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Negotiating Gender Relations through Resisting Gendered Rituals:

A Study of Ex-Hijabi Arab-Muslim Women

Doha Saleh Almutawaa

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Marketing, School of Management

September 2019

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis derives entirely from my own work. I provide full references to other authors within the text. I have not submitted nor presented this thesis for examination for another degree.

Signature: ………………….. Date: …………………..

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 7
Abstract 9
Chapter 1: Introduction 10
1.1 Listening to the Voices of the “Silenced” Muslim Women 10
1.2 Research Purpose 12
1.3 Research Questions 14
1.4 Research Methodology 15
1.5 The Structure of the Thesis 16
Chapter 2: Literature Review 18
2.1 Context of the Consumer Culture 18
2.1.1 Islamic Cultures 19
2.1.2 Hijab in Islamic Cultures 24
2.1.3 Kuwaiti Culture 30
2.1.4 Hijab in Kuwait 36
2.1.5 Salient Issues for Exploration 37
2.2 Power and Gender 39
2.2.1 Power and the Production of Social Bodies 40
2.2.2 The Production of Gendered Bodies 44
2.2.3 Gender Relations in Arab-Islamic Societies 48
2.2.4 Familial Gender Relations in Arab-Islamic Societies 54
2.2.5 Negotiating Familial Gender Relations in Arab-Islamic Societies 59
2.2.6 Salient Issues for Exploration 62
2.3 Resistance and Consumption 64
2.3.1 Resistance in Consumer Research 65
2.3.2 Rituals in Consumer Research 67
2.3.3 Participating in Public Consumption Rituals 69
2.3.4 Resisting Public Consumption Rituals 75
2.3.5 Resisting Gendered Consumption Rituals 77
2.3.6 Resisting the Modesty Gendered Consumption Ritual 80
2.3.7 Salient Issues for Exploration 86

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Towards an Understanding of Resisting the Modesty Ritual 87
Chapter 3: Methodology 90
3.1 A Philosophical Discussion 90
3.1.1 Mode of Inquiry: Qualitative Research 90
3.1.2 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism 91
3.2 Data Collection 96
3.2.1 Pilot Study 96
3.2.2 Methods and Sampling 98
3.2.3 Rapport Building 106
3.2.4 Data Analysis 107
3.2.5 Credibility and Transferability 109
3.2.6 Limitations of Methods 110
3.2.7 Reflections of the Indigenous Researcher 111
3.2.8 Ethical Considerations 115
3.3 Overview of Methodology 119
Chapter 4: Findings 120
4.1 A (Female) Cultural Interpretation 121
4.1.1 The Hijab in Islam 122
4.1.2 Ex-Hijabi Women and Family Honour 126
4.2 Performing Gender on the Extended Self 129
4.2.1 Female Modesty and Relational Masculine Identities 130
4.2.2 Female Immodesty and Relational Masculine Identities 144
4.3 Resisting Power through Consumption 150
4.3.1 Combining Modesty and Sexuality (Combination Strategy) 151
4.3.2 Attracting the Male Gaze (Attraction Strategy) 156
4.3.3 Substituting the Hijab (Substitution Strategy) 161
4.3.4 Eliminating the Hijab (Elimination Strategy) 165
4.3.5 Contextualizing the Hijab (Contextualization Strategy) 170
4.4 Transformations of the Self 175
4.4.1 The Empowered Self 176
4.4.1.1 Deflecting the Male Gaze (Hijabi) 176
4.4.1.2 Developing Agentic Behavior (Ex-Hijabi) 179

4.4.1.3 Developing Agentic Attitude (Ex-Hijabi) ... 182
4.4.1.4 Connecting to a Deviant Subculture (Ex-Hijabi) ... 186
4.4.2 The Subordinate Self ... 189
4.4.2.1 Experiencing Daily Restrictions (Hijabi) ... 189
4.4.2.2 Sacrificing Social Capital (Ex-Hijabi) ... 194
4.5 Overview of Findings ... 200
4.5.1 Figure 1: Final Conceptual Model ... 200
4.5.2 Figure 2: A Typology of Ritual Resistance Strategies ... 202
Chapter 5: Discussion ... 204
5.1 The Extended Self as a Gendered Disciplinary Mechanism ... 205
5.2 The Dynamics of Cultural Resistance ... 209
5.3 The Impact of Ritual Artefacts on Self-Transformations ... 212
Chapter 6: Conclusions ... 215
6.1 Overview of the Theoretical Framework ... 215
6.2 Research Implications ... 217
6.2.1 Social Implications ... 217
6.2.2 Business Implications ... 218
6.3 Directions for Future Research ... 220
6.3.1 Applicability of the Research in Other Contexts ... 220
6.3.2 Addressing the Research Limitations ... 220
6.3.2 Exploring Alternative Avenues for the Research Topic ... 222
Bibliography ... 224
Appendices ... 258
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheets ... 259
Appendix B: Participant Consent Sheets ... 268
Appendix C: Participant Questions ... 272
Appendix D: Table of Participants ... 276
Appendix E: Pilot Study Questions ... 277
Appendix F: Conference Papers ... 278

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Abstract

Gender relations provide the basis of social inequality between men and women. The social power ascribed to men translates into their construction of gender discourses which are communicated through gendered rituals. This suggests that while participation in gendered rituals reinforces gender relations, resistance towards gendered rituals represents a means of negotiating gender relations. Compared to Western gender frameworks, gender relations in Eastern contexts appear to be largely undertheorized. Therefore, this thesis explores how gender relations manifest in Arab-Islamic societies.

Arab-Muslim women are often constructed as a homogenous group whose lives are shaped by patriarchal Islamic discourses. This generalization reduces them to passive victims of oppression and masks the existence and experiences of deviant Arab-Muslim women. In this study, female modesty is construed as a type of gendered ritual that is particularly pertinent to Arab-Islamic societies. While previous research focuses on Arab-Muslim women's participation in the modesty ritual, I chose to phenomenologically understand Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards the modesty ritual. More specifically, I focus on Arab-Muslim women's negotiation of familial gender relations in the process of resisting the modesty ritual. This is achieved through qualitative data collected from twenty-three ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women and some of their nuclear family members.

Briefly, the findings show how Arab-Muslim women's bodies are manipulated by their male relatives to construct their own masculine identities, how Arab-Muslim women resist male power through their consumption choices, and the outcomes of Arab-Muslim women's submission to and resistance towards male power. The research contributes to theories of gender and consumption rituals. It also offers broader social and business implications which can inform Arab-Muslim women's empowerment.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter briefly introduces the research context, research purpose, research questions, research methodology, and the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Listening to the Voices of the "Silenced" Muslim Women

In this rapidly changing world, Muslim women are not an exception. Muslim women are dominantly constructed as a homogenous group that are obedient towards their male relatives and prioritize their social identities as daughters, wives, and mothers at the cost of their own individuality (Fulu and Miedema, 2016). Contrary to dominant understandings, nowadays, numerous Muslim women appear to be challenging their expected social roles (Fulu and Miedema, 2016) despite the accompanied risks. To date, however, the social experiences of deviant Muslim women in Muslim-majority countries appear to be largely neglected by scholars.

There is a tendency to assume that the patriarchal Islamist discourses concerning Muslim women's expected social roles are reflective of their lived experiences (Sandikci and Rice, 2011). I posit that such an approach to knowledge homogenizes Muslim women's divergent social experiences and renders them as passive recipients of religious discourses rather than as active participants in shaping their social realities. Furthermore, the reduction of Muslim women's experiences to religious discourses implies their changeless states and insusceptibility to external social influences, such as the effect of globalization on their changing social roles. Similarly to other women around the world, Muslim women are not "frozen in place" (Bernal; 1994, 37). Although dominant Islamist discourses construct women as inferior to men, Muslim women's resistance towards such discourses appear to be underrepresented in extant literature (Ali, 2014). Instead, the image of pious Muslim women appears to be perpetuated more so than their deviant counterparts. This is especially with regards to the modest public representation of Muslim women.

The notion of modesty is central to Islamic teachings and female modesty is particularly emphasized (Boulanouar, 2006). Broadly, modesty can be defined as "wearing loose attire, displaying modesty in behaviour and 'purity' of intentions" (Mishra and Shirazi, 2010; 206). The hijab (also known as Islamic veil or head cover) has been recognized as the dominant form of expressing Muslim women's modesty in Islamic countries (Hamzeh and Oliver, 2012). Aside from the hijab that is intended to cover women's hair, there are visual, spatial, and ethical dimensions associated with the hijab discourse (Hamzeh, 2011). The visual dimension involves wearing long and loose attire that conceals one's entire body except for one's face and hands; the spatial dimension pertains to limited physical mobility, including curfews, restrictions from certain social spaces etc.; and the ethical dimension relates to prohibition from interacting with unrelated men (Hamzeh, 2011).

Thus, the hijab is not merely the clothing requirement for Muslim women, but more broadly, is deemed to be a modesty gender discourse that is intended to transform women into "sexualized 'objects' needing protection and discipline" (Hamzeh, 2011; 500). Gender discourses consist of the meanings ascribed to male and female bodies in a given cultural context (Butler, 2006). From this standpoint, the act of wearing the hijab has pervaded the literature on Muslim women, including reasons for veiling (Hopkins and Greenwood, 2013; Gökarıksel and Secor, 2014; Bhowon and Bundhoo, 2016), veiling as fashion (Balasescu, 2007; Sandikci and Ger, 2007; Sandikci and Ger, 2009; Sobh et al., 2012; Gökarıksel and Secor, 2014), cross-cultural differences in veiling practices (Moors, 2007; Sandikci and Ger, 2007; Kejanlioğlu and Taş, 2009) experiences of veiling in Muslim-majority vs. Muslim minority countries (Wagner et al., 2012; Mirza, 2013; Everett et al., 2015; Chapman, 2016). Some other studies compare meanings of modesty proposed by hijabi versus non-hijabi Muslim women (Siraj, 2011; Hoekstra and Verkuyten, 2015). However, "records of the lived experiences of women who unveil remain scarce" (Izharuddin, 2018; 156). The latter, as examined in this project, involves a conscious effort to resist hegemonic gender norms concerning female modesty (Izharuddin, 2018).

It is postulated that Muslim women learn to be modest mainly within their families, since parents often enforce modesty onto their daughters as part of the gender socialization process (Hamzeh, 2011). Therefore, an analysis of power at the micro-social level is deemed to enhance understanding of how power operates socially because Muslim "women's attempt for empowerment [within their families] are constrained by unequal power relations embedded in the broader socio-cultural patterns" (Ali, 2014; 120). Nonetheless, knowledge constructions about Muslim women's negotiation of familial gender relations within Islamic countries appear to be relatively scarce (Fulu and Miedema, 2016).

1.2 Research Purpose

Drawing onto the above, the purpose of this thesis is to explore how Muslim women negotiate gender relations through resisting gendered rituals. In simple terms, gender relations refer to the social relationships between men and women that are based on the social construction of men as superior to women (Butler, 2006). The social power ascribed to men as a social group translates into their construction of gender discourses which are communicated through gendered rituals (Butler, 2006; Foucault, 1991). Broadly, rituals can be described as repetitive, symbolic actions that help construct our social realities, and in return, produce a social order (Rook, 1985). Gendered rituals are understood as the repeated gender performances that enable individuals to construct their gender identities (Butler, 2006). At the same time, compliance with gendered rituals perpetuates male dominance and reproduces gender relations/the gender order (Butler, 2006).

Compared to Western gender frameworks, gender relations in Eastern contexts appear to be largely undertheorized. In Western societies, individuals are personally held accountable for their gender identity constructions (Butler, 2011), whereas in Eastern societies, individuals are socially identified as part of larger social groups (e.g. family, friends etc.) that often influence and are influenced by one's gender identity construction (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011). This suggests that existing Western gender frameworks cannot be uniformly applied to non-Western contexts (Jafari et al., 2012).

Scholars indicate that although Muslim and non-Muslim women's subordination in relation to men is a global concern, it is particularly intensified in Arab-Islamic countries (Masoud et al., 2016). This is because "Islam has a strong Arab quality, as Islam's holiest places are in the Middle East, and the Koran was originally written in Arabic" (Sechzer, 2004; 264). Therefore, the present study seeks to develop Western gender theories by exploring how gender relations manifest in Arab-Islamic societies.

Following a gender perspective towards Foucauldian thought, if gender relations produce gender discourses and one way of communicating such discourses is through gendered rituals, then this produces two interrelated assumptions; 1) that *participation* in gendered rituals reinforces gender relations, and 2) that *resistance* towards gendered rituals represents a means of negotiating gender relations. In line with Rook's (1985) definition of what constitutes a ritual experience, modesty is constructed as a type of gendered ritual in this research (discussed in-depth in chapter 2). That said, while Arab-Muslim women's *participation* in the modesty ritual has been widely studied, less is known about their *resistance* towards the modesty ritual. Relatedly, since the family represents the core social unit in Arab-Islamic societies where gendered rituals are reinforced (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011), this research explores Arab-Muslim women's negotiation of familial gender relations in the process of resisting the modesty ritual.

Despite the cultural similarities among Arab-Islamic societies, it is erroneous to generalize Arab-Muslim women's lived experiences without looking at context specific issues (Butler, 2011) and "considering localized problems within a global sphere" (Fulu and Miedema, 2016; 1). From this standpoint, I recognize the importance of *contextually* examining how familial gender relations are experienced by Arab-Muslim women in terms of the modesty ritual, and in return, how do Arab-Muslim women negotiate familial gender relations through resisting the modesty ritual.

In this thesis, Kuwait has been chosen since it represents an ideal context in which to explore the research phenomenon. As per Askegaard and Linnet (2011), phenomenon is best investigated where it is intensified. Kuwait is a small country situated in the Arab Gulf, Middle East. Compared to its neighboring Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, Kuwait is deemed to be most liberal in terms of women's rights (Al-Mutawa et al., 2015). Yet, "the crosscurrents of modernism and traditionalism seem to be flowing in opposite directions, creating tension and frustration wherever they converge" (Ramazani, 1985; 270) particularly regarding women's clothing choices and public representations. Botz-Bornstein and Abdullah-Khan (2014) point out that although the hijab is not a legal requirement in Kuwait, meaning that both hijabi and non-hijabi women occupy public spaces, those who take off the hijab are socially stigmatized. This paradox is addressed in this thesis which focus on the experiences, including the consumption choices, of ex-hijabi (former hijab wearers) Kuwaiti women. Since the hijab is intended to communicate female modesty (Hassan and Harun, 2016), the experiences of ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women will help understand how modesty is defied.

1.3 Research Questions

At the outset of this research project, I aimed to explore how Kuwaiti women deal with the consequences (if any) of abandoning the hijab. This topic inspired me since although many Muslim women are taking off the hijab, the extant body of literature primarily focuses on those who wear it, thereby neglecting the experiences of ex-hijabi Muslim women. A pilot study (consisting of four semi-structured interviews) was conducted with ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women to determine whether abandoning the hijab is problematic or raises any consequences. As such, the aim of the pilot study was to assess the feasibility of the research project, and relatedly, determine the most appropriate theoretical lenses to apply.

The pilot study revealed the following: 1) the hijab is situated within broader socio-cultural issues concerning Kuwaiti women's public modesty, 2) abandoning the hijab is not a

singular act (i.e. women take off the hijab and deal with the consequences that follow) but involves a continuous contestation between power and resistance (before and after taking off the hijab), 3) Kuwaiti women negotiate power mainly within their families as opposed to their other social groups, and 4) the complexity and dynamic nature of power within Kuwaiti families.

Accordingly, the main research question was refined to: **How are gender relations negotiated by women in the process of resisting a gendered consumption ritual?** More specifically, this thesis was guided by the following sub-questions:

> **1- How do ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women experience familial gender relations in terms of the modesty ritual?**
>
> **2- How do ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women negotiate familial gender relations in the process of resisting the modesty ritual?**

1.4 Research Methodology

The above research questions are answered through a qualitative (interpretivist) research paradigm. This stems from the belief that a qualitative perspective is most appropriate for examining understudied topics (Hogg and Banister, 2001) and populations (Shinnar, 2008), such as Arab-Muslim women's negotiation of gender relations in Kuwait. I employed a relativist ontology (the belief in multiple realities), social constructionist epistemology (the belief in a subjective relationship between the researcher and the researched), and phenomenology as a methodology (related to understanding individuals' lived experiences). I offer a more detailed discussion of the research procedures in the methodology chapter.

1.5 The Structure of the Thesis

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 offers an in-depth literature review related to the context of study, theoretical constructs applied, and the proposed theoretical framework. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I introduce Islamic cultures and discuss the importance of the hijab as the dominant attire for Muslim women. I also provide a historical analysis of the country of Kuwait to trace women's changing social roles, and relatedly, examine the importance of the hijab in Kuwait. In the second and third sections, I critically assess the literature on power and gender followed by resistance and consumption. I particularly emphasize the scarcity of research in the following areas: gender theories in non-western contexts, the negotiation of familial gender relations by Arab-Muslim women, and Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards the modesty gendered ritual. In the fourth section, I address the significance of understanding how Arab-Muslim women resist the modesty ritual to develop knowledge about gender relations in an Eastern context.

Chapter 3 consists of the philosophical foundations of the research. The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I offer an explanation and justification of the framework of inquiry and the related research paradigm, including the ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations of the thesis. Subsequently, in the second section, I focus on the data collection procedures, which include a reflexive account of my indigenous status (as a Kuwaiti Muslim woman) within the field and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 presents the key findings of the research. The chapter is divided into five sections. In the first section, I offer a background introduction of participants' interpretations of their social realities. This is followed by the three major themes in sections two, three, and four. Subsequently, in section five I present two conceptual models that summarize the findings.

Chapter 5 presents a holistic discussion of the research findings. By connecting the findings of the research with already existing literature, I propose several theoretical contributions to advance knowledge in the relevant areas.

Chapter 6 concludes with an overall summary of the research. The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I provide an overview of the theoretical framework of the project. In the second and third sections, I address the practical implications of the research and suggest directions for future researchers, respectively.

Finally, the bibliography includes a list of all the references used in the production of this project. This is followed by the appendices which include the participant information sheets and consent forms, data collection questions, a comprehensive table of participants' profile details, and the conference papers produced from this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter is divided into four major sections as follows. First, in **context of the consumer culture**, I introduce the context of the Islamic consumer culture being studied, with specific focus on Arab-Muslim women in Kuwait. Second, in **power and gender**, I review the literature on power and gender relations, with emphasis on how familial gender relations manifest in Arab-Islamic cultures. Third, in **resistance and consumption**, I review the literature on resistance and rituals in consumer research, with emphasis on resisting gendered consumption rituals and specifically, resisting the modesty gendered consumption ritual. Lastly, in **theoretical framework**, I propose the significance of understanding how Arab-Muslim women resist the modesty ritual to develop knowledge about gender relations in an Eastern context and the notion of resistance.

In what follows, I discuss each section in more depth.

2.1 Context of the Consumer Culture

This study is situated within the CCT (Consumer Culture Theory) tradition of consumer research. CCT attaches importance to cultural constructions in determining individuals' consumption choices (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). In the context of this study, religious and cultural constructions are highly interrelated in that the former informs the latter (Jafari and Süerdem, 2012; Arat and Hassan, 2017). It is therefore important to understand how the religion of Islam shapes Arab-Muslim women's lives. Accordingly, this section is structured as follows.

First, in **Islamic cultures**, I discuss the role of Islam on Muslims' lives, Islamic perspectives on women, and female modesty and family honour in Islam. Second, in **hijab in Islamic cultures**, I discuss the origins of the hijab and how it became associated with

Muslim women, and the different perspectives on the hijab in extant studies. Third, in **Kuwaiti culture**, I discuss the country of Kuwait in terms of key historical events, such as the pre- and post- oil discovery periods, the gulf war, and the political situation, all of which have a major impact on Kuwaiti women's roles and representations. Fourth, in **hijab in Kuwait**, I discuss the role of the hijab in Kuwait to shed light onto its perceived socio-cultural significance. Lastly, in **salient issues for exploration**, I summarize the relevance of choosing Kuwaiti women to study the notion of power and resistance.

2.1.1 Islamic Cultures

The Role of Islam

In literal terms, the word "Islam" means "surrender", or the submission to God (Sechzer, 2004). Islam is described as a monolithic religion (it's based on the belief of one God) that was found in the seventh century (Amer, 2014). The followers of Islam believe in God's indivisibility (Arabic trans., "*Tawhīd*") (Barlas, 2002) and that Prophet Muhammed (Peace Be Upon Him, hereafter PBUH) is God's messenger (Sechzer, 2004).

Islam is deemed to be the second largest and most rapidly expanding religion worldwide (Uddin, 2003). In terms of population, there are over one billion Muslims around the world, with an average increase of twenty five million per year (Essoo and Dibb, 2004). Furthermore, Muslims are expected to construct their lives around certain Islamic principles (Hasna, 2003). Those principles are found in the Islamic code of conduct (also known as "*Shari'ah*" in Arabic) and are derived from two main sources: the Qur'an (believed by Muslims to be God's words) and the Hadith (Prophet Muhammad's [PBUH] traditions in lieu with the Qur'an) (Hasna, 2003).

Akin to other religions, Islam encompasses distinct beliefs, values, rituals, and the desire for an Islamic community, thus it plays a major role in shaping the consumption choices

of its adherents (Mathras et al., 2016). For instance, “the criteria of halal and *haram*, or religiously permissible and forbidden, has traditionally guided Muslims’ dietary restrictions (e.g., consuming pork and alcohol is not allowed)” (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; 669). Other rituals such as praying, fasting, and covering are also fundamental to being regarded as a “good Muslim” (Winchester, 2008).

That said, it is important to note that Islamic societies are not homogenous since like any other religion, Islam has been interpreted and adapted differently in different countries (Jafari and Süerdem, 2012; Arat and Hassan, 2017). As Al-Mannai states, “culture has its effects on the interpretation of the verses of the *Qur’an* and the *Hadith*” (2010; 89). Thus, although all Islamic societies are deemed non-secular (i.e. the state and religion are inseparable entities) (Galloway, 2014), Islamic law is interpreted differently in each country, particularly with respect to women’s public representation (Sechzer, 2004).

On the one hand, from a *macro* perspective, Islam is a localized religion (Wagner et al., 2012) since each government establishes its own rules and regulations. For instance, in Saudi Arabia and Iran, the hijab is devised as a legal requirement (Gould, 2014). In Kuwait, however, the hijab is constructed as women’s personal choice rather than a legal imposition (Botz-Bornstein and Abdullah-Khan, 2014). On the other hand, from a *micro* perspective, personal interpretations of the Qur’an have created individual differences (Hamzeh and Oliver, 2012). As Tarlo (2007) argues, the hijab carries contested meanings among Muslims themselves. Yet, those subtle in-group differences cannot be easily observed by outsiders (Aveili, 2009). On this basis, Muslims should not be treated as a homogenous group (Hamzeh and Oliver, 2012) nor should the image of Muslim women be oversimplified (Sechzer, 2004).

In what follows, I address the role of Muslim women in Islam.

Islam and Women

Prior to the rise of Islam, women of the Arabian Peninsula were exposed to various forms of abuse, treated as possessions, and had minimal rights (González, 2013). Therefore, "when Islam arrived on the scene in the early seventh-century Arabia, it came into a region with a long tradition of patriarchal authority, misogyny, and restriction toward women in the public sphere" (Amer, 2014; 9). Accordingly, many scholars contend that the Arab culture rather than Islam is responsible for undermining Muslim women (Shelash, 1985; Self and Grabowski, 2012). As Amer (2014) argues, patriarchal authority preceded Islam, and in effect, Islam attempted to resolve issues related to women's rights.

Islam granted women access to basic legal rights, including their inheritance of wealth, ownership of property, and choice of one's spouse (Hasna, 2003). It also prohibited female infanticide and issued divorce rights for women (González, 2013). However, while such Islamic provisions provided advantages for Muslim women back then, they appear inadequate in today's times (González, 2013). For instance, despite the efforts to liberate women, Islam fails to clearly address their clothing expectations and public representations (Amer, 2014). This oversight has led to Muslim women's clothing being subjected to interpretation by male Muslim clerics who occupy positions of power with regards to interpreting and disseminating knowledge about Islam, including the roles of men and women (Meldrum et al., 2014).

In what follows, I refer to how Muslim women's bodies are constructed by male Muslim clerics.

Female Modesty and Family Honour

The notion of modesty (*hay'a* in Arabic) is central to Islamic teachings surrounding the Islamic (permissible) way of living (Boulanouar, 2006). Modesty in Islamic teachings has been addressed from multiple perspectives, including its physical (i.e. clothing) and non-

physical (i.e. speech, thought, behavior, intentions) aspects (Boulanouar, 2006). This study focuses on the physical aspect of modesty, defined as one's *awra'*, an Arabic term meaning "the private body parts" of a human being that "must be covered" in the public sphere (Boulanouar, 2006). Although modesty in clothing is applicable to both Muslim men and women, the constructions of *awra'* differ for male and female bodies (Boulanouar, 2006).

For men, their *awra'* is the area from their navel to their knees, whereas for women it is a more complicated matter (Boulanouar, 2006). Women's *awra'* consists of their entire body, except for their face and hands; their *awra'* must be covered in the presence of non-*mahrem's*, or marriageable males (Boulanouar, 2006). Only "men in the *mahrem* category (e.g. her husband and kin not eligible for marriage) may see a woman's hair, ears, neck, upper part of the chest, arms and legs. Other parts of her body may only be seen by her spouse" (Sobh and Belk, 2011; 324). This leads to an important distinction between the "private" and "public" spheres in Islamic contexts which differ from those of Western paradigms.

Contrary to Western contexts, in Islamic societies, the private and public spheres are not preestablished arenas (Gole, 2002) whereby "private is home and public is out" (Boulanouar, 2006; 146). Instead, the public sphere is any place which involves the presence of non-*mahrem's* (Boulanouar, 2006), whether it's inside or outside the home. This suggests that a private space (such as one's home) can easily be transformed into a public space (when non-*mahrem's* are present). Following Sobh and Belk:

> "A home free from non-mahrem males is physically and symbolically felt to be liberating for women since they do not have to bear the inconvenience of covering, and can also show their ostentatious outfits, hairstyles, jewelry, and beauty to female guests and thereby make statements about their status, taste, and interest in fashion" (2011; 330)"

Hence, Muslim women are expected to confine their beauty and adornment to private spaces and comply with a modest appearance in public (Boulanouar, 2006). For instance, Jafari and Maclaran (2014) reveal the social stigmatization of Iranian Muslim women who appear with make-up in public spaces. Relatedly, women's public modesty is also reflected in the housing architecture found in Islamic societies (Sobh and Belk, 2011). Houses are designed in a way that women's living quarters are secluded from men to allow them to uncover while at home, even when non-*mahrem's* are present in the same house (Sobh and Belk, 2011).

Furthermore, in Islamic societies, female modesty is essential to protecting family honour. It is argued that the nuclear and extended family are interrelated, and the family is recognized as the core social unit (Joseph, 2010). In literary Arabic, "the word *sharaf*, which is the equivalent to the English word honour, refers specifically to noble descent from both parents" (Abu-Zahra, 1970; 1084). Family (male) honour is primarily contingent upon the modesty of females who are held accountable to preserve the honour of their male relatives (Joseph, 2010). Family honour is associated with males because the family law is derived from religious (Islamic) law which codifies wives and children as properties of fathers and husbands (Joseph, 2010). Such treatment is intended to preserve the family hierarchy whereby "men are respected [and] women are protected" (Haboush and Alyan, 2013; 506). The protection of women is often described as men's obligation to clothe their female relatives and hide them from the male gaze (Antoun, 1968). This suggests that although Arab-Muslim women are traditionally identified with the body, they are not perceived as owners of their bodies (Al-Absi, 2018). As Aboulhassan and Brumley's (2019) study show, despite being progressive thinkers, many Arab-Muslim women refrain from publicly engaging in deviant behavior due to their fear of the consequences which may threaten their lives. Relatedly, Aboulhassan and Brumley (2019) add that the women who participated in their study refer to the association of the family honour with female modesty as a "social control mechanism" that sustains gender inequality.

In what follows, I offer a detailed discussion on the hijab which represents the dominant form of expressing female modesty, and thus, preserving family honour, in Islamic societies.

2.1.2 Hijab in Islamic Cultures

Origins of the Hijab

The hijab appears to be one of the most debated topics in the literature on Islam, and more specifically, Muslim women. The hijab's popularity among many Muslim women has captured the attention of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars (Ruby, 2006). In extant studies, the term "veil" has commonly been used as synonymous to "hijab", however, there are important distinctions that should be clarified to avoid confusion (Ruby, 2006). Relatedly, another faulty assumption is the idea that Islam introduced the veil/hijab for Muslim women (Secor, 2002).

The "veil" is a generic term used to refer to all types of covering, indiscriminately (Amer, 2014). According to Siraj, "veiling is a cultural custom that was associated with high social status in Arabia, and preceded Islam as it was practised by women of various religions" (2011; 717). Hence, Islam adopted the veil from earlier Byzantine, Persian, Jewish, and Christian traditions rather than introduced it (Amer, 2014). The veil originated in Assyrian law in the thirteenth-century BCE where aristocratic women wore a veil to distinguish themselves from slaves and prostitutes (Amer, 2014). Therefore, it was perceived as a marker of social status and difference.

Two verses from the Qur'an are central to the debates as to whether a "veil" or simply modesty in Muslim women's clothing is required (Zahedi, 2007). The first verse specifically addresses the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) female relatives:

> "O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they sho uld cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most conve nient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested" (trans. Ali, 2011; 240).

In the above verse, the term "known" is used to emphasize that the Prophet's (PBUH) wives and other Muslim women should be distinguished from uncovered women (Zahedi, 2007). During that time, an outer garment (or *jilbab* in Arabic) was worn to help women avoid sexual advancements from men as it was common in the pre-Islamic era (known as *jahiliyya,* meaning ignorance in Arabic) in Arab societies (Zahedi, 2007). In line with this, since an understanding of the Qur'an demands knowledge of its historical context, it is likewise important to realize historical interpretations (Barlas, 2002) that do not necessarily coincide with later periods.

The second verse refers to a general code of modesty, including not only appearance, but also eye contact:

> "And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils [i.e. *khimar*] over their bosoms…" (trans. Ali, 2011; 195).

Although modesty is valued in Islam, there are no specific references to a veil to cover women's hair (Zahedi, 2007). The above Islamic verse clearly emphasizes that women should avoid being attractive and cover their chests, without any references to covering their hair. However, the Qur'an is not explicit as to what constitutes women's modest clothing, which led to multiple interpretations of Islamic text (Sechzer, 2004). For instance:

> "Inclusion of a head covering comes from interpretation of the word "khimar." It has been agreed that at the time of Muhammad, this was a loose scarf covering the woman's head, neck, and perhaps her shoulders, leaving the rest of her body exposed. So in the later enforcement of this rule, women had to use a khimar to cover their breasts as well. The interpretation of the khimar explains why Muslims believe that the Qur'an instructs women to cover their hair. This however is not specified in the Qur'an" (Sechzer, 2004; 268)

Furthermore, the term "hijab" originated in the Qur'an and refers to a "curtain" rather than a form of clothing for Muslim women (Sechzer, 2004). This curtain served as a screen between the Prophet's (PBUH) wives and other Muslims (Sechzer, 2004; Siraj, 2011; Amer, 2014). The screen took the form of a face veil when the Prophet's (PBUH) wives were outside in the public space (Sechzer, 2004). Therefore, the hijab was exclusive to the Prophet's (PBUH) household and reflected the high honour of his female relatives.

Over time, however, Muslims associated the hijab with women's "proper" dress (Amer, 2014) and it became an Islamic tradition (Zahedi, 2007). Specifically, it represents a cover draped over the head to cover one's hair and neck. The hijab should also be accompanied with long and loose outfits to conceal a woman's body. Due to being derived from the Qur'an, the hijab is widely recognized as an Islamic symbol (McDermott, 2010).

In what follows, I address the different perspectives on the hijab in extant studies.

Perspectives on the Hijab

The topic of the hijab has been extensively studied from various perspectives. This includes what it means, how it's worn, and why it's worn in different cultural settings and among distinct individuals. There is agreement that the hijab visibly represents an intersection

between one's religion, nationality, and gendered identity (Hopkins and Greenwood, 2013).

Following September 11, 2001, Muslims have generally been "Othered" in Western countries, and specifically, the hijab became a symbol of backwardness and oppression (Haddad, 2007). However, while dominant conceptions in the West tend to situate the hijab as a symbol of oppression, many Muslim women who wear it perceive themselves as empowered rather than oppressed (Droogsma, 2007). As Bhowon and Bundhoo (2016) argue, the hijab is imbued with various symbolic meanings and is interpreted depending on the cultural context and one's majority or minority status. In other words:

> "Just as Muslims are 'in context' in some countries, they are 'out of context' in others—usually when they are in the minority. The 'communication' of the clothing message does suffer from distortion in these contexts. Often the 'message sent' by the wearer is not understood by the 'receiver'—or is understood to have a very different meaning from that intended (or sent) by the wearer" (Boulanouar, 2006; 148)

In the case of being minorities, hijabi women are likely to be exposed to biased treatment, whereas a sense of belonging is attained in a majority state (Droogsma, 2007). For instance, Unkelbach et al. (2010) show that hijabi women in Germany were immediately rejected in a job application screening process based on their perceived Muslimness, regardless of their academic qualifications. In Israel, however, hijabi women have increased chances of being recruited in public institutions (Arar and Shapira, 2016).

Furthermore, it is imperative to note that "not all Muslims experience mistreatment, or the same degree of it, as a result of their minority group status" (Everett et al., 2015; 90). Different types of coverage often elicit different reactions, with greater levels of coverage

stimulating greater negativity (Everett et al., 2015). As a response, some Muslim women have identified coping strategies (such as wearing wigs, refashioning, and removing the hijab) to deal with the hijab stigma in Western countries (Kejanlioğlu and Taş, 2009; Chapman, 2016).

In addition, the common Western belief that the hijab intends to transform women into invisible and voiceless subjects has been challenged. For instance, Tarlo (2010) contends that rather than making them invisible, the hijab makes Muslim women visible in a certain way. This is especially reflected in the recent veiling as fashion phenomenon, which ultimately reinforces the visibility of hijabi women (Gökarıksel and Secor, 2014). As Sobh et al. argues, "long known as a region where women wear traditional conservative clothing and where religious imperatives discourage public display of beauty, the Arab Gulf appears to be reinventing itself in terms of fashion consumption" (2012; 357).

For instance, global forces have had a major influence on Qatari and Emirati women's clothing choices (Sobh et al., 2012). Such Muslim women are minorities in their own countries (which are outnumbered by foreigners) thereby leading them to simultaneously negotiate a combination of traditional as well as Western identities (Sobh et al., 2012). Similarly, many fashion designers in Tehran have addressed state mandated clothing while also being responsive to the fashion desires of consumers, thereby creating clothing designs that are inspired by Western taste but are customised to fit traditional requirements (Balasescu, 2007).

In Turkey as well, *Tesettur* women (those who wear Islamic forms of covering) have become a target market who represent a mesh between being both "modern" and "Islamic" consumers by being fashionably covered (Sandikci and Ger, 2007). Muslim women's fashions include variations in color, length, coverage, cut, design, and material of traditional veiling garments (Moors, 2007). This suggest that ideals of beauty and

concealment are not necessarily opposites but can overlap and still produce socially acceptable identities (Abbas, 2015).

Many Western scholars who are unfamiliar with Muslim cultures (including the multiple meanings attached to symbols and social representations) immediately associate the hijab with women's oppression (Davary, 2009). Accordingly, they tend to ascribe meaning to the hijab rather than describe it from the perspective of those who wear it (Droogsma, 2007). Although feelings of oppression are relevant to some hijabi women, a "willingness to listen to pluralistic voices seems a more promising approach than to argue for a single overriding "meaning" of the hijab" (Alghafli, 2017; 700).

The importance of wearing the hijab in Muslim majority countries has been widely studied. This includes reasons for veiling (Hopkins and Greenwood, 2013; Gökarıksel and Secor, 2014; Bhowon and Bundhoo, 2016), cross-cultural differences in veiling practices (Moors, 2007; Sandikci and Ger, 2007; Kejanlioğlu and Taş, 2009) experiences of veiling in Muslim-majority vs. Muslim minority countries (Wagner et al., 2012; Mirza, 2013; Everett et al., 2015; Chapman, 2016) etc. However, an overemphasis on the act of *wearing* the hijab reinforces the idea of Muslim women as a homogenous group (Said, 1979) who blindly conform to social expectations. It is therefore crucial to acknowledge the experiences of non-conforming Muslim women who either do not wear or have taken off the hijab.

Relatedly, while coping strategies are identified for hijabi immigrants in Muslim minority countries (Mossière, 2012; Chapman, 2016) due to the hijab stigma, a reverse process occurs in women's home country, whereby their removal of the hijab is a stigmatized act. This raises the question of how do (some) Muslim women negotiate being expected to keep the hijab on while having the desire to take it off in their own home countries? Accordingly, this study focuses on the experiences of ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women who have taken off the hijab in their own home country.

In what follows, I introduce the country of Kuwait along with its historical events that shape women's social situations.

2.1.3 Kuwaiti Culture

Introducing Kuwait

The name Kuwait originates from the word *kut*, meaning a small fortress (Al Mughni, 1993). Kuwait is a small Islamic country situated in the Arab Gulf region, Middle East. Its population is estimated at approximately three million (Al-Mutawa et al., 2015), with expatriates outnumbering local citizens (Crystal, 2016). Kuwait appears to be a unique context in which to explore how power and resistance operate from a gendered perspective. First, "given the small size of Kuwaiti society and the fact that people rarely go out without meeting someone they know, one can appreciate how much pressure Kuwaiti females are under to look their best at all times in view of what is virtually constant scrutiny" (Kelly, 2010; 225). Second, while compared to other Gulf countries, Kuwait is deemed most liberal in terms of women's rights (Al-Mutawa et al., 2015), women's lived experiences are nonetheless largely shaped by cultural norms and traditions. Third, "although some research has been conducted on collectivist societies in the Middle Eastern region, few have focused on the Arab region, particularly the country of Kuwait" (Dakhli et al., 2013; 88).

Accordingly, the following sub-sections focus on the "historical events that affected Kuwaiti society and have bearing on the current social and political roles for women", including the discovery of oil, the aftermath of the Gulf war, and the political situation (González, 2013; 7). Throughout the different periods, developments are traced both quantitatively (the numbers of infrastructure built) and qualitatively (changes in women's behavior) (Kandari and Hadben, 2010).

Pre- and Post- Oil Discovery

The pre- and post- oil eras in Kuwait had a major impact on the living conditions, especially for women (Shelash, 1985). Centuries before the discovery of oil in 1936, Kuwait was heavily dependent on trade from activities such as pearl diving and fishing for its economic security (Shelash, 1985; Tetreault and al-Mughni, 1995). Such activities were solely occupied by men, who were held responsible for their families' well-being (Tetreault and al-Mughni, 1995). Women, on the other hand, were assigned traditional feminine roles within the household, such as child rearing and house work (Al-Tarrah, 2002).

Women belonging to wealthy families were restricted from being seen or heard outside the confines their house courtyard (Al Mughni, 1993). Servants were appointed to fulfill their shopping requirement in the *suk* (market) (Al-Mughni, 1993). The houses were constructed in a way that secluded women from the public space as windows were only built in the *dewanya* (a designated area in the house where men gather to discuss political matters) (Al Mughni, 1993). Conversely, women belonging to moderate families had more freedom to mobilize outside the terrains of the home since they couldn't afford to appoint servants on their behalf (Al Mughni, 1993). In addition to their limited mobility, women were also restricted from educational rights (Al Mughni, 1993). Compared to men who received formal education, women took basic classes (such as dress making and embroidery) which limited their social advancement (Al Mughni, 1993).

Furthermore, modesty was stressed upon when it comes to the public representation of women. If women needed to perform shopping activities in public spaces, they were strictly required to cover their bodies with an *abbaya* (a long and loose black cloak) and faces with a *boshiya* (thick black cloth) (Al Mughni, 1993). By concealing the female body, the mandated clothes symbolized a woman's respect, honour, and chastity (Al Mughni, 1993). Those who revealed their faces in front of unrelated men were severely punished, if not killed (Al Mughni, 1993).

In 1946, Kuwait was involved in the commercial export of oil, which led to significant improvements in its economic, social, and political conditions (Tetreault and al-Mughni, 1995; Ghabra, 1997). The state experienced a major shift from reliance on sea resources to massive revenues from its oil reserves (Al-Moqatei, 1989). As a result, the Kuwaiti government built improved infrastructure and provided health care, education, and job opportunities for all Kuwaiti citizens (Ghabra, 1997), including more females being enrolled in schools and later joining the workforce (Shelash, 1985). Despite the achieved improvements, however, surplus demand of oil was realized between the 1950's and 1960's (Al-Tarrah, 2002). Also, the increased investments in infrastructure and educational opportunities for women did not result in their full emancipation (Al-Tarrah, 2002) as their public visibility remained limited. This intensified women and led to assertive actions by some (Tetreault and Al-Mughni, 1995).

In 1956, some merchant class (high status) women initiated a revolutionary movement, they removed their *abbayas* and burnt them in their school yard (Tetreault and al-Mughni, 1995). However, their parents and community men warned them that they would be banned from school if they chose to unveil (Al Mughni, 1993). The merchant class women therefore re-veiled to maintain their educational privilege (Al Mughni, 1993). Nonetheless, the incident made men of the community reconsider the issue of the hijab (veiled) and *sufur* (unveiled) (Al Mughni, 1993). Almost a year later, the Council for Education recreated the school uniform into a short black dress with red ribbons instead of the black *abbaya* (Al Mughni, 1993). By 1960, when educated merchant class women returned from their studies abroad, they were committed to remain unveiled despite jeopardizing their careers, since veiling was obligatory for all working women (Al Mughni, 1993). During that time, the women were supported by their families who became accustomed to seeing them unveiled (Al Mughni, 1993). In 1961, following oppositions towards the veil and the demand to modernize the country, the government eventually permitted women to work without wearing a veil (Al-Mughni, 1993).

The Gulf War

The Gulf war commenced on 2nd August 1990, which was when Iraq invaded Kuwait (Ghabra, 1991; Rizzo et al., 2002). At the time, the president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, believed that the invasion would create political divisions between Kuwaitis which would serve his own interests (Ghabra, 1991). Also, the amount of wealth and generated oil revenue was a leading motive behind the invasion (Al-Sabah, 2013). During the Gulf war, Kuwait's resurgence was difficult, and therefore the exportation of oil was limited (Al-Tarrah, 2002). Also, since the country could not rely on foreign labor, women were obliged to participate in the workforce (Al-Tarrah, 2002).

Al-Sabah states that women "were crucial in providing food, health care and other services to the larger Kuwaiti community, especially as many of the men had disappeared or moved underground. These women transcended tradition, culture and religion by reaching out to others and putting up fierce resistance to the Iraqi occupation, including a brave armed struggle, sabotaging Iraqi installations and attacking troops" (2013; 32-33). However, this did not persist post-liberation, when men were able to solely handle public affairs again (Juliá and Ridha, 2001).

On 26th February 1991, with the great support of American armed forces, Kuwait was finally liberated from Iraq (Ghabra, 1991). By 1992, the establishment of networks were necessary for the economy's recovery (Wheeler, 2000). Innovative technology, particularly the internet, infiltrated the country and eliminated barriers with the outside world (Wheeler, 2000). Wheeler (2000) mentions that globalization (or exposure to foreign cultures) has a negative impact on "traditional social ritual". Nonetheless, despite the entrance of foreign practices in Kuwait, traditional lifestyles are still maintained.

Political Situation

"Kuwait has conducted regular and irregular elections since 1921, making it a unique country in the Middle East" (Olimat, 2012; 181). The Gulf war highlighted the importance of resolving democratization issues (Rizzo et al., 2002). In 1986, prior to the Gulf war, parliamentary elections were dissolved and resumed in 1992 at the request of opposition groups and those politically marginalized, including the Shi'a and commercial class (Meyer et al., 2007). This was based on the belief that a democratic system must involve all concerned citizens. Following that, the year 1993 marks the start of the first women's organization in Kuwait (Meyer et al., 2007). Despite women's efforts to claim their rights, these were dismissed in both 1993 and following a second attempt in 1998 (Meyer et al., 2007).

