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Feminist Activism and Digital Feminist Activism in the Arab Gulf States: The Case of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait

Ph.D. Candidate

HUDA ALSAHI

Ph.D. Coordinator

Prof. Donatella Della Porta

Ph.D. Supervisor

Prof. Donatella Della Porta

Prof. Lorenzo Mosca

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has been long associated with conflict, fundamentalism and patriarchy. Thus, in studies tackling the Arab world, women are often depicted as either agentless victims of patriarchal oppression or as tools of legitimization for authoritarian regimes (Ahmed, 1999; Alloula, 1987). This impression is strengthened by the preoccupation with Islam as a marker of cultural identity (Kandiyoti, 1996), which is often perceived to have constrained the scope and magnitude of women's movements throughout the Middle East.

Such an understanding is even more prevalent in academic treatments that highlight the authoritarian political structure and supposed abundance of traditionalism in the Arab Gulf States (Eickelman & Piscatori, 2013). Many academic treatments have assumed feminist movements are absent altogether, especially those that operate beyond the state. Much of the scholarly work that dominates the discourses about women in the Gulf States tends to proffer an understanding that is contrary to history and dismissive of the region's local knowledge. It portrays women as submissive subjects trapped in the solitude of domesticity and religion without possessing any active agency (Al-Rasheed, 2013; Lim, 2018). Commenting on such studies, Mohanty (1988, p. 65) elaborates that some scholars and feminist writers have promoted a binary, essentialist narrative of third-world difference and a universalist discourse that positions non-Western women as traditional, passive and devoutly religious. She notes that this approach privileges a particular group as the normative referent through an abstract consideration of the non-Western subjects, while simultaneously constructing Western women as modern, free, secular, agential and thus fully capable of saving their non-Western sisters (Keller, 2012).

Similarly, Basu (1995) argues that much of the available literature "ignore[s] women's movements in the postcolonial world, considers women's movements as products of modernization or development and assumes a sameness in the forms of women's oppression and women's movements cross-nationally" (p.1). The image of the "other" is built through opposition to the West (which considers the "self" the hegemonic epicenter), while the "other" is sidelined and differences are disregarded in favor of a simplistic black and white view. To overcome such condescending characterization, Mohanty (1988) advocates for contextual analysis that examines women as embedded within specific local, historical and social conditions. Far fewer studies have taken seriously the different conditions that women encounter in other contexts in the Global South. Taking this into consideration, this Ph.D. thesis will endeavor to disturb the ahistorical and monolithic accounts of women's movements in the Gulf States and challenge stereotypes by drawing attention to the growing visibility of feminist activism.

Chapter 1

This thesis will focus primarily on feminist activism in the Arab Gulf Region. I aim to provide a contingent mapping of women's feminist efforts within a comparative perspective in two of its states, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This entails conducting a detailed exploration of the historical genesis and development of women's organizations in the Gulf, their form of organization and their links to other social groups and the state. I simultaneously examine the meandering paths of their growth, evolution and transformation.

Perceiving women's movements in the Gulf States as absent is highly misleading. The Gulf States have a rich history of women's activism. Women have long organized themselves in the form of voluntary service groups. They have established women's organizations and grassroots advocacy networks to challenge both state authority and the prevailing oppressive practices shaping their everyday lives, even if the means were less visible in dominant historical accounts or if the venues were less politically overt. I write in response to accounts that insist there is no women's movement(s) in the Gulf Region. Scholars who make such claims base their arguments on some classic definitions of social movements that confine the concept of "movements" to visible street protests. They are accustomed to thinking of feminism as a merely Western construct that has no applicability or resonance in the MENA region. This thesis will not attempt to argue through simply holding up examples of successful feminist activists to counter such limiting narratives; to do so would ultimately only assert a sort of exceptionalism. Instead, through careful analysis, it will situate the existing trends in Gulf feminisms as part of a complex fabric of political action in the forms of activism, alliances and mobilizations that take place within the existing configurations of the feminist movement(s), including the digital sphere.

The discussion of the historical context will also serve to shed some light on the significance of historical and contextual analysis to better understand and situate the contemporary women's movements that have emerged with greater visibility in the last few years. These movements have become particularly prominent in the aftermath of the Arab Spring in 2011, in which women have been notably engaged in challenging the existing patriarchal arrangements and the surrounding political and legal barriers that are in place. As stated by Sreberny (2015), it is reasonable to suggest that access to the internet, the advancement of digital media platforms and the growing widespread awareness of the inevitability of change have produced a more conducive environment for women's activities and thus for a broader definition of what counts as feminist activism.

For the sake of examining the contemporary trajectory of women's movements in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, I have limited my focus to two major feminist campaigns: "Women to Drive" and "Ensaf." The grassroots "Women to Drive" campaign in Saudi Arabia materialized over the course of 2011 and 2013, despite the existence of many hurdles including the highly constrained sociopolitical

environment, restrictions on the development of independent civil society organizations and the denied visibility of Saudi women in the public sphere.

My other case involves the “Ensaf” campaign, which translates to “Justice” in English. This campaign was launched in 2014 by a coalition of women’s rights organizations to claim full citizenship rights for Kuwaiti women and demand the right to pass their nationality to their children in case they are married to foreigners—a right Kuwaiti men already enjoy. Using a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods, this research will analyze the use of digital media by feminist activists and women’s organizations. It will also evaluate the emergence of feminist discourse online and the ways digital-mediated practices are embedded in roles and functions relevant to activists, giving attention to the importance of discourse, networks and actors’ agency for the sake of providing a more nuanced and more contextual understanding of feminist activism in this context.

I argue that feminist activism, while often pushing the boundaries of existing political structures, must also be understood in terms of the deployed agential practices, the discursive opportunities structures that are in place and the surrounding networks of exchange. Thus one must view the available structures not only as determining a specific action, but also as allowing a certain degree of choice. Digital technologies do not exist separately or independently from the situated practices of feminist activists, but the two inform and shape each other (Fotopoulou, 2016).

Accordingly, my theoretical framework is informed by an integrated relational approach that moves beyond the techno-utopian assumption. It is centered on how digital media and networks are deployed and situated in relation to feminist activism. By placing these three interrelated dimensions—discursive opportunities structures, networks and actors’ agency—at the core of my theoretical framework, I seek to privilege a relational approach that connects the agency of social movement actors to digital media use. I will take into account the presence of discursive opportunities structures and the content that networks circulate and produce to better comprehend the role digital feminist activism plays in advancing feminist claims. I will also reflect on how digital media technologies are shaping the contemporary forms of feminist activism in the Arab Gulf States.

1.1 Defining Feminist Activism in This Research

Examining feminist activism in the Arab Gulf States requires a firm commitment to contextualizing specific terms that are associated with this concept. Accordingly, it becomes essential to clarify the basic terminologies used, such as “women’s movement,” “feminist movements” and “feminist activism,” since they are understood differently by different actors.

Chapter 1

There is no singular women's movement and no singular definition of "women's movement." It is difficult to provide a single, overarching definition of women's movements, which are in fact characterized by a proliferation of ideas, concepts, approaches and practices. There is a range of competing definitions that have yet to be assessed and culled. Moreover, arriving at an acceptable universal definition of women's movements or of what they constitute is challenging because the patriarchal relations against which women's movements constitute a resistance differ significantly in their configuration from one location to another (Franks, 2002). I approach this challenging task by elaborating on the different existing definitions of women's movements in relation to social movements. Then I move to the difference between women's movements and feminist movements, followed my definitional approach to feminist activism.

1.2 Women's Movements within Social Movement Research

To begin with, many influential comparative studies on women's movements embrace explicit recognition that women's movements are majorly defined and identified by their core actors: women. Women are "the primary constituency who are mobilizing, building organizational and political strategies around specific issues of concern" (Tripp, Casimiro, Kwesiga & Mungwa, 2008, p. 14).

Beckwith (2013) argues that placing women at the center of women's movements allows three conceptual distinctions to emerge for research. First, it analytically differentiates between women's movements and women in movements. This distinction allows researchers to examine social movements in which large numbers of women are active, but that cannot be identified purposely as women's movements such as the peace movement or revolutionary movements. Furthermore, it allows assessment of the circumstances of women's involvement in various movements and evaluation of the strategic differences for female activists and leaders in women's as opposed to other movements.

Second, it encompasses women's movements that are rightly recognized as feminist movements without excluding movements that are not identified as inherently feminist. And lastly, it pushes scholars to reflect on women's movements as distinct from other political movements. I treat the concept of women's movements as deriving from a broader category of social movements. Women's movements, similar to social movements, are a diffuse and complex set of individuals, organizations and informal groups who engage in sustained interactions that persist over time. This aligns with Tarrow's definition of social movements as "individuals with shared collective identities and grievances, connected and organized in social networks, who mount organized and sustained challenges against powerful targets" (1998, p. 2) as well as Diani's conceptualization of social movements as "networks of interaction between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (1992, p. 13).

Social movements and women's movements are marked by activism that is both collective scope and challenging to a certain extent in response to political structural opportunities, established social order, new issues or unanticipated events (Beckwith, 2005, p. 591). Like social movements, women's movements rely on social networks for the diffusion of information (King & Soule, 2007) and for mobilization purposes and coordination of efforts in campaigns (Banaszak, 2008; Porta & Rucht, 2002). This observation is consistent with Banaszak's (2008, p. 414) account that social movements, in general, are most often viewed as a mixture of informal networks and organizations, typically outside the realm of conventional politics and articulate claims for fundamental changes in the political or social system.

What distinguishes women's movements is the articulation of gender-based claims that act as the basis for activism and mobilization (Beckwith, 2005). The politicization of women's lived experience serves as a common underlying principle that challenges the established order (Alvarez, 1990). Thus, women mobilize collectively around their expressed identities as women, even if the content of these identities may be context-specific. This is not to claim that all women have identical identities or interests, nor is it an assertion of any essential, fundamental uniformity of women everywhere.

Many women's movements scholars have become critical of the underlying assumptions of mainly male-dominated definitions of social movements that emphasize protest repertoires and disruptive action as definitional features. Such definitions fail to take into account the different forms of contention that emerge among social movements that might not be necessarily tied to protest action alone, disregarding many of the activities of women's movements (Sawer, 2010). Katzenstein (1999) contends the assumption that only massive street protests challenge authority does not apply to the women's movement. Women might be constrained by a limiting political environment, traditional stereotypes in relation to gender roles or even a political choice. Others also problematized the perceptions of public visibility as criteria for defining movements, pointing to instances of movement persistence in abeyance structures (Taylor, 1989) and submerged networks (Melucci, 1989). Narrow definitions of social movements have led some academics to interpret the limited use of disruptive means to challenge the established order a sign of the decline of women's movement and feminism in overall.

This definitional problem demands some serious reflection about what constitutes a women's "movement" in the current discourse. In some instances, only the visible, collective and persistent act of resistance is defined as a movement; in others, scattered demonstrations and a sudden outburst of fury over some injustices also fall under the overall rubric of a movement. Intermittently, acts of an oppositional nature carried out by a single individual in a particular moment of defiance are also regarded as being part of a movement. This covers the general contours in which the literature that tackled movements has conceptualized the different manifestations of movements.

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One could apply this variation in the ways that movements have been conceptualized so far to draw a general sketch of women's movements, including the autonomous protests of the 1970s and the institutionalized women's movements of the 1990s, moving to the use of the internet for social change by women in the early 2000s. This trajectory necessitates realizing that women's movements across the world therefore operate in multiple arenas, using diverse repertoires, that could include disruptive actions but also other, less-public forms of continuous actions. In light of these arguments and the contributions of women's movement scholars, it seems the time to expand the definition of social movement to make the concept applicable to the wide range of change-oriented collective action. Women's movements are more than waves, as this metaphor ignores the different crucial conditions that women face elsewhere (Staggenborg & Taylor, 2005). Scholars must be attentive to the fact there are different rationales for women to mobilize as women in relation to the emergent power relations at play.

In short, throughout this research, I view women's movements as subsets of social movements characterized by the primacy of women's issues, organized by women explicitly as women presenting claims in public life based on their gendered identities without necessarily involving disruptive collective action. The relationship of women to these movements is direct and immediate when it comes to movement definition, issue articulation and issue resolutions specific to women (Beckwith, 1996). This definition also allows a certain degree of flexibility as it encompasses individual actions as well as collective actions and includes the different ways in which movement objectives can be pursued through dealing with institutional as well as non-institutional action. Based on this definition, I believe the women's movements in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have, at one time or another, conformed to these characterizations of a movement. They became vocal, active and visible at some moments in contemporary history and quiescent in others.

1.3 Unpacking the Difference between Feminist and Women's Movements

Women's movements scholarship often conflates women's movement and feminist movement, if not in explicit terminology then in implicit analysis, insofar as their definitions include substantive shared elements involving assertions of women's rights to equality and critiques of gender-based subordination (Banaszak, 2006; Kaplan, 1992; M. Katzenstein & Mueller, 1987).

Some scholars have stressed the importance of drawing some distinctions between feminist movements and the larger women's movement, identifying feminist movements as one but not the only form of women's movement in which women organize explicitly and consciously to defend their interests (Alvarez, 1990; Valiente, 2003). The broader definitions of women's movements therefore encompass feminist movements as one type of women's movement, but also recognize organized collective action by women who do not identify themselves as feminists and women who belong to the right or derive their activism from religious frameworks.

Along the same lines, Alvarez regards women's movements as "composed primarily but not necessarily exclusively of female participants who make claims on the basis of their affirmed identities" (1990, p. 23). More recently, the same author has defined feminist movements as "characterized by an expansive, polycentric, heterogeneous discursive field of action which spans into a vast array of cultural, social and political arenas, in which activists envision themselves as working to alter gender power relations that circumscribe their own lives as women" (1999, pp. 184–186). Feminist movements are further distinguished by the articulation of "specific feminist discourse which introduces gendered power analysis of women's oppression which contests political, social and other structural arrangements of domination and on the basis of gender" (Beckwith, 2001, p. 372) as well as passionate commitment to diminishing gender subordination (Wieringa, 1995). This distinction implies that gender is seen as one of the most significant social cleavages and that the combination of protest against male dominance and partial visions of equality is the defining characteristic of feminism; any feminist is, at the very minimum level, committed to some form of reevaluation of the position of women in society.

For scholars like Molyneux (1985), the distinction between women's movements and feminist movements is rather implicit; she coined the typologies of practical and strategic feminist demands and argued that some differences exist between women organizing to meet their basic needs within the preexisting patriarchal structures and women who are explicitly organizing to counter systems of patriarchy that are in place. Along the same lines, other academics have opted to differentiate between women's movements and feminist ones in terms of aims. Women's movements' aims include advocating for women and women's issues, while feminist movements involve posing specific challenges to patriarchy and the subordination of women (Ferree & Mueller, 2007). Under this vision, the difference between women's movements and feminist movements ultimately comes down to differences in the ideas, aspirations and identities presented by collective actors.

Conversely, other scholars such as Laurel Weldon deliberately incorporate into the category of feminist movements the activists or organizations that do not explicitly label themselves as feminists. Weldon includes actors who have contradictory understandings of feminism, including conservative women's groups that focus on women's differences or distinctive roles as mothers or caregivers, as long as these groups aim to improve women's situation. She discounts those who claim women's status does not necessitate improvement (2002, p. 63). Although it is important analytically to separate women's movements and feminist movements, they are in practice interrelated and overlapping. Numerous academic studies have indicated that some women's movements transform themselves into feminist movements or spawn feminist movements (Alvarez, 1990). Moreover, in many contexts, mobilizations of women in pursuit of feminist goals have historically been referred to as the women's movement (Mackay, 2008; Nash, 2002), which makes it challenging to disentangle these terms completely.

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This historical reality led me to use the terms feminist movement and women's movement interchangeably in the context of this Ph.D. thesis. I understand both as networks of social actors and organizations that are explicitly feminist by identification who articulate their claims as women or insist upon their identity as part of a larger women's movement. Movements also present a particular women's centered movement discourse (e.g., Tripp et al., 2008). This definition encompasses a vision, a roadmap and a strategy as well as individual and collective actors. Thus, I will explore feminist activism in the Arab Gulf States within the parameters of this definition. I understand women's and feminist movements as universal endeavors to overturn injustices against women, while I dismiss the mistaken culturally essentialist claims that feminist movements are inescapably linked to Western hegemony and ultimately tied to modern Western settings.

I believe that feminist movements in the MENA region, including the Gulf States, fit into a rich history of female activism flourishing in social environments that place considerable obstacles to female action in the public sphere. The diversity of feminisms also stems from various regions and histories that demanded social, cultural and organizational transformations in their own capacities (Al-Ali, 2008). This observation is consistent with Badran's explanation that "feminisms are produced in particular places and are articulated in local terms" (2009, p. 243); feminist perspectives are strongly influenced by each nation's historical, cultural and religious contexts.

In sum, such movements in the region are characterized by a plurality of feminist discourses that reflect women's status. They adopt various strategies for redefining gender relationships based on different means, both religious and non-religious. They rest on the fundamental premise that women suffer from inequality and that women engage in contention to change the material conditions around them (El-Fadl, 2001). Movements in the region maintain a strong commitment to women's empowerment, while the sources and terms of this empowerment can be different.

I view that, at their core, feminist movements are characterized by a specific kind of women's centered discourse, one that encourages self-reflexivity and focuses on advancing the position of women in society. They seek to challenge and change women's subordination and the structures of gender-based hierarchies (Offen, 1988). I also depart from the position that feminist movements my case studies concern encompass different positions, many of which are in tension with each other, over a blend of piety and choice, religiosity and secular-based rights (Bayat, 2013). Thus, questions of whether some forms of feminism are more legitimate than others are avoided here. Just because some women's visions for embracing change are framed through concepts and stances that others might perceive as not sufficiently feminist, they are no less valid in empowering at least some women (Al-Ali, 2000).

1.4 Feminist Activism: What Does it Entail?

When it comes to feminist activism, the literature has acknowledged that the term is a difficult concept to pin down because it has been used in plural ways by a variety of actors. Broadly speaking, activism often denotes the organization of individuals around a particular issue of interest in order to demand social, political or economic change (Housley et al., 2018). Feminist activism, by extension, is about putting feminist interests at the center through action (Sherrod, 2006).

Collins (2000) claims that activism is inherent within feminism, while Alvarez (1990) delineates an act as feminist if it attempts to transform social roles assigned to women while simultaneously challenging gender power arrangements and advancing claims for women's rights to equality. Taking this challenge into consideration, I attempt to maintain an openness to what constitutes feminist activism. I adopt a broad definition that encapsulates a variety of involvements and activities, such as advocacy, consciousness-raising and lobbying, that are taken by feminists and organizations guided by strong visions of social change at an individual or collective level.

My definition also encompasses the use of digital and network technologies to subvert patriarchal norms and practices by raising awareness about women's issues and generating feminist discourses in online spaces, as well as disseminating feminist discourses and producing feminist knowledge (Daniels, 2009). Thus, I understand that carrying out feminist action encompasses pursuing a common goal and engaging in organized feminist activity in different arenas to draw attention status of women's citizenship and mobility rights. Feminist action demands being taken seriously and incorporated in laws and legislation, as seen in my selected feminist campaigns.

This definition is also inclusive of grassroots challengers as well as institutional activists that are located in professional organizations. They can engage with conventional politics through lobbying or pursue more adversarial strategic tactics. This inclusion paves the way for greater understanding of how movement goals can be pursued through dealing with institutions as well as non-institutional targets. It is also an indicator of the importance of the inclusion of digital technologies and discursive elements to feminist activism. Technology makes it possible to be political at an individual level and pursue feminist action through the act of making gendered claims. Digital feminist action is not ontologically different, but rather a different mode of being political (Sreberny, 2015).

1.5 Case Studies Justification

Case selection is the rational selection of one or more instances of a phenomenon as the particular subject of research to generate dense, concrete and context-dependent knowledge. It defined by Yin (2009, p. 16) as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context." In relation to that, della Porta (2008) affirms that much research, especially in the political science field is case-oriented: that is, it aims at rich descriptions of a few instances of a

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particular phenomenon by focusing on a relatively small set of cases, analyzed with careful attention to each case as an interpretable whole, with a large number of characteristics being taken into consideration, often together with their interaction within long-lasting processes (Ragin, 1987).

So, the key question is how can researchers select cases from a large universe for in-depth analysis? Random sampling is often not a viable option when the total number of cases to be selected is small (which is the case with the phenomenon that I am researching, that is feminist and digital feminist activism in the Arab Gulf States). Hence, attention to purposive modes of sampling is needed. Yet, choosing good cases for small samples remains a challenging endeavor (Gerring, 2007). Coyne (1997) differentiates between purposeful and theoretical approaches to purposive sampling. Theoretical sampling selects cases representative of emerging theory following a grounded theory approach. Purposeful sampling on the other hand seeks to identify cases that can be considered of “central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, 1990).

Furthermore, the reasons for selecting cases vary from an interest in the particular case to theoretical considerations and the selection criteria for cases may include geography and type of organization, among other factors. Nonetheless, the relevance of the case or cases for the research objectives is the most important criterion for case selection (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). Case-oriented scholars may intentionally choose cases that differ relatively from each other with respect to the outcome under investigation (Ragin, 2004), focusing in particular on positive cases that are cases where a certain phenomenon is present. Meanwhile, della Porta (2008) responds to the question of how can researchers select cases from a large universe by illuminating that during the process of casing, singling out the degree of homogeneity of the cases (by answering the question, “What is this a case of?”) is part and parcel of the research process, which typically concludes with the construction of types and the allocation of cases to them.

Since the main focus of this research is feminist and digital feminist activism in the Arab Gulf States, I will first lay down the reasons behind choosing this region in particular. Then I move to explain the justifications of my purposeful case selection in detail. My motivation of deciding on the Arab Gulf States as a region to undertake research about stems from the fact that most studies on feminist activism and digital media have seldom dealt with non-Western women’s and feminists’ movements, as far fewer studies have taken as their point of departure the conditions and experiences of other cultural contexts.

Therefore, little is known about the contemporary forms of feminist activism in the Gulf States that have emerged with greater strength in the last years. This blind spot provides a rich understudied field for developing theoretical and empirical observations about how feminist activists and organizations engage with and make use of new digital media technologies from a particular local

context. I view the inability of previous academic studies to shed some light on this topic, in combination with my positionality and familiarity with the context, as a promising research opportunity to offer genuine, empirically grounded contribution to the under-researched topic of women's feminist activism in the Arab Gulf States that is starting to emerge in relatively constrained social and political structures.

By doing so, I aim to examine the new landscape of feminist activism in this region, which has been rarely examined using the lens of social movements theories, and counter the existing trends in academic research, which have often portrayed women in this context as passive victims of their structural patriarchal systems—a view that fails to account for their complex multifaceted position and the modes of action that they are taking place. I believe that undertaking systematic comparative assessment in reference to feminist activism in this context can help us to make productive inferences in relation to the overall picture in which feminist activism emerges and unfurls and identify the points of commonality across the selected cases, as well as to untangle the divergences among female activists, their different trajectories and the circumstances surrounding their mode of feminist activism (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Also, in attempting to demonstrate the merits of conducting cross-national comparisons of contemporary forms of feminist activism lies the potential of expanding our concepts beyond the limits of single-case studies and develop standards of comparison—common criteria with which we can understand feminist activism in the MENA region overall and potentially beyond (Gharawi, Pardo, & Guerrero 2009).

As with regards to the selected cases, I sought to ensure that I followed clear and specific criteria, rather than selecting some cases just because they seemed readily accessible or convenient to study. Moreover, due to the fact that feminist activism in the Gulf States most often takes the form of campaigns, it was crucial that the selected cases of campaigns met specific criteria that were relevant to the overall objectives of the research. Therefore, the potential cases were expected to meet at least four predetermined criteria: the presence of active or organized feminist efforts and mobilization, the articulation of gendered claims that act as the basis for activism, the relative use of digital media as a means for activism and the existence of some degree of variation in the socio-cultural contexts between the selected cases to ensure variation of findings.

The finalized purposive selection was decided upon after an iterative series of decisions that evaluated the characteristics of each case. The cases which met the above mentioned case selection criteria included the “Women to Drive” campaign that was launched in full force in the aftermath of the Arab Spring in 2011 in Saudi Arabia and the “Ensaf” campaign in Kuwait that commenced in 2014 to demand full citizenship rights for Kuwaiti women who are married to non-nationals and advocate for allowing them to pass their Kuwaiti nationality to their children. These campaigns were selected because they represent two of the most prominent feminist campaigns that were launched in the Gulf Region within similar spatial and temporal trajectories that took place post the Arab Spring era, in

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which women have been increasingly involved as newly empowered citizens in campaigns directed at the state against existing legal and regulatory limitations to demand improving women's position in their respective societies. Furthermore, both of the selected campaigns can potentially offer interesting insights into the relationship between feminist activism and digital media to a greater or lesser degree.

So while many forms of gender inequality exist in the Arab Gulf States in which women struggle on many fronts: against legal restrictions and political barriers, the ban on driving as seen in the case of Saudi Arabia and the existing legal and regulatory limitations when it comes to female citizenship rights as witnessed in the context of Kuwait. Both are manifestations of a system that keeps women restricted in terms of both mobility and exercising agency and choice. At the same time, I was aware that we cannot assume a sameness in the forms of feminist movements or the deployed feminist practices, especially because, contrary to popular belief, the Arabian Peninsula is not a uniform and homogeneous region. So, while Saudi Arabia and Kuwait share a tribal background and thus bear the imprint of a common value system, these countries vary significantly in terms of national political topography, state-society relations, cultural openness, the absence or presence of organized civil society organizations, the overall impact of conservative or liberal political environments, as well as the centralization or dispersion within the movement itself, potentially leading each feminist movement within each country to follow a peculiar course of actions and develop distinctive agendas in response to their local circumstances.

So while Saudi Arabia has a distinct profile in terms of being a conservative Islamist clerical state, which has pursued sex segregation and many forms of legal and practical discrimination against women, Kuwait, on the contrary, is more liberal in orientation. It wouldn't be inaccurate to describe its political system as relatively democratic when compared to other Gulf States. It is not a full democracy per se according to Western standards as it is in fact constitutional emirate with a parliamentary system of government. Yet, it is the closest example to a democracy in the Gulf Region, as the earliest modern elections following the independence from Britain can be traced to 1962, when elections were held to elect 20 members to the constitutional convention.

Kuwait, also unlike Saudi Arabia, is recognized for having a long-established history in relation to the establishment of women's rights organizations. These organizations were formed in 1963 with the establishment of the first two women's organizations, the Arab Women Development Society (AWDS) and the Women's Cultural and Social Society (WCSS). Therefore, when it comes to answering the question of "what are these cases of?". In both cases, we see feminist activists and organizations challenging social order through gendered claims-making and women-centered discourses to draw attention to women's demands and make sure that they are taken seriously and incorporated in laws and legislation. Both cases are also illustrative of the variety of modes of action, in which digital media, actors, networks and gender-centered discourses are featured predominantly.

The two campaigns also converge on being both initiated and mobilized on the basis of confronting gender-based discrimination and calling for securing civil and legislative rights for women, providing by that a direct window to women's mobilization that deploys different tactical repertoires. To elaborate further, I have chosen the "Women to Drive" campaign as my first case study because it serves as an example through which to examine the relationship between feminist activism and digital media; the campaign was characterized by the extensive use of digital media, as evidenced by the ability of Saudi women to manage, organize and mobilize during the 2011 and 2013 driving campaigns, where the features of digital media in terms of anonymity, speed and transnational outreach have encouraged Saudi women to publicize and disseminate campaign-related information for both local and global audience, connect to and engage with other feminist networks, sign online petitions, as well as raise feminist claims and women's centered discourse to a wider audience to foster mobilization.

It is worth noting that this campaign represented a milestone to Saudi women and signaled a rise in feminist activism in Saudi Arabia by allowing women to maneuver a constraining political culture that is characterized by a dearth of channels for civic engagement and lack of strong organizational structure capable of articulating women's claims through institutionalized channels, as NGOs and voluntary women's associations are severely constrained by existing laws and policies that do not formally recognize independent women's established organizations and limit the independence of non-state structures.

Alternatively, the development of digital media platforms in English and Arabic and the ease of access to the internet have produced a more conducive environment for feminist activism and led women and activists to extensively rely on digital media and social media networks for the diffusion of information, mobilization purposes and coordination of efforts. Hence, it is the informal networks that constitute the alternative locus of activism and the principal mode of women's mobilization, rather than institutionalized channels in the case of Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, the "Ensaf" campaign was selected because it represents one of the most important feminist campaigns that have taken place in Kuwait. It was initiated by a coalition of women's rights organizations to claim full citizenship rights for Kuwaiti women and demand granting them the right to allow them to pass their nationality to their children in case they are married to foreigners through legislation.

The campaign posed direct challenges to the contentious politics of citizenship in Kuwait, in which women asserted their personal and collective rights from de facto second-class citizenship positions, as Kuwait is one of the only 26 countries in the world that discriminate against female nationals in terms of citizenship rights. However, unlike the campaign in Saudi Arabia that was mainly operating at a grassroots level, the picture was a bit different in Kuwait. Established women's organizations played an important role in mobilizing for legal and policy changes when it came to the objectives of the "Ensaf" campaign. This is because the trajectory of the feminist movement in Kuwait differs from the one in Saudi Arabia in terms of being more oriented towards institutionalization and

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professionalization, in which women's organizations serve as the main locus of activism instead of informal networks.

This made it easier for the campaign to traverse the official terrain of formal politics, work much more closely through existing state structures and engage with institutions such as the legislature, the judiciary and the state to enhance their collective ability to achieve the movement's goals and exert some pressure on the government to enact policies that respond to the campaign's demands. The campaign was also open to embracing other informal groups and resorted to the use of digital networking platforms in its pursuit, complementing by that the activities on the ground with digital efforts. Reflecting back on the choice of these cases, the selected campaigns therefore echo the forms of resistance that question the status quo restricting women's rights and lives, in which the politicization of women's lived experiences serve as a common underlying principle that challenges the established order, as women are making use of different resources via digital media and beyond to promote and advocate for their gendered claims and demands.

These cases are also testimonies of the emergence of a new era that has coincided with the increasing prevalence of digital media access and use, in which advocacy networks, digital platforms and digital communicative practices are being increasingly manifested, deployed and embraced by feminist activists and established women's organizations alike. Thus, by taking a comparative case study approach, this Ph.D. thesis will cover several important aspects of feminist activism by examining two feminist campaigns that emerge within different contexts within the Arab Gulf States, in which digital technologies are increasingly playing key roles in the emergence and growth of activists' campaigns that are both highly distributed and centrally organized.

1.6 Thesis Significance and Contribution

Conducting comparative research on women's movements is indeed a challenging task. Women's movements, however problematically defined, are not beyond comparison, especially in studies that clearly formulate their research questions, specify the frameworks of analysis and clearly explain the concepts they seek to investigate (Beckwith, 2000).

Accordingly, this doctoral thesis will be adopting a comparative perspective to the examination of the contemporary landscape of feminist activism in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait by comparing how feminist activists in Saudi Arabia and feminist organizations in Kuwait are making use of different social networking platforms to promote and advocate for their causes. My research, therefore, aims to offer an original, empirically-driven contribution to the research on the nexus between women's feminist activism and digital technologies, a contribution that moves beyond technology-centered perspectives and debunks the commonly-held myth that digital media are used in a universal manner to promote sociopolitical change everywhere. This will be made possible by adopting an integrated

relational approach around a three-dimensional axis that centers on activists' voices and accounts, the discourses that materialize over the digital sphere and the networks of exchange that are composed in the span of the feminist campaigns that I will be examining.

By focusing on actors' agency, I seek to provide emergent, situated knowledge that is actively informed from the standpoint of female activists and privileges their voices as active agents. My motivation in doing so rests on the unfortunate reality that their perspectives are often subsumed into the dominant academic discourse, a discourse that supposedly considers the absence of women's and feminist movements in these contexts. Such accounts fail to consider the multiplicity of feminist modes and practices that exist. Incorporating these women's voices will, in turn, complicate the current debates on women's roles in feminist struggles beyond reductionist accounts that present women as misguided or without agency.

By focusing on the discourse, I intend to explore how feminist discourses are articulated in these techno-social spaces and unpack the variations in how feminist claims are discursively constructed and negotiated. By paying attention to networks, I aim to capture the essence of the central hubs involved at the core of the network and explore the interconnectedness and relational dimension between networks and ties as well as the content that these networks of exchange produce for public dissemination and outreach.

Departing from technological utopianism as well as Orientalist frameworks, this Ph.D. thesis offers nuanced, historically grounded research of the contemporary forms of Kuwaiti and Saudi feminist activism by privileging women's histories, voices, discourses and networks, centrally incorporating them into the analysis. The added value of this Ph.D. research is significant for multiple reasons. First, there is a dearth of research about the contemporary modes of feminist activism in the Gulf States, which offers an intriguing opportunity for developing original theoretical and empirical insights about women's feminist activism.

Moreover, my cases of study will shed light on the deployment of digital media for feminist action, as well as the plural and heterogeneous digital practices that take place. They will demonstrate how digital media is used as an alternative channel of communication and resistance, making the research a valuable contribution to the existing areas of research on digital communication, social movements and feminist activism. These strands currently remain disjointed. Finally, I believe that my Ph.D. project has wider implications beyond the circumscribed context of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The questions at the heart of my research on women's engagement in feminist activism have broad relevance across several interdisciplinary fields, as my case studies, although very specific, are illustrative examples of some of the underlying tensions, problems and contentions that make up the backdrop of contemporary women's activism in the MENA region and beyond. My research will also

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contribute to solidifying the understanding of how feminist activism is maintained in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian settings emerging in highly constrained social and political structures.

1.7 Thesis Outline

Having given a brief overview of the Ph.D. thesis, I will now outline its structure. In the next chapter, I will review the existing literature on Saudi and Kuwaiti women's movements and feminist activism that forms the backdrop to this research. I also provide an extensive reading of the theories in this field, question the conceptual separation between digital media and social movements and elaborate on the significance of digital technologies for feminist activism from the perspective of social movements. I move later to describe my relational theoretical framework within which the Ph.D. project is situated, reflect on its applicability and conclude the chapter by stating my research questions.

In Chapter 3, I provide a comprehensive overview of the historical and temporal contexts that shaped women's movements and the status of gendered politics in both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Chapters 4 to 7 represent the epicenter of my analysis. These four empirical chapters derive from the analysis of my data and split into themes that broadly correspond to my theoretically informed dimensions and research questions. Each chapter contains its data collection procedures, methods and data analysis techniques separately. The chapters move progressively from obtaining insights on actors' perspectives, to focusing on the discursive dimension and the networked aspect of the campaigns.

Chapter 4 incorporates extensive semi-structured interviews that are directed towards uncovering activists' perceptions and experiences in carrying out feminist activism, most notably during the campaigns that I have identified. Chapter 5 examines the salience of the driving and nationality issues in the Saudi and Kuwaiti mediated public sphere and whether feminist activism has the potential to disrupt and intervene in mainstream discourses. Just as feminism varies in its mode, form and content digital feminist activists also use a myriad of platforms to articulate their claims. I examine two main platforms that feminist activists use in Chapters 6 and 7.

In Chapter 6, I analyze the content of the campaigns' related Facebook pages in order to shed light on the local appropriations and online practices that occurred through Facebook in relation to the campaigns. In Chapter 7, I move further by adopting a network-centric approach that seeks to identify the central hubs around specific popular hashtags and examine the content that is disseminated by the Twitter accounts that claim to be representative of the campaigns. The concluding chapter draws on all of the preceding material to further reflect on and re-engage with my findings, then consider the overall theoretical implications of the research. It also evaluates the limitations of the thesis and considers some possible directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Current State of Research and Theoretical Underpinnings

The goal of this chapter is to explain the path of the research and ground it firmly in its corresponding theoretical constructs. It promises to provide both impetus and direction for the research inquiry. The chapter begins by reviewing the literature that forms the backdrop to this research. In doing so, an attempt will be made to systematically integrate the seemingly disjointed literature on women's movements and feminist activism in the context of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which belongs to different bodies of knowledge with diverse epistemologies and focal points.

Following that, I make an effort to synthesize the existing scholarly work connected to the concepts, tenants and theories I have identified as central to my research. I hope to give the reader a clear sense that my proposed theoretical approach is grounded in relevant, established work in literature. The theoretical underpinnings will also inform my research questions and methodological choices and further justify my research problems. Accordingly, three primary literature concentrations will be recognized as relevant for my thesis: social movements theories, digital media use and feminist engagement in both. Then an assessment of the challenges that digital media pose for the examination of activism and movements in the digital age will be made, followed by a general overview of the different ways in which digital media platforms have been contextualized and examined in social movements literature.

I later elaborate on the proposed integrated relational approach to the examination of feminist activism in connection to my case studies. By doing so, I aim to offer an alternative approach that examines feminist activism in a situated and contextualized manner and highlight how the current literature on social movements, digital technologies and activism can benefit from the application of such an approach. Lastly, I put forward my main research questions and how I intend to approach them.

2.1 State of the Art on Feminist Activism in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait

Literature that tackles women's movement and feminist activism in Saudi Arabia is relatively scarce. Some scattered snippets about women's status can be extracted from scholarly work done on Saudi Arabia itself. Al-Rasheed (2013, p. 33) explained that a significant hurdle facing researchers is the "limited historical knowledge and current research on Saudi women;" most research focuses primarily on the history of the Kingdom, its politics, the rentier economy or the Wahhabi strain of Islam practiced there.

One can observe some common patterns and thematic trends from the available scholarship on Saudi Arabia. The majority of relevant literature either adopts the statist approach, which reduces the

Saudi feminism to a feminism initiated and promoted by the state (e.g., Kéchichian, 2013) or relies on Orientalist and modernist paradigms, which uphold the clumsy conclusion that a feminist movement is absent in this context, either because of Saudi Arabia's theological dogma or because of the state co-optation of women's feminist actions (e.g. Valentine, 2015).

To elaborate further, the first approach argues that a grassroots Saudi women's movement does not exist due to structural constraints arising from religion and culture that ultimately confine women to more passive roles. It also presents the Saudi state as the only legitimate agent capable of protecting women's best interests and empowering them. Such an approach also attributes what may be considered an instance of women's agency to historical moments of state-initiated reforms that target women (Doaij, 2018). The second approach perpetuates the image of an oppressive regime and oppressed women. It holds the state equally responsible for the absence of a women's movement by considering the structural factors affecting women, such as society, religion and the state, as all equally restrictive and patriarchal, thus resulting in no possible instances of women's agency. Such statist and Orientalist accounts of Saudi feminism have not stood without response. They have been challenged by competing literature, particularly from Saudi academics, who draw attention to women's social and familial lives. This literature is more sympathetic in the sense that it highlights the existence of some limited form of agency that manifests within and against the existing patriarchic structures in the private realm, but could potentially be extended to the public sphere in some ways.

The work of Almunajjed and al-Torki is a prime example of these early attempts to highlight Saudi women's agency. Al-Torki's (1977) ethnographical studies focus predominantly on demonstrating how Saudi feminism occurred mainly within the private realm through contentious negotiations. She, therefore, located the exercise of women's agency in social matters of importance, as well as in women's use of religious concepts to their advantage. Another example of research that examined Saudi women is the work by Almunajjed (1997), who conducted one hundred interviews with women of different classes and backgrounds to present an accurate depiction of Saudi women that called into question the dominant narratives of their submissiveness.

However, a noticeable pattern within this line of work is that it is often executed along the very modernist lines that they criticize, meaning that such works adopt a Western modernity stance and focus on the study of elite, educated, modern Saudi women. In doing so, these works are an exercise in "engaging the gaze" and are carried out along criteria set by Western imaginaries of Saudi women, modernity and development (Doaij, 2018). There is, however, recent, emerging, subaltern literature that seeks to counter both the statist and Orientalist approaches. Such studies had proved to be most significant in understanding and situating feminist activism. This approach is exemplified by Madawi al-Rasheed's (2013) work on the intersection between gender, politics and religion in Saudi Arabia and Le Renard's (2014) scholarly research on Saudi women's transgressions in women-only spaces. Both of these critical texts serve as foundational attempts to give Saudi women a voice and display their

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agency from below. They dismiss the earliest claims that Saudi women are unable to posit feminist will or agency, as well as the currently upheld stereotypes and abstractions about Saudi women. Both of these academic efforts also converge on rejecting modernization theory and Saudi exceptionalism, two frameworks historically present in a great deal of writing on Saudi Arabia.

In doing so, al-Rasheed's work (Al-Rasheed, 2013) explains how the representation of Saudi womanhood was central to the idea of the nation and the state's legitimation. She provides a detailed account of how the process of creating a Saudi nation-state based on a pious Islamic nationalist identity also created a parallel image of an ideal woman, which was used later as a national symbol to distinguish their pious nation "visibly and structurally from the other ungodly polities" (p.16). Her work also pointed out that Saudi women were now an emerging divergent constituency as she documents the manifestation of their feminist activism in unusual places such as mosques or through writing (p.27). Le Renard's scholarship (Le Renard, 2014) was based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Saudi Arabia. It explored women's strategies for navigating and negotiating the segregated spaces governed by strict gender segregation rules. Her work, therefore, provided a rich, layered look into the diversity of actions taken by young Saudi women and demonstrated a commitment to locating Saudi women's agency and feminism to everyday feminisms when it came to negotiating emancipation and mobility.

She therefore situated her work as part of "historical and ethnographic evidence that discredits the dominant reading of Saudi history in terms of linear progress and modernization, according to which all obstacles to women's advancement are the result of traditions inherited from the past" (p. 745). She problematized the view that the main structural restrictions on Saudi feminism were that of religion and state as she introduced elements such as urbanization and neoliberalism (p. 154); she explained how the production of homosocial spaces and the limitations placed on Saudi women's mobility are entirely modern conventions tied to rapid urbanization.

On a different note, the preoccupation with social media in the aftermath of the Arab Spring has attracted much scholarly attention about women's heightened engagement in broad-based social mobilizations, as well as on their capitalization on the capabilities of digital media to organize and enact change across the Middle East and resist offline patriarchal norms (Khamis, 2011; Landorf, 2014). Saudi Arabia was not an exception. Some media-based reports and academic studies tackled Saudi women's ability to manage, organize and mobilize during the 2011 and 2013 driving campaigns, which signaled a rise in feminist activism in Saudi Arabia. The features of speed, anonymity and decentralization encouraged activists to create online groups, connect to and engage with others and put contentious issues into public contention (Sreberny, 2015).

A disparate body of research with diverse epistemologies and focal points has since surfaced examining the connection between the proliferation of digital technologies and Saudi women's activism, particularly on the digital front. Some studies sought to explore the potentials that digital media offered for Saudi women in their struggle against the patriarchal social order (Chaudhry, 2014). Others examined the information diffusion processes, including the role of networks (Yuce, Agarwal, & Wigand, 2015), along with the process of formation of online collective action by studying the diffusion of the campaign's hashtags (Yuce, Agarwal, Wigand, Lim, & Robinson, 2014).

Work by Tønnessen (2016) and Guta and Karolak (2015) affirmed that digital media platforms have become alternative spaces for self-expression and building up online momentum towards the quest to abolish the discriminatory legal practice. This academic trend corresponds to a global trend in which many academics have presented digital technologies as revitalizing feminism, as well as reviving feminist critical thought and action through information dissemination, the initiation of discourses and solidarity building (McClean & Maalsen, 2013; Munro, 2013).

Nonetheless, although these studies—which belong to different strands of literature including political communication, sociology and computer-mediated communication—have made valuable contributions to further our understanding of the nexus between digital media and women's activism, the majority of this scholarship falls short in terms of its ahistorical approach. It neglects to emphasize the broader contexts in which feminist activism occurs, shifting attention away from the complexities inherent within the region (Alrasheed, 2013). Besides the lack of historical perspective and the removal of complexity, much of this work is characterized by a technological determinist stance on digital technologies and their implications for activism that can lead us to falsely perceive digital media as possessing qualities removed from social actors' behavior. For example, some early analysis of the Arab uprisings overstated and obfuscated the role of social media in change by circulating overly techno-utopian, sensationalizing descriptions such as “Facebook and Twitter Revolution” (e.g. Howard, 2011) for complex political and social dynamics.

Meanwhile, other studies have taken a different route. They have focused on the sociolinguistic perspective or critical discourse analysis in terms of how discourse could be effectively deployed through digital media. Almahmoud (2015), Alotaibi (2017) and Sahly (2016) used framing theory to examine the different ways in which Twitter users have linguistically constructed the women driving issue. Almahmoud (2015) analyzed two Twitter-based datasets, one of which was generated by female activists and the other by male clerics. She examined the different intertextual references used by each cluster to frame the women's driving issue and found that a vast majority of female activists opted to frame the driving ban in an international context that intersected and resonated with a wider international audience. In contrast, male clerics framed the issue as a conspiracy against Islam and the morals of the society.

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Alotaibi (2017) directed her analysis to the opponents of women's driving and found that they used a narrative of moral panic over threats to the public order. Similar to Almahmoud (2015), her analysis revealed that women's driving was presented as a threat to religious morality and traditional values. Sahly (2016) analyzed thousands of Twitter posts on the topic of women driving using linguistic inquiry to examine how Twitter was used to convey meaning, emotion and power. She concluded that feminist activists used the language of logic and reasoning more frequently than emotional language. Lastly, Altoaimy (2018) adopted a critical feminist perspective and a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of the Twitter debates on the Saudi ban on women driving to unpack and identify the discourses used in tweets published. Through her analysis, she demonstrated the strategic usage of Twitter in debates and negotiations.

As for Kuwait, an extensive review of the work previously done on the status of Kuwaiti women and the development of women's movements revealed significant gaps that need to be filled. Although academic articles and chapters on women's issues have appeared, full-length studies have been few and far between. I have observed that the vast majority of the work done is overly descriptive, focusing more on the dimension of women's education, employment and professional achievements than the emergence of a collective women's movement over the course of contemporary history.

This assessment includes the work of Amal al-Sabah (1989), who conducted an analytical assessment of women's educational attainment and participation in the workforce. Her work extended to discuss challenges to women's participation and the perceived gender distinctions in employment. In the same vein, al-Zaben (1989) carried out a comparative study of the type of occupations that Kuwaiti women undertook during the pre-oil era and the changes that occurred after the discovery of oil. Jill Crystal (1992) painted a comprehensive picture of the history of Kuwaiti society in her book. In one section, she examined the gender division in Kuwaiti society wherein women occupy a position of "subordination," in her words. She also discussed the perceptions of gender-ascribed roles in the workforce and the dissemination of the traditional idea that women's natures make them unsuitable for specific jobs. Moreover, al-Sabah (2001), in "Kuwait Tradition: Creative Expressions of a Culture," outlined the structural changes that occurred in Kuwait, the ascribed gender roles, as well as the predominant role of family structures as the basic social organization units.

While I found these studies mostly directed their focus on examining the changes that occurred in Kuwaiti society and not on how those changes impacted the position of women in society per se, there were rare exceptions. The work of the Kuwaiti sociologist al-Mughni (1993) examined the pioneer women's movements and the backlash they received from Islamists and tribal forces alike. Her work paid attention to intersectional issues of class, kinship and Islam. She also addressed the pitfalls of state-affiliated women's organizations in Kuwait and their responsibility for "consolidating the patriarchal foundations of Kuwaiti society" (p. 138).

Similarly, Tétreault, Rizzo and Shultziner (2012) presented an original analysis in which they traced the formation of women's organizations, their structural makeup and how the Arab nationalist ideology profoundly influenced them during the early 1970s. Mary Anne Tetreault (1995) also examined the women's political movement in Kuwait before and after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the women's heroic role during the resistance to occupation and the changes that occurred in women's political status. Another thoughtful analysis of women's movements was put forward by al-Sabah (2014). In his work, he identified the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the consequent 1991 war of liberation as critical to Kuwaiti women's activists' fight for enfranchisement. He also provided some explanations for the long delay in granting women their suffrage rights, which did not occur until 2005, by highlighting the often-overlooked, unlikely alliances made over the course of decades, such as between the ruling elites and Islamists or Islamists and reformists, all at the expense of women's interests.

In her book, al-Sadani (1983) discussed the Kuwaiti women's suffrage movement and evaluated the repertoire of action it adopted in women's resistance to tribal and Islamist opposition that objected to women's political participation. Her research also analyzed the National Assembly debates on the petition for women's political rights and the differing views of parliament members on this issue. Other studies in the literature have focused on the paradoxes and intertwining relationships between feminism and Islamic identities. For example, Gonzalez (2014) did extensive research using the lens of Islamic feminism to examine Islamist women's strategies of empowerment in their quest for recognition. Kuwaiti women appear in her work as engaged and empowered agents who derive legitimacy from within the Islamic tradition. These observations put her book into conversation with other ethnographies of Islamic feminism, such as Saba Mahmood's (2011), that redefined contemporary approaches to sociological ideas about the subjectivity of piety. Rizzo (2005) examined the effect of Islamic revivalism on women's organizations and the struggle for women's democratic rights in Kuwait, while adopting Islamic feminism as a framework of action.

When it comes to the issue of gendered citizenship in the Kuwaiti context, few studies examined the discrimination against women nationals married to non-nationals. An exception, Alsharekh's (2018) work highlighted the institutionalized norms of exclusion and the attempted to fight the social stigma and discriminatory practices that female nationals married to non-nationals have to confront. It also noted the attempts made by a few independent civil society organizations to advocate for equal citizenship rights, emphasizing that equal citizenship is a focal concern of Kuwaiti women and feminists alike.

While a few articles tackled the topic of digital media, these articles lacked a gendered focus. Thus, it was unfortunate to witness the scant literature on the intersection between digital media use and women's movements. What I have managed to find was the work of Wheeler (2001) on the early days of the internet. Wheeler believed that the internet could be developed into a means to facilitate

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gender activism in Kuwait. She supported her claim by referring to how the internet was used to articulate discourses that protested a law imposing gender segregation in Kuwaiti universities. She also asserted that women were using the internet to empower themselves and negotiate the limits imposed in both the private and public spheres.

Al-Roomi (2007) attempted to explore the realities of political activism reflected in Kuwaiti women's blogging by examining the content of blog posts between April and September 2005—one month before women received their right to vote through five months after. He revealed that bloggers in Kuwait helped unleash a virtual campaign for election reform in April 2005, a campaign that spilled later onto the streets. Another study by al-Abdullah and colleagues (2015) examined Kuwaiti female students' political discourse on Twitter. It concluded that, although Twitter seemed to ease the obstacles for women to take part in deliberative political discussions, there is no actual difference between face-to-face and Twitter for women participating in local political discourse.

Lastly, Alsharekh (2016) stated that many campaigns and female NGOs found the online space to be more cost-effective and engaging to introduce new ideas to the public and recruit members. She gave examples of Kuwaiti groups such as Abolish 153, which deals with the abolition of honor killing laws or "Kuwaiti Women without Borders," which calls for more inclusive citizenship rights for Kuwaiti women. These groups used digital media as a testing ground to gauge the levels of societal acceptability of a specific idea before venturing into actual action. Alsharekh hypothesized that digital media platforms can become valuable means of pushing forward feminist ideas and claims.

Nevertheless, what I have observed from the existing literature that covers feminist activism in the Gulf is an unfortunate dearth of research tackling feminist activism and especially the digital aspect of it from a social movement perspective. I believe that the examination of the contemporary form of feminist activism can be further leveraged by the use of social movement lenses as a mode of inquiry, especially at this time in which we are witnessing an increase of the deployment of digital media platforms in activists' campaigns, including those that are centrally organized or highly distributed over the internet.

To begin this pursuit, as already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, I will first reflect on the overall relationship between social movements and digital media as documented in the literature in general. I will then move to provide a comprehensive reading of the current studies in this field of digital communication, highlighting the significance of communication technologies for activism from the perspective of social movements, while also embedding empirical studies on the promises and perils of digital mediated communication for feminist activism.

2.2 The Nexus Between Digital Media and Social Movements: Disintegration and Fragmentation

The proliferation of new digital media in recent years has transformed how political action is perceived, performed and planned by social movements (Diani, 2000; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Sometimes the very act of political action is being carried out by traditional social movement organizations leveraging on the functionalities of the new digital media, while other times new “digitally-based” social movements are stepping into the continuous field (Edwards, 2004).

New questions that tackle the scale of digital involvement in social movements were raised when the internet was in its infancy. However, it was not until 2002, when web platforms such as Myspace gained widespread popularity that digital media began to take a form that resembles what we now know today as social networking platforms. Mattoni and Trere (2014) have indicated that early social movement studies gave varying attention to communication processes, but focused mainly on state manipulation and propaganda activity conducted by the authorities and elites (Gusfield, 1981).

In the early strands of the political process theory, some social movements scholars touched upon the prominence of the communicative aspect when theorizing social movements. For instance, McAdam (1982, p. 47) emphasized the presence of a “communication network or infrastructure” to coordinate the patterns of diffusion of the movement itself. Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) positioned media as central to their study of the relationship between movements and media as interacting systems, identifying three primary explanations of the importance of media to social movements: mobilization, validation and scope enlargement. Melucci (1996) asserted that the process of forming a collective identity was an act that required visibility and recognition amongst the social movements actors and the environment in which they operated.

While both movement and media landscapes have changed dramatically in the last few decades, it is believed that the extensive use of digital media during critical junctures starting from the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement and other massive protests that subsequently erupted in many countries during 2011 constituted a new phase that reframed many discussions on social movements and the communication dynamics of dissent. It is perceived by many scholars that these forms of contemporary activism have prompted a highly interdisciplinary reflection on how increased communication possibilities entwine with the organizational and symbolic dimensions of social movements as well as on media practices as forms of resistance in their own right (della Porta & Pavan, 2018)

In this vein, Kavada (2016) stated that digital media destabilized the long-held assumptions about social movements and their ability to effect change. Digital media now enable more decentralized, dispersed and individualized forms of political action that subvert the notion of the collective as singular, unified, homogeneous and coherent. Similarly, della Porta (2012) also contended that digital media boosted the communication confidence of social movements. Other researchers

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affirmed that digital media usage enabled large-scale communications with newer possibilities of deliberation, mobilization and coordination between activists and their audience (Castells, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012).

Nonetheless, some academics contend that the research field of digital media and social movements does not constitute an integrated subfield yet (Fominaya & Gillan, 2017), as social movement studies have not paid sufficient attention to the nexus between digital media and communication practices. The latter has remained at the periphery “in comparison to the study of the organizational structure of collective efforts, frame formation, and movements’ action repertoires” (Mosca, 2014, p. 219). Murthy (2018) affirmed that—despite the existence of numerous studies rooted in resource mobilization theories, political process approaches and new social movement theories—the literature on social movements and digital media had not fully grasped how much social media have fundamentally changed the landscape of organizational communication. Cammaerts (2015) also argued that social media studies had little contributed to understanding the precise role of communication and communicative practices in the field of contentious politics, which is surprising due to the significance of communication in political mobilizations.

Overall, traditional approaches to social movements appear to only pay partial attention to communication and media. Work rooted in resource mobilization theories, political process approaches and new social movement theories often evoke media, but never systematically address their role in mobilizations (Van de Donk, Loader, Nixon & Rucht, 2004). Others also question the utility of existing social movement theories in explaining digital age activism as these theories were mainly developed for offline protest action. Such theories might not adequately account for digital activism. Mattoni and Trere (2014) have drawn attention to the fact that the majority of empirically oriented studies that tackle digital communication suffer from two main biases—the one-medium bias and the technological-fascination bias. The one-medium bias refers to the tendency to analyze one medium or platform at a time without taking into consideration the overall array of media ecology, which can potentially lead to a partial view.

Studies that fall under the one-medium bias paradigm tend to address questions relating to the ways a particular medium can contribute to mobilization or contestation or what limitations it might pose on social movement actors. At a micro-level, it is challenging to find a broader applicability in answers to such questions due to variances in both the media platform logic and the political contexts in which it is being deployed, which makes it challenging to develop an overall theoretical insight that might stretch to other cases (Treré, 2011). As a result of this type of bias, the literature remains disintegrated, even when social movement scholars address media-related issues.

Mattoni and Trere (2014) define the technological-fascination bias as the obsession with handling the latest technological platform when considering social movements. This tendency leads to the fixation on and preoccupation with the most recent technological medium, neglecting the relevance and the contribution that other mediums bring to social movements. The adoption of this view can lead scholars to neglect the complexity of digital media ecology when it comes to the use of technologies during political mobilizations and beyond. Moreover, this can also lead to circulating the same unproductive debates that either insist on the radical democratizing features of one medium or the reconfiguration of traditional power structures in the new arena.

Thus, a look at the current state of the art in the field shows the fragmentation in digital media and social movement studies. In addressing this fragmentation, Mattoni (2017) stresses the need to combine different theoretical approaches in social movement studies in order to provide a more varied understanding of how social movement actors interact with digital technologies. The first step in addressing such disintegration could be to enable positive cross-field interdisciplinary development. We need to acknowledge that there is a promising chance in bridging these gaps, especially by combining insights from movement scholarship with those of political communication (Earl & Garrett, 2017), media studies (Mattoni, 2017) and network-centric studies (Pavan, 2017).

2.3 Relevant Literature: An Overview

Many scholars have addressed, from different angles, how new digital media technologies are structurally changing the internal and external organizational dynamics of social movements (Van de Donk et al., 2004). According to Cammaerts (2015, p.2), a large body of the literature that tackles social movements in the age of digital media focused on how and to what degree social media platforms were related to the mobilization and organization of contentious action. He conceptualized five critical areas of focus for scholars in digital media, which will later serve as an inspiring entry point to my theoretical approach: (1) Types of usage and forms of communicative practices, (2) Roles and functions of social media, (3) Networks, ties and the relational dimension, (4) Online spaces as contentious fields and (5) Opportunities and structural constraints.

Thus, the studies that fall under the first category tend to be concerned with identifying activists' communication practices, which were presented by Mattoni (2017, p. 496) as both "routinized and creative arrays of activists' interactions with media technologies" in which the communicative dimensions of social movements could be observed and explained from an empirical level. In connecting that area of focus to social movement research, scholars began to classify the types of use of social media by different categories of social movement actors or explore the multiplicity of communicative practices that were being deployed (Gillan, Pickerill & Webster, 2011). Some studies even differentiated between internet-based practices and internet-supported practices. The latter refers to the on-ground actions that have become easier to organize and coordinate due to the internet, while

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the former denotes the typology of practices that exist only because of the internet (Van Laer and Van Aelst, 2010, p. 1148).

Other scholarly work draws a distinction between two broad fields of activists' micro-level communicative practices (Mattoni, 2017)—activists' interactions with the general public, whether through public discourse or potential exposure in mainstream media, and their internal communicative interactions amongst themselves. This thematic focus was adopted in several studies that examine feminist activism. For instance, Brimacombe and colleagues (2018) investigated the digitally-based practices of women's rights activists in Fiji in order to highlight how digital media was employed as a platform for information dissemination, participation and dialogue. Similarly, Radsch's (2012) work on Arab women's participation in social movements during the Arab Spring illuminated distinctive practices that women deployed for countering state-controlled media and to communicate with other activists, journalists and transnational rights groups.

Aljuwaiser (2018) adopted a media-centric focus while exploring Saudi women's online practices across various social networking platforms to challenge the existing patriarchal order, including the compulsory Hijab and gender segregation rules. More recent studies have also begun to examine advocacy organizations' digital media practices. Bortree and Seltzer (2009) analyzed the dialogic practices of environmental advocacy groups via their social networking profiles; they concluded that the investigated organizations failed to capitalize on the opportunity to effectively utilize the full communicative potentials embedded in social networking platforms. The conclusion was also shared by Waters and Jamal's (2011) study on public communication of non-profit organizations on Twitter, which concluded that such failure was related to the advocacy groups' tendency to use one-way models, despite the potential for dialogue and community building on the social networking site.

The functions of digital media have also constituted a stand-alone thematic area of interest for scholars. Broadly speaking, focusing on the functionalities of digital media requires examining the affordances associated with the use of a specific type of social networking platform. These affordances could include the external functions that relate to mobilization, information dissemination and recruitment or inward-oriented roles that might cover planning, internal discussion and decision-making among the members of the social movements (Cammaerts, 2015).

Drawing on this insight, several studies have attempted to connect the functionalities of digital media with the resource mobilization theory of social movements, which purports that the success or failure of social movements depends on the resources that are available and actors' efficacy in using them effectively (Jenkins, 1983). In this case, some embedded functionalities within digital media platforms were viewed from the lens of resource mobilization theory as available technological

resources for social movements (Tham, 2016). Empirical studies that adopted this angle have focused on the functionalities of digital media for cutting costs (García-Avilés, 2014) or reducing the time and efforts invested in resources that social movements actors cannot easily obtain, such as access to mainstream media channels, attaining favorable coverage or state funding. Along the same lines, Bimber, et al. (2005) indicated that new digital technologies made available to individuals communication methods that were previously used exclusively by formal organizations; they enabled social movements to take on specific functions of formal organizations, blurring the boundaries between traditional, hierarchical forms and flexible network structures.

This approach was steadily adopted following the outpouring optimism about the role of digital media in the field of contention after the 2011 demonstrations that swept the Middle East and North Africa. Many scholars, therefore, have explored the utility of resource mobilization theory in explaining the digital aspect of social movements. For example, Eltantawy and Wiest (2011) asserted that digital media introduced a novel resource for Egyptian protesters during anti-Mubarak demonstrations and provided swiftness in rapid reach of information; strengthened ties among activists; and facilitated interaction among protesters and the rest of the world. The authors also contended that mobilization and organization became more efficient via digital media because of the low costs of building a large-scale communication infrastructure in comparison with managing the filters of the mainstream news media.

The roles and functions of new technologies were also widely celebrated as heralding a turning point for feminism as a social movement, mainly because of technology's perceived speed, horizontality and ability to facilitate productive debate. One researcher remarked that technology "contributed a new chapter to the history of both Arab feminism and the region" (Khamis, 2011, p. 784). This assessment was further explored in various research directions about feminist activism in the MENA region. Khannous (2011) examined the ways in which women in Saudi Arabia and Morocco have leveraged Facebook as a medium for networking with other activists, forming different groups and fueling online discourses about controversial topics such as personal status law and women's rights under Islam in the present globalized context. Zlitni and Touati (2012) asserted, while investigating women's mobilization in Tunisia, that the embedded functionalities of platforms such as Facebook have enhanced public awareness and facilitated the formation of networks of individuals who mobilized and took part in various demonstrations.

Skalli (2014) demonstrated how activists combined on-the-ground action with digital campaigns to mobilize against gender-based violence within the broader context of the Arab Spring. Finally, Stephan (2013) evaluated the role of the "Arab Women's Solidarity Association United" (AWSA United)—a digitally-based, transnational, dispersed women's advocacy group—in fostering communication between women in the diaspora supporting each others' struggles.

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Networks, ties and relational interconnections have also constituted a third thematic area of study. The relationships between actors within networks have been considered to be of crucial importance to social movements due to their perceived influence and impact on coordinating and sustaining social action. The direction of study is rooted in the area of relational sociology, which provides the basis for conceptualizing social networks as relational social structures interwoven with meaning. This framework followed Tilly's (1978) adoption of the concept "catnets," a portmanteau of "category" and "network," to explain the density level of social movement actors (Diani, 2007). Thus, a focus on social networks entails a desire to make sense of the relational aspects of mobilization and organization.

In this light, social networks have been generally understood as patterns of relations between actors made up of collective identities that are "constructed and negotiated by repeated activation of relationships that link individuals or groups" (Melucci, 1995, p. 44). Such networks could potentially promote mutual interaction and sometimes the development of strong ties. In adopting a network perspective, it is essential to ascertain the quality of the ties between various network nodes.

The approach of thinking about social movements in social network terms has proven useful in empirical research about large-scale social phenomena, including feminist movements. It traces the set of social interconnections among the involved actors, assuming a varying degree of importance of relationships that emerge in the online space as a result of digital media use between the interacting nodes which could represent individuals, groups or organizations (Hansen, Shneiderman & Smith, 2011). Consequently, as cited in della Porta and Pavan (2018), a large body of scholarship has surfaced that seeks to uncover how online networks contribute to the development of social movements. In connection with theories that present collective action as organized through networks (e.g., Diani, 2015), serial activism among politically angered protesters in the Indignados, Occupy and Brazilian Vinegar protest (Bastos, Mercea & Charpentier, 2015), as well as the coordination of offline mobilizations (Hussain & Howard, 2013) can be viewed using this lens.

Still, some critical reflections have been raised on the ways digital networks have been approached in the literature in connection to social movements. For Pavan (2014, p. 442), digital networks were frequently regarded as a product of external environmental conditions, thus as a space for action disconnected from offline mobilizations. For her, it was crucial to question the ontological separation between media and collective action networks that was assumed to exist between communication tools and social networks of collective action; such separation was hard to maintain in a context where digital communication mediums were effectively intervening in affecting the relational structure underpinning collective and connective action efforts.

A great deal of empirical research has been conducted that attempts to integrate social networking principles and feminist activism, most notably the work of Crossley (2015). In her research on contemporary, US-based feminism—in which she draws from the literature on social networks, digital mobilization and women’s movements to examine the broader relationship between friendship networks and online and offline mobilization—she argued that both Facebook and feminist blogs successfully managed to foster feminist networks, expand recruitment potential for online and offline mobilization and increase opportunities for online interaction with challengers.

Most recently, Pavan and Mainardi (2018) applied a multifaceted analytical framework of the concept of “integrative power” (Pavan, 2017) to investigate how online networks evolve as part of broader movement processes by tracing the networks that emerged on Twitter in relation to the Italian feminist network “Non Una Di Menonline.” They found that “not only [do] these networks matter as they enrich the relational milieu of contemporary mobilizations, but they also nurture collective action dynamics insofar as they enable the continuous circulation of ideas, inputs, and frames which are integrated and provide an overall shared symbolic universe under which collective action can be undertaken” (Pavan and Mainardi, 2018, p. 418).

A network-centric approach was also adopted in few empirically based studies that tackled feminist activism in the MENA region. For instance, al-Bunni, Millard and Vass (2018) assessed the configuration of Arab feminism on Facebook to uncover the interconnections between Arabic feminist networks and other transnational feminist networks. Their analysis revealed that Arab women’s networks were grouped into two main clusters—some networks distanced themselves from associating with “secular” feminism pages, while others sought the opposite. Their work also supported the argument that Arab feminism was inclusive of both secular and religiously grounded feminist approaches to women’s issues. Yet, these approaches were characterized by a rigid separation between the groups that belong to each ideational framework.

Alsahi (2018) used a network-centric approach to examine how Twitter could serve as an ad-hoc abeyance structure in relation to the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia. She concluded that certain influential accounts on Twitter could mimic specific bureaucratic organizing functions on Twitter and that abeyance could take the shape of ad-hoc, Twitter-based networks.

The study of digital media as a field of contention puts the dynamics of digital protest mobilization under authoritarian rule and beyond under closer scrutiny. It is mostly concerned with how authoritarian rulers can successfully incorporate digital technologies into their repertoires of repression and legitimation. The prominent role played by digital media during the Arab revolutions has brought considerable attention to the internet’s effects on the persistence of authoritarian rule—

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how autocrats worldwide have learned to adapt to the challenges posed by digital media and appropriate it to their benefit (della Porta, 2013).

Consequently, many studies on the usage of digital media in authoritarian settings have highlighted the severe consequences of internet controls, as well as the use of commercial surveillance software and the shaping of public opinion through disinformation (e.g., Rød & Weidmann, 2015). Lebert (2013) also reported that state surveillance is a central concern for activists in many countries for those spreading human rights-related information. In the case of Iran, it has been reported that Iranian activists are not only faced with internet filtering policies, but they are also more easily and quickly tracked down by the state when they communicate through social media (Baldino & Goold, 2014). This kind of surveillance has given rise to new social movements specifically focused on defending an open internet and digital rights.

In parallel, the inclination and capability of the state to engage in measures of internet control was also demonstrated in the MENA region. The Arab Spring uprisings are among the factors that seem to have pushed many authoritarian states to improve their counterinsurgency capabilities for monitoring and disrupting online communication. State responses have ranged from technical ones, designed to limit or shape access to the internet, to selective repression and overt intervention in online communication flows. The outcome has differed considerably between regimes. For example, while Tunisia and Egypt failed to act quickly and effectively to control digital networks, Libya and Bahrain succeeded (Howard & Hussain, 2013).

There are not many studies, however, that cover the implications of digital repression on feminist activism, with the exception of Siapera and Ging (2018). Their research documented how online anti-feminist spaces were transformed by the technological affordances of new digital platforms. Other research has tackled aspects of online misogyny on popular social media platforms, including the work done Lin (2017). Lin examined how the internet fuels anti-feminist sentiment by examining the case study of “Men Going Their Own Way” (MGTOW), an anonymous, anti-feminist online group. Additionally, it is worth remembering that while networked technologies have the potential to reduce participation costs, they continue to pose barriers such as the uneven distribution of access, as well as state and market control of the networked infrastructures (Loader & Mercea, 2011).

There have been some attempts to link research on the opportunities and constraints of networked technologies to social movement literature using the concepts of opportunity structure and repertoire of contentious action to examine the interplay between the structural constraints of networked technologies and strategies of agency (Cammaerts, 2015). Such studies have been rooted in the concept of political opportunity structure, which rests on the premise that the capacity to mobilize

people depends on opportunities and constraints at an economic and political level beyond the control of social movements (e.g., Tarrow, 1994). There is little agreement about the signifiers, but advocates of political opportunity structure theory often incorporate measures of elite division, political pluralism, regime type and the state's capability for repression (McAdam, 1996).

The political opportunity structure approach claims that the concept of political opportunity is a key determinant of the emergence of a social movement; any change in the elements concerning elite division, alliance structures or regime type can influence the acceleration or deceleration of episodes of collective action (Wiktorowicz, 2004). Opportunity structures are therefore generally understood as “attributes of a social system that facilitate or constrain movement activity. They shape the environment in which activists operate, and activists must take them into account when crafting actions” (Garrett, 2006, p. 212).

Many social movements scholars and especially feminist scholars found this approach useful in explaining the emergence of women's movements under the authoritarian regimes in Latin America and beyond, analyzing the movements' interactions and situatedness with the surrounding political parties and the state (e.g., Valiente, 2015; Waylen, 1993). Some expansions on the concept of political structures were later introduced. Koopmans and Statham (1999) developed the notion of discursive opportunity structure to link political opportunity structure and framing perspectives on collective action that facilitated the reception of specific movement frames and could thereby affect mobilization.

Because media and communication are relevant to the symbolic and discursive realms in which social movements operate, several scholars have started to tie the discursive opportunity structure (DOS) theory to the discursive opportunities provided by digital media that can determine the level of success or failure of social movements (e.g., Cammaerts, 2012). Digital media has been thought to increase the capacity to transmit text and visual discourses and potentially provide new opportunities for marginalized individuals to bypass state controls and challenge the existing political hierarchies' monopolies on powerful communications media to construct alternative discourse (McCammon, 2013).

Several studies have made efforts to tie the discursive opportunity structure back to the actions of digital media and social movements, adopting discursive approaches to feminist activism and digital media; tackling the digital media campaigns around issues concerning abortion, harassment and misogyny or quantifying the influence of Twitter in terms of digital connectivity and discourse creation. These efforts include research by Shaw (2012), who argued that digital discourse can represent a new mode of activism capable of triggering sociopolitical change with or without the help of collective action offline. Skalli (2006) found that new digital media allowed women in the MENA region “to impact and redefine the public sphere despite the often-institutionalized norms of exclusion and marginalization restricting their physical mobility and visibility” and to create and disseminate

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alternative discursive spaces where it is possible to redefine and challenge the existing patriarchal gender relations (p. 36).

Landorf's (2014) research on female reverberations online in Egypt and Tunisia concluded that discursive activism online managed to engender new networks of connectivity during the revolution, targeted traditional media and was used to organize physical protests, illustrating the expansion of physical space into the digital realm. Upon reflection, it appears that attempts to focus on the discursive dimension of opportunity structures have made some substantial contributions to the study of social movements. They have reversed the assumptions that structures are beyond the control of movement actors and made it possible to view them as more dynamic, co-shaped by movements, activists and other actors who are engaging in a dialectical fashion with structure and agency (Cammaerts, 2015).

2.4 The Possibility of an Integrated Relational Approach

As seen from the wide range of different interdisciplinary enquires on the intersection between social movements and digital communication technologies, the research strands on the practices of digital activism are either dominated by a strong focus on the digital, emphasizing a universal way of using certain mediums, or prioritize the very act of activism but lose sight of the specificities of the affordances of media technologies (Kaun and Uldam, 2018).

Put briefly, while most researchers are critical of the technological determinism thesis, there is a continuum within the field that privileges the role of technologies and perceives them as the driving forces of movements (e.g. Benkler, 2006; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). There is a tendency to overestimate the role of the media as agents of change while dismissing the other non-media factors. This approach poses a risk of “automatically center-staging media logics and technologies” (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014, p. 1033) that might overshadow more complex elements.

On the other side of the spectrum, scholars who focus on social actors and the ways that they deploy these technologies can end up privileging the technological practices over digital affordances (e.g., Fominaya & Gillan, 2017). While both tendencies have substantial merits, they risk failing to adequately address the significance of the intersection between digital media and activism. To address this tension, many researchers have emphasized the necessity of combining interdisciplinary insights from social movement studies in order to construct a more meaningful understanding of how social movement actors approach digital technologies (Mattoni, 2017), bringing diverse perspectives and approaches into the conversation about contemporary activism.

Accordingly, I follow Kaun and Uldam's (2018) proposal in examining the very act of activism and digital feminist activism by extension in a manner that traverses digital media technologies and activist practices, striking a long-anticipated balance between context and media-specificity. I believe that it is crucial to explore feminist activism as my case indicated as a deeply situated act that materializes within and in response to a specific societal context and does not exist independently from the existing larger social and political structures (Terre, 2011).

I also agree with Pavan (2014), who believes that it is essential to acknowledge that digital activism is not solely a set of technical practices that are detached from material reality; it is an act that is shaped by the cross-dimensional back-and-forth exchanges that take place among individuals, groups, organizations and digital platforms. Consequently, I adopt an integrated relational approach to the study of digital feminist activism in relation to my case studies. My theoretical modeling efforts are mainly concentrated on integrating the major dimensions of literature that were identified by Cammaerts (2015), which tackle the nexus between digital media and social movements—the opportunities and structural constraints, the relational dimension of networks and ties and finally actors' perceptions.

By placing these three interrelated dimensions—discursive opportunities structures, networks and actors' agencies—at the core of my theoretical framework, I seek to privilege a relational approach to the study of feminist activism. So, by first concentrating on the agency of feminist actors, I devote attention to the embodied, material and socially situated aspects of carrying out feminist activism. As alternatively, the deployment of purely technological-centric approach might instead lead us to a skewed reading of the phenomenon at hand and render the actors' agency invisible.

By focusing on the discursive opportunity dimension, I explore the deployment of feminist discourses in these socio-material spaces. Finally, by including networks, I seek to draw inferences from the relational milieu that governs the deployment of digitally mediated practices, taking account of the content that networks produce through the rapid circulation of user-generated content over these networks of exchange. By adopting this approach, I aim to get a better understanding of the situatedness of digital feminist activism in advancing feminist claims and reflect on how digital media technologies are connected to the contemporary forms of feminist activism in the Arab Gulf States.

2.4.1 First Dimension: Actors' Agency

It is crucial to broaden the interdisciplinary nature of digital communication studies to examine the activists' situated perceptions. Doing so will allow us to comprehend better the meanings that actors attribute to their actions and how these meanings are constantly reconstructed and renegotiated.

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However, the majority of the studies that are carried out in relation to feminist digital activism examine one aspect of activists' communicative social media tactics, either by analyzing a specific social media platform (replicating the one-medium bias), the interaction between mainstream media and activists or activists' mobilization and self-mediation. These focus areas are significant, but they risk missing the relevance of other aspects. By solely relying on the analysis of existing social media data or individual media platforms, one can fail to observe insights about activists' motivations and tactics leading up to the visible representation of actions, which could potentially be better understood through qualitative inquiries.

Alternatively, by deploying my integrated relational approach, I maintain a focus on the lived, material and socially situated aspects of carrying feminist activism. Digital media do not exist independently of the situated practices of feminist activists, but the two interact and shape each other (Fotopoulou, 2017). The applicability of this theoretical direction stems from the conviction that neither technologically centric approaches nor a constructivist view of human agency is alone adequate to explain feminist activism (Leonardi & Barley, 2008).

At the center of the actors' agency dimension is the social actor—which may represent activists, bloggers, institutional women's rights activists affiliated with established women's organizations, or others—who are actively involved in the campaigns that I am examining. The approach highlights the agency of social movement actors in relation to media technologies (Mattoni, 2017). More specifically, I give attention to activists' subjectivities as I attempt to uncover their experiences in carrying out feminist action to reveal the complex and multifaceted ways that they deploy the resources available to them to participate in feminist action. I will also examine the nature of their relationship to feminism that materializes over a contested digital media space.

This attention is conceptually crucial for realizing a more nuanced understanding of feminist activism and avoiding the mystification of the role of digital media in women's struggles. It also restores women's voices and portrays them as active agents beyond the reductionist accounts that view them as passive subjects. This actors' agency dimension, therefore, repositions feminist activists, their acts and their subjectivities from the margin to the center in my analysis, highlighting the dialectical relations between technologies and actors that are often missing from social movement theories on activism.

2.4.2 Second Dimension: Looking at the Discourses

This dimension will cover the dialectic relationship between the strategies of visibility and discursive practices enacted by feminist activists and organizations in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It will also

evaluate how actors utilize digital media to create counter-hegemonic discourses, increase the public claims-making process and initiate movement messages that are directed towards the public sphere.

This dimension will, therefore, draw insights from the discursive opportunity structures theory. In that respect, many theoretical and empirical studies have recently emerged about digital media offering activists opportunities not possible through mainstream media. After all, receiving mainstream media coverage is not an easy task for activists who are located outside the realm of institutional politics, not to mention the severe competition for attention from a variety of alternative sources (Pfetsch & Adam, 2011). Breindl (2010), who draws on the literature about information technologies for activism, explained that the elimination of intermediaries in online spaces also gives activists and groups unlimited editorial control in explaining, informing and developing their narratives.

To this end, Koopmans and Statham (1999) proposed the concept of “discursive opportunities structures” (DOS), which is derived from two notions in social movement studies—political opportunity structure and framing—in order to incorporate meaning into structural approaches and differentiate political from cultural opportunities. The concept also devotes special attention to the opportunities and constraints that become publicly visible and can thereby affect mobilization.

Discursive opportunity structures, therefore, refer to the aspects of the public discourse that determine a message's chances of diffusion in the public sphere (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004). They denote a space where different alternative interpretations about important issues are proposed and articulated by competing actors (Koopmans and Olzak, 2004). Simply put, DOS theories seek to account for changes in the conversation about the concerned issues because “opportunity” denotes the varying chances for an issue to be addressed (della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Traditionally, significant attention has been paid to the role of mass media, which has been located at the very core of this overall DOS. Scholars indeed viewed mass media as a master arena for the development of public discourses (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards & Rucht, 2002), as well as for the crystallization of specific interpretative frameworks constituting the public opinion on relevant issues (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Mass media has therefore been seen as relevant to social movements' success first of all in light of their capability of shaping a more or less receptive environment for movements and their claims. It was not surprising to observe social movement actors as keen on obtaining visibility and support through mass media.

However, the process of getting media attention has proven difficult for multiple reasons that can range from the state's control over mass media to the severe competition and limited carrying capacity of the mass media outlets. As a result, only a few attempts to enter the public sphere will be successful in achieving a high level of public visibility deemed newsworthy; much of the political

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mobilization and communication fails to pass through the filter of the mass media to reach to their target audience (Koopmans & Zimmermann, 2003).

Mattoni (2017) has elaborated on the subaltern position of activists with regard to mainstream media who have no voice in the bourgeois public sphere. She notes that some turn to new digital media technologies to be in charge of their own mediated representation. Similarly, Costanza Chock (2012) contended digital media now give a chance for interested actors to directly mobilize people, obtain public visibility and initiate political claims, without needing to pass through the traditional mass media filters. Following these lines of inquiry, I am interested in capturing the role of digital media platforms in increasing the visibility of feminist discourse and the public claims-making process by employing discursive opportunities structure theories inspired by the theoretical model put forward by Koopmans and Statham (2002) and Koopmans and Zimmermann (2003). I expect that incorporating discursive opportunity structures theories (DOS) is essential to account for the role of digital media in feminist contention and digital media platforms provide somewhat better opportunities for feminist actors to carry out feminist action than is possible through the available institutional means or traditional mass media.

2.4.3 Third Dimension: Networks, Ties, and Content

Social movements are distinctive because they consist of independent social actors who are embedded in specific settings, exhibit distinct orientations and seek to achieve common objectives, but who are at the same time connected through some means of concrete cooperation and/or mutual recognition in a bond. This observation aligns with Diani's (1992) definition of social movement as "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (p. 13). It also serves as an entry point to the third strand of literature that I have turned to, which is based on network theory. Network theory generally examines the micro-level connections between involved actors and theorizes about how groups and individuals interact with each other (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

The basic premise of network theories indicates that through constant interaction processes, the boundaries bounding the actors become consistently reconfigured and actors' togetherness becomes built on conversation and connectedness. Thus, for the network to survive, it must persistently initiate discourse and share information. Networked studies became widely relevant after recent studies on digital media and collective action emphasized the rise of issue-based, distributed networks on the expanse of traditional social movements organizations (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). Such studies highlighted the rise of "connective action," an internet-based version of collective action, in which online social networks have become prominent.

These studies indicate that as digital and social media become increasingly prominent, they too become networking agents (Latour, 2005) within the movement spaces. Social network structures are therefore formed when connections in the shape of links, ties or edges are created in the process of sharing texts, images, hashtags and videos among social actors who are represented by nodes or vertices. This reality is manifested on Twitter for instance, where the social network is composed of users and the connections they form with other users by the tweeting, mentioning and replying to relations (Hansen, Shneiderman and Smith, 2011).

Perceiving movements from a networked perspective can provide us with an entrée into social movements through providing a way to look at individuals as well as organizations and the way they interrelate within a given field. It can also allow us to capture networks' essences as cognate forms capable of conducting action and reveal interesting insights about the actors' social position and the movement's overall composition and ecology. This perspective may, among other things, point to the larger network of relations involved in a particular event, even if it does not tell the whole story (Huberman, Romero & Wu, 2009).

So, in terms of the overall contribution of networked approaches to the field of social movements, research on social media from a social network perspective shifts the focus from individual traits to relational ties between social entities. The application of a network perspective could generate important insights on the process whereby events become a movement through meaning attribution and recognition of commonalities (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001). Additionally, examining networks can provide us with clues to assess the social location of specific actors and identify the general structural patterns from a relational perspective. For instance, exploring how the "Women to Drive" campaign unfolded on Twitter can be useful for identifying the core actors who were involved and the content that these relevant accounts produced. Thus, both social actors and discursive content have an active presence in social networks that can provide us with some insights into the organizational dynamics and information sources that were manifested there.

Taking this into consideration, I seek to shed some light on the role of Twitter in aiding feminist activism concerning my case studies. I am interested in making sense of the embeddedness of the most active Twitter users in the relational context of the campaigns and the content disseminated by the Twitter accounts that claim to be representative of the movement. Overall, I hope that this relational approach will allow us to rethink the ontological separation between structures, networks and actors in the field of movements and digital activism that has so far characterized research in this domain. I hope it will also account for the multiplicity of dimensions underpinning feminist activism and the hybrid interplay between technology-facilitated practices.

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2. 5 Research Questions

Given this backdrop, a set of challenging research questions underlying the separate case studies stands at the center of the Ph.D. dissertation. Just as feminist activism varies in its form, mode of organization and conduct, feminist activists also make use of a variety of resources and heterogeneous practices to spread out their claims.

In analyzing feminist activism and especially the digital component of it, I pay special attention to the different dimensions that constitute feminist activism (actors' agency, discourses and networks) and the different platforms that activist and feminist organizations use (traditional media, Facebook, Twitter) as well as highlight their deployment. Attempting to answer the following questions will also give us a clue of whether digital media platforms provide somewhat better opportunities for feminist actors to carry out feminist action than what is possible through the available institutional means or traditional mass media.

1) What are activists' perceptions and experiences while carrying out feminist activism?

This question, which corresponds to actors' agency dimension in my theoretical framework, will generally cover the overall engagements of Saudi and Kuwaiti feminist activists both offline and online, most notably during the campaigns that I have identified in my case selection section. Thus, by adopting an activist-centric approach, here I examine women's perceptions concerning the multifaceted ways in which they view the overall trajectory of the feminist movement in each case, as well as the multifaceted ways that they are using the resources available to them to participate in feminist activism. Moreover, I move further to uncover their experiences in carrying out feminist action to better understand their sense-making of feminist activism as an agentic practice, as well as the nature of their relationship to feminism that materializes over a contested digital media spaces.

2) How do we capture the salience of the claims made by activists and the publicly visible side of their involvement in the mediated public sphere?

The main aim of this question, which tackles the discursive opportunities dimension of my theoretical approach, is to examine the visibility of two of the main issues that are advocated by the feminist campaigns that I have included in the case selection (the driving ban and gendered citizenship laws) in the Saudi and Kuwaiti mediated public sphere. This assessment will be conducted in relation to the media coverage of these two contentious issues at different points of time (prior to and during the mobilization that took place) to possibly get a sense about the contribution of these campaigns on the formation and diffusion of campaigns' claims in the mass media.

Hence, I devote my attention to the salience of the claims made in mainstream media and explore the position of different actors who are involved, the discursive repertoires they deployed and the framing process. This evaluation will be made possible by carrying out systematic political claims analysis on a set of national newspapers in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and examining media attention towards the claims made by the campaigns before and after the mobilization. Doing so will allow me to analyze the publicly visible side of activists' feminist involvement and communication as advocated by Koopmans and Statham (1999) and the possibility of the diffusion of feminist claims into mass media.

3) How did activists and feminist organizations deploy Facebook during the feminist campaigns?

This question will tackle the adoption of Facebook by both women's organizations and activists, in which I will shed some light on the multipurpose use of Facebook and feminist discourses are articulated in these techno-social spaces. Hence, in Chapter 6, I elaborate on how Facebook was deployed as a platform for claims-making, mobilization and feminist expression in the complex and multifaceted context of the campaigns, as well as the arrays of meanings and feminist references that emerged and manifested themselves on that platform.

4) Who are the main actors involved in networked action on Twitter and what is the content that is being produced and disseminated in these networks?

Answering this last research question will be made possible by adopting a network-centric perspective to shed some light on the deployment of Twitter by feminist activists and organizations in both campaigns. Accordingly, I will be mainly concerned with illuminating the deployment of Twitter in aiding feminist activism and making sense of the embeddedness of the most active Twitter users. I will also analyze the content generated and circulated by the Twitter accounts that claim to be representative of the campaign.

Chapter 3: Historical Contextualization

Scholars who work on topics that are related to activism tend to forget that the contemporary forms of activism are a result of multiple intersecting factors that are shaped by a set of contextual and historical conditions. This chapter, therefore, seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the historical and temporal contexts that shaped women's movements and feminist activism as well as the gendered politics of both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

I depart from the assumption that an adequately historicized and politicized understanding of the configuration of women's movements requires a detailed examination of the long-term historical processes and the embeddedness of the gendered subjects in the complex geopolitical field. Considering this aim, after the initial presentation of the processes of state formation that took place in Saudi Arabia, I focus my efforts on outlining the contours of the politico-religious alliance on which Saudi Arabia is based, dating back to the eighteenth-century pact between the al-Saud and the theologian religious reformer Muḥammad Abd al-Wahab (d. 1792). This alliance has formed the ideological backbone of the kingdom up to the present.

I later highlight the transformations that occurred with the discovery of oil and the accompanying changes in state-society relations. Then I tackle the effects of urbanization on the creation of social tensions between the actors who advocated for modernity and those who wished to retain the conservative religious norms. A detailed summary of the changing dynamics that occurred in the transformative year of 1979 will later follow, in which I historically sketch the changes that took place in Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution and the siege of the Grand Mosque of Mecca. Then I move to shed some light on the emergence of the Islamist revival movement (al- Sahwa) and the shifting alliances that were forged and re-forged in relation to it.

Whereas the 1970s laid the foundation for Saudi opposition, the 1990s turned out to be a decade of consolidation due to the Gulf War in 1990. Here, I focus on how the Gulf War was indeed a catalyst for radical Islamic anger and politicization due to the Saudi's alliance with the United States and international forces. Then I move to the twenty-first century and the changes that it has brought on the political front in the wake of the September, 11 2001 attacks on the United States. After these attacks, Saudi Arabia faced mounting political pressure to examine its relationship with the Wahhabi movement and introduce a series of reformist measures that opened the political opportunity structure for limited reforms that targeted women as direct gendered subjects.

And lastly, I present a compact overview of the challenges that were posed by the Arab uprisings in 2011 and the obstacles that came with the rule of King Salman in 2015 after the death of King Abdullah—from leadership shuffles and sinking oil prices, to regional and international upheaval such as the military intervention in Yemen, ending with the rise of his son Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman to the domestic and international scene. I dedicate the second section to untangling the complexities of gendered politics in Saudi Arabia that are conditioned by the political-religious pact between the monarchy and the religious establishment. Hence, I view the historical period with a gendered lens because Saudi women have been significant to the country's ideology since its founding days.

Still, up until the 1980s, women remained mostly invisible to the state, depicted as strictly pious, religious subjects. This characterization has changed following the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States as well as domestic terrorism in Saudi Arabia; both set off structural changes with important implications for Saudi women. Saudi women became the objects of state policy, but this time as new faces of modernity. In the final section, I trace the development of the organic Saudi feminist movement from its early stages. I begin with the ascendance of Islamist feminists to the Saudi public sphere in the 1980s-90s, move to the Gulf War driving campaign in the 1990s, the scattered feminist efforts during the early 2000s and then end with the current digital feminist activism that takes places in online spaces.

A similar historical overview will be carried in the context of Kuwait. Overall, the historical trajectory of Kuwait can be divided into three major periods: (1) the pre-oil era, which began in the early eighteenth century and continued to 1960, (2) independent Kuwait from the 1960s to the Iraqi invasion on August 2, 1990 and (3) post-liberation Kuwait. I begin by highlighting the rise of al-Sabah as a dynastic family of Kuwait and the support that it enjoyed from the merchant families. I will then discuss the impact of the discovery of oil on the dynamics of the relationship between al-Sabah and the merchant families, followed by the merchant class's attempts to curtail the power of the al-Sabah family and establish a participatory political process where power is shared between them.

The historical overview will show the resistance of al-Sabah to such attempts and their willingness to fight to prevent such an eventuality. The discussion of the oil revenue will also extend to mention its impact on changing the structure of the Kuwaiti economy. The resulting massive influx of Arab and foreign migrants, made the issue of identity and citizenship central and detrimental in the maintenance of al-Sabah rule. Later, I contextualize the independence of Kuwait from British protectorate status in 1961 and the promulgation of the constitution, as well as the relatively stable political environment that was enjoyed inside Kuwait during the era of Arab Nationalism. Then I focus on tracing the emergence of the Islamist movement at the end of the 1970s, which became more organized and found a following in Kuwaiti society.

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I consider the Iraqi-Kuwaiti crisis as a major turning event that changed the landscape of Kuwait's political life. Then I outline the dominance of Islamists inside the Kuwaiti National Assembly and the gendered conflicts that emerged, such as the denial of women's political rights. I conclude this historical trajectory by mentioning the Kuwaiti government's efforts to re-evaluate its alliance with the Islamists. I dedicate the following section to illuminating the different stages of the Kuwait feminist movements. Therefore, I begin here by delineating the history of women's movements from the 1960s. Women's activism has been mostly channeled to create institutionalized forms of women's organizations and associations that address women's issues from differing, sometimes opposing, perspectives.

Closer attention to women's shifting rules during the late 1970s and early 1980s will follow. Similar to the same period in Saudi Arabia, this era marked a change in the status of women in Kuwait during the resurgence of political Islam. Prior to that resurgence, women had enjoyed relative freedom, so activists moved to tackle the rise of Islamic feminism in Kuwait. Afterward, I offer insights on women's contributions during the Gulf Crisis of 1990–1991, but then show how progress halted, followed by a decline in women's status. I speak about the cross-alliance between secular and Islamist women to push for the right to vote after the turn of the millennium. I end by mentioning that there are potentials for further collaboration as women are still on their way to achieve further full citizenship rights. After relating the national political topography and differing historical and political contexts for both cases, I conclude the chapter by elaborating on my case studies in greater detail. I hope that the two case studies will contribute to assessing the roots of the present-day continuous politics of gender and revealing the specific historical as well as current conditions that shape the current forms of women's and feminist activism.

3.1: An Insight to Saudi Arabia's Modern Political History

The process of state formation in Saudi Arabia started in the central region of the Arabian Peninsula in 1744. It went through multiple phases, ending in the establishment of the modern Saudi State under the rule of King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, who united the four disparate regions of the Hejaz, Najd, Hasa and Southern Arabia (Asir) in 1932 (al-Rasheed, 2010). The success in forming the Saudi state owes much to the historical alliance between the al-Saud clan and a body of religious scholars (Ulama) who promoted the teachings of the puritanical, 18th-century reformer Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab al-Wahhab's contribution has shaped the type of Islam adopted in Saudi Arabia today (Vassiliev, 2013).

This alliance succeeded in providing the ideological and political support needed to form the Saudi state as it legitimized the regime's political interests and protected it from the organized political opposition. This deal was in return for implementing Abd al-Wahhab's strict orthodox teachings as the religious basis of the Saudi Arabian dynastic rule (al-Rasheed, 2010). So, with political support, the religious establishment gained control over the legal and education systems, helping to expand its

vision and practices among rising Saudi generations. It aimed to solidify religious conservatism and reinforce the Islamic identity of Saudis. All such practices have helped to uphold the Saudi state as a Muslim nation that represents that true Islamic faith.

The discovery and production of oil was a major event in the country as it freed the government from the political constraints that naturally come with taxation and set the stage for another major shift in state-society relations. More specifically, the economic upheaval arising from the increased income from oil led to explosive economic and material developments and gave rise to a trend towards education abroad and a change in lifestyle (Yamani, 1996). The religious establishment objected to the country's rapid urbanization and openness to the West, as they perceived both as threats to the Kingdom's commitment to applying Sharia.

These rapid changes also created social tensions between those who advocated for modernity and those who intended to retain the conservative religious norms within their communities. This tension was first manifested with the opening of the Kingdom's first television station in September 1965, which prompted a group of radical Islamists to attack the broadcasting studio in Riyadh. Along the same lines, the introduction of girls' education in a conservative city in Saudi Arabia (Buraidah) set the stage for violent protests that came to an end only after the National Guard intervened to protect the school (Lawson, 2017). 1979 brought two critical junctures that shaped the nature and the scope of the Saudi opposition. First, the overthrow of the Shah of Iran by Ayatollah Khomeini resulted in a Shia Islamic Revolution in neighboring Iran. Later that year, the siege of the Grand Mosque of Mecca for two weeks by religiously motivated groups critical of the government's openness to the West and tolerance of laxity in public religious practice challenged the legitimacy of al-Saud (al-Munajjed, 1997).

Afraid of suffering the same fate as the Iranian monarchy and to take the wind out of the radicals' sails, the al-Saud empowered the religious establishment, granting them significant concessions in social and religious matters. They promised further financial incentives as a precautionary measure to protect themselves from future opposition. As a consequence, the aftermath of the 1979 rebellion saw a greater public display of religiosity by the state and embrace of political Islam to appeal to the growing Islamist sentiment. Also as a response, the authorities increased mosque construction, reinforced the Islamic content of the schools' curricula and empowered the religious police officers to crack down on women who violated the dress code (Prokop, 2003).

According to Lacroix (2011), these events provoked the Islamists to start the Islamic Awakening revival movement (Sahwa). The movement was developed primarily on university campuses after the arrival of large numbers of members of the Muslim Brotherhood (many of whom were academics or well-trained professionals) who were fleeing persecution in countries like Egypt and

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Syria. Henceforth, the religious tenets of Wahhabism were blended with the political discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood, giving birth to a social movement that soon gained momentum among Saudi youth. It advocated rejection of Westernization and a return to a puritan way of Islam.

The new era was marked by strict social measures. These groups successfully lobbied for more religious education in schools and universities as well as restrictions and censorship practices in media to conform to religious and social values. New laws barred women from appearing on the Saudi official television (al-Fassi, 2016), banned music in any media and marginalized Shiites and other religious minorities. From there, the 1980s witnessed increased institutionalization and enforcement of the religious establishment and its practices, which have persisted over the years. With the help of oil revenues, these practices were expanded in “individual behavior, in government policies, in official and unofficial relations with foreigners” (Pompea, 2002, p. 65). In 1986, the king adopted a new title, the Custodian of the Two Holy Places and no longer referred to himself just as a king (Lawson, 2011).

This period also witnessed the opening of Islamic universities in major cities in the Kingdom; by the late 1980s, these schools accepted more than 15 percent of the country’s university students and by 1986, more than 16,000 of the Kingdom’s 100,000 students were enrolled in Islamic studies. By the early 1990s, one-quarter of all university students were studying in religious institutions. Whereas the 1970s laid the foundation for Saudi opposition, the 1990s turned out to be a decade of consolidation due to the Gulf War in 1990. Widespread public anger increased over the alliance with the United States and the deployment of 500,000 American troops on Saudi soil to coordinate the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 (Peterson, 1993).

The opposition perceived the Saudi regime as incompetent and unable to deal with outside threats. Sermons and speeches that criticized the al-Saud for relying on the Americans to defend the holiest places of Islam circulated widely on audiocassettes and videotapes. In November 1990, 43 prominent figures in the Islamic Awakening movement signed a petition to the ruler requesting the immediate implementation of political and social reforms. The petition coincided with a public protest by elite women in Riyadh against the longstanding custom of not permitting females to drive automobiles, along with a small rally in Jeddah that called for an end to al-Saud rule (Lawson, 2017). The Iraqi-Kuwaiti War served as a catalyst for radical outrage and politicization. Islamist figures became more organized than ever before and their demands became bolder and more far-reaching. The Sahwa, led by Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awda, became the icons of a strong protest movement against the royal family.

They formulated and presented formal political demands to the Saudi government, most famously through petitions known as the “Letter of Demands” in 1991—signed by hundreds of

prominent religious scholars, judges and intellectuals—and the “Memorandum of Advice” in 1992 (Lacroix, 2011). The petitions carried an Islamist flavor, but encompassed many demands with which liberal critics of the regime could identify with (Meijer & Aarts, 2012). For example, they called for an end to corruption and nepotism, the appointment of a consultative council and more freedom of expression.

Contrary to the established norm in the Kingdom, that all criticism of the monarchy should remain private, the letters were made public. As a result, many of the signatories of the letter were questioned while others landed in jail, including the famous sheiks Salman al-Awda, Safar al-Hawali and Nasir al-Umar (Lacroix, 2004). The major political and religious challenges of the 1990s led to significant upheavals and forced the leadership to introduce a series of limited political reforms such as the 1992 Basic Law of Government, which for the most part confirmed the ruler’s right to carry out a broad range of duties; the Law of the Consultative Council, whereby the ruler would appoint representatives to advise him concerning domestic affairs and the Law of the Provinces, which provided for a network of appointed provincial councils (Lawson, 2017).

Many political prisoners were released in 1999, together with hundreds of supporters and sympathizers with the Islamists. Other Islamists fled to Afghanistan, where Osama Bin Laden had established training camps, or took refuge in London, where they continued their media campaign against the Saudi government. The twenty-first century has brought many changes across the country. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, Saudi Arabia faced mounting political pressure from the Bush administration to reevaluate its relationship with the Wahhabi movement and introduce a series of reformist measures because 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis (al-Rasheed, 2013).

These events set off structural changes with significant implications. A mix of repression and internal restructuring began shifting the Saudi state from the Islamism of the Sahwa era to a new form of nationhood. As a response, the regime has initiated some measures of reform to counter radicalization (Niblock, 2006) by reviewing educational materials to ensure the elimination of fundamentalist thinking and monitoring the activities of preachers and Islamists. The members of the Islamic Awakening movement who had been released from prison in the late 1990s began to distance themselves from radical Jihadi groups. While both lacked sympathy for the United States, they disputed the theological justification for attacking civilians. They denounced al-Qaidah in the Arabian Peninsula, but fell short of openly denouncing Bin Laden. They favored dialogue and rehabilitation programs to reform those who had gone astray. They also called for fair trials in order to encourage those involved in terrorism or supportive of jihadi theology to give themselves up (al-Rasheed, 2010).

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In January 2003, a group of more than 100 Saudi intellectuals submitted a “vision document” in which they presented their views about the required changes in the political and social domains in Saudi Arabia. The document discussed the promulgation of a constitution based on the principle of separation of the legislative, executive and judiciary powers. This was a significant move in a country that does not allow public gatherings to discuss political or social issues and petitions are the only means by which reformists can communicate with political leadership (Lawson, 2017). Calls for revising the religious discourse of the country would continue after 2003, when al-Qaeda, in May, began a bombing campaign in Saudi Arabia targeting Western expatriates and Saudi security forces. The attacks encouraged some Saudis publicly to question the bases of Wahhabism in unprecedented fashion.

The campaign prompted the Saudi leadership to stage national dialogue forums, announce the preparation of limited municipal elections, create an international interfaith dialogue center, appoint women in limited numbers to official positions and open up the public sphere to quasi-independent civil society associations (Thompson, 2014). Moreover, in May 2003, the government established a committee as part of a campaign to promote a moderate image of Islam and to uproot extremism from the country. With the ascension to the throne of King Abdullah in 2005, some limited opening occurred, such as the launch of a nationwide scholarship program to send young Saudis abroad for their university education. Moreover, perhaps most importantly, the country held its first experiment in mass participatory politics—the 2005 municipal council elections. The move to offer limited advancement for women in Saudi Arabia can be traced to this period in which King Abdullah was portrayed as a reformer and a campaigner for top-down women’s empowerment efforts (Yamani, 2008).

The Kingdom surprised observers in the wake of the Arab uprisings in 2011 by remaining relatively stable. Domestically, the regime appeared intact while confronting multiple challenges from active groups, including Islamists, women and religious minorities as some protests erupted immediately after demonstrations in Arab capitals. More powers were extended to the Ministry of Interior during this period. The anti-terrorism law was enacted by royal decree in December 2013 with vague and broadly defined articles of what constitutes terrorist crimes so to silence dissent. Following the death of King Abdullah in 2015, King Salman al-Saud assumed the throne. King Salman began his rule in 2015 with a series of unprecedented challenges: leadership shuffles; a decline in oil prices and regional and international upheaval, such as the military intervention in Yemen. Many political analysts attribute the intervention in Yemen to an attempt to rally support among Saudis for the new king and establish Saudi hegemony in the Muslim world (Doaij, 2017).

Meanwhile, his son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, announced plans to introduce tourism, social activities and entertainment to the Kingdom. Central to this vision is a new economic plan, dubbed Vision 2030, to boost the country’s economy and reduce its reliance on oil (Nurunnabi,

2017). The plan promises economic diversification, Saudization, privatization and other social and economic initiatives to prepare for the post-oil era. The government also advertised the plan as dependent on “social vibrancy that is antithetical to extreme religious values,” giving a clear message that economic and social development cannot be achieved alongside religious extremism (Hamidaddin, 2017, para. 1). Prince Muhammad has called for religious reform and bringing an end to “the post-79” era, a term referring to the period of Islamic Awakening.

Furthermore, Vision 2030 calls for developing women’s talents, investing in their productive capabilities and enabling them to strengthen their futures, as well as raising the female labor force participation rate by 2030. To achieve these objectives, the state lifted the long-standing ban on driving by issuing a royal decree on September 26, 2017; women were granted the right to drive from June 2018 onwards. These announcements were followed by the decision to allow women to enter sports stadiums for the first time. King Salman also issued an edict instructing the Interior Ministry to draft legislation to criminalize sexual harassment (Alsahi, 2018).

3.2: Untangling the Complexities of gendered politics in Saudi Arabia: The State, the Religious Establishment, and the Gendered Subject

Women’s rights have been placed at the center of power struggle between the Saudi state and the religious establishment both historically and presently (van Geel, 2012). Al-Fassi (2016) claims that part of what has become known in the public discourse as Saudi women’s “exceptional uniqueness” is in fact connected to the transition of the traditional state to the format of a modern state.

In the process of forming the Saudi nation-state based on a pious Islamic nationalist identity, women became boundary markers and were regarded as key instruments that visibly and structurally distinguished this holy nation from other ungodly polities (al-Rasheed, 2013). Operating from this logic, the Saudi state has increasingly depicted women as guardians of the moral integrity of the nation, producers of future pious generations and markers of the nation’s commitment to Islam (DeLong-Bas, 2010). In this context, regulating women’s appearances, movements and segregation were deemed to be necessary to consolidate the image of the Saudi nation. Traditional roles for women have since been transfigured to reflect these ideals. Women have been utilized by the regime as an emblem of its Islamic character and to demonstrate a national identity that is uniquely Saudi Arabian.

Al-Rasheed (2013) posits that neither Islam nor tribal ethos is responsible alone for gender inequality in Saudi Arabia; instead, she argues that the union between religion and nationalism has contributed to the construction of women as symbols for the nation. Religious nationalism in this context, therefore, relied on singling out women as pillars of a nation’s image as the state forged a convergence of tribal ethos and Wahhabi tradition and ideologues. The state kept women in patriarchal relationships as part of the imagining of the Saudi nation. Gender ideology promoted within the

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political culture constructs an ideal type, one that may be called the “ideal Islamic woman.” The version of the ideal woman tends to elevate the public separation of women from men as the hallmark of Islamic society. It defines the particular Muslim society of Saudi Arabia as distinct from and morally superior to the West as well other Muslim countries where women are less rigidly separated. It is an ideology that has been expressed in official government statements, state policy decisions and religious opinions issued by the state-supported Ulama (Doumato, 1992).

Women’s roles became an issue of contention between the authorities and religious ultra-conservatives in the late 1950s over the question of public education for girls. The state under King Faisal dealt with gender through the prism of religious nationalism, a homogenizing paradigm that invoked common religious bonds between citizens. At the same time, it pushed for mass education for girls to depict itself as a modernizing force in society. The advent of formal public schooling for girls in Saudi Arabia dates back to the 1960s, when the first official primary school opened its doors in Riyadh (al-Munajjed, 1997). However, the process of introducing girls’ education in the early 1960s was met with considerable resistance from some religious scholars and preachers, claiming that education would corrupt girls’ morals and destroy the foundations of the Saudi Muslim family (Hamdan, 2005).

King Faisal decided to work together with religious scholars, quoting the Quran and hadiths (narrated stories on the life of the Prophet Mohammed) to convince the ultra-conservatives that Islam does not oppose women’s education and that schooling would also positively contribute to girls’ Islamic education. Education would make women better Muslim wives and mothers or equip them for jobs that suited their nature, such as teachers and nurses (Hamdan, 2005). It was not until the religious scholars asserted that girls’ education complied with Islam that traditional families started sending their daughters to girls’ schools. Education was the first field in which the progress of women was realized by creating separate spaces for them.

Nonetheless, while men’s education was under the Ministry of Education, women’s schooling was under the Department of Religious Guidance until 2002. It was transferred to the General Presidency for Girls’ Education and the Ministry of Education after a fire broke out in an elementary girls’ school in Mecca, resulting in the death of 15 young girls. Members of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice prevented the firemen from entering the girls’ school because both the girls and their teachers might not be wearing their Hijab. The issue was widely discussed in the Saudi press and also covered by the foreign press, causing a widespread public outcry and prompted a debate about the role of the religious police in public life (Prokop, 2003).

Ever since modernization began in earnest in the early 1970s, tensions have grown over how society wishes to define the standards for Islamic and social values. The role of women is the arena in which these standards are most passionately debated. The monarchy and the Ulama have consistently promoted women's domesticity and women's public separation from men as Islamic virtues. However, with the growth in education, population mobility and ethnic and religious diversity, women's roles have changed. The monarch's legitimacy, however, is still based on this ability to uphold Islamic principles

The 1979 Mecca insurrection against Saudi rule illustrates how delicate this balance is and how important the role of women in maintaining it. More specifically, the leader of the attempt to seize the Grand Mosque at Mecca, Juhaiman ibn Saif al-Utaibi, was a former seminary student and protégé of bin Baz, Saudi Arabia's most influential religious scholar. In a series of pamphlets distributed the previous year, Juhaiman had called for an end to Western influence in the Kingdom, television, gambling, Western-style universities, conspicuous and extravagant spending and the presence of all foreigners (Doumato, 1991). Juhaiman's movement was effectively ended when he and 62 of his followers were beheaded, but their yearning to set boundaries around Western influence—symbolized most poignantly by the changing roles of women—had struck a sympathetic chord with society (Doumato, 1992). Toward the end of 1979, a shadowy organization called the Brothers came to light in al-Hasa, compelled the Saudi oil company ARAMCO to close its training program for women and vandalized several beauty salons (Lawson, 2017).

The state responded to these acts by giving excessive authority to the religious police officers and the agents of the Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. These groups sought to discipline female secretaries working in offices, unmarried couples eating in restaurants or riding in cars and “improperly” dressed women who ignored the conventions that regulated behavior and dress in public places. The Interior Ministry issued new rulers instituting sex-segregation in recreation areas of foreign housing compounds. Scholarships for Saudi women to study abroad were curtailed. The purpose behind the articulation and zealous enforcement of these rules was to undermine and appease the broad coalition that resented Western influence—Juhaiman and his group represented only the most extreme fringe—and to do so in ways which would not alienate other significant constituencies. By focusing on women's roles and defining these as Islamic, the monarchy could show that it was prepared to act with vigor to uphold Islamic morality against the West without actually having to address any of the specific issues Juhaiman's movement put forward (Doumato, 1991).

The 1970s were a two-edged sword for women (al-Rasheed, 2013). The surplus wealth allowed women's education and the provision of welfare services, but at the same time, it further excluded women from the public sphere. To explain, oil revenues improved living standards and provided Saudi men with job opportunities and significant monthly wages. As a result, women's employment was no

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longer needed to sustain the household and women's domesticity became a symbol of both wealth and moral distinction; it also differentiated Saudi women from foreign women because they did have to work (van Geel, 2012).

The production of gendered spaces therefore has not merely been a means of domesticating women in confined spaces. It was affordable due to the "oil curse" and what followed were institutionalized policies such as sex segregation in education and the workplace and the ban on driving. These policies contributed to defining Saudi women as a unified category encompassing their different origins and groups of belonging and promoting "a model of the Saudi woman as pious and virtuous, financially comfortable, and devoted to her family" (Le Renard, 2008, p. 613-614). Consequently, the first generation of educated Saudi women during the 1970s and 1980s either did not work or accepted limited employment opportunities in fields that were considered appropriate for them such education; education required female teachers because of the sex segregation policy in schools. Some have also linked women's exclusion from the labor market to the employment of foreign workers. As al-Munajjed (1997) explains, after the oil boom in the 1970s, "the growth of employment opportunities [surpassed] the number of Saudi entrants into the labor market, thus causing a substantial increase in foreign labor" (p. 81). Women were not considered job candidates, however, due to several factors such as the lack of public transportation, training and childcare facilities and, most importantly, the widespread traditional view that a woman's role is as a mother or housewife (Ibid).

Saudi Arabia arrived in the 1980s with a more complex society, eager to enjoy the fruits of advancement on all social and economic levels. At the same time, there was a determination to preserve the country's religious identity and its social traditions. This balance between the two has been challenging to maintain. All three wars affected the whole region in different aspects. Though the 1990s in the Saudi Kingdom became known as "a decade of silence," with a heavy crackdown on political dissidents and uncertainty in the wake of the Gulf War, many women continued working toward women's empowerment, creating latent networks through community-based activities in private spaces (al-Fassi, 2015, 242).

While the state aligned itself more clearly with the Saudi Islamism, Saudi Islamist feminists began to emerge as well known figures and respected icons in society (Doaiji, 2017). These women were hugely influenced by the Islamist Sahwa movement and assumed roles in guarding the nation against the loss of tradition, piety and morality (Doaiji, 2017). In parallel, the political activism of liberal Saudi women peaked in the 1990s amid the Gulf War despite the suspension of political life. The now-famous driving campaign of November 1990 was the very first example of Saudi women's activism reaching beyond intellectual spaces and posing a more overt, organized action in the Saudi public sphere.

However, in the twenty-first century, the state has adopted a different approach to women's rights. More specifically, a major shift happened during King Abdullah's reformist years throughout the 2000s. Women became essential to the country's economic development and "Saudization" plans to replace foreign labor with nationals, including Saudi women. Moreover, the post-9/11 era showed the state's attempts to reverse decades of restrictions and promote itself as a champion of women's emancipation, though within limits. King Abdullah's rule is seen as a time when state feminism began to define women's prospects in the country; the Saudi state suddenly started encouraging successful and educated Saudi women to participate in international forums, appear in media and participate in business ventures. As a result, King Abdullah's image as the emancipator of women was well established by the end of his reign (Doaij, 2012).

Nonetheless, Saudi women's ability to exercise their rights continued to be restrained by the male guardianship system. Under this system, women are considered as legal minors under the control of their male relatives (e.g. father, brother, husband or son) and are subject to legal restrictions on their behavior (Alsaifi, 2018). Restrictions were also imposed on women's movements and mobility; women were not granted the right to drive until June 2018. In summary, tracing back through this historical era one can observe that Saudi women have been important to the Kingdom's ideology since its establishment, as state legitimacy and national identity were grounded in their protection and control. Yet women remained mostly invisible to the state as strictly religious subjects. Eventually, as oil revenue improved state capabilities and in the aftermath of September 11 era, Saudi women became the objects of state policy, but as new faces and agents of modernity.

This shift illustrates to us that Saudi state policies are far from fixed when dealing with women's issues and that the changing approaches and policies of the state vis-à-vis women's issues have in fact been linked to domestic and international factors. The Saudi state poses a threat even as it offers limited resources to women at critical times when it is necessary. A useful concept to be adopted here has been put forward by Connell (1990). He refers to the state as embodying "gender regimes" and highlights the multiple ways in which the state is implicated in the institutionalization and regulation of gender relations. It can work towards the consolidation of existing gender relations, but at the same time has the potential to unsettle the existing gender order through reforms when deemed appropriate. Furthermore, the shift in the depiction of women by the state is not only limited to the case of Saudi Arabia. For instance, Kandiyoti (2000) argues that these contradictions are common in the nationalist projects within postcolonial states, which reflect portrayals of women as either victims of social backwardness, icons of modernity, or privileged bearers of cultural authenticity.

3.3 From the Bottom-Up: Tracing the Evolution of the Saudi Women's Movements

Contemporary feminist collective actions taken by women are rooted in structures of opportunity that are, in part, the products of women's past organizing efforts. Marx, Ferree and Mueller (2004) have argued that a long-term view of history and social change is essential for understanding the origins,

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outcomes and dynamics of women's movements; they claim most social movement theories have taken an approach that is too short term—one in which gender relations and repertoires of action appear to be stable rather than being embedded in a continuously changing context.

Thus, one needs to take into account that social movements, including women's movements, are historical, social phenomena that are shaped by historical conditions. So, in order to better understand their politics, choice of strategies and the meaning and influence of their presence, such movements need to be read in their historical context. Following this logic, I believe that understanding the configuration of the Saudi feminist movement today first necessitates a reading of its historical evolution and that it is crucial to acknowledge that the contemporary feminist movement is embedded in its past history and is informed and affected by various socio-political forces and currents. Accordingly, the historical background below sets the stage for a more in-depth discussion of the contemporary Saudi feminist movement.

3.3.1 1980s-90s: The Ascendance of Female Islamist Activists

Saudi women have been participating in charitable organizations since the 1960s, generally under the aegis of princesses. This participation was easily accepted within the parameters of society since it required traits that were considered to be typically female, such as generosity and devotion to others. The female space within the charity sector first emerged with the creation of the female association "Nahda" founded by Princess Sara al-Faysal in 1962, followed by the opening of female sections in many charity foundations which were concerned with taking care of poor women, orphans and disabled children. This field remained closely monitored by the Ministry of Social Affairs (Le Renard, 2008).

By the early 1970s, the increase of women-only educational institutions nurtured nascent political activism among Saudi women. Educational institutions, coupled with efforts to bring more Saudi nationals into the workplace due to the oil boom, paved the way for the formation of Saudi intelligentsia and opened up new spaces for their activities. Initially, this dynamic played out in mostly academic and intellectual circles (Doaij, 2017). Nonetheless, faced with the challenges posed by the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the seizure of the grand mosque in Mecca in 1979, the Saudi state opted to enhance its religiosity by increasing state resources for the religious establishment and aligning itself with the emerging Sahwa movement.

The implication for Saudi women of this state strategy was a weakening of their position in the intellectual circles. Thus, the 1980s era, which coincided with the Sahwa movement, is considered by many, especially who are within the liberal and secular circles, as a setback for women's emancipation. The rise of Islamism was deemed to be responsible for the process of reversal that erased much of the sociopolitical gains for women in Saudi Arabia (al-Fassi, 2016).

While this era most evidently served as a temporal deterrence to secular feminism, it also conjoined it with different narratives, mainly nationalism and Islamism (Doaiji, 2017). Consequently, the increase of the display of religiosity, the strengthening of gender segregation laws and the surge in the number of religiously educated led to the emergence of a female sphere of religious activities (Le Renard, 2008). As a direct consequence, the religious sphere stopped being a male monopoly after female faculties of religious sciences opened, which led to the graduation of increasing numbers of female students in religious sciences and the creation of female sections within the religious foundations. It is important to emphasize that before the 1980s, women's religious practice was individual or familial, contrary to the practice of men, for whom the mosque is a space for socialization (al-Rasheed, 2013). With the opening of religious spaces for women, a religious discourse by women and for women emerged; through this process, women became annunciators and subjects of Islamic revivalist discourse.

The first generation of female Islamist preachers and activists rose to the surface during the early 1990s. With time they became increasingly numerous. Some were descendants of well-known religious families, but others were not. The opening up of the religious sphere that came along with the expansion of mass schooling and the institutionalization of religious education was mainly developed by Syrian and Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members who had sought refuge from the repressive Nasserite and Baathist regimes in Egypt and Iraq (Makboul, 2017). By the 1990s, a new terminology has begun to circulate to refer to religious women. The new religious women were known by a generic name (multazimat) or specific labels such as nashitat Islamiyat (Islamist activist), a specific category for women who fulfilled a series of interrelated personal and communal activities. At the lower end of the religious ranking system, women preachers (daiyat) and defenders of the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong (muhasibat) became standard labels given to women whose worldview was defined by Islam and its teachings (al-Rasheed, 2010).

These female preachers began preaching inside university campuses, where they would set up gatherings for memorizing the Quran. With time, several female preachers appropriated the Islamic rhetoric that had long been mainly developed by men. These included Fatima Naseef, a graduate in history and sharia from the University of King Abdulaziz in Jeddah who is believed to have travelled to Afghanistan during the anti-Soviet mobilization; Suhayla al-Abidin, a graduate in Islamic history from al-Azhar University in Cairo and Nura al-Saad, who received a Master's degree in sociology in the United States and then a doctorate from the University of Imam Mohammed ibn Saud (Le Renard, 2010).

These three female preachers wrote newspaper articles and books, including some dealing with the issue of women's rights in Islam. Most of the time, they did not speak beyond what they were familiar with, limiting themselves to specifically "female" subjects like women in Islam, women's role in society, the family in Islam and children's upbringing (Badran, 2001). Their writings tended to

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conform to the male religious establishment's interpretation of Islam with respect to women's issues, a discourse they perceive as more favorable to women than to change. Their writings also reveal that they viewed that the stricter application of the precepts of Islam to society should lead to greater respect between men and women (Le Renard, 2010). They subscribed to the Islamic feminism school of thought and the idea that Islam guarantees full equality of all Muslims, male and female alike, in both the public and private spheres (Badran, 2001).

What they have in common with male preachers is the defense of Islamic principles and an Islamic perspective on different aspects of private and public life. However, unlike their male counterparts, they are generally not committed to making particular political claims or protests, except (Le Renard, 2010) in their criticism of the Western way of life that could potentially corrupt Saudi society and the unnecessary demands of liberal Saudi women, such as the right to drive cars. Al-Rasheed (2010) offers a valuable contribution to this understudied topic of Islamist female preachers in Saudi Arabia. In her work, she acknowledges that some Islamist women are active in transmitting religious knowledge and intervening in the public discourse from a religious point of view. However, they are dismissed as potential Islamic actors in contexts where both men and women are potential audiences, as they enter the public sphere only as women preaching to other women, thus creating a parallel yet structurally inferior space for women in order to preserve overall male dominance.

For instance, Islamic women's preachers' publications and articles are grouped together under sections dedicated to women on many religious websites and their efforts remain constrained in female spaces. They complement the role of men as preachers, but do not replace them as their discourses are meant to be consumed by women only. The work of sociologist Le Renard also deals with this topic. Like al-Rasheed, she concludes that female preachers do not have a significant impact beyond the female sphere. According to her, "Saudi female preachers are not considered religious authorities generally, but are instead authorities in a parallel female world" (2011, p. 120). She ascribes their limitation to what she considers an official Saudi interpretation of Islam—men are not allowed access to female preachers' images or voices so women cannot record their religious lectures on audio or videotapes or host their satellite TV programs, limiting their potential audience. Furthermore, much of their more accessible material on the internet is specifically targeted to women and therefore may not be of an appeal to men.

Today, female preachers can appear on some programs on Saudi TV channels, but for programs that target women. For example, in the context of the National Dialogue Forum that started in 2003, many female Islamist activists addressed men via microphones during the meetings, seated in a separate area of the conference hall. Together with liberal women, they offered their opinions on the themes of the conferences: counter-radicalization, youth and women's unemployment and religious

tolerance. Outside the state-initiated forums, it is, however, still unusual for female activists to be invited and directly address all-male audiences (al-Rasheed, 2010).

It is important therefore to contextualize the rise of female preachers as both as an outcome and a manifestation of the growing tide of Islamic resurgence in the MENA region that occurred in the 1980s. Despite the fact that the discourse of female preachers and Islamist activists stays confined within the boundaries of the category of women and does not clearly contest the established order, their practices reveal their personal commitment and some emancipation vis-à-vis their families. With a deep knowledge of religious matters, these women shape certain spaces of religiosity and sociability in their image, redefine the pious to assert themselves as subjects and to claim rights—even limited ones—in a context where religious language, to a great extent, monopolizes debates (Le Renard, 2008). Moreover, many men and women in Saudi society find religious women as an Islamic alternative to liberal intellectuals.

3.3.2 1990s: The Gulf War Driving Campaign: The First Protest of its Kind

The activism of Saudi women peaked in the 1990s during the Gulf War. In an unprecedented organized act of civil disobedience, 47 women staged a driving protest and drove in the capital Riyadh in resistance to the ban. This protest was one of the primary examples of Saudi women's activism reaching beyond intellectual spaces and posing a more overt, organized manifestation of public sentiment. The protest was a response to the call for action that was directed towards women who had foreign driving licenses they had obtained abroad, primarily while studying. Thus, among the protesters, many were highly educated professionals. Many agree that the leading figure behind the protest was Aisha al-Maneh, a sociology professor who received her Ph.D. from the University of Colorado in Boulder, who is a veteran advocate for women's rights in Saudi Arabia (Ibrahim, 1990).

The demonstration took place a time when the Gulf Region was witnessing the First Gulf War. The presence of American and other Western forces, especially the American women military personnel, to defend the country after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was stirring considerable debate about whether to bring Saudi Arabia more in tune with the modern world (Lim, 2018). Consequently, in September 1990, the King issued an edict calling for government entities to train women volunteers to work in civil defense and medical services. The response was one of elation by women who hoped it would be the beginning of a more prominent role for women in the workforce. Those who participated included not only the Western-educated, but also women of the royal family, who organized and attended training sessions at Riyadh hospitals. By early October, hundreds of women in every section of the country were participating in these sessions (Doumato, 1999).

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The King's political affiliation with the United States and his initiative for women's civil defense work appeared to bring out the possibility of a decline in ultra-religious influence and the further pave a way for the opening of Saudi society to the rest of the world. This optimism was strongly felt among the Kingdom's highly educated women. The driving demonstration organizers were therefore inspired by the King's new apparent commitment to increasing women's involvement and participation in the public sphere. A petition requesting permission for women to drive was reportedly submitted to the then-Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz by the mayor of Riyadh at the time on the day the driving demonstration took place.

The petition began by praising the king's edict that paved the way for Saudi women to volunteer to serve their country. It then appealed to the prince "in the name of every ambitious Saudi woman eager to serve her country under the leadership of the Servant of the Two Holy Shrines and his wise government to open your paternal heart to us and to look sympathetically on our humane demand, to drive in Riyadh" (Doumato, 1992, 31). This language indicates that these women were seeking to bargain with the state.

Nevertheless, the driving demonstration was interrupted by the religious police, who were angered that women refused to acknowledge their jurisdiction. The female drivers were later taken into custody and freed only after their male guardians signed pledges confirming that they would never attempt to drive again. The repercussions of this act were severe. Most of the women were fired from their jobs and banned from traveling abroad. Some were subsequently harassed by phone callers accusing the women of sexual immorality and of being agents of Western vice (Doumato, 1992). The media dimension is also central to this event in terms of how it played out in the Saudi public sphere. The women's reputations were smeared, but they had no outlet to defend themselves or to engage in any counter-narrative action. These events were before the existence of satellite television channels and the only means of official and mainstream media were the local TV stations and newspapers.

Apart from one local newspaper, *al-Muslimoon*, there was no domestic media coverage of the event. The state also took an active role in concealing recorded traces of the event; renowned photographer and journalist Saleh al-Azzaz, who was present at the demonstration, was arrested for several months and the photos that he took at the event were confiscated and destroyed (Jarbou, 2018). The Ministry of Interior Affairs and Ministry of Information published official warnings commanding the media against conducting interviews or reporting about the event or the topic of women's driving. Thus, the general sentiments could not be captured. The only available media that referred to the event were the cassette tapes circulated by the religious police. These tapes spoke against the demonstration and became dominant in the official discourse surrounding the topic (AlManae & Al Sheikh, 2013).

For this reason, women took upon themselves the mission to document the defamatory flyers that were distributed, along with all the international media coverage of the event. They compiled a private archive of approximately 70 pages of pamphlets, news and extracts from print media (Jarbou, 2018). Also following the event, the Ministry of Interior issued a ban on all future political activity by women. The state-funded Directorate of Islamic Ruling and Guidance, headed by Shaikh ibn Baz, sanctioned the ministry's ruling by issuing a religious edict that implied that women's driving goes against the morality and chastity of women. The prohibition against women's driving has no religious basis (Mtango, 2004). Nevertheless, the ministry stated, "women should not be allowed to drive vehicles, as the Shari'a instructs that the things that degrade or harm the dignity of women must be prevented," thereby making official the previously unofficial ban on women's driving (Doumato, 1992, p. 32).

The question of women's right to drive was not a new issue, but one that had been publicly addressed on several occasions in the past. With the preparations for war consuming public attention and the king's commitment to women's participation in the war effort, women thought it was the right time to press for the right to drive. The demonstration brought to the surface the underlying tensions in the country between the moderate factions who envisioned a more liberal, moderate image of Islam and those who were committed to maintaining the literal notions of conservative Islam. The regime's reactions to the driving demonstration in 1990, punishing the women and reaffirming the idealized version of Muslim womanhood, were similar to those during the period of the Mosque insurrection in 1979, when the monarchy was facing a challenge to its legitimacy.

One should also take into account that the demonstration took place in the capital Riyadh, which is the heart of the conservative religious establishment. Najd, the region in which Riyadh lies, is primarily populated by the descendants of the inner tribal desert Bedouins (Ibrahim, 1990). The demonstration was an action that could have been perceived by the regime and the religious establishment as a call to alter Saudi Arabia's unique Islamic character. In effect, it represented a challenge to the stability of the ruling monarchy in which the traditional roles for women had become an emblem of its own Islamic character (Doumato, 1991).

3.3.3 Early 2000s: The Emergence of State Feminism and the Fragmentation of Feminist Mobilization Efforts

This driving campaign served as a powerful catalyst to further liberal feminist actions. Since 1990, many active, latent women's groups from both Islamist and liberal-leaning orientations have emerged to form pressure groups for reform. For instance, the Sunday Women Group (SWG) was established in Riyadh in January 1994 by a group of academics from King Saud University (KSU). The main aim was to create a forum to exchange knowledge and discuss ideas. The events took place in the members' homes on the last Sunday of each month. The members included intellectual figures, academics,

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housewives and students alike. The group initially agreed to remain leaderless, but after the first decade, a board of ten women, comprised of the most regular participants, was established (Alfassi, 2015).

The group is one of the oldest continuous groups of its kind in the country, but its attempts to officially register have been unsuccessful because the state has refused to authorize it. The political claims that came from the group transformed to more refined demands calling for women's political participation. The group would later initiate the Baladi campaign for women's right to vote and participate as candidates in municipal elections and would promote and participate in the women's driving campaigns in the 2000s (Alfassi, 2015). These women's networks and their ideas would provide continuity and support for an emerging generation of activists.

The early 2000s is also perceived by many as an era in which top-down state feminism began to emerge in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States and the domestic terrorism in Saudi Arabia that followed. These attacks set off a series of structural changes with important implications for Saudi women's activism (Doaij, 2018). Within the context of these top-down empowerment efforts, limited advancement for women was made possible by King Abdullah, who was later described as a supporter of women's emancipation and rights. Women were provided with their national identification cards, allowed to obtain commercial licenses in 2005 and to enroll in the King Abdullah's Scholarship Abroad Program for students in the same year. Under Abdullah, the agenda of women's rights figured in the regime's discussions and policies (Alsuwaida, 2016).

Moreover, the king also passed regulations that limited the power of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which has long dominated the enforcement of the strictly religious practices and the public condemning of social immorality. Again, changes in the status of women have helped these efforts to gradually temper the role of the religious establishment in defining gender roles and relations. Nonetheless, the mix of repression and internal restructuring that began to shift the Saudi state from the Islamism of the Sahwa era to a new form of modern nationhood has unexpected repercussions (Doaij, 2017).

The state's counterterrorism and repression of Islamist-leaning individuals in the 2000s resulted in mass arrests and the emergence of a new grievance group. A new campaign of reformers and petitioners called for rights and respect for prisoners' rights (al-Rasheed, 2013). With regards to the feminist efforts to lift the ban on driving, in 2007, Wajeha al-Huwaider and Fawzia al-Ayouni founded an organization called the Association for the Protection and Defense of Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia. The association is not formally recognized as an NGO by the Saudi authorities and is prohibited from demonstrating (Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2008). Within this organizational

framework, the founders established the League of Demanders of Women's Rights to Drive Cars, which later became the main force behind Saudi women's campaign to lift the driving ban. The association began circulating a petition directed at the Saudi government that emphasized that women should be given the freedom of mobility in the interest of a more developed society (Judd, 2007).

The petition was later submitted to the Saudi ruler to reverse the driving ban, but the government made no serious efforts to accommodate women's requests. The initial demands of the campaign of the league did not materialize. On International Women's Day in 2008, al-Huwaider drove a car in the streets of Saudi Arabia while recording an appeal to the Saudi officials that she later uploaded on YouTube. It can be found at this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8GiTnb33wE>. She was eventually forced to back down and apologize for her actions (Agarwal, Lim & Wigand, 2012).

In May 2009, Areej Khan, a young Saudi student who studied graphic design in the United States, initiated a new online campaign called "N7nu," which translates to "We the Women" in English. Khan made use of YouTube, Facebook and Flickr to promote dialogue on the subject of women's rights and to get Saudis to debate and possibly reevaluate the ban on women drivers in the country. The main tactic adopted in the campaign was the use of declaration bubbles and bumper stickers with a pictogram of a woman dressed as a man—a common strategy females in Saudi have used in the past to get away with driving in emergencies. Those bumper stickers were created as a space for self-expression, in which Saudis are encouraged to download from the campaign's Flickr account (available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/36722661@N06>), fill in with their thoughts and then display. Some people took pictures of what they wrote on the stickers and added those photographs to the project's Flickr set of "Declarations" (Mackey, 2009).

The ultimate goal of the campaign was to make it easier for individuals to express their thoughts, listen to and understand each other's points of view and avoid being censored by the government. The campaign also had its Facebook page to facilitate active debate about whether the ban should be lifted.

3.3.4 The Arab Spring and Beyond: Feminist Activism Moves Online

Nonetheless, these earlier attempts of dissent, as well as other scattered efforts, did not manage to attract much public visibility and resonance as the "Women to Drive" campaign in 2011, when a collective of women activists inspired by the Arab Spring decided to revive the old claims by initiating a national wide campaign to encourage and mobilize women to drive on June 17, 2011 (Agarwal et al., 2012).

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Given the spatial and temporal context surrounding the campaign, it seems that the campaign was set off at the right time in a country that did not witness any significant public mobilization during the Arab uprisings to overshadow women's protests. The campaign was also well managed over the internet, making it easy for the public and the media to follow the latest tactics of the movement. The activists set up a specific Facebook page that was dedicated entirely to the campaign. They also deployed Twitter to manage, organize and mobilize, offering the world yet another example of how digital media can be cleverly leveraged to advocate for feminist causes and to take locally specific issues and promote them as transnational (Chaudhry, 2014).

As part of the campaign efforts, Manal al-Sharif, one of the campaign's main activists, decided to drive and posted a video of herself driving in the Eastern Province city of al-Dammam. The video, in which she urges women to learn how to drive, went viral within two days. She was later arrested on May 21 for nine days on charges of disturbing public order and inciting public disorder; she was released as a result of significant international pressure (MacFarquhar & Amer, 2011).

Consequently, several Saudi women got behind the wheel on June 17, 2011 in major cities across the Kingdom, documenting their driving experience online. Some women who drove were stopped and arrested, only to be freed after being admonished not to drive again. On the other hand, encouragement poured in via the internet that was filled with testimonies of women who drove their kids to school, a husband to the airport or themselves on errands. The online momentum was boosted by the high internet penetration in Saudi Arabia and revealed the important role of digital media in facilitating online action.

In general, the June 17 campaign was a success as it highlighted one specific injustice—the restrictions on women's mobility—and used it to illuminate the other social and political injustices inextricably linked to this ban. It also managed to point out the practical necessity of driving and signaled a rise in feminist consciousness among Saudi women (Doaiji, 2017). Moreover, the campaign made further attempts to politicize the issue, filing a lawsuit against the Saudi Traffic Department for denying Manal al-Sharif her driver's license despite there being no written law against issuing one to a woman. It also called on those who were interested in filing a similar lawsuit (Doaij, 2012).

The campaign triggered a variety of responses on domestic and international levels, as it resonated globally, increased the media attention to this cause and sparked an outcry from international rights groups. Some protests were scheduled abroad in solidarity with the campaign (NBC Washington, 2011). The reaction domestically ranged from praise to vilification. The movement was not without its critics; many religious clerics objected to the very idea of women being exposed to strangers outside their homes by driving (Shmuluvitz, 2011). Local state actors, on the other hand, tended to distance

themselves from the issue by stating that Saudi society is not ready for women to gain the right to drive. The efforts of the campaign continued into 2012; in June, to celebrate the anniversary of the June 2011 protest, the driving initiative was renewed once again to urge the authorities to look into this demand. Moreover, there were some attempts made by the citizens to sue the traffic department in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province for the right to drive (Abu-Nasr, 2011). Saudi women's efforts continued through 2013, when activists arranged another round of campaigning efforts by declaring October 26, 2013 a day for defying the state ban on women driving. They also launched a website (www.oct26driving.com) calling for women to get behind the steering wheel and drive individually. The online petition gathered more than 16,000 signatures within just a few days. The website of the campaign was later hacked on October 9, 2013, which led to a surge in Twitter activity (Yuce, Agarwal, Wigand, Lim & Robinson, 2014).

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia's passage of the anti-terrorism law, as well as the modification of anti-cybercrime legislation, combined with the month-long arrest of activists such as Loujain al-Hathloul and Maysaa al-Amoudi for attempting to drive in that same year slowed the campaign's momentum. This slowdown continued into 2015, reflecting domestic uncertainties, such as the death of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and the Saudi military intervention in Yemen (Doaiji, 2017). The situation did not change until the lift of the ban in 2018 after the appointment of Mohammed bin Salman as a new Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. However, one can not deny the scale and magnitude of the continuous efforts that were made by Saudi activists, who demonstrated an ability to cleverly maneuver within a restricting terrain using digital networking technologies and online forms of communication as digital platforms have become the central location of activism.

3.4 An Entry to Kuwait's Modern Political History

Historians maintain that the foundations of Kuwait as a state and as an independent political entity were laid in the early years of the eighteenth century, when the al-Sabah family was collectively selected by the Bani Utbah merchant families to lead and unify their emerging Sheikdom of Kuwait (Crystal, 1992). Modern state-building began under Emir Mubarak (r. 1896–1915). His autocratic reign enlarged and consolidated the power of the ruling Sabah family (al-Sabah, 1987). The ruler signed a treaty with Britain in 1899 that assured that Mubarak would not sell or lease any territory to a foreign power without obtaining British approval in exchange for protection from any external attack. The ruler also sought to ensure that the right to rule the country would be transferred to his direct descendants after his death (Finnie, 1992).

While the al-Sabah family managed to prove themselves as political leaders of a relatively conflict-free state, the merchant class constituted the backbone of its economy as it extracted revenues from pearl divers (Al-kandari & Al-hadben, 2010). Merchants paid tax duties to al-Sabah to run the sheikdom's administrative matters, hired most of his subjects and lent them money on numerous occasions (Crystal, 1995). This arrangement served as an informal ruling coalition between these two

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parties. The vital economic role played by the merchant class allowed it to keep al Sabah's political ambitions in check. The political power of the merchant class grew from its economic strength; the al-Sabah ruling family was constrained by its financial dependence on the merchants. The ordinary input of the merchants into the decision-making process came from the social institutions of marriage—intermarriage between merchants and the ruling family were common—and majlis (regular social councils for articulating grievances and concerns) that gave merchants informal but daily access to the rulers (Crystal, 1995).

The discovery of oil in the late 1930s liberated the rulers from the financial dependency on the merchants, but at the same time prompted merchants' anxiety that Kuwait's natural resources would only go to the personal purse of the sheiks (Al-Kuwari, 1978). With the inflow of massive oil revenues, a new kind of economy emerged built on the extraction and exportation of oil. Such an economy is heavily reliant on the export of a single raw material, the production of which requires little contact with the rest of the economy. Most critically for politics, these revenues and rents are paid directly to the state or, in the context of the Gulf, the rulers (Beblawi, 1987).

The immediate implications of oil revenues were the breakdown of the economic ties of the historical governing coalition between the rulers and the trading families and the development of new unstable arrangements that excluded the merchants from the formal political life. Hence, old alliances, forged in scarcity faded away in an environment of financial abundance, consolidating by that the power of the state as the ruling families themselves turned inward (Delacroix, 1980).

As a result, the merchants united to create an institutionalized form of bottom-up political resistance by establishing the Legislative Council in 1938, along with other institutions to publicly counter the political powers of the ruler of Kuwait (Moore, 2004; Tétreault, 1995). Periods of conflict were frequent and violent enough to forge a conscious and politically organized merchant elite. They were quick to organize—first through educational councils, then through explicitly political institutions such as the Kuwait municipality, secret meeting groups and clubs—and to protest, as they did in a brief rebellion in 1921 and through the Majlis Movement of 1938. Both movements, especially the latter, generated well-organized and articulate political opposition. The 1938–39 movement called for the adoption of a parliamentary system and the ratification of a constitution that would establish the parameters of the state-society relationship. However, the movement was crushed and dealt with swiftly by the ruling elites (Crystal, 1989).

Meanwhile, the role of the ruling Sabah family in governance was strengthened. Oil wealth served as a catalyst for the creation of the modern city in Kuwait and the establishment of modern infrastructure, including facilities for universal education of both boys and girls (Al-Tarrah, 2002).

Subsequently, Kuwait witnessed a period of relative calm, especially during the Second World War (1939-1945). This political stability continued until 1950. It was followed by a period of growing political consciousness during the Pan Arab movement, in which many civil society organizations, ranging from professional associations and clubs, were established and flourished in Kuwait.

Under the rule of Emir Abdullah al-Salim (r. 1950–65), the state initiated several welfare programs that were in charge of the distribution of services and income supports directly to individuals and families. They targeted the core of Kuwait City first, followed by the outlying areas where tribal social formations remained strong. The state's intervention initiated a wave of modernization that effected a fundamental transformation of Kuwaiti society. However, these policies had mixed results (Tétreault, 2001). On the one hand, improved education and health services and substantial transfers of income and capital to the Kuwaiti population contributed to citizens' dependence on the state and popular allegiance to the ruling elites, who were intent on capitalizing on their bargaining power. However, the increased in the level of education also contributed to the formation of human capital that provided Kuwaitis from diverse social groups with the resources to challenge the ruler's autocracy and to put forward political claims in relation to their civil and political rights (al-Nakib, 2014).

Another significant development that accompanied the growth in state revenues and the state's development role was the influx of foreign labor. This migration further complicated the political demography of the country and the issue of identity and citizenship. Kuwaiti society began to take shape along the lines of a minority of Kuwaiti nationals and a majority of foreign workers engaging in all aspects of the economy. Foreign labors, primarily Arab, worked in the teaching, medicine, engineering and public administration sectors. However, despite their substantial contribution to the Kuwaiti economy and the development process, these migrants were not allowed to integrate into the social and political fabric of Kuwaiti society and were treated as a distinct and separate group (Alhajeri, 2004).

In response to these demographical developments, the nationality law of 1959 was issued by Sheikh Abdullah al-Salim. Interestingly, Kuwaiti nationality laws were issued before the promulgation of the Kuwaiti constitution and before the independence of Kuwait, signifying the centrality of citizenship and mirroring the early concern with the flow of foreign labor that accompanied the oil era (Longva, 1995). Citizenship became a crucial issue in the development of the Kuwaiti state and the legitimization of al-Sabah's rule. Thus, in order to protect their minority citizens and to maintain their dominance, the regime opted to implement a restrictive definition of citizenship and limit political participation to a small segment of the population through citizenship and election legislation.

The independence of Kuwait from British protectorate status in 1961 marked the beginning of a state-building process rife with political opposition. The merchants' enthusiasm to curtail the powers of

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the sheik and involve citizens in the political decision-making process culminated in the formation of the first constitution and parliament in the Gulf in 1962 (Ghabra, 1993). Although the Emir of Kuwait continued to hold the right to appoint the prime minister who then assembles the cabinet, the elected parliament still had significant powers, including legislating, opposing the legislation or even dismissing the government (Louer, 2013). The constitution also guarantees Kuwaitis a long list of civil rights, one of which is equal protection. In practice, this principle has been violated repeatedly by legislation, the most notable example being an election law that long has denied Kuwaiti women the right to vote and run for office.

Alhajeri (2004) argues that al-Sabah, motivated by a desire to create a national Kuwaiti identity to thwart the aspirations of Iraq and undermine the Pan Arab feelings that were sweeping the Arab region and influencing Kuwait opposition groups, hoped that such an organization of state powers would both confirm the separate identity of Kuwait and Kuwaitis and ensure their domination. Within this context of reorganizing state powers, citizenship became a central issue in the development of the Kuwaiti state and the legitimization of al-Sabah's rule, a topic that I will elaborate on later in detail.

Nonetheless, the promulgation of a constitution and the reorganization of state power, moving away from autocratic rule toward the adoption of a representative system of government, marked the break away from the traditional-informal origination to a formal-legal organization of state powers. In the aftermath of independence, an urban intellectual elite emerged from among the members of this new commercial elite as well as from the older established families. It was education that united these two groups. The intellectual elite included university professors, teachers, writers, lawyers, doctors and journalists who had been influenced during the 1950s and 1960s by modernist ideas, as well as by Arab nationalism. These circles played a crucial role in supervising Kuwait's parliamentary system after independence (Al-kandari & Al-hadben, 2010).

Although Islamist groups had existed in Kuwait since the early 1950s, their influence was limited in society. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, which were characterized by rapid modernization and state-building, Islamists organizations played a marginal role in society (Ghabra, 1997). As elsewhere across the MENA during that time, Arab Nationalism was the dominant political ideology among Kuwait's secular groups, namely the Arab nationalist and leftist groups who led the political opposition in parliament (AbuKhalil, 1992). These two groups also had great control over the civil society sector and called for political and economic reform, civil rights and the emancipation of women.

Nonetheless, by the end of the 1970s, the Salafis became more organized and found a growing following in Kuwaiti society, in particular among merchant families. As the 1980s began, the Islamist

trend also gained a foothold in labor associations and student unions and reached an unprecedented level of organizational development (Utvik, 2014). Pall (2014) explains that three major factors played a crucial role in the expansion of the Salafi movement in Kuwait. The first factor was the decline of Arab Nationalism and the left and the subsequent Islamic revival that followed in the region. More specifically, the popularity of the nationalist and Marxist groups that existed in Kuwait during that era suffered following the Arab defeat in the June War of 1967, which facilitated the ascendance of the Islamic forces that Nasserism and Arab nationalism had shut out in the early 1950s. The main beneficiary of this process in Kuwait was the Muslim Brotherhood, which, by the beginning of the 1980s, had become the strongest political force in Kuwait. Besides the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis were also able to take advantage of the religious revival because they already controlled several religious places and had direct access to the youth who had recently turned to religion

The second factor was the geopolitical shift that occurred in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution in 1979, which spawned waves of religious revival and boosted the stature of the Salafis. The Iranian revolution constituted a threat to the very existence of the state of Kuwait. Besides the military threat that came from Iran, the Kuwaiti ruling elites were fearful that the new Islamic regime would attempt to spread the revolution to the Shi'ite communities of the Gulf. They also feared the prospect of being overthrown by Sunni Islamists (Boghardt, 2006).

As a reaction, the regime attempted to capitalize on the deep-seated rivalry between the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis to divide the Sunnis and forbade the emergence of a strong Islamic opposition under the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood. This strategy is the reason why the state began supporting the Salafi movement at the expense of the Muslim Brotherhood. Thus, the state's move towards the Islamization of society can be read as intended to diminish Islamist influence and power (Pall, 2014). The third factor, as argued by Pall (2014), was the Salafi movement's ability to infiltrate Kuwait's economic elites. At the end of the 1970s, many members of influential merchant families became followers of Salafism. These new members helped the movement gain access to the financial and trading sectors and to receive increased funding. Given that the merchants were interested in social and political issues, the voices that became stronger within the Salafi movement were those that were keen to see religious rulings implemented in public life. This enthusiasm is probably one of the explanations why Salafism in Kuwait evolved in a unique way and became intertwined in the country's political life at a time when elsewhere, especially in Saudi Arabia, Salafis were mostly preoccupied with religious practice.

By the beginning of the 1980s, the Salafi movement in Kuwait had achieved an unprecedented level of organizational development compared to the Muslim Brotherhood. Kuwait's 1981 election marked the first time anywhere in the world that Salafis ran for parliamentary elections; they ultimately won two seats (Ghabra, 1997). The election was significant because, at that time, Salafis elsewhere did not actively engage in any form of political participation. They were heavily influenced by the Saudi

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religious line, which called for abstention from political involvement apart from legitimizing the autocratic rule of the royal family.

The two members of parliament who belonged to the Salafi movement increasingly utilized their presence in parliament to Islamize society from the top-down as they pushed to ban public Christmas celebrations, limit Kuwaiti nationality to Muslims in 1982 and prohibit the consumption or sale of alcohol in embassies in 1983 (Awadh, 1999). The prominence of the Islamists was also reflected in the social realm of Kuwait, which manifested new Islamic sentiment. Gradually, they took control of the religious places, professional associations, student unions, charitable organizations and Islamic banks. Hence they managed in less than a decade to reposition themselves from the margins of society to the forefront (Pall, 2014).

Similar to the same period in Saudi Arabia, which also witnessed the resurgence of political Islam in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this era marked a change in the status of women in Kuwait. Prior to the mid-1970s, women rarely wore the Hijab, joined their male counterparts in classes at Kuwait University and were able to participate in sports and many arenas of work. Kuwaitis began educating women in the 1930s (al-Mughni, 2010). The overall new conservative attitude of society toward women, dress codes and religion exemplified the overlap between social conservatism and political Islam and projected a different image that now reflected the Islamization of society (Ghabra, 1997). The Iraqi-Kuwaiti crisis began in the summer of 1990 with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The crisis ended a year later with the defeat of Iraq and the liberation of Kuwait. The Iraqi occupation and the events that followed formed an important turning point in the political life in Kuwait. After Kuwait's liberation in 1991, Kuwaiti society went through a critical self-evaluation (Juliá & Ridha, 2001).

Many young Kuwaitis looked toward the United States as a model for creating a new way of life. For instance, exiled Kuwaitis who had lived for almost a year in more open Western environments began to appreciate the need for change in their own society and values. Simultaneously, social conservatism had also spread among equally large sectors; most Kuwaiti Salafis had fled Kuwait during Iraq's invasion to Saudi Arabia, where they became more involved with Saudi Salafi networks (Rizzo, Meyer & Ali, 2002). Salafi activists in Saudi Arabia were angered by the Saudi government's decision to allow the American military into the Kingdom. They demanded broad-ranging political reforms and appealed to many Kuwaitis in the Kingdom during the Iraqi occupation: "upon their return to their home country after the war, these individuals became pioneers of the activist wing of Kuwaiti Salafism" (Awadh, 1999, p.7).

Consequently, three major Islamist political groups have emerged since liberation to strengthen Islamist political power and ensure that they were well represented in parliament. A non-governmental association was established by Islamists in order to “direct the public to do good and refrain them from doing evil,” similar to the function that is carried out in Saudi Arabia by the morality police. The group’s aim was to enlist one thousand men and establish religious police with a branch in every neighborhood to patrol, watch over citizens and spread the teachings of Islam. The government responded by not allowing the practice to take place, stating that police would not permit any group to disturb any citizen or resident in Kuwait in any shape or form (Ghabra, 1997).

Islamists, however, had dominated Kuwait’s Parliament since the first post-war election in 1992. Their rise to power was partly due to their strong grassroots organizations and community outreach programs. Their message of social justice, anti-corruption and religious authenticity had great appeal among the electorate, including women. While the Islamists’ call to change the second article of the constitution to make Sharia “the primary source” rather than “a primary source” of legislation was a contentious issue in domestic politics, they succeeded in passing a number of laws with conservative overtones (al-Mughni, 2009).

These efforts include introducing the women’s early retirement bill, which encourages women to retire with full benefits at a young age in order to devote more time to their children; a measure imposing gender segregation in postsecondary schools; a new labor law that bans women from working night shifts and a law that criminalizes cross-dressing (al-Mughni, 2010). Anti-gender sentiment in the all-male parliament poisoned the national atmosphere by 1996, making public opinion far less receptive to calls for women’s rights. The elected parliament had consistently denied women their political rights since women’s rights became politically salient in the 1970s (Rizzo, Meyer & Ali, 2002).

The rulers changed their position from indifference to a favoring view of women’s political rights, especially after the Second Gulf War, in which women demonstrated their courage as they became involved in the resistance and mobilized support for Kuwait abroad (Tétreault, 2006). Women’s rights also became part of a larger set of strategic plan about maintaining a positive international image and good relations with the United States (Yetiv, 2002). From the late 1990s, the government was also faced with increasing pressures from women’s movement (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011). At the same time, increased pressure to Islamize Kuwaiti society, combined with the insistence on social conservatism at the expense of Kuwaiti economic development, resulting in unintended complications for the Islamists. In which by the mid-1990s, rulers began to re-consider their former alliance with the Islamist groups. They pushed forward the development of modernist Islamic discourse and redirected their attention towards the liberal groups that maintained a modernist discourse (al-Mughni, 2010).

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3.5 Sketching the Development of the Kuwaiti Women's Movements: The Early Beginnings

The beginnings of the feminist movement in Kuwait can be traced back to the 1940s and the institutionalization of formal education for girls. In late 1948, some female writers emerged calling women to participate in public life. In 1953, a group of young women advocated for the removal of Hijab. The group attracted mixed reactions between support and opposition, but their activities were restricted to holding meetings and publishing newspaper articles. They, however, indeed encouraged women to consider founding their own societies and organizations modeled after other Arab associations (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995).

3.5.1 The Formation of Feminist Associations: Taking the Institutionalized Path

In a climate of rapid modernization and with the rise of the modern state under the new oil economy, women's associations were created, giving Kuwaiti women more chances for access to a public sphere from which they had long been excluded. In 1963, when the first parliament was inaugurated, women protested the withholding of their political rights. That same year, they formed their first association, the Arab Women's Development Society (AWDS), to focus on the education and development of all women (Olimat, 2009).

Meanwhile, returning Kuwaiti female graduate students from abroad and women of wealthy merchant families formed the Women's Cultural and Social Society (WCSS) to provide a social gathering place for the educated, merchant-class women with the energy and wealth to indulge in charity work. This group extended women's traditional role of support and nurturing into the public sphere without posing a challenge to women's position of women in society (al-Mughni, 1996). Thus, we can see that women's activism in Kuwait historically intersected with nation-building. It was more preferable for women to form their own organizations, taking the institutionalized path when it comes to the mobilization for women's issues. So, although institutionalization has traditionally been seen as signaling the end of the social movement in question, this was not the case in Kuwait; the process of institutionalization of the feminist movement in the form of more formal professionalized groups marked the beginning of the women's movement.

Both WCSS and AWDS remained the only operating associations for a decade. Licensed organizations with government support, these organizations projected an image of educated career women who dutifully participated in the labor market, as well as the state-building process. Although the two associations had a brief union, their efforts to raise women's rights issues were hampered by class conflicts and institutional rivalry; the AWDS had a larger membership from the middle class than the elite-dominated WCSS (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995). The AWDS focused on issues that the WCSS avoided addressing—namely, gender equality and women's citizenship rights. It organized Kuwait's first women's conference in 1971, which culminated in a petition demanding the right to equal opportunity in employment, the right of working mothers to child allowances (then provided only

to male heads-of-household), the right of women to be appointed as special attorneys to draft a new family law and legislative curbs on polygamy (Olimat, 2009).

The AWDS also placed the issue of women's suffrage on the public agenda. Kuwaiti women could neither vote nor stand for election under the 1959 election law, passed before Kuwait's first constitution, in which only Kuwaiti men were entitled to political rights, was ratified in 1962 (al-Magnani, 1996). In 1973, ten years after its establishment, AWDS succeeded in pressing the all-male parliament to discuss an equal rights bill. Opponents of the bill, who made up the majority, sided against the bill on the grounds of the necessity of preserving the patriarchal order and division of roles in society. Opponents argued that Islam gave men and women different roles and made men superior to women. The bill's supporters, on the other hand, were the liberals and the minority. With support from the government, the parliament avoided voting on the bill by transferring it to the Committee of Legal Affairs for further study (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011).

The AWDS held different conferences in 1974 and 1977 on the status of working women, continuing by that its commitment to women's rights, while forming transnational ties to other women's organizations in the region. This strategy included making alliances with Arab nationalist groups; the move proved fatal given government concerns that Arab nationalists were attacking the very identity and stability of Kuwaiti society (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995). The AWDS-Arab nationalist alliance allowed opponents to discredit AWDS members as secularists and revolutionaries and undermined the group's relations with the state. So, in 1977, the government dissolved the umbrella organization, the Kuwaiti Women's Union, under which the AWDS, the WCSS and an AWDS offshoot "Nadi al-Fatat" ("The Girls' Club") had operated. A year later, the government removed the AWDS president, Nouria al-Sadani, who had been accused of committing financial fraud. She was later forced into exile. The AWDS organization was subsequently dissolved in 1980 (Tétreault, Rizzo and Shultziner, 2012). With the AWDS dissolved, the WCSS and Nadi al-Fatat became the primary advocates for women's rights during the 1980s. They had some success in pressing for women's employment in state posts, but their successes were constrained by the Islamic revival sweeping Kuwait during the 1980s (Krause, 2014).

3.5.2 The Rise of Islamist Activists: Islamic Feminists?

Another notable manifestation of the Islamists' continued attempts to confine women's participation in the public sphere was the noticeable rise of Islamic feminism in Kuwait. A small but significant number of Islamist women activists have begun to question and challenge the mainstream Islamists' views on women while calling for more rights for women (al-Mughni, 2010).

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Prompted by the success of the Iranian Islamic revolution, Kuwaiti Islamists sought to impose their version of traditional values in Kuwait. By the early 1980s, numerous conservative religious groups rose to the surface. Among them was Bayader al-Salam (the Threshing Fields of Peace) and the Islamic Care Society. The latter was led by the wife of the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikha Latifa al-Sabah, an indication of the state's efforts to support women's engagement in the Islamization process and perhaps to counter the popularity of Arab nationalism by identifying itself with traditional tribal and religious values (Dianu, 2002).

Both of these associations carried out similar activities directed towards women and children. These activities include preaching sessions, religious classes, summer camps, a kindergarten and conferences and seminars on how to raise a family and spread social awareness. Religious education centered on the Quran and Sharia gave women the opportunity to become more knowledgeable about religious matters. Moreover, their charitable work was mainly oriented towards the financing of a wide range of community-outreach programs outside Kuwait that included building the Hanan Villages for orphans in Sudan and occupied Palestine (Tétreault, Meyer & Rizzo, 2009). At a discursive level, the Islamic associations were oriented towards the production of a body of discourse that celebrated the importance of women's domestic role and the natural differences between men and women in order to rationalize asymmetrical gender relations in society. So, although there was no consensus as to what place women should occupy in society, most of the religious groups called for a return to traditional female virtues and morality. Women were defined as having moral duties to strengthen family ties, raise good children and defend the traditions and customs of society.

Parallel to the expansion of religious organizations was the explosion of writing and debates on women's rights and duties in Islam. The Hijab made its appearance and a new model of womanhood surfaced. Many women found resonance in this new Islamized discourse and took part in the Islamization process through participation in preaching sessions (Tétreault et al., 2009). Women's Islamic activism also extended to the university campus, where female students played an important role in converting women to the Islamic cause and spreading the practice of wearing Hijab among them. These women helped the Islamists to take control of Kuwait's University's student union and the influential teachers' association (al-Mughni, 2010).

The appeal of the Islamist movement to a large section of Kuwaitis can be attributed to several factors. Nath (1978) argues that the rapid pace of modernization disrupted the equation of traditional gender relations and brought new values into the Kuwaiti society. Modernization was widely regarded as responsible for generating severe social problems, such as the rise of divorce rates and the consumption of alcohol, which became widespread. Also, women's lives were perceived as changed. Kuwaiti women moved from being veiled to moving about freely in public dressed in Western clothes and driving their own cars, enjoying by that a mobility that was not available before. The growing

involvement of women in the labor force was seen as leading to the neglect of their family responsibilities. Both were cited as primary causes of the erosion of family ties and the weakening of national unity (al-Mughni, 1993). Many women felt a sense of alienation. Thus, returning to Islam was seen as a much-needed means to ease the strains of modernity by preserving traditional values and practices and providing a sense of stability in an ever-changing society.

In her study, al-Mughani (1996) maintains that during the period, many female Islamist activists emerged as prominent and influential leaders. However, they produced a discourse that reaffirmed gender subordination as their emphasis was concentrated on women's obligations towards their family and their community at large. Issues of women's rights were considered heresy and an imperialist ploy. Consequently, during that period, women's demands for equal rights were silenced and marginalized. This left the liberal Women's Cultural and Social Society (WCSS) struggling on its own to campaign for political rights, especially after the disbanding of AWDS. Early female Islamist activists did not support the suffrage movement for women.

It was not until the 1990s that female Islamist activists began to articulate new roles for women in the public sphere. This shift was partly due to their frustration of being left out of the decision-making bodies that echoed the unequal patterns of gender relations based on male authority. Women's committees were kept outside the major bodies in the Islamist movements where important decisions were taken. Female members did not enjoy any participatory rights. While male members could elect their representatives and serve as board members, women could not. Conversely, in most liberal civic organizations in Kuwait, women could still fully participate in the elections and occasionally serve as founding members or contributing board members (al-Mughani, 2010).

Henceforth, contradictions between women's contributions to the Islamic cause and their marginalized role within the Islamist movement have pushed Islamist women activists to challenge male leadership and demand a fairer share in decision-making (Abdellatif, 2008). Their committees were kept separate from the major bodies where important decisions were made and their members did not have any participatory rights, while male representatives could elect other members and serve as board members, in contrast to women. Islamic activists, however, remained trapped in the dynamic of being divided along secular and Islamists lines, far from achieving broader gender solidarity around common causes. Yet, during the 1990–91 Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, women would forge the gender solidarity that until then had eluded them.

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3.5.3 Kuwaiti Women and the Iraq-Kuwait War: Women's Resistance, Hope, and Further Dissent

It is argued that the seven-month Iraqi invasion of Kuwait served as a catalyst for women's growing feminist consciousness. During that period, many women took important social responsibilities and were instrumental in the survival of their besieged communities. Some women volunteered in hospitals to compensate for the lack of medical staff, others ran shelters. Some smuggled food, money and weapons across military checkpoints.

Women participated directly as activists and auxiliaries. They were also central to mobilizing opposition. The first issue of the underground resistance paper was produced by women as they were in charge of its underground circulation. Some of those who were abroad created one of the first resistance groups outside Kuwait, the Women's Joint Resistance Committee in Cairo (Juliá & Ridha, 2001). Women also formed part of the underground armed resistance, passing weapons and ammunition through checkpoints. Many women became prisoners of war and martyrs (Al-Tarrah, 2002). For many, women's performance exposed the fallacies of conventional gender norms and their accompanied contradictions. The prevailing crisis at the time provided a situational context where women's participation in non-traditional domains became acceptable for the survival of the community at the cost of traditional norms and values.

As Badran (1998) has stated, the abnormal as normal new dynamic during the war freed women to perform as citizens and prove their capabilities as equal partners. The defense of the nation and its people legitimized all behaviors and normal rules, which were prior to this crisis, were irrelevant. In the immediate aftermath of liberation, women wished to maintain the newfound gender consciousness experienced under occupation and resistance. Many expressed concerns about losing ground in gender equality experienced during the occupation; it had become clear to them that their political roles were as important as their social roles.

A new period of the women's rights struggle began in 1991 after Kuwait was liberated from the invasion of Iraq. Women argued that they had proven themselves by their contributions to the resistance throughout the brutal occupation, thereby earning full political rights. The government appeared to be more sympathetic to women's rights as they made several public assurances that women would play a greater role and make more noble contributions to the country that they had courageously helped to defend (al-Mughni, 2010). However, it chose not to confront the strong alliance of Islamists, tribalists and conservatives in parliament on this issue.

With the return of normalcy, traditional roles once again rose up as age-old hindrances in the path of women's emancipation. The marginalization of women's roles had grown to become a major

source of dissatisfaction among Islamist women activists themselves (Al-Tarrah, 2002). Not only did these women activists feel betrayed by their own organizations, but they also felt frustrated by the movement failed to acknowledge their contribution. Other Islamist activists, “Khawlah al-Atiqi” publicly addressed her dissatisfaction with the continuing exclusion of women from decision-making positions within the Islamist organizations. In an interview with a local newspaper, she pointed out that the major obstacle facing a female activist inside the Islamist organization was her position as a follower of men. The voices of dissent that belonged to Islamist women made headlines in the majority of print media, leading some journalists to ponder whether this was a sign of maturity or mere rebellion (al-Mughni, 2010).

When it came to the institutionalized feminist scene that followed the liberation of Kuwait, in 1994, a new union was licensed, the Kuwaiti Union of Women’s Societies. The union was led by the Crown Prince’s wife Sheikha Latifa, who was already the acting chairwoman of the Islamic Care Society. All the women’s organizations except the WCSS joined the union; WCSS considered the union a manoeuver intended to weaken and restrain the women’s movement. As might have been expected, the union was not active on the feminist scene, restricting itself to coordination between the Islamic societies, resolving potential disagreements and representing women in and outside Kuwait (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011).

The union gave elite women the chance to speak on behalf of all Kuwaiti women, ignoring the many social and economic problems faced by Kuwaiti women in their everyday lives. For instance, following the Gulf War, the number of impoverished female heads of households increased and the situation of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis seriously worsened. To elaborate, foreign husbands and children of Kuwaiti women who are married to non-Kuwaitis are denied all protections to which Kuwaiti males are otherwise entitled. The patrilineal character of citizenship in Kuwait allows the state to disavow any responsibility to support them. Government housing, child allowances and welfare assistance packages are provided directly to Kuwaiti men as heads of households. Women who faced this problem could not find any alternative but to go to WCSS with their issue, so the WCSS embraced the cause of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaiti men (Alsharekh, 2018).

Suffrage politics surfaced again in 1999, when the late Emir of Kuwait, Shaikh Jabir al-Sabah, promulgated a decree granting women the right to participate fully in political life in appreciation of their efforts in defending Kuwait during the occupation. The decree was issued in the interim between the dissolution of the old and the election of a new parliament. The Constitution requires that all laws issued in the absence of parliament be approved by the new parliament. However, the Islamist-dominated re-elected Parliament ruled that the decree was illegal and by a simple majority voted down the decree (Rizzo et al., 2002).

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Some liberals rejected the decree on the basis that the decree was an unconstitutional attack on the power of the elected parliament. A week later, some liberal MPs who generally supported women's voting rights but opposed the Emir's action drafted an identical bill, which was rejected as well (Olimat, 2009). Kuwait was very polarized politically. All the repeated legislative initiatives and calls to enfranchise women introduced in parliament since 1981 failed to obtain the majority of votes because Islamist deputies and their conservative allies had coordinated to defeat the bills both in committee and on the floor. Those who opposed women's suffrage rights claimed that Islam restricted the leadership of the Muslim nation to men (al-Mughni, 2010).

3.5.4 The Battle for the Ballot: Bridging the Islamist-Liberal Divide

In response to the decree's defeat, women attempted to organize themselves and operate as an active coalition. A few of the female elite tried to register their names in voter registration centers or to resort to the constitutional court to obtain their political rights. The court ruled that this would be unconstitutional. Women activists opted to shift the focus of their efforts towards raising awareness among the broad-based female population to attempt to win the support of moderate Muslim movements and coordinate and cooperate with several civil society institutions to achieve their goals (Shalaby, 2015).

Thus, we can observe women's organizations' realization of the importance of building cooperative links with influential constituencies by moderating their stance and utilizing the "politics of engagement" instead of confrontation to maximize the sociopolitical leverage of movement activities. Many Islamist activists announced their public support for the suffrage struggle and formed alliances with liberal women activists. These alliances angered their male peers and leaders (al-Mughni, 2010). Prominent Islamist women activists such as Khadija al -Mahmeed, Khawlah al-Atiqi and Urub al-Riffa, joined the suffrage movement.

Together, Islamist women activists organized grassroots working groups to coordinate pro-suffrage activities, appeared on national television and joined forces with liberal women activists, a move which gave greater visibility and strength to the suffrage movement. They also requested deputies for support and organized numerous public seminars to which both opponents and supporters of women's suffrage rights were invited. The shift in the Islamist women's position towards political participation can be attributed to their experiences during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, during which they assumed great responsibility for the survival of their besieged community (Badran, 1998), which strengthened their political consciousness and gender solidarity.

Liberal women activists benefited from the involvement of Islamist women as it enabled them to deploy religious-based frames in addition to legal frames based on the country's constitution and international human rights declarations. Liberal women activists had previously framed their demands around the Constitution and Kuwait's democratic principles. Their main argument was that the 1962 election law that denied women the right to vote violated the constitution, which upholds the principle of equality between men and women in all spheres, including politics. Islamist women activists helped to extend their struggle via an avenue new to them, "Islamic feminism," and open up the discursive opportunity field to frame and push for women's rights within an Islamic frame of reference that would find resonance (al-Mughni, 2010).

While the suffrage movement was spearheaded by the liberal women's groups, it regained its strength and vitality when many Islamist women who previously opposed the right to political participation joined the struggle alongside liberal women's activists. Such an unexpected alliance strengthened the suffrage movement. It gave it greater credibility that eventually led to the enfranchisement of Kuwaiti women in 2005. During the fight for the right for women to vote, secular feminist activism co-existed, challenged, converged and collaborated with Islamist women's committees and Islamic feminist groups, emphasizing the porous boundaries between secular and religious agencies (Buscemi, 2016).

Moreover, the battle for the ballot became a symbol that would pave the way for women to achieve further citizenship rights, as despite significant advances, Kuwaiti women continue to face discrimination on many fronts. For instance, laws regulating social welfare services and housing treat men and women in different, unequal manners. However, many women activists believed that the enfranchisement of women would help to redress some of the structural inequalities based on gender, including equal citizenship rights for Kuwaiti women who are married to non-Kuwaitis.

3.5.5 Women's Pursuit to Claim Full Citizenship Rights: The Nationality Issue

The right of women to equal citizenship rights is guaranteed by the majority of constitutions across the MENA region, as well as by international law. Nonetheless, in some countries, women are denied their right to pass on their nationality to their children and/or their non-national spouses. Kuwait is one of 25 countries in the world where women remain unable to confer their nationality to their children in the same manner as men (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019), which creates many obstacles. These women need to obtain residency/work permits for their children and are bound to renew them regularly.

The nationality issue is a contentious topic in Kuwait, because it is also rooted in Kuwait's modern political history and needs to be contextualized. Kuwait was the first Gulf Emirate to proclaim

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its independence in 1961. From 1948 onwards, however, the Kuwaiti state defined the original Kuwaitis as (a) every member of the ruling family, (b) every resident in Kuwait since 1899, (c) every child of a Kuwaiti father and (d) every child born on Kuwaiti soil of an Arab or Muslim father. These provisions stood out among other regional legalization for the unique role played by the *jus soli* in the determination of *de facto* Kuwaiti nationality (Oskay, 2010).

In 1959, an Emiri decree established Kuwaiti nationality and regulated its attribution, acquisition and loss. Thus, The 1959 Decree which is in fact pre-dated the constitution assumed 1920 as watershed for Kuwaiti nationality, since in that year the citizenry gathered to resist the attack of Abd Alaziz ibn Saud in the battle of Jahra, a turning point in the shaping of Kuwaiti national identity over Saudi expansion (Parolin, 2009). The Nationality Act created several classes of citizenship. The primary distinction is between those who are so-called “original Kuwaitis” and those who are naturalized citizens. Consequently, different classes of citizenship are maintained today and the rights that come with Kuwaiti citizenship vary significantly depending on the article that the citizenship category falls into. Full political rights are only given to those who acquire nationality under Article 1 or 2, within the “original Kuwaitis” category. Naturalized citizens only acquire the right to vote after 30 years of residence (Refugees International, 2011).

In accordance with the Act, “Article-1-citizens” identifies Kuwaiti nationals as those persons and their descendants who resided in Kuwait prior to 1920 and maintained residence there until the publication of the decree in 1959. Article 2 provides an automatic right to citizenship for descendants of the “original Kuwaitis” provided that descent is through the paternal bloodline. Article 3 grants nationality to foundlings (an abandoned child of unknown parentage) and Articles 4 and 5 provide for the acquisition of nationality through naturalization. Significantly, naturalization decisions are entirely taken by the Minister of Interior (Refugees International, 2011).

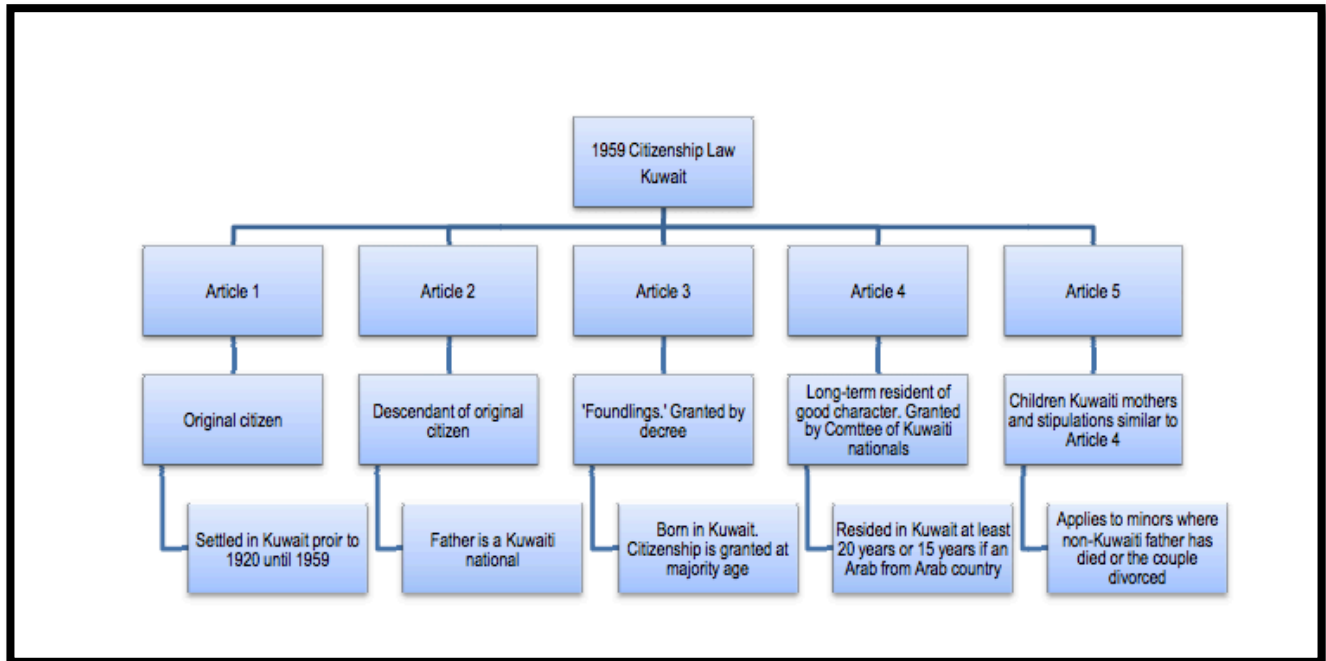


Figure 3. 1 Articles 1-5 of the Nationality Law of Kuwait (UNHCR, 2016)

One of the main divisions in Kuwaiti society is between Kuwaiti citizens and non-Kuwaiti citizens. Those whose families immigrated to Kuwait before 1920 are considered to be first-class citizens who enjoy full citizenship rights in contrast to those whose families immigrated to Kuwait between 1920 and 1949 or those naturalized after that, who have limited political rights but the same access to Kuwait's generous welfare state as first-class Kuwaitis (Tétreault, Rizzo and Shultziner, 2012). There have been several amendments to the Kuwaiti nationality law since its implementation in 1959, notably in 1980, 1982, 1994, 1998 and 2000. The amendments have increased the restrictiveness of granting of citizenship, such as by prohibiting non-Muslims to apply for naturalization and limiting the conditions in which women can pass their citizenship to their children. The conditions include the cases if women are widowed, permanently divorced or if the father is unknown or paternity has not been established (Albarazi, 2017).

These restrictions are contrary to the Kuwaiti Constitution, written in 1962, which proclaims the principle of equality and human dignity as stated in Article (29): people are equal in human dignity, and they are equal in the law in public rights and duties, and the law does not tolerate discrimination because of sex, origin, language or religion (al-Nakib, 2006). Several implementation problems and discrepancies emerged in practice as other state laws trumped constitutional provisions. Article 2 of the 1959 Nationality Law states that Kuwaiti citizenship is transmitted through a male citizen, prohibiting Kuwaiti women from conferring their nationality on their children or husband with limited exceptions such as if the father of the child was unknown. Even in these cases, giving Kuwaiti nationality is subject to the discretionary authority of the minister of interior (Maktabi, 2017). Also, depriving Kuwaiti women who are married to foreigners of the right to grant citizenship to their children

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seriously affects the children's rights to the inheritance of their mother in immovable funds such as real estate, a law intended to control foreign ownership in Kuwait. These children are also denied political, economic and social protections to which Kuwaitis are entitled. Moreover, they are normally paid less than their fellow citizens who occupy the same jobs and do the same work (Alsharekh, 2018).

This system makes citizenship, which is often referred to as the legal and political relationship negotiated between a sovereign state and individuals residing within its territory (Kastoryano, 2005), a gendered phenomenon. So, while much of citizenship is connected to juridical/legal status and ensuing rights, duties and obligations, it also extends conceptually to include the more constructed notion of entitlements, privileges and belongings that are centered on questions of exclusion and inclusion (Babar, 2014). Thus, citizenship in the context of Kuwait remains based on a privilege that is built around an accepted right to the exclusivity that comes with certain social, economic and political rights and privileges. This very right to exclusivity is protected by strictly limiting the possibilities of naturalization and institutionalizing patriarchal policies that are targeted towards women in specific (Maktabi, 2012).

This system is also a product of the idea of citizenship as established through "blood" that is passed along patrilineal lines; only men are capable of passing citizenship on to their children and spouses. Thus, questions of how citizenship is gendered in the context of Kuwait provide an example of how the social contract, kinship policies and economic logic in this rentier state intersect to regulate and delegitimize women's citizenship and tie the authority of the ruling family and citizens under a single umbrella of family patriarchy (Tétreault, 2001).

Alsharekh (2018) asserts that by having different criteria regulating the granting of citizenship to spouses and children for Kuwaiti men and women, the principle of equal rights and opportunities for Kuwaiti women and their right freely to choose a spouse becomes principally challenged. Discrimination against Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis appears even more severe in cases where the non-Kuwaiti spouse is Bidūn, a term that refers to the stateless population in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti government claims, that many Bidūn are not really stateless nomads, but rather Iraqis or Iranians who deny their nationality as a way to gain entitlements to superior Kuwaiti economic, social and political rights (Ali, 2006).

Until the late 1980s, the settlement and participation of Bidūn in Kuwaiti life were welcomed because Bidūn men constituted a large pool of willing recruits for Kuwaiti security forces. The status of the Bidūn was so close to that of certified Kuwaiti nationals that, in census tallies carried out prior to the Iraqi invasion, the Bidūn were counted as part of the Kuwaiti population rather than as non-Kuwaitis (Tétreault and al-Mughni, 1995).

In response to the deterioration of the Kuwaiti economy following the collapse of the oil prices in the mid-1980s, however, the Bidūn were pushed out from the domestic labor force by demands that all expatriate workers show their nationality papers. Since the Bidūn by definition have no such papers, they could not produce them for their employers and many were fired from their jobs. The economic and social marginality of the Bidūn increased following the liberation in 1991. It deteriorated to the extent that the government population statistics were revised in 1992, reclassifying the Bidūn as non-Kuwaitis (Tétreault and al-Mughni, 1995).

During the early 1900s, an amendment to the Article 3 in the 1959 Nationality Act which previously allowed Kuwait mothers married to stateless men to pass on their citizenship to their children dropped this provision, erecting yet another barrier between Kuwaiti citizens and the Bidūn which leaves children of Kuwaiti mothers and stateless fathers stateless, perpetuating the plight of the Bidūn community (Eldemerdash, 2015). Today, an estimated 106,000 Bidūn live in Kuwait, according to the conservative estimate of the government body created to review their files in November 2010, the Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents' Status (hereafter 'Central System'). Estimates of cases of mixed marriages between a Kuwaiti citizen woman and a stateless man range from 5,000 to 7,000, as asserted by the press (Beaugrand, 2015).

Since the 1990s, the politicization of census figures and the dynamics of inclusion or exclusion of residents based on tribal affiliation have played into the politics of citizenship, including women's full nationality rights. Part of the problem regarding the exclusion of Kuwaiti women from full nationality rights is related to the constitution of the citizenry and to kinship relations between Kuwaiti nationals and stateless Bidūn through tribal alliances and cross-border intermarriages (Maktabi, 2017). Therefore, the ethnic conceptions of citizenship are prevalent in the context of Kuwait. Based on Nils Butenschon's (2000) characterizations, we can define Kuwait as ethnocracies, where the identity of the state is that of a particular ethnic group.

This conception of citizenship means that those not belonging to the ethnic group in question are always excluded from the political community. In the case of Kuwait particularly, the ethnic identity represented by the state is that of the "original Kuwaitis" who were settled in the country in 1920 (Longva, 2005). Citizenship also intersects with Kuwaiti nationalism, based on the concept of a united family, which has been a symbol of the nation since the early 1970s. The concept promotes national cohesion, where everyone lives securely under the protective wing of the family patriarch and shows allegiance to the monarchic state; any deviation won't be easily tolerated (al-Mughni, 1996). Additionally, there is an economic logic behind the exclusion of Bidūn. The inclusion of more inhabitants as part of the privileged citizenry is most probably related to the distribution of welfare benefits among larger segments of the population. Many are concerned about the potential decrease, or deterioration, in economic privileges (Maktabi, 2017).

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3.5.6: The “Ensaf” Campaign for Abolishing Gender Discrimination in Nationality Law in Kuwait

As a result of this discriminatory treatment, Kuwaiti women have mobilized to address the issue of granting full citizenship rights for more than three decades. Nonetheless, it was not until Kuwait’s liberation from the Iraqi invasion in the early 1990s and the state new policy requiring submitting a formal proof of citizenship for every worker that a group of women decided to mobilize on a collective basis to improve their conditions after facing deteriorated economic situations that resulted from the new policy (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995).

Consequently, in April 1991, a group of stay-at-home mothers who belonged to low-to middle-income classes, along with some highly educated women, attempted to form a civil society association that lobbied for full citizenship rights. The state rejected their request, thus denying them the chance to operate officially and to be eligible to receive state financial support available to recognized organizations (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995). However, this denial did not discourage women, who kept holding ongoing meetings. As of 1993, of Kuwait’s main women’s organization, the Women’s Cultural and Social Society (WCSS), decided to adopt their cause and add the issue of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis to the top of their priorities (Rizzo, 2005). Since then, WCSS has articulated more explicit outward support towards the cause for full citizenship rights and lobbied for laws that would permit women to pass their Kuwaiti citizenship to their non-citizen children. They have argued that the law is contrary in some of its articles with the constitution and paragraph (2) of Article (9) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Meyer, Rizzo & Ali, 1998). The issue of the continued suffering of the children of Kuwaiti women continued to find more resonance with the civil society sector in Kuwait and aspiring politicians. The issue has emerged more frequently in campaign promises for some male candidates during elections since the early 2010s (Alsharekh, 2018).

Nevertheless, it was not until 2014, when a coalition of women’s organizations dedicated to the cause came together under the banner of “Ensaf,” which translates to “Justice” in English, to seek justice for Kuwaiti women and their families. The first executive meeting for the campaign was held on January 2014 and it was decided to form an administrative committee run by the members of the WCSS to coordinate the efforts of the participating organizations. Participating organizations included the Association of Social Workers in Kuwait, the National Association of Familial Security (Rawasi), Kuwait’s Society for Social Education, Kuwait Graduates Society, Kuwait Lawyers Association, Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals, The Center for Child Evaluation and Teaching, the Agricultural Engineers Association and the relevant official and civil authorities (WCSS Report, 2015).

The campaign was officially launched on February 5, 2014 and was depicted as being a first-of-its-kind coalition to pursue the common goal of raising awareness of the impact of gendered nationality law and pushing for its abolition. The coalition also demands equal civil rights for Kuwaiti women and raise awareness, as there might be little awareness amongst civil society actors, the media and the public that discriminatory nationality laws may leave children stateless and unable to exercise many fundamental rights (al-Ali, 2014). More specifically, the campaign called for amending Article 2 of the Amiri Decree No. 15 of the 1959 Kuwaiti Nationality Act to permit women to confer their citizenship to their sons and daughters on an equal basis with men. It also called for the introduction of permanent residence for the foreign spouses and children of Kuwaiti women who choose to hold to their original citizenship in addition to equal opportunity in employment for the sons/daughters of Kuwaiti female citizens.

The campaign was also divided into two phases. The first phase involved participating in public seminars/lectures to raise awareness about the constitutional rights of Kuwaiti women and arranging meetings with the relevant officials and stakeholders to politicalize the issue and explain the humanitarian aspect to those who were in public office. This was manifested in the efforts to submit a petition to the National Assembly and the Office of Prime Minister and to meet with some Deputies (WCSS report, 2016). The second phase was concerned with establishing communication with transnational bodies, human rights organizations and the United Nations (Janat, 2014).

During the first phase, the tactical actions included holding public seminars, engaging in extensive media and press interviews as well as maintaining outreach efforts that targeted the legislative and executive branches. The coalition was promised that the parliament would form a special working committee to coordinate and follow up with their members in order to work on their demands (WCSS report, 2016). Other strategies taken included introducing new tactics to serve the cause and welcome new activists and civil society associations to join the forces. More specifically, the committee of “Kuwaitis Without Borders,” which is a grassroots voluntarily committee formed by Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis who have come together through the shared experience of being denied of full citizenship rights, later joined the “Ensaf” campaign to demand the strengthening of citizenship rights. Actors relied on raising awareness about this issue through public lectures/seminars and digital networking platforms, complementing by that their activities on the ground with digital efforts.

“Ensaf” also filed three separate constitutional appeals in 2016 to look into the issue of equalizing Kuwaiti mothers’ housing allowances and allowing Kuwaiti mothers to pass on a rightful inheritance to their children in the same manner that is allowed for Kuwaiti men. The court rejected the cases in May 2017 (Alsharekh, 2018). Despite the perceived reluctance of the legislatures to amend Article 2 of the Kuwaiti Nationality Law, we can see that Kuwaiti activists are continuing their pursuit,

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raising claims and making use of the symbolic and material recourses available to them to draw attention to the urgency of it.

Chapter 4: Bringing the Actors Back on Stage: Reflections, Subjectivities and Assertions on Feminist Activism

As already discussed in Chapter 2, although there is a growing body of research interested in feminist activism, much of it does not attend to the lived experiences of women engaging in feminist campaigns in the MENA region. I address this research gap concerning the persistent lack of recognition for women's voices, roles and motivations in the dominant academic discourses by investigating the renewed feminist politics in the Gulf States that rose most notably during with the "Women to Drive" campaign in Saudi Arabia and "Ensaf" campaign in Kuwait.

By adopting an activist-centric approach, I intend to look beyond the digital media affordances thesis and also consider the other contextual factors conditioning activist uses of digital media platforms for feminist activism. The chapter will, therefore, be led by the following multifaceted research questions: What are activists' perceptions and experiences while carrying out feminist activism? And while admittedly, this question seems to be overly generic, the formulation of this question in this way was intentional to allow a degree of flexibility for activists to define, articulate and convey their understandings of their feminist involvement in the involved campaigns.

I depart from the assumption that investigating activist's experiences and involvement in the selected campaigns can provide us with situated emergent knowledge that is actively formed from the standpoint of female activists and brings us closer to understand their sense-making of feminist activism as an agentic practice. To do so, a special effort was dedicated to giving the women whom I interviewed, the chance and the space to speak on their own terms about the complex and contradictory ways in which they reflect on their involvement with these campaigns. And while it is almost impossible to construct a single map of collective feminist genealogies, it is in fact possible to identify important, parallel narratives of feminist activism.

Consequently, I have chosen to outline some established insights that run through all responses which included their reflections on the intra-movement dynamics surrounding feminist activism, their mode of organization, the ways in which they crafted and reflected on their feminist identification, as well as the to identify the tactics and practices that they employed to mobilize for lifting the driving ban and strengthening female citizenship in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait respectively. I emphasize on the importance of bridging the gap between feminism and activism (Reinharz, 1992). Indeed, in this research, I adopt the perspective that the unifying purpose of feminism is a combination of political action and intellectual commitment to address and confront patriarchal norms directed against women.

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By doing so, I aim to enhance our understanding of the overall picture of feminist activism in the Gulf Region. This emphasis, in turn, raises questions about the subjectivity, motivations and the constitutions of activists who enact agency within larger women's movements (Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl, 2005; della Porta & Diani, 2006).

4.1 Conducting Qualitative Interviews

Interviews constitute the empirical backbone of much qualitative research in the social sciences. They are considered to be fundamental for generating empirical knowledge by asking people to talk about certain themes or issues of interest (della Porta, 2014). According to Schostak (2006, p. 23), an interview is “an extended conversation between partners that aims at having in-depth information about a certain topic or subject of interest and through which a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the meanings interviewees bring to it.” Maccoby and Maccoby (1954, p. 449) define it as “an exchange in which one person attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons.”

At a general level, interviews can be placed on a continuum of structure from “unstructured” to highly “structured.” Embedded in this continuum is the question of how much control the interviewer will have over the interaction (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Structured interviews are most often organized around a fixed set of predetermined direct questions that require immediate, mostly “yes” or “no” type responses. In such interviews, the questions are fixed. They are asked in a specific order and the same interview script is used in each separate interview. This continuity facilitates easier comparison between different transcripts, but does not allow interviewees to shape the discussion (Punch, 2013).

It can be argued that this type of interviewing is similar to self-administered quantitative questionnaires in both their form and underlying assumptions. Structured interviews have several advantages over surveys, including lower levels of item nonresponse and the ability for an interviewer to mitigate inappropriate responses (Boeije, 2002). These interviews are often used when one has a large sample size and is looking for data that can be generalized to a large population. Conversely, unstructured interviews are closer to observation. In this style of interview, the course of the conversation depends on the responses obtained from the interviewees themselves and questions are asked spontaneously based on these answers (Bryman, 2006). The interviewer here would be keener to let the interviewee elaborate on various issues (Dörnyei, 2007).

As opposed to unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews have some structure embedded in their compilation of topics. These interviews rely on a pre-conceived interview guide. Although structured by a set of questions, but allow the researcher flexibility to meet the individual

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interviewee's accounts. Standard questions are asked in each individual interview, allowing comparison and maintaining data quality. Crucially, semi-structured interviews allow depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In reflecting on the advantages of semi-structured interviewing, Cohen and Manion (1990) maintained that semi-structured interviews are perhaps the preferred choice for researchers wishing to explore, discover and interoperate complex social events and processes.

Semi-structured interviews have been extensively used in a wide variety of fields including social movements studies. Such interviewing strategies have proven to be particularly useful while researching about loosely organized, short-lived or thinly documented social movements in which it is difficult to gather data through structured questionnaires, field observation or document analysis. More importantly, semi-structured interviews can shed new light on the importance that actors give their actions, especially when the researchers seek to assess the context of "individual and collective visions, hopes, expectations, critique of the present and projection of the future on which the possibility of collective action rests and through which social movements form, endure or disband" (Blee and Taylor, 2002, p. 95). They can also facilitate the generation of reflections and representations that embody the subjects' voices, minimizing, at least as much as possible, the voice of the researcher (Ragin, 1994).

The use of semi-structured interviews has become the principal means for the study of the feminist movements as well (Reinharz, 1992). Scholars have sought to achieve the active involvement of their feminist respondents in the construction of data about their lives. For instance, Taylor and Van Willigen's (1996) study of the women's self-help movement points to a number of advantages of semi-structured interviewing, including how intensive interviews can maximize description, discovery and the active involvement of participants in social movement research; interviewing methods can also be used to create new theoretical insights. Finally, they mandate the constant navigation and negotiation of decorum and boundaries to elicit meaningful knowledge (Okruhlik, 2018).

Discussing the feminist phenomenological approach to research interviews, Fisher and Embree (2000) agree that open-ended questions maximize discovery and description and also facilitate the researcher's access to localized, personal and embodied feminist accounts and perceptions. Taking into account these reasons together, the data for this chapter were obtained through qualitative, semi-structured interviews of women who became involved in the "Women to Drive" campaign and the campaign for equal citizenship rights. I opted to use semi-structured interviews to gain insider information on specific aspects of the movements and provide more detailed responses about interviewees and their experiences. Semi-structured interviews made it easier to identify and pick up on certain themes that were useful for contextualizing their perceptions.

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Not only do semi-structured interviews provide information about and from activists, but they are of fundamental importance for the study of motives, beliefs and attitudes as well as the identities of movement activists (Blee, 2013). This information is instrumental for latent and underground organizations, where other sources of information are limited or potentially biased (Blee & Taylor, 2002). It should be noted, however, that semi-structured interviews are not without limitations. Several critiques have been posted in response to their use, including the lack of transparency in sampling strategy, choice of questions and mode of analysis.

Indeed, Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated that, “there always are constraints of time, energy, availability of participants, and other conditions that affect data collection” (p. 16). In the same vein, Walford (2007) argued that “interviews alone are insufficient to study social life.” That is, both interviewer and interviewee may have incomplete knowledge or even faulty memory. Additionally, Roulston, deMarris and Lewise (2003, p. 643) spoke about the challenges which inexperienced interviewers could encounter in interviews, such as “unexpected participant behavior, dealing with the consequences of the interviewer’s own action and subjectivities, constructing and delivering questions and handling sensitive topics.”

Therefore, given the foregoing succinct observations, the researchers should weigh the advantages and disadvantages of interviews as a methodology in the light of their research agenda and question(s), including different styles of interviews (structured, semi-structured and unstructured), and must work diligently to ensure the validity and reliability of the interview data. In sum, with regard to the advantages and limitations of interviews and to make my position clear, I will follow Robson (2002), who maintains that although interviewing is a powerful way of getting insights into the interviewee’s perceptions, it can go hand in hand with other methods to strengthen the overall findings.

Although it depends on the research questions, I would argue that using more than one data collection instrument would help to obtain richer data and validate research findings. Moreover, one should also take into consideration that most often studies based on interviews involve a varying number of activists who do not represent the (unknown) universe, but rather important theoretical dimensions. As mentioned, the quality of the information collected in this way is influenced by the complex relations between interviewers and interviewees, in particular the interviewer’s capacity to stimulate participation and careful listening.

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4.1.1 Interviewing Participants

Generally speaking, in semi-structured interviewing, interviewees are selected in a deliberate, rarely random manner. Sampling choices, therefore, reflect the underlying questions and theories guiding the research and the emergent understandings garnered in the study. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested that sampling for qualitative interviews should follow two main principles. First, sampling should strive for completeness. In the field of social movements, researchers most often choose respondents who are knowledgeable about the topic under investigation and continue to add new interviewees until the topic is saturated. That is, the interviews are garnering the same kinds of narratives and interpretations.

Second, sampling should ideally follow the principle of similarity and dissimilarity. Interviewees are chosen to see how the interpretations or accounts of similarly situated respondents compare, as well as to ascertain how those respondents with very different characteristics or in different circumstances contrast. Sampling may proceed in stages when new questions are raised by the researcher/s or when new insights need to be captured. Henceforth, for the purpose of this chapter, I employed the purposive sampling technique (Sandelowski, 2000), which encompasses the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses.

It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the study's research questions by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 1994). Purposive sampling, therefore, involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups who are well informed with a phenomenon of interest. In addition to knowledge and experience, Spradley (1979) noted the importance of availability and willingness to participate and the ability to interview participants to articulate their opinions in a clear way. Unlike random studies, which deliberately include a diverse cross-section of ages and backgrounds, the idea behind purposive sampling is to select individuals with particular characteristics who will better be able to assist with the relevant research.

The respondents were accordingly identified due to their notable public profiles or through internet searches and pre-existing contacts. They were primarily selected because of their engagement in the given feminist campaigns that I am examining, rather than because their experiences are representative of the larger population. Twenty-five Saudi women and 20 Kuwaiti women's activists were contacted via private emails, Twitter and Whatsapp. A standardized text was created and was adjusted to each. The text introduced me as the researcher and the main focus of my research and

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included paragraphs appreciating their incredible work and asking them if they were willing to be interviewed.

Out of the 25 Saudi activists, 10 of them replied and agreed to be interviewed. Eight Kuwaiti activists contacted me and agreed to be interviewed. The sample of Saudi interviewees included six women who live in Saudi Arabia and four women who live abroad in European Countries and North America, while all the Kuwaiti interviewees happened to reside in Kuwait. The women in this sample came from different backgrounds, ranging from advocacy for human rights and children's rights to academia. It was both interesting and telling at the same time that all the interviewees refused to be quoted and opted to remain anonymous; their refusals speak volumes about the perceptions of security threats that surround activists and activism in this context.

The interviews, therefore, were conducted primarily over Skype, with the exception of two interviews that were conducted via Telegram. The justification for using Skype and Telegram to interview participants stemmed from the fact that my institution preferred I not travel to Saudi Arabia to conduct fieldwork because of the perceived security risks involved. Alternatively, I opted to use VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) technologies to reach out to the research participants, which provided me with the means to interview the research participants using voice and video internet via a real-time connection.

A great advantage of using VoIP software such as Skype and Telegram is that it allows researchers to transcend geographical boundaries by nullifying distances and eliminating the necessity to visit a specific location for the interview (Rowley, 2012). Researchers can widen the range of their sample by connecting with participants from all over the globe, breaking down the barrier of time and space. At the same time, I was conscious of the fact that the use of Skype might affect the areas of rapport, non-verbal cues and ethics by imposing limitations on the scope

and nature of communication.

Of the eight interviewed Kuwaiti women, two of the interviews took place while I visited Kuwait for conducting research. The rest of the interviews were conducted via Skype. Unlike the Saudi interviewees, all the interviewed women from Kuwait with the exception of one woman did not mind to be quoted publicly in my research. They stated that they didn't have anything to hide and that their activism was well known to authorities and the general public. All interviews were recorded with a recording device and were later listened to multiple times and copied verbatim. The length of interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 2 hours, with an average length of 1.25 hours. Participants were offered the opportunity to have their transcripts emailed to them for their records and to verify them

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and ensure their accuracy. For those who took up this offer, transcripts were sent; no participants made any substantive changes to their transcript.

4.1.2 Interview Outline

Researchers who employ semi-structured interviews often develop a written interview guide in advance. The interview guide may be specific, with detailed questions, or it could consist of a list of topics to be covered. The interviewer may precisely follow the guide, asking the questions in the order they are given or he/she may move back and forth through the topic list based on the participant's answers. In either case, the topics of the interview guide are based on the research question and the tentative conceptual model of the phenomenon that underlies the research. Accordingly, all of my conducted interviews began with a small paragraph that I slightly modified to suit each interview, thanking the interviewees for their acceptance of being part of the research and for giving me the opportunity to interview them. I then followed by introducing the research topic to the interviewees and providing them with a summary of the main themes that would be covered throughout the interview.

Each interview was composed of a total of 16 questions, divided into four main sections. All of the questions were formulated in a way to avoid any misleading interpretations of the questions and allow the interviewees to express their true opinions towards the themes. Follow-up questions were only asked when the interviewee did not talk about certain topics during the reply to the main question. Specific, short questions are not well appreciated during interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Therefore the follow-up questions only served for the researcher to make sure that the main question was answered in the most complete way for the aim of the research questions at hand.

The first section was composed of four questions that were meant to assess the level of interviewees' involvement in the "Women to Drive" or the "Ensaf" campaign. In order to put the interviewees at ease, the first question was put for the purpose of starting the interview in a relaxed, colloquial manner and allowing the interviewees to talk a bit about themselves. As Jacob and Furgerson (2012) state, it is preferable when formulating open and broad questions to encourage the interviewees to talk about themselves, to make them feel invited to start talking without being put under pressure with uneasy questions. It is a strategy that often allows a flow of information that could go far beyond what the interviewer hoped, unlocking particulars that could be beneficial to the outcome of the research.

The other questions were more specific and asked the interviewees to reflect on their personal experience during either the driving or the Ensaf campaign by raising questions that tackled the main reasons behind their involvement, their contribution to the campaign and what were they hoping to obtain from their participation. The second thematic inquiry was also composed of four questions that were related to their perceptions about the scope and configuration of the Saudi or the Kuwaiti

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women's movement in general. Within the third section, interviewees were asked concrete questions to reflect on how they mobilize and organize themselves. Questions also asked them to enumerate the actions and tactics that they opted to use so I could become aware of those actions and strategies.

The last section was aimed at shedding some light on the interviewees' relationship to feminism and whether they self-identify as feminists while carrying out digital or on-ground activism. I made sure that every question had its own focus and avoided overloading many concepts within one question so as not to confuse my interview participants and concluded the interviews thanking the interviewees with the promise that once I finished the chapter, I would send my findings to them. While interviewing, these questions were used as thematic guidelines. Not all of the questions were addressed the same way for all interviewees. Additional questions tailored for each interviewee during the interview in order to better address themes that emerged from each interview. As with regards to the language considerations, the majority of the interviews were conducted in Arabic, with the exception of three participants who preferred to be interviewed in English.

4.2 Negotiating my Positionality

Conducting research represents a unique experience, shaped by many influential factors. There have been extensive debates over the last few decades about objectivity and positionality when conducting research. Researchers across various disciplines have reflected on the impact of researchers' own positionality on the research process and its outcomes. Since I am deploying a mixed research design approach with a qualitative component, I gradually understood that conducting qualitative research and especially conducting interviews is not neutral. Researchers impart their own subjectivities into the practices and processes of conducting research and in the analysis of research findings (Creswell, 2008).

To mitigate bias complications and protect the "integrity of the knowledge produced" (O'Leary, 2010, p. 28), it is fundamental for the researchers to identify their own positionality and the impact it has on their analysis of the findings. Positionality in this sense is regarded as a lens that signals an awareness of the situatedness of the researcher in a particular political and cultural position by calling attention to the researcher's prior knowledge, normative standards and ways in which identities and political positions are in place (Lewis & Mills, 2003). Positionality also unveils the complexity of the self in relation to the other and how the fluidity of both could influence the analysis of the data interpretation of research findings.

Thus, throughout the process of doing my Ph.D. on feminist activism in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, I reflected on my own positionality as a scholar born and raised in Bahrain, with research interests in feminist movements, intersectionality and digital media. I also identify myself as a secular

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feminist. I attempted to pay attention to the socially constructed nature of social concepts and relations and engage in researcher reflexivity. Researching about women's movements and feminist activism in the Arab Gulf States meant acknowledging the biases I carry with me, recognizing the impact they have on my research choices and how I choose to examine them to conduct research that I genuinely believe has value at multiple levels beyond the completion of the doctoral dissertation.

Interviewing women about feminist activism in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait challenged me with some unexpected complexities of insider and outsider positions. I initially thought that researchers who share similar backgrounds as the group they are examining entails multiple advantages in collecting qualitative data over "outsiders" who do not share similar backgrounds or experiences with the group under study; I believed overlapping backgrounds afford intimate insights into the perspectives of participants (Abu-Lughod, 1988).

I initially thought that my Bahraini origin and identification as a citizen of one of the Arab Gulf States as well as my social proximity; familiarity with the context and personal standpoint on the issues facing women in the region would ideally position me as an "insider." I discovered that this process is not as straightforward; the combination of not being actually from Saudi Arabia or Kuwait and my current affiliation as a Ph.D. candidate who studying in Europe occasionally pushed me to the "outsider" position. The effect of this insider-outsider dynamic came to the forefront in two contradictory ways that pushed my positionality out into the open. For instance, during an attempt to schedule an interview with a Saudi activist, she questioned my motives for conducting research on Saudi Arabia and why I was not researching about "my own country?" I could not help but feel that my Bahraini origins and Western academic affiliation positioned me as an outsider. Upon reflection, I understood that gaining the insider advantage is not an easy feat. It was understandable for my Saudi informants to remain guarded about their interactions and personal information unless they were familiar with the person with whom they are engaging; it is not uncommon for the academic researchers to be seen as government informants in the context of the MENA region. Thus, I learned that overcoming the reluctance of informants to speak out and gaining their trust had to be earned and not taken for granted, despite my perceived "insider" advantage.

Interestingly, I felt that my perceived position as an "outsider" played out differently while I was conducting interviews in Kuwait. In some instances, I felt that my residence and education abroad granted me credibility and facilitated my access to interview participants; I was perceived as a potential messenger who could disseminate positive information and improve the image of Kuwaiti women in the outside world. In sum, throughout the process, I learned that my national identity did not in itself designate me with a fixed "insider" or "outsider" position. My experience also made me aware that the insider-outsider binary is a boundary that is both highly unstable and subject to the dynamism of positionalities in time and through space (Herod, 1999). I learned that my positionality did not fit neatly

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either as an insider or outsider; instead, I straddled both categories. Thus, it might be more productive to perceive this binary in terms of a broader continuum that is neither static nor fixed.

When it came to my ideological position as a secular feminist, I attempted to maintain a self-reflexive attitude that acknowledges rather than denies my own position. I simultaneously questioned how my research interactions and the information I collected are socially conditioned (Dowling, 2005). Although I do not personally believe in the notion of the neutral, completely objective researcher who conceals his or her ideological views and values, I sometimes found it challenging to authentically engage with women in my research whose ideological views I found problematic as a secular feminist.

In principle, I agree with Tohidi's (2003) contention that we should not equate secularism with feminism and religiosity with anti-feminism. Situated experiences lead to situated knowledge. There are diverse strands of feminisms which include both secular feminisms and feminisms within religious frameworks can all converge in challenging the situated patriarchal configurations: "specific forms of feminism are located as a response to the particular manifestations of patriarchal relations within any given culture or belief system" (Franks, 2002, p. 5). Overall, I found that embracing my positionality was helpful to counterbalance the possible over-personalization of standpoint. Rather than perceiving our respective positionalities as an obstacle to be overcome, we should view them as resources.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

While ethical concerns are present in any type of research, MENA scholars argue that the greatest challenges to conducting qualitative research in the Middle East are those related to the authoritarian political conditions prevalent in most of the countries of the region. These conditions raise important ethical issues and ongoing moral dilemmas (Allam, 2019).

The presence of ethical concerns was definitely acute when I was collecting data for my research, while the level of ethical concerns varied tremendously between my two case studies. I became aware that these challenges were not exclusive to this setting, but they were acute because of the lack of effective protections for political and civil rights, as Okruhlik (2018) rightfully argues. Such constraints compound the more universal imperatives of building relationships, sustaining trust, navigating secrecy and working ethically. I have experienced great difficulties in obtaining interviews with key Saudi female activists. The most ubiquitous reasons cited were the political sensitivity of the topic and interviewees' unwillingness to speak openly due, most commonly, to political repression.

As elaborated in the previous section, gaining access to potential interviewees proved to be a challenging task; activists had considerable suspicion and caution about the motivation and creditability of my position as a researcher. This hesitancy to speak to researchers points to the dangers associated

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with activism and fear resulting from speaking out. It also calls attention to suspicions that researchers might encounter about their motives or trustworthiness.

To overcome this caution, I introduced myself in the initial emails I sent to potential interviewees and attached a sample of academic articles and research pieces that I have previously written concerning women's rights and feminist activism in Saudi Arabia. I hoped these proofs would mitigate the degree of suspicion. I also relied on my network of contacts to reach out to the interviewees to introduce me and inform them about my research motivation.

Another challenge that I faced was developing a mutual relationship of trust between the interviewees and me, especially when it came to the impact that I might cause as a researcher on the participants. Reaching out to activists could result in consequences that cannot be dismissed. On closer examination, I was aware that by researching a topic that is related to activism in such a volatile context might expose activists to surveillance as well as repression, jeopardizing their activities if not subjecting them to personal threats. It is, therefore, crucial to consider the ethical obligation to protect research subjects from harm, which may necessitate guarantees of confidentiality to protect the identity and privacy of activists by negotiating the level of disclosure of sensitive information; such guarantees might include avoiding using real names and disclosing information that might facilitate identification by third parties.

Nonetheless, protecting the anonymity of interviewees is particularly challenging in times of tight digital surveillance schemes. In the case of sustained online exchanges, researchers should encourage activists to use email encryption. Above all else, researchers must protect subjects and collaborators as much as possible when conducting research in such settings and ensure that the information obtained during interviews will not be made public in a way that might expose the participants to any harm or expose their real identities (Blee, 2013).

Plummer (1990) suggests that all empirical qualitative studies must meet a number of ethical considerations: (1) intellectual property, (2) informed consent, (3) right to withdraw, (4) accuracy of portrayal, and (5) confidentiality, among others. For the purpose of carrying out Skype/Telegram interviews in my research, I followed standard ethical procedures to ensure that the Plummer's points were met. I obtained informed consent from the interviewees. Informed consent essentially meant that the interviewees had received comprehensive information about the research that they agreed to participate in. The information given to the interviewees first and foremost concerned my own professional background and institutional affiliation as well as the aims and purpose of the research project.

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Before initiating my interviews, I made sure that the interviewees approved of the conversation being audio recorded. I also informed them about the length of the interview. They were aware of the fact that they could stop the interview at any time on request and they could withdraw their participation for any reason up until the thesis is made public. They were also given the opportunity to choose the day and time of their interview. Moreover, in order to ensure that interviewees felt able to discuss a range of issues without fear of reprisal, full anonymity was assured. The anonymity of interviewees' personal details was protected through the careful removal of what would readily identify informant names, contact details, places of work or any other identifiers. All Saudi respondents were given pseudonyms when quoted from the data. Lastly, I promised that they would be able to access the chapter once I finalized it.

The interviews were carefully designed to minimize the risk of causing harm or distress to informants; I chose not to reveal the specific individual roles of the activists because of potential security risks. This choice brings up the question of how to balance the protection of respondent anonymity with the requirements of transparency and descriptive analysis that sufficiently describe the phenomena. This question is related to a broader one of how to maintain a balance between anonymity and the need for descriptive richness and analytic transparency in empirical work (Masterson & Mourad, 2019).

I was also aware that conducting interviews on Skype entails some additional ethical considerations. Online interviewing means that there can be uncertainty about how the data is stored and whether conversations are monitored (Zimmer & Kinder-Kurlanda, 2017). To meet confidentiality standards, once collected, interview materials were transcribed and stored on an encrypted hard drive. Only I had access to the research data. The contact information was kept on a separately stored, encrypted, password-protected flash drive. To sum up, the emergent ethical challenges for researchers often require a carefully considered approach. It is important for us as researchers to continuously incorporate ethical commitments into the social scientific research agendas in order to prevent harm and protect human subjects and participants. It is especially important in contexts where accessibility is hampered by political sensitivities and where control and surveillance effectively limit access to the voices of activists.

4.4 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis Approach

In semi-structured interviewing, analysis and interpretation are ongoing processes that go hand in hand. Researchers make a conscious effort to clarify concepts and categories through successive, alternating waves of data collection and interpretation. Such flexibility allows researchers to incorporate new avenues of inquiry suggested by respondents' interview data that might reshape the direction of the study, discard some elements that turn out to be unproductive or even to correct theoretical inaccuracies in the original research design (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

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This approach is counter to quantitative research, which depends on the completion of data collection to begin the analysis; semi-structured interviews most often require researchers to begin analyzing data as it is being collected and be open to the idea that these initial analyses may provoke changes in the study. To proceed with analyzing the collected materials from the interviews, thematic analysis was chosen to carry out the data analysis of the interview data. As its name indicates, thematic analysis is defined as “a process for encoding qualitative information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations, or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4).

Themes may be described as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during an interview” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). They are usually attached to pieces of data of varying sizes. For this reason, themes can be assigned to individual words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs in each transcript in order to aid the interpretation of meaning. Central to the use of themes is the notion that words themselves do not matter. Instead, their meaning is more important. This understanding allows the clustering of key issues in the data.

The objective of this process is to identify recognizable themes among the collected materials deemed of sufficient significance for the understanding of the phenomenon under study. Researchers can also create broader units of analysis from the codes; generally, a set of codes will form one theme. Themes may alternatively be integrated into sub-themes or be eliminated after analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be applied in a variety of ways. On one axis, the search for patterns within the data is guided by either a theoretical approach or an inductive approach. The former, also known as the deductive approach, is inspired by the researcher’s theoretical concepts drawn from existing literature in the field. It is mainly directed towards pre-existing themes and grounded in the theoretical background of the research (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Alternatively, with the inductive approach, themes are generated almost exclusively from the data itself, avoiding the influence of the researcher’s own theoretical interests or biases in the subject. Ultimately, the researcher is able to generate theories after analyzing the findings (Boyatzis, 1998). I adopted the inductive approach as the most suitable form of data analysis due to its exceptional flexibility (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and because there is no specific, established research that I am aware of on the theme of feminist activism in the context of Gulf countries.

Transcripts were individually reread and patterns in the interviews were searched for. Patterns were listed in order to be easily compared. Open coding was the basis of the analysis, while paying attention to the underlying themes, central ideas, core meanings and the structures of narration (Lofland

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& Lofland, 1990). Once this process was applied to all the interviews, the categories were congregated under more general headings in order not to have many similar groups. Bigger headings themes incorporate similar categories. Interviews' scripts were read once more following the headings and categories previously created.

This procedure was performed in order to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the created headings. After this process, each transcript was coded according to the created categories and headings. Since the analyzed interviews were not many, this process was done manually by highlighting the text according to each heading. Once this procedure was finalized, different interviews' items were placed together, so that each category and heading had complete elements of each interview. Section by section, each part was then analyzed, commenting on the link between each included part. The researcher's reflexivity is important throughout the process. Statements were organized into themes and compared with others within groups and between groups to enable elaboration on each theme. The themes that came out of the interpretation of the materials serve as the basis of the analysis below.

4.5 Empirical Findings

Needless to say, the interviewees elicited deep, complex and multifaceted understandings of the multiple dimensions surrounding feminism activism. While it was difficult to construct a single storyline of the collective feminist genealogies, it was feasible to identify common lines of inquiry. Thus, throughout the following sections, rather than summarize or edit responses, I have preferred to quote at length from the interview participants to encapsulate some of the common threads that emerged in the survey of the feminist activists that I interviewed.

Based on interviews with the participants inside and outside Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the findings from the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interview data are presented below as a series of themes. I first tackle the Saudi case and then move to the findings of the Kuwