distress when defining desired and undesired selves.

Moreover, the changing priorities when reflecting on the next generation included normalizing social taboos (i.e. sexuality and relationships), and the desire to challenge a traditional “space” in a new modern “time”. Furthermore, modest women feel that they relate to the changing world (precisely when raising their daughters) without having traditions create a barrier to their cognitive responses. As a result, emotional and intellectual conflicts continue to be negotiated in women’s meaning makings and tension in terms of the physical aspects relate to women’s well-being at different salient levels.

Therefore, within a changing world, women are forced into managing cultural rebound effects particularly in a context of secret keeping. This reflects on their relationships as women in pre-marital relationships, divorcees or spinsters (single women), and in the way they bring up their children. This impacts upon their
psychological well-being as illustrated in the tension they have over the meanings of the veil and making sense of conflicting identities.

The following section presents the overarching model (Model D) pulling together the theoretical contributions and constructions of the three studies. As it illustrates, Muslim women living in the context of a changing world are continuously challenging traditional sentiments and the socio-cultural constructed patterns in terms of their identities. Social constructionism reflects upon social, interpersonal, and communal influences. This means that compliance in many situations involves a change in women’s behaviour consistent with the society’s direct requests.

In addition, conformity defined as peoples’ tendency when adapting to the behaviours, attitudes, and values of other members of a reference group is a causal factor of the socially constructed cultural norms. The main psychological implication is this adaptation process, which accelerated to “interconnected identities” due to the contrasting ideologies involved in women’s new concepts of living. This means that women described different meanings when making sense of religious sentiments and the social identity.
(6. 5) Model D: Overarching model

Economic/
Financial
opportunities

MUSLIM WOMEN
Psychological well-being

Identity conflict
A changing world: *Interconnected identities*
Veil tension

Modern technology
Religion

Globalization
(6.6) Methodological limitations

Although this thesis was conducted carefully, a few research design and methodological limitations had an impact in terms of the interpretation of the findings. First of all, the areas explored in this thesis lacked, or had very limited prior existing studies in such realms. This meant that in the process of framing out the literature review, laying out a foundation to help understanding the research problems was not very broad. More research on such notions would have helped identifying more academic contributions, and also offered advice on how to handle sensitive areas in Islam. This could have even reduced more of the influencing dynamics discussed earlier. Preparing a direct hypothesis to test would have been possible if there was previous research to build upon. With that, the analytical process (thematic analysis) could have been changed to a more grounded approach (with new insights developed in women's senses of their lives experiences and shared stories).

In addition, access to participants (and data) was limited from an observational methods perspective. This would have enriched overall findings by showing direct behavioural conflicts when making sense of secret keeping and romantic relationships. Even with its usefulness, carrying out observational methods would create cultural risks in a society like Kuwait (raising suspicion in the community which could lead to an ethical dilemma). Another unavoidable limitation was language barriers. This meant that wordings of questions in terms of designing the interview schedules had to be considerate of Kuwait's nature. With that, deeper meaning makings were limited when discussing sexuality in Islam as a separate notion.

Women under the age of 18 were not interviewed because of assent versus informed
consent when discussing cultural taboo issues. This links to the overall conclusions and findings, for example, when making sense of the next generation by analyzing their own voices rather than their mothers' voices. Finally, even though such measures were not intended early in the research process, the studies had smaller sample sizes, hence, limiting the analysis to be exploratory in nature without a more rigorous assessment in terms of statistical measures. Looking at the statistical side of it, this could have given us a bigger picture when relating identity conflict and self-categories to social changes in Kuwait's population.

Findings in this thesis suggest a number of interesting avenues for future researchers. One important aspect that was not answered is to what extent are Muslim men adapting to the context of a changing world and how Muslim Kuwaiti men make sense of women's erotic and romantic lives. Direct responses of men were not included due to segregation along gender lines in Kuwait (with myself being a female researcher). This limited the thesis to women only; hence, men’s social identities and values could not be fully addressed (except in cases when women reflected on them). This section discussed the major methodological limitations in this thesis. The limitations link to several recommendations for future researchers as elaborated in the next section.

(6.7) Implications for research

This thesis discovered new knowledge when making sense of Muslim Kuwaiti women's identities in a changing world. There are still other areas to be explored (especially when connecting some of the limitations to future research). For example, the three studies in this thesis explored the meaning making and lived experiences of women only. Women shared stories about their fathers, sons, brothers, husbands, dating partners
etc., but the studies were limited to actually interpreting such religious discourses in the “voice” and views of the Muslim Kuwaiti men involved in the society and how they feel about such narratives of transition and influences. Examining the sexual relationships of men (heterosexual or homosexual) outside marriage has not been explored. In addition, aspects related to parenting were only examined from the context of motherhood and their feelings in this changing world (limiting our academic knowledge on how men make sense of such new ideologies today).

It would be interesting to research further (in a patriarchal context that still carries gender inequality today): What are the experiences of Muslim Kuwaiti men in relationships outside marriage, what are the feelings and emotions of unmarried men, and how do they define the new social transitions of today (modern ideologies with issues related to clothing, mixed schoolings, and pre-marital experiences before marriage as oppose to the traditional arranged marriages)? What discourse challenges are Muslim men (with daughters of this generation) facing? How do Muslim men define the intimate lives and social identities of Muslim women today?

Moreover, this thesis looked at Muslim Kuwaiti women with bi-cultural influences (through grandmothers) without a direct focus on bi-cultural influences from the parents. Looking at Kuwaiti women with non-Muslim mothers and furthermore compare the cultural conflicts that arise when comparing full Kuwaiti women with the half Kuwaiti-"half Western" women living and adapting between two cultures would also be interesting. Furthermore, the practice of polygamy is accepted in Islamic nations, but the question is: Why are the second wives “neglected” by society? In that context, Muslim Kuwaiti women in this thesis were either “first wives” or women that recently ended a
marriage proposal in becoming “second wives”. This limited our knowledge not only on why men might engage in polygamy, but also on the factors that pushed women into “accepting” to become second, third, or fourth wives.

Another topic of possible interest to future researchers is how technological changes may influence children’s developments in the fast paced technological world of today. Not only it is important to research “how media affects children’s development” but also how “children use the media in the phase of development” (i.e. the relationship between children and media usage is important to question in today’s advanced world). It would also be interesting for future researchers to examine the impact of media advancements amongst children’s lives in Islamic cultures to see the effects of modern ideologies in traditional contexts. In this thesis, attention has been given to the mothers only, lacking direct observation on Muslim children’s behavioural patterns in the context of this changing world. Future research could focus on how Muslim children adapt to new modern ideologies within their Islamic cultures. This remains an important question if we are fully to understand Islamic cultures in a technologically advanced changing world.

Another important question that was unanswered in this thesis is the influence of the modern mixed schools (in Islamic cultures) on romantic dating. Although women from mixed schools joined this thesis, yet the focus was more precise in terms of globalization and social networks as the influencing forces. It would be interesting to compare the results of this thesis with future findings when making sense of schools, as well as the influences of ethnically diverse schools on interracial relationships in Islamic societies. Comparing acculturative educational experiences with women that never migrated could be an interesting follow-up study.
Furthermore, limited knowledge and research has been carried out on culturally taboo sensitive issues related to women’s sexuality in Islamic contexts. For example, sexual identities and sexual preferences amongst Muslim women are not properly examined. Although homosexual Muslim women were not a direct focus in this thesis, some women raised and described their homosexual preferences (and the pressures for them to accept marriages and explain their sexual preferences). Such areas would be interesting to examine in-depth for future research, with the aim to explore how Muslim women cope in their marriages when going against their sexual desires and transgress into new sexual conduct and ways of living. Making sense of the psychological impacts, behavioural, and emotional conflicts are therefore a major focus in this area. Researching how Muslim women feel about managing different sexual experiences would be a unique academic contribution. It would also be important to understand how Muslim women balance their homosexual desires (i.e. lesbian identities) (that go strongly against Islamic ideologies) with Islam.

Finally, in this thesis, Kuwaiti women feel that the Kuwaiti culture provides its definitions of cultural norms. For example, many Kuwaiti men smoke. Yet still, Kuwaiti “women” who smoke are deliberately “visible” and linked to “women with a bad reputation and upbringing”. This makes smoking “culturally defined” as immoral (by society) if done by women (noting that the Islamic religion does not prohibit it for either men or women). Although smoking was not a major theme in this thesis, a large number of the women respondents described how they were “pointed out”, defined as “rebellious”, and stigmatized (by men) for being public smokers. Some described that they were verbally harassed in public by men that labeled them as “trash” or “easy”.
Cultural ideologies versus Islam still remain a question, making it difficult to distinguish between both. Differences exist in terms of cultural norms because of social constructionism. These areas of constructed cultural versus Islamic meaning makings would be interesting to research in the future.

In general, researchers have done a lot of work on disparities between men and women in areas such as education, marriage, ways of dressing, and participation in the community affairs. Debate about these issues has gone on for a number of years and takes a different dimension each time researchers collect and analyze data. One of the religions with major differences between the way women and men are perceived and treated is Islam. As a result, researchers interested in carrying out studies about Muslim women have a range of topics to cover.

(6. 8) Final conclusion

Kuwait has changed dramatically over the last 50 years and simultaneously the world has changed in terms of economic and financial factors, globalization, technology, and religion. The globally advanced world opened doors to Muslim women and cultural transitions continue until the present. Although this (in many ways) created implications on women (balancing their traditional identities with their modern desired selves), new Muslim women (challenging their social norms) are made possible as a result of a changing world. The Sheikdom of Kuwait is a good example of fascinating social changes in the Middle East (Golkowska, 2014).

This thesis contributed by exploring the self-desires and motivations of Muslim Kuwaiti women and how they made sense of their individual lived experiences in this changing world (and a continuously changing Kuwaiti culture). Cultural taboos and
social stigmas in terms of Muslim women were examined. As this thesis focuses on Kuwaiti women, findings illustrate that overall; the changing world challenges the Islamic identity when linking traditions to modernity. The final results tell us that this creates tension and women feel a constant need to manage different salient levels of self-categories. Women when describing their sexual relationships, being unmarried, or bringing up their daughters, experienced a sense of clash of self and contrasting interconnected identities when balancing between desired selves and social identities.
(6.9) Glossary

This glossary is divided into two sections. Section one describes the English terms and how they were applied within the Eastern Islamic context. Section two describes the Arabic/Islamic words used in this thesis and how they are religiously applied and related to Muslim women. The following notions are defined according to the context of this thesis when linking them to Muslim Kuwaiti women.

Key words

Sexuality, relationships, cultural taboos, divorce, self and identity, social stigmas, parenting, motherhood, media influences, Muslim women, and globalization

Section one

Concepts applied in an Eastern context

The changing world: a pattern of gradual modernized and advanced influences (specifically in the Kuwaiti context) in terms of the social changes and influences and the precise implications on the lives of Muslim women in the context of that world.

Social changes and influences: modern and advanced ideologies introduced to the Kuwaiti culture in terms of economic and financial factors, globalization, technology, and religion.

Self: this refers to women’s meaning makings, feelings, and definitions of their self, yet in their Islamic restricted context.

Identity: a link as to how women identify or locate their identities in relation to the society’s rules and rigidity (sense of self identification).

Self-categories: women’s senses of whether where feel they “fit in” within modern, traditional, or religious social groups in line with Islam.

Social norms: traditions and ideologies most appropriate in the Kuwaiti culture.

Culture: one part of self and identity directly related to one’s cultural norms.

Cultural taboos: culturally sensitive topics within the Kuwaiti traditions (i.e. sexuality and relationships).

Social/ Islamic stigmatization: negative social attributes related to the expected (or unexpected) roles of women in Islamic contexts.

Othering: A dissimilar context in terms of cultural norms, religious ideologies, and different views.
Suppression: pressures on women in Islamic contexts (i.e. hiding their bodies through clothing or lack of freedom to express one’s personal identity, keeping it adjacent to Mahram men or the husband).

Gender: for the purpose of this thesis, gender defines the expected social roles of men and women and how women “changed” their roles in a changing Kuwaiti culture.

Feminism: women’s call (precisely Muslims in the context of this thesis) for equal opportunities to men (going against oppressive practices on Muslim women due to their sex that are derived through Islam).

Bi-cultural identities: in this thesis, all women interviewed were purely Kuwaitis with the exception to 5 women in study one that had non-Kuwaiti grandmothers (interviewed to compare and make sense of modern rearing if blended with the Kuwaiti traditional rearing).

Acculturation: Kuwaiti Muslim women with a long-term migration experience (i.e. for education or work experience) interviewed to understand the influences of migrating to another culture.

**Social categories**

Modern Muslim Kuwaiti women: women with a “Westernized physical appearance”, involved in mixed social environments, and do not relate themselves to traditional or religious (Islamic) discourses.

Traditional Muslim Kuwaiti women: women with a “Hijab”, involved in mixed social environments, and relate themselves to traditional discourses (with minimal relatedness to religious (Islamic) discourses).

Religious Muslim Kuwaiti women: women with a “Hijab” (and a Neqab in many cases), involved in mixed social environments, and relate themselves to traditional and religious (Islamic) discourses as a part of defining their selves and identities (unless family pressures made them appear in a certain way).

Shiaa: an Islamic sect with different religious interpretations than Sunna.

Sunna: an Islamic sect with different religious interpretations than Shiaa.

Bedouins: families in Kuwait with a history of desert orientation.

**Social classes**

High class: women with a well-recognized family name and personal financial and economic stability (high income).
Medium class: women with a recognized family name and financial economic stability (limited personal income).

Low class: women with an average family name and not necessarily holding on to a personal financial and economic career (or personal income).

Family name and origin: easily distinguishable in the low populated Kuwaiti population and defined in terms of the family’s origin (purity), wealth, and social reputation (and position within the Kuwaiti context).

Heterogeneous sample: women selected in terms of a wide range including different social classes, social groups, age groups, acculturation experiences, or marital status.

Religion

Islam: the last monotheistic religion (derived from the Arabic word “Salam” meaning peace).

Quran: Allah’s (God’s book).

Hadeeth: Prophet Mohammad’s sayings.

Sunna: more general Islamic traditions and behaviours related to the Prophet Mohammad.

Relationships

Pre-marital/romantic relationships: secretive dating lifestyles away from the public view in an Islamic context (Kuwait).

Sexuality: any desire, practice, or sense of self and identity defined to be erotic.

Nikah: the Islamic marriage.

Love marriages: this type of marriage remains a cultural taboo (even though done through the process of Nikah) owing to the belief that (in its history) it included the “man and woman” communicating secretly, going against the segregation along gender lines in Kuwait (i.e. pre-marital romantic dating).

Traditionally arranged marriages: this type of marriage is typically arranged between the close kin family members (i.e. targeted girls are ones seen in women only parties such as weddings and selected accordingly).

Misyar and Mutah marriages (marriages for short term sexual pleasure): short term agreed upon marriage contract under the condition that the woman involved is not a virgin (i.e. divorced or widowed Muslim or non-Muslim women).
Polygamous marriages: the practice in which a Muslim man is permitted to marry up to four women at the same period of time and all with a proper (full-time) marital contract.

Khatiba: the engagement period in which man and woman are permitted to communicate with the aim to get to know each other (in cases the marriage was not a love marriage and the spouses need to know each other before giving consent).

Melcha: the first ceremony in which the Aqd (marriage contract) is signed and takes place a short period of time before the second ceremony (wedding ceremony).

_Schools in Kuwait_

Modern schools: English (IGCSE) or American systems.

Bilingual schools: English and Arabic foundations.

Arabic schools: Islamic and Arabic foundations (minimal attention to the English language).

_Study one’s terminologies_

Social identity: derived through the social expectations in Kuwait.

Personal desires: women’s desires of a liberated (sexual) lifestyle.

Clash of identities: a consequence of a double life torn between women’s sexual desires and the demands of society.

_Study two’s terminologies_

Visible self: women feeling visible in a “negative light” due to the desire to remain unmarried in their restricted Islamic context.

Invisible self: women feeling invisible in their patriarchal society due to their “independent identity” that goes against man’s preference of a less economically and financially stable wife (to increase his self worth and pride once needed).

Marital competing: women unwilling to “give up” their personal desires of an independent identity in order to “fit in” with traditions and marital expectations.

_Study three’s terminologies_

Intellectual aspects: Muslim Kuwaiti women’s social lives and lived experiences.
Emotional aspects: Muslim Kuwaiti women’s emotional meaning makings and emotional conflicts.

Head cover versus brain cover: physical appearance (Islamic appearances when veiled) aspects not necessarily blocking or being a barrier to Muslim Kuwaiti women’s advanced thoughts and actions.

**Section two**

*Islamic clothing*

Hijab: an Islamic veil that covers a woman’s hair with a continuity of modesty in the clothing style. It covers and conceals the body from head to ankles, revealing only the face and hands. Today, the veil is recognized by Muslim women as a sign of their Islamic status and identity.

Neqab: an Islamic veil that covers a woman’s face (with the exception to her eyes) and is naturally worn with the Hijab (as defined above) and an Abaya.

Abaya: an Islamic loose black robe worn by Muslim women to conceal their body parts (i.e. colour of skin or shape of body).

*Muslim men*

Mahrams: kin male members not permissible for women to marry (i.e. father, brothers, sons, uncles, nephews, and grandfathers).

Non-Mahrams: stranger men that Muslim women are forbidden from engaging with without the physical presence of a Mahram member (which links to man’s Sharaf).

Sharaf: the highest virtue for Muslim men (deliberately linked to women’s abilities in maintaining the man’s Sharaf, which is related to honour).

Face and Head: these terms refer to the “man’s pride” within his society in Arab contexts (i.e. raised face or raised head).

Quiwama: an Islamic “degree” that men are ahead of women (which resulted in man dominated Islamic contexts).

*Unmarried women*

Taleq (divorce): means “setting free” and is initiated by the husband after 3 pronouncements of the word Taleq.

Khula (divorce): means “extracted” and is initiated by the wife through the Islamic court.
Faskh AlNikah (divorce): the Islamic court’s decision to terminate a marriage without any spouse initiating it.

Anisa (spinster): a spinster woman in the Kuwaiti context is a woman nearing the end of her 20s (or over) and has still not experienced a marriage.

Kuwait

Kut: a centre of secure trade port (the original name of Kuwait during early history).

Dawlat AlKuwait: the country of Kuwait, a modern contemporary culture, yet maintaining the traditions and Islamic religion of the society.

Emir (leader): based on hereditary ruling in Kuwait (Al-Sabah family).

Kuwaiti Majlis: Kuwait’s parliament.

Arabic/ Islamic terminologies

Zina: sexual interaction or any other sexual acts outside marriage.

Fawahesh: women’s indecency which could cause a sexual threat to virginity, reputation, and man’s “face” or “head”.

Awra: private body parts of a woman that arouse sexual desires in men (or shame of her) (i.e. breasts, thighs, or legs).

Zeenatahuna: a woman’s beauty spots that must be concealed in public space.

Tabarruj: Muslim women displaying their beauty in public space.

Sitr: a concealed woman in public space (violating Sitr or body modesty is seen as a call for sex outside marriage which is Haram in Islam).

Haram or Moharam: forbidden in Islam.

Makruh (hated): permissible in Islam but “hated” (i.e. women demanding a divorce).

Halal: permissible and “liked” in Islam.

Mazhar: a woman’s public (physical) appearance in terms of clothing (one of the most important aspects in relation to Muslim women).

Tarbiya Islamiya: an Islamic approach in raising children (parenting and motherhood).

Fitna: Social chaos linked to Muslim women if their sexuality is not controlled.
Iddah: a 3 months waiting period (consisting of 3 menstrual cycles) to be certain a woman is not pregnant before divorce takes action (and she is free to re-marry if desiring to do so).

**Law system in Kuwait**

Sharia law: Islamic based law applied only on the Kuwaiti residents with the focus on Islamic sensitive issues (Islamic cultures differ in their ways of applying religious/Islamic rules).

Civil law system: modeled in line with the British common law and the French legal system.

Court system: known to be the most secular (unlike other Gulf states that use only Sharia courts) court system in the Gulf contexts (i.e. not exclusively allied with or against Islam in terms of separating law from religion).
(6.10) Appendices

Appendix A1

Participant Information Sheet (23/11/13 version3)
Research title: Meaning makings of Muslim Kuwaiti women: notions of love marriages and relationships

Introduction
I am a PhD student at the University of Surrey carrying out a research on modern Muslim women and how they make sense of love marriages and relationships. I would like to invite you to take part in a research project. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

What is the purpose of the study?
This study aims to seek responses to examine how young, Muslim, Kuwaiti women (in Kuwait) negotiate between different cultural and ideological positions and potential dilemmas (to do with patriarchy, religion and social change, for example) in their talk about reported lived experiences of love marriages and relationships.

Why have I been invited to take part in the study?
Because you meet the category of a young Muslim Kuwaiti woman that is required for this research.

Do I have to take part?
No, you do not have to participate. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What will my involvement require?
You will be asked to meet the researcher for:
An interview that lasts approximately between 30-100 minutes approximately in Kuwaiti in a location where you feel most comfortable and secure at to participate in responding to the research questions.

What will I have to do?
If you would like to take part please be sure you understood this Participant Information Sheet and sign the Consent Form so interview arrangements could be made after.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?
The data is transcribed and analyzed by myself only and your identities will remain unknown. Back translation might be needed in some cases when Arabic would be the preferred interview language by the participant. The most serious damage from the participants' behalf is the exposure of their personal information and personal desires,
especially when it is a sensitive topic in Islam, thus could ruin the participants' reputations. I will ensure that your family name and honor remain protected when carrying out this research.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**
Although done anonymously on your behalf as explained so the outcome of the research does not benefit you directly, but you would have engaged in the first study done on women in Kuwait (on such issues) and you will be given the opportunity to read the findings of this study after completion. Other than that, there are no direct benefits on your behalf.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**
Yes. All of the information you give will be anonymised so that those reading reports from the research will not know who has contributed to it. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Contact details of supervisors and researcher:**

Supervisor:

Professor Jane Ogden

j.ogden@surrey.ac.uk

Researcher:

Ghinaa Saleh Almutawa

g.al-mutawa@surrey.ac.uk

0096597497927

**Who is organising and funding the research?**
Self-funded

**Who has reviewed the project?**
The study has been reviewed and received a favourable opinion from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee and through law in Kuwait.

**Thank you for taking time to read this Participant Information Sheet.**
Appendix A2

Background and demographic information questionnaire for members participating in individual informant interviews

Research title: Meaning makings of Muslim Kuwaiti women: notions of love marriages and relationships

Please circle and fill details where necessary

1: How old are you? (Years)
2: What is your highest educational degree? (High school-Diploma-Bachelor Master-PhD)
3: Where did you get your educational degree/degrees from? (............................)
4: What is your current occupation? (Employed, Where?.......................-Unemployed)
5: Are you married? (.........................)
6: Which area do you live in? (............................)
7: Which social class do you come from according to your family name and orientation? (High-Medium-Low)
8: Which religious circle are you from? (Shia-Sunna)
9: Which category of appearance do you fall under?
   A: Veiled (Wearing a hijab)
   B: Traditional (Not wearing a hijab but conserved in clothing)
   C: Modern (Modern and appear in Westernized trendy clothing)
10: Which of the following social groups do you consider yourself to be?
    A: Religious (Perform all the Islamic rituals, all the woman roles, and do not communicate with stranger men)
    B: Traditional but not very religious (Perform all the Islamic rituals and allow yourself some personal freedom)
    C: Modernized (Modern in your thoughts, behavior, appearance, and actions)

Please explain briefly what aspects in your identity made you select this?..........................................................................................................................
Appendix A3

Consent Form

I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on Meaning makings of Muslim Kuwaiti women: Notions of love marriages and relationships

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do.

- I consent to my personal data, as outlined in the accompanying information sheet, being used for this study and other research. I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS)

......................................................

Signed

......................................................

Date

......................................................

Name of researcher/ person taking consent

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(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Signed

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Appendix B1

Participant Information Sheet (16/09/14 version 4)

Research title: Lived experiences of unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women

Introduction
My name is Ghinaa Saleh Almutawa and I am a PhD student at the University of Surrey carrying out a research project on the lived experiences of unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women. I would like to invite you to take part in a research project. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

What is the purpose of the study?
This study seeks to examine the lived experiences of being unmarried in an Islamic context such as Kuwait where marriage is very important. Furthermore, the study aims to seek responses as to the rates of unmarried women that are rising dramatically in Kuwait. This research aims to explore further causes for a change in marriage patterns and the age of marriage when looking at women and how they make sense of their personal and social lives. The research contributes further by examining how unmarried (divorced or never married) Kuwaiti Muslim women manage to cope and balance between their personal desires and the societal expectations from them as unmarried women.

Why have I been invited to take part in the study?
Because you fit the target sample of this research in being an unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women. You were selected randomly through a team of gatekeepers.

Do I have to take part?
No, you do not have to participate and if you participate you can still withdraw whenever you wish without providing justification.

What will my involvement require?
You will be asked to attend for an open ended interview that lasts sometime between 60-75 minutes in a location where you feel most comfortable at and this shall be arranged after you provide consent to join the research.

What will I have to do?
If you would like to take part please take time to fill in the demographic sheet and sign the consent form after reading it.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?
The only possible disadvantage would be that there is harm on your social reputation. This is certainly avoided because all the data is protected and in the research you are quoted anonymously.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**
There are no direct benefits but you would have joined the first research study on such issues in Kuwait and you will get a personal copy of the findings.

**What happens when the research study stops?**
After you receive a document of the research findings, we can meet up to discuss those issues further should you be interested.

**What if there is a problem?**
Any complaint or concern about any aspect of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed; please contact Professor Jane Ogden or Doctor Andrew King on the details shown below.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**
Yes. All of the information you give will be anonymous so that those reading reports from the research will not know who has contributed to it. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Contact details of supervisors and researcher:**

Supervisors:

Professor Jane Ogden
j.ogden@surrey.ac.uk

Doctor Andrew King
andrew.king@surrey.ac.uk

Researcher:

Ghinaa Saleh Almutawa
g.al-mutawa@surrey.ac.uk

0096597497927

**Who is organising and funding the research?**
Self-funded.

**Who has reviewed the project?**
The study has been reviewed and received a Favourable Ethical Opinion (FEO) from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee and through law in Kuwait.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet.
Appendix B2

Background and demographic information questionnaire for members participating in individual informant interviews

Research title: Lived experiences of unmarried Muslim Kuwaiti women

Please circle and fill details where necessary

1: How old are you? (Years)
2: What is your highest educational degree? (High school-Diploma-Bachelor Master-PhD)
3: Where did you get your educational degree/degrees from? (............................)
4: What is your current occupation? (Employed, Where?...........................- Unemployed)
5: Are you divorced or never married? (............................)
6: Which area do you live in? (............................)
7: Which social class do you come from according to your family name and orientation? (High-Medium-Low)
8: Which religious circle are you from? (Shia-Sunna)
9: Which category of appearance do you fall under?
   A: Veiled
      (Wearing a hijab)
   B: Traditional
      (Not wearing a hijab but conserved in clothing)
   C: Modern
      (Modern and appear in Westernized trendy clothing)
10: Which of the following social groups do you consider yourself to be?
    A: Religious
       (Perform all the Islamic rituals, all the woman roles, and do not communicate with stranger men)
    B: Traditional but not very religious
       (Perform all the Islamic rituals and allow yourself some personal freedom)
    C: Modernized
       (Modern in your thoughts, behavior, appearance, and actions)

Please explain briefly what aspects in your identity made you select this?........................................................................................................................
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Appendix B3

Consent Form

I, the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on Lived experiences of unmarried Kuwaiti women

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do.

- I consent to my personal data, as outlined in the accompanying information sheet, being used for this study and other research. I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………

Signed

…………………………………………………

Date

…………………………………………………

Name of researcher/person taking consent

…………………………………………………

(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Signed

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Appendix C1

Participant Information Sheet
Research title: Mothering in Kuwait

Introduction
My name is Ghinaa Saleh Almutawa and I am a PhD student at the University of Surrey carrying out a research project on mothers in Kuwait, precisely their relationships with their daughters. I would like to invite you to take part in a research project. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

What is the purpose of the study?
The study aims to examine how Muslim Kuwaiti mothers relate to their daughters in a modernized and advanced context. This research aims to explore further how mothers feel about the social media and the social networks. The study focuses on the generation differences and the challenges mothers may feel when raising their children (with daughters aged between 5-13 being the focus).

Why have I been invited to take part in the study?
Because you fit the target sample of this research in being a Muslim Kuwaiti mother with at least one daughter aged between 5-13. You were selected randomly through a team of gatekeepers.

Do I have to take part?
No, you do not have to participate and if you participate you can still withdraw whenever you wish without providing justification.

What will my involvement require?
You will be asked to attend for an open ended interview that lasts sometime between 60-120 minutes in a location where you feel most comfortable at and this shall be arranged after you provide consent to join the research.

What will I have to do?
If you would like to take part please take time to fill in the demographic sheet and sign the consent form after reading it.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?
The only possible disadvantage would be that there is harm on your social reputation. This is certainly avoided because all the data is protected and in the research you are quoted anonymously.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
There are no direct benefits but you would have joined the first research study on mothering in Kuwait and you will get a personal copy of the findings.

**What happens when the research study stops?**
After you receive a document of the research findings, we can meet up to discuss those issues further should you be interested.

**What if there is a problem?**
Any complaint or concern about any aspect of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed; please contact Professor Jane Ogden or Doctor Andrew King on the details shown below.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**
Yes. All of the information you give will be anonymous so that those reading reports from the research will not know who has contributed to it. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Contact details of supervisors and researcher:**

Supervisors:
Professor Jane Ogden
j.ogden@surrey.ac.uk

Doctor Andrew King
andrew.king@surrey.ac.uk

Researcher:
Ghinaa Saleh Almutawa
g.al-mutawa@surrey.ac.uk

0096597497927

**Who is organising and funding the research?**
Self-funded.

**Who has reviewed the project?**
The study has been reviewed and received a Favourable Ethical Opinion (FEO) from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee and through law in Kuwait.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet.**
Appendix C2

Background and demographic information questionnaire for members participating in individual informant interviews

Research title: Mothering in Kuwait

Please circle and fill details where necessary

1: How old are you? (Years)
2: What is your highest educational degree? (High school-Diploma-Bachelor Master-PhD)
3: Where did you get your educational degree/degrees from? (.........................)
4: What is your current occupation? (Employed, Where?..............................- Unemployed)
5: What children do you have? (.........................)
6: Which area do you live in? (.........................)
7: Which social class do you come from according to your family name and orientation? (High-Medium-Low)
8: Which religious circle are you from? (Shia-Sunna)
9: Which category of appearance do you fall under?
   A: Veiled (Wearing a hijab)
   B: Traditional (Not wearing a hijab but conserved in clothing)
   C: Modern (Modern and appear in Westernized trendy clothing)
10: Which of the following social groups do you consider yourself to be?
   A: Religious (Perform all the Islamic rituals, all the woman roles, and do not communicate with stranger men)
   B: Traditional but not very religious (Perform all the Islamic rituals and allow yourself some personal freedom)
   C: Modernized (Modern in your thoughts, behavior, appearance, and actions)

Please explain briefly what aspects in your identity made you select this? ..........................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
Appendix C3

Consent Form

I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on Mothering in Kuwait

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do.

- I consent to my personal data, as outlined in the accompanying information sheet, being used for this study and other research. I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS)

..........................................................  
Signed

..........................................................

Date

..........................................................

Name of researcher/ person taking consent

..........................................................

(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Signed

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الملحق أ
جدول المقابلات العربية (الدراسة الأولى)

يقدم الجزء التالي جدول المقابلات. وقد كانت المقابلات مفتوحة النهايات كما كان جدول المقابلات مجرد نقطة بداية.

1- قم بوصف العلاقة الرومانسية التي تمر بها؟
2- ما هي الفوائد التي تعرضت لها عند الانخراط في علاقة رومانسية؟
3- أين تتلقى شريكك المواعدة المرتبة وما هي المرحلة التي تعتبرين أن يكون فيها رجلا متوقعا للمواعدة؟
4- ما هي أموقع الحوار التي تجريها مع شريكك وما هو دافعك الذي يقيع خلف المواعدة قبل الزواج؟
5- هل مررت بتجربة المواعدة أكثر من مرة؟
6- هل تتواجد أن تتزوجي من شريكك المواعدة (أم تختار الدخول في الزواج التقليدي) ولماذا؟
7- المثالية التي دعائك لترك شريكك السابق؟
8- ما هي العلاقة غير الناجحة بالنسبة إليك؟
9- هل تقبلين بالزواج المرتبط له؟
10- بالموافقة قبل الزواج، فإن تتجنبي عبده الزواج المرتبط له؟
11- هل تقبلين بالزواج المرتبط له؟
12- إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم أو لا، لماذا؟
13- كيف تعبرين عن رغباتك الشخصية في المجتمع (مثل المواعدة قبل الزواج بالإضافة إلى الرغبات الشخصية الأخرى المفيدة في مجتمع الشرق الأوسط)؟
14- هل يمكنك أن تخبر عن التجارب التي مررت بها مع رجل ما (من غير الأقارب والعلاقات)؟
15- هل تعتبرين نفسك سيدة PRICE هذا السلوك؟
16- إذا لم يكن عصريا، ففي أي فئة تشعرين أنك تتبعين إليها (مثل، التقليدية، أو الدينية، إلخ)؟
17- ما الذي دعوك لترك ذلك؟
18- في رأيك، ما الفرق بين المرأة المسلمة التقليدية والمرأة المسلمة المصرية ( بصورة عامة)؟
19- تفاوت في المرأة المسلمة المصرية بمقارنتها مع مثيلاتها الدينية؟
20- إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم أو لا، لماذا؟
21- مع من تتحدثين عن الجنس؟
22- هل تعلمون باستخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي للتعرف على الجنس؟
23- كيف تحصلين وتشاركن المعلومات بشأن الجنس؟
24- كيف تحصلين وتشاركن المعلومات بشأن الجنس؟
25- هل تقومين بتنظيم حوارات عمل من الرجال عن هذا الشأن؟
26- إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم أو لا، لماذا؟
27- هل هناك أي شيء آخر تودي أن تضيفيه؟
28- هل هناك أي شيء آخر تودي أن تضيفيه؟
عنوان البحث: معنى متطلبات المرأة المسلمة الكويتية: مفهوم الزواج عن حب وعلاقات الحب

المقدمة:

إنني طالبة أدرس للتحضير لرسالة الدكتوراه بجامعة سوراي. أقوم بإجراء بحث عن المرأة المسلمة الكويتية، وما هو المعنى لديهن بخصوص الزيجات الناتجة عن الحب وعلاقات الحب. أود أن أدعوكم للمشاركة في مشروع البحث. وقبل أن تت辛勤 قرارك، عليك أن تعرف ما هو السبب من وراء إجراء هذا البحث وما الذي سيطلب منه منك. رجاء ملاحظة وقتك لقراءة المعلومات بعناية. وقم بالتحدث للأخرى بشأن الدراسة إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة.

ما هو هدف الدراسة؟

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة وراء الزواج الناجم عن الحب بين النساء المسلمات في الكويت من مختلف الثقافات والمراكز الاجتماعية. يتافيمن وما هي المشاكل المتوقعة (مع رجال الدين والتغييرات الاجتماعية، على سبيل المثال) في حديثهن عن التجارب التي ع�نا فيها وأفادنا عنها حول الزيجات الناتجة عن الحب.

ما السبب من وراء دعوتي للمشاركة في هذا البحث؟

لأنك تنتمين إلى فئة النساء السابات المسلمات المستهدفة من هذا البحث.

هل يجب علي أن أشارك؟

كلا، لست مضطرة للمشاركة. إذا قررت أن تشاركي، عليك أن تسحبين في أي وقت دون إبداء أي أسباب.

ما الذي تتطلبه مشاركتي؟

سيطلب منك أن تلتقي مع الباحثة في أي وقت تشعر به سهولة وامان للرد على أسئلة البحث.

ما الذي علي أن أفعله؟

إذا رغبت في المشاركة، يرجى التأكد من أنك تفهم ما وضعته ورقة بيانات المشاركين وتوقيع استمارة السحب حتى نتمكن من إجراء ترتيبات المقابلة بعد ذلك.

ما هي المخاطر المحتملة من جراء المشاركة؟

لا يوجد أي خطر أو مخاطر محتملة من جراء المشاركة.

ما هي المميزات المحتملة للمشاركة؟

بالرغم من أن إجابة البحث بطبيعة الحال مقيدة، كما تم بيعه، فلن يكون النتائج النهائية من خلال البحث، ولكن يمكن أن تكون النتائج في بعض الأحيان مفيدة للبحث في مثيلات المرأة المسلمة الكويتية. كما أنه سيقدم منحك فرصة للإجابة على أسئلة البحث عبر الإنترنت بطرق أكثر تعزيزًا للبحث.

هل تبقى مشاركتي في هذا الدراسة في إطار السرية؟

نعم، كالة المعلومات التي سوف تقوم بها سوف تبقى مخفية حتى أن هؤلاء الذين يقومون التقارير من البحث لن يعرفون عن هم الآخر.

وسيتم تخزين المعلومات بصورة آمنة وفقًا لقانون حماية البيانات لسنة 1998.

بيانات اتصال المشرفون أو الباحث:
من يقوم بتنظيم وتمويل البحث؟

إنه تمويل ذاتي.

من الذي يقوم بمراجعة المشروع؟

يتم مراجعة هذه الدراسة واستلام الرأي المفضل من لجنة جامعة سوراي للأخلاقيات وطبقا لقانون دولة الكويت.

أشكركم على وقتكم وعلى اطلاعكم على ورقة المعلومات هذه.
الملحق أ

استبيان عن المعلومات الديموغرافية والخلفية

الأفراد المشاركون في المقابلات الفردية.

عنوان البحث: معنى متطلبات المرأة المسلمة الكويتية: مفهوم الزواج عن حب وعلاقات الحب

يرجى الإجابة عند الحاجة:

1. كم عمرك؟ (            سنة)
2. ما هو أعلى مؤهل علمي حصلت عليه؟ (الثانوية العامة – دبلوم – بكالوريوس – ماجستير – دكتوراه)
3. من أين حصلت على درجتك / درجاتك العلمية؟ ( موظف، لا أعمل) أين؟ .............................................
4. ما هي وظيفتك الحالية؟ هل انت متزوجة؟
5. في أي منطقة تعيشين؟
6. ما هي الطبقية الاجتماعية التي تنحدر منها حسب اسم واتجاه عائلتك؟ (عالية – متوسطة – منخفضة)
7. أي طائفة دينية تتبعين؟
8. أي فئة مظهرية تنخرطين تحتها؟ محجبة (ترتدن حجاب) – تقليدي (لا ترتدن حجاب ولكن ملتزمة في ملبس) – عصرية (عصرية وتطورت)
9. أي الفئات الاجتماعية التي تعتبرين نفسك منها؟
   أ. مطيعة (تؤدي كافة الشعائر الإسلامية، كافة أدوار المرأة، ولا تختلطين مع الغرباء من الرجال)
   ب. تقليدية ولكن لست مطيعة جدا (تؤدي كافة الشعائر الإسلامية وتسمحين لنفسك ببعض من الحرية الشخصية)
   ج. عصرية (عصرية في أفكارك، سلوكك، مظهرك، تصرفاتك)

بإيجاز، برجاء إيضاح ما هي الجوانب في هويتك التي تجعلك تختارين هذا؟ ...................................................

Study One-Arabic Demographic Sheet

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الملحق أ

استمارة القبول

أوافق أنا الموقع أدناه، طواعية وبارختي أن أشارك في الدراسة حول معنى ممتلكات المرأة المسلمة الكويتية مفهوم الزواج عن حب وعلاقات الحب.

لقد اطلعتك وفهمت ما نصت عليه ورقة المعلومات، كما أنه قد تم إعطائي تفسيرا كاملاً من جانب المحققين عن طبيعة وعرض وموقع الدراسة بالإضافة إلى الفترة المحتملة للدراسة، وبما هو متوقع مني أن أفعله.


إني أتفهم أنه لدي حرية الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي وقت دون الحاجة لتبرير قراري ودون أي إجحاف.

إني أؤكد على أنني قد اطلعت وفهمت الموافقة المذكورة أعلاه بكامل حريتي على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة. كما أنه قد منحني الوقت الكافي للنظر في مشاركتي، كما أنني أوافق على أن أتبع تعليمات وقيود الدراسة.

اسم المتطوع (حرف واضح)

التاريخ

التوقيع

اسم الشاهد (أينما تلائم ذلك) (حرف واضح)

التاريخ

التوقيع

اسم الباحث / الشخص الذي أبدى الموافقة

التاريخ

التوقيع

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لا يوجد نص يمكن قراءته بشكل طبيعي.

ملحوظة: لقد كانت الأسئلة مفتوحة النهايات كما أن المناقشات تناولت ما يتعدي جدول المقابلة. تم توجيه ذات الأسئلة لفئتي النساء (المطلقات والعازبات) لتكوين نموذج واضح للمقارنة. ومع هذا، تم مشاركة كل فئة بقصصهم في إطار السياق (سواء كن مطلقات أو عازبات).
عنوان البحث: التجارب التي مررت بها كامرأة غير متزوجة مسلمة كويتية

المقدمة

أنا إسمي غنا صالح المطوع أنا طالبة أدرس للتحضير لرسالة الدكتوراه بجامعة سوراي، أقوم بإجراء مشروع بحثي عن المرأة غير المتزوجة المسلمة الكويتية. وأود أن أدعوكم للمشاركة في مشروعي البحثي. وقبل أن تحاذي قرارك، عليك أن تعي ما هو السبب من وراء إجراء هذا البحث وما الذي سيتطلبه منك.

رجاء خذي وقتك لقراءة المعلومات بعناية. وقم بالتحدث للأخرين بشأن الدراسة إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة.

ما هدف الدراسة؟

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في التجارب التي تمر بها المرأة غير المتزوجة في مجتمع إسلامي مثل الكويت الذي يعتبر فيه الزواج شيء مهم للغاية. علاوة على ذلك، فإن الدراسة تهدف للسعي وراء الردود التي تتعلق بالمرأة غير المتزوجة التي تترتب بصورة ديناميكية في الكويت. كما يهدف هذا البحث لاستكشاف المزيد من الأسباب التي تتعلق بالتغيير في أمانة الزواج، وسن الزواج عند النظر إلى النساء، بالإضافة إلى معنى حياتهن الشخصية والاجتماعية. كما يساعد هذا البحث في استكشاف طريقة السيدات الغير متزوجات (المطلقات أو اللاتي لم يتزوجن) في المجتمع المسلمات، في تعاملهن وموازنتهن بين رغباتهن الشخصية والنظرية المجتمعية لحLOCKEY عدم غير متزوجات.

ما السبب من وراء دعوتي للمشاركة في هذا البحث؟

لأنك تلائمين العينة المستهدفة من هذا البحث كونك امرأة غير متزوجة مسلمة كويتية. كما أنه تم اختيارك بصورة عشوائية من خلال فريق من حراس العقارات.

هل يجب علي أن أشارك؟

كلا، لست مضطرودة للمشاركة. إذا قررت أن تشاركن، عليك أن تنسحب في أي وقت دون إبداء أي أسباب.

ما الذي تتطلبها المشاركة؟

سيطلب منك أن تحضري مقابلة مفتوحة يمكن أن تستمر لفترة من الوقت ما بين 60 - 90 دقيقة في مكان ما تشعري فيه بالإرادة الشديد. كما سيتم ترتيب هذا بعد الحصول على موافقتك بالاتصال بالبحث.

ما الذي علي أن أفعله؟

إذا رغبت في المشاركة، رجاء خذي وقتك لتعبئة الورقة الديموغرافية والتوقيع عليها بالموافقة بعد قراءتها.

ما هي المزايا المحتملة للمشاركة؟

لا توجد مزايا مباشرة من التحالفات في البحث الدراسي الأول عن تلك القضية في الكويت كما سيتم تزويدك بصورة عشوائية عبر رفيق من حواس العقول.

ما الذي يحدث عند توقف الدراسة البحثية؟

بعد تسلمك نسخة من نتائج البحث، بإمكانك أن تلتقي بمناقشة تلك القضايا لمزيد من الاهتمام إذا رغبت.

ماذا إذا حدث إن شكوك أو تعليق بشأن أي وجه يكون قد تم التعامل معه أثناء فترة الدراسة، سيتم توجيهك لي برجاء الاتصال بالبيانات الموضوعة أعلاه.

هل تبقى مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة في إطار السرية؟

نعم، كافة المعلومات التي سوف تقدمها سوف تبقى مخطية حتى أن هؤلاء الذين يقومون التقارير من البحث لن يعرفوا من هم اللائي شارك.

وسيتم تخزين المعلومات بصورة آمنة وفقا لقوانين حماية البيانات لسنة 1998.

والملحق ب 1

عنوان البحث: التجارب التي مررت بها كامرأة غير متزوجة مسلمة كويتية

المقدمة

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سيطلب منك أن تحضري مقابلة مفتوحة يمكن أن تستمر لفترة من الوقت ما بين 60 - 90 دقيقة في مكان ما تشعري فيه بالإرادة الشديد. كما سيتم ترتيب هذا بعد الحصول على موافقتك بالاتصال بالبحث.

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ما هي المزايا المحتملة للمشاركة؟

لا توجد مزايا مباشرة من التحالفات في البحث الدراسي الأول عن تلك القضية في الكويت كما سيتم تزويدك بصورة عشوائية عبر رفيق من حواس العقول.

ما الذي يحدث عند توقف الدراسة البحثية؟

بعد تسلمك نسخة من نتائج البحث، بإمكانك أن تلتقي بمناقشة تلك القضايا لمزيد من الاهتمام إذا رغبت.

ماذا إذا حدث إن شكوك أو تعليق بشأن أي وجه يكون قد تم التعامل معه أثناء فترة الدراسة، سيتم توجيهك لي برجاء الاتصال بالبيانات الموضوعة أعلاه.

هل تبقى مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة في إطار السرية؟

نعم، كافة المعلومات التي سوف تقدمها سوف تبقى مخطية حتى أن هؤلاء الذين يقومون التقارير من البحث لن يعرفوا من هم اللائي شارك.

وسيتم تخزين المعلومات بصورة آمنة وفقا لقوانين حماية البيانات لسنة 1998.
بيانات اتصال المشرفون أو الباحث:
المشرف:
بروفسور جين أوغدن
j.ogden@surrey.ac.uk
دكتور اندرو كنغ
andrew.king@surrey.ac.uk
الباحث:
غنا صالح المطوع
g.al-mutawa@surrey.ac.uk
0096597497927
من يقوم بتنظيم وتمويل البحث؟
إنه تمويل ذاتي.
من الذي يقوم بمراجعة المشروع؟
يتم مراجعة هذه الدراسة واستلام الرأي المفضل من لجنة جامعة سوراي للأخلاقيات وطبقا لقانون دولة الكويت.
أشكركم على وقتكم وعلى اطلاعكم على ورقة المعلومات هذه.
ملحق ب 2

استبيان عن المعلومات الديموغرافية والخلفية للمشاركين في المقابلات الفردية.

عنوان البحث: التجارب التي مررت بها كامرأة غير مترحة مسلمة كويتية

يرجى الاختيار وتعبئة البيانات أينما تطلب الأمر:

1. كم عمرك؟ (سنوات)
2. ما هو أعلى مؤهل علمي حصلت عليه؟ (الثانوية العامة - دبلوم - بكالوريوس - ماجستير - دكتوراه)
3. من أين حصلت على درجتك العلمية؟ (.................................................................)
4. ما هي وظيفتك الحالية؟ (موظف، لا أعمل) أين؟ (.................................................................)
5. هل أنت مطلقة أو لم تزوجي مطلقة؟ (.................................................................)
6. في أي منطقة تعيشين؟ (.................................................................)
7. ما هي الطبقية الاجتماعية التي تنحدر منها حسب اسم واتجاه العائلة؟ (العالية - متوسطة - منخفضة)
8. أي طائفة دينية تتبعين؟ (.................................................................)
9. أي فئة مظهرية تنخرطين تحتها؟ محجبة (ترتدين حجاب) - تقليدية (لا ترتدين حجاب ولكن متزودة في ملابس) - عصرية (عصرية وتطورين بملابس ذات اتجاه غربي)
10. أي الفئات الاجتماعية التي تعتبرين نفسك منها؟
    أ. مدنية (تأتي كافة الشعائر الإسلامية، كافة أدوار المرأة، ولا تختلطين مع الغرباء من الرجال)
    ب. تقليدية ولكن لست مدنية جداً (تأتي كافة الشعائر الإسلامية وتسمحين لنفسك ببعض من الحرية الشخصية)
    ج. عصرية (عصرية في أفكارك، سلوكك، مظهرك، تصرفاتك)

بايجاز، برجاء إيضاح ما هي الجوانب في هويتك التي تجعلك تختارين هذا؟ .................................................................
أوافق أنا الموقع أدناه، طواعية وباراديتي أن أشارك في الدراسة حول التجارب التي مررت بها كامرأة غير متزوجة مسلمة كويتية.

لقد أطلعت وتفهمت ما نصت عليه ورقة المعلومات. كما أنه قد تم إعطائي نسخا كاملا من جانب المحققين عن طبيعة، وأعراف، وموقع الدراسة بالإضافة إلى الفترة المحتملة للدراسة، وما هو متوقع مني أن أفعله. كما أنه قد منحتني فرصة لطرح أسئلة عن كافة أوجه الدراسة وقد تفهمت النصيحة والمعلومات التي قدمت إلى.

أوافق أن بياناتي الشخصية، كما هي مبينة في ورقة المعلومات، سيتم استخدامها بهذه الدراسة بالإضافة إلى الأبحاث الأخرى. كما أنني أتفهم أن كافة البيانات التي تتعلق بالمتطوعين سيتم التعامل معها بمنتهى السرية، ووفقا لقانون حماية البيانات (1998)، وأوافق على إلا أقوم بالسعي إلى تقييد استخدام نتائج الدراسة للتأكد من إخفاء هويتي.

إنني أتفهم أنه لدي حرية الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي وقت دون الحاجة لتبقي قراري دون أي إجحاف.

إنني أؤكد على أنني قد اطلعت وتفهمت الموافقة المذكورة أعلاه بكامل حريتي على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

كما أنه قد منحتني الوقت الكافي للنظر في مشاركتي كما أنني أوافق على أن أتبع تعليمات وقيود الدراسة.

اسم المتطوع

التوقيع

التاريخ
الملحق ج
جدول المقابلات العربية (الدراسة الثالثة)

1. هل يمكنك أن تخبرني عن دورك في تنشئة وتربيه بناتك؟
2. هل لديك أي تصور حول كيف سيكون مستقبل بناتك؟
3. هل تحاولين تشكيل عقل بناتك للاستعداد لمستقبلهن؟
4. ما نوع الحياة التي تريدين لبناتك في المستقبل؟
5. هل يمكنك أن تخبرني عن شعورك تجاه تعليم بناتك وما هي نوع المدارس (متلا مختلط أو المنفصلة)؟
6. هل يمكنك أن تخبرني عن شعورك تجاه ملابس بناتك؟
7. ما هي آرائك حول وسائل الإعلام الاجتماعي والتكنيولوجي؟
8. ما هي الشبكات التي تسمح بناتك باستخدامها؟
9. كيف ترين نباتك أن تزوج؟
10. كيف تحاولين بناتك بشان العلاقات؟
11. كيف تحاولين بناتك بشان الأولاد؟
12. كيف تحاولين بناتك بشان الجنس؟
13. كيف تشعرن تجاه وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مثل الفيسبوك؟
14. ما هو شعورك تجاه الإعلام الاجتماعي، مثل الأفلام الرومانسية أو الموسيقى العربية التي تعتبر سهلة الوصول من جانب الأطفال؟
15. هل تعتقدون أن الإعلام الاجتماعي له تأثير على ملابس الفتيات المسلمات الصغيرات، والذي يمكن أن يمثل إغراءات الجنسية أكثر من الحفاظ على الهوية الجنسية؟
16. ما هو التحدي الذي تنعجين أنه يزيد من توجه بناتك نحو العولمة التي تختلف عن مجتمعك؟
17. إذا كان لديك أطفال أولاد، ما هي التشابهات والاختلافات التي تشتري فيها الجنسين في سياق مجتمع الكوريتي؟
18. لقد انتهينا الآن، هل لديك أي أراء تودين إضافتها؟
19. بالرغم من إجراء المقابلة بالتنسيق المحدد من أجل المقارنة العادلة بين كلا الفتيتين من الأمهات المنخرطين في الدراسة، كما أن ممارسة المقابلة ما زالت مستخدمة منهجا مفتوحا يكون للنساء فيه حرية الانخراط في مجال أكبر من مجال الحديث.
عنوان البحث: الأمومة في الكويت

المقدمة:
أنا غنا صالح المطوع وانا طالبة أدرس للتحضير لرسالة الدكتوراه بجامعة سوراي، أقوم بإجراء مشروع بحثي عن الأمهات في الكويت، وعلاقاتهن مع بناتهن. وأود أن أدعوكن للمشاركة في مشروعي البحثي. وقبل أن تخذي قرارك، عليك أن تعي ما هو السبب من وراء إجراء هذا البحث وما الذي سيطلب منه. رجاء خذي وقتك لقراءة المعلومات بعناية. وقمي بالتحدث للأخرين بشأن الدراسة إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة.

ما هو هدف الدراسة؟
تهدف هذه الدراسة للبحث في طريقة ارتباط الأمهات ببناتهن في السياق العصري والمتطور. كما يهدف هذا البحث لاستكشاف المزيد عن الطريقة التي تشعر بها الأمهات نحو الإعلام الاجتماعي وشبكات التواصل الاجتماعي. هذا وتركز الدراسة على الفروق بين الأجالي والتحديات التي قد تواجه الأمهات عند تنشئة أطفالهن (يكون التركيز حول البنات من عمر 9 – 13 سنة).

ما السبب من وراء دعوتي للمشاركة في هذا البحث؟
لأنك تلائمين العينة المستهدفة من هذا البحث كونك أم مسلمة كويتية لديك على الأقل بنت واحدة عمرها من 9 – 13 سنة. كما أنه تم اختيارك بصورة عشوائية عبر فريق من حراس العقارات.

هل يجب علي أن أشارك؟
كلا، لست مضطرة للمشاركة. إذا قررت أن تشاركين، عليك أن تنسحبين في أي وقت دون إبداء أي أسباب.

ما الذي تتطلبه المشاركة؟
سيطلب منك أن تحضري مقابلة مفتوحة يمكن أن تستمر لفترة من الوقت ما بين 60 – 120 دقيقة في مكان ما تشعر فيه بالراحة الشديدة. كما سيتم ترتيب هذا بعد الحصول على موافتك بالالتحاق بالبحث.

ما الذي علي أن أفعله؟
إذا رغبت في المشاركة، رجاء خذي وقتك لتعبئة الورقة الديموغرافية والتوقيع عليها بالموافقة بعد قراءتها.

ما هي المميزات المحتملة للمشاركة؟
لا توجد مميزات مباشرة من التحاقك بالبحث الدراسي الأول عن تلك القضايا في الكويت كما سيتم تزويدك بصورة شاملة من النتائج.

ما الذي يحدث عند توقف الدراسة البحثية؟
بعد تسلمك نسخة من نتائج البحث، بإمكاننا أن نلتقي لمناقشة تلك القضايا لمزيد من الاهتمام إذا رغبت.

ماذا إذا حدث هناك أي مشكلة؟
إذا كنت تشعر بأن هناك مشكلة حيث أنك تواجه بعض القيود أو التحذيرات، فإنك يمكن أن توجه لي للإطلاع بالمزيد من التفاصيل.

هل تبقى مشاركتي في هذه الدراسة في إطار السرية؟
نعم، كافة المعلومات التي سوف تقدمها سوف تبقى مخفية حتى أن هؤلاء الذين يقرأون التقارير من البحث لن يعرفون من هم المشكرين.

وسيتم تخزين المعلومات بصورة آمنة وفقا لقانون حماية البيانات لسنة 1998.
بيانات اتصال المشرفون أو الباحث:

المشرف:
بروفسير جين أوغدن
j.ogden@surrey.ac.uk
دكتور أندرو كنغ
andrew.king@surrey.ac.uk

الباحث:
غنا صالح المطوع
g.al-mutawa@surrey.ac.uk
0096597497927

من يقوم بتنظيم وتمويل البحث؟
إنه تمويل ذاتي.

من الذي يقوم بمراجعة المشروع؟
يتم مراجعة هذه الدراسة واستلام الرأي الفضيل من لجنة جامعة سوراي للاخلاقيات وطبقا لقانون دولة الكويت.

أتمنى أن تكون هذه المعلومات مفيدة.

أشكركم على وقتكم وعلى اطلاعكم على ورقة المعلومات هذه.
الملحق ج

استبيان عن المعلومات الديموغرافية والخلفية
للأفراد المشاركين في المقابلات الفردية.

عنوان البحث: الأمهات في الكويت

برجاء الاختيار وتعبئة البيانات أينما تطلب الأمر:

1. كم عمرك؟ (سنوات)
2. ما هو أعلى مؤهل علمي حصلت عليه؟ (الثانوية العامة – دبلوم – بكالوريوس – ماجستير – الدكتوراه)
3. من أين حصلت على درجتك/درجاتك العلمية؟ (موظفة، لا عمل) أين؟
4. ما هي وظيفتك الحالية؟
5. كم عدد الأطفال لديك؟
6. في أي منطقة تعيشين؟
7. ما هي الطبقة الاجتماعية التي تنحدر منها حسب اسم واتجاه العائلة؟ (عالية – متوسطة – منخفضة)
8. أي طائفة دينية تتبعين؟
9. أي فئة مظهرية تتخططين تحتها؟ محجبة (ترتدين حجاب) – تقليدية (لا ترتدين حجاب ولكن ملتزمة في ملبسي) – عصرية (عصرية وتظهيرين ملابس ذات اتجاه غربي – على العموم)
10. أي الفئات الاجتماعية التي تعتبرين نفسك منها؟
   أ. متدنية (تؤدي كافة الشعائر الإسلامية، كافة أدوار المرأة، ولا تختلطين مع الغرباء من الرجال)
   ب. تقليدية ولكن ليست متدنية جدا (تؤدي كافة الشعائر الإسلامية وتسمحين لنفسك ببعض من الحرية الشخصية)
   ج. عصرية (عصرية في أفكارك، سلوكيك، مظهرك، تصرفائك)

بايجاز، برجاء إيضاح ما هي الجوانب في هويتك التي تجعلك تختارين هذا؟
الملحق ج 3
استمارة القبول

أوافق أنا الموقع أدناه، طواعية وبارية أن أشارك في الدراسة حول الأمومة في الكويت
لقد أطلعت وتفهمت ما نصت عليه ورقة المعلومات. كما أنه قد تم إعطاني تفسيرا كاملاً من جانب المحققين
عن طبيعة وعمر وموقع الدراسة بالإضافة إلى الفترة المحتملة للدراسة، وبما هو متوقع مني أن أفعله.
إنني وافق أن بانيتي الشخصية، كما هي مبينة في ورقة المعلومات، سيتم استخدامها بهذه الدراسة بالإضافة
إلى الأبحاث الأخرى. كما أنه أنهم أن كافة البيانات التي تتعلق بالمشاركين سيتم التعامل معها بمنتهى
إنني أتفهم أنه لدي حرية الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي وقت دون الحاجة لتبرير قراري ودون أي إجحاف.
إنني أؤكد على أنني قد اطلعت وتفهمت الموافقة المذكورة أعلاه بكلام حرتي على المشاركة في هذه
الدراسة. كما أنه قد منحني الوقت الكافي للمثل في مشاركتي، كما أنني أوافق على أن أتبع تعليمات وقيود
الدراسة.

اسم المتطوع (حرف واضح): ............................................................
التاريخ: ...............................................................

اسم الشاهد (أينما تلائم ذلك) (حرف واضح): ............................................................
التاريخ: ...............................................................

اسم الباحث / الشخص الذي أبدى الموافقة (حرف واضح): ............................................................
التاريخ: ...............................................................
(6. 11) Ethical documents

شـِـهادة لم يُهمِـه الامِـر

لا يوجد قوانين خاصة لمصل البحوث والمقابلات وحفظ معلوماتها داخل دولة الكويت، لكننا أيضاً لا مانع من عمل بحـُث بخصوص المرأة المسلمة الحديثة وعمل لمقابلات وجميع المعلومات في هذا البحث وموضوعاته وأهدافه لا يتعارض قانوناً مع قوانين دولة الكويت.

المحامي
عبدالعزيز أبا الخيل
AL-TAMAYOZ GROUP LEGAL CONSULTANTS AND ATTORNEYS
AL -TAMAYOZ GROUP Legal Consultants and Attorneys

Date: 9/12/2013

To Whom It May Concern

There are no specific laws concerning conducting researches, interviews and protecting its data in the State of Kuwait, but still there is no objection to conduct a research on (Modern Muslim Women), as well as interviewing and collecting data. The research aims and objectives are approved legally to be carried out in the State of Kuwait.

Attorney

ABDUL AZIZ ABA AL-KHAIL

AL -TAMAYOZ GROUP LEGAL CONSULTANTS AND ATTORNEYS
Ms GS Al-Mutawa  
School of Psychology,  
FAHS  

05 February 2014  

Dear Ms Al-Mutawa  

Ideological conflicts in Islamic context: meaning making of young Kuwaiti women in premarital relationships EC/2013/135/FAHS  

On behalf of the Ethics Committee, I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the submitted protocol and supporting documentation.  

Date of confirmation of ethical opinion: 5 February 2014.  

The final list of documents reviewed by the Committee is as follows:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protocol Cover Sheet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16 Dec 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the project</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 Dec 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed protocol for the project</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 Dec 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Information sheet English &amp; Arabic Version (Appendix A)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27 Jan 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent Form (Appendix B)</td>
<td></td>
<td>24 Jan 2014</td>
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<td>Background Information Questionnaire (Appendix C)</td>
<td></td>
<td>24 Jan 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants Interview Schedule (Appendix D)</td>
<td></td>
<td>24 Jan 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Tamayoz Group Legal Consultants and Attorneys statement with translation: Approval of research</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 Dec 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 Dec 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This opinion is given on the understanding that you will comply with the University's Ethical Principles & Procedures for Teaching and Research.  

If the project includes distribution of a survey or questionnaire to members of the University community, researchers are asked to include a statement advising that the project has been reviewed by the University's Ethics Committee.  

If you wish to make any amendments to your protocol please address your request to the Secretary of the Ethics Committee and attach any revised documentation.  

The Committee will need to be notified of adverse reactions suffered by research participants, and if the study is terminated earlier than expected with reasons. Please be advised that the Ethics Committee is able to audit research to ensure that researchers are abiding by the University requirements and guidelines.  

You are asked to note that a further submission to the Ethics Committee will be required in the event that the study is not completed within five years of the above date.
Please inform me when the research has been completed.

Yours sincerely

Ms Susan Douthwaite
Research Governance Administrator, Research & Enterprise Support
Administrator, University Ethics Committee
الهويات الاجتماعية للسيدات الكويتيات غير متزوجات ووفقاً لقواعد وأحكام
السياق الإسلامي الحنفي، بما يلي ذلك من تبعات والالتزامات.

لا يوجد قوانين محددة تتعلق بتقليد الأبحاث العامة والمقابلات الشخصية وقضايا
البيانات في دولة الكويت ولكن أيضاً لا يوجد ما يمنع تقليد البحث بخصوص
المرأة المسلمة المعاصرة ولا إجراء المقابلات ولا تجميع البيانات والمعلومات.

وأهداف البحث وأغراضه تم اعتبارها قانونياً للتقليد في دولة الكويت.

المحامى
عبيد العزيز أبا الخيل
مجموعة التنميم للاستشارات القانونية والمحاماة

Lawyer
Abdul Aziz Aba Al-Khail
Kuwait Bar Association
Membership No. 731
Date: 28/9/2014

The Social Identities of unmarried Kuwaiti Women: Rules and rigidity on rebound effects in an Islamic context

There are no specific laws concerning conducting researches, interviews and protecting its data in the State of Kuwait, but still there is no objection to conduct a research on (Modern Muslim Women), as well as interviewing and collecting data. The research aims and objectives are approved legally to be carried out in the State of Kuwait.

Attorney
AEDUL AZIZ ABA AL-KHAIWI

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E-mail: agi@altamayozgroup.com - Website: www.altamayozgroup.com
لا يوجد قوانين محددة تتعلق بتنفيذ الأبحاث العلمية والمقابلات الشخصية وحماية البيانات في دولة الكويت ولكن أيضاً لا يوجد ما يمنع تنفيذ بحث بخصوص (الأمومة في الكويت) ولا إجراء المقابلات ولا تجميع البيانات والمعلومات، وأهداف البحث وأغراضه تم اعتبارها قانونياً للتنفيذ في دولة الكويت.

المحاكث

عبد العزيز أبا الخيل

الأمومة في الكويت

المحموم

عبد العزيز أبا الخيل
Date: 22/3/2015

Mothering in Kuwait

There are no specific laws concerning conducting researches, interviews and protecting its data in the state of Kuwait, but still there is no objection to conduct a research on (Mothering in Kuwait), as well as interviewing and collecting data. The research aims and objectives are approved legally to be carried out in the state of Kuwait.

Attorney

ABDUL AZIZ ABA AL-KHALI.

[Signature]

Abdul Aziz Aba Al-Khali
Kuwait Bar Association
Membership No.: 731
(6. 12) References


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