Accordingly, in May 1999, the late emir, Shaykh Jabir Al Ahmad Al Sabah intervened and issued a decree for women's right to vote and participate in the 2003 parliamentary elections (Wills, 2013). Shortly after, this decree was also dissolved in November 1999 due to oppositions from Islamists and some liberals in the National Assembly (Meyer et al., 2007; Wills, 2013). During that year, Kuwait was neither a fully democratic nor an autocratic state, which reflects the current situation to-date (Wills, 2013). Total democracy (the system of governance based on citizens' opinions) cannot take place because the appointed emir or Shaykh still holds power.

The Gulf war appears to be a major turning point for women's emancipation in later years due to their remarkable contributions at the time (Al-Sabah, 2013). In 2005, after great lobbying efforts, Shaykh Al Sabah was able to successfully enforce women's political participation (Wills, 2013). Unfortunately, none of the female candidates won the elections in 2005; May 2009 marks the first time that four women (western doctorate holders) won parliamentary elections, namely: "Ma'suma al-Mubarak, Asil al-'Awadi, Rula Dashti, and Salwa al-Jassar" (Wills, 2013; 183). Those women raised important issues related to female

citizenship in Kuwait, such as requesting women's equal housing and educational opportunities as well as extended rights to children from non-Kuwaiti fathers who are excluded from citizenship incentives (Olimat, 2012). This shows that Kuwaiti women, like other Arab women, are treated as "second class citizens" (Shelash, 1985; Tétreault, 2001).

In February 2012, however, a backlash occurred whereby all four women lost their seats and no other women were elected although several had participated (Olimat, 2012; Wills, 2013). Those women had the potential to secure positions in the parliament if they had been supported by other Kuwaiti women, given that women account for the majority vote in the country (Olimat, 2012). Nonetheless, their perceived failure ensued due to several reasons, including: 1) society's lack of trust in women's brief experience, 2) women culturally feel more secure in the hands of men, 3) Islamist and tribal groups fear women's power, and 4) women's religious organizations believe that women's rights threaten their "natural" domestic identities (Rizzo et al., 2002; Olimat, 2012). This shows that unlike women in the other Gulf countries, although Kuwaiti women are allowed to participate in the political sphere, cultural traditions discourage their participation (Dashti et al., 2015). Currently, Safa al-Hashem is the only female representative in the Kuwaiti National assembly (Al Terkait, 2018).

The above discussion shows that while some steps of progress are taking place for Kuwaiti women, these are always faced with opposition in the broader socio-cultural environment. In what follows, I specifically focus on Kuwaiti women's public representation in terms of the hijab.

2.1.4 Hijab in Kuwait

Today, the female dress code in Kuwait is not as strict as it is in other Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia (Walter, 2016). The hijab is not a legal requirement in Kuwait, meaning that both hijabi and non-hijabi women occupy public spaces (Botz-Bornstein and Abdullah-Khan, 2014). However, a modest bodily representation is culturally expected of both groups of women, including the avoidance of clothing that is revealing, tight, transparent, and/or short (Al-Mutawa, 2013). This explains why Kuwaiti women often appropriate Western attire to communicate their fashion desires (Al-Mutawa, 2013) whilst simultaneously complying with "the acceptable [clothing] limits of their society, with or without the hijab" (Kelly, 2010; 226).

Although the hijab in Kuwait is constructed as a personal and free choice, sometimes parental enforcement transforms it into an obligation (Botz-Bornstein and Abdullah-Khan, 2014). The enforcement of the hijab is often associated with socio-cultural rather than religious concerns (Botz-Bornstein and Abdullah-Khan, 2014) because family honour is dictated based on the degree of visibility of female bodies. Relatedly, with or without the hijab, male family members have the authority to mandate or restrict certain clothing on their female relatives (Kelly, 2010).

Furthermore, while both hijabi and non-hijabi women are prevalent in Kuwait, paradoxically, those who (decide to) take off the hijab are socially stigmatized and often confront familial interventions. For instance, the Kuwaiti journalist Al-Shuaibi (2016) published an article in *Kuwait Times* (an English language newspaper in Kuwait) where she addresses the impact of removing the hijab in Kuwait. Al-Shuaibi (2016) particularly highlights the idea that Kuwaiti's often respect non-hijabi women more than those who take off the hijab. She states that those who take off the hijab are harshly judged by society and are sometimes susceptible to domestic violence (Al-Shuaibi, 2016). Similarly, Amin (2017) who writes in *Al-Qabas* (an Arabic language newspaper in Kuwait) published an

article concerning the recent “trend” of taking off the hijab in Kuwait. She asserts that before judging those who take off the hijab one should ask oneself the following questions; have such women voluntarily or forcefully worn the hijab? Do they have the right to choose whether to wear the hijab? And do they exercise authority over their lives as independent individuals, or are they merely females undermined in societies that favor male dominance? (Amin, 2017). Despite the pervasive media attention surrounding ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women, this has not been reflected in scholarly work. To address this dearth in literature, this study explores the experiences of ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women in negotiating familial gender relations through resisting modesty.

2.1.5 Salient Issues for Exploration

In summary of the above section, I offer several key points to justify the chosen context of this study.

First, the religion of Islam is neither uniformly applied across Islamic societies (on a macro level) or among Muslim individuals (on a micro level). It is therefore imperative to explore the interrelation between Islam as a religion and its cultural as well as individual adaptation. The interrelation between the Islamic religion and culture plays a vital role in determining the consumption choices of Muslims, therefore context specific issues should be explored rather than assuming generalizations of a global Islam.

Second, Muslim women’s social roles are primarily based on male interpretations of Islamic script, thereby reflecting male interests. Muslim women are constructed as carriers of their family honour, and their modest public representation is essential to maintaining an honourable image of their families. According to male Muslim clerics, modesty should be expressed through women’s observance of the hijab which is intended to restrict their

sexuality. That said, Muslim women are not passive victims of male oppression but often employ various resistance strategies towards modesty/wearing the hijab.

Third, Kuwait represents an ideal context in which to explore women's resistance towards modesty, and particularly the hijab, due to the following: a) Kuwait is an under researched Arab country in the realm of consumer research b) there is historical evidence that Kuwaiti women's resistance towards their social roles are met with opposition from the broader socio-cultural environment, and c) although the hijab is not a legal requirement in Kuwait, it is nonetheless culturally unacceptable for women to take off the hijab due to family honour concerns.

Accordingly, in the next section, I focus on the theoretical constructs of power and gender, with emphasis on the characteristics of gender relations in Arab-Islamic societies.

2.2 Power and Gender

This section focuses on the role of power in producing social bodies. However, rather than understanding the body as a universal entity, emphasis is placed on the importance of recognizing that bodies of men and women are differently, and unequally, constructed in society, with privileges being accorded to the former group. Following such an approach, the gender identity theory is applied to show how gender inequalities are inscribed into and reinforced through our everyday gender performance.

That said, it is imperative to realize that women do not represent a homogenous category as their experiences are largely shaped by an intersection of multiple social factors, nor should they be reduced to passive victims of oppression. In light of this, and due to western colonization, the lived realities of Arab-Muslim women appear to be under-represented in gender theories. As such, this section explores the construction of gender in Arab-Islamic societies, and particularly, how gender relations are experienced by Arab-Muslim women within their families.

Accordingly, this section is structured as follows. First, in **power and the production of social bodies**, I address how power produces social bodies through discursive formations and disciplinary mechanisms. Second, in **the production of gendered bodies**, I approach gender from a constructionist rather than a deterministic perspective; I show how gender is socially constructed to produce relations of power and inequality between men and women. Third, in **gender relations in Arab-Islamic societies**, I focus on how the construction of women's sexuality in Arab-Islamic societies informs the ways in which gender relations are practiced. Fourth, in **familial gender relation in Arab-Islamic societies**, I show how gender relations are particularly reinforced within the family domain in Arab-Islamic societies. Fifth, in **negotiating familial gender relations in Arab-Islamic societies**, I argue that if gender is a social construction, then Arab-Muslim women can deconstruct and reproduce their identities. Lastly, in **salient issues for exploration**, I

summarize the key gaps in the power and gender literature that are identified and addressed in this research.

2.2.1 Power and the Production of Social Bodies

The concept of power has been applied by various social science theorists, therefore its essence can be approached from multiple perspectives. Broadly, "power refers to the ability to obtain desired goals through controlling or influencing others" (Weitz, 2001; 668). For purposes of this research, I draw upon the twentieth century French philosopher, Michel Foucault's conceptualization of power. Foucault's work differs from earlier conceptualizations of power on several grounds as he argues that power is 1) exercised in *relation* to others rather than possessed by any individuals, 2) everywhere and diffused rather than centralized in society, 3) multidirectional rather than flowing from the more to the less powerful, 4) productive rather than solely repressive, and 5) constitutes individuals rather than merely being employed by them.

Foucault was the first to introduce the idea of power within the analysis of discourse (Sheridan, 1990). His core argument centres around the notion that power and knowledge (the equivalent of *discourse* in a Foucauldian sense) constitute the same relation, i.e. power-knowledge (Foucault, 1970). Following Foucault's words, "we should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (1991; 27). Knowledge is transmitted through both "scholarly discipline" (such as medicine, sociology, science etc.) and "institutions of social control" (such as prison, schools, hospitals etc.) (Foucault, 1991).

Therefore, as opposed to traditional and liberal Marxist views which focus on the repressive role of power, Foucault (1990) acknowledges that power plays *both* repressive *and* productive roles in modern society. As he emphasizes, "we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces, it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truths. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production" (Foucault, 1991; 194). That is, power should not be perceived as a mere form of domination, but also as that which *activates* subjects and produces their social existence (Butler, 1997).

For example, in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault stresses the idea that human sexuality is a social construction. He argues that in the beginning of the seventh century, following the Victorian bourgeoisie, talking about sex outside the confines of one's bedroom was prohibited based on productive rather than repressive intentions (Foucault, 1990). A productive form of power was taking place because sexuality was discussed, however, such discussions were confined to certain spaces and people, including those involved in the medical and psychoanalysis field, in order to produce knowledge (Foucault, 1990).

Later, in the eighteenth century, sexuality was openly discussed to "police" it and make people aware of its consequences (Foucault, 1990). Policies were applied not regarding the taboo nature of sex, but rather to construct useful discourses surrounding it, such as population control (Foucault, 1990). Thereafter, since sexuality cannot be observed, in the nineteenth century, individuals were encouraged to confess any sexual interests that lie outside the marital domain (such as the sexuality of children, the mentally ill, criminals, and homosexuals) to powerful entities who can then normalize their sexual desires (Foucault, 1990). That is, "deviancy is controlled and norms are established through the very process of identifying deviant activity as such, then observing it, further classifying it, and monitoring and "treating" it" (Diamond and Quinby, 1988; 182-183).

Similarly, in his later work on *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1991) focuses on the role of disciplinary power in producing social bodies. He states that in the sovereign age, a public offense was perceived to be an offense towards the king, therefore the offender was punished through "spectacle" – the offender's *body* was visibily tortured in public, such as through public execution, which represents the power of the king (Foucault, 1991). In modern society, however, a public offense is perceived to be directed towards society, therefore the offender is punished through disciplinary power (Foucault, 1991). Disciplinary power was intended towards prisoners; however, society appears to be composed of a multitude of dominated others, including students, patients, soldiers etc. which shows that power is vested in multiple institutional contexts, such as schools, hospitals, military etc. (Foucault, 1991). According to Foucault, "the success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination" (1991; 170).

To briefly clarify, hierarchal observation relates to the disciplining of individuals by means of observation (Foucault, 1991). By applying Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, Foucault illustrates that the prison is a form of discipline because it induces in "the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" through self-surveillance (Foucault, 1991; 201). The *soul* (as opposed to the *body* in pre-modern societies) is tortured since an offender is removed from the public space and into a private area where he/she is exposed to constant observation (Foucault, 1991). Also, the normalizing judgement is a form of discipline that involves comparing one with others, and therefore, judging one's behavior according to what is deemed "normal" or the norm in society (Foucault, 1991). Conformity is encouraged through rewards, and those who deviate from the norm incur penalties to normalize their behavior (Foucault, 1991). In this sense, "the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps" since "the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences" (Foucault, 1991; 184).

Furthermore, examination combines both "hierarchal observation" and "normalizing judgement" – it is a "normalizing gaze" since it involves both surveillance and judgment (Foucault, 1991). Through examination (of patients in hospitals or students in schools, for example) individuals experience a sense of visibility through which they are differentiated, judged against the norm, and corrected in case of deviation from the norm (Foucault, 1991).

At this stage, it is worth noting that while Foucault shows how power produces social bodies, his work has been criticized as suffering from "gender blindness" due to treating the human body as a universal and desexualized entity (McNay, 1992). At the same time, however, "when Foucault talks of the body or the self it is a male version that is frequently implied and thus, albeit unintentionally, he perpetuates the patriarchal habit of eliding the masculine with the general" (McNay, 1992; 195). In doing so, Foucault undermines the different ways in which men and women are sexualized, as well as the effects of such differences on their lived gender experiences (Ramazanoglu, 1993). For instance, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault fails to articulate the gendered nature of disciplinary power, in that men and women are differently disciplined in society (McNay, 1992).

Although Foucault demonstrates a lack of interest in gender per se, this does not indicate that his entire conceptual framework must be negated in feminist studies; rather, analyzing his work from a gendered perspective presents an opportunity to fill the lacuna in his work (King, 2004). Also, far from being incommensurable with feminist thoughts, Foucault's work has particularly attracted feminist theorists due to his insistence that the body is a historical and cultural identity and refuses to explain it from a biological perspective (McNay, 1992).

In what follows, I apply Foucault's view of power to an analysis of gender. I show how gender is constructed through practices of power, and relatedly, that gender relations *are* in effect, power relations (Radtke et al., 1994; 13).

2.2.2 The Production of Gendered Bodies

The meaning of gender is widely contested due to the various and conflicting discourses and systems of knowledge accounting for gender (Connell and Connell, 2005). For instance, in the biological sciences, gender is deemed to be a "natural" order, whereas in the social sciences, there is consensus that gender is "socially constructed" and/or "constituted in discourse" rather than being a natural occurrence (Connell and Connell, 2005). By borrowing Foucault's conceptualization of social bodies, this research employs Judith Butler's (2006) view on gender as a social construction. Following a social constructionist perspective, Butler (2006) contends that while sex (i.e. male and female) is biological and assigned at birth based on one's perceived genitals, gender (i.e. masculine and feminine) represents social role expectations associated with being identified as man or woman.

Contrary to positivist theories who tend to equate sex with gender, in that male is necessarily masculine and female is necessarily feminine (Maclaran et al., 2009), Butler (2006) argues that sex and gender are separable constructs that do not always fit neatly together. In other words, one should not think of gender as being true or false, since this would imply the existence of an "essential" gender identity which defies its socially constructed nature (Butler, 1988). Broadly, social constructionists define gender as "psychologically, sociologically, or culturally rooted traits, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies" (Bristor and Fischer, 1993; 519). There is consensus that while masculinity is constructed as dominating, unemotional, and workplace oriented, femininity is constructed as compliant, nurturing, and empathetic (Fugate and Phillips, 2010).

As such, masculinity and femininity are personality traits that inform the basis of gender identity theory (Fischer and Arnold, 1994). These traits, however, should neither be restricted to one's sex nor necessarily be perceived as two-dimensional constructs (i.e. one is either masculine *or* feminine) since there are varying degrees to which an individual

identifies with masculine and feminine personality traits (Palan, 2001) suggesting that "gender identities are complex, multi-layered and contentious" (Goulding and Saren, 2009; 28). Gender identity theory stresses that gender is something that individuals actively "do", yet this "doing" is not performed by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed (Butler, 2006; 34). As Butler emphasizes:

> "The act that gender is, the act that embodied agents *are* inasmuch as they dramatically and actively embody and, indeed, *wear* certain cultural significations, is clearly not one's act alone. Surely, there are nuanced and individual ways of *doing* one's gender, but *that* one does it, and that one does it *in accord with* certain sanctions and proscriptions, is clearly not a fully individual matter" (1988; 525).

In this sense, Butler (2011) notes that gender is "performative"; that is, doing gender involves a reiteration of pre-established norms rather than being an individual's own (unique) "performance". In effect, gender performativity places constraints one one's social performances as it predisposes one to act in a certain way in order to be recognized as legitimate in society (Butler, 2011). As Thompson and Ustuner mention, "naturalized gender discourses and distinctions place ideological constraints upon what are deemed to be normatively acceptable actions, and they can foreclose modes of gender practice that fall outside of these regulatory norms" (2015; 239). Individuals are held "accountable" for their gender performance (Hollander, 2013). Accountability operates in two related ways; individuals orient themselves towards others' imagined assessments, and individuals' behavior is assessed by others based on normative expectations associated with their sex category (Hollander, 2013).

Butler (2006) indicates that the institutionalization of heterosexual desire – as being the "natural" and compulsory state of men and women – is what drives the binary distinctions between masculinity and femininity. "Heterosexual desire is defined as an erotic attachment to difference, and as such, it does the hegemonic work of fusing masculinity

and femininity together as complementary opposites. Thus, it is assumed that men have a natural attraction to women *because of their differences* and women have a natural attraction to men" (Schippers, 2007; 90). It is in this sense that the heterosexualization of desire necessitates the production of an asymmetrical relation between masculine and feminine attributes to correspond with male and female bodies, respectively (Butler, 2006). However, gender should not be understood as a mere *difference* between men and women, but more importantly, it involves *relations of power and inequality* (Radtke et al., 1994; Butler, 2011).

Gender relations are known as relations of domination since they "have been (more) defined and (imperfectly) controlled by one of their interrelated aspects – the man" (Flax, 1987; 629). The biological differences between the sexes, particularly the anatomical difference between the sex organs, appears to reflect the "natural" justification of the socially constructed differences between the genders (Bourdieu, 2001) and ultimately, women's inferior status *in relation* to men. This is most evident in the sexual penetration model, which involves a superior (male) acting upon a subordinate (female) (Foucault, 1992). As de Beauvoir (1972) indicates, women's subjectivity appears to be a result of their reproductive abilities which reduces them to mere "sex objects". In procreation, women are intended to carry and nourish the seed that man creates; in the process, male is active (deposits) while female is passive (receives) (de Beauvoir, 1972). Accordingly, positivist theorists claim that women's subordinate social status reflects what "nature" intended.

On the contrary, however, feminist theorists argue that women's oppression does not follow from their natural bodies, but rather from the patriarchal appropriation of their bodies in which the "natural" is used to justify their oppression (McNay, 1992). As de Beauvoir's (1972) famously states, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" – it is society that makes women powerless by privileging man. Individuals do not operate based on their biological nature but on a "second nature" which is socially constructed, such as laws, customs, and taboos that differentiate between men and women (de Beauvoir, 1972).

As Bennett stresses, “every girl born today will face more constraints and restrictions than will be encountered by a boy who is born today into *the same social circumstances as that girl*” (2006; 10). Yet, Foucault’s disciplinary power overlooks the ways in which bodies of women are produced as more docile than bodies of men (Bartky, 1997) through the sexualization of the female body.

It is argued that various research shows that the sexualization of the female body has become a site of public debate and regulation (Duits and Van Zoonen, 2006). Duits and Van Zoonen (2006) show that while debates concerning the headscarf (concealing the female body) and porno-chic (revealing the female body) are conducted independently, both debates constitute a part of a single hegemonic discourse related to controlling women’s sexuality. “They share a common approach to girls and their bodies as entities that can be objectified, classified and disciplined, and that do not need listening to” (Duits and Van Zoonen, 2007; 164). Duits and Van Zoonen (2006) further emphasize that while boys’ clothing choices are understood within a discourse of freedom of expression, girls’ clothing is subject to scrutiny based on shared cultural concerns about women’s sexuality. Such ideologies suppress women’s ability to undertake autonomous choices over their bodies (Gill, 2007) which can lead to ‘choosing to conform’ (Stuart and Donaghue, 2012) to avoid social sanctions.

Given that “masculinity and femininity are not fixed properties of male and female bodies, the meanings and expectations for being men and women differ both historically and across interactional settings” (Schilt and Westbrook, 2009; 442-443). For instance, what it takes to be recognized as masculine or feminine in western countries is different from Arab countries and thus, individuals within each context must be assessed through different criteria. Despite this acknowledgment, existing work on gender appears to be primarily oriented towards Western, white, male and females which does not accurately represent the experiences of individuals belonging to Islamic majority societies.

In what follows, I provide a closer examination of gender relations within Arab-Islamic societies.

2.2.3 Gender Relations in Arab-Islamic Societies

In adopting a gender-neutral perspective to power, and thus, not differentiating between the cultural constructions of male and female sexualities, Foucault downplays the idea that women's experiences of oppression are largely shaped by their socio-historical contexts (Ramazanoglu, 1993). Following Butler (2011), the category of "women" is troublesome because it presumes that all women share a singular identity by virtue of their femaleness. Such categorization fails to account for how different historical contexts define women as well as other social factors that intersect in shaping women's experiences, including their nationality, religion, class etc. With that, women's oppression must be examined contextually rather than approached from a universal perspective (Butler, 2011).

In Arab-Islamic societies, women's sexuality is constructed "as both a deviant power of beauty and an object of social control" (Stephan, 2006; 159). Following such constructions, women are commonly described as *fitna*, an Arabic term that carriers two meanings: attractive (adjective) and chaos (noun) (Stephan, 2006; 162). According to the well-known Islamist feminist, Fatema Mernissi, "the Muslim social order views the female as a potent aggressive individual whose power can, if not tamed and curbed, corrode the [male-based] social order" (1985; 75). This resonates with the Egyptian feminist, Nawal El Saadawi (1980) who mentions that Muslim men often veil women's bodies instead of their own eyes since their legislative power allows them to command those who lack such power.

The suppression of Muslim women's sexuality is manifested through a strict moral rule of virginity (El Saadawi, 1980). As El Saadawi (1980) writes when referring to the sexual inequalities between men and women, a woman's hymen is a very fine membrane that

symbolically resembles “honour” since one’s entire family honour is determined by her avoidance of pre-marital sex. The symbolic link between honour and female genitalia is often expressed through the popular Arabic insult of *kus immak* (English trans., “your mother’s genitals”) that men often use to humiliate one another (Antoun, 1968). According to Mernissi:

> “it is not by subjugating nature or by conquering mountains and rivers that a man secures his status, but by controlling the movements of women related to him by blood or by marriage, and by forbidding them any contact with male strangers” (1982; 183)

This shows that hegemonic masculine discourses (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) in Arab-Islamic societies revolve around a man’s ability to control his female relatives. Consequently, when men feel that their power is being threatened, domestic violence is often used to “correct” the behavior of their deviant female relatives (Arfaoui and Moghadam, 2016; Usta et al., 2016; Gengler et al., 2018). With that, there is no legal support for victims of violence, and seeking formal support has a negative stigma, hence is not sought often (Haj-Yahia, 2000; Zaatut and Haj-Yahia, 2016).

On the other hand, however, since there is no proof of virginity for men, a man can engage in unlimited pre-marital sex and still be considered honourable as long as his unmarried relatives protect their virginity (El Saadawi, 1980). Not only that, but ironically, upon deciding to get married, men embark “a frantic search for a virgin whom no other man has ‘defiled’” (Mernissi, 1982; 185). This has unsurprisingly led to many women restoring their virginity through surgical procedures (such as hymen repair) to get married, and in return, some men are deceived into artificial virginity from their wives (Mernissi, 1982). Relatedly, Al-Mutawa et al. (2015) reveal that although traditional and religious belief systems usually influence Muslim women’s sexual behavior, it is not uncommon to learn about secretive dating practices involving pre-marital sexual relationships.

Furthermore, Lari (2011) argues that a woman is treated like a “commodity” that is transferred from one man’s house (father’s) to another’s (husband’s), and this “commodity” must be protected so that when the appropriate time comes, it is delivered in prime form to its recipient. Upon marriage, it is a common practice that men pay a dowry (the bride-price system) to the bride’s family to gain marital rights over their daughter (Sev’er, 2012). As opposed to popular belief related to a dowry as being a measure of a woman’s status, this practice has in effect transformed women into mere commodities (Sev’er, 2012).

After marriage, the manipulation of female sexuality is a way of expressing one’s femininity, therefore a mother usually advises her daughter to remain docile on her first night with her husband (Minces, 1980). This is to avoid her husband’s association of her sexual knowledge with first-hand sexual experience (Minces, 1980). A woman is expected to demonstrate naïve sexual behavior and awaits her husband to take the initiative (Mernissi, 1982) because the expression of chastity on the first night is reflected upon her family honour (Minces, 1980). More recent research conducted by Ghanim (2015) and Amer et al. (2015) reveals that to-date, Arab-Islamic societies relate female virginity and lack of sexual experience with family honour.

Moreover, while Muslim women are restricted to a monogamous marriage, Muslim men are entitled to marry up to four wives under the condition of treating them equally, both emotionally and financially (Mernissi, 1982). The permissibility of polygamy for men indicates that women are treated as sexual objects to satisfy male desire, and thus, prevent their involvement in *zina* or fornication (Mernissi, 1985), and at the same time, as lacking sexual needs. The idea of “curbing active female sexuality, preventing female sexual self-determination, is the basis of many of Islam’s family institutions” (Mernissi, 1985; 60).

The family law in Islamic states codifies wives and children as properties of fathers and husbands (Joseph, 2010). This is similar to capitalism in that “what a worker produces is not considered the property of the worker, so in a patriarchal context a woman’s products – be they children or rugs – belong not to her but to the patriarchal family and especially the male kin” (Moghadam, 2013; 115). However, there is evidence that when a woman is old and has had sons, this is the time when she is able to exert influence within her family (Minces, 1980).

Following her husband’s request, an elderly wife will be responsible in searching for an appropriate wife for their son(s) in the case of traditional, arranged marriages (Minces, 1980). As Altorki and El-Solh (1988) states, women exercise power in arranged marriages by being able to control decisive information, without which, men would not be able to fulfill their alliances. Thus, although an elderly woman might still be a minor in relation to her husband, she nonetheless exercises great authority over other members of the household (Minces, 1980).

However, elderly women are not universally respected out of good-will, but because they are no longer perceived as sexual beings; there is no fear in their ability to ruin their family’s honour, arouse male desire, or threaten their husband’s masculinity (Minces, 1980). At this stage, women have already normalized their roles in society and are required to maintain such traditions through the socialization of younger girls and boys (Minces, 1980).

Drawing on the above, the privilege ascribed to male sexuality translates into different ways of disciplining men and women in Arab-Islamic societies. Although there are numerous interpretations of the Qur’an and Islamic teachings, there are nonetheless widely accepted norms that apply to all Muslims alike (Meldrum et al., 2014). For instance, despite the disagreement between the Qur’anic interpretations of different male authorities, a

common strand among all interpretations relates to the subordination of female compared to male role expectations (Meldrum et al., 2014).

As such, doing gender in Arab-Islamic societies is based on the strict placement of men and women into set boxes of what is expected to be masculine or feminine, respectively (Ghabra, 2015). Femininity entails women's expression of modesty in terms of both appearance and behavior, whereas masculinity is measured based on man's ability to preserve his honour by ensuring the modesty of his female relatives (Antoun, 1968). The man who fails to protect the modesty of his female relatives is susceptible to being labelled *dayyuth* (English trans., cuckold), meaning an animal who merely observes other men perform sexual activities with his female relatives (Antoun, 1968).

Female modesty is often expressed through wearing the hijab, which helps restrict women's sexuality (Meldrum et al., 2014). The hijab, described as a "moral principle of the regulation of [female] sexuality" (Mahmood, 2005; 161) represents a form of patriarchal control over women's bodies (Dwyer, 1999; Secor, 2002). While the moral behavior of women is assessed based upon their '*use of their bodies*' (i.e. sexuality), men's morality heavily depends on their '*social graces*' (i.e. hospitality, generosity etc.) (Bauer, 1985; Sobh and Belk, 2011). Thus, irrespective of whether women feel oppressed or emancipated in wearing the hijab, the dominant discourse surrounding its observance relates to covering, and therefore, desexualizing the female body (Ruby, 2006). However, this is not to suggest that modesty only applies to hijabi women, since modest attire is expected of both hijabi and non-hijabi women (Al-Mutawa, 2015; Lewis, 2015).

For instance, Al-Mutawa (2013) shows how Kuwaiti women appropriate western fashion to comply with Kuwait's cultural modesty code, regardless of wearing the hijab. The Kuwaiti women in Al-Mutawa's (2013) study created a modest as opposed to appealing brand meaning that is congruent with their local culture. As Odeh (1993) asserts, Muslim women are taught that in covering their bodies, they are obeying Allah's (God's) words,

who would otherwise punish them on the judgement day for seducing men; that is why many women experience the hijab as a necessity. There are popular Arabic metaphors which describe women as either "lollipops" which if uncovered, would attract flies, or "pearls" which must be covered to be protected. Both metaphors construct women as objects of (male) sexual desire. Apart from the visual embodiment of the hijab, by drawing on the work of Mernissi (1991), Hamzeh (2011) argues that the hijab discourse also encompasses spatial and ethical dimensions. As she indicates:

> "the *hijab* is not only the narrow and static visual representation of the headscarf some *muslim* women wear. It is also the spatial *hijab*, the border that challenges *muslim* females' mobility in public spaces [e.g. travelling alone without a *mahram* (unmarriageable male kin) or going out without curfews], and the ethical *hijab*, the protector that shelters them from forbiddens, *harams*, like physical/ sexual encounters with males" (Hamzeh, 2011; 482)

There is further evidence that constant surveillance by family, friends, community members, and other relatives with the disciplinary domain all function together to enforce the three hijabs (the visual, spatial, and ethical) onto Muslim women (Stride and Flintoff, 2017). Therefore, a Muslim woman's "sense of disempowerment stems from the terror exercised over her body" (Odeh, 1993; 28). As Harkness (2012) shows, Qatari women's participation in sports or lack thereof depends on the approval of their family members, especially their parents and close male relatives, such as the husband and brothers. Similarly, Hamzeh and Oliver (2012) address the parental restrictions that Muslim girls confront in their choices of apparel for physical activities.

The disciplining of Arab-Muslim women appears to be mainly conducted within the family domain, and as Kaestle mentions, the "family is an excellent potential arena to challenge gender norms and change power structures in society because of its pivotal role in socializing generations on gender and other axes of power and oppression" (2016; 71). Yet,

while Foucault (1988) acknowledges that power operates on both macro (institutional power) and micro (interactional power) levels of society, many feminist studies focus on how gender relations manifest in the public arena (such as in terms of economic, political, and occupational structures) without sufficient attention paid to gender relations as they occur within the private sphere (such as within families) (Lyon and Morris, 2016).

In what follows, I focus on the manifestation of familial gender relations within Arab-Islamic societies.

2.2.4 Familial Gender Relations in Arab-Islamic Societies

It is argued that the family domain represents a microcosm of gender norms embedded in the wider society (Butler, 1988) since it is within families that "gender power gets exercised and institutionalized" (Ferree, 2010; 425). Therefore, an understanding of how gender relations operate within Arab-Muslim families is expected to illuminate Arab-Muslim women's social experiences. Like any other figurative term, there are multiple ways of defining what constitutes a "family" – e.g. Is it those who share the same household or the same bloodline? In line with the dominant constructions in Arab-Islamic societies, this research refers to family as involving one's nuclear and extended relatives. The nuclear family members include one's parents, siblings, spouse, and offspring, whereas the extended family members include one's grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. While both categories of family are deemed highly interconnected, the nuclear family appears to have an immediate effect on Arab-Muslim women's lives (Joseph, 2010). Therefore, by analyzing familial gender relations within Arab-Islamic societies, this research particularly highlights how nuclear family members behave and the motives underlying their behavior.

Importantly, this study recognizes the importance of shifting away from a "one size fits all" perspective (Allen, 2016) and analyzing women's experiences of familial gender

relations relevant to their socio-historical contexts. In his preeminent work on *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1979) explains that Western hegemony has created falsifications about the Orient people and their countries. The idea that the West is superior to the East has perpetuated Western scholarship, and thus, prevented an accurate representation of Arab societies (Said, 1979). For instance, due to being examined from a Western perspective, Arab families are predominantly represented in a negative manner (Beitin et al., 2010). Such representations are often a result of weak knowledge about Arab societies, resulting in a stereotypical belief that Arab families are monolithic, and their structures are unchanging (Beitin et al., 2010).

Following Golley (2004), for many Westerners, the phrase "Arab women" creates an imaginary of veiled and secluded women who are confined to their home and child rearing. While this perception may reflect the situation in some families, it does not account for the role of increased modernization, urbanization, and changing marriage patterns which all have an impact on Arab family structures (Olmsted, 2011), and especially women's roles. Accordingly, it is imperative to deconstruct prevailing Western notions about the Arab world, and instead, propose a less structuralist perspective that reflects the ongoing changes and transformations (Pappé, 2014) within families. As Weiner (2016) proposes, due to the ongoing changes in their region, Middle Eastern countries present an excellent area in which to explore the manifestation of traditional and contemporary patriarchal power structures. Examining patriarchal power within Middle Eastern families is particularly interesting given their strong familial ties and respect towards kinship authority (Weiner, 2016). More specifically, according to Joseph and Slyomovics, patriarchy in the Arab world:

> "privileges males and elders (including elder women in the Arab-Islamic world) and justifies the privilege in kinship terms. Females are generally taught to respect and defer to their fathers, brothers, grandparents, uncles, and at times, male cousins. Young people are taught to respect and defer to their older kin. In turn, males are

> taught to take responsibility for their female kin, and elders are taught to protect and take responsibility for those younger than themselves" (2011; 2)

This shows that Arab-Muslim women are identified as inferior to their kinsmen. However, although such patriarchal rules are widely held in the region, like any other social expectations, there are variations in power within distinct families that do not necessarily correspond with dominant discourses (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011). It would be erroneous to overgeneralize the rigid structures of Arab-Muslim families whereby males are positioned at the top and females at the bottom of the family hierarchy (Mohanty, 1988). That said, while the individualized citizen is identified as the basic unit of society in Western states, in Arab states, the collective family unit takes precedence (Joseph, 2010). Accordingly, in Arab societies, familial considerations permeate the social, political, economic, and religious spheres of life (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011). For instance, the allocation of jobs is largely based on nepotism and familial connections (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011). Also, religious institutions serve as guardians of family life (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011).

Apart from that, men and women's legal rights and duties are constructed based on their gender roles in their nuclear family (Dahlgren, 2008). It is therefore difficult to underestimate the centrality of the family in Arab societies (Harkness, 2012). There is consensus among Arab scholars that kinship "sustains a person's sense of self and identity, and shapes their position in society" (Joseph, 1996; 15). From this standpoint, the danger in applying Western ideologies to study Arab societies rests on the premise that Western theory focuses on an "individualized self" which overlooks the cultural differences and global heterogeneity in identity constructions (Joseph, 1991). Notions of the self in the Arab world are defined as "intimate" and "relational", thereby stressing on the expectations that individuals maintain familial ties and a lifelong responsibility towards their family members (Joseph, 1999). That is not to say that individualized selves to do not exist in Arab societies, but that the relational self is both legally and socially hegemonic (Joseph, 2008).

Both parents and children are expected to demonstrate a long-lasting familial commitment (Barakat, 1993). This sense of commitment can be traced in the Arabic word for family, which is *'aila* or *'usra*, meaning "support" in English (Barakat, 1993). Also, while parents are socially identified as *Abu* (father of) and *Umm* (mother of) followed by the name of their eldest son, the children are called *'iyal* (dependents) and are elevated to be their parent's *sanad* (supporters) when they become adults (Barakat, 1993). Such forms of identification indicate that one's family identity overrides his/her individual identity (Barakat, 1993). Therefore, individuals in Arab societies are socialized to value bonding and sociability as opposed to being autonomous (Joseph, 1999). According to Joseph, "perhaps the value most widely known outside the region is that of honour, which is crucial in the arab world and Mediterranean societies more generally. Family honour implies that one's sense of dignity, identity, status, and self, as well as public esteem, are linked to the regard with which one's family is held by the community at large" (1994; 199).

The emphasis placed on family honour suggests that individual members are held accountable for their whole family in such a way that an individual's success or failure reflects on the status of ever other family member (Barakat, 1993). In this sense, social deviation can result in more severe consequences for Arab-Muslim compared to Western individuals. This is because both personal and familial consequences are likely to occur. However, Joseph (1994) highlights that although the relational self construct applies to both Arab men and women, women are particularly expected to place their family interests before their own. This explains why women who engage in pre-marital sexual relations are exposed to honour crimes; it is a way for men to restore their family honour (Barakat, 1993; Arfaoui and Moghadam, 2016; Gengler et al., 2018). Furthermore, while wife abuse is legally banned in the West, Arab countries perceive domestic violence as a personal and familial rather than legal issue (Haj-Yahia, 2000; Zaatut and Haj-Yahia, 2016) This shows that "the Arab states embody various patriarchal structures and Arab society clings to a patriarchal system in which women's positions within and duties toward the family precede their rights as individuals" (Zuhur, 2003; 18).

Another main distinction between Western and Arab countries relates to the idea that religion and the state are inseparable entities in Islamic societies, therefore Western feminism becomes irrelevant to many Muslim women's issues (Galloway, 2014). For instance, Joseph and Slyomovics (2011) indicate that religious (Islamic) institutions dictate the laws pertaining to marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance rights, and that those laws are derived from Islamic texts which are interpreted by male Muslim clerics through a patriarchal lens. Although Islamic practices related to women are said to be adamant to change due to being embedded in the Qur'an, nonetheless there is evidence of "breaking" and "bending" of Qur'anic scripture by Muslim women throughout history (Keddie and Baron, 2008). Hence, we should cease to perceive Muslim women as "frozen in place" since such a "ahistorical model of a text-driven society distorts our understanding of how Muslim women and men actually live and obscures the processes through which Islamic traditions are invented and transformed" (Bernal; 1994, 37).

Following Cooke (2008), veiled or unveiled, Muslim women today are no longer perceived as individuals but are collectively identified as the "Muslimwoman" – one word that combines the two words "Muslim" and "woman" to evoke a singular identity. "Muslimwoman" produces a predefined subject position of who a Muslim woman is and what she can/ cannot and should/ should not do, which suppresses Muslim women's agency (Piela, 2013). However, many Muslim women have engaged in a reinterpretation of Islamic texts, and thus, started to produce and live according to alternative gender discourses that challenge dominant constructions (Piela, 2013). Accordingly, it makes more sense to study the experiences of Muslim women based on their lived cultural realities rather than imposing pre-existing notions to explain their behavior (Sandikci and Rice, 2011). As Al-Mutawa (2013) highlights, we should not rely on Islamic texts to infer the lifestyles of Muslim women as such sources produce an "ideal" image which can be misleading compared to actual behavior. Therefore, in what follows, I propose a call for understanding how Arab-Muslim women negotiate gender relations within their families.

2.2.5 Negotiating Familial Gender Relations in Arab-Islamic Societies

The extant body of literature on family studies in Arab-Islamic societies is often oriented towards traditional familial gender relations, whereby rigid gender roles are reproduced by associating power with men and powerlessness with women (Haj-Yahia, 2000; Yount, 2005; Sa'ar, 2006; Harkness, 2012; Williams et al., 2013). This occurs in stark contrast with Foucault's notion of the omnipresence of power and that individuals are not in a fixed state of power or powerlessness. On the one hand, there is "dominating power" (power over) which involves coercive acts only, while on the other hand, there is "resisting power" (power to) which serves as a force against dominating power (Sharp, 2000). However, while dominant power has been sufficiently explored, much less is known about resistance to power in general, and specifically as it occurs within Arab-Muslim families.

Further to this, it is important to note that oppression is not only induced from males to females but also among females themselves (Baumeister and Twenge, 2002). As Almutawa shows, "the academic literature, feminist scholars, social media and stereotypes have for many years ascribed to the view that men dominate and oppress women in the Muslim world" (2011; 154). While this form of domination is most common, Almutawa (2011) reveals that sometimes Muslim women are the oppressors of one another. Almutawa (2011) identifies four main socialization strategies that women use to oppress their own gender, including; myths (mythic tales, links to religion etc.), gossip (gossiping about another non-present female), male proxies (using males as mediators), and oppressing the self (the result of the three previous strategies/oppression strategies become internalized). Sa'ar (2006) similarly asserts that women exercise informal power by policing each other's bodies and reproducing hegemonic gender ideologies. Fahs (2011) also supports the findings of Almutawa (2011) by showing that female to female criticism often results from internalized oppression. This suggests that the negotiation of power can also relate to female to female relationships.

That said, Foucault's work primarily focuses on the dominating role of power in producing human subjects and overlooked individuals' agency; he prioritized the idea of docile bodies/passive subjects (Ramazanoglu, 1993). Feminist theorists argued that such a narrow perception erases women's specific experiences with power, and relatedly, denies the possibility of their empowerment (Deveaux, 1994). As a response, Foucault attempted to shift his attention from "technologies of domination/power" to "technologies of the self" (also known as "ethics of the self") to fill this gap in his work (McNay, 2013). Specifically, this was achieved in his second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, namely: "The Use of Pleasure" (Foucault, 1992) and "The Care of the Self" (Foucault, 1990), respectively. In those bodies of work, Foucault studied Greek and Greco-Roman sexual ethics and emphasized that since there was no strict prohibition on sexuality, the desire to conduct oneself as an ethical subject has led individuals to "resist" sexual practices (Foucault, 1992; Foucault, 1990).

Nonetheless, Foucault was primary concerned with male ethics. He mentions that men's sexual resistance ensures both faithfulness towards their wives and helps them enact self-control (Ramazanoglu, 1993). Resistance in Foucault's (1992) perspective stems from the idea that self-mastery is an essential pre-requisite for the mastery of others – it shows one's capability in exercising power. Accordingly, Foucault addresses how resistance functions to "reinforce" rather than "transform" structures of domination (Amigot and Pujal, 2009). Unfortunately, he died shortly after introducing *Care of the Self*, thus leaving his work partially incomplete. Examining power exclusively from a dominant perspective (a top-down approach) obscures the complexities underlying the power dynamics of a patriarchal system. As Kaestle mentions, "describing power relationships and their concomitant inequities cannot be the end goal" (2016; 73). Therefore, this research focuses on the experiences of women as a dominated group, however, rather than treating them as passive victims of oppression, it explores their strategies in resisting power (a bottom-up approach) (Castilhos and Fonseca, 2016). This is consistent with feminist thought, whereby the purpose is not only to describe, but also transform society (Risman, 2004).

As Butler (2004) emphasizes, since gender is constructed as a "doing" then there is always the potential for it to be "undone". However, it is argued that while gender has been theorized across various disciplines, the significance of power as it relates to gender relations appears to be particularly sidelined in the field of marketing and consumer research (Hearn and Hein, 2015). Most gender studies in consumer research appear to adopt an essentialist perspective (Hearn and Hein, 2015), including "marketing strategies that unreflectively accept the dominant cultural distinctions between 'male' and 'female' or 'feminine' and 'masculine', and capitalise on social expectations and stereotypical sex roles, [which] may be exploitative and thus ethically suspect: they perpetuate and reinforce the oppressive discourses and practices that are linked to social and gender inequality" (Arsel et al., 2015; 1553).

As opposed to socialization theories which focus on gender transformations as a long-term process requiring resocialization (Bourdieu, 2001), Deutsch (2007) argues that a change in gender relations does not necessarily depend on the resocialization of the upcoming generation. Instead of relying on socialization to create social change, it is important to realize that social actors have the power to shift gender norms by altering their behavior (Pearse and Connell, 2016). However, in the same way that gender oppression varies depending on the intersection of one's social background, the strategies of undoing that oppression also varies among oppressed groups (Deutsch, 2007). As Diamond and Quinby indicate, "if relations of power are dispersed and fragmented through the social field, so must resistance to power be" (1988; 185-186). It is important to realize that women's resistance occurs in various ways other than the Western liberal model (Vintges, 2012). While open resistance represents one way of empowering women, it does not apply to all cultural contexts alike (Ali, 2014).

Unlike many Western women who often engage in direct forms of resistance, Arab-Muslim women tend to exercise power in more subtle ways, such as through simultaneously satisfying and subverting those who hold power (Ali, 2014). For instance, Al-Mutawa (2013) developed the concept of a "modestly sexy" female to refer to Kuwaiti women's expressions of their sexuality through Western symbolic brand meanings which

enable them to appear sexy without necessarily exposing their sexual body parts, and therefore, maintaining their family honour. In another study, Trainer (2015) explores how female Emirati students negotiate their identities in different social spaces, including on and off the campus. The study finds that the women performed their desired identities on-campus, whereby they flaunted their fashion possessions ranging from Western clothing styles to lavish make-up and accessories, and as soon as they left the campus, their self-presentation complied with the traditional and familial norms (Trainer, 2015).

That said, theories of gender have mainly been developed by Western scholars (Connell, 2014), with the subsequent effect of non-Western contexts being scrutinized through Western ideologies (Jafari et al., 2012). As Hunnicutt (2009) mentions, patriarchy appears in different forms and degrees rather than being a universal phenomenon. For instance, patriarchy is more intensified in Arab-Islamic countries compared to other developed nations. Accordingly, this research supports the call for different cultural contexts to being examined in their own terms (Butler, 2011).

2.2.6 Salient Issues for Exploration

In summary of the above section, I identify several key gaps that are addressed in this study.

First, while Foucault contends that power produces social bodies through institutions of social control and disciplinary mechanisms (hierarchal observation, normalizing judgement, and examination), he adapts a gender-neutral perspective on the production of social bodies. In emphasizing on the general idea of disciplinary power, Foucault dismisses the importance of acknowledging that bodies of women are socially produced as more docile than bodies of men, which has a major impact on women's lived experiences.

Second, and related to the aforementioned point, Foucault's work mainly focuses on disciplinary power, with minimal attention given to the role of individuals' agency and their ability to resist dominant power. This neglects the different resistance strategies that many women have developed to empower themselves.

Third, since Butler argues that gender is a social construction that is highly contingent upon culture, then the application of gender theories developed from studies conducted in Western societies cannot be uniformly applied to non-Western contexts. The theorization of gender relations in Arab-Islamic societies remains scant, especially with regards to familial gender relations and women's resistance towards their traditional feminine roles.

Given that Foucault's core idea centers around the notion that power produces discourses (Foucault and Rabinow, 1991), gender discourses reveal the construction of an unequal relationship between men and women (Radtke et al., 1994). One way of communicating gender discourses is through gendered consumption "rituals and ritually-informed performances [which] represent themselves as cultural truths" (Hüsken and Brosius, 2012; 34). This suggest that women's resistance towards gendered consumption rituals can be a means of negotiating gender relations. Therefore, in the next section, I focus on resistance and consumption.

2.3 Resistance and Consumption

This section addresses resistance from a consumer behavior perspective. The concept of resistance is multidimensional and has been applied to explain various types of behaviors in multiple contexts. However, resistance towards ritual practices remain relatively underexplored in consumer research. The overemphasis placed on the individual and societal significance of ritual participation has led to a lack of understanding ritual resistance. In line with the research purpose, I explore resistance towards public consumption rituals. I particularly explore resistance towards gendered consumption rituals and modesty as an example thereof.

Accordingly, this section is structured as follows. First, in **resistance in consumer research**, I discuss the concept of resistance as applied in consumer research. Second, in **rituals in consumer research**, I discuss the concept of rituals as applied in consumer research. Third, in **participating in public consumption rituals**, I discuss the significance of participating in public consumption rituals, including an appropriation to Arab-Islamic societies. Fourth, in **resisting public consumption rituals**, I discuss the importance of exploring resistance towards a public consumption ritual. Fifth, in **resisting gendered consumption rituals**, I discuss the importance of resisting gendered rituals to challenge gender relations. Sixth, in **resisting the modesty gendered consumption ritual**, I discuss the importance of exploring Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards the modesty gendered ritual. Lastly, in **salient issues for exploration**, I summarize the key gaps in the resistance and consumption literature that are identified and addressed in this research.

2.3.1 Resistance in Consumer Research

Resistance is a broad and multidimensional concept (Penaloza and Price, 1993). Generally, there is consensus among various definitions that resistance entails "oppositional action" as a core attribute (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004). More specifically, however, there are a number of possible forms of resistant behavior (e.g. individual/collective); a number of intentions (e.g. personal/social); a number of targets (e.g. institutional/non-institutional); a number of performances (e.g. ideological/behavioral); a number of degrees (e.g. passive/active); and a number of contexts in which the notion of resistance is studied (Penaloza and Price, 1993; Holt, 1997; Thompson and Haytko, 1997; Heath et al., 2017). If resistance is understood as oppositional then it exists *in relation* to power. As Foucault famously states, "where there is power, there is resistance" (Sheridan, 1990; 184). This equally means, as Abu-Lughod asserts, that "where there is resistance, there is power" (1990; 42). Hence, power and resistance should be analyzed simultaneously as they constitute the same relationship.

Although the concept of resistance originated in the social sciences and humanities literature, it has recently been employed by those researching consumer culture and marketing to describe various anti-consumerist activities (Tinson et al., 2013) including 'consumer resistance', 'anti-consumption', and 'non-consumption'. Briefly, consumer resistance focuses on consumers opposing the products, practices, and partnerships associated with a "structure of dominance" within the market place that is incongruent with their *ideologies* (Penaloza and Price, 1993; Lee et al., 2011). Consumer resistance is therefore concerned with *power* issues (Lee et al., 2011). It is argued that consumer resistance should be "analyzed through the lens of power, since to explore these frames is also to study the question of who is perceived as the locus of power and how power/resistance is exercised to achieve the movement's goals" (Valor et al., 2017; 72). The most common examples of consumer resistance include boycotting (Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Klein et al., 2004; Kucuk, 2008) and culture jamming (Penaloza and Price, 1993; Sandlin and Callahan, 2009).

Conversely, while the term anti-consumption "may be taken literally as against consumption in general (a macro perspective), a more practical view (micro perspective) of anti-consumption focuses on specific acts against consumption" which "relate to a person's self-identity project" (Cherrier et al., 2011; 1758). Anti-consumption revolves around *consumption* issues (Lee et al., 2011). Hogg (1998) outlines the different degrees of anti-consumption, namely; aversion, avoidance, and abandonment. Aversion as an aspect of attitude (e.g. distaste, disgust, revulsion) tends to stimulate rejection *behaviors* such as avoidance or abandonment (Hogg et al., 2009). Furthermore, Lee et al. (2009) offers three possible reasons for avoiding consumption. Unmet expectations (experiential avoidance), symbolic incompatibility (identity avoidance), and ideological incompatibility (moral avoidance) are some reasons for refusal to consume (Lee et al., 2009). Examples of anti-consumption behaviors include voluntary simplicity, ethical consumption, and brand avoidance/ rejection (Craig-Lees and Hill, 2002; Zavestoski, 2002; Cromie and Ewing, 2009; Lee et al., 2009; Shaw and Moraes, 2009; Sandikci and Ekici, 2009;-Hoffman, 2011; Portwood-Stacer, 2012; Kaynak and Eksi, 2013). Closely related to anti-consumption is the act of non-consumption (Hogg et al., 1998). However, non-consumption occurs when the products/services are not affordable and/or available to the consumer (Hogg et al., 1998).

While there has been attempts to effectively differentiate between ideological stance and behavior, an interrelationship often (but not necessarily) exists between the two (Tinson et al., 2013). For purposes of this research, ideological stance and behavior are treated as co-existent. This is because the experiences of the studied Arab-Muslim women suggest that their rejection of power structures (specifically, gender relations) mainly manifests through their everyday behavior. Relatedly, although there is a growing body of literature on consumer resistance, the primary emphasis has been on ethical consumption, sustainability, and environmental issues (Tinson et al., 2013). Research on resistance to ritual practices, however, has been relatively scarce (e.g. Nuttall and Tinson, 2011; Tinson and Close, 2012; Tinson et al., 2013) despite their centrality in consumers' lives (Tinson et al., 2013). Accordingly, this research attempts to fill the dearth in literature by exploring resistance in

the context of rituals. Prior to highlighting the importance of exploring ritual resistance, the next two sub-sections offer an introduction to the concept of rituals in consumer research.

2.3.2 Rituals in Consumer Research

Rituals (also known as *rites*) constitute a large theoretical domain that can be approached from multiple perspectives and disciplines. Therefore, the meaning of “ritual” has been defined in various ways throughout extant literature. Historically, rituals were mainly associated with either religion (by being restricted to religious behavior) or characterized primitive societies (by being perceived as incommensurable with modern life) (Rook, 1984; Rook, 1985). Over time, however, scholars began to recognize the centrality of ritual behavior in individual’s mundane lives. Thus, besides religion, an increased interest in human ritual experiences flourished in the fields of anthropology, sociology, psychology, and more recently, marketing (Rook, 1985). Rituals are pervasive and are found in both sacred and non-sacred domains of life (Duman Kurt and Ozgen, 2013). As Rook mentions:

> “At one end of a conceptual continuum, a ritual is a public, elaborate, and often largescale religious, aesthetic or civic ceremony. At the other end, it may be one of a variety of private and persona' rituals, such as those associated with religious prayer or one's own grooming behavior. In between these conceptual poles are numerous small group and family rituals; for example, formal office luncheons, and birthday and holiday celebrations” (1984; 279)

This shows that rituals mark big and small life events (Vohs et al., 2013) and are practiced either individually (McCracken, 1986) or as part of a larger group (Belk, 1990; Alexander, 2004; McKechnie and Tynan, 2006; Minowa et al., 2010; Duman Kurt and Ozgen, 2013).

For purposes of this research, Rook's (1985) conceptualization of rituals is applied as it incorporates both religious and non-religious aspects of behavior. That is, it suggests that rituals are carried out in a sacred manner while simultaneously involve reliance on consumption. Rook's (1985) definition of rituals corresponds with the experiences of the studied Muslim women who observe the hijab (symbol of Islam) accompanied with Western fashion and styles (non-Islamic attire). As Jafari and Süerdem (2012) assert, although the sacred and the profane realms of life are distinguished in Islam, they are nonetheless intertwined in the lives of many Muslims. Accordingly, throughout this research, ritual(s) is defined as:

> "a type of expressive, symbolic activity constructed of multiple behaviors that occur in a fixed, episodic sequence, and that tend to be repeated over time. Ritual behavior is dramatically scripted and acted out and is performed with formality, seriousness, and inner intensity" (Rook, 1985; 252)

Rook (1985) indicates that four main elements constitute a ritual experience, namely: artefacts, a script, performance role(s), and audience. Artefacts involve material objects used in a ritual setting to either provide symbolic meaning to the experience or are used as part of the main ritual, such as in the case of gift-giving. The artefacts or consumer goods used in a ritual setting are of utmost importance in communicating a symbolic message that contributes to the totality of the ritual experience (Rook, 1985). A script outlines what and how artefacts are used and by whom, including the behavioral sequence in which artefact usage occurs. Some ritual scripts are more casual and allow for variations in behavior (e.g. family mealtime ritual) compared to other more formally scripted rituals (e.g. civic rituals). Performance role(s) involve individuals' assigned roles to perform in a ritual. Lastly, the audience include the target audience or the observers of the ritual.

Examples of consumption rituals can be classified as rites of passage (related to identity changes, such as weddings, graduations, and birthdays), calendrical rites (related to the

passage of time, such as New Year, Christmas, and Thanksgiving), rites of exchange and communion (related to gift-giving) (Bell, 1997), and rites of brand communities (related to shared consumption among distinct individuals) (Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Muniz and Schau, 2005; Cova and Pace, 2006; Schau et al., 2009; Nardella, 2014). In what follows, I address the societal and individual significance of participating in *public* consumption rituals.

2.3.3 Participating in Public Consumption Rituals

As discussed earlier, individuals participate in numerous types of consumption rituals. However, this does not imply that all rituals contribute to the construction of social realities. Using Erving Goffman's (1990) theatrical stage metaphor, private rituals can be described as the backstage (hidden from the observation of audience) and public rituals as front stage (intended to be observed by audience) performances.

As opposed to private rituals which are intended to fulfill personal motives, public rituals produce fields of discourse, and thus, represent cultural truths (Hüsken and Brosius, 2012). As Crossley states, "what many rituals manifest . . . particularly public and social rituals, is an understanding of the social world to which the agent belongs, that is, of its values, beliefs, distinctions, social positions, and hierarchies" (2004; 38). Relatedly, Driver (1991) posits that participation in public rituals produces three main "social gifts", namely: creating/maintaining the social order, providing a sense of group belonging, and facilitating identity transformations. In what follows, each "gift" is discussed in more detail and in terms of Arab-Islamic societies.

First, rituals are known for their ability to create and maintain the social order as they represent the right way of doing things (Rook, 1985). Public rituals communicate social norms by transforming beliefs into observable action (Rossano, 2012). As Emile Durkheim clearly articulates, "collective consciousness" can only be accessed through observable

effects or “collective representations” (Schmaus, 1994). He “insists that culture is identical with religion in the sense that any “proper” religious belief is shared by every member of the group, and that these shared beliefs are always translated into the practices he calls rituals, or rites” (Alexander et al., 2006; 39). Furthermore, ritual actors require symbolic objects that serve as iconic representations of their invisible morals, and to ensure that a ritual has both its effect and affect in an interaction, the actors and audience must share a mutual understanding of the symbolic meanings involved (Alexander, 2004).

For instance, in Islamic societies, the hijab is a symbol of modesty (an Islamic value) and the women who wear it are deemed modest. However, when the same hijab is worn in non-Islamic societies, it does not carry the same symbolic meaning of modesty, and thus, women who wear it might be perceived as oppressed rather than modest. Accordingly, individuals must behave according to what is deemed “normal” in their cultural context to be positively recognized. “Acting normally, achieved by making a self-conscious effort to follow interactional rituals, affirms the collective image of what is a normal manner of conduct and in turn ensures trust and tacit cooperation” (Misztal, 2001; 316). From a social identity perspective, Goffman (1990) indicates that society creates categories and allocates individuals based on a predetermined set of attributes that correspond with each category. In distinguishing between a *virtual* (social expectations) and *actual* social identity, Goffman (1990) stresses that a discrepancy between the two identities exposes one to social stigma.

Goffman’s (1967) seminal work on face saving reveals that while a *line* constitutes the verbal and behavioral expressions that individuals convey in social interactions, *face* is described as the positive social value that one claims in relation to his/her *line* as perceived by others (the audience) (Goffman, 1967). Face maintenance is highly dependent on one’s compliance with the social order, and thus, those who violate social norms are subjected to a loss of face (Goffman, 1967). “One’s face, then, is a sacred thing, and the expressive order required to sustain it is a ritual one” (Goffman, 1967; 19).

It is important to realize that face related issues are contingent upon culture rather than being a universal phenomenon (Bao et al., 2003). While loss of face in collectivist cultures incorporates members of one's social group(s), such as family and friends, this is not the case in individualistic cultures whereby there is less concern with face consciousness since emphasis is placed on one's personal self (Bao et al., 2003). For instance, the relational self construct that characterizes Arab identities (Joseph, 1999) suggests that impression management is widely practiced in different social spaces (Goffman, 1990) to prevent one's in-group (e.g. family) from experiencing a stigma by association (Bos et al., 2013).

In Arab-Islamic societies, an individual's loss of face is equivalent to a loss of family honour. However, as El Saadawi (1980) emphasizes, women (as opposed to men) are the sole bearers of that honour and are expected to maintain it through the regulation of their behavior. There are certain moral standards for men and others for women, and such double moral standards privilege men and permeate every aspect of social life (El Saadawi, 1980). As Mernissi (1985) further states, women are suppressed in order to maintain a male-based social order. In other words, when women are controlled, the social order is maintained, and when they are free to act as desired, then there is the potential for chaos and disorder to arise (Mernissi, 1985). Hence, in Arab-Islamic societies, the emphasized importance on women in protecting their family 'face' is intended to secure the existing gender order.

Second, the transformations of beliefs into action (as discussed above) suggests that rituals facilitate one's sense of group belonging (Marshall, 2002). Individuals do not "ontologically 'belong' to the world or to any group within it" but rather construct their identities through performing rituals to integrate with their desired social groups (Bell, 1999; 3). In providing a sense of belonging, rituals also create boundaries between group members and outsiders (Watson-Jones and Legare, 2016). They mark a visible difference between "us" (participants) and "them" (non-participants) (De Coppet, 2002; Nuttall and Tinson, 2011; Tinson et al., 2013; Weinberger, 2015).

In Arab-Islamic societies, the conceptualization of “us” and “them” does not necessarily refer to distinct individuals who participate or do not participate in a ritual, respectively. Instead, given that an interpersonal self-concept is dominant in Arab societies, references to “us” and “them” are directed towards families as opposed to unrelated individuals. In other words, because Arab-Muslims are inevitably identified as part of a family, an individual’s (non)participation in a ritual has an impact on every other family member. Relatedly, rather than perceiving (non)participation in rituals as a decision undertaken on an individual level, it is vital to consider that Arab-Muslims are not independent decisions makers but often consult their families prior to undertaking a decision. This is because in collectivist societies, individuals are expected to suppress their personal desires for the sake of their in-group interests (Triandis, 1988).

Third, identity transformations relate to the passage of individuals from one social state to another. Van Gennep (2011) argues that the process of change involves three distinct phases, namely: 1) separation (involves distancing from a current social state), 2) transition (being between two different social states without being fully incorporated into either), and 3) integration (when a new social state is successfully acquired). By extension, Turner (1995) focused his work in the transition phase, or what he called a *liminal period* in which an individual is placed in a “betwixt and between” space. The *liminal persona* refers to the transitional being who appears invisible due to being no longer and not yet socially classified (Turner, 1967). Following Turner:

> “The subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, “invisible”. As members of society, most of us see only what we expect to see, and what we expect to see is what we are conditioned to see when we have learned the definitions and classifications of our culture. A society’s secular definitions do not allow for the existence of not-boy-not-man which is what a novice in a male puberty rite is (if he can be said to be anything)” (1987; 6)

Therefore, Turner (1995) distinguishes between two models in society, structured (culturally recognized) and unstructured (characterizes the liminal period). During the unstructured/liminal period, individuals must consider themselves as a *tabula rasa* (meaning blank slate) to allow the wisdom and knowledge of a new social group to be inscribed upon them through initiation rites, and ensure their successful social integration (Turner, 1995).

The need for individuals to be attentive to their social identities is particularly accentuated in collectivist societies (Dhillon, 2005) such as Arab-Islamic countries. From this standpoint, "the Western rationality inherent in most consumer theories needs to be reinterpreted through the eyes of Eastern reality" (Nancy and AARON, 1998; 436). As Khare et al. (2012) indicates, despite the influence of globalization and the related changes in consumption behavior, conformity to social norms and values is still prioritized in collectivist cultures. Furthermore, although consumer research addresses the importance of identity constructions in establishing social recognition (Bonsu and Belk, 2003; Gentina et al., 2012; Littlefield and Ozanneh, 2011; Afflerback et al., 2014; Gentina et al., 2017), much less is known about the challenges that individuals confront in the process of identity changes (Castilhos and Fonseca, 2016). As Shankar et al. (2009) stress, transitions from one identity to another should not be treated as a linear process. For instance, McAlexander et al. (2014) shows that a change in one's social identity can consequently lead to a loss of social capital. The challenges associated with choosing a desired identity are particularly salient for women who belong to Muslim honour cultures (Pearce and Vitak, 2016) whereby familial marginality or rejection by one's own family is common in case of anti-normative behavior.

This brings us to the notion of the extended self. In his influential publication entitled *Possessions and the Extended Self*, Belk (1988) focuses on how consumption enables individuals to construct a sense of who they are. Belk (1988) emphasizes that individuals embody a core and an extended self. The core self consists of one's "body, internal

processes, ideas, and experiences", whereas "those persons, places, and things to which one feels attached" constitute one's extended self (Belk, 1988; 141).

According to Belk (1988), the notion of *the extended self* is a metaphor that reflects both that which is seen as "me" and that which is seen as "mine". The extended self provides a sense of "who I am", and thus, contributes to one's identity formation. For instance, "objects in our possession literally can extend self, as when a tool or weapon allows us to do things of which we would otherwise be incapable. Possessions can also symbolically extend the self, as when a uniform or trophy allows us to convince ourselves (and perhaps others) that we can be a different person than we would be without them" (Belk, 1988; 145). Yet, Belk (1988) emphasizes that one's extended self includes both tangible (material objects) and intangible (other people) aspects.

Nonetheless, existing studies appear to focus on the role of material objects on one's extended self and identity construction (Noble and Walker; 1997; Ahuvia, 2005; Tian and Belk, 2005; Mittal, 2006; Belk, 2014) while overlooking the incorporation of other people as part of one's extended self. The incorporation of other people in one's identity construction is particularly pertinent to individuals belonging to Eastern cultures, and thus, deserves increased attention. Belk himself notes that "in individualistic societies, we need only elicit individuals' self-perceptions to assess the extended self, while in societies with more aggregate identities, perceptions of group identity are more relevant" (1989; 129). More recently, Gjerso et al. add that "the generalizability of the extended-self concept across cultures remains unclear" because "the importance that people place on the ''self'' may be greatly influenced by cultural factors" (2014; 1). Self-concepts are largely influenced by whether one belongs to an individualistic or collectivist culture (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Thus far, the importance of participating in public consumption rituals has been addressed. In what follows, I focus on the notion of resisting public consumption rituals.

2.3.4 Resisting Public Consumption Rituals

In contrast to the well-established literature on the importance of participating in public consumption rituals, a few studies have examined resistance to rituals "and the implications this may have for business as well as individual and social identity processes" (Tinson et al., 2013; 437). For instance, by exploring resistance to Valentine's day, Close and Zinkhan (2009) show that resistance may be directed towards an entire and/or an element of a ritual event (e.g. gift-exchange). In addition to understanding how anti-consumption occurs, Nuttall and Tinson (2011) explore the perceptions and implications of anti-consumption. Their study specifically focuses on the perceptions that ritual attendees hold about non-attendees in the context of the high school prom (Nuttall and Tinson, 2011). Four main perceptions of non-attendance are identified, including; non-consumption (could not afford to be at the event due to lack of resources and accessibility), risk averse (not attending due to self-esteem issues and avoiding being in an uncomfortable situation), passive disengagement (not conforming to social norms of the peer group as a whole), and intentional disengagement (not attending as a means of reinforcing an identity position) (Nuttall and Tinson, 2011).

Further to this, it is important to reiterate that while ritual non-attendance represents one form of resistance, there are varying degrees and other subtle ways of expressing ritual resistance (Close and Zinkhan, 2009). The latter is demonstrated by Tinson and Close (2012) who propose a typology of four types of resistance associated with the high school prom and that differ in terms of attitude and behavior. Enforced resistance (attitude high/behavior low) refers to having a positive attitude towards the prom but low behavior due to external enforcers (i.e. parents, school etc.) who enforce non-attendance of the prom or aspects of it; emotional resistance (behavior high/attitude low) refers to having a negative attitude towards the prom but high behavior due to internal securities; low level resistance (behavior low/attitude low) refers to having a negative attitude and behavior and therefore attend the prom to satisfy others rather than being emotionally invested in the event; and event ambassador (behavior high/attitude high) refers to having a positive

attitude and behavior towards the prom which reflects in being highly invested in the event (Tinson and Close, 2012).

Relatedly, and by extending Nuttall and Tinson's (2011) study, Tinson et al. (2013) offer explanations associated with attitudinal and behavioral resistance by those who self-identify as high school prom resistors. This includes four types of resistors; identity-positioning resistors (displays attitudinal and behavior resistance to promote individual identity), emotional resistors (displays negative attitude and is inclined to engage in deviant behavior), identity-protecting resistors (displays behavioral resistance as a result of inability to blend in with social group), and apathetic resistors (displays neutral attitude but attends to facilitate inclusion).

Drawing onto the above, existing studies on resistance towards consumption rituals are conducted in Western contexts (Close and Zinkhan, 2009; Nuttall and Tinson, 2011; Tinson and Close, 2012; Tinson et al., 2013) whereby ritual resistance reflects a personal choice, and relatedly, individuals incur the consequences of their own actions. Conversely, there appears to be a lack of research on consumption rituals in non-Western, Islamic contexts (Sandikci and Ger, 2011). In such contexts, personal choices regarding ritual resistance often lead to collective (familial) consequences which can affect individuals' resistance strategies.

Furthermore, resisting culturally embedded consumption rituals, as opposed to other types of rituals, ought to threaten prevailing discourses and the social order. For example, non-attendance of the high school prom impacts individuals' relationship within their friendship group only (Nuttall and Tinson, 2011), whereas leaving a church involves broader societal effects related to discrediting religion (McAlexander et al., 2014). This suggests that an interplay exists between the macro social environment and micro resistance strategies when it comes to resisting culturally embedded consumption rituals.

In what follows, I focus specifically on the notion of resisting gendered consumption rituals which can have a direct impact on the gender order.

2.3.5 Resisting Gendered Consumption Rituals

Butler (1988) posits that gendered rituals are central to the communication of gendered ideologies that reinforce traditional differences and inequalities between men and women. Essentially, gender performativity is sustained through the repeated performances underpinning gendered rituals. Given that rituals often involve the use of artefacts (Rook, 1985), consumption is recognized as an integral aspect of a ritual experience (Wallendorf and Nelson, 1986). Within contemporary consumer culture, gender and consumption are perceived as highly intertwined aspects of identity constructions (Bristor and Fischer, 1993). In line with Bristor and Fischer, since "gender is a pervasive filter through which individuals experience their social world, consumption activities are fundamentally gendered" (1993; 519). Therefore, consumer research shows that consumption plays a major role in facilitating individuals' participation in gendered rituals.

It is argued that while the "doing gender" theoretical framework has captured significant scholarly attention related to understanding gender inequality, this hegemonic framework does not account for the possibilities of creating social change (Connell, 2010). Instead, it perpetuates the status quo by overlooking the extent to which resistance towards gender norms on a social interactional level can create the potential for structural change (Deutsch, 2007). Critiques of the "doing gender" model propose that "undoing gender" is a more radical approach to dismantle gender inequality (Butler, 2004). This stems from the belief that the phrases "doing gender" and "undoing gender" evoke gender conformity or resistance, respectively (Deutsch, 2007). In response, however, West and Zimmerman (2009) contend that gender cannot be "undone" but rather "redone". They argue that individuals are always held accountable for doing gender, and while less oppressive ways of doing gender can be realized, accountability persists (West and Zimmerman, 2009).

Following such logic, this research realizes that “undoing gender” is in effect a process of “redoing gender” rather than completely eradicating its existence.

Although “gender has been theorised and studied in many ways and across different disciplines” and “a number of these theorisations have been recognised and adopted in marketing and consumer research, the significance of feminism in knowledge construction has largely remained what we would call ‘unfinished’” (Hearn and Hein, 2015; 4). In particular, “the word *power* is often sidelined in gender marketing and consumer research, even when power may be a dominant factor in gender relations” (Hearn and Hein, 2015; 30). An analysis of gendered rituals reveals that such performances involve disciplining and regulating the female body.

Numerous consumer research studies on gendered rituals appear to privilege the “doing gender” framework by merely highlighting that female subordination is articulated in different types of rituals. For instance, wedding ceremonies show that women’s bodies are objectified through the hyper-emphasis on their appearance in preparation for their transference from the father to the husband (Ustuner et al., 2000; Fernandez et al., 2011; Arend, 2016). In other rituals, there are subtle performances of a gendered division of labor. For instance, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) briefly refers to the common gender roles associated with Thanksgiving Day, whereby men are expected to engage in symbolic labor such as lifting the cooked turkey from the oven and carving it, while women are responsible form domestic labor duties which entail shopping for food as well as cooking and preparing meals. Similarly, Fischer and Arnold (1990) found that Christmas gift shopping and giving is mainly constructed as women’s work. However, on a more romantic, interpersonal level, Valentine’s day represents an occasion where men are the gift shoppers/givers and women are the receivers (Rugimbana et al., 2003). According to Rugimbana et al. (2003), one of the main motives underlying men’s gift-giving on Valentine’s Day is self-interest, whereby men provide gifts for their partner in return for sexual favors.

Apart from their emphasis on gender conformity, the aforementioned studies are limited to occasion-focused rather than mundane gendered rituals such as grooming (Rook, 1985; Joy and Venkatesh, 1994). Rook describes grooming behavior "as a form of body language, communicating specific messages about an individual's social status, maturity, aspirations, conformity, even morality" (1985; 258). Relatedly, Joy and Venkatesh argue that "from a feminist perspective, grooming rituals are important, since the focus is on the body on which gender configurations are inscribed" (1994; 349). This includes, for example, everyday dressing (Johnstone and Conroy, 2005) and beautifying (Gentina et al., 2012; Thyne et al., 2016; McCabe et al., 2017) rituals associated with an embodied feminine identity. Compared to occasion-focused ritual events, women's participation in mundane gendered rituals are particularly relevant to their gender identity constructions and the reproduction of the gender order. Accordingly, "undoing" gender entails exploring women's resistance towards mundane gendered rituals, an aspect of research that is yet to be explored in depth.

Inspired by Butler's work on transcending the idea of binary gender roles, several marketing studies have explored consumption spaces that facilitate gender subversion (Stevens et al., 2015). From a Foucauldian perspective, (un)doing gender can be constructed as a relational process mediated by power relations within a given local space (Rezeanu, 2015). It is therefore important to acknowledge "the slippage which may occur between feminine and masculine subjectivities as individuals move between [different social spaces]" (Meah, 2014; 673). From this standpoint, consumer research studies have primarily explored subversion towards hegemonic gender norms in carnivalesque contexts (Kates, 2003; Kates, 2004; Martin et al., 2006; Goulding and Saren, 2009; Thompson and Üstüner, 2015). For instance, Kates (2003) explores Mardi Gras (a carnivelisque event in Australia) as a space created by the LGBT (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals) where they can safely subvert gender norms, with the intention of encouraging the normalization of their identities over time.

Similarly, Goulding and Saren show how Goth festivals are constructed as (gender) transgressive spaces "where orthodoxy is challenged and identities are constructed and "performed"" (2009; 27). Gender pluralism is experienced as individuals put "together bits and pieces from different gender types" (Goulding and Saren, 2009; 43). However, such carnivalesque contexts can be described as heterotopian sites (Foucault, 1968) which are intentionally constructed to enable subversion. In Foucauldian terms, heterotopian spaces are "those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (Foucault, 1986; 25). Although such spaces support undoing gender, their construction as "safe spaces" for challenging gender norms suggests that they also inadvertently reinforce rather than transform the existing gender order (Seregina, 2018).

By contrast, the present study explores women's mundane subversion of gendered consumption rituals that occur outside heterotopian spaces and which are likely to result in social change. This represents a potentially more powerful way of negotiating gender relations since resistance becomes publicly visible compared to heterotopian spaces whereby the audience are already aligned with the subversion (e.g. Kates, 2003). In what follows, I conceptualize modesty as a type of mundane gendered consumption ritual relevant to "doing" femininity, and particularly, highlight the importance of addressing Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards the modesty ritual.

2.3.6 Resisting the Modesty Gendered Consumption Ritual

Prior to explaining how modesty is construed as a gendered ritual, it is important to understand the different meanings associated with modesty as a concept. Modesty is a multidimensional concept that refers to various aspects of the self, including references related to humility, shyness, sexual purity, innocence, fidelity, respect, and body concealment (Antoun, 1968; Andrews, 2011; Siraj, 2012; Hahner and Varda, 2012; O'Hagan, 2018). Thus, broadly, modesty is associated with behavioral traits, and more narrowly, it relates to the coverage of various body parts (Antoun, 1968).

In addition to the multiple conceptualizations of modesty, extant literature suggests that modesty is a gender specific trait. There is a widely held assumption that modesty represents an everyday mechanism of doing gender since being modest is highly associated with being a woman, and as such, modesty becomes a feminine trait. For instance, Budworth and Mann (2010) claims that women (compared to men) are more susceptible to encountering obstacles in acquiring leadership roles. The expectation of women to exhibit modest behavior in terms of their achievements appears to be counterproductive to their career success (Budworth and Mann, 2010). This justifies Smith and Huntoon (2014) study which shows that American women experienced discomfort when promoting their selves since self-promotion violates the feminine norms of modesty. Relatedly, Moss-Racusin et al. (2010) found that 'modest' men suffered from work-place hiring discrimination due to violating masculine stereotypes which demand self-promotion. In line with Connell's (2005) argument that gender is relational (masculine traits are identified in contrast to feminine traits), Moss-Racusin et al. (2010) claims that "displays of dominance, including immodesty, are a key component of playing by the masculine gender rules" (2010; 141).

From a different perspective, in exploring Iranian women's sexual behavior, Merghati-Khoei et al. (2014) study reveals the importance of Iranian women's expressions of modesty by inhibiting their sexual desires within their marital relationships. This involves their avoidance of sexual initiation to preserve their worthiness and prioritize their husband's sexual needs (Merghati-Khoei et al., 2014). Furthermore, Hassim (2017) states that the hijab for Muslim women is intended to protect their modesty, both physically (concealing their sexual body parts from the male gaze) and mentally (restricting their sexual desires). As an aspect of female modesty, constrained sexual expressions appear to be more prevalent in Eastern contexts, where women tend to conform with being modest, and thus, there is less scholarly emphasis on how women resist modesty compared to Western contexts (e.g. Jackson, 2006; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007; Lyons and Willott, 2008; Griffin et al., 2013).

Although the general notion of modesty appears to be confined to women, the past two decades have witnessed increased attention to women's modest clothing in both academic and media discourse (Sadatmoosavi et al., 2016). In line with that, this research focuses on the expression of modesty through clothing, and its role in the construction of feminine identities. Modesty as a function of clothing refers to the physical concealment of women's sexual body parts (Boulanouar, 2006) which are context and culture dependent. The importance attached to the modesty of female bodies appears to be embedded in some of the most prominent religions, including Islam (Khoei et al., 2008; Siraj, 2011; Jackson and Monk-Turner, 2015), Christianity (Arthur, 1997; Michelman, 1997; Bryant, 2006), and Judaism (Block, 2011; Andrews, 2014; Taragin-Zeller, 2014).

That said, many female believers do not merely comply with patriarchal interpretations of religion, but actively construct their own notions of modesty (Al-Mutawa, 2015). For instance, Siraj (2011) interviewed Muslim women in Scotland about their preferences towards the hijab and showed that while some women observed the hijab for religious reasons, others believed that modest clothing rather than the hijab is sufficient in Islam. Relatedly, Andrews (2014) found that women also attach different reasons to their choice of being modest, which are not necessarily associated with religion. Apart from religious reasons, the Jewish women interviewed in Andrew's (2014) study referred to maturity and self-esteem as other factors that influenced their desire to be modest. In addition, Taragin-Zeller (2014) shows that ultra-Orthodox teenagers in Israel adopted modest attire with the intention to express their devotion to God, rather than to conform to cultural expectations. On the contrary, Abbas (2015) shows that Muslim women in Amman have observed the hijab as a fashion statement, to reveal rather than conceal their bodies. As mentioned, while female modesty is not confined to any specific culture, and is embraced in all scriptures of Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism), it has nonetheless become the subject of intense scrutiny in the Islamic context (Sadatmoosavi et al., 2016).

Muslim women's clothing represents a visible form of public consumption that is widely debated within the social sciences literature (Sobh et al., 2011). Most importantly, "the

question of how and to what degree a woman should cover according to Islam is not with a single, agreed-upon answer, although naturally there are those who believe that their own interpretation is indisputably correct" (Gökarıksel and Secor, 2014; 185). The extent and form of Muslim women's body and hair coverings vary among different countries and between distinct individuals (Sobh et al., 2010).

However, Chapman (2018) argues that although the role of covering by Muslim women to express a Muslim identity has been well-established in the consumption literature, insight into the gendered virtues attached to covering remain relatively scarce. The consumption literature has placed emphasis on what and how Muslim women consume while overlooking the reproduction of gender inequalities as they are perceived and experienced by Muslim women on a mundane basis (Karademir Hazır, 2017). As Mahmood (2005) contends, while all Islamic virtues are highly gendered in that the measures and standards are differently applied to men versus women, modesty is particularly pertinent to women. This has been confirmed by Gökarıksel and Secor (2017) who claim that there are limited studies oriented towards Muslim men's clothing practices compared to Muslim women's dress and the construction of pious femininities.

Islamic clothing regulations for women are based on the construction of females as objects and symbols of (male) sexual temptation (Mossière, 2012). As such, the sexual identities of women are both literally and figuratively controlled by the concealment of their bodies (Mossière, 2012). The hair of Muslim women is particularly constructed as seductive beauty (Mossière, 2012). This explains why the hijab has become a pervasive symbol of female modesty in Islamic countries. As expressed by Hassan and Harun, in Islamic contexts, "wearing the hijab is more than just covering one's hair; it symbolizes modesty, morality, natural beauty and the harmonious interaction between a Muslim woman and society. The hijab is a symbol of Islamic belief that differentiates the role of women from that of men" (2016; 478).

The construction of Muslim women's modesty as a gendered ritual can be explained through reference to Rook's (1985) elements of a ritual experience (artefacts, script, performance roles, and audience) as outlined below:

The main artefact used to symbolize female modesty is the hijab or head scarf. It is important to acknowledge that besides the hijab, there are other more elaborate forms of covering such as the *niqab* (a face veil that reveals one's eyes only through a horizontal slit) and the *burqa* (a full face veil) which depend on personal interpretations of female sexuality and are only worn by minorities of Muslim women to complement the hijab. However, the hijab is the focus of this study since it's the dominant artefact used to express female modesty in Islamic countries (Siraj, 2011; McGinty, 2014; Hoekstra and Verkuyten, 2015; Chapman, 2018).

The script includes the prescribed expectations that hijabi women must fulfill to be recognized as modest. In terms of the hijab artefact, it must be drawn to cover one's hair, ears, neck, and chest (if exposed) (Zahedi, 2007). The hijab must also be accompanied with long and loose outfits to conceal a woman's body except for her face and hands (Hoekstra and Verkuyten, 2015). Apart from the physical requirements, the hijab discourse also involves behavioral dimensions such as lowering one's gaze, avoidance of extravagant consumption items that attract male attention and interactions with non-kin males etc. (Hamzeh, 2011).

Performance roles relate to expectations from both hijabi women and their family members. Hijabi women are expected to perform the hijab script in the public sphere (i.e. in the presence of marriageable men, excluding the father, husband, and son) (Sobh and Belk, 2011), while their family members (mainly male relatives) are expected to ensure that the script is being correctly performed (Stride and Flintoff, 2017). Lastly, the audience are all the observers of hijabi women in the public sphere, including both men and women.

Existing studies tend to emphasize on Muslim women as being either hijabi or non-hijabi which produces a dichotomy of participant or non-participant in the modesty ritual. This "dichotomy between the unveiled and veiled woman as oppositional and mutually exclusive is a reductive one, masking the shifting subjectivities of women who wish to unveil but cannot, women who remove the veil but eventually choose to reveil, those who veil part time, and others who down-veil (i.e., transition from the *niqab* or the oversized hijab to a shorter headscarf)" (Izharuddin, 2018; 156). It negates the lived experiences of Muslim women who actively choose to deviate from hegemonic feminine norms.

Compared to the abundance of research on hijabi women, to date, accounts of ex-hijabi Muslim women remain unacknowledged (Izharuddin, 2018). For instance, in Siraj's (2011) study on the meanings that Muslim women in Glasgow attach to modesty, a few ex-hijabi participants are included, however, they are classified as "non-hijabi's". This general classification is problematic because "non-hijabi's" and "ex-hijabi's" are distinct groups of women with distinct experiences that shape their worldviews. In another study, Moors (2007) refers to Yemeni women's decision to unveil only when travelling abroad, as their covering is perceived as compliance to local traditions that aren't applicable elsewhere.

Similarly, Bakr (2014) interviewed a Kuwaiti Muslim woman living in the U.S. who shares her experience in alternating between wearing and taking off the hijab depending on whether she resides in Kuwait or the U.S., respectively. However, Muslim women who unveil in foreign countries only are perpetuating rather than challenging the importance of veiling/ conforming with gender expectations in their home countries. More recently, Izharuddin (2018) explores why Malaysian Muslim women choose to unveil. I argue that a mere exploration of the reasons that Muslim women attach to unveiling answers the question of "why?" while overlooking "how" such women unveil despite the social pressure to conform with feminine expectations. Alternatively, this research recognizes the complexity underlying the act of unveiling since it relates to resisting gender discourses

concerning female modesty, and thus, involves challenging the gender order rather than being an inconsequential act.

Arab-Muslim citizens are particularly depicted "as one homogenous bloc—contrary to the progressive, secular West—inhabited by a passive populace perpetually subjected to patriarchal Islam" (Glas et al., 2019; 1). This occurs in contrast to many Arab-Muslim women's attempts to undo religion through their reinterpretations of Islam which result in undoing gender norms, since as Darwin (2018) argues, religious and gender scripts are inextricably intertwined. The idea of Islam as multifaceted appears to be undertheorized (Glas et al., 2018) in favor of a uniform Islam, thereby foreclosing the existence of multiple, contradictory, and fragmented Muslim identities (Sehlikoglu, 2018). From this standpoint, this research seeks to develop understanding of the experiences of ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women to show that rather than being passive subjects of a patriarchal Islam, such women are active agents in reinterpreting religion and reproducing their social realities.

2.3.7 Salient Issues for Exploration

In summary of the above section, several key gaps inform the direction of this study.

First, public consumption rituals are mainly examined in terms of individualistic, Western cultures which do not reflect the experiences of individuals in non-Western contexts, such as Arab-Islamic societies. Second, while participation in public consumption rituals is widely acknowledged, including both social and personal benefits that result from participation (i.e. participating in a ritual contributes to the maintenance of the social order, creates a sense of group belonging, and facilitates identity transformations), the notion of resisting a public consumption ritual remains largely underdeveloped. Third, and related to the aforementioned points, Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards the modesty gendered ritual appears to be unexplored.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Towards an Understanding of Resisting the Modesty Ritual

Following the review of relevant literature, this section offers a detailed explanation of the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

Gender relations in Eastern contexts appear to be largely undertheorized in the extant literature. A question that arises would be; can existing Western gender frameworks explain individuals' behavior in non-Western contexts? In the West, individuals are personally held accountable for their gender identity constructions (Butler, 2011). This differs from Eastern societies where individuals are socially identified as part of larger social groups (e.g. family, friends etc.) that often influence and are influenced by one's gender identity construction (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011). Therefore, the present study seeks to develop Western gender theories by exploring how gender relations manifest in Arab-Islamic societies.

Following a gender perspective towards Foucauldian thought, if gender relations produce gender discourses and one way of communicating such discourses is through gendered rituals, then this produces two interrelated assumptions; 1) that *participation* in gendered rituals reinforces gender relations, and 2) that *resistance* towards gendered rituals represents a means of negotiating gender relations. That said, research conducted in Arab-Islamic societies primarily focuses on the former assumption by addressing Arab-Muslim women's participation in the modesty gendered ritual. I posit that an overemphasis on studying Arab-Muslim women's participation in the modesty ritual perpetuates a top-down approach of examining power, which reflects an ideal and static social state. It assumes that a) women are a homogenous group conforming with gender expectations, b) women are passive victims of a patriarchal Islam, c) power is centralized, d) gender discourses are fixed, and e) the gender order is continuously reproduced.

Relatedly, I attempt to extend existing knowledge by exploring the experiences of deviant Arab-Muslim women who choose to resist rather than participate in the modesty ritual. As opposed to participation in the modesty ritual which reproduces the gender order, resistance towards the modesty ritual creates the potential for social change. This bottom-up approach of examining power is intended to reveal a) the existence of non-conformist women, b) women's power to contest dominant gender discourses, c) the decentralization of power, d) that gender discourses are discontinuous, e) the possibility of gender transformations, and f) the challenges that deviant women encounter.

As Butler (2004) stresses, gender norms only persist to the extent that they are acted out and reinstituted through mundane bodily rituals. She asserts that if the maintenance of gendered identities requires a stylized repetition of acts over time rather than being a fixed aspect of one's self, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be realized through a different form of repeating, such as in breaking or being subversive to the repetition of that style (Butler, 1988). In other words, "undoing" gender entails women's continuous efforts to challenge hegemonic gender discourses through their mundane resistance towards traditional gendered rituals (Butler, 2004).

Given that the family represents the core social unit in Arab-Islamic societies where gendered rituals are reinforced (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011), this study explores Arab-Muslim women's negotiation of familial gender relations in the process of resisting the modesty ritual. The family domain reflects a micro institution of social control that reveals how gender relations operate socially in the wider society (Ali, 2014). In line with this, Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards the modesty gendered ritual on a micro level has the potential to alter the gender order. Following the notion of gender as a social construction, it is crucial to *contextually* examine how familial gender relations are experienced by Arab-Muslim women in terms of the modesty ritual, and in return, how do Arab-Muslim women negotiate familial gender relations through resisting the modesty ritual.

The country of Kuwait has been chosen as the context of inquiry for this study. Kuwait appears to be an under researched Arab-Islamic country (Dakhli et al., 2013), particularly within the realm of consumer research concerning gender issues (with the exception of Al-Mutawa, 2013, 2016 and Al-Mutawa et al., 2015). However, it represents an ideal context in which to explore the research phenomenon. The hijab is not a legal requirement in Kuwait, meaning that both hijabi and non-hijabi women occupy public spaces (Botz-Bornstein and Abdullah-Khan, 2014). Paradoxically, however, those who take off the hijab are socially stigmatized (Botz-Bornstein and Abdullah-Khan, 2014). Although this paradox is reflected in the media (e.g. Al-Shuaibi, 2016; Amin, 2017), it has not received scholarly attention. Since the hijab is intended to communicate female modesty (Hassan and Harun, 2016), the experiences of those who have taken off the hijab will help understand how modesty is defied. Accordingly, this thesis focuses on the experiences, including the consumption choices, of ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women. It responds to the recent call for exploring the role of consumption in (dis)empowering women (Sherry and Fischer, 2017).

Based on the above, the main research question asks; **How are gender relations negotiated by women in the process of resisting a gendered consumption ritual?** This question is further specified by asking the following questions;

> **1- How do ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women experience familial gender relations in terms of the modesty ritual?**
>
> **2- How do ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women negotiate familial gender relations in the process of resisting the modesty ritual?**

I applied a qualitative methodology to answer the research questions. In the next chapter, I offer a detailed explanation of the methodological procedures adapted in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter is divided into two main sections as follows. First, in **a philosophical discussion**, I discuss the philosophical foundations of the research and their relevance to the research purpose. Subsequently, in **data collection**, I discuss the specific procedures used to conduct this research.

3.1 A Philosophical Discussion

This section offers justifications of the mode of inquiry and research paradigm (including the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions) adapted in this research.

3.1.1 Mode of Inquiry: Qualitative Research

The mode of inquiry refers to the methods used to develop knowledge. In this thesis, a qualitative perspective was employed to offer an understanding of the under-researched topic, i.e. the negotiation of gender relations by Arab-Muslim women. It is argued that a qualitative perspective is most suitable for examining under-researched topics (Hogg and Banister, 2001) where limited knowledge is constructed, and thus, an inductive (vs deductive) approach is applied. Qualitative research is also useful when the researcher's aim is to probe into individuals' experiences as opposed to form testable hypotheses (Hesse-Biber, 2007). This is relevant to the current study which aims to access the multiple meanings that ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women ascribe to their lived experiences rather than assume universal generalizations. As per the word *qualitative* research, it implies that the *quality* is more important than the *quantity* of the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Following Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research is broadly defined as:

> “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self” (2008; 4)

Specifically, in-depth interviews provide feminist researchers with direct “access [to] the voices of those who are marginalized in a society” (Hesse-Biber, 2007; 118) such as ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women. As such, this study relied on in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection (discussed later in more detail).

3.1.2 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

Paradigms represent theories about the nature of reality and individuals’ relation to it (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It is imperative to maintain an appropriate fit between the chosen research paradigm and other research components, such as the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), each paradigm consists a set of philosophical assumptions related to its ontology (i.e. “what is the nature of reality?”), epistemology (i.e. what is the relationship between the knower and what can be known?”), and methodology (i.e. “how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?”). For instance, while the positivist paradigm (the belief in an objective reality) is popular among quantitative researchers, the interpretivist paradigm (the belief in a subjective reality) tends to guide the work of qualitative researchers.

In line with the qualitative perspective of this study, the interpretivist paradigm appears most appropriate to understanding ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women’s experiences as informed by their socio-cultural contexts. Following Friedrich Nietzsche (1977), who had a major influence on Foucault’s work, interpretivism underlies the belief that reality is a product of infinite interpretations rather than an absolute truth. Nietzsche argues that

"human knowledge is possible only by means of language" and "language reveals itself to be founded on human beings' capacity for the creation of metaphor" (Schrift, 1990; 124). From this standpoint, what people accept as "knowledge" is nothing more than mere interpretations which, while necessary to construct our social realities, are a function of *power* rather than truth (Schrift, 1990). As Foucault and Rabinow (1991) stress, the construction of knowledge (or discourse) in society is a product of power relations.

In what follows, I discuss the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions underpinning this research.

Ontology and Epistemology: Relativism and Social Constructionism

The ontological and epistemological assumptions of research inform one another, as Crotty indicates, "ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together" (1998; 10) because the nature of reality (ontology) and the relationship between the knower and what can be known (epistemology) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) are closely related. As such, the ontology and epistemology of this study are discussed in tandem below.

Ontologically, the objectivist nature of reality is incompatible with this research. Objectivists (or positivists) believe that the nature of reality exists outside the consciousness (Crotty, 1998). This belief is rooted in Cartesian dualism that treats the mind and body as independent of one another. In other words, reality is deemed to be "out there" independent of human experience(s) (Laverty, 2003). On the contrary, the interpretive paradigm related to this study is guided by the ontological belief that "reality is not something 'out there', but rather is local and specifically constructed" (Laverty, 2003; 26). This study explores ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women's experiences within a specific socio-cultural context (i.e. Kuwait), and thus, it is acknowledged that such experiences are contingent upon the culture being studied. Accordingly, the existence of multiple (local) realities rather than a single (universal) truth is privileged in this study.

From this standpoint, the ontological perspective of *relativism* is adapted in this study since it supports the belief that "each society has its own regime of truth: the types of discourses accepted as true, the mechanisms that make it possible to distinguish between truth and error" (Sheridan, 1990; 222). Following Hibberd:

> "Knowing is always subject to some kind of conditionality, and so knowledge is not absolute but relative. It is the claim of the relativist that to *really* assert a true statement, or to *really* know something, would require us not only to state the conditions of the statement but to state the conditions of those conditions and so on, in an infinite regress. Hence, it is impossible to know something absolutely, and impossible for there to be statements which are absolutely true" (2006; 33)

Therefore, relativism rejects the notion that there is an external truth that exists outside history and society (Foucault and Rabinow, 1991). In line with this, rather than assuming a universal form of patriarchal oppression, this study acknowledged that women's experiences of oppression must be examined in terms of a specific socio-cultural context (Butler, 2011). Based on a relativist ontology, the epistemology of this study is best described as social constructionism. Constructionists believe that knowledge about the social world is socially constructed rather than naturally dictated. As Crotty asserts, constructionism is based on "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (1998; 42).

Constructionism resonates with this study since ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women's (subversive) behavior can have an impact on gender relations in the social context of Kuwait. In this sense, knowledge is subjective as it depends on the interactions between individuals and their world; constructionism places emphasis on the role of human in shaping rather than merely responding to their realities (Morgan and Smircich, 1980).

Methodology: Phenomenology

The methodology is an important aspect of research since in-depth insights are highly dependent on the methods used (Tsui, 2004). Based on Tsui (2004), doing research in non-Western contexts requires the researcher's ability to identify the most appropriate methods that would elicit unbiased responses. It is argued that individuals belonging to different cultures are likely to respond differently to different research methods (Tsui, 2004). This can be especially relevant to the nature of the researched topic.

In this study, phenomenology as a methodology was applied. Phenomenology is concerned with "the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" and it involves a "reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through" (van Manen, 1997; 10). It resonates with the aim of this study which is to understand Arab-Muslim women's lived experiences with resisting modesty. A similar study conducted by McAlexander et al. was based on a phenomenological approach whereby former members of the Mormon church "were asked to reflect on their experiences in leaving the church" (2014; 864). As such, phenomenology places emphasis on the lived or existential meanings rather than statistical relationships between variables, the predominance of social opinions, or the frequency of certain behaviors (van Manen, 1997).

Phenomenology involves multiple methods of data collection, including (but not limited to) "using the techniques of personal interviewing, analyzing written accounts such as documents or diaries and/or by making observations of subjects in contexts or environments" (Sloan and Bowe, 2014; 1298). However, it is argued that in-depth interviews are the most powerful means to gaining an in-depth understanding of another person's experience (Thompson et al., 1989; Goulding, 2005).

A brief history of phenomenology is essential to offer a justification of the specific methodological approach applied in this study. As mentioned earlier, while phenomenology broadly focuses on meanings related to "lived experiences", how such meanings are attained depends on the type of phenomenological approach used. The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, focused on a descriptive form of phenomenology (van Manen, 1997). In Husserl's view, the researcher needs to bracket or suspend his/her judgements and preconceived notions about the studied phenomenon to achieve contact with the essences (or true meaning) of another person's lived experience (Laverty, 2003). Husserl believed that such a method is a way of reaching essences without being contaminated by the researcher (Laverty, 2003).

Alternatively, Husserl's student, Martin Heidegger, introduced hermeneutic phenomenology, and argues that researchers cannot bracket their assumptions because they already belong to the world and have a preunderstanding of it (Laverty, 2003; Arnold and Fischer, 1994). Preunderstanding relates to the recognition that the "interpreter and that which is interpreted are linked by a context of tradition – the accumulation of the beliefs, theories, codes, metaphors, myths, events, practices, institutions, and ideologies (as apprehended through language) that precede the interpretation" (Arnold and Fischer, 1994; 56), and thus, the researcher cannot assume a neutral stance.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was applied in this study as I sought to understand the multiple meanings underlying ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women's experiences by searching for themes and being involved in interpreting the data rather than deriving essences as implied in descriptive phenomenology (Sloan and Bowe, 2014). Relatedly, I also acknowledge that "there is never any one, or objective, understanding of a text. Rather, there are many; no one understanding can embody all the elements of tradition" (Arnold and Fischer, 1994; 59).

In what follows, I thoroughly discuss how I collected and made sense of the data.

3.2 Data Collection

This section addresses aspects pertaining to the pilot study, methods and sampling, rapport building, data analysis, credibility and transferability of the findings, limitations of the data collection methods, reflections of the indigenous researcher, and finally, ethical considerations.

3.2.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study is an important determinant of the feasibility of a given study, however, it is often unacknowledged by qualitative researchers (Sampson, 2004). It exposes the researcher to the field prior to being fully immersed, and therefore, raises awareness on things that are not anticipated (Sampson, 2004). The researcher's methodological stance influences his/her decision to conduct a pilot study (Sampson, 2004). In this research, I conducted a pilot study to better understand and theoretically reflect upon the understudied phenomenon.

With the support of my mother as a gatekeeper, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with four ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women (see **Table 1** below for participants' profile details) during July 2015. The pilot interviews served as a preliminary check on the significance and feasibility of the research project (Hazzi and Maldaon, 2015) as well as helped establish theoretical relevance. They also enabled me to identify overlooked questions, amend existing ones, and refine the research focus (Hazzi and Maldaon, 2015). Therefore, the interview questions were improved for the PhD research.

Table 1

Pilot Participants			
	Pseudonym	**Age**	**Marital Status**
1	Sarah	28	Married
2	Dalal	22	Single
3	Zahra	40	Single
4	Layla	28	Single

The pilot interviews were composed of a mix of demographical, psychological, and sociological questions (see **Appendix E**). The demographics involved personal attributes that would be useful in the analysis stage. The psychological and sociological questions were intended to access both the personal and social aspects of women's experiences, respectively.

Interestingly, the interviews revealed that some ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women are keen about sharing their experiences, expressed their gratitude in being recognized as worthy of being researched, and acknowledged that their voices need to be addressed rather than silenced. This showed me that there is interest in the research topic and potential to recruit more participants for the final PhD interviews. From a theoretical perspective, the interviews also revealed that the hijab is situated within broader socio-cultural issues concerning Arab-Muslim women's public modesty. Relatedly, abandoning the hijab appears to be a complex process which involves women's negotiation of gender relations within their families. This informed the theoretical direction of the study.

3.2.2 Methods and Sampling

The choice of research methods relates to the specific techniques used in data collection. In line with the phenomenological methodology of this study, I relied on in-depth interviews as the main data collection method. However, written accounts were also used to triangulate the obtained data (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989).

In terms of sampling, it is the process of identifying the "right" cases to represent the examined phenomenon; representativeness in qualitative research refers to the appropriateness of the selected cases as opposed to possible generalizations which relate to quantitative research (Flick, 2008). This study is based on non-probability, purposive sampling. Purposive sampling "refers to strategies in which the researcher exercises his or her judgment about who will provide the best perspective on the phenomenon of interest, and then intentionally invites those specific perspectives into the study" (Abrams, 2010; 538). I relied on purposive sampling since I intended to target Kuwaiti women who have taken off the hijab, and thus, lived the experience under study (Goulding, 1999).

In terms of recruitment, Kuwaiti women who have taken off the hijab can be described as "hard to reach populations" (Abrams, 2010; 542) because although the hijab is not a legal requirement in Kuwait, there is a widely held social agreement that hijabi women should not take off the hijab. Those who take off the hijab are frowned upon and discouraged from publicly declaring their behavior (such as announcing/celebrating their rebellion on their social media accounts) to protect their family honour.

Accordingly, I was unable to openly recruit participations via advertising techniques such as billboards, social media platforms etc. which would require an explicit indication of the sample criteria (i.e. Kuwaiti women who have taken off the hijab). At the same time, ex-hijabi women might not be willing to share their personal experiences with an unknown

other. Furthermore, given the minority status of ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women, I was only familiar with a few women who would fit the sought sample.

As per Abrams, “researchers studying hard to reach populations will inevitably encounter some barriers to achieving their desired sample, [thus] it is important to fold in other methods or procedures to counterbalance these limitations” (2010; 547). Therefore, “to assist in the process of acceptance and trust, informants can be recruited through mutual acquaintances intermediaries” (Riley, 1996; 28). I relied on my mother in performing the role of a gatekeeper which entails providing access to potential participants based on her strong social connections and familiarity with women from diverse social backgrounds. I discussed the sampling criteria with my mother and asked her to approach suitable women and enquire whether they are interested to participate. Once she received the responses, she sent me the contact numbers of those who agreed to participate.

My mother’s social connections facilitated access to participants for my study because it is argued that “an introduction by a trusted acquaintance will quell fears of meeting an unknown individual and will also reduce social intercourse barriers” (Riley, 1996; 28). Participants’ trust in my mother was extended to their trust in me as her daughter. This was reflected in their comfort to share their honest stories. For instance, I received the following statements: “by the way you are the first one that I say this in front”, “I will tell you everything”, and “I tell you honestly” (all directly quoted from the interviews).

Furthermore, to move beyond the individualized accounts that dominate the literature, I sought supplementary data from core participants’ nuclear family members (Handy and Ross, 2005). The nuclear family plays a crucial role in shaping women’s lived experiences in Arab-Islamic societies (Joseph, 2010), thus the perspectives of parents, siblings, children, and spouse (if any) were sought to triangulate the data.

I had direct access to some family members through my mother's familiarity with whole families. In other cases, however, participants mediated the contact between me and their relatives. Each participant was advised to approach her relatives based on ease of access. This is because a few participants encountered a long-term loss of relationship with one or more family member due to taking off the hijab.

A few relatives refused to participate at the outset, which might be attributed to the culturally sensitive nature of the studied topic. On the other hand, there were other unforeseen circumstances that prevented participation by others. This included death or illness of parents, overage parents or underage siblings, not having siblings/children, and not having a spouse due to being single, divorced, or widowed. For both core participants and their relatives, the research topic was revealed as an "understanding of how the cultural norms in Kuwait influence Kuwaiti women's public representation in terms of their clothing choices, with specific focus on the act of wearing and taking off the hijab".

In what follows, I discuss each method and its corresponding sampling decisions.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews are useful when personal details about a sensitive topic are sought (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The researcher adapts the role of the listener while the participant takes the lead in speaking (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This indicates that a pre-prepared set of questions is not always necessary for conducting in-depth interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). In this study, however, I employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are based on a pre-defined set of questions as well as the potential for follow-up questions as the discussion progresses. Accordingly, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted as they allow for increased conversational flexibility (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) while also maintaining the participant's focus on the lived experience.

The main interview guide (see **Appendix C**) was oriented towards the core participants and comprised a combination of broad (e.g. what does the hijab mean to you?), indirect (e.g. what you think about women who wear the hijab?) and direct (e.g. tell me about your experience with the hijab?) questions which were intended to increase the accuracy of the obtained responses.

In terms of relatives, their interview guide (see **Appendix C**) primarily consisted of in-direct questions (e.g. what does the hijab mean to you? What do you think influences women to wear the hijab? And what do you think of women who have removed the hijab?) related to their opinions about the hijab as opposed to direct questions about their female relative(s). In-direct questions were used as a projective technique to “help informants to say things indirectly that are difficult to say directly” since they are “less threatening and less apparently self-revealing” (Belk et al., 2012; 44). In-direct questions were necessary to prevent any feelings of discomfort associated with sharing negative views (if any) about a female relative due to family honour concerns. It enables participants to freely decide whether to speak about a female relative.

The interviews varied between one to three hours depending on the openness of each participant. Since both male and female participants were involved, the interviews were conducted in different locations accordingly. Interviews with females took place either in their own homes (in a private room) or in my personal office at home. On the other hand, it is culturally inappropriate for males to visit my home or be seen publicly (e.g. in a hotel or coffee shop) with me. Therefore, male interviews were conducted in a private conference room located in Salmiya Palace Hotel (a quiet local hotel in Kuwait). The conference room represents a business setting, whereby it is more culturally acceptable for women to interact with men.

Some of the core participants requested to publish their real names in the research, stating that they are proud to share their experiences and would like to be personally identified as a source of empowerment for other Arab-Muslim women. On the other hand, other core participants sought assurance that their identities will not be exposed as it can be problematic for themselves as well as their family members. In the interest of all parties involved (myself included), I informed all participants that in accord with the research ethics, all names will be assigned a pseudonym to protect (family) identities. To maintain anonymity, any identifiable information, such as visited places or names of other people are also excluded.

In terms of sampling size, the qualitative nature of the study suggests that rich information is more important than the quantity of respondents (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Accordingly, the number of participants was decided as data collection progressed. Data saturation was achieved at eighteen core participants, after which no new information was being obtained. However, I increased the sample size to twenty-three core participants to increase access to relatives (see **Table 2** below for core participants' profile details). As such, a total of twenty-three core participants along with seven relatives took part in the interviews (see **Table 3** below for relatives' profile details).

Table 2

Interviews: Core Participants				
	Pseudonym	**Age**	**Marital Status**	**Social Class**
1	Shurooq	49	Widowed	Upper
2	Ameera	29	Married	Upper
3	Asma	39	Married	Lower
4	Moneera	23	Single	Middle
5	Futha	26	Single	Middle
6	Heba	19	Single	Middle
7	Nawal	24	Single	Middle
8	Amani	26	Single	Lower
9	Khulood	20	Single	Lower
10	Dalal	37	Divorced	Middle
11	Mariam	38	Married	Lower
12	Sara	28	Married	Middle-Lower
13	Dana	24	Married	Middle
14	Zuhoor	25	Single	Lower
15	Noura	34	Single	Middle
16	Laila	27	Divorced	Middle
17	Farah	30	Single	Middle-Lower
18	Maysa	35	Married	Middle
19	Khadija	27	Single	Lower
20	Aisha	45	Single	Middle-Lower
21	Maha	53	Married	Middle
22	Dunia	22	Single	Middle-Upper
23	Manal	31	Married	Middle-Lower

*Social class in Kuwait is determined based on each family's social classification in terms of family name, financial status, and reputation (Almutawa, 2011).

Table 3

Interviews: Relatives					
	Pseudonym	**Age**	**Educational Level**	**Related To**	**Relationship Type**
1	Hind	27	Diploma	Shurooq	Daughter
2	Kareem	59	Master's	Ameera	Father
3	Haneen	49	Bachelor's	Ameera	Mother
4	Faris	25	Diploma	Ameera	Brother
5	Wael	31	Master's	Ameera	Husband
6	Khalid	42	PhD	Asma	Husband
7	Hessa	49	Bachelor's	Moneera, Futha, Heba, & Nawal	Mother

Photographs

Photographs were used by some core participants during the interviews to help them reflect on their past experiences. All core participants were asked to prepare a set of their pictures before wearing, while wearing, and/or after taking off the hijab to reflect on as part of the main interview. Participants were informed that their photographs will only be used to elicit responses during the interview and are not collected for publication in the research. They were also informed that the interview can still be conducted without their provision of photographs. This was to avoid any pressure or effort on behalf of participants to search for their photographs if they were not readily available. The use of photographs was intended to “show people to themselves” and in doing so, they become “markedly self-conscious and seek to explain and justify themselves” (Heisley and Levy, 1991; 257). This is because unconscious memories cannot be easily conveyed through speech but are often recalled when viewing oneself in photographs (Heisley and Levy, 1991). The use of photographs improved the quality of the data because participants were highly engaged in the discussion and were keen to elaborate on their recalled experiences.

Written Accounts

Although interviews were conducted with all core participants and some relatives, other relatives preferred to express their opinions through writing as opposed to being interviewed. Similarly to relatives who refused to participate, this can be attributed to the culturally sensitive nature of the studied topic, and thus, one's desire to gain control over his/her responses. Therefore, rather than excluding participation by those who preferred to provide written data, I employed written accounts as an alternative method.

Following Handy and Ross (2005), semi-structured written accounts were used as a substitute to interviews. Despite being rarely applied in qualitative research (Letherby and Zdrodowski, 1995; Toerien and Wilkinson, 2004; Al-Mutawa, 2016), written accounts are a useful method for those who are reluctant to being interviewed (Handy and Ross, 2005). In addition, written accounts are also effective in obtaining familial perspectives on a sensitive topic (Handy and Ross, 2005). For consistency purposes, the same guide (see **Appendix C**) that I used to conduct the interviews with some relatives was also disseminated to others for their written responses. I forwarded the set of questions to each participant via WhatsApp, "an instant messaging smartphone application" (O'Hara et al., 2014; 1) as it was their selected mode of communication.

I formulated the questions in both Arabic and English to allow participants to choose their preferred language. Also, I did not set a deadline for receiving feedback but instead, allowed participants to complete and send their responses at their own convenience. Response time varied between thirty minutes to one week. All the written accounts except for two were composed in Arabic and were therefore back translated into English. A total of seven written accounts were formulated (see **Table 4** below for relatives' profile details). There were no specific criteria for selection as this was initially determined through the core participants; relatives were subsequently approached based on their willingness to participate.

Table 4

Written Accounts: Relatives					
	Pseudonym	**Age**	**Educational Level**	**Related To**	**Relationship Type**
1	Talal	47	Bachelor's	Amani & Khulood	Father
2	Zeinab	46	Uneducated	Amani & Khulood	Mother
3	Faisal	18	High School	Amani & Khulood	Brother
4	Ali	23	Bachelor's	Amani & Khulood	Brother
5	Fahad	18	High School	Dalal	Son
6	Omar	44	Bachelor's	Mariam	Husband
7	Noha	42	Bachelor's	Mariam	Sister

3.2.3 Rapport Building

The study focuses on a controversial topic, and thus, establishing rapport with potential participants is deemed necessary. Initially, my mother provided me with the participants' contact numbers. Thereafter, I approached participants via WhatsApp (O'Hara et al., 2014) as it was their selected mode of communication. The purpose of communication was to introduce myself (for those who are unfamiliar with me) and schedule an initial meeting to discuss the research purpose and establish strong rapport.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I met the participants several times to ensure that rapport is established to make them feel comfortable in sharing their personal stories. Rapport was also maintained throughout the different stages of the interview. At the start of each

interview, I engaged in a friendly chat with participants and encouraged them to ask any questions. This was intended to put them at ease and set the tone for the entire interview. The research questions were addressed in an informal, conversational manner to avoid a hierarchal relationship between myself and the participants. For instance, I avoided obtaining demographic information at the beginning of the interview, as direct questioning might create tension for participants, and thus, distort their responses. Instead, the participants were left to naturally converse and any missing demographic information was obtained towards the end of the interview.

Furthermore, rather than arbitrarily ending the interview, I encouraged participants to indicate the duration of the interview by allowing them to state when there is no additional information. Upon the completion of the interview, I thanked the participants for their cooperation and reassured them about their anonymity. Even after completing the interviews, I maintained rapport with participants to avoid making them feel exploited. Similarly, I remained in contact with participants who opted for written accounts.

3.2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis describes the process of transforming raw data into useful information (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This involves theoretically reflecting upon the descriptive stories of participants. After collecting data from interviews and written accounts, I maintained distance from the field due to identifying as an insider in the studied culture (Al-Mutawa, 2013). This is because while data collection requires the researcher's close association with the participants, the data analysis stage requires fartherness from the field (Wallendorf and Brucks, 1993). I spent long periods of time away from Kuwait (in Bath) to develop distance from the culture and maximize unbiased interpretations.

Initially, I carefully transcribed all the interviews and written accounts to obtain a detailed understanding of each participant's experience. Transcribing is identified as an effective method to familiarize oneself with the collected data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As such, it is central to data analysis in qualitative research since it aids the researcher in meaning construction (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Since most participants preferred to speak/write in their native Arabic (Kuwaiti) language, back-translation was performed to check for consistency. I translated the Arabic interviews from Arabic to English with the support of a translator to ensure accuracy. Thereafter, I translated them back into Arabic, and again into English.

After I transcribed the interviews and written accounts, I relied on an inductive thematic analysis approach to make sense of the data. Thematic analysis can be defined as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within [qualitative] data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 79). To make this process more efficient, I relied on the analysis software, Nvivo, to integrate, analyse, and view the data from a central location. Nvivo is used to manage complex qualitative data to help the researcher identify connections related to the collected material (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). It aids in presenting multiple forms of data and carrying out the appropriate analytical procedures (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013).

Specifically, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure as it is "a popular strategy for hermeneutic phenomenological analysis" (Ho et al., 2017; 1758). I familiarized myself with the data during the process of transcription, whereby I made an initial list of prevalent ideas within the data set and identified what is theoretically interesting about them. For instance, women's references to the manipulation of their bodies by male relatives (in terms being forced to either wear or take off the hijab) was associated with women representing the extended self of their male relatives. Also, women's references to wearing revealing clothing with the hijab was interpreted as their desire to express their (suppressed) sexuality. I then read each transcript in isolation to identify and code elements of the text that may represent a larger pattern. Commonalities and differences were identified between the coded extracts across the whole data set which

helped me develop categories (or sub-themes) that formed the main themes. This was followed by a detailed examination of all the collated extracts under each theme to ensure that a coherent pattern is formed. Following the hermeneutic principles, a “back and forth, specific-general-specific movement of interpretation” was implemented “to achieve an understanding free of contradictions” (Arnold and Fischer, 1994; 63). I identified three main themes and each theme included its own sub-themes. The three main themes are; 1) performing gender on the extended self, 2) resisting power through consumption, and 3) transformations of the self.

3.2.5 Credibility and Transferability

In line with the constructionist epistemology that underlies this research, the evaluation criteria traditionally associated with positivist philosophy (including validity, reliability, and objectivity) are deemed inappropriate in assessing trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Instead, the substitution criteria compatible with constructionism known as credibility and transferability are examined (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Credibility was achieved through triangulation across sources and member checks (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). I obtained data from (some) relatives which enabled me to articulate a more detailed account of (some) women’s experiences. Member checks were also conducted both during and after the interviews took place. During the interviews, I summarized what participants said to check whether my understandings accurately reflected their experiences. After the interviews, fifteen participants were presented with the anonymized research findings and asked whether the interpretations appear “realistic” to them.

Furthermore, although context specific research can offer insightful information, it is critiqued for its lack of generalizability (Tsui, 2004). However, this constructionist study

does not aim to provide generalizations about Kuwaiti women or Arab-Muslim women worldwide. Instead, the presented findings are intended to reflect the experiences of a sample of ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women. Accordingly, as opposed to focusing on generalizability, it is more important to determine whether the findings of the study are transferable to other social situations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To address transferability, I abstracted and theorized context specific data to make them "fit" alternative contexts. Therefore, the developed themes are not limited in application to Arab-Islamic societies. This is because a constructionist study seeks to develop theory rather than derive generalizable findings.

3.2.6 Limitations of Methods

Similarly to any other research methods, I experienced several limitations pertaining to the use of interviews and written accounts.

Socially desirable responding (SDR) is a common issue associated with the conduction of interviews (Mick, 1996). This occurs when the respondents are unwilling or unable to share truthful accounts of their experiences for the sake of impression management (Fischer, 1993). It is the tendency to report socially acceptable or normative behavior which can lead to biased responses (Fischer, 1993). As this study deals with a controversial topic, my personal characteristics (i.e. a PhD student and upper-class Kuwaiti women) are bound to have an impact on what respondents share.

In accounting for the possibility of social desirability bias, I carefully ensured that my presence and communication with respondents would strengthen rather than inhibit data collection. Although the influence of my personal characteristics (mentioned earlier) are inevitable, I tried to minimize the effect of my "appearance" from inciting socially desirable answers. I deliberately chose to dress in a moderate manner for the interviews; I

avoided clothes that are either too revealing or concealing (based on Kuwait's cultural standards). It is important to note that I do not wear the hijab, and thus, a sense of similarity with respondents (as opposed to a hijabi researcher) was attained.

In addition, the interviews consisted of both direct and indirect questions. Indirect questions are an effective way to control for SDR (Fischer, 1993) as they enable respondents to "describe their own feelings behind a facade of impersonality" (Simon and Simon, 1974; 586). I also maintained a neutral stance (in terms of both verbal and non-verbal expressions) throughout each interview and only expressed approval when it was necessary to keep the respondent engaged. Furthermore, I assured respondents of their anonymity which is considered the most common method to deal with SDR (Fischer, 1993).

Due to the lack of physical presence in collecting written accounts, I was unable to observe respondents' verbal and non-verbal expressions which could otherwise support my interpretations of meanings. In addition, although I constructed a set of semi-structured questions to encourage respondents to elaborate on their answers, I still received short answers and/or no answers to some questions. This limited the depth of familial perspectives obtained.

3.2.7 Reflections of the Indigenous Researcher

Unlike quantitative studies whereby the researcher assumes distance from the studied phenomenon, qualitative studies are based on an interdependent relation between the researcher and the researched since the researcher is deemed to be the main instrument that facilitates data collection and analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Hence, it is important to acknowledge my social position and personal experiences in relation to the study and involved participants because "the cultural beliefs and behaviors of feminist researchers

shape the results of their analysis no less than do those of sexist and androcentric researchers" (Harding, 1987; 9).

In what follows, I discuss my experience with the hijab, and relatedly, my positionality in the field.

My Experience with the Hijab

Personally, I identify as a Kuwaiti woman who is born and raised in Kuwait. I was brought up in a family of relatively non-traditional parents. During my teenage years, my father had attempted to persuade me into wearing the hijab by emphasizing the importance of female modesty in our culture. I was taught that a respectable/respected woman is she who wears the hijab and covers her body. However, instead of forcing me to wear the hijab, my father respected my choice to remain unveiled. Like many other families, it is common that girls from my father's side of the family don the hijab at the onset of puberty, around the age of eleven to twelve years old. My mother, however, did not support the idea of wearing the hijab at such a young age, or even at all. Although many girls from her side of the family also wore the hijab when they approached puberty, her opinion was shaped by her own experience.

My mother wore the hijab after getting married and having her first child, at the age of nineteen. Her decision was driven by the fact that she was the only non-hijabi, seemingly odd female relative, in gatherings with my father's family. My uncles used to leave the family gatherings whenever my mother walks in to express their disapproval of her non-hijabi state. This made her feel uncomfortable and inspired her decision to wear the hijab. Later, when me and my two sisters were older and deemed suitable for the hijab, my uncles tried to convince my father to enforce it onto us. Like my mother during her time, we were the "non-conforming" girls in the family gatherings. My father was not really concerned

about us wearing the hijab, he just preferred to generally fit in. However, my mother managed to convince him otherwise.

In the eyes of my teenage self, I didn't want to wear the hijab because it didn't look "cool" or "attractive". As the popular and trendy girl at school, I believed that the hijab presented an identity conflict. I associated being "cool" with wearing revealing clothing and perceived the hijab as "tacky" and unfashionable. Posters of my Western idol female celebrities (including Avril Lavigne, Hillary Duff, and Lindsay Lohan) were plastered all around my bedroom. They inspired my daily choice of hairstyle, make-up, and clothing. I also watched video clips of Western songs which portrayed women with revealing clothes as "sexy" and "desired" but did not feature any hijabi women. Many Western magazines and global brands' advertisements also represented unveiled girls, posing, pouting, and flaunting their bodies. Basically, I associated women's freedom with Western lifestyles.

The amount of media exposure I had made me aware that the hijab would inhibit my lifestyle; I wouldn't be able to wear my favorite bikini to public swimming pools, experiment different hairstyles, or wear whatever I desired. I occasionally dyed my hair and regularly styled it in the salon, which made me think, "why should I cover it?" I always felt sympathetic towards girl (friends and relatives) who are forced to wear the hijab by their parents.

Upon starting university, I had already become accustomed to my appearance without the hijab and did not envision myself wearing it. I did not want to follow the hijab "norm" regardless of whether it is a religious or cultural requirement. This made me the rebellious girl at university who was known for resisting feminine clothing norms by wearing sleeveless shirts and short skirts and dresses. I experienced a sense of disapproval from many students (males and females) who gazed at me and gossiped among themselves. However, this still did not make me conform with their expectations.

In being a rebellious Kuwaiti girl myself, this inspired me to research about the experiences of rebellious Kuwaiti women, such as those who have taken off the hijab. While pursing my PhD and engaging in in-depth reading about the hijab, I began to interpret it as a social and cultural rather than religious requirement (as instructed in many families and schools in Arab-Islamic societies). I've learned that the hijab is based on a male interpretation of religious script concerning Muslim women's public representation. This further assured me that as a feminist researcher, I will never allow a male opinion to be marked onto my own body.

My Positionality in the Field

My position in relation to the studied sample can be defined as a "space between" which means simultaneously being both an insider and outsider (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). I shared similarities with as well as differences from the experiences of participants. I was a relative insider due to identifying as a Kuwaiti woman, and thus, is familiar with the norms, traditions, and lifestyles expected of Kuwaiti women. At the same time, however, I was also a relative outsider due to lacking first-hand experience with taking off the hijab. Accordingly, my insider-outsider status presented me with several opportunities and costs which are addressed below.

In terms of my insider female status, I was enabled access to personal (and familial) information that participants claimed they would not share with non-Kuwaiti/Western women (due to concerns of being 'Othered') or local males (due to family honour concerns). However, as Belk et al. warns, an insider is in danger of imposing his/her knowledge and assumptions, and in doing so, discourages informants from wanting to speak due to appearing to "already know everything" (2012; 32). The opposite occurred in my case, while I allowed participants to take the lead in the discussion, many of the women (and the few interviewed men) assumed that I am already aware of the Kuwaiti culture and often explicitly stated "as you already know…" when discussing culture matters, such as

how hijabi/non-hijabi women are perceived, the culturally acceptable dress code for women, women's inferior status within their families in relation to men etc. Accordingly, I relied on follow-up questions to probe into what participants deemed "obvious" to me by asking, for instance, "can you elaborate on how hijabi and non-hijabi women are perceived in Kuwait?". This enabled me to access the world views of participants without imposing my "taken for granted" assumptions (Tsui, 2004; 498).

Furthermore, although being part of the Kuwaiti culture enhanced my contextual understanding of the studied phenomenon, Bolak argues that "an indigenous researcher runs the risk of being blinded by the familiar" (1996; 109) when interpreting the data. However, based on Bolak's (1996) personal experience, being away from home helps the indigenous researcher to develop distance from and in-depth insight pertaining to his/her culture. Similarly, I spent long periods of time away from Kuwait (i.e. in Bath) throughout the research process. This allowed me to maximize unbiased interpretations and articulate unbiased views.

In addition, participants belonged to a sub-culture that I wasn't a part of. Hence, I could not claim to "understand" (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) women's experiences in taking off the hijab. For instance, when I first approached the research I was interested in the idea of "abandoning a public ritual" through taking off the hijab and assumed that it was a singular act. However, the findings reveal that it's a transitional behavior which involves various acts of "resistance" until an end goal is achieved (i.e. women taking off the hijab).

3.2.8 Ethical Considerations

This research strictly complies with the University of Bath ethical protocol which is outlined in the Data Protection Act 1998.

In terms of gathering data, I obtained informed consent from all involved participants. Prior to data collection, a participant information sheet (see **Appendix A**) and consent form (see **Appendix B**) was given to all potential participants. The participant information sheet outlined the research purpose, why participants are chosen, what participants' involvement entails, the benefits/risks of participating, what will happen if participants decide to withdraw their participation, and the handling of data. Those who decide to participate were asked to carefully read and sign the consent form. Participants were informed that their participation is entirely voluntarily and that no pressure to participate is imposed by any parties. None of the participants were underage (below eighteen years old), therefore parental consent was not required.

Furthermore, I only collected data that is directly relevant to the research purpose and did not exploit participants to share irrelevant or excessive information. In case of excessive sensitive information being shared (which did not occur), I was prepared to inform participants that their shared information is beyond the scope of the research. All the interviews were scheduled according to each participant's preferred day, time, and location to reduce the possibility of a hierarchal relationship between myself and the participants. On the day of the interview, I encouraged participants to ask for clarifications or any questions. Before the interview commenced, participants were reminded that they are allowed to take breaks, skip any questions, or completely withdraw at any stage during or after the interview. A few participants took short breaks, but nobody skipped any questions or withdrew. That said, I informed participants that if they decide to withdraw, I will immediately discard all the collected information and exclude their participation.

During the interview, I addressed the questions in an informal manner to provoke stories rather than straightforward answers. This casual approach was intended to reduce tension on behalf of participants and offer them the opportunity to share as much or as little as desired. Throughout the interviews, I adopted a moderate stance in listening and responding while expressing acceptance and compassion when necessary. This is because

my type of responsiveness can be a critical factor in determining how participants feel about themselves.

In addition, the collection of written accounts prevented my direct interaction with participants, meaning that it was impossible to assess their emotions such as their body language and speaking tone, and respond accordingly. Given the lack of physical presence, the written accounts were solely based on indirect questions to avoid any feelings of tension. Similarly to the interviews, participants were allowed to skip any questions or decide to withdraw (nobody withdrew) their participation at their own convenience.

In terms of disclosing data, all involved participants were assured that their shared information will only be accessed by myself in its original form. Participants were informed that their identities will be anonymized throughout the PhD thesis and any subsequent publications. I also guaranteed participants that the original data will not be viewed by or discussed with any third parties, and as such, their personal information will remain discreet. Participants were made aware that the gatekeeper's primary role is to mediate contact between us and has no obligation to view or discuss the collected data or intervene in the research process.

In terms of storing data, I used several instruments to facilitate data collection. A digital recorder was used to record all interviews, which were then transferred to my personal laptop (for transcribing and translating into Word documents) and a backup copy was also stored on an external hard drive. Memos were manually composed using a note pad and later copied onto Word documents which was stored in the same manner as the interviews. My personal smartphone was also used to build rapport and schedule interviews with participants.

To ensure that all data is stored securely, I was the only person who accessed data collected on all instruments. The digital recorder and external hard drive were stored in my built-in and password protected safe box which is placed in my office at home, in Kuwait. I locked the office whenever I am not present and always kept the key with me. Both my laptop (which is placed in my office) and smartphone (which is always at hand) were also password protected.

Upon completion of each interview, the recorded audio was transferred into my laptop for transcribing in verbatim form. After transcribing, recorded audios were immediately deleted from both my laptop and digital recorder. Only anonymized, transcribed verbatim was stored on my laptop and a backup copy was stored on my external hard drive. In my laptop, a folder named "interviews" was created to store all interview data. Within that main folder, separate folders were created for each core participant. The folder names were anonymized based on each participant's order of interview (i.e. the code "P1" = participant one, "P2" = participant two etc.). Each folder contained a core participant's Word documents consisting of transcribed verbatim and field notes. The Word documents were named to match each participant's folder name.

Furthermore, within each core participant's folder, Word documents were created for family members and were named based on their relationship with the core participant (i.e. "mother", "father", "husband" etc.) as well as data collection method (e.g. "mother-interview" or "father-written account"). Since written accounts were sent to my mobile phone, I deleted the WhatsApp conversation and advised participants to do the same.

3.3 Overview of Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, interpretivist research paradigm. More specificially, this study is guided by a relativist ontology, social constructionist epistemology, and phenomenology as a methodology. In line with the phenomenological approach adapted in this study, in-depth, semi-structured interviews and written accounts are chosen as data collection methods. Certain techniques are applied to reduce the possibility of SDR in data collection, including, maintaining a neutral stance during the interviews, combining direct and indirect questions, and ensuring participants of their anonymity.

In terms of data analysis, an inductive thematic analysis procedure is applied. The researcher's insider-outsider status in relation to the studied participants as well as her time spent away from the studied culture helps maximize unbiased interpretations. Furthermore, while credibility is achieved through triangulation across sources and member checks, transferability is addressed through abstracting and theorizing context specific data.

Importantly, this study strictly complies with the research ethics outlined in the Data Protection Act 1998.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the main research findings. To reiterate, this research explores how gender relations are negotiated by women in the process of resisting a gendered consumption ritual. The two main research questions are: 1) How do ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women experience familial gender relations in terms of the modesty ritual? and 2) How do ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women negotiate familial gender relations in the process of resisting the modesty ritual? Specifically, I focus on the experiences of ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women's experiences with resisting modesty in Kuwait.

Accordingly, this chapter begins with an introduction to a (female) cultural interpretation of the hijab, including participants' interpretations of: 1) the hijab in Islam, and 2) ex-hijabi women and family honour. The phenomenological perspective adapted in this research suggests that women's interpretations of their social realities play a major role in shaping their lived experiences. Therefore, a (female) cultural interpretation is intended to inform the subsequent themes. This is followed by the three major themes, namely: 1) performing gender on the extended self, 2) resisting power through consumption, and 3) transformations of the self. The first theme focuses on the manipulation of women's bodies by their male relatives to construct their own masculine identities. It represents women as passive subjects who are acted upon by others. Two objectification strategies are identified: 1) female modesty and relational masculine identity, and 2) female immodesty and relational masculine identity. The second theme focuses on women's resistance to male power through their consumption choices. It represents women as active resistors of familial power. Five resistance strategies are identified: 1) combining modesty and sexuality (combination strategy), 2) attracting the male gaze (attraction strategy), 3) substituting the hijab (substitution strategy), 4) eliminating the hijab (elimination strategy), and 5) contextualizing the hijab (contextualization strategy). The third theme focuses on women's perceived identity transformations which result from the objectification and resistance strategies. Two main outcomes are identified: 1) the empowered self, and 2) the subordinate self.

4.1 A (Female) Cultural Interpretation

Prior to presenting the core themes of this thesis, I offer a female cultural interpretation of the hijab artefact and its related association with the female body and family honour. The significance of a female cultural interpretation stems from the idea that nowadays, many Muslim women are (re)interpreting Islamic texts from a feminist perspective and challenging (male imposed) dominant discourses surrounding their gender roles (Piela, 2013). I therefore "stress female voices, and female memories in order to *feminize* the knowledge produced about an already female-exclusive garment. I regard this as one step toward undoing the patriarchal epistemological processes of alienating women from knowledges produced about them in the Arab region" (Bakr, 2014; 8).

The extant body of literature has explored the hijab from various perspectives, including (but not limited to) its construction as a religious, fashionable, political, and cultural artefact. However, while such research provides definitions of the hijab from the perspective of women who wear it, I propose alternate definitions that reflect the interpretations of women who took it off. It is therefore worth mentioning that the shared interpretations are specific to the subculture of ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women. Specifically, I intend to enhance understandings of the modesty ritual (as expressed through the hijab) in Kuwait through ex-hijabi women's interpretations of both Islamic texts and their lived experiences. Accordingly, two main areas are addressed below, including: 1) the hijab in Islam, and 2) ex-hijabi women and family honour.

4.1.1 The Hijab in Islam

The idea that a Muslim woman's modesty is primarily dependent on observing the hijab (as instructed by Male Muslim clerics) has been refuted by some participants. Their personal interpretations of the Qur'an have led them to conclude that the hijab is not a religious requirement:

> "Through my readings, like through [my] reading of [the] Qur'an, reading of hadith from the Prophet [PBUH], I came to the conclusion that it's [the hijab] not something religious because religion did not actually clarify that women should cover their head, the religion said women should cover their *chest*, not their *head*… so it's the religious scholars, the religious Mullah's, who said that something which covers the chest should come *up from the head*… that's their logic, basically… but I don't believe in that, you can cover your chest with a scarf, you don't need to put something on your head to cover your chest, there are collars, there are turtle necks, high neck shirts... you can cover your chest in so many things, it doesn't need to be something that comes from the top of the head…" (Ameera, 29)

> "I see that the hijab is not a requirement in the Islamic religion… they are five texts that were revealed in the Qur'an, some of them talk about the hijab which is the partition and some talk about a veil on women's chest… chest, they didn't say on their head… their chest… in those days there were slaves, and the slaves were exposed… so women who showed that they are free used to put the veil on their head… so they had specific circumstances that we don't… " (Manal, 31)

Ameera and Manal indicate that their readings of Islamic texts raised their awareness that the hijab is an imposed misinterpretation of Muslim women's clothing expectations. Both participants stress that the hijab reflects the situation of women in a specific historical era that does not apply to women nowadays. In line with El Saadawi, "since each [Qur'anic]

verse or saying was linked to a particular circumstance or incident, and to a particular setting in terms of place and time, the verses often tend to embody conflicting directives or ambiguous instructions. This is especially true in relation to the life of women" (1997; 79). Ameera and Manal agree that while Islamic texts require women to cover their chest, there are no explicit references to a specific form of covering, particularly to covering one's head. As per Ameera, male religious scholars have concluded that one must draw something over her head to be able to cover her chest. Nowadays, however, she argues that there are multiple ways to cover one's chest only, such as by wearing scarfs, collars, turtle necks, and high neck shirts. The Islamic requirement of covering the chest and essentially, practicing modesty, as applicable to women only could be illustrative of the sexualization of the female body.

In addition, there is a dominant view among participants that rather than being perceived as a religious symbol that connotes the religiosity of its wearer, the hijab appears to be widely observed for socio-cultural purposes. For instance, as many participants share, male enforcement of the hijab onto women does not indicate their personal religious devotion. Instead, the hijab becomes a form of social control over women's bodies that men utilize to signify their power through the "occultation of the feminine, at least symbolically, by trying to veil it, to hide it, to mask it" (Mernissi, 1991; 81):

> "I see it [the hijab] from a perspective of male power… like still the woman is under the man… still he must hide her, he must cover her, like the man whose sister or daughter is not wearing the hijab is not a man… although there is no relation, like it's supposed [to be] that the woman has her entity, has her personality… it [the hijab] doesn't have a relation with the man…" (Amani, 26)

Amani shares her view of the hijab as an artefact that Muslim men constructed to secure their dominance over women. It represents a form of male power being physically marked onto women's bodies. As Amani hints, through transforming women into invisible beings,

men can make their masculinities appear more visible. This follows from the notion that Arab-Muslim men who don't veil their female relatives are labelled as "not men" (Antoun, 1968). Therefore, one's level of masculinity appears to be socially determined based on the (in)visibility of his female relatives. To elaborate:

> "Before I assumed that for example, if a girl doesn't wear the hijab that her father, her husband, and her brother are responsible about her… no, in reality, no… after I studied a bit of religion I knew that the father is not judged, nor the brother… nobody is judged on the mistakes that I make… everyone will be judged alone… so they want me to wear the hijab so they won't be judged? … pathetic! I will be judged alone…" (Dana, 24)

> "In my opinion that it [the hijab] has [as] I told you social foundations… we got used to it… we saw it for a long period… women must cover their head and it [the hijab] became, it entered religion from us, like us people, it wasn't existent in religion, we instilled it in religion and made it one of the religious foundations and left the requirements in religion and cared about things that we instilled by ourselves…" (Amani, 26)

> "Ummm… I think it's [the hijab] a man-made ideology representing itself as a religion, to use it as an excuse to impose it on women… but I don't believe it's religion, I believe it's just something that, it's a mechanism basically that men use to control women… ummm… I see it as an oppressive form of clothing… it's, it's, in my opinion… for example, in my opinion, seeing a stripper or, or wearing mini skirts or something like that, is the same thing as wearing a hijab and covering up, they are two sides of the same coin…" (Ameera, 29)

Participants perceive the hijab as a social construction that is fabricated into religion to justify its sacred status. As an expression of female modesty, the hijab is being "manipulated by those who hold power in society, used to protect their privileged positions by surrounding them with an aura of sacredness or inevitability" (Driver, 1991; 162). According to Dana, Muslim girls are taught that if they don't wear the hijab then God will punish their male relatives for their shortcomings (i.e. not preserving the modesty of their female relatives) which makes them feel liable to wear the hijab. Amani further emphasizes that it is a social performance that has been observed over time, and thus, become a normalized expression of femininity. Relatedly, Ameera highlights that while she perceives the hijab as an oppressive form of clothing, the idea of being revealed is equally oppressive. In both instances, women's bodies are treated as sexual objects to either deflect or invite the male gaze, respectively. In other words, "both styles are obsessed with girls' bodies and sexuality: Muslim styles aiming to protect girls' bodies from the public eye, consumer capitalist styles seeking to expose them to the public eye" (Duits and Van Zoonen, 2007; 163). As Zuhoor alludes:

> "There is agreement that it's [the hijab] something cultural you don't even work your brain in it… if you sit and talk to yourself you would say, 'It's not, it's religious'… so… we never had the chance to actually see it from the point [of view] it should be seen from, which is the religious point [of view]… [the] point [of view] that it's your own decision to make… [the] point [of view] that if you want to be that religious, you want to cover up head to toe it's up to you… you want, for example, to walk with the acceptable, it's up to you… you wanna take it [the hijab] off, it's up to you… ummm… we didn't see it from this perspective… I think men imposed it on us, socially, just to make sure that their women cover up their bodies you know, so other men won't be looking…" (Zuhoor, 25)

Zuhoor argues that while the hijab is deemed to be derived from Islam, it is widely adapted as a cultural norm. She believes that if the hijab was a religious artefact, then whether one decides to wear it or not is a personal matter, reflecting one's own religiosity and beliefs.

However, Zuhoor states that the hijab represents an enforced male mechanism to control women's sexuality.

4.1.2 Ex-Hijabi Women and Family Honour

As mentioned earlier, the act of imposing the hijab onto female relatives carries paramount importance for the construction of one's masculinity. Consequently, a woman who takes off the hijab poses a threat to the masculine identities of her male relatives. This suggests that although the hijab is an artefact intended for women, it is associated with the construction of both feminine and masculine identities. Paradoxically, data shows that in Kuwait, a woman who never wore the hijab is deemed more respectful than the one who wears it and later takes it off:

> "If you wear the hijab you have to wear it for the rest of your life, like if you're not wearing hijab no one's gonna really say, you know, 'She's bad she's not wearing hijab'… but if you wear the hijab then you take it off suddenly you're a slut!" (Ameera, 29)

In line with Schippers (2007), Ameera's account reveals that masculinity in Kuwait is exclusively reserved for men because women who are authoritative embody a stigmatized form of femininity rather than masculinity. That is, "when a woman is authoritative, she is not masculine; she is a bitch – both feminine and undesirable. The slut is decidedly feminine" (Schippers, 2007; 95). The term "slut" is often used in Kuwait to demean a misbehaving woman and does not necessarily reflect her involvement in sexual affairs per se. However, being labelled as such threatens one's family honour:

> "A woman's actions are a representation of the honour of her family… so if she does something wrong it's like the entire honour of the family is ruined, people will

be like 'Ya this family is shit!' or whatever… she's part of a group, you have to think of the consequence of your actions on the entire group, which is total bullshit, in my opinion, but that's the way it is here…" (Ameera, 29)

"Like nobody will agree that you throw the hijab… it's something difficult… reputation… the most important thing in Kuwait is family reputation…" (Moneera, 23)

Ameera states that since the entire family is judged based on a woman's individualistic behavior, women are held accountable for the collective effects of their actions. In other words, "even if one is willing to resist the social pressure to conform, one must also think about how one's behavior reflects on one's family" (Nancy and AARON, 1998; 434). While Goffman (1967) indicates that losing face is a personal concern in Western societies, the participants' accounts show that loss of face is a collective issue in Eastern societies. Moneera argues that Kuwaiti women who take off the hijab expose their families to a collective loss of honour. This could perhaps be illustrative of the dominant social view that a hijabi is a "good woman" who creates a "good reputation" for her family. Therefore, a woman who takes off the hijab leads to her family's loss of symbolic capital:

"In Kuwait they consider that if a girl takes off her hijab that 'Oh!' like she became a bad girl and I don't know what… like even when they ask about you for marriage or something like that, first thing they bring up about her throwing the hijab… okay it's not a big deal by the way…" (Futha, 26)

"I have a daughter, later hopefully if God wills, she will get married, they will ask who's her mother, they won't ask who's her father… who's her mother… you know… [if] they're going to say, 'Her mother has taken off the hijab' [and] they

> won't take her [for marriage], let them not take her, it's up to them…" (Shurooq, 49)

Following Futha and Shurooq's accounts, a woman who takes off the hijab is socially perceived as undesirable for marriage as she threatens her husband's right to control her. They indicate that women who take off the hijab are deemed powerful and disruptive to male dominance within their families, hence if a woman's father (or equivalent male guardian) couldn't control her, then it is unlikely that her husband will be able to. For instance, in traditional marriages in Kuwait, people often ask one another about a women's reputation prior to proposing to her for marriage to their (sometimes immoral) son, including whether she wears the hijab or not. However, a woman who has taken off the hijab is not reintegrated into her former identity as a "non-hijabi", but rather identified as "she who removed the hijab" (Khulood, 20) to emphasize her rebellion. Shurooq further reveals that women who take off their hijab also decrease the marriage potentials of their daughters. This is based on the belief that a woman's bad reputation is a familial issue, whereas a man's reputation is an individual matter (El Saadawi, 1980). Kuwaiti women are expected to protect their family "honour, public face, and [maintain] social approval [since a family's] moral worth is largely judged [based on the behavior of its women]" (Sobh and Belk, 2011; 322-323).

4.2 Performing Gender on the Extended Self

This theme focuses on how Kuwaiti women's bodies are being manipulated by their male relatives to construct their own masculine identities. Data demonstrates that regardless of their roles within their families, marital status, or age, many participants felt like being treated as possessions of men who are entitled full control over their bodies and public representation. As such, participants felt themselves as being the 'extended self' (Belk, 1988) of their male relatives, and thus, represent their kinsmen, whereas men represent themselves only.

Following Belk, "the incorporation of others into extended self can involve a demeaning objectification of these other persons" (1988; 156). Data shows that the incorporation of women into the extended self of their male relatives is manifested in four ways, including: 1) being forced to wear the hijab regardless of one's personal choice, 2) being prevented from taking off the hijab, even if it was initially observed as a personal choice, 3) being encouraged, either implicitly or explicitly, to take off the hijab, and 4) being prevented from wearing the hijab. In the first and second instances, participants expressed that their male relatives utilized their bodies to either express conformity with social expectations of masculinity or avoid experiencing a threatened masculinity, respectively. In the third and fourth instances, however, participants expressed that male relatives sometimes utilize women's bodies to express a modern form of masculinity.

Accordingly, I identified two objectification strategies which are discussed in the themes below, namely: 1) female modesty and relational masculine identities, and 2) female immodesty and relational masculine identities.

4.2.1 Female Modesty and Relational Masculine Identities

Data demonstrates that the primary reason that compels Kuwaiti men to impose the hijab on their female relatives stems from male to male pressure as it occurs within one's social group(s). To be recognized as an honourable man, one is expected to conform with the hegemonic norms of masculinity, identified as "the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that [allows] men's dominance over women to continue" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; 832). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) explain, hegemonic masculinity is both relational (i.e., it occurs in contrast to hegemonic femininity) and its characteristics are contingent upon the social context being examined (i.e., what is considered as hegemonic masculinity in one context might not be the same in another). With regards to hegemonic masculinity in Arab societies, two male participants share:

> "In the male community, sometimes men force their female relatives to wear the hijab just to prove their masculinity in front of other men who know them. I personally don't believe in this, but it is common in Arab societies like Kuwait. It's like a man is fitting with society if his female relatives are wearing hijab." (Omar, 44)

> "Arab men have this idea that their masculinity depends on controlling their female relatives and making sure they are covered in public. This creates an impression that a girl must be forced into wearing the hijab because one doesn't want to be questioned about his masculinity. In Arab societies the female body is related to man's honour." (Imbarak, 23)

Similarly to other Arab societies, Omar and Imbarak reveal that in Kuwait, hegemonic masculinity relates to man's ability to control his female relatives in terms of their public representation. According to the participants, this particularly involves concealing the

female body through modest attire such as the hijab. Hegemonic masculinity and femininity appear to be interrelated; one's identification with hegemonic masculinity is contingent upon the compliance of his female relatives with hegemonic feminine norms. Therefore, one's social recognition as an honourable man entails the enforcement of physical modesty upon his female relatives. This utilization of the female body as a tool for expressing one's masculinity suggests that women's bodies do not belong to them but represent the extended self of another male relative. It also suggests that the sexual segregation of the female body (through the hijab) is intended to protect men (since it is associated with family honour) as opposed to women (e.g., from being harassed) (Mernissi, 1985):

> "The whole society is pressuring [women to wear the hijab]… like not the family itself or the father or the brother as an individual… the whole society is exerting pressure on this brother and this brother is exerting pressure on his sister, for example… so it's not an individual matter… its more than just a brother imposing [the hijab] on his sister or father imposing [the hijab] on his daughter… there is a larger society that is pressuring that father…" (Khalid, 42)

In line with Butler (2011), Khalid (Asma's husband) asserts that individuals' behavior is informed by pre-existing social norms that transcend the individual self. That is, when males impose the hijab on their relatives, it does not necessarily reflect their personal preferences but is merely a performance of their expected social roles. Pressure to conform with gender norms is experienced by all family members; males in exercising power and females in accepting it (Haboush and Alyan, 2013). Accordingly, the underlying motive for imposing the hijab should not be restricted to brother-sister or father-daughter relations since power relations outside the (nuclear) family are reinforcing power within the (nuclear) family. Following Foucault's contention, "if power is relational, then the agents of power, to the extent they exist, are as much caught within the system as everyone else" (Cooper, 1994; 445). As Khalid reveals, for instance, the father is both pressured (by society) and pressuring (his female relatives). Hence, micro level interactions are

constituted as part of a macro society that seeks to reproduce masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2001):

> "In our society, they deal with a woman as if they are dealing with a child… so when they see a naughty child or a child with bad attitude, they would say his parents must be the same because they raised him in that way… so similarly, the woman is the same case, the woman who is behaving badly implies that her father is bad, her family is bad, her husband is bad, so it's something related, they don't treat her as a separate being but always belonging to someone…" (Khalid, 42)

Khalid further states that raising a girl in Kuwait is an ongoing process that requires continuous disciplining to preserve the family's social image, specifically the masculinities of male relatives. Unlike boys, girls do not acquire an independent social status since they are transformed from being "the daughter of" and/or "sister of" to "the wife of", always socially identified in relation to a male relative (Lari, 2011). Relatedly, "unlike a boy who can grow up to be *rabb al-'usra* [i.e. lord of the family] in his own home, a girl has little to look forward to in terms of future authority over herself, much less over others" (Tétreault, 2001; 207). While unmarried, a girl's father, elder brother, uncle, or any equivalent male guardian are entitled absolute authority over her; after marriage, this authority is transferred onto her husband and his family (Minces, 1980; Lari, 2011). For instance:

> "So even my sisters used to get annoyed when they go to my uncle's [house], like [my uncle used to tell my father,] 'Why are your daughters not wearing the hijab?' why this and why that… [he tells my father,] 'Let them wear the hijab, it's frowned upon', and like that…" (Noura, 34)

> "My uncle always pressured my dad… I remember he would tell us, 'Why don't you just put a rag on your head?', meaning hijab… he wanted us to be covered, me

and my sisters… when I wore the hijab he was happy, he turned his attention away from me and to my sisters…" (Ameera, 29)

Both Noura and Ameera reveal the role of other males (siblings in this case) in exerting pressure on a man's decision to veil his daughters. Noura states that her uncle questioned her father about having non-hijabi daughters, which implies that the hijab is the default choice for women. Her uncle did not direct his question to the daughters themselves since they 'belong to' their father who assumes full responsibility for allowing them to remain unveiled. The daughters' autonomy over their own bodies appears to be irrelevant. Even if they didn't want to wear the hijab, their father is expected to enforce it onto them. This stems from the idea that anything a woman does must be approved by a male guardian (father, brother, husband etc.) and not wearing the hijab reflects such approval. Furthermore, as per Ameera, daughters are usually questioned only if their father fails to act as expected. Accordingly, other participants indicate that Kuwaiti men are pressured to conform with the masculinity norms adapted by other men within their social group(s):

> Q: "Why do you think your father forced you to wear the hijab?" A: "That for example he sees his friends, their daughters are all wearing the hijab and like that, so he wishes that his daughter are wearing the hijab…" (Heba, 19)

> "My dad was very happy [when I wore the hijab] because my dad likes to fit in with the culture, even though he doesn't really believe it's like a thing to do… the hijab… but he wants to fit in with his family and society… so he was *very* happy…" (Ameera, 29)

Ameera's mother, Haneen, elaborates:

> "We are from a family, the father's side are strictly complying with the hijab… the girls wear the hijab at nine years old... he [my husband] comes from a family

> [where] all the women are hijabis, his mother, sisters, nieces, they don't have an unveiled woman…" (Haneen, 49)

Heba explains that her father might have forced her (and her other three sisters) to wear the hijab to attain a sense of belonging with his friends whose daughters are already wearing the hijab. If, among his friends, it is expected of fathers to veil their daughters, then Heba's father would have deviated from the masculinity norm in case of non-conformity. This shows that in Arab-Islamic societies, while women are required to use material objects (i.e. hijab) to gain a sense of belonging within a specific subculture (i.e. hijabi women), men on the other hand, appear to treat women's bodies as objects (Belk, 1988) to facilitate their integration within their social group(s).

As Ameera further indicates, it is common that Kuwaiti men follow social expectations regardless of their personal ideologies. Whether a man 'fits in' or is 'singled out' of his social group(s) largely depends on the representation of his female relatives rather than his own self. Following El Saadawi, an Arab-Muslim man's honour "is more closely related to the behaviour of women in the family than to his own behaviour" (1980; 31).

Ameera's mother, Haneen, confirms that girls from her husband's family are all unexceptionally veiled at nine years old. She stresses that "they don't have an unveiled woman", indicating that the hijab is worn at a young age, even before one becomes a (sexualized) "woman". Although Ameera (voluntarily) wore the hijab at 16 years old, which meant that she surpassed the expected age in her father's family, it still impressed her father to finally gain a sense of belonging.

Relatedly, data shows that sometimes men are highly invested in cultivating their conformity with masculinity norms through their female relatives to the extent that they rely on rewards power to influence women to wear the hijab. In effect, the gift-giving ritual

is performed by men to motivate participation in the modesty ritual on behalf of women. This involves reciprocating material objects in return for possessing control over one's body. Usually, a gift is offered to a woman after wearing the hijab to celebrate her conformity with feminine expectations. However, in some instances, the gift functions to influence one's choice. For example:

> "There is one [woman] in our family her uncle told her, 'If you wear the hijab I'll buy you a Mercedes'… really I swear… she wore the hijab then he bought her the Mercedes… but she's still wearing the hijab…" (Dunia, 22)

> "I was a kid and my father lied to me and made me wear the hijab… just because he was gonna give me something… ummm… during that time my father suddenly became religious, that you don't listen to music and those type of stuff, but I used to love music so much… music is a big deal to me, you know… so he told me, 'Wear the hijab and I'll get you a CD player', so I was like CD player during that time was like something so straight away I was like, 'Yes, ok!', I didn't even think about it… and then when I actually got the CD player my dad was like, 'You won't listen to music on it all you're gonna listen to is Qur'an CD's', so here I hated myself (laughing)… and after that he was like, 'No finish I will return it because it's nothing', you know…" (Nawal, 24)

As Dunia and Nawal demonstrate, the value of the received gift ranges from an affordable CD player to one of the most expensive car brands. This depends on the woman's age and perceived interests at any given point in time. Nawal shares her awareness of being deceived into wearing the hijab by her father. Nawal's father bribed her into wearing the hijab in return for a desired product. Hence, she wore the hijab not because she genuinely wanted to wear it but because she wanted a CD player. Thereafter, once Nawal's father secured her compliance, he restricted her use of the CD player (i.e., by only allowing her

to listen to the audio version of the Qur'an), and later returned it as it wasn't used as instructed. As Nawal's sister, Moneera, elaborates:

> "I wasn't convinced about it, like I wore the hijab when I was young and he [my father] didn't convince us that the hijab is a must and like that… no… [he said,] 'Wear the hijab and I'll get you this toy'… like I didn't even hit puberty during that time… you know… I was really young… maybe younger than thirteen… I don't remember I swear… but I remember we were in America and we used to study there and we were fourth grade like… just finished fourth grade going to fifth grade… so my dad told us, 'Wear the hijab and I'll get you whatever you want', so I wore the hijab…" (Moneera, 23)

It is widely acknowledged that Muslim clerics often promote the idea that Muslim women "must" observe the hijab. At the same time, however, when one wears the hijab, she must understand its meaning, be convinced about it, and thus, personally believe in wearing it. In this sense, the hijab is constructed as a (personal) religious obligation that should neither involve force nor a reward in return for its adaptation. In Moneera's case, however, she was not informed about the hijab foundations or given the opportunity to educate herself about it. Instead, she and her sisters were forced into a non-consensual hijab that involved bribery:

> "I don't know what [was the] reason but he [my father] was convincing us [to wear the hijab], he didn't force me… he didn't force me at all but that he was trying to convince me the whole time… so one of my sisters was convinced straight away and like she's younger than me, I'm the eldest one… ok… and she was convinced straight away and the second one, the one younger than me in two years, he told her, 'Wear the hijab and I'll buy you this and that', so she wasn't convinced for the hijab much but that she wanted this stuff, you know… and then I was the last one, I was still holding on to that I don't want to wear the hijab (laughing)… I was still

> holding on to it till the last moment (laughing)… I used to feel sorry for him because he used to tell me stories everyday it's better and I don't know what and that for your afterlife, like he was trying to convince me in religion and like that… soooo… so he told me, 'Sooner or later you will wear the hijab hopefully, so it's better now it's better for you', and like that… and then I wore the hijab and I wasn't convinced… I wasn't happy at all because I wasn't doing it for… for… just for my father he wants me to wear it, you know…" (Futha, 26)

Moneera elaborates:

> "My older sister was still not convinced about the hijab… she doesn't want to wear the hijab… my dad used to whine every day on her… whine every day on her and like scare her… you know… [he tells her,] 'that she who doesn't wear the hijab they hang her from her hair in the dooms day', something like that… he used to scare her… so what do you call it… he used to scare her… every day she used to cry and like that, until finish she wore the hijab…" (Moneera, 23)

Although Futha expresses that her father did not force her to wear the hijab, it seems that her father was relying on exerting pressure on her as a form of implicit force. First, he was provoking a sense of fear within Futha through his constant references to religious teachings (as her sister Moneera confirms). Second, he implies that Futha is obliged to wear the hijab anyway, and thus, highlights the benefits of doing so sooner rather than later. In saying so, Futha's father is not giving her the choice to refuse wearing the hijab. Futha states that she tried to resist the hijab for as long as she could but her father managed to indirectly enforce it; she had to wear the hijab to avoid listening to terrifying stories about the afterlife.

As for their youngest sister, Heba:

> "First thing my sisters almost all wore the hijab in the same time, when they were young… I was the last one… I saw that they are all wearing the hijab I didn't have the choice to like say no, when I wanted to enter sixth grade my father told me, 'That's it! you are old and you have to wear the hijab!', he didn't give me a choice, he didn't tell me do you want this thing and like that…" (Heba, 19)

Unlike her older sisters who are closer in age, by the time Heba approached puberty (around the age eleven to twelve years), her father forced her to wear the hijab without any incentives involved. During Heba's time, modesty was already a family ritual that should merely be reinforced. By informing Heba that she is "old", her father implies that she has become a "mature" woman whose body has now acquired a sexualized status, and thus, must be concealed in front of (kin and non-kin) marriageable men. This shows that the sexualization of women is instilled into their minds and inscribed onto their bodies from an early stage of their lives.

From an alternative perspective, data also shows that apart from being forced to wear the hijab by their male relatives, some participants were not allowed to take off the hijab, even if they initially chose to wear it. Such male opposition can be attributed to men's fear of experiencing a threatened masculinity:

> "I personally don't look at the hijab or care about it or judge a woman based on whether she is wearing the hijab or not… but society forces me to prevent my daughters from taking off the hijab… it's something related to a man's honour…" (Talal, 47)

> “I don’t like societies view… sometimes we’re afraid of societies view, ‘Why did she throw?’ or else to me as a person, it’s her thoughts it’s up to her… there’s no problem… but societies view tells you, ‘Oh why did she throw?’ they have nothing to talk about… we became self-conscious, we see what society wants and do it…” (Kareem, 59)

Talal (Amani and Khulood’s father) and Kareem (Ameera’s father) refer to the clash between their personal ideologies and dominant gender discourses. Despite not believing in patriarchal Islamic interpretations concerning the female body, both participants feel compelled to conform with religiously informed gender discourses to be recognized as viable social subjects. As their narratives suggest, men’s masculinity is socially associated with the behavior of their female relatives. Women’s deviation from femininity norms simultaneously indicate deviation on behalf of their male relatives. This gender order leads to men involuntarily exercising power over their female relatives to maintain their social status because:

> “‘Your daughter threw the hijab’, in our society, means ‘Your daughter is a dirty girl’, ‘You don’t have control over her’, ‘You as a father, as the lord of the family, you are not respected and you don’t have a say’, because we have the idea that if you’re not wearing the hijab, you are okay… but if you wear the hijab and then take it off, here is the problem…” (Haneen, 49)

> “[When I told her that I want to take off the hijab,] my mother told me, ‘Do you want your family to say that your father and brothers and husband are not men or what?!’…” (Manal, 31)

Haneen (Ameera’s mother) expresses that taking off the hijab in Kuwait is equated with losing one’s virginity. An unmarried woman who loses her virginity and a woman who takes off her hijab are both labelled as “dirty” women for committing “revolutionary acts”

(ElTahawy, 2015) against gender norms. This suggets the hijab and virginity are both used to control Muslim women's sexuality; the outward public appearance (wearing hijab) serves as a symbolic representation of one's inward chastity (being a virgin). According to Haneen, in allowing his daughter to remove the hijab, a father's social status would be jeopardized based on his lack of control. The common phrase "your daughter threw the hijab" is an implicit way of expressing contempt towards the father and his daughter; the daughter in committing the so-called "crime" (of taking off the hijab) and father in not interfering to prevent it.

Haneen and Manal's accounts reveal that, to date, Minces (1980) assertion holds true, in that women are expected to avoid portraying their male relatives as weak (i.e. unable to control female relatives) since it exposes them to oppression by others based on being identified as "not real men". At the same time, however, women's maintenance of the status of their male relatives occurs at the cost of their own oppression (i.e. obedience) (Minces, 1980). This is because gender is inherently relational; 'masculinity' (i.e. superiority) cannot exist except in contrast to 'femininity' (i.e. inferiority) (Connell, 2005). This explains why some participants were threatened to be disowned by their fathers if they take off the hijab:

> "More than once when we're in like family gatherings I used to open the topic with him [my father], [I ask him,] '*what if* I threw my hijab?' … of course, the response is always in screaming, no discussions, [he says,] '*I don't make it halal [trans., permissible] for you! You are not my daughter!*' and you, and you! and the door is always closed in my face… so… (sigh)…" (Khadija, 27)

> "So four years when I used to talk to them [my parents], my mother tells me talk to your father… my father when I talk to him [he says,] 'No, if you throw it [the hijab] you will leave the house'… bla, bla, bla (laughing)… [he said] that, 'It's frowned upon and sinful and what will people say about me?'… like the most important point is what people will say, 'What will people say?' is the only thing I heard from

> my father during the time I wanted to throw my hijab… like 'You will blacken our face! She threw her hijab! What will people say!' and 'It's sinful! You will not get married!'… society's view…" (Noura, 34)

Both Khadija and Noura refer to their repetitive attempts to convince their fathers about allowing them to take off the hijab. It is not uncommon that a barrier of communication exists within father-daughter relationships in Arab-Islamic societies as it is intended to maintain the father's hierarchal position and respect within the family. This suggests that there are certain non-negotiable topics that should not be discussed with one's father. As Khadija mentions, she relied on "what if" questions to indirectly access her father's perception about her desire to take off the hijab. Statements such as "you are not my daughter" and "you will leave the house" are used by Khadija's and Noura's father, respectively, to warn their daughters that they will be disowned if they take off the hijab. Sometimes, a man would rather disown his daughter rather than suffer from a loss of face in society. The metaphor "blacken our face" is widely used in Kuwait when disciplining women into proper (feminine) behavior, i.e. parents often warn, "don't blacken our face". It suggests that family "face" is "clean" of any sins and that a woman's antinormative behavior has the power to contaminate it. This confirms Antoun's (1968) claim that beliefs about the modesty of females are closely related to beliefs about the honour of the male; although the Qur'anic verses emphasize modesty for both sexes, honour is referenced in relation to women, thus implying that men are already honourable, and it is women's duty to preserve that honour:

> Q: "What about your brothers? They said remove it straight away?" A: "No… no! no, no, no! I have… they are two… one was like against, against, against [me taking off the hijab], like [he told me,] 'You will regret!' … and one was against [me taking off the hijab] for my own good, like he was disappointed… but [the] other one not for my own good, he was concerned about himself (laughing)… really, I swear, Kuwaiti!" (Khulood, 20)

Khulood shares that both her brothers were objecting her removal of the hijab. While one of her brothers relied on threat (of the unknown) to downplay her power, the other one tried to convince her that it is for her own best interest to keep the hijab on. In reflecting on her brother's threatening attitude, Khulood describes typical Kuwaiti men as those who associate their own social image with that of their sisters. According to Khulood's brother, Faisal:

> "Our society perceives the girl who used to wear the hijab and then takes it off as disrespectful and as if she gave up her religion… and we are in a society that judges based on looks, so they judge the girl based on this thing… I personally don't accept that my sisters have taken off the hijab because I don't want anybody to talk about them in a bad way…" (Faisal, 18)

Similarly, Faris (Ameera's brother) adds:

> "What really bothers me is, and that's when I can sometimes understand when men interfere like in their females relatives as far as taking off the hijab is because the… the people that will come and bother you, and the people that will come and talk about your sister, and the people that will come and bother her directly, and the people who will talk behind her back…" (Faris, 25)

Faisal states that in Arab-Islamic societies, people perceive the woman who takes off the hijab as not merely discarding an artefact, but more importantly, is rejecting a religious requirement, and thus, abandoning her religion (McAlexander et al., 2014). In other words, a woman who takes off the hijab is altering its sacred meaning by communicating to others that the hijab can be worn and discarded at one's own convenience. However, while both Faisal and Faris express their concern about negative social judgements towards their sisters, it is common that Arab-Muslim men rely on such excuses to indirectly address their own fears. The idea of fabricating a brother's control over his sister as a sign of love and

protection is an alternative to the traditional father-rest of the family form of patriarchal power (Joseph, 1994). It is in this sense that many Arab-Muslim women experience a paradox between support and suppression within their families (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011). In Kuwait, a man's masculinity is questioned when his sister(s) engage(s) in outrageous behavior. As per Farah:

> "I want to clarify something for you, when my brother didn't want me to throw the hijab [it's because] my brother works in a place with the police and all that… so I don't know… and I used to work in a [new] place where his friends were there as well… so I think if I was working in my original [work]place, my brother wouldn't have objected or questioned me… I think my brother got bothered because I'm working in a place where his friends are there… and I told you how this society functions, and they would talk that this man's sister threw her hijab…" (Farah, 30)

Farah asserts that her brother objected her decision to take off the hijab due to three main reasons. First, he works with the police force which means that his public recognition is greater than that of a regular employee. Since nepotism is widely practiced in Kuwait, and given the nature of his job, Farah's brother is expected to have various social connections, and is therefore known by many people. Second, his duty as a police man involves the regulation of people's behavior. This suggests that his public authority would be contradicted if he isn't able to control his own female relatives. Third, Farah shares the same workplace as her brother's friends which demands her respectful image to avoid his embarrassment. Farah's brother was particularly concerned about the co-existence of his sister and friends in the same workplace, because unlike others, his friends are aware that she is his sister.

4.2.2 Female Immodesty and Relational Masculine Identities

In the previous sub-theme, emphasis was placed on how modesty is imposed onto participants by their male relatives to identify themselves with the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Although hegemonic masculinity is recognized as normative, there are deviations from the norm (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Masculinity is 'multiple' rather than a unidimensional construct (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) as it is constantly re(produced) in social practice (Connell, 2005). Accordingly, it is worth noting that just as the hijab can be forced (whether in being pressured to wear the hijab or not allowed to take it off) onto Kuwaiti women, so too can the prevention from wearing it (whether in not being allowed to wear the hijab or being pressured to take it off). Importantly, however, data shows that while the category of Kuwaiti men who enforce the hijab commonly include one's father, spouse, male sibling(s), and/or male offspring, it is mainly the spouse who prevents his wife from wearing it:

> "Because she caught the big fish… that's it… that's it, as a family their duty towards her is over… whether she removes or doesn't remove, for us, in religion, her guardian is now her husband… he will carry the shame… before she was the father's responsibility…" (Haneen, 49)

> "In our society they would say, 'She's married', and be quiet… nobody can talk because she's a married woman… it's easier than throwing it [the hijab] while you're not married because this is our society, they believe that the woman is part of the man…" (Dalal, 37)

As such, this theme focuses on specific cases where Kuwaiti women are being forced *to not wear or take off the hijab* by their husband. These experiences differ from what my main study explores (i.e. women voluntarily taking off the hijab instead of being forced to do so) and suggest that if a woman's husband tells her to not wear (or take off) the hijab,

she does not encounter the same stigma as when she decides to take it off herself. However, this still implies that a woman is “part” of a man since she is only exempted from social criticism if her husband forced her to not wear (or take off) the hijab. For instance, Ameera shares her observation of why some women don’t wear the hijab:

> “There are even women who don’t wear it [the hijab] because their husband doesn’t want them to wear it (laughing)… doesn’t allow them to wear it… like there are men who want their wife to look good and to look like *trophy wife* kind of thing… like I want people to look at her and see that she’s mine… and she’s beautiful and gorgeous and all that… so there are men that actually don’t want their wife to wear it... so that could be also another reason that a woman is not wearing it, because her husband doesn’t want her to… so… different stories… everybody has a different story…” (Ameera, 29)

Ameera’s account suggests that not all Kuwaiti men seek to cover their wives and hide them from the (male) gaze. On the contrary, some men are eager to flaunt their wives, and therefore prevent them from wearing the hijab. In both cases, however, women are being manipulated to fulfill the desires of their husbands. Ameera states that some men express pride in showing others that an attractive woman ‘belongs’ to them, thereby using their wives as objects to facilitate their acquisition of symbolic capital – i.e. being married to an attractive woman being perceived as a status symbol. Apart from not allowing their wives to wear the hijab:

> “There are men who take her [their wife] with a hijab and make her throw it… [their mentality is,] ‘We took her from her father’s house, she wears the hijab, she’s respectful, honourable… but I don’t want her to wear the hijab… I want to go out, travel with her and want her to dress up, my wife… I want to stay up late with her’… you know… so now there are men who take them [women] and make them throw the hijab…” (Dalal, 37)

Dalal shares that some Kuwaiti men prefer to approach a hijabi woman for marriage and after officially getting married, they would force her to discard the hijab. According to Dalal, this male mindset is not uncommon, as many Kuwaiti men strive to ensure that their potential wife qualifies for marriage – i.e. that she is a modest and moral woman who is worthy of representing him. However, once a man has secured his possession of a premier quality wife, he would then appropriate her appearance to fulfill his specific requirements. In reflecting on her personal experience, Dalal adds:

> "I threw it [the hijab] when I was married… it was his [my husband's] decision, I didn't want to [take off the hijab]… he asked me to throw the hijab, [he said,] 'Our life and lifestyles doesn't suit you wearing the hijab, we travel and go to the beach and wear swimsuits'…" (Dalal, 37)

> "My mother took off her hijab, but I heard in the family that she took off the hijab after getting married because my father told her. My father is not the traditional type of Kuwaiti man, he's very open-minded and doesn't care that his wife should be wearing hijab." (Fahad, 18)

Dalal refers to her lack of autonomy over her body after getting married. Despite voluntarily wearing the hijab and expressing her reluctance of taking it off, Dalal's obedience towards her husband's request to take off the hijab reflects her inferiority in relation to him. As her son, Fahad, further indicates, his father does not identify with hegemonic masculinity traits, however a hijabi wife would imply otherwise. Similarly:

> "There was one [girl] with us in university, her father was over religious to the extent that she wears an abaya [i.e. a traditionally worn wide, black cloak that conceals a woman's body in its entirety] … so suddenly she came once to university

> and nobody knew her, nobody used to know that this was her but then they realized from the name and like that… she's wearing *very, very* short and tight and sleeveless and open from the front near her breasts and *over, over* naked the clothes she was wearing… they got shocked that how she took off the hijab and that's how she looks… everyone knows how her father is and like that… and then like it appeared that she got married and her husband is the one who let her throw the hijab, like her father forced her on the hijab and when she got married her husband let her throw it…" (Heba, 19)

Heba shares her observation of the huge discrepancies in the social identities of some Kuwaiti women before and after marriage. She states her familiarity with a girl who used to wear an abaya to accompany the hijab due to her father's extremist religious beliefs. After getting married, however, that same girl transformed into revealing every aspect of her body, appearing as if she's naked. This confirms Lari (2011) who mentions that a Muslim woman is treated like a "commodity" that is transferred from one household (father's) to another (husband's). Akin to a business exchange, the recipient (husband) often (but not always) pays a dowry, and therefore expects to receive a brand "new" rather than "damaged" commodity (wife). Thereafter, once a "new" wife has been obtained, possession rituals are performed over her body which is altered and invested with new meanings (McCracken, 1986) to reflect her husband's lifestyle. According to Ameera's mother, Haneen:

> "Why is he [a husband] telling her [his wife] to throw the hijab while she's outside? He already has her at home, she can wear whatever she wants, she takes off the hijab, she wears revealing, she wears lingerie, she wears everything… so why does he want to reveal her outside? For show off! Like when you see a man and his wife is all covered up, you feel that he is backward… so the man whose wife is dressed up and has make-up on, he's open minded… because the man is identified with the female who is with him… you would understand one's mindset from the type of females with him… [For instance,] [name of friend] husband made her wear hijab

> and abaya and all that, her husband travelled with her to [name of country], she sent us pictures, he's wearing a polo t-shirt and trousers and trainers so when you see him passing by alone, you would say, 'Oh this boy looks cool!', but when you see him with [name of friend] [who's] wearing an abaya, you would say, 'Ah no he's religious!'…" (Haneen, 49)

Haneen asserts that a man who requests of his wife to take off the hijab is using her body to expose a latent aspect of his self – i.e. his beliefs. As Haneen emphasizes, a hijabi woman is already unveiled at home (privately with her husband) and has no clothing restrictions. Therefore, the man who wants to reveal his wife in public is exercising power over her body by using it as a symbolic representation of his beliefs, or to show that he is a modern man. This is similar to the man who covers his wife to express his religiosity. A woman's body therefore becomes one of man's symbolic objects (in the same way as a wallet, shoes, bag etc. function) to help him construct his desired social identity. However, rather than being either fully revealed or covered, sometimes Kuwaiti men merely want their wives to remove the hijab (i.e. the head scarf itself) without necessarily wanting to reveal their bodies:

> "My husband, may his soul rest in peace, didn't like the hijab, he tells me, 'The one who wears the hijab is half insane and the one who wears the niqab [i.e. a full face cover] is fully insane'… he didn't like the hijab… when we travel, he buys me head bands, you know them, the fur I don't know what… he tells me wear the cap don't wear the hijab, I don't like the hijab… like he didn't even encourage me on the hijab, he didn't like it…" (Shurooq, 49)

Relatedly, Shurooq's daughter alludes:

> "My father used to always pressure my mother to take off the hijab… they used to argue a lot because she wants to keep it on, but he wants her to take it off… it's

> really strange… I don't know why… I think he doesn't like the idea of it… or maybe doesn't like how she looks in it (laughing)… I don't know…" (Hind, 23)

Shurooq's narrative reveals that verbal abuse can be a mechanism used by some Kuwaiti men to discourage their wives from wearing the hijab. This is achieved through associating the hijab with a social stigma, and thus, demeaning its wearer. As Shurooq states, her husband criticized women's different types of modest attire by describing them as a visible measure of a woman's insanity. Guided by such belief, Shurooq further asserts that he forced her to replace the hijab with other headcover substitutes that do not symbolize modesty. In elaboration, Hind shares that conflict occurred between her parents due to her mother's identification with hegemonic femininity against the will of her father. This reflects a case whereby compliance with as opposed to deviation from hegemonic femininity (as outlined in the previous theme 4.2.1) results in a threat to one's desired masculine identity.

4.3 Resisting Power through Consumption

This theme focuses on the role of consumption in enabling Kuwaiti women to resist familial power over their bodies. Specifically, through their consumption choices, participants were able to simultaneously satisfy familial expectations and express their personal desires. The dilemma between complying with familial expectations (to keep the hijab on) *or* fulfilling personal desires (to take off the hijab) has led to alternative self constructions.

In Kuwait, akin to many other Arab-Islamic countries, modesty is one of the central characteristics associated with women's public representation (Al-Mutawa, 2015). Modesty and sexuality are said to be incommensurable in Islam since it is *haram* (trans., religiously prohibited) for women "to wear clothes which fail to cover the body and which are transparent, revealing what is underneath. It is likewise *haram* to wear tightly fitting clothes which delineate the parts of the body, especially those parts which are sexually attractive" (Al-Qaradawi, 1984; 85) or use "adornments to attract men and arouse their sexual desires" (Al-Qaradawi, 1984; 84-85). In line with this, Al-Mutawa (2013) shows how Kuwaiti women recreate Western brand meanings through modest consumption that covers rather than reveals their sexual body parts. Relatedly, she posits that Kuwaiti women's experiences of Western sexual lifestyle are restricted to women-only gatherings (Al-Mutawa, 2013).

Conversely, in this research, data demonstrates that Kuwaiti women's resistance towards modesty is manifested in five different ways (unrestricted to women only spaces), including: 1) wearing the hijab with revealing clothing (e.g. form-fitting, transparent, short etc.) to construct a public self that expresses rejection of the hijab. This is because the hijab discourse involves more than just the artefact to cover a woman's head/hair, but it must also be accompanied with modest clothing as part of the script element of the modesty ritual, 2) wearing the hijab with modest clothing (i.e. complying with the hijab dress code)

but relying on feminine adornments (e.g. make-up, jewellery, nail polish etc.) to attract the male gaze, 3) substituting the traditional hijab (an opaque colored scarf intended to cover one' hair, ears, and neck) with alternative forms of head covers (e.g. caps, beanies, hair bands), 4) taking off the hijab but wearing modest clothing, and 5) alternating between taking off and wearing the hijab depending on the occupied social space.

Accordingly, I identified five resistance strategies which are discussed in the themes below, namely: 1) combining modesty and sexuality (combination strategy), 2) attracting the male gaze (attraction strategy), 3) substituting the hijab (substitution strategy), 4) eliminating the hijab (elimination strategy), and 5) contextualizing the hijab (contextualization strategy).

4.3.1 Combining Modesty and Sexuality (Combination Strategy)

Data demonstrates that Kuwaiti women who observe the hijab with revealing clothing (e.g. form-fitting, transparent, short etc.) can be described, as criticized by the Prophet (PBUH), as "clothed, yet naked" because they are covered but not concealed (Al-Qaradawi, 1984; 85). Instead, their clothing is intended to reveal their bodies (Al-Qaradawi, 1984). In line with Kelly, many Kuwaiti women's "hair may be covered as well as their skin, but the clothing itself is so form-fitting that little is left to the imagination" (2010; 224):

> "I can now see that those who are wearing the hijab are ruining the image of the hijab one-hundred percent... because she [a hijabi] is not restricting herself to the proper clothes that she must wear with the hijab, she's not respecting the hijab… she's feeling like it's a scarf that she throws [on or off] anytime…" (Dalal, 37)

> "Like you can't wear everything… you can't wear anything… you can't wear short, tight… like you have to commit to it… like you become constrained by it, ok, regardless of those who wear for example tight and leggings and a blouse above

> it… no, I think this is not a hijab… you know… but if we talk about hijab, hijab, no it's constraining, you can't wear anything, like there must be something long, something loose…" (Dalal, 37)

Data reveals that due to being forced to wear the hijab, many hijabi women in Kuwait are utilizing the artefact (i.e. hijab) not subverting with the modesty script (i.e. hijab accompanied with long and loose attire) expected of them. As Dalal indicates, such women are appropriating the hijab to fit their personal desires and convenience. Such appropriation can diminish the sacred status of the hijab and transforms it into a personal rather than religious attire. In personalizing the hijab, Kuwaiti women are challenging the dominant discourse surrounding the hijab (i.e. that it is a symbol of modesty) and re(constructing) their own meanings. Dalal asserts that hijabi women are "ruining the image of the hijab one-hundred percent", which indicates that their behavior is oriented towards a counter gender discourse. As other participants observed:

> "Lots of girls are wearing clothes that are not for one wearing the hijab… even when I see one wearing the hijab and wearing clothes that isn't for one wearing the hijab, I be like, 'Poor thing, maybe her family have forced her'… girls at our university, unfortunately, those who wear the hijab a lot of them [wear] leggings and everything is showing and the front [lady] part[s]… like chaos, chaos… everything is clear… like me, [even when] I'm not wearing the hijab [right now] I won't get this part of my body even if the world turned upside down… it's very wrong… so imagine wearing the hijab and she's walking with all confidence… so I was like, 'I don't know, maybe from insecurity… because her family forced her to wear the hijab'…" (Moneera, 23)

> "[My friend] from the way she dresses, her clothes doesn't suit a woman wearing a hijab *at all*… she wears over, over, over short that I don't wear now after officially throwing it… and she's wearing the hijab… she wears very *over* tight, very *over*

transparent, very *over* short… aaaa… her scarf goes till the back… and she sits in all confidence…" (Khadija, 27)

Moneera and Khadija stress that many hijabi women are observing tight, transparent and short forms of clothing that reflect their lack of commitment to the hijab, and who nonetheless express confidence with their deviant identities. As Moneera highlights, many hijabi women in Kuwait are wearing leggings that reveal the contours of their lower body, especially their private area. Moneera states that even after taking off the hijab, she would never expose that area of her body because "it's very wrong". This is consistent with Ameera (29) in relation to the socialization of Arab-Muslim girls, whereby "ever since they're little kids, like if a little girl would pull her skirt up or something or her skirt gets lifted, her parents will be like, 'That's shameful! Cover it!', so, they teach them from a very young age that the woman should be covered, that it's a shame to expose her body… that it's something shameful so she has to cover… so they teach, they instill the idea from childhood…". Hence, it is even more surprising to observe a hijabi woman (who is expected to promote modesty) exposing her private area.

Similarly, Kelly states that "the combinations most likely to raise Western eyebrows are usually worn by young women who wear a hijab with revealing clothes" (2010; 224). Duits and Van Zoonen's (2007) advise that top-down discourses surrounding women's clothing should be replaced with their own constructed meaning, thereby making them actors rather than objects in the debate. In this study, several participants shared their experiences in combining expressions of modesty and sexuality in their clothing choices to communicate their resistance towards the hijab. For instance:

"When I wore the hijab, it's my same clothes [as before wearing the hijab], long skirt, I wear baggy clothes, everything baggy, ok… so later I started rejecting it [the hijab]… ok… like I started telling my mother and like that and they all [my family] said, 'No [you will not take the hijab off]', all of them like that, concerned about

what people will say… I wore it three years, only the first year I was a little convinced in it, [but throughout] all the three years I was rejecting it! rejecting it! rejecting it! and I whine, 'I don't want it!' ok… then last year, finish! enough! I can't! I started wearing *extremely* tight, I wear disgusting clothes because I am rejecting this thing, I am rejecting the hijab so I'm doing everything against it but I'm not removing it… like [when] I was wearing the hijab, I used to wear like extremely short leggings, disgusting! (laughing)… really… I wear something short on top of it [the legging], I wear a belt on the waist… like I want to attract attention, you know… I want like this, like… I don't know what was on my mind exactly, but I wanted to show people that I'm against it [the hijab], I'm wearing it just like that…" (Khulood, 20)

"In the beginning phase my hijab was so decent… my clothes were so good, so decent, so baggy… and Zara's cotton shirts and those baggy ones you know and linen and all that… I looked so decent… and after that in four years the hijab started to shrink (laughing)… at the end it became a scarf (laughing)… I swear a scarf I'm not joking, that all my neck was showing and off-shoulder… I don't know why the bra strap was showing… I reached this stage… that was the stage before removing the hijab… in the last four years my hijab was ridiculous, totally not hijab… in the beginning it was very decent, very decent… like a hair would not show on my forehead, nor my back, nothing… nothing… and normal sleeves… long sleeves… I wear normal clothes and I wear everything but nothing from my body was shown… the places that aren't supposed to be shown, you know…" (Noura, 34)

"I wore the hijab, I wore the ideal clothes for those who wear the hijab… slowly, slowly it stopped being ideal… like I used to wear loose trousers, charleston [style trousers]… ummm... It mustn't be a body, it must be a shirt… and if I wanted to wear a trouser that's a bit tight, it must, the shirt must be near the knee… the shirt must be long till the knee… slowly it became not the ideal clothes for hijab

> (laughing)… I started wearing leggings and a blouse a bit like half of the thighs covering but not till the knees…" (Farah, 30)

Participants referred to their combination of modest and sexually provocative clothing. Khulood expresses that such choice of clothing results from a paradoxical situation of wanting to take off the hijab but being prevented by one's family. Therefore, participants decided to violate the hijab's dress code; that is, while they wore the head scarf itself, it was accompanied with revealing (as opposed to conservative) clothing. Khulood repeatedly mentions wearing "disgusting" revealing clothes, which nonetheless were effective in communicating her resistance towards the hijab. Although Khulood, Noura, and Farah engaged in conscious efforts to resist the hijab, sometimes resistance is an unconscious behavior:

> "I'm wearing an abaya [i.e., a traditionally worn wide, black cloak that conceals a woman's body in its entirety] with a layer of lining beneath, or a bra and pantie beneath it and put it brackets, panties and bra, without clothes… I swear I tell you twice at university [girls] they used to tell me, 'By the way [participant's name] it [your undergarments] shows' … I tell them 'I don't give a fuck! I don't care!'… you know… sometimes I used to be nice and wear a layer of lining but sometimes this unconscious behavior that I used to do… after, I realized that I was rejecting [the hijab]… I used to lie to myself… by the way, I didn't do it deliberately… no, no, unconsciously by the way…" (Maysa, 35)

Maysa wore an abaya with visible lingerie underneath it. Such appearance is deemed inappropriate in Arab-Islamic societies whereby women are strictly refrained from wearing transparent clothing that reveals their undergarments. As Maysa's account reveals, if a woman's undergarments are exposed, it is often assumed to be accidental, and therefore, others (most likely women) feel obliged to raise one's awareness. In Maysa's case, however, she embraced her unconscious gender subversion. This was reflected in both her

appearance and attitude (i.e. use of obscene language) which both defy femininity norms in Arab-Islamic societies.

4.3.2 Attracting the Male Gaze (Attraction Strategy)

In the above sub-theme, the findings reveal that deviations from the modesty ritual pertain to defying the clothing aspect of the script while still embracing the hijab artefact. However, in addition to the clothing aspect of the modesty script, hijabi women are also expected to refrain from beautification consumption items, such as wearing make-up, high heels, attractive accessories etc. This suggests that some participants are utilizing the artefact (i.e. hijab) but subverting one aspect of the modesty script (i.e. relying on feminine consumption to deliberately enhance their visibility and attract male attention). Specifically, some participants mentioned that the hijab made them feel "invisible" to the (occasionally) desired male gaze, which in effect, is the core purpose of the hijab.

According to Erchull and Liss, "the phenomenon of women enjoying sexualized male attention has recently been operationalized and found to be related to primarily traditional and sexist beliefs, but some argue that enjoying sexiness can be a feminist act" (2013; 2341). This is especially applicable to Arab-Islamic societies, where 'technologies of sexiness' (Evans et al., 2010) reflect a subversive form of feminine identity:

> "The one who wears the hijab and puts a lot of make-up, why is she wearing the hijab? like the hijab has specific [modesty] principles according to the religious understanding but what we are seeing [is] heavy make-up, [which is the] opposite, like why are you putting make-up? Some make-up makes the hijab *more sexier* than the one who is not wearing the hijab…" (Asma, 39)

> “Some women wear hijab with adornments which is wrong… I asked my husband and I heard from men, they say that an adorned woman with hijab attracts male attention... for example things like make-up, nail polish, rings, heels like that… they say that a man gets attracted to those things because everything else is covered… they would imagine her in sexual ways…” (Hessa, 49)

Hijabi women are expected to demonstrate a modest appearance by minimizing their overall attractiveness (Jafari and Maclaran, 2014). However, as Asma mentions, not all hijabi women in Kuwait are complying with the hijab’s modesty principles. In her opinion, while non-hijabi women are deemed ‘sexy’, hijabi women who wear make-up appear ‘sexier’ than their non-hijabi counterparts. This resonates with Hessa who shares that several men indicate that adorned hijabi women are simultaneously revealing and concealing certain aspects of their bodies, thereby provoking male sexual imagineries. Such women are downplaying some aspects of their feminine beauty (i.e., hair and body) while accentuating others (i.e., facial features, bodily posture etc.). Following Dunia:

> “Let me tell you something, the girls who wear the hijab put more makeup than the girl who doesn’t wear the hijab because you know the girl who doesn’t wear the hijab [has her] hair and like that [so] even if she puts light makeup she looks nice… [but] the one who wears the hijab no she must put a lot [of make-up] on her face so that it shows (laughing)… you see every girl who wears the hijab knows how to put makeup, I realized this thing…” (Dunia, 22)

Dunia observes that hijabi women are obsessed with applying make-up. She emphasizes that hair styles and make-up are women’s most readily available ways of being visible. Thus, hijabi women’s reliance on make-up helps them compensate for their covered hair. Dunia states that hijabi women can “show” their faces by applying excessive make-up. This implies that the hijab not only conceals one’s hair and body, but also makes one feel completely invisible:

> "Although I was happy that men were not staring at me when I wore the hijab, and I did feel free, after almost seven years of wearing it… not after seven years, after four years of wearing it, I started questioning, because I started to feel really restricted, like… sometimes you *do wanna be gazed at… you do wanna go out and dress up and look good…* you don't wanna be invisible all the time… after four years of being invisible, I was sick of it! I'm ready to be visible now…" (Ameera, 29)

Ameera asserts that she felt invisible after wearing the hijab; men stopped gazing at her which was emancipating from being perceived as a sexual object for the male gaze. The hijab created a sense of freedom from being reduced to a mere body. Over time, however, Ameera felt more restricted than free. Freedom entails having the choice to be either invisible (such as by wearing modest clothing) or visible (such as by wearing attractive/revealing clothing), yet Ameera expresses being constrained with permanent invisibility while wearing the hijab. As she indicates, "sometimes you do wanna be gazed at" and "you don't want to be invisible all the time":

> "Okay I'm gonna be honest with you, before, when I was with the hijab, guys, maybe when I pass they don't recognize me much… they look at me but there's a difference when you're with the hijab than without the hijab… so, see it's not a good thing that guys stare at you and like that but it gives you confidence, it gives you confidence… like when they don't see you, you feel like, 'Oh why aren't they looking at me? Am I ugly or what? Or what's going on?', you know… I'm not a shallow person that all I care about is looks but everyone wants to look good, everyone wants to get confident every now and then…" (Futha, 26)

> “See every girl has naughtiness (laughing)… when I was with the hijab I feel like nobody looks into my face… I don’t have anyone… I feel like I’m ugly… I don’t know what’s the situation…” (Laila, 27)

Participants state that the hijab diverts the male gaze, and in doing so, makes them feel ugly. According to Futha, men would still “look” (i.e., see) but not “stare” (i.e., gaze) which indicates her lack of attraction. The participants’ accounts reveal that sometimes Kuwaiti women seek validation from men to enhance their self-esteem. Nowatzki and Morry (2009) argue that some women believe that embracing self-sexualization can make them feel empowered. Hence, “instead of casting the veil as something that blocks the gaze or removes women from the scopic field”, Kuwaiti women began to situate themselves “within the field of the gaze” (Gökarıksel and Secor, 2014; 179):

> “When I was wearing hijab I would always put makeup on… not like crazy, heavy makeup but like some eyeliner, lipstick, like that… maybe not in the beginning… in the beginning I don’t think I did… but later on when I started to feel constrained in the hijab, I started to focus on my makeup to try to feel like I’m free in other ways ‘cause I’m not free in my clothing, maybe I’m free in the way I colour my face, in the way I portray my face because that’s what you could see… I used to also wear a lot of rings on my hands to make them look pretty, and nail polish… like I would focus my energy on my face and my hands to look sexy, because everything else was covered… I like to relief myself in different ways… instead of taking it [the hijab] off and committing that so-called ‘*sin*’ of taking it off, let me enjoy my face, enjoy my hands…” (Ameera, 29)

Ameera hints that the hijab concealed her body, which made her feel asexual and sexually disempowered. However, as opposed to subverting the modest clothing that is expected of her as a hijabi, she decided to make her already visible body parts (i.e. face and hands) appear more visible. By applying make-up, nail polish, and wearing multiple rings, Ameera

relied on such forms of feminine consumption to facilitate her sexual empowerment without fully jeopardizing her social image (i.e. by committing the social sin of taking off the hijab). Similarly:

> "I used to insist on the high heels… now it's okay that I wear flats…. before I used to care about applying make-up, I cared at least about putting lipstick and an eyeliner while wearing the hijab…" Q: "Why did you insist on the heels?" A: "So that people look at me, that I'm here…" Q: "Which people?" A: "All the people… that I'm here by the way, hello! When you pass by with high heels on, first thing, the sound of the heels is attractive, the sound of the heels makes all people turn to look at you… of course every human wishes that people look at him, that people see him… plus, the clothes for hijabi's is always baggy and long and like that, the heels gives height and slimness… when you're wearing baggy and until the knees, you want to give your legs height so that you don't look short and fat… I'm already tiny so I used to wear heels to show that I'm pretty… now I don't care, they see my hair… personally, my hair is long and thick, so I see that my hair is nicer [than wearing heels] … the best thing in me is my hair, what else do you want? I won't even put an eyeliner…" (Manal, 31)

> "I was depending so much on large accessories… like watches… rings… huge necklaces… because I was wearing the hijab so if I wear something simple it wouldn't show… you know… you wear large accessories to fantasize your look in the eyes of men…" (Zuhoor, 25)

Manal and Zuhoor relied on feminine consumption items to sexualize their hidden bodies. As Manal states, while wearing the hijab, she insisted on wearing high heels to attract attention. She mentions that the sound of the heels is attractive and easily noticeable, thereby making her a head-turner. Although Manal claims that she seeks attention from "all the people", her subsequent references indicate interest in attracting the male gaze.

Since the proper hijab clothes is baggy and long, Manal states that it makes one appear short and fat, whereas the heels can enhance a woman's bodily figure because it accentuates one's height and creates an illusion of being slim. She therefore wore heels to communicate her physical attractiveness while still being covered. After taking off the hijab, however, Manal flaunted her long and thick hair which did not need to be complemented with heels or make-up. Similarly, Zuhoor relied on oversized accessories as signifiers of her feminine sexual features.

4.3.3 Substituting the Hijab (Substitution Strategy)

Data demonstrates that the social stigma attached to women who take off the hijab in Kuwait makes it challenging for some women to perform such an act without considering the personal/familial consequences that are likely to occur, even if familial approval has been attained. This led to participants subverting the artefact (i.e. replacing the hijab with alternative forms of head/hair covers) but following the modesty script (i.e. maintaining conservative attire). The data shows that Kuwaiti women who decide to take off their hijab are confronted with negotiating power both within and outside their nuclear families. This is because families are constituted as part of a larger society, and therefore, even if one's family allows her to discard the hijab, it is dominantly perceived as a socially unacceptable act. Accordingly, some participants became self-consciousness after taking off the hijab, despite being convinced with their choices:

> "You know that in Kuwait, so that you see the social pressure… I started putting you know what they call them, hair bands, that are like elastic… I buy one a bit thick so that there is something stuck on my head… I want something I feel over my head… I threw it, [the hijab,] finish, official… yet, I couldn't… this phase required me to wear hairbands just so that I feel there's something over my head… *I used to feel that people are looking at me… I was very afraid of people…* even people who don't know me and don't know that I wear the hijab…" (Asma, 39)

> "Negative [things] is what people say in the beginning… the psychological pressure that you live through… what people say… see the first public outing without the hijab was in the Avenues [mall] I remember… I felt like I was *naked*… you know I felt all people were looking at me although no one was looking at me…" (Noura, 34)

Due to the social stigma attached to the removal of the hijab, participants found it extremely challenging to be observed without a head/hair cover. The social and psychological pressure that ex-hijabi's experience instigates a fear of being identified without a hijab, even by unknown others. As Noura hints, the hijab becomes almost like a "second skin" (Mirza, 2013) since without it, one feels naked and attracting public attention. An "imaginary" gaze can be felt because of women's internalization of the disciplinary gaze. For instance, Asma relied on wearing thick hair bands to personally put herself at ease (i.e. by not wearing a hijab per se but still covering her head). On the other hand, some participants share their awareness of the social consequences of taking off the hijab, and therefore, experienced challenges before taking it off:

> "Although I was convinced that's it [I will take off the hijab], before I took off the hijab I was *very* afraid of people's gaze, *so very afraid* they'll talk about me, *very afraid* to have problems…" (Laila, 27)

> "When I got convinced to take it [the hijab] off, actually I, I was convinced in my heart that it's not something from God, but it took me a very long time to take it off in front of society because for a long time I was worried about what would people say about me… so… I faded it out, I used to wear beanies with scarves instead of hijab… and then just beanies alone… and then just caps… and then bandanas…

> and slowly I, I took it off… so I phased it out over a long period like over a period of three years, two years, three years, something like that…" (Ameera, 29)

Ameera's husband, Wael, adds:

> "In terms of my wife, it was not all of a sudden from hijab to no hijab… from hijab to caps to scarfs… slowly, the scarves and the cap comes off not the hijab (laughing)… so the gradual change back to no hijab…" (Wael, 31)

Laila and Ameera both express that while their personal convictions were encouraging them to take off the hijab, the fear of being judged by others was constraining them. This shows that the judgmental gaze compels one to self-reflect and reconsider one's choices. As Ameera indicates, instead of suddenly taking off the hijab, she decided to soften the blow for others by slowly transitioning out of it. Using head scarf substitutes (such as beanies, caps, and bandanas) enabled Ameera to create an ambiguous hijab to avoid people's gossips. As Wael asserts, Ameera discarded the hijab substitutes rather than the traditional hijab. The ambiguous hijab/hijab substitutes suggest that those who are unfamiliar with Ameera would assume that she's wearing a beanie and scarf, whereas those who know that she wears the hijab will likely interpret the beanie and scarf as a form of hijab (i.e. it's not the traditional hijab but it's still covering her hair, ears, and neck):

> "If her [a woman's] hijab is for example a turban, I don't know what… like that… okay it shows that she does not want to wear the hijab, it shows from the way she dresses… she tries to grab attention in different ways…" (Futha, 26)

> "I started wearing bodies, and then I went out I put the turban, I wore it, I loved it and people loved it… I started wearing turban with a shawl… I cover the neck… and then I started wearing only turban without a shawl, my neck is all shown… and

> even people didn't neglect it, actually they loved it, they loved it a lot…" (Farah, 30)

Futha claims that Kuwaiti women who wear head scarf substitutes are resisting the traditional hijab (which consists of a head scarf and inner bonnet to ensure full hair coverage and a secure fit and is extended to cover one's neck). However, as Farah shares, people would prefer a woman to wear a non-traditional hijab than to take it off completely and expose all of her hair. Paradoxically, at the same time, women who wear a non-traditional hijab appear to be using it to ease their transition into a new identity (i.e. from hijabi to non-hijabi). That is, instead of directly transforming from being a traditional hijab wearer to a non-hijabi, a non-traditional hijab is used to facilitate the transformation process. Farah reveals that there are subtle consumption cues related to the ex-hijabi subculture that cannot be easily identified by outsiders. As she states, she initially wore a turban with a shawl (to cover her neck), and then she started wearing a turban without a shawl (to expose her neck). This indicates that once others become accustomed to and accept one's identity, one feels safe to further transgress. I assert that the transgression might gradually be perceived as an expectation rather than a surprise:

> "In the last phase, my head scarfs began to slip a bit (laughing)… the last few months… but I used to wear like a hair band underneath it… but the head scarf that I put was transparent… the turban looks like I have henna on my hair or else I would've worn it… " (Manal, 31)

> "I started wearing three quarter sleeves… the hair started showing from the front… the opaque [head] scarf became chiffon [material]… transparent… yes… like they [my family] felt I had the intention of throwing the hijab…" (Dalal, 37)

The traditional hijab is expected to be opaque in color to serve its purpose of concealing one's hair. Hence, as Manal and Dalal share, a more explicit way of expressing resistance

towards the hijab is by exposing parts of one's hair, such as wearing a transparent head scarf and/or showing hair strands from the front of one's head scarf. Through personal observations of women in the studied sample, I have witnessed some of them intentionally expose and style a section of their hair through blow drying and/or dyeing it. I also observed some of the participants wearing a large hair clip or faux bun beneath the head scarf to create a symbolic illusion of having long and thick hair.

Despite the preparation of others through hijab substitutes, data shows that the transition from hijabi to non-hijabi is a lengthy process (e.g. Ameera stated earlier that it took her around three years to officially discard the hijab).

4.3.4 Eliminating the Hijab (Elimination Strategy)

In the above sub-themes, I show that participants relied on different strategies to 'bend the rules' of the modesty script associated with the hijab artefact. Alternatively, data also shows that the modesty script can be performed without necessarily wearing a hijab. This involves rejecting the artefact (i.e. taking off the hijab) but following the modesty script. Several participants complied with the modesty script after taking off (as opposed to while wearing) the hijab. Participants' indicate that their compliance with the modesty script is intended to prove that taking off the hijab does not necessarily reflect their desire to attract (male) attention or become promiscuous women. For instance:

> "When a woman throws her hijab people say that she is bad or for example she wants to attract attention or else why did she throw it? they say, why did she throw it? of course she wants boys to look at her… you know… they always say like that but I don't know I feel it's unrelated…" (Dunia, 22)

> "In our society, a woman who takes off the hijab is considered bad and is not well raised by her family… people associate the act of taking off the hijab with the desire for male attention… my daughters were afraid of being labelled like that…" (Zeinab, 46)

> "I don't have any thoughts about women who take off their hijab, it's a personal choice. But in society it's a bad thing. For example, my sister took off her hijab, but it was difficult because people will assume she wants men to look at her although she is doing it for herself. She doesn't feel comfortable wearing the hijab." (Noha, 42)

There appears to be a dominant view in Arab-Islamic societies that women who take off the hijab are seeking male attention. This explains why taking off the hijab is a problematic act that threatens one's family honour. It also shows that women's bodies are reduced to mere sexual objects since their clothing choices are always interpreted in relation to men rather than their own intentions. For instance, while wearing the hijab is constructed as a woman's desire to deflect the male gaze, taking off the hijab is perceived as a woman's desire to attract the male gaze. Such binary oppositions undermine the different reasons women attach to (un)veiling. In line with this, many participants were cautious with their consumption choices to avoid being criticized as (male) attention seekers:

> "Mmm… like, for example, for example, see I know it's something basic but I am like that, like society is still constraining me… I tell you, like I removed the hijab now and now in society my name is, 'She who removed the hijab'… ok… so, so I don't come now and wear shorts or something short because I can't, you know… at least respect their feelings… like, see, it's up to you, you can do whatever you want, but I feel, I respect people, I don't want to aggravate anybody… I will wear respectful because I don't want to aggravate anybody…" (Khulood, 20)

> "I told [my friend] her, 'What you did is very wrong… like it's not ok that you throw your hijab today and the other day you are wearing a short skirt at the Avenues [mall]… it's not ok, you must transition… people are shocked about the hijab' … as soon as she took off the hijab she wore a short skirt… I told her, 'This is something wrong, it's supposed that you transition… you made two shocks for people, the shock of the hijab and the shock of the clothes… you were supposed to transition, transition, transition, until you take the style that you want'… so she went back to wearing it, she threw the hijab exactly two weeks and she went back to wearing it because people's reactions really bothered her…" (Farah, 30)

Participants' accounts indicate that taking off the hijab is one problem and wearing revealing clothing is another. The former involves resisting the modesty artefact, whereas the latter involves resisting the modesty script. Therefore, a woman who takes off the hijab and reveals her body is resisting two elements of the modesty ritual. This suggests that taking off the hijab does not translate into a woman's freedom to reveal her body "because like showing your hair is different from showing various areas of your body, this [showing your body] will make you look cheap" (Zuhoor, 25). As such, several participants claim that they have taken off the hijab but observed modest clothing:

> "Like [my clothes] it's normal like I'm not wearing the hijab, but I wear for example long… like it covers my arms, my legs… it's normal… a lot of times in fact I wear like this… sometimes I wear a short dress… for example till my knees… I don't go shorter like… something within the limits…" Q: "What do you mean by limits?" A: "Limits of me respecting myself… and know the clothes from where to where… you know… also I respect people… the men for example when they see [my] clothes like [it should] not [be] over short… or when they see my clothes [it shouldn't be] over tight…" (Dana, 24)

"Now, [after taking off the hijab,] like [my clothes] it's totally normal… like I wear everything but not, I don't wear sleeveless like this… like in Kuwait we don't wear sleeveless, we don't wear short skirts, above the knee we don't wear, like mini skirts or… tight pants are not okay… aaa… see through [clothing] of course is not okay… like appropriate clothes like everyone else… I didn't go overboard like, 'Oh I have freedom I can wear whatever I want', no…" (Futha, 26)

"Even now, the sleeve that is above the elbow, I don't like it… even I just bought a shirt from Zara, when I came home and tried it, I found that it's below the shoulder in a bit… I said to myself, 'How will I wear this? I don't like that the arms show and shoulder'… see this picture [*presents a post-hijab picture of herself wearing a loose black trouser and a grey three-quarter sleeve t-shirt*], the sleeve is until my elbow, I don't have a problem with it, but above the elbow, no I don't like… I'm respectful, respectful (laughing)… it's true that I took off my hijab, Doha, but I am respectful (laughing)…" (Shurooq, 49)

Participants stress that female modesty is ingrained in Kuwaiti society, and therefore, produces self-disciplining women. That is, women self-monitor their bodies to ensure compliance with the limits of what is deemed socially acceptable. Participants further reveal their awareness that the female body is exposed to the normalizing judgement (i.e., being compared with the majority of other women/normative feminine behavior) which restricts women's expressions of sexuality (Foucault, 1991). During the interview, Shurooq repeatedly emphasized that although she has taken off the hijab, she is still respectful and expresses modesty through her clothing choices. Similarly, other participants allude:

"I stopped wearing tight, I wore longer clothes because I was *happy*… I didn't want the hijab… I guess it was just me trying to prove to my dad basically that it's not necessary that when I throw the hijab I become a bad person… I guess that's what it is..." (Sara, 28)

> "Now, like I'm in university and people who see me like weren't with me in high school and don't know that I threw the hijab and like that, like they praise my clothes a lot, that how neat it is and decent, so I really like that thing… the thing is I'm not taking off the hijab to be naked, like you can be decent without wearing the hijab… it's not about the hijab only…" (Heba, 19)

Participants emphasize that taking off the hijab should not be equated with being an immodest woman. Contrary to dominant belief about ex-hijabi women threatening their family honour, Sara and Heba observed modest clothing as ex-hijabi's. As Sara states, modesty should not be confined to hijabi women because although her hair was covered while wearing the hijab, her body was exposed through tightly fitted clothes. Heba also shares that her desire to take off the hijab should not be reflected as her desire to expose her body. Apart from the clothing aspect of the modesty script, other participants indicated that feminine adornment were no longer required after taking off the hijab:

> "When I was wearing the hijab, I used to put a lot of make-up, when I throw the hijab no, almost no make-up… I don't know why… I feel it could be the hijab, exactly when I used to wear the hijab I feel like I am not myself, exactly like you're wearing a mask, like you're wearing something so you want to show your personality so you put make-up… like it could be like that, you feel there's something wrong in you so you are fixing it with something else… I used to cover my hair and I used to feel that I look wrong when I'm wearing the hijab, so maybe I used to put make-up so that I forcefully put my personality… so when I threw it [the hijab] I feel like no, this is me …" (Mariam, 38)

> "Before taking off the hijab it was a must that I go out with makeup, now no its okay I go out without makeup… your outward appearance is what you express

about yourself… aaa… your style… most importantly your hair, like it talks about you so when you cover it you are covering a big part of you, of your personality, of your appearance… you are covering it from other people… I was half human because there was a part of my personality that wasn't being revealed… after I removed it [the hijab] I became very confident in myself… so finish, that's me…" (Amani, 26)

"Like now, looking at myself now, I *hate* nail polish, I can't be bothered… I can't be bothered with makeup… I'm not into any of those beautification things, like I don't bother with them *at all*… like I *rarely* put any make-up when I go out… I'm not into nail polish… I'm not into wearing rings and accessories and things like that… like sometimes I do, but like not obsessive as I was before…" (Ameera, 29)

Participants assert that their reliance on beautification consumption rituals were intended to compensate for their covered hair while wearing the hijab which is no longer necessary. As Mariam and Amani stress, their application of make-up while wearing the hijab helped them express their suppressed personalities. The expressions "wearing a mask" and being "half human" were stated by Mariam and Amani, respectively, to emphasize that an aspect of themselves was hidden when their hair was covered. After taking off the hijab, however, they felt more visible (since their hair can be styled to suit their personality) and did not wear excessive make-up. Similarly, during the interview, Ameera constantly referred to her previous obsession with using jewellery to construct her desired non-hijabi identity.

4.3.5 Contextualizing the Hijab (Contextualization Strategy)

This sub-theme reflects participants' resistance to power through different social spaces. In such cases, participants expressed that whether they utilize or reject the hijab artefact and modesty script largely depends on the occupied social space and audience involved.

This supports Foucault's (1991) view that power is both relational and everywhere. As such, some participants constructed multiple identities to accommodate with different social situations:

> "We couldn't tell his [my husband's] family [that I threw the hijab] … I started putting a [head]scarf in the car and go out without it and as soon as I get inside the house I wear the [head]scarf because I was living with them [my husband's family]… I call my [house] area Saudi [Arabia]… as soon as I get in the area I throw it [the scarf] over my head…" (Manal, 31)

Although Manal's husband accepts her choice of taking off the hijab, they both couldn't confront his family about the matter. Manal's husband could be criticized for not complying with the hegemonic masculinity norms expected of him. Accordingly, instead of creating conflict with her husband's family, Manal decided to take off the hijab everywhere and only wear it within the area of their house. Manal refers to the area as Saudi Arabia, meaning it is the only place where she feels obliged to wear the hijab. The idea of impression management (Goffman, 1990) towards one's family is also prevalent in other participants' accounts:

> "I hated going to malls and crowded places because of the hijab… because I'm used to throwing it [off] in other places so I used to always tell them [my friends], 'Come let's go to this place, there's no one who will see', so that I could throw it…" Q: "Where are the other places?" A: "So places for example not the Avenues [mall], 360 [mall], you know… not places where there are lots of people… like for example, quiet restaurants… aaa… coffee shops that aren't crowded is where I can [take off the hijab]… but like the Avenues [mall] and 360 [mall] it's difficult that I throw it [the hijab] because there are lots of people and I might see anyone there… because half of my family didn't know about the matter, so I didn't want people to see me like that and talk to my family and say, 'We saw your daughter' and like

> that… Q: “Did you ever encounter a time when someone saw you?” A: “No, no because I try to keep away from crowded places…” Q: “So how do you know that your family won’t coincidentally be in the same place?” A: “Because I know they don’t go… I know exactly the places they go to… especially for example in the weekend, I know that [they will be in] the Avenues [mall], 360 [mall], Al-hamra [mall], Al-raya [mall], Salhiya [mall], you know… so I avoid going to those places… for example I go to Marina [mall], Gate [mall], the restaurants in Arabella [an outdoor complex in Kuwait, known exclusively for offering a range of restaurants], like that… ” (Noura, 34)

Even when Noura was taking off her hijab in some public spaces, she was still concerned about the level of publicity of a given space. This was based on the amount of people expected in a place; the greater the number of audience, the increased exposure to surveillance, and the higher the risk of being identified by a familiar other. As Noura indicates, she avoided going to malls and crowded places (such as the Avenues and 360 mall which are two of the most popular malls in Kuwait) where there is a high chance of being caught without the hijab. Noura was not only trying to escape her family’s gaze, but also observance by those who are socially connected with her family, and therefore, can easily report her behavior. Accordingly, uncrowded areas are self-constructed as ‘safe spaces’ (Evans et al., 2010) which enabled Noura to exercise control over her surroundings. Other participants relied on secluded spaces to slowly transition before having the courage to publicly engage in their transgressive behavior:

> “See we [me and my sisters] started [taking off the hijab] in hidden [places]… like we go to places there’s no one… you know… or only in the car… I usually took it [the hijab] off in my friend’s car that had tinted windows and we cruised around different places… but then we want to go out… we want to go out with our friends… then finish we totally loosen it, we started going to 360 [mall], Al-Raya [mall], Salhiya [mall]… all without the hijab…” (Moneera, 23)

Moneera states that the car represents an enclosed private space within the public sphere, especially if the windows are tinted. It prevents one's direct exposure to the public gaze while still being outside the public space. However, as Moneera asserts, such hideous zones can limit one's socialization, and are therefore only temporarily tested. In addition, taking off the hijab is not limited to the outside public space, but can also include a private space (i.e. home) that is transformed into a public one (i.e. in the presence of non-*mahrem's*) (Sobh and Belk, 2011):

> "Just like anyone else, when I go out I used to throw my hijab behind their [my parents] back… aaa… at all I didn't feel bad… at all… like even sometimes when I go to my friend's house, her brother pops in by mistake and I've thrown my hijab, I don't get this fear that I cover my head quickly… only in one case! If he had focused on me that she's the girl who comes and throws [her hijab], yes [I would wear the hijab] … but if he just passed and he doesn't know me and doesn't know who I am, no, it's okay…" (Khadija, 27)

Khadija shares that because her parents have imposed the hijab onto her, she takes it off without their consent. Apart from taking off the hijab in openly public spaces, Khadija indicates that during visits to her friend's house, she did not experience a sense of urgency to wear the hijab (as many hijabi women often do in the unexpected presence of non-*mahrems*) whenever her friend's brother accidently enters their (temporarily) female secluded space. However, this only occurs "if" her friend's brother is unaware that she wears the hijab, and therefore, she isn't perceived as rebellious (by remaining unveiled in his presence) which would otherwise ruin her friendship. This is because Arab-Muslim men often prevent their female relatives from associating with deviant women who are likely to cause one's 'stigma by association' (e.g. Bos et al., 2013) or directly influence one another's behavior:

> "First of all, when I used to throw it [the hijab] I used to say, 'Oh my god what, what am I doing?' … they [my family] didn't know… before they knew, I used to go out with my friends and like that, they used to all throw it [the hijab] so I get shocked I tell them, 'How do you throw it?', they said, 'It's ok… we throw it'… when they go inside their house they wear the hijab… it didn't appeal to me this idea that I throw it and wear it and throw it… in front of my family something and behind my family something else… with time, they influenced me…" (Dana, 24)

> "I used to throw it [the hijab] behind my family and with my friends, even I have a few friends who used to wear the hijab and the same thing they throw it with me… one of my friends threw her hijab before me so here like I started not to wear the hijab at all… like I don't accept myself in it… straightaway as soon as I get in the car I throw it… my friend threw it before me…" (Moneera, 23)

Participants' accounts reveal that sometimes Kuwaiti women collectively empower each other to participate in a deviant act. Although Dana and Moneera felt powerless amid their families, their friends helped restore their sense of power. Dana expresses feeling guilty when she started taking off the hijab behind her family, she questioned her own behavior due to being aware that it deviated from her expected social identity (as a hijabi woman). However, both Dana and Moneera indicate that observing their friends take off the hijab helped them normalize the idea of embracing dual identities. Observance of one's friend(s) take off the hijab could provide assurance that it is an acceptable behavior within one's social group, and therefore, collective as opposed to individual deviance becomes less challenging. For instance, a woman might be reluctant to take off the hijab with her friends due to the possibility of being socially excluded.

4.4 Transformations of the Self

This theme focuses on the central role of the hijab artefact in transforming Kuwaiti women's social identities. Specifically, it demonstrates how the act of wearing and taking off the hijab contributes to participants' sense of empowerment and/or subordination. The theme also accounts for the effect of wearing and taking off the hijab on participants' familial power relations.

It is important to note that participants have experienced multiple rather than single transformations while wearing and after taking off the hijab. For instance, while some women felt empowered during the early stage of wearing the hijab and began to feel suppressed over time, other women simultaneously felt empowered and suppressed after taking off the hijab. Therefore, identity transformations are constructed as both fluid and co-existing.

Data shows that participants' identity changes pertain to the following: 1) feeling emancipated from the male gaze and harassment while wearing the hijab, 2) developing courageous behavior, experiencing increased flexibility in clothing choices, exercising power over men etc. after taking off the hijab, 3) feeling proud and influential after taking off the hijab, 4) feeling constrained in clothing and behavior, participation in social activities, interactions with males etc. while wearing the hijab, and 5) being socially excluded and condemned after taking off the hijab.

Accordingly, I identified two overarching themes related to transformations of the self as *experienced* by participants, namely: 1) the empowered self and 2) the subordinate self. Each broad theme includes its distinct sub-themes.

4.4.1 The Empowered Self

This theme reflects participants' sense of empowerment while wearing and/or after taking off the hijab, including the following sub-themes: 1) deflecting the male gaze (hijabi), 2) developing agentic behavior (ex-hijabi), 3) developing agentic attitude (ex-hijabi), and 4) connecting to a deviant subculture (ex-hijabi).

4.4.1.1 Deflecting the Male Gaze (Hijabi)

Data demonstrates that some participant experienced a sense of freedom in deflecting the male gaze after wearing the hijab. Although the hijab is intended to function as a form of social control over women's bodies and behavior (Hamzeh, 2011), some Kuwaiti women who *voluntarily* chose to wear the hijab felt temporarily empowered rather than oppressed:

> "So, when I first wore the hijab, I actually felt very comfortable because before [wearing] the hijab I used to dress in revealing clothing, and tight clothing, and I had a nice body, in high school… so… I was like the center of attention… and I always felt the male gaze on me, wherever I go… but then, when I wore the hijab and I started to wear more loose clothing, I suddenly felt a little bit invisible… like men stopped staring at me and it made me feel more free in a way… because it made me feel like I'm not an object for their *gaze*… I'm a human being that is not just a body that's walking around… so, I felt really comfortable with it…" (Ameera, 29)

> "I wore the hijab by being convinced, nobody like told me [to wear it]… and when I wore the hijab I was so comfortable, and my hijab was so respectful… I felt that I am comfortable… I feel like really, it's decent… aaa… like when I enter a place, for example, now I'm not wearing the hijab, when I enter a place everybody looks at me… before no there weren't male gazes as much as now…" (Laila, 27)

The hijab accompanied with modest clothing appears to release women from being reduced to mere sexual objects for men's pleasure. This relates to how women perceive their bodies as well as how others perceive them. For instance, Ameera states that as a non-hijabi woman, she practiced her own self-objectification through engaging in 'technologies of sexiness' (Evans et al., 2010) to sexualize her body. After wearing the hijab, however, Ameera diverted male attention away from her body and felt appreciated as a human. Similarly, the hijab facilitated Laila's ability to escape public male scrutiny over her body. This is consistent with Droogsma (2007) who finds that the hijab can empower women as it often prevents them from being sexually objectified and allows men to appreciate them for their intangible merits, such as their intelligence. Relatedly, Dunia states:

> "When I first thought [of wearing the hijab] I thought I want to move this group, the boys from me, how? I said let me wear the hijab, if I wear the hijab they will not bother me because of my appearance or something like that… the best thing in it is, like when I was wearing the hijab I feel that nobody has anything to do with me, in terms of boys and like that… they don't bother me, you know… [the hijab was] like a shield I feel it… really a shield, like they [boys] don't approach me, they don't flirt with me… the boys respect me, you know…" (Dunia, 22)

Dunia intentionally observed the hijab as a form of protection against unsolicited male interactions. As she explains, the hijab symbolically functioned as a shield against being harassed since a woman's covered hair and body minimizes her overall sexual attractiveness. The hijab appears to command respect from men who would otherwise treat women as passive sexual objects. Dunia hints that before wearing the hijab, she was exposed to flirtatious male behavior despite her lack of responsiveness. She further elaborates:

> “It’s true, like for the girls who are being exposed to harassment a lot, being exposed a lot to boys bothering them and like that, when they wear it [the hijab] really they will feel that nobody has anything to do with them… like if they were wearing it in the right way… not the hijab that she wears as if she’s not wearing the hijab but she’s wearing the hijab, no, in the right way… nobody harasses her, nobody bothers her and like that…” (Dunia, 22)

According to Dunia, to avoid male harassment, women should not only wear the hijab, but must also ensure compliance with its modest dress code. As she mentions, wearing the hijab in the ‘right way’ is protective for women, including covering one’s hair and body rather than covering one’s hair and revealing one’s body through alternative strategies (as outlined in the previous theme on ‘resisting power through consumption’). The latter, Dunia states, would lead to an adverse effect, whereby men would be drawn to the seductive hijabi woman. As Manal asserts:

> “Believe it or not, when I was wearing a headscarf and an abaya [i.e., a traditionally worn wide, black cloak that conceals a woman’s body in its entirety], more guys used to flirt with me compared to when I was unveiled… when I was unveiled, nobody looks at my face… I swear… but with the hijab, guys used follow me until my house, I was more attractive…” (Manal, 31)

Unlike Ameera, Laila, and Dunia, rather than deflecting the male gaze and male interactions while wearing the hijab, Manal was exposed to increased harassment due to identifying as a covered but appealing hijabi woman. This shows that although some participants felt empowered with the hijab, their empowerment was subject to compliance with the modesty ritual rather than merely observing the hijab artefact. Implicitly, this suggests that while participants are using the hijab to express their agency and feel empowered in doing so, this sense of empowerment is nonetheless conducted in broader

conditions of subordination, wherein women are required to cover their bodies to avoid the male gaze.

4.4.1.2 Developing Agentic Behavior (Ex-Hijabi)

In elaboration to the previous sub-theme whereby participants felt empowered by deflecting the male gaze *after wearing the hijab*, data further reveals that in some cases, participants' empowerment relates to their development of agentic behavior *after taking off the hijab*. Participants' agentic behavior manifests in several ways which are outlined below.

A few participants experienced an alignment between their thoughts and behavior after taking off the hijab, which were otherwise contradictory due to the social expectations imposed on hijabi women:

> "I felt right… I felt just right, like I felt as if there was weight above my shoulders and it was removed… it felt right… I felt that I'm more honest with my God, that I'm not lying to him or contradicting or that I'm doing something and I'm not believing in it… I feel like I am as I am in front of my God…" (Asma, 39)

> "But what was really positive was me, myself… like I changed, I felt that I took a strong decision by myself and for myself, and like I'm proud that I did this thing… so I was so happy, I was feeling better myself… before [taking off the hijab] there was a bit of contradiction in what I do, but now no, I choose for myself, you know… so I feel like I'm changing to the better, I'm improving myself more because I'm not hiding anything… there's nothing like I'm contradicting, lying to myself about… no, what's inside is exactly outside, there's nothing I'm hiding, you

know… like my thoughts became okay, I can live what I am thinking, I can take decisions like the ones in my mind…" (Amani, 26)

Since a ritual represents the 'right' way of doing something (Rook, 1985), it prescribes certain behavior onto participants that often contradicts their intentions and beliefs. In terms of the gendered ritual of modesty, Asma and Amani experienced a 'torn [hijabi] self' (Jafari and Goulding, 2008) due to the clash between their personal ideologies and the social expectations to conform with a hijabi lifestyle. Their agentic self was activated after taking off the hijab. More specifically, other participants referred to agency as expressed through their clothing choices:

> "When I threw it [the hijab] honestly, I was happy (laughing)… like I know it's not a good thing, but I was happy when I threw it… I can't encourage someone to throw their hijab or say that it's a good thing, I can't tell someone that it's a good thing that I threw my hijab but for myself I feel it was a really good thing…" Q: "What makes you happy?" A: "I like freedom, I don't like anything to constrain me in anything… my clothes all changed, I go out, before I hate going out and the reason is I don't like going out because I'm not in the mood of wearing and like that because I'm so picky, my taste is not the taste of one who wears the hijab… so now I could wear whatever I want… freedom is happiness to me, like something doesn't constrain me that's happiness…" (Nawal, 24)

> "Like one day I would wear short clothes… like right now I'm at that stage, if I wanna wear revealing, I wear revealing… if I wanna cover up, I'll cover up… I do whatever I want basically, so my body is just a mechanism that gets me through this world, it's not a sex object… so how I dress just depends on how I feel on that particular day, what the weather is like, what's my mood, am I bloated or do I feel like I'm, you know, not bloated today… do I wanna wear something tight or am I

> not in the mood I'm just gonna put on a hoodie and go out… so… ya…" (Ameera, 29)

> "This picture [*presents a post-hijab picture of herself wearing a black, skin-tight dress, with a wide cleavage and front slit exposing her thighs*] reflects me, my personality… I started to feel that I'm comfortable… strong… that I go out with this courage… I go out like that and post it on the media… I started to love myself more… I wanted to prove my presence, that I'm at an event and I'm invited and that this is me… I'm showing that I'm always up to date [in fashion] and I didn't have any constraints… I want to prove to people that this is me…" (Dalal, 37)

In a society where women are expected to maintain a modest public representation, women's freedom commences with their courage to deviate from feminine expectations. As Dalal (37) states, "Freedom for us in Kuwait starts with the clothes… a woman's freedom starts with the clothes because what people focus on mostly is the clothes… anybody judges you based on your clothes… like the first thing they [people] say about a woman is, 'Did you see her clothes?'… they say, 'Look at this girl, [she's] wearing sleeveless!'… this thing still exists in our society…" (37).

This explains why participants associated their freedom with having increased flexibility in their clothing choices rather than being confined to a prescribed hijab dress code. For instance, Ameera stresses that her choice of clothing varies based on different factors, such as the weather condition and her daily personal preferences. Ameera no longer feels like her body is a 'sex object' that should primarily be concealed from the male gaze, but rather voluntarily adapted various degrees of concealing or exposing her body. Moreover, since data shows that feminine discourses in Kuwait promote female modesty, Dalal expresses feeling empowered through practicing self-sexualization which defies the gender order.

4.4.1.3 Developing Agentic Attitude (Ex-Hijabi)

In addition to the above sub-theme on participants developing agentic 'behavior', data also shows that some participants developed agentic 'attitude' as ex-hijabi women. For instance, some participants demonstrated their confidence and arrogance through being active sexual subjects:

> "Before I had no one, I didn't have guys that I know… I don't have… like even maybe the poshest one I spoke with had maybe a BM [W car] or something like that… I don't have anyone… like I don't have Ferrari's or something like that… but when I first threw my hijab… this story is totally a secret… but you know *how many Ferrari's I have*… like they became all rings on my hands…" (Laila, 27)

> "During that time [*presents post-hijab picture of herself wearing a bright blue training suit with a white, wide cleavage t-shirt*], I had just thrown my hijab… like a few months… I was enjoying kinda freedom when it comes to my dress code… I think the picture says I'm happy! I'm confident! very confident! I love me! and then it says something about new starts… new beginnings…" Q: "What makes you feel that way?" A: "Because I just got rid of my veil… I was in love with how I looked… like my make-up… my clothes… this is my favorite training suit… guys were hitting on me (laughing)… it doesn't mean that I wanted to be with them, but it was fun…" (Zuhoor, 25)

Traditionally, aggression is often associated with hegemonic masculinity traits, and women are usually the victims of such aggression (Connell, 2005). This is especially with regards to men's aggressive sexual attitudes being manifested through female objectification. On the contrary, participants' accounts suggest that sometimes women exercise power over men through male objectification. Laila describes men as equivalents of cars and possession items. Her reference to the Arabic proverb related to men as "rings on a

woman's hand" carries twofold meanings: that many men are desperate to attain a woman's attention and she has many options to choose from, and relatedly, that men become subordinates to a woman's commands. In both cases, men are constructed as status symbols of a woman. Zuhoor also refers to her objectification of men by enjoying temporary sexual attention from them without the intention to be committed in a relationship. Thus, although Laila and Zuhoor are approached by men due to their physical qualities, this made them feel sexually empowered rather than oppressed. The participants' behavior represents an example where women transform their oppression into power (e.g. Sa'ar, 2006; Almutawa, 2011; Fahs, 2011). In addition, participants also developed agentic attitude within their various social groups, such as among their colleagues, friend, and family members:

> "When I threw it [the hijab] I didn't care about what people say… I don't care about people in the sense that they'd talk about me [and say,] 'Oh she threw the hijab' and like that, I used to walk in university, in the beginning time when I threw it [the hijab] and the girls nudge each other in front of me, obviously, and point at me like 'See, see she threw her hijab!' They didn't have an influence on me at all, it was so ok because I know if I was in their place and there was someone who threw her hijab it would be the same reaction, I would tell my friend, 'Look at her she threw her hijab' so I was very understanding and accepting and it's ok for me…" (Moneera, 23)

> "There's a girl who sent me a message on WhatsApp saying, 'Huh, weren't you wearing the hijab?' I blocked her straight away… like this is not my personality, everybody was shocked like, 'How did you do this?' I'm from the type who sits and thinks that 'Oh my god, how did she tell me so!' I don't know, it's ok… I didn't care… block straight away… what? What do you want? Like why are you asking?... like one [girl] called me and I love her and she told me '[Participant's name], the matter is one, two, three… fire and burning in the afterlife' and blah blah blah, I told her, 'Sorry, but I know about all these things and I respect your advice but I took this decision and I threw the hijab and all what you are saying will not benefit'…" (Laila, 27)

Arab-Muslim women appear to police one another's deviant behavior. This suggests that patriarchal authority is not limited to male to female interactions since some Arab-Muslim women also play a major role in reinforcing the oppression of their own gender. In other words, Arab-Muslim women appear to be both oppressed (through socialization processes) and oppressors of one another (due to normalizing their own oppression) (Almutawa, 2011). As Moneera states, apart from the objectifying male gaze, Kuwaiti women's bodies are also scrutinized through the judgmental female gaze. Both Moneera and Laila's accounts reveal their normalization of the female gaze has led to their insensitivity towards cues of female disapproval. For instance, Moneera expresses autonomy over her body by neglecting other women's reactions, which can be a tactic to communicate their inferior opinions in relation to her courageous behavior. Laila, on the other hand, claims that taking off the hijab transformed her from a passive to a more defensive woman. She began to defend her freedom of choice rather than being a victim of feminine expectations. Similarly:

> Q: "How did you feel when your mother doesn't greet you?" A: "I don't have feelings (laughing)… so I used to laugh at her (laughing)… till that day I tell her, 'Do you remember?' and she says, 'Yes, I was such a kid'… my mother says it herself… she told me, 'Didn't you feel upset?'… I told her, 'Not at all, I had my salary'… really, really, I didn't get affected because finish the idea was on my mind and when she does anything I laugh at her… I used to say, 'Who's the kid me or her?' That's what I was thinking (laughing)… not that she's cherishing her other daughters more than me… at all, at all I didn't think [so]!" (Noura, 34)

> "My dad was in complete shock because he never knew that I was taking it [the hijab] off, it was just one day I think he saw me I wasn't wearing it… so it was a complete shock to him like 'Wow what the hell!' By the way, I never spoke with my father, like my father tells me do this, I follow what he says… you know… but

> with the hijab, he told me, ‘Why? Why did you remove it? Why aren’t you going to wear it?’ I told him, ‘I don’t want to wear it, and finish I’ll wear it when I’m convinced about it… I currently don’t want it… I feel suffocated… I don’t want to wear it’ and he started comparing me to one of my cousins… my cousin, when she removed her hijab, like her clothes all changed… she wears tight clothes, goes out with leggings… and it was really bad… like her appearance when I look at her, no it was like totally not a respectful girl… you know… I told my dad, ‘Like you are coming now and comparing me with her?’ I said, ‘Look at what she’s wearing and look at what I’m wearing… you see my clothes is long… do you see my hair changed color? You see me, I already don’t put make-up… you see me putting make-up and going out? nothing about me changed, don’t compare me to those people…’ He was quiet, he had nothing else to say… he had no control over it…” (Sara, 28)

As opposed to their submissive hijabi self, Noura and Sara’s accounts reveal that their courage to deviate from feminine expectations (by taking off the hijab) also had an impact on their perceptions of familial power relations. Both participants refer to using responsive techniques to reverse familial power relations to their own advantage. That is, rather than being subjected to disciplinary power, they manipulated the behavior of those who exercised power over them. As per Noura, although her mother avoided interactions with her and privileged her sisters as a form of punishment for taking off the hijab, she nonetheless perceived her mother’s behavior as humorous and childlike. Therefore, Noura bestowed an inferior status upon her mother who ceased to exercise control over her.

Sara, however, downplayed her father’s power through the normalizing judgement (Foucault, 1991) to prove her superiority in relation to other forms of subordinate femininities. Specifically, the construction of her cousin as immodest in relation to hegemonic femininity norms presents three implications: 1) that Kuwaiti women are socially conditioned to measure one another’s value based on the perceived degree of body coverage/exposure, 2) that sometimes Kuwaiti women negotiate power by Othering their

own gender, and relatedly, 3) the notion of "multiple" masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) also applies to the multiple forms of femininities.

4.4.1.4 Connecting to a Deviant Subculture (Ex-Hijabi)

Data demonstrates that some participants experienced empowerment by their mere association with a deviant (ex-hijabi) subculture. Although there's a stigma attached to women who discard the hijab and defy socially constructed notions of modesty, this does not necessarily mean that such women perceive themselves as immoral. On the contrary, sometimes women express pride in connecting to a deviant ex-hijabi subculture:

> "Once a woman told me, 'Yes, hopefully you wear the hijab' I told her, 'No, don't say that!' then she told me, 'Why?' I told her, 'Because I threw it I won't wear it again!' I don't hide it because I'm not bothered so that I'd hide it… in fact, I'm happy (laughing)… so I do say [to people that] 'I was wearing it and I threw it'…" (Farah, 30)

> "Can I use my real name in the research? I feel like I'm giving experience, maybe some other young women, whenever, wherever, this might fall in some hands, maybe someone would benefit from me… I hope I can be a motive!" (Zuhoor, 25)

Contrary to many participants who prefer to hide their former identities as hijab wearers, Farah and Zuhoor appear to embrace their non-conformity with feminine expectations. Both participants demonstrate their willingness to be identified as ex-hijabi women. In effect, they are challenging the dominant hijab discourse by normalizing the act of taking off the hijab. Zuhoor explicitly requests to publish her name in the research to be personally identified as empowered and empowering other women. Relatedly, some participants have been approached and admired by other women who are struggling to take off the hijab:

> "Lots of girls came up to me when I was signing in [at work] because when I sign in I see girls from all departments, so when it's time to sign in all of them said, '[Participant's name], we wish to talk to you about a matter… how [did you take off the hijab]? We wish to throw the hijab but we're afraid…' I told them, 'You're not supposed to be afraid and handle it, they talked about me for two months' Then one of them told me, 'No I'm not ready for anyone to talk about me for two months' so I told her, 'Since you're not ready for anyone to talk about you, she meant at work, change your workplace' (laughing)…" (Farah, 30)

> "Some girls called me saying, 'Good for you! Good what you did! I wish I can do this!' even after I became popular in Kuwait, there are small girls who called me and asked, 'Tell me, how can I open up with my mother and father about the topic? That I tell them that I want to take it [the hijab] off?'…" (Maysa, 35)

> "My friend's daughter wears the hijab, she even wore the hijab voluntarily herself… now she wants to take it off, so when she saw me [she said,] 'Oh my god! Auntie [participant's name]! Lucky you!' like that… I told her, 'Take it off since you don't want' then she said, 'Oh my god! My mother would not talk to me until the afterlife!'…" (Maha, 53)

In a Foucauldian sense, ex-hijabi women's power stems from their knowledge about how to deviate and the expected consequences of such behavior. Therefore, other women who seek to integrate with this ex-hijabi subculture rely on strategies adapted by already existing members. In other words, ex-hijabi women serve as a reference group for other women who want to learn the right way of transitioning from one social identity (hijabi) to another (non-hijabi). This includes women learning how to confront their families about their desire to take off the hijab as well as coping with familial and social reactions in a manner that

eases the transition. In this sense, those who take off the hijab become influential for women within their social groups:

> "In the family, we [me and my sister] are the ideal girls, that come from an ideal family, we shouldn't do any mistake… so, when I removed it [the hijab], everybody got surprised, lots of girls that are far relatives who wear the hijab, took it off because we took it off… they wanted to, but couldn't do this thing… they're afraid of people, afraid of society… so when I, when I took off the hijab, it's like I (laughing), it's like I encouraged them (laughing)… it's not something good, but they said, 'Since [participant's name] and [participant's sister's name] were able to do it, we will do it'… so, lots, lots of girls [have taken off the hijab]…" (Khulood, 20)

Khulood states that she and her sister are perceived as role models for other girls within their extended family. In Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) terms, being identified as "ideal girls" suggests their embodiment of "emphasized femininity" which is characterized as being subordinates to male authority. However, discarding the hijab represents a powerful act that defies the notion of being a passive subject, Yet, Khulood and her sister's symbolic capital enabled them to normalize the act of taking off the hijab and still embody the characteristics of emphasized femininity.

4.4.2 The Subordinate Self

This theme reflects participants' sense of subordination while wearing and/or after taking off the hijab, including the following sub-themes: 1) experiencing daily restrictions (hijabi), and 2) sacrificing social capital (ex-hijabi).

4.4.2.1 Experiencing Daily Restrictions (Hijabi)

Data shows that participants confronted several restrictions in their mundane lives while wearing the hijab. Restrictions were experienced by both groups of participants who voluntarily or forcefully observed the hijab. The main difference is that the former group of participants gradually realized the restrictions, whereas an immediate restrictive effect was experienced by the latter group. For instance, in terms of hijabi women's clothing:

> Q: "What exactly made you feel like choking?" A: "Well, the hijab is not just the piece of cloth you put on your head… you have to wear clothing that's loose and covering and all that… so… I think the choking comes from *everything*… the entire attire, if you will… like the cloth on the head… the clothing… the long clothing… the loose clothing… always wearing baggy, I forgot how my body looks like… like I don't know who I am anymore as a woman… I don't know, like… I forgot, I forgot what I look like basically… I forgot, I forgot the shape of my body… I forgot, I forgot how I look like when I walk outside… I forgot how it feels to have the wind blow through my hair… I forgot how it feels when I have the sun hitting my skin… it's, it's very sad like even recalling this makes me sad, makes me tear up right now as I'm talking to you… because I felt I was in a prison basically, inside my own body… it was a prison… I was inside all these layers of cloth and they were prison that I was inside… (Ameera, 29)

During the interview, Ameera stated that the hijab made her feel like choking at some point. Metaphorically, the hijab is normally tied around one's head and neck, which can provoke a sense of being strangled. Practically, the hijab also constrains women's clothing choices (as Ameera mentioned earlier, she felt invisible to the male gaze in modest clothing). According to Ameera, the hijab transcends the purpose of covering women's hair. It enables gender embodiment since it functions as a "disciplinary artefact" that produces self-disciplining women. This occurs through the internalization of the importance of hijabi women concealing their bodies through modest clothing. As Ameera emphasizes, the layers of clothing she wore with the hijab felt like prison, where one is essentially isolated from the social gaze. This also created a sense of disconnection from the natural environment. Similarly:

> "With the hijab, I always felt invisible… that people actually can't see me, can't see the real [participant's name]… and this thing used to suffocate me, I feel that the hijab for me was a restriction, it wasn't only a cover for my hair, a cover also for my existence… ummm… it was something that makes me get angry… I was angry, I feel [like] I was screaming within myself…" (Asma, 39)

> "This is something psychological and like that, but in my view, people always gave me attention because of my appearance since I was little… that for example, I was the thinnest one in high school, my hair is beautiful, so people gave me attention because of my appearance, appearance, appearance! I wore the hijab, I became nobody! It's something difficult, something basic, but something difficult… that what's the thing that made people not even think that 'Oh [participant's name]!' or something like that… it became something extremely normal…" (Khulood, 20)

Asma and Khulood refer to their physical existence but social invisibility while wearing the hijab. The idea that a woman's covered hair and body provokes her sense of invisibility relates to the reduction of women to mere sexual bodies. As Khulood indicates, while she

always received compliments about her hair and body as a non-hijabi girl, she "became nobody" and sacrificed her desired feminine identity when she wore the hijab.

Furthermore, some participants encountered difficulties in finding hijab appropriate clothes:

> "Like the clothes you have to wear long, and I don't know what… when you go shopping it's so hard, everything has to be long and loose and I don't know what… I don't like tight and short but that I mean, you know what I mean, it's easier when you're not wearing the hijab… you just throw on anything and it's okay, come on lets go… but when you're wearing a hijab you actually have to like [avoid] transparent [clothing], I don't know what, like that… or for example [there's] something you like but in the shops it's not long sleeves so you have to pair it with something else that matches under, I don't know it's very chaotic…" (Futha, 26)

> "You take a normal blouse, a blouse not for a woman wearing hijab and you wear on top of it twins… like I stayed for certain years of my life I rot on this style, I felt finish! Till when am I going to wear *short with twins on top? Short with a long body?* I don't know… I feel like before even in the clothes I was constrained… I didn't find anything… it's difficult to find…" (Khadija, 27)

> "Matching up clothes! It was… you have to wear layers above layers! Because it was hard finding something that's considered it's only made for hijab… like… other than dresses… if you wear a dress sometimes the dress it's… it's a t-shirt and you have to wear something on top because you can't show your arms… that was really annoying…" (Sara, 28)

Despite being a dominant group in society, participants claim that hijabi women are not considered as a target market segment with specific clothing requirements that need be

tailored. Participants state the inconvenience of appropriating non-hijabi attire to fit hijabi expectations of being modest, which involved wearing layers of clothing to achieve the ideal hijabi image. This consumed their time, effort, and well-being. Thus, although participants' clothing choice were constrained by patriarchal discourses, limited options were available to enable their compliance with such discourses through a desired self-representation, which further suppresses their agency. Moreover, the hijab also constrained participants from a social interactional perspective:

> "Maybe that everything is counted on me… like before I wore it [the hijab] I was like young, I do what I want, nobody talks to me, nobody blames me on something I did, I was young… but after wearing it there are things that I can't do… like my relationship with my male cousins was very close, after I wore it, it became frowned upon that I be with them, chat and go out with them… like before I wore it, although it was a week or two, it was okay [that] I go out with them and chat with them, but after I wore it became frowned upon… so I think this is something sad… with the hijab comes many principles you must commit to…" (Amani, 26)

> "I remember there were guys from my uncle's sons and girls that we used to play with each other… you know when you are young, and the same age group play together… aaaa… I remember that I was banned from this thing… I couldn't sit with my guy cousins or play with them under the consideration that I am wearing the hijab… don't touch this, don't touch that, you can't do this…" (Khadija, 27)

The hijab appears to not only command women's clothing choices but also controls their behavior. It converts women into passive subjects since it is imbued with a metaphorical manual of do's and don'ts. The hijab also serves as a symbolic marker of women's maturity, which emphasizes the importance of "doing" femininity. As Amani and Khadija indicate, they were held accountable for their behavior after wearing the hijab. This includes compliance with interactional restrictions, whereby hijabi women should avoid

interactions with marriageable males (including male cousins). Restrictions also pertain to engaging in leisure activities:

> "I adore the sea and I go to the chalet [i.e., beach house], but I don't like wearing these clothes, I don't know how, black on black, the Islamic suit [i.e., a black nylon/polyster attire consisting of leggings, a loose and long-sleeved t-shirt, and a head cover] that makes me look like a penguin… I don't like it I swear, I look like a penguin… I was prohibited from the thing I love the most in the world, the thing I love the most is sea…" (Farah, 30)

> "Like I'm a woman who loves the beach… ok, you can go to the beach with an Islamic swim wear… you can… right… but you're not gonna get the tan… if you want to tell me, 'Ok [go to a] private place'… but not everywhere has a private place… you know…" (Moneera, 23)

> "The thing that I was really, really happy about and I wanted to throw my hijab because of it is… not for the sake of guys… like many people said for the sake of guys but not for guys… so that I could go horse riding, I can dive, I can do all those things… I know I can do them with the hijab, like I don't like the way I look! you know… like there are girls who find it ok, I don't like the way I look wearing the divers suit and diving…" (Laila, 27)

Participation in leisure activities while wearing the hijab appears to be burdensome for some women. This relates to issues concerning their appearance and inability to obtain the main purpose of their participation. For instance, Farah perceives the Islamic swim suit as an impediment to her self-representation. The Islamic swim suit is a substitute for other forms of swim wear to facilitate swimming for hijabi women. However, as Laila expresses, the Islamic swim suit prevented her from tanning, and women-only designated areas are

not readily available. Therefore, despite participants' awareness that several leisure activities can be performed with the hijab, there are certain boundaries that discourage participation. In other words, hijabi women are indirectly compelled to avoid leisure activities.

4.4.2.2 Sacrificing Social Capital (Ex-Hijabi)

Data suggests that due to the social construction of taking off the hijab as a deviant act in Kuwait, many participants were subjected to a potential loss of symbolic capital (i.e. individual/familial reputation) which in return, has led to their loss of social capital (i.e. familial relationships). The loss of participants' familial capital appears to be manifested in multiple ways. For instance, some participants experienced a lack of or limited interactions with one or more family member:

> "[My family] they were sad, of course [when I took off the hijab], they were sad… like they were very sad, not a little, to the extent that my mother said, 'We don't want to talk to you! Move away from me!' I feel like the family always cares about what people will say, we are in a society that fears what people say a lot…" (Mariam, 38)

> "Even my son I told him, 'Listen, I wore it, I will take it off, if you don't want to talk to me, don't talk to me' He stayed one month he didn't talk to me, like even Eid [i.e. an Islamic ritual which marks the end of Ramadan], we're having lunch, he totally doesn't join us… [he says,] 'Put it [the hijab] on, I go [out with you], you don't put it, I don't' …" (Shurooq, 49)

> "There were people, my uncle's children from my mother's side don't talk to me, they don't… like boys, they don't talk to me, they don't look at me… till now, there

are a few that don't look into my face when I talk to them… although their sisters are not wearing the hijab… *something strange*…" (Khulood, 20)

Mariam reveals that Kuwaiti's often prioritize their social conformity over their individual preferences. As she states, the desire to gain social acceptance manifests in individual's mundane lives, ranging from their clothing choices to their visited places. Relatedly, given that the group as opposed to individual identity is dominant in Arab-Islamic cultures, conformity is expected by all family members who are responsible to preserve their familial identity. However, the family's symbolic capital is primarily associated with women's behavior, meaning that deviant women threaten their family identity (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011). As experienced by Mariam and other participants, their choice to take off the hijab involved sacrificing familial interactions. For instance, Shurooq was neglected during a social ritual that requires familial cohesion. Her son exercised threat power to influence her behavior. Khulood, on the other hand, witnessed her male cousins lowering their gaze while talking to her, which indicates her loss of face. As such, lack of or limited interactions represents a form of power that families deploy to manipulate a woman's behavior. The opposite strategy is rewards power which involves rewarding hijabi women for their compliance. Furthermore, sometimes family members react in a more hostile manner:

"In terms of my family, they weren't accepting [that I take off the hijab]… my father told me, 'It's up to you but I don't agree'… in the beginning phase, the first year, my relationship with him was not ok, although me, I'm daddy's girl… he scolds me on pathetic things, my sister used to say, 'He is hating you because of the hijab matter that's why he's putting his tension on those things'…" (Laila, 27)

"There's a situation I forget to say… I have my uncle, I love him so, so much… he's unique to me, ok, so when I took it [the hijab] off, he doesn't know… suddenly he saw me, first thing he was angry, he started shouting! Yelling, yelling, yelling,

> yelling, like he said, 'How did you do something like that!' ok, after a while he stopped talking to me… this is something that affected me a lot… I forgot to say… the most negative situation…" (Khulood, 20)

Laila and Khulood share their exposure to verbal assault from male relatives whom they otherwise had a strong relationship with. As per Laila, it appears that her father privileged her over her (non-hijabi) sisters merely because she observed the hijab, which suggests that the artefact has invited the reward. After Laila has taken off the hijab, however, her father exerted his dominant role to secure her obedience. Both participants shed light on the idea that Arab-Muslim women's clothing decisions must be approved by male relatives, including those of their nuclear and extended families. For instance, although Khulood stated during the interview that her father approved of her decision to discard the hijab, her uncle's interference demonstrates the effect of extended family members on a woman's decision. This shows that Arab-Muslim women are exposed to a multi-layered form of familial power relations:

> "When people found out that I took it [the hijab] off they were giving me kinda like weird looks, like 'Ohhh why did you take it off?' Especially my *family!* Like my grandfather, my aunts… like it was really weird, I dunno, I just got a strange, very weird vibe from them... Ummm… like my grandfather, when he saw me the first time without it [the hijab] he's like, 'Ohh [participant's name], you used to wear the hijab before right?' Like stating the obvious, and I'm like, 'Ya I *used* to wear it, not anymore' Like I dunno it's obvious that I'm not wearing the hijab… like I removed it… like… I don't know, where do you want to reach for example?" (Sara, 28)

> "Negative reactions were from all the extended family basically, everybody that's like knew that I used to wear the hijab would be like, 'Oh! Why did she take it off?' like in a very sorry sounding tone… you could feel the disapproval and… but you

> have to be strong… you have to get to a point where it doesn't matter what people think but their reactions were always like 'Why?!', that was the question like 'Why?! Why did she take it off?' Like now they wanna know why! Before you can't question! You should wear it and you don't ask why you should wear it… you should just wear it… but when I took it off suddenly it's 'Why?', they wanna know, they wanna seek knowledge! Now they want answers! Now they're asking! Like 'Why? Why did you take it off?' They wanna know… (Ameera, 29)

Sara and Ameera emphasize on receiving cues of disapproval from the extended families after taking off the hijab. This was conveyed through judgmental gazes, sympathetic attitudes, and direct as well as indirect questions requesting clarifications for their behavior. The requirement for women to justify their behavior reflects Foucault's notion of exercising power through confessionary truths (Foucault, 1990). As Sara and Ameera state, their family members sought confession about why they have taken off the hijab, which can help in assessing and normalizing their behavior. Following Ameera, while wearing the act of the hijab appears to be non-negotiable, women who take off the hijab become the subject of attention:

> "They blamed me when I threw the hijab, my brothers were the most people in the world that blamed me… [they said,] 'You don't like it and you don't want it and we told you that this doesn't suit your life… doesn't suit your travels… or your weekends… or the beach… and, and… why did you wear it? why?... we know that you will throw it, why did you wear it so that you throw it, why??' They didn't blame me because of what people will say, they blamed me for wearing it and wanting to throw it again… [they said,] 'why? you either wear it permanently or you don't wear it from the beginning, so why do you put yourself that I want to wear it and then throw it, why??'… like this 'Why?' is what I heard a lot at home… they [my brothers] said it to me a lot, 'Hijab is not a toy, like you either wear it or don't wear it from the beginning, we didn't enforce the hijab on you, you ran and wore the hijab, why?'… this thing bothered them…" (Farah, 30)

Farah voluntarily chose to wear and take off the hijab. Her account demonstrates that Arab-Muslim women who engage in such agentic behavior pose a threat to the masculine identities of their male relatives. As Farah indicates, her ownership of her body appears to have offended her brothers who lacked authority over their sister. Although Farah initially observed the hijab against her brothers' will, it was not perceived as problematic behavior given her conformity with feminine expectations. However, after taking off the hijab following her father's consent, Farah proved that her brothers' opinions are secondary. Farah states that her brothers reprimanded her behavior which can be a means to reclaim their power and emphasize her inferiority. This was achieved through their explanation of the purpose of the hijab, such as indicating that it is a sacred attire that requires lifetime commitment rather than being a disposable consumption item, which implies Farah's irrationality.

Thus far, I have highlighted cases where participants were subjected to conflict with one or more family member while still maintaining physical inclusion within their households. On the other hand, sometimes women's abandonment is a family's collective decision:

> "During the time I took it [the hijab] off nobody stood by my side to the extent that I stayed in London for four months, four months my brother has been completely rejecting that I enter my father's house… I was disappointed a lot… but I tell you, when I threw it I knew this will happen but not to the extent that I don't enter the house or come or go… because I threw it while I'm outside Kuwait… so I told them [my family,] 'I will not come back with it'… [they said,] 'Since you're not coming back with it then don't come back at all'… I said, 'Ok, I will not come back!'…" (Dalal, 37)

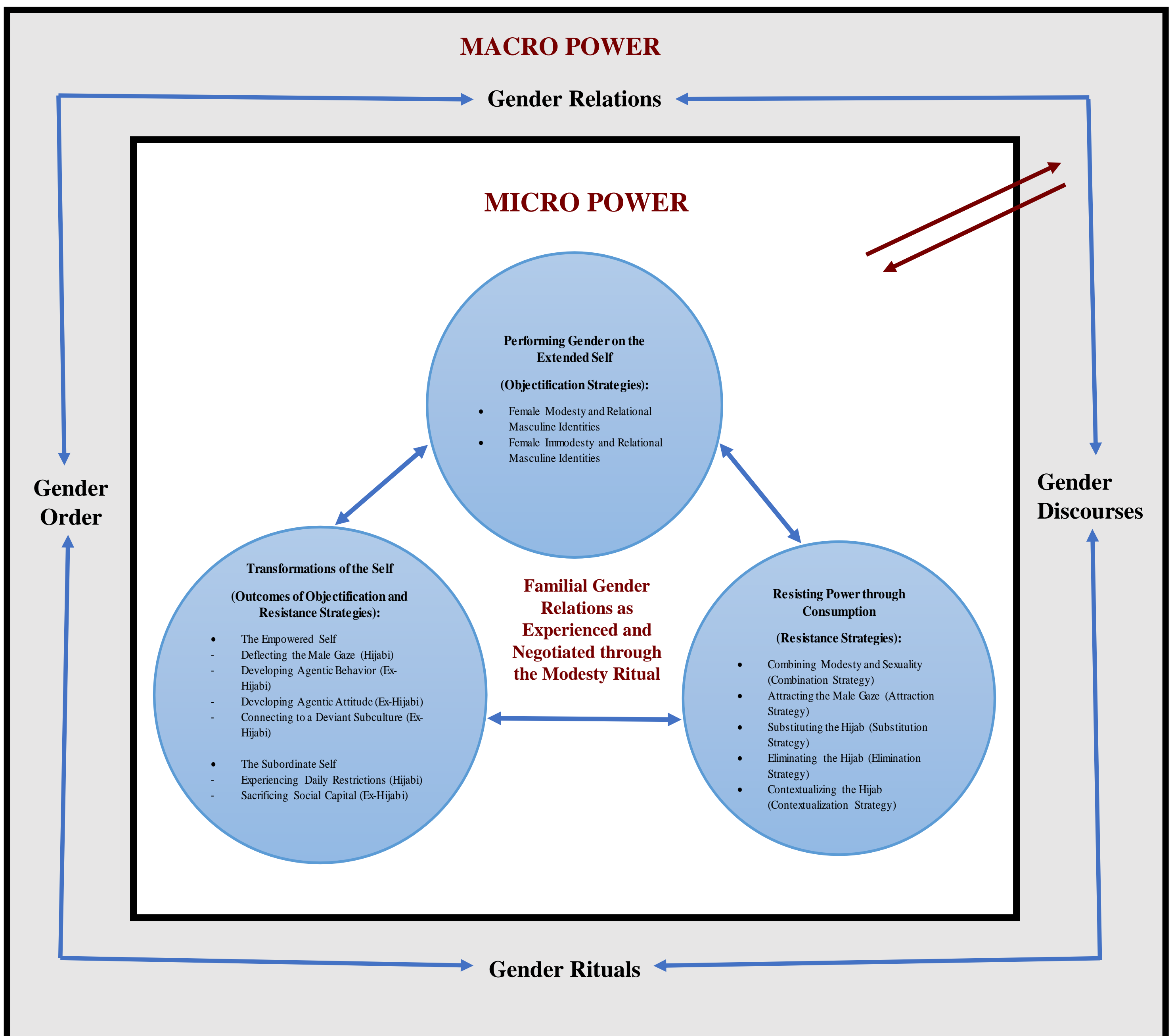
> “The thing that I can’t forget is that after removing the hijab is that I spent maybe from two to four years let’s say that most of my family were not talking to me, including my mother… I will not tell you it was something easy, it was something really, really, really, difficult… you know… especially that you didn’t do anything… from the things I faced is that even if someone proposed to me for marriage or something like that, it’s normal that they tell him ‘She is not our daughter and not from us’ and sorry for the word ‘She is like, a bitch!’… you know… ummm… so I tell you it affected me a lot psychologically, but it taught me to be strong… I even reached a stage that I want to run away from the whole country… you know… seriously I was planning, that I will put my stuff, money, passport and like that and I want to leave Kuwait totally…” (Maysa, 35)

Familial exclusion varies from a few months to a few years, depending on how different families perceive the severity of women’s rejection of the hijab. Relatedly, disciplinary strategies may either occur privately between a woman and her family (e.g. Dalal being prohibited from entering her father’s house) or involve a woman’s public ostracism (e.g. Maysa being Othered by her own family). The latter case in uncommon in Kuwait where families are often concerned with protecting their honour. Nonetheless, Maysa’s family distinguished themselves through “us” and “her” boundaries to emphasize their contempt towards her behavior, and thus, her out-group status can be a means to maintain their honour.

4.5 Overview of Findings

To conclude, the findings demonstrate how familial gender relations are experienced and negotiated by ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women in terms of the modesty ritual. The findings are summarized in the below figure 1:

4.5.1 Figure 1: Final Conceptual Model



The above conceptual model shows that the manifestation of gender power on the macro-social level influences how gender power operates on the micro-social level (in this case, within the family domain), and vice versa. The interviewed ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women indicate that their experiences of familial gender relations are largely shaped by how gender is constituted in the broader socio-cultural environment. This is depicted in the theme "**performing gender on the extended self**" where some participants discuss how their bodies are manipulated by their male relatives to construct their own masculine identities. Two female objectification strategies are identified, namely: 1) female modesty and relational masculine identity, and 2) female immodesty and relational masculine identity. It should be emphasized that modesty/immodesty are not applied as binary concepts, but rather used to explain that certain behaviors are socially interpreted as more modest or immodest than others. Also, as opposed to cases where 'immodesty' is enforced by male relatives, this research focuses on Kuwaiti women's voluntarily resistance towards 'modesty' despite being restrcited by their male relatives.

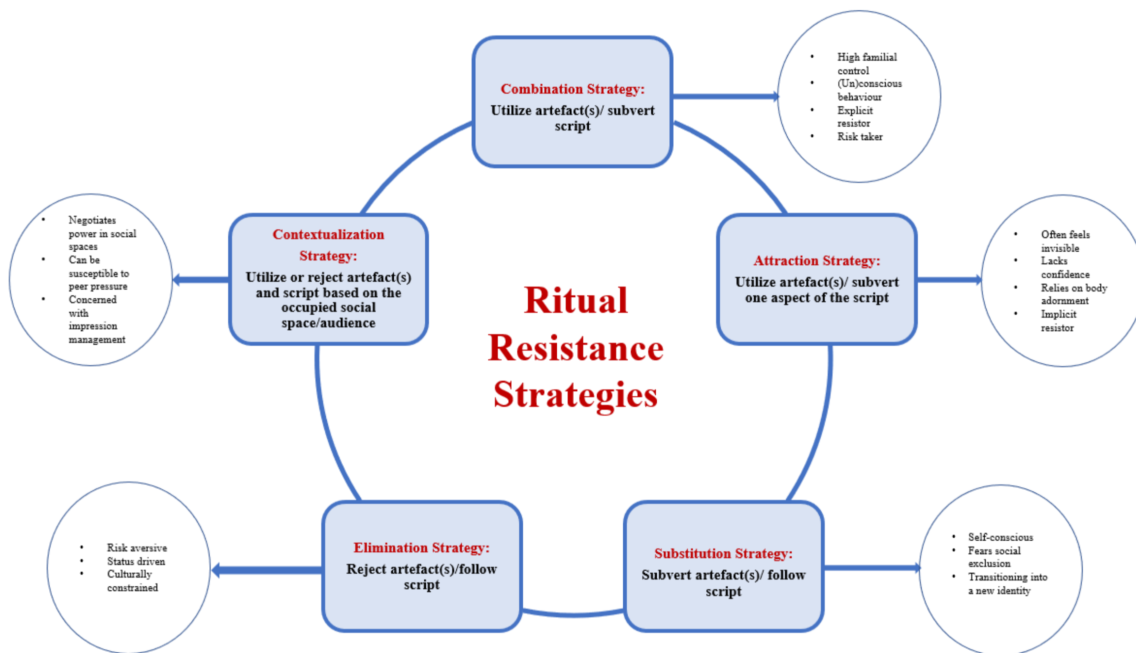
The theme "**resisting power through consumption**" reflects this tension between fulfilling familial expectations while simultaneously expressing personal desires. Through their consumption choices, participants refer to five resistance strategies, namely: 1) combining modesty and sexuality (combination strategy), 2) attracting the male gaze (attraction strategy), 3) substituting the hijab (substitution strategy), 4) eliminating the hijab (elimination strategy), and 5) contextualizing the hijab (contextualization strategy). The resistance strategies show that the interviewed Kuwaiti women are not passive recipients of hegemonic gender expectations but actively construct their own notions of modesty.

Following their experiences of objectification and resistance, the theme "**transformations of the self**" discusses how participants felt at different times throughout the process. This includes references to: 1) the empowered self and 2) the subordinate self. It is important to

note that self transformations are both fluid (changing over time) and co-existing (multiple transformations often occur).

In the next figure 2, I focus specifically on the ritual resistance strategies (combination strategy, attraction strategy, substitution strategy, elimination strategy, and contextualization strategy) as they form the key contribution of this study.

4.5.2 Figure 2: A Typology of Ritual Resistance Strategies



As depicted in figure 2 above, there are certain characteristics related to each resistant strategy. Although the presented typology discusses the studied Arab-Muslim women's experiences with resisting the modesty ritual, the resistance strategies can also be applied to other types of ritual contexts (e.g. weddings, proms, birthdays etc.). The identified

strategies reflect Arab-Muslim women's attempt to balance between familial/social expectations and personal desires. This mainly involves their reconstruction of the ritual experience through their manipulation of certain ritual elements (i.e. artefacts, script, and audience). That said, it is important to note that rather than being confined to one resistant strategy, participants often employed multiple strategies in a single period or over different periods of their lives. Also, there is no specific order in which the resistance strategies are performed; the importance of each strategy varies among participants and their unique personal experiences.

In the following discussion chapter, I offer a detailed theoretical linkage between the findings and existing literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the theoretical contributions identified from the research findings.

It is argued that context-specific research focuses on the studied phenomenon in a new context, “unfamiliar to Western researchers” which helps extend “existing scholarly knowledge” (Tsui, 2004; 498-499). In line with this, the phenomenological approach adapted in this thesis suggests that understanding lived experiences in an under-researched context is likely to advance theoretical insights (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). This stems from the belief that individuals’ lived experiences are informed by their socio-cultural contexts, and thus, both experiences and the context in which they occur are equally significant factors in phenomenological research (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011).

From this standpoint, and following Said (1979), it is important to examine the lived experiences of individuals belonging to Eastern societies to develop relevant knowledge rather than perceive them through a Western lens. That said, gender theories are mainly developed by Western scholars (Butler, 1988; de Beauvoir, 1972; Connell, 2014) which are not uniformly applicable to non-Western contexts (Jafari et al., 2012). Accordingly, this research develops gender theories by examining how gender relations are manifested in an Eastern context.

In the following, I present three main areas of theoretical contributions, namely; 1) the extended self as a gendered disciplinary mechanism, 2) the dynamics of cultural resistance, and 3) the impact of ritual artefacts on self-transformations.

5.1 The Extended Self as a Gendered Disciplinary Mechanism

The findings of this study offer two theoretical contributions related to power and gender relations in an Eastern context. The first contribution develops Foucault's gender-neutral disciplinary mechanisms by proposing a gendered disciplinary mechanism. The second contribution develops gender theories by exploring the implications of a gendered disciplinary mechanism on gender performance. Each contribution is discussed in depth below.

In his body of work entitled *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1991) explores the role of disciplinary power in producing social bodies. He introduces three main disciplinary mechanisms or technologies of domination; hierarchal observation, normalizing judgement, and examination (Foucault, 1991). To briefly recap from the literature review chapter, hierarchal observation refers to one's conformity with social norms due to being exposed to observation by others at any given point in time; normalizing judgement refers to one's conformity with social norms due to being aware of the resultant rewards, or punishments in case of non-conformity; and examination refers to one's conformity due to being both observed and judged against the norm (Foucault, 1991). The three disciplinary mechanisms reflect individuals' internalization of power, and are imbued in both macro and micro institutional settings (Foucault, 1991). However, given Foucault's lack of interest in gender per se, the disciplinary mechanisms represent a general form of disciplinary power being exercised over social subjects, including both men and women. Alternatively, the findings of this research reveal that Arab-Muslim women are particularly susceptible to disciplinary power within their families.

The findings develop Foucault's (1991) disciplinary mechanisms by revealing that the notion of "the extended self" (Belk, 1988) represents a "gendered" disciplinary mechanism. Following Belk (1988), the extended self refers to both tangible (material) and non-tangible (other people) aspects of one's self or identity. However, existing studies appear to

prioritize the tangible aspects of identity constructions (Noble and Walker; 1997; Ahuvia, 2005; Tian and Belk, 2005; Mittal, 2006; Belk, 2014) over the use of other people. This is because such studies are conducted in individualistic societies whereby individual as opposed to collective identities are more socially dominant. As Gjerso et al. (2014) point out, what constitutes one's "self" is largely influenced by cultural values. Therefore, in elaboration to previous studies, the collectivist context of this project reveals how gender identities are constructed through the manipulation of others.

More specifically, the findings reveal that the bodies of some women are utilized as objects (Belk, 1988) by their male relatives to construct their own masculine identities. This appears to manifest in two main ways; 1) females being forced by their male relatives to wear the hijab, and 2) females being prevented by their male relatives from wearing the hijab or being forced to take it off. The extent to which women identify as modest seems to be contingent upon whether a hegemonic or modern masculine identity is sought by the patriarch of the household, be it one's father, brother, husband, or even son. This suggests that women's bodies are "used, transformed and improved" (Foucault and Rabinow, 1991; 17) based on the desired masculine identities of their male relatives.

Although the manipulation of women's bodies by their male relatives is carried out on a micro interactional level (within their families), it is imperative to note that such male behavior is guided by gendered discourses that are constituted in the macro socio-cultural environment rather than being independent choices (Khalid, 2015). Arab-Muslim women are socially constructed as representative of their family honour, and one's identification with hegemonic masculinity in Arab-Islamic countries demands control over female relatives to ensure their modesty and in return, uphold the family's reputable social status. As Butler notes, "certain gender norms which originate within the family and are enforced through certain familial modes of punishment and reward and which, as a consequence, might be construed as highly individual … are rarely, if ever, radically original" (1988; 526). Thus, what happens within Arab-Muslim families tends to be a microcosm of socio-

cultural values, thereby indicating the existence of a bilateral relationship between the micro and macro levels of society (Ali, 2014).

Therefore, the theorization of the extended self as a gendered disciplinary mechanism follows from its shared characteristics with Foucault's (1991) disciplinary mechanisms, although it is applicable to women only. The association of men's masculine identities with the public representation of their female relatives produces self-disciplining women who become conscious about their appearance and behavior to avoid threatening the masculinity of their male relatives, and by extension, their family honour. The findings demonstrate that some women have internalized their own oppression/objectification by obtaining male permission regarding their clothing choices rather than act as independent agents. This shows that Muslim women are ""depersonalized": they are perceived as, are reacted to, and act as embodiments of the relevant in-group prototype rather than as unique individuals" (Hogg et al., 1995; 261). Furthermore, some women encountered rewards or punishments based on their compliance or non-compliance with male expectations, respectively. This is manifested through reward and threat power which are used to manipulate women's clothing choices. Therefore, in elaboration to Belk (1988), the findings show that the constitution of others as part of one's extended self represents more than just a means of constructing one's social identity, but reflects a disciplinary mechanism (Foucault, 1991), and a means of exercising power over others, either directly or indirectly.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that Western gender theories are insufficient in understanding gender constructions within Eastern contexts. While the broad characteristics of Western gender theories are applicable to Eastern contexts, including the idea that gender is 1) a historically situated social construct, 2) acquired through socialization processes, 3) a "doing" that contributes to the maintenance of the social order, and 4) a driving force underlying women's inferior social status in relation to men, the findings suggests that there are other overlooked aspects related to gender constructions within Arab-Islamic societies. That said, apart from general references made by Arab-Muslim feminist writers (including but not limited to El Saadawi, 1980; Mernissi, 1985;

Mahmood, 2005; ElTahawy, 2015) regarding the social situations of Arab-Muslim men and women, there appears to be a lack of explicit gender theorization in relation to Arab-Islamic societies. This study addresses this dearth in literature by revealing that gender constructions in Arab-Islamic societies are more complex than otherwise indicated in Western theories.

Unlike Butler (2011) who contends that individuals are held accountable for their own gender performance, the findings show that gender performance in Arab-Islamic societies transcends individuals' bodies and incorporates in-group members. This is especially with regards to the relational emphasis on masculinity as being dependent on the public representation of female relatives. As reflected in the findings, some women appear to be restricted from expressing their desired gender identities due to being socially identified as the extended self of their male relatives, and therefore, are held accountable for their masculine identities. In return, the social constitution of women as the extended self of their male relatives has led to male control over female bodies. Therefore, "doing" gender in Arab-Islamic societies appears to be a familial as well as individual concern.

Relatedly, while Connell (2005) argues that gender is relational in a sense that hegemonic masculinity occurs in contrast to hegemonic femininity, the findings reveal that a feminine characteristic such as female modesty, is relevant to the construction of both hegemonic masculine and feminine identities. This is because women who observe the hijab are not individually identifying with hegemonic feminine norms, but equally associate their male relatives with hegemonic masculinity due to being incorporated into their extended self.

5.2 The Dynamics of Cultural Resistance

The findings of this study offer theoretical contributions related to the notion of resistance from a cultural perspective. The contributions are derived from an analysis of Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards modesty.

It is important to note that existing studies on Muslim women tend to overemphasize the meanings ascribed to modesty (Boulanouar, 2006; Siraj, 2011; Hoekstra and Verkuyten, 2015) and how to be modest (Balasescu, 2007; Sandikci and Ger, 2007; Sobh et al., 2014; Abbas, 2015; Hassan and Harun, 2016), while overlooking the existence of deviant Muslim women who deploy certain resistance strategies towards being modest. Such studies perpetuate a generalized and static image of Muslim women that does not account for the lived experiences of those who are actively challenging rather than reproducing the gender order. Therefore, this study attempted to fill this gap in literature by exploring Arab-Muslim women's negotiation of familial gender relation in the process of resisting the modesty ritual. Phenomenologically, Arab-Muslim women's experiences with resisting modesty presents an example where context provides theoretical insight.

At the outset, this study reinforces the findings of existing studies (Close and Zinkhan, 2009; Tinson and Close, 2012; Tinson et al., 2013) by showing that ritual resistance can be directed towards an entire ritual or certain ritual elements (i.e. artefacts, script, and performance roles). It suggests that resistance does not necessarily imply non-participation in or withdrawal from a ritual, but individuals can also engage in various degrees of ritual (non)participation, ranging from overt to subtle behaviors. In addition, three main theoretical contributions are identified as follows:

First, the findings develop knowledge of resistance and consumption. Extant studies on consumer resistance appear to mainly focus on *resistance to* consumption per se. This

involves the rejection of certain products and/or service for personal and/or social reasons (Penaloza and Price, 1993; Hogg, 1998; Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Lee et al., 2009; Heath et al., 2017). However, the findings of this study reveal that individuals can use consumption as an everyday resistance strategy by engaging in *resistance through* consumption. In such cases, consumption can be used as a mechanism that enables individuals to express a deviant identity (Kates and Belk, 2001). Although *resistance through* consumption requires extensive reliance on product consumption, it has received minimal attention in consumer research (Kates and Belk, 2001).

For instance, Kates and Belk (2001) focus on *resistance through* consumption in secluded social spaces whereby the audience are aligned with the deviant behavior, and relatedly, there is no perceived threat to the social order. Conversely, the findings of this study show that *resistance through* consumption is not necessarily restricted to certain social spaces, but instead is publicly enacted and intended to inform social change. The findings show that rather than merely complying with the Islamic modesty ritual imposed onto them, many participants explained how they constructed their own notions of modesty (Al-Mutawa et al., 2015) by selectively adapting and modifying certain elements of the modesty ritual through their mundane consumption choices. Such behavior produces "multiple" modesties that challenge the dominant religious/patriarchal discourses and can have an impact on the gender order.

Second, the findings show that resistance is a continuous process rather than a single act. Existing studies on marketplace resistance (Penaloza and Price, 1993; Hogg, 1998; Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Lee et al., 2009; Cherrier et al., 2011) suggest that individuals can simply reject consumption of certain products/services and achieve their end goal. In this sense, power and resistance within the marketplace seem to be relatively static and non-negotiable. As Heath asserts, "while incredibly influential in wider social theory, [the dialectical relationship between power and resistance] tend[s] to be underrepresented in marketing research" (2017; 1284). In contrast, however, the findings of this study suggest that resistance between individuals is cyclical in that "domination

leads to resistance, which leads to the further exercise of power, provoking further resistance, and so on" (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004; 548). At the same time, this cyclical process of negotiating power within social groups is enabled through individuals' (non-)consumption choices. This is demonstrated by the participants who shared that negotiating power within their families is achieved through their (non-)consumption choices related to the modesty ritual.

Third, and related to the above point, the findings show that ritual resistance is a complex process. This is especially relevant to mundane ritual resistance (i.e. of gendered rituals) compared to resisting a ritual event (Close and Zinkhan, 2009) or a rite of passage (Nuttall and Tinson, 2011; Tinson et al., 2013). The findings of this study reveal that ritual resistors are not identified with a single resistant strategy (or a particular group) as suggested by Tinson and Close (2012) and Tinson et al. (2013). Instead, participants indicated that they employed multiple resistance strategies for the same purpose (i.e. resisting the modesty ritual). The importance of each resistant strategy varied among participants and their individual experiences. This finding supports the belief in multiple realities underpinning social constructionism. It also shows the fluidity underlying identity constructions.

5.3 The Impact of Ritual Artefacts on Self-Transformations

The findings of this study extend knowledge in relation to the impact of ritual artefacts on self-transformations. This includes how the presence or absence of ritual artefacts can have an impact on both one's self-perception as well as one's relation with others.

Initially, Turner's (1995) work establishes the foundations for understanding identity transformations. Turner (1995) posits that individuals are constantly exposed to changes in their social identities throughout their lives. Following Turner (1995), extant studies on identity transformations focus on the importance of ritual participation in facilitating individuals' transition from one social state to another (Bonsu and Belk, 2003; Gentina et al., 2012; Littlefield and Ozanneh, 2011; Afflerback et al., 2014; Gentina et al., 2017). However, Shankar et al. (2009) and Castilhos and Fonseca (2016) argue that such a linear conceptualization of identity changes undermines the challenges that individuals can encounter within the process. This is especially relevant when a deviant social identity is sought. In relation to this study, for instance, linear identity changes do not account for the effect of external social influences, such as gender norms, in restricting women's gender subversion (Butler, 1988).

Furthermore, studies on identity transformations appear to privilege changes to individuals' social identities when a new social state is acquired, without sufficient attention oriented towards the accompanied changes in individuals' self-perceptions. Emphasis is placed on how one is perceived by others (social-identity) as opposed to how one perceives oneself (self-identity). Also, due to being conducted in Western contexts, such studies overlook how a change in individuals' social identities can affect their relationship with their in-group members (with the exception of McAlexander et al., 2014). The findings of this study reveal the impact of ritual artefacts on transformations of the self as well as the self in relation to others.

Rook (1985) shows that ritual artefacts represent a central element of any ritual. The significance attached to ritual artefacts stem from their ability to command the script and performance roles of a ritual (Rook, 1985). From this standpoint, as opposed to exploring how participation in an entire ritual facilitates identity transformations, the findings show that ritual artefacts solely have the power to transform individuals' identities. In Foucauldian (1991) terms, I propose the notion of "disciplinary artefact(s)" to demonstrate the transformative power of ritual artefacts.

In the context of this study, the hijab represents the disciplinary artefact of the modesty ritual. This is because several participants claim that by merely wearing the hijab, they consciously ensured their compliance with the modesty script expectations bestowed upon hijabi women. This finding is consistent with other studies which show that the internalization of the hijab as a religious symbol creates self-disciplining hijabi women (Hopkins and Greenwood, 2013; Mansson McGinty, 2014; Izharuddin, 2018). In other words, "the *hijab* guides self-transformation and encourages the adoption of Islamic doctrine, which promotes a certain gendered and religious self" (Mansson McGinty, 2014; 691). Relatedly, the women involved in this study reflected on the changes to their self-perceptions while wearing and after taking off the hijab. As Hazır mentions, our clothing can "influence how we feel in our bodies (i.e. by generating feelings such as comfort, confidence or embarrassment)" (2016; 4).

In elaboration to Turner (1995) who focuses on social identity transformations as occurring across social states, the findings show that changes to individuals' self-perceptions occurs both across social states (i.e. how women perceive themselves after wearing or taking off the hijab) as well as within the same social state over time (i.e. how women perceive themselves at different stages of wearing the hijab). For instance, some women felt empowered by deflecting the male gaze when they first wore the hijab, but gradually began to feel suppressed due to experiencing daily restrictions.

The findings also show that self-perceptions can sometimes co-exist as several women felt simultaneously empowered and suppressed after taking off the hijab. That is, although some women felt empowered after taking off the hijab due to connecting to a deviant subculture, their loss of familial capital reflects their subordinate status within their families. This is when the impact of the disciplinary artefact on one's social relations comes into play. Existing studies on collective identity transformations often focus on a national level of analysis, such how a host country can influence immigrants' identity constructions in lieu with the dominant culture (Üstüner and Holt, 2007; Jafari and Goulding, 2008). However, such an approach focuses on the effect of macro power on a whole social group (e.g. immigrants). On the contrary, from a micro-interactional level of society, the findings show how individuals' identity transformations simultaneously transforms their treatment by other members of their social groups.

In response to Sherry and Fischer's (2017) call for research on gender and consumption, and specifically the role of consumer goods in (dis)empowering women, the findings demonstrate that the hijab functions as a disciplinary artefact that makes women feel (dis)empowered. Importantly, changes in one's self-identity does not suggest an equivalent change in one's social-identity. Although some women felt empowered when wearing or taking off the hijab, this does not imply their social empowerment. For instance, the findings show that while wearing the hijab can provoke a sense of empowerment, this is subject to compliance with hegemonic feminine norms. Similarly, those who felt empowered after taking off the hijab are socially identified as deviant.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This chapter offers an overview of the theoretical framework, the research implications, and directions for future research.

6.1 Overview of the Theoretical Framework

Following an in-depth literature review and identification of gaps in knowledge, I set out to explore how Arab-Muslim women experience familial gender relations in terms of the modesty ritual, and in return, how do they negotiate familial gender relations through resisting the modesty ritual. This was due to the lack of theorization of gender relations in Eastern contexts. In particular, my choice of Arab-Muslim women was guided by the dominant misconceptions of such women as voiceless victims of a patriarchal Islam. This generalization both reduces Arab-Muslim women to passive subjects of oppression, and relatedly, neglects the existence and experiences of deviant Arab-Muslim women. Hence, while extant literature primarily focuses on Arab-Muslim women's *participation* in the modesty ritual, I chose to phenomenologically understand the lived experiences of Arab-Muslim women's *resistance* towards the modesty ritual. This was achieved through data collected from twenty-three ex-hijabi Kuwaiti women and some of their nuclear family relatives. The research findings offer several contributions to theories of gender, resistance, and rituals as outlined below:

First, this research develops existing Western gender frameworks by theorizing how gender relations manifest in an Eastern context. The notion of "the extended self" (Belk, 1988) is constructed as a gendered disciplinary mechanism, which complements Foucault's (1991) gender-neutral disciplinary mechanisms. Arab-Muslim women appear to be socially constructed as the extended self of the kinsmen since the public representation of their bodies are reflective of the masculine identities of their male relatives. This has led to the manipulation of female bodies by their male relatives to construct their own masculine

identities. Thus, apart from dominant gender discourses which emphasize women's inferior status in relation to men (Butler, 2004), Arab-Muslim women are also held accountable for representing the masculine identities of their male relatives through their bodily performance which further contributes to their inferiority.

Second, this research differs from consumer research studies which mainly explore marketplace resistance (Penaloza and Price, 1993; Hogg, 1998; Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Lee et al., 2009; Cherrier et al., 2011) as well as resistance towards ritual events (Close and Zinkhan, 2009) or rites of passage (Nuttall and Tinson, 2011; Tinson et al., 2013). It focuses on Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards gendered consumption rituals, which involve mundane acts of resistance that are not restricted to secluded social spaces (e.g. Kates, 2003; Kates, 2004; Martin et al., 2006; Goulding and Saren, 2009; Thompson and Üstüner, 2015). As Butler (2011) posits, the possibility of gender transformations occurs when traditional gendered rituals are continuously subverted by women. However, this research also shows that resisting gendered rituals is a complex process that involves continuous negotiation of power through (non-)consumption choices.

Third, in addition to studies on identity transformations which focus on how ritual participation facilitates *social identity* changes (Bonsu and Belk, 2003; Gentina et al., 2012; Littlefield and Ozanneh, 2011; Afflerback et al., 2014), this research reveals the transformative role of ritual artefacts in transforming one's *self identity*. It introduces a new concept in understanding rituals, namely the 'disciplinary ritual artefact' – the presence or absence of a disciplinary ritual artefact can have an impact on one's self-perception as well as one's relationship with others. While Turner (1995) posits that social identity transformations occur across social states, this research demonstrates that changes in self-perceptions occur both within and across social states. Thus, unlike social identities, self identities are constructed as fluid.

6.2 Research Implications

This section provides the practical implications of this research including; 1) social implications, and 2) business implications.

6.2.1 Social Implications

Initially, this thesis addressed the importance of listening to the voices of the silenced Muslim women. Understanding the lived experiences of such women represents the first step towards social change. However, the next crucial step involves raising awareness about their lived experiences through social action. Without this latter step, the silenced Muslim women would remain as they are, silenced. I therefore offer social implications that could have a progressive impact on Kuwaiti women's social situations.

First, I briefly shed light on gender politics in Kuwait to explain the current political system and then suggest potential improvements based on the research findings. Kuwait has been identified as a pluralistic society – within the political sphere, there are conservative and liberal groups each competing for Kuwait to follow their partisan ideals (Al Terkait, 2018). Conservatives argue that women should comply with the Sharia (Islamic law) through veiling, while their liberal opponents advocate women's freedom of choice in their clothing (Al Terkait, 2018). Accordingly, this research can inform the political debate concerning women's public representations. It offers substantial contributions that both political groups (conservatives and liberals) can use to improve understandings of issues encountered by Kuwaiti women.

The findings show that the enforcement of veiling involves the oppression and objectification of women. However, contrary to conservative beliefs, this does not result in compliance by women, but rather leads to their active engagement in resistance strategies.

Relatedly, forcing women to veil appears to have a negative impact on the hijab as a symbol of modesty, since many women are not complying with the modest dress code. Therefore, the findings can improve policies concerning women's rights in Kuwait.

Since conservative groups are keen to perpetuate patriarchal interpretations of Islam, their awareness that forced veiling would threaten their perception of Islam might lead them to soften their approach in terms of women's clothing. At the same time, liberals can use religion to justify the importance of women's voluntarily choice to (un)veil. The findings can facilitate lobbying amongst activists and social groups who are protesting for women's freedom to choose their clothing. For example, a protest campaign can feature a hijabi woman wearing provocative clothing versus a non-hijabi women wearing modest clothing. The slogan "I represent myself, my hijab doesn't represent me!" can be used to accompany the visual depictions. This is to communicate the message that modesty is not necessarily confined to hijabi women, and that those who are forced to observe the hijab are not 'more' modest than their non-hijabi counterparts, as argued by conservative groups (Al Terkait, 2018). In addition, the campaign can also be disseminated over social media platforms to reach a wider public.

Overall, whether the findings influence conservatives or liberals, in both cases they are favoring Kuwaiti women's rights.

6.2.2 Business Implications

The social implications addressed above can be translated into business implications concerning Muslim women's fashion desires. As a marketing PhD student in the school of management, I have become aware of a connection between sociological issues and marketing practices, which are often treated separately.

Currently, the global fashion industry appears to target hijabi and non-hijabi women while overlooking the consumption desires of those who identify as “in-between” those two identities, a third segment/category of women that is deemed socially invisible. Since the hijab is widely associated with Muslim women, their reduction to being either hijabi or non-hijabi masks the diversity of Muslim women’s identities. The findings of this research provide an opportunity for marketers to target the “in-between” Arab-Muslim women who want to take off the hijab but are prevented by their families. In other words, familial power can be transformed into commercial power when marketers target vulnerable Arab-Muslim women.

Several ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women indicated their extensive reliance on consumption practices to express their resistance towards the hijab while still wearing it. This involves, for example, wearing the hijab with revealing and/or form-fitting clothing, wearing the hijab with attractive feminine adornments to capture male attention, and wearing alternative forms of fashionable head covers to substitute the traditional hijab. These different strategies can be represented in global fashion advertisements to support Arab-Muslim women’s empowerment. This can be achieved through collaborations with already existing female social media influencers (e.g. Ascia Al Faraj and Mona Haydar) whose consumption behavior resembles that of the studied sample of ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women. Alternatively, marketers can also recruit other female models to communicate the same social image.

In doing so, marketers would support Arab-Muslim women’s rights over their bodies, attract the relevant target segment, and increase sales/profits.

6.3 Directions for Future Research

This section proposes directions for future research based on three aspects; 1) applicability of the research in other contexts, 2) addressing the research limitations, and 3) exploring alternative avenues for the research topic.

6.3.1 Applicability of the Research in Other Contexts

This research examines ritual resistance in terms of a specific cultural context (i.e. resistance towards the modesty ritual by Arab-Muslim women). It shows that for some women, ritual resistance is a challenging process that requires balancing between cultural/familial expectations and personal desires. This is achieved through various resistance strategies which involve the manipulation of certain ritual elements (i.e. artefacts, script, and audience). However, the findings of this research also relate to other ritual contexts rather than being limited in their application to the modesty ritual and/or Arab-Muslim women. For example, non-conformity with traditional wedding and funeral ceremonies (of a particular culture) can be considered as subversive public acts that challenge the social order. In such cases, the resistance strategies identified in this research enable individuals to simulatenously express their conformity and non-conformity with a ritual, rather than being identified as either conformist or non-conformist.

6.3.2 Addressing the Research Limitations

Apart from the limitations of the data collection methods, I identified several limitations related to the overall research which can guide the work of future researchers.

First, while this study involves a diverse sample of women in terms of social classes (upper, middle, and lower) and age groups (nineteen to fifty-three years old), women belonging to

Kuwait's ruling family (Al Sabah) and women classified as minors (below eighteen years old) were not included in the study due to accessibility and assent issues, respectively. However, their inclusion can improve sample diversity and provide an in-depth understanding of Kuwaiti women's experiences with resisting modesty. For instance, the experiences of women belonging to the ruling family are likely to differ based on their noble social status, which compared to ordinary citizens, exposes them to increased surveillance and pressure to maintain their family honour. Although ordinary citizens may find it difficult to access information about a member of the ruling family, a researcher who already identifies as part of that family can easily obtain such information. Furthermore, minors also represent teenagers who are known for their rebellious behavior and whose experiences in resisting the modesty ritual might offer a novel perspective to the phenomenon. To avoid the violation of the research ethics, parental consent can be attained to include women who are classified as minors.

Second, while women's lived experiences appear to be largely influences by their male relatives, this study was limited in terms of obtaining male perspectives on the modesty ritual. Only a small sample of nine male participants was obtained, consisting of three interviews and six written accounts. Participation was also restricted to either male members of the same family (the father, brother(s), and husband of a core participant) or only one male family member (the son or husband of a core participant). Accordingly, men's values were not fully addressed except through the reflective narratives of women. At the same time, this study shows that while Kuwaiti men are socially pressured to conform with hegemonic masculinity norms which necessitate the modesty of their female relatives, many of them do not impose modesty on their female relatives. Hence, another study that explores male perspectives on the modesty ritual would develop knowledge about how men are socially pressured to impose modesty on their female relatives, and relatedly, the motives underlying their behavior in terms of whether they do(not) impose modesty.

Third, access to core participants, and thus, to data, was limited from an observational perspective. The study relies on interviews to gather data related to women's past experiences, therefore they were not observed in their natural environments. However, direct, first-hand observation of women within their mundane environments might reveal behavioral conflicts related to familial expectations and personal desires. A future study involving observations, alongside interviews, can enhance the overall findings as the researcher is able to compare "what is said" to "what is done" and identify any disparities/contradictions. This is because spending prolonged periods of time with women who are resisting the modesty ritual (as identified in this study) can provide access to their unconscious behavioral cues that are not necessarily accessible through reflective narratives, such as in the interview setting.

6.3.2 Exploring Alternative Avenues for the Research Topic

The idea of Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards the modesty ritual appears to be a novel area of research which could be further extended to develop knowledge in relation the interplay between power and resistance.

This study contributes to existing knowledge by examining how familial gender relations are negotiated in the process of Arab-Muslim women's resistance towards the modesty ritual, thereby focusing on a micro-social level of analysis. Alternatively, I suggest other avenues that could inform future research.

First, I recommend that a longitudinal study can explain the impact of micro interactions on macro processes over time. In other words, a deviant behavior at one point in time might later become normalized due to its repetition. In terms of the studied context, for example, the act of resisting the modesty ritual is not an inconsequential act, but rather defies gender roles which has the potential to shatter and reproduce gender constructions.

Second, I explored the act of resisting a public ritual as a unidirectional process. Another interesting perspective would be to look at the reverse process, which involves the experiences of individuals who resisted a public ritual and then decided to participate in it once again. This raises overlooked questions such as; would individuals be able to swiftly reintegrate with their former social group or would they become discredited? What are the consequences associated with the reintegration with one's former social group? And how do individuals deal with any challenges in the process of their reintegration? In the context of this study, this involves exploring the experiences of ex-hijabi Arab-Muslim women who decide to wear the hijab again.

Third, variations in resisting a public ritual can be found across different cultural contexts. A cross-cultural study would reveal how power and resistance operate based on distinct cultural norms and values. For instance, a cross-cultural comparison between Kuwaiti versus Saudi Arabian women's resistance to the modesty ritual is likely to reveal different resistance strategies due to the following; 1) the hijab is a legal rather than social requirement in Saudi Arabia, 2) women in Saudi Arabia are obliged to wear an abaya (a long and loose black cloak that conceals a woman's entire body, with the exception of her face and hands), and 3) the policing of female bodies in Saudi Arabia is a legal public enactment, meaning that religious men have the authority to scold/punish deviant women.

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Appendices

Note: All interview questions intended to guide rather than restrict the discussion. In line with the open-ended nature of the interviews, I was not strictly limited with asking only the following questions. Instead, multiple follow-up questions were raised based on each participant's responses. Also, the interview questions were not addressed in an orderly manner as sometimes participants provided extensive answers that covered two or more questions or discussed certain aspects that required me to skip to specific questions.

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheets

<u>For Core Participants (Interviews):</u>

Participant Information Sheet

University of Bath

School of Management

Marketing Department

Research Title: Understanding the Role of the Hijab in Kuwait

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Introduction

My name is Doha Saleh AlMutawaa and I am a PhD student in Marketing at the University of Bath, United Kingdom. My research seeks to develop understanding of how the cultural norms in Kuwait influence Kuwaiti women's public representation in terms of their clothing choices, with specific focus on the act of wearing and taking off the hijab. I would like to invite you to take part in a one-to-one interview concerning this research project. To help you decide whether you wish to take part in this research, this form provides detailed information about the research purpose, your invitation to participate, your involvement in the research, the benefits/risks of participating, deciding to withdraw your participation, and the handling of data. My contact details as well as my supervisors are also provided for your reference.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to provide an in-depth understanding of how the cultural norms in Kuwait influence Kuwaiti women's public representation. It particularly explores women's personal and social experiences with wearing and later taking off the hijab.

Why am I invited to participate?

You are invited to participate because you fit the required sample criteria of this research. The target sample for this research is Kuwaiti women who have experienced wearing and taking off the hijab.

What does my participation involve?

Your participation involves a one-to-one meeting with me at your own convenience. This means that the date, time, and location of the interview depends on your choice. The duration of the interview also depends on the amount of information you are willing to share.

The interview will be about your experience with the hijab. You can bring along some of your pictures with and/or without the hijab to discuss as part of the interview. The pictures will not be collected, and you can still take part in the interview without providing any pictures.

You can skip any questions and/or take breaks at any stage during the interview. You can also withdraw your participation at any stage during or after the interview, without giving a reason.

How will data be handled?

Data will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Your interview will be audio recorded and later written word-for-word by myself. Your participation in this research and identity will remain anonymous under all circumstances. The information you share in the interview will only be accessed and used by myself in its original form. For publishing any of your shared information, I will give you a fake name and exclude any information that would reveal your identity and the identity of others mentioned in your interview. Only the written version of the interview will be used in the form of quotes. The information you share in the interview will only be used in this PhD research project and related publications. I will delete the recorded interview after translating it word-for-word in written form.

What are the benefits of participating?

There are no direct benefits of participating in this research. However, if you are interested, I can share the research results with you. I can send you an anonymized copy of the findings and/or meet you in-person to discuss them.

What are the possible risks of participating?

The only possible risk of participating is being identified by others. This will certainly be avoided as I am strictly complying with the Data Protection Act (1998) to ensure that your identity is protected.

What will happen if I decide to withdraw my participation?

Your participation is entirely optional; no pressure to participate is imposed by any parties. If you decide to withdraw your participation, I will immediately delete all the collected/recorded information and exclude your participation.

What if I have additional questions?

You are encouraged to ask me any questions by directly contacting me on my telephone number or emailing me on: dsaa22@bath.ac.uk. Questions can be asked before, during, and after the interview.

What if I have a problem?

If you have any complaint/concern about any aspect related to your involvement in this research, please contact any of my supervisors on the details provided below:

First Supervisor: Dr. Peter Nuttall – pn230@bath.ac.uk

Second Supervisor: Professor Avi Shankar – a.shankar@bath.ac.uk

Third Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Mamali – e.mamali@bath.ac.uk

Who is funding this research?

This research is self-funded.

Thank you for taking the time to read this **Participant Information Sheet**. If you have decided to participate in this research, please refer to the attached **Participant Consent Form**.

For Relatives (Interviews):

Participant Information Sheet

University of Bath

School of Management

Marketing Department

Research Title: Understanding the Role of the Hijab in Kuwait

---

Introduction

My name is Doha Saleh AlMutawaa and I am a PhD student in Marketing at the University of Bath, United Kingdom. My research seeks to develop understanding of how the cultural norms in Kuwait influence Kuwaiti women's public representation in terms of their clothing choices, with specific focus on the act of wearing and taking off the hijab. I would like to invite you to take part in a one-to-one interview concerning this research project. To help you decide whether you wish to take part in this research, this form provides detailed information about the research purpose, your invitation to participate, your involvement in the research, the benefits/risks of participating, deciding to withdraw your participation, and the handling of data. My contact details as well as my supervisors are also provided for your reference.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to provide an in-depth understanding of how the cultural norms in Kuwait influence Kuwaiti women's public representation. It particularly explores women's personal and social experiences with wearing and later taking off the hijab.

Why am I invited to participate?

You are invited to participate to help me understand the different meanings of the hijab in Kuwait.

What does my participation involve?

Your participation involves a one-to-one meeting with me at your own convenience. This means that the date, time, and location of the interview depends on your choice. The duration of the interview also depends on the amount of information you are willing to share.

The interview will be about your opinion on the hijab. You can skip any questions and/or take breaks at any stage during the interview. You can also withdraw your participation at any stage during or after the interview, without giving a reason.

How will data be handled?

Data will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Your interview will be audio recorded and later written word-for-word by myself. Your participation in this research and identity will remain anonymous under all circumstances. The information you share in the interview will only be accessed and used by myself in its original form. For publishing any of your shared information, I will give you a fake name and exclude any information that would reveal your identity and the identity of others mentioned in your interview. Only the written version of the interview will be used in the form of quotes. The information you share in the interview will only be used in this PhD research project and related publications. I will delete the recorded interview after translating it word-for-word in written form.

What are the benefits of participating?

There are no direct benefits of participating in this research. However, if you are interested, I can share the research results with you. I can send you an anonymized copy of the findings and/or meet you in-person to discuss them.

What are the possible risks of participating?

The only possible risk of participating is being identified by others. This will certainly be avoided as I am strictly complying with the Data Protection Act (1998) to ensure that your identity is protected.

What will happen if I decide to withdraw my participation?

Your participation is entirely optional; no pressure to participate is imposed by any parties. If you decide to withdraw your participation, I will immediately delete all the collected/recorded information and exclude your participation.

What if I have additional questions?

You are encouraged to ask me any questions by directly contacting me on my telephone number or emailing me on: dsaa22@bath.ac.uk. Questions can be asked before, during, and after the interview.

What if I have a problem?

If you have any complaint/concern about any aspect related to your involvement in this research, please contact any of my supervisors on the details provided below:

First Supervisor: Dr. Peter Nuttall – pn230@bath.ac.uk

Second Supervisor: Professor Avi Shankar – a.shankar@bath.ac.uk

Third Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Mamali – e.mamali@bath.ac.uk

Who is funding this research?

This research is self-funded.

Thank you for taking the time to read this **Participant Information Sheet**. If you have decided to participate in this research, please refer to the attached **Participant Consent Form**.

For Relatives (Written Accounts):

Participant Information Sheet

University of Bath

School of Management

Marketing Department

Research Title: Understanding the Role of the Hijab in Kuwait

---

Introduction

My name is Doha Saleh AlMutawaa and I am a PhD student in Marketing at the University of Bath, United Kingdom. My research seeks to develop understanding of how the cultural norms in Kuwait influence Kuwaiti women's public representation in terms of their clothing choices, with specific focus on the act of wearing and taking off the hijab. I would like to invite you to provide a written response concerning this research project. To help you decide whether you wish to take part in this research, this form provides detailed information about the research purpose, your invitation to participate, your involvement in the research, the benefits/risks of participating, deciding to withdraw your participation, and the handling of data. My contact details as well as my supervisors are also provided for your reference.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to provide an in-depth understanding of how the cultural norms in Kuwait influence Kuwaiti women's public representation. It particularly explores women's personal and social experiences with wearing and later taking off the hijab.

Why am I invited to participate?

You are invited to participate to help me understand the different meanings of the hijab in Kuwait.

What does my participation involve?

Your participation involves providing your written responses about your opinion on the hijab. I will forward a set of questions to you on your preferred mode of communication. You can take as much time as needed to answer the questions and send them back to me.

You can skip any questions. You can also withdraw your participations at any stage, even after sending your written response, without giving a reason.

How will data be handled?

Data will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Your written response will be sent directly to myself. Your participation in this research and identity will remain anonymous under all circumstances. The information you share in the written response will only be accessed and used by myself in its original form. For publishing any of your shared information, I will give you a fake name and exclude any information that would reveal your identity and the identity of others mentioned in your written response. The information you share in the written response will only be used in this PhD research project and related publications. I will delete the written response from my end after I anonymously save it on my laptop. I also advise you to delete the written response once I confirm its receipt to ensure your anonymity.

What are the benefits of participating?

There are no direct benefits of participating in this research. However, if you are interested, I can share the research results with you. I can send you an anonymized copy of the findings and/or meet you in-person to discuss them.

What are the possible risks of participating?

The only possible risk of participating is being identified by others. This will certainly be avoided as I am strictly complying with the Data Protection Act (1998) to ensure that your identity is protected.

What will happen if I decide to withdraw my participation?

Your participation is entirely optional; no pressure to participate is imposed by any parties. If you decide to withdraw your participation, I will immediately delete all the collected information and exclude your participation.

What if I have additional questions?

You are encouraged to ask me any questions by directly contacting me on my telephone number or emailing me on: dsaa22@bath.ac.uk. Questions can be asked before, in the process of, and after providing the written response.

What if I have a problem?

If you have any complaint/concern about any aspect related to your involvement in this research, please contact any of my supervisors on the details provided below:

First Supervisor: Dr. Peter Nuttall – pn230@bath.ac.uk

Second Supervisor: Professor Avi Shankar – a.shankar@bath.ac.uk

Third Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Mamali – e.mamali@bath.ac.uk

Who is funding this research?

This research is self-funded.

Thank you for taking the time to read this **Participant Information Sheet**. If you have decided to participate in this research, please refer to the attached **Participant Consent Form**.

Appendix B: Participant Consent Sheets

For Core Participants and Relatives (Interviews):

Participant Consent Form

Research Title: Understanding the Role of the Hijab in Kuwait

---

To participate in the interview, please carefully read and sign this **Participant Consent Form**.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the **Participant Information Sheet** related to this research project.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded and later written word-for-word by the researcher.
- I understand that the information I share will only be accessed and used by the researcher in its original form.
- I understand that my participation in this research and identity will remain anonymous under all circumstances. For public reports of the results, the researcher will give me a fake name and exclude any information that would reveal my identity and the identity of others I mention in the interview.
- I understand that the information I share will only be used for this study and related publications.
- I understand that I can skip questions and/or take breaks at any stage during the interview.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation at any stage during or after the interview without giving a reason.
- I understand that if I decide to withdraw my participation, the researcher will immediately delete all the collected/recorded information obtained from me.
- I understand that I can ask any questions before, during, and after the interview.

- I understand that I will determine the interview duration depending on the amount of information I want to share.
- I understand that I will not receive any direct benefits for participating in this research.
- I voluntarily consent to participate in this research.
- I confirm that I am 18+ years old.

________________________ ____________________

Participant's Signature **Date** (DD/MM/YY)

________________________ ____________________

Researcher's Signature **Date** (DD/MM/YY)

For Relatives (Written Accounts):

Participant Consent Form

Research Title: Understanding the Role of the Hijab in Kuwait

---

To participate in providing your written response, please carefully read and sign this **Participant Consent Form**.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the **Participant Information Sheet** related to this research project.
- I agree to send my written response to the researcher.
- I understand that the information I share will only be accessed and used by the researcher in its original form.
- I understand that my participation in this research and identity will remain anonymous under all circumstances. For public reports of the results, the researcher will give me a fake name and exclude any information that would reveal my identity and the identity of others I mention in the written response.
- I understand that the information I share will only be used for this study and related publications.
- I understand that I can skip questions.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation, even after sending my written response, without giving a reason.
- I understand that if I decide to withdraw my participation, the researcher will immediately delete all the collected information obtained from me.
- I understand that I can ask any questions before, in the process of, and after providing my written response.
- I understand that I can take my time in completing my written response.
- I understand that I am responsible to delete my written response after the researcher confirms its receipt.
- I understand that I will not receive any direct benefits for participating in this research.

- I voluntarily consent to participate in this research.
- I confirm that I am 18+ years old.

______________________ ______________________

Participant's Signature **Date** (DD/MM/YY)

______________________ ______________________

Researcher's Signature **Date** (DD/MM/YY)

Appendix C: Participant Questions

For Core Participants (Interview Guide):

Perceptions of the Hijab:

- Could you please tell me what does the hijab mean to you?
- How did you learn about the hijab?
- What do you think about those who wear the hijab? Why?
- What do you think of those who don't wear the hijab? Why?
- What do you think influences one's decision to wear the hijab? Why?

Wearing the Hijab:

- Could you please tell me about your experience with the hijab?
- How old were you when you first started wearing the hijab?
- Why did you wear the hijab?
- (If it was a personal choice) Did you consult your parents before wearing the hijab?
- How did your father react to your decision? How did his reaction make you feel? Who/what do you think influenced his reaction?
- How did your mother react to your decision? How did her reaction make you feel? Who/what do you think influenced her reaction?
- (If married) Did you consult your husband before wearing the hijab? How did he react to your decision? How did his reaction make you feel? Who/what do you think influenced his reaction?
- Do you remember any instances when someone reacted 'positively' towards you 'wearing' the hijab? Could you please tell me more about it?
- Do you remember any instances when someone reacted 'negatively' towards you 'wearing' the hijab? Could you please tell me more about it?

- How did you feel about yourself when you wore the hijab? What made you feel that way?

<u>Removing the Hijab:</u>

- For how many years did you have the hijab on? at what age did you remove it?
- Why did you remove the hijab?
- How did you approach your parents about wanting to remove the hijab?
- How did your father react? How did his reaction make you feel? Who/what do you think influenced his reaction?
- How did your mother react? How did her reaction make you feel? Who/what do you think influenced her reaction?
- (If one or both parent(s) did not accept the removal) How did you cope with the situation?
- Do you have any siblings? (If yes) did any of them interfere in your decision to remove the hijab? (If yes) How did they interfere? How did this make you feel?
- (If married) how did you approach your husband about wanting to remove the hijab? How did he react? How did his reaction make you feel?
- (If husband did not accept the removal) How did you cope with the situation?
- Did you remove the hijab overnight or was it a transition? What influenced your decision? (If transition) how did you transition?
- Do you remember any instances when someone reacted 'positively' towards your 'removal' of the hijab? Could you please tell me more about it?
- Do you remember any instances when someone reacted 'negatively' towards your 'removal' of the hijab? Could you please tell me more about it?
- How did you feel about yourself when you removed the hijab? What made you feel that way?

<u>Comparisons Between Self and Others:</u>

- How were you dressed before, during, and after wearing the hijab? What made you dress that way?

- Is there anything that you used to do/wear while wearing the hijab and stopped doing/wearing after you removed the hijab (and vice versa)? What made you behave that way?
- Did you witness someone else go through a similar or different experience as you did? Could you please tell me more about it?

Hijab and Non-hijab Pictures:

- Could you please tell me where and when was this picture taken?
- What does this picture say about you?
- How did you feel about yourself while wearing this outfit?
- How did you feel others looked at you?
- Did their perceptions change how you felt about yourself?
- Did any of your family members see you in this outfit? Who? Did they say anything?

Demographical Information:

- Can you please tell me your age, marital status, educational level, occupation, and income?
- Can you please tell me your parents' age, marital status, educational level, occupation, and income?

Closing Questions/Statements:

- Is there anything else that you would like to add?
- Is there anything that you would like to ask me?

Just to reassure you, all the information you shared will be anonymized throughout this research and any related publications. If you are interested, I'll be happy to send you an anonymized copy of the final research findings. Also, please feel free to contact me anytime regarding this research or any other matter. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

<u>For Relatives (Interview Guide/Written Account Questions):</u>

<u>Perceptions and Observations of the Hijab:</u>

- Could you please tell me what does the hijab mean to you?
- How do you interact with women who wear the hijab? is it different from or the same as those who don't wear it? What makes you interact that way?
- What do you think influences women to wear the hijab? What makes you think so?
- What do you think of women who have removed their hijab? What makes you think so?
- Did you witness someone's experience with removing the hijab? (If yes) what happened then?
- (If yes) Did you witness changes in her clothing? (If yes) what are the changes?
- What do you think of men who impose the hijab on their relatives? What makes you think so?
- How would you react if your close relative (e.g. mother, sister, daughter, or wife) removes her hijab?

<u>Demographical Information:</u>

- Can you please tell me your age, marital status, educational level, occupation, and income?

<u>Closing Questions/Statements:</u>

- Is there anything else that you would like to add?
- Is there anything that you would like to ask me?

Appendix D: Table of Participants

A comprehensive table of all participants' details and methods is presented below:

	Core Participants (Interviews)				Relatives (Interviews/Written Accounts)				
	Pseudonym	**Age**	**Marital Status**	**Social Class**	**Pseudonym**	**Age**	**Educational Level**	**Relationship Type**	**Method**
1	Shurooq	49	Widowed	Upper	Hind	27	Diploma	Daughter	Interview
2	Ameera	29	Married	Upper	Kareem	59	Master's	Father	Interview
					Haneen	49	Bachelor's	Mother	Interview
					Faris	25	Diploma	Brother	Interview
					Wael	31	Master's	Husband	Interview
3	Asma	39	Married	Lower	Khalid	42	PhD	Husband	Interview
4	Moneera	23	Single	Middle	Hessa	49	Bachelor's	Mother	Interview
5	Futha	26	Single	Middle	Hessa	49	Bachelor's	Mother	Interview
6	Heba	19	Single	Middle	Hessa	49	Bachelor's	Mother	Interview
7	Nawal	24	Single	Middle	Hessa	49	Bachelor's	Mother	Interview
8	Amani	26	Single	Lower	Talal	47	Bachelor's	Father	Written Account
					Zeinab	46	Uneducated	Mother	Written Account
					Faisal	18	High School	Brother	Written Account
					Ali	23	Bachelor's	Brother	Written Account
9	Khulood	20	Single	Lower	Talal	47	Bachelor's	Father	Written Account
					Zeinab	46	Uneducated	Mother	Written Account
					Faisal	18	High School	Brother	Written Account
					Ali	23	Bachelor's	Brother	Written Account
10	Dalal	37	Divorced	Middle	Fahad	18	High School	Son	Written Account
11	Mariam	38	Married	Lower	Omar	44	Bachelor's	Husband	Written Account
					Noha	42	Bachelor's	Sister	Written Account
12	Sara	28	Married	Middle-Lower	-	-	-	-	-
13	Dana	24	Married	Middle	-	-	-	-	-
14	Zuhoor	25	Single	Lower	-	-	-	-	-
15	Noura	34	Single	Middle	-	-	-	-	-
16	Laila	27	Divorced	Middle	-	-	-	-	-
17	Farah	30	Single	Middle-Lower	-	-	-	-	-
18	Maysa	35	Married	Middle	-	-	-	-	-
19	Khadija	27	Single	Lower	-	-	-	-	-
20	Aisha	45	Single	Middle-Lower	-	-	-	-	-
21	Maha	53	Married	Middle	-	-	-	-	-
22	Dunia	22	Single	Middle-Upper	-	-	-	-	-
23	Manal	31	Married	Middle-Lower	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix E: Pilot Study Questions

For Pilot Study Participants (Interview Guide):

Demographical Information:

1. Can you please tell me your age?
2. Can you please tell me your occupation?
3. Can you please tell me your marital status?

Wearing the Hijab:

1. Can you please tell me how old were you when you first started wearing the hijab?
2. Why did you wear it?
3. How did you feel about yourself?
4. How did others feel towards you? (Your family, friends etc.)
5. Did their reactions make you feel good or bad? And why?
6. (If bad) How did you deal with it?

Removing the Hijab:

1. Could you please tell me for how many years did you have the hijab on?
2. At what age did you remove it?
3. Why did you remove it?
4. How did you approach your parents about removing it?
5. (If married/in a relationship) How did your partner feel about it?
6. How did you feel about yourself?
7. How did others feel towards you?
8. Did their reactions make you feel good or bad? And why?
9. (If bad) How did you deal with it?

Self Comparisons:

1. What type of clothes did you wear before wearing the hijab, during, and after removing it?
2. Did you remove the hijab overnight or was it a transition? Why?

Appendix F: Conference Papers

A copy of the below conference papers is available upon request.

Conference Paper 1: Almutawaa, D. S., Nuttall, P., Mamali, E., & Shankar, A. (2017). *Negotiating Power through Breaking Rituals: Muslim Women in Kuwait*. Paper presented at Consumer Culture Theory Conference 2017, California, United States.

Conference Paper 2: Almutawaa, D. S. (2018). *A Micro-Social Analysis of Power and Resistance: Ex-Hijabi Muslim Women.* Paper presented at AM2018 Conference, Stirling, United Kingdom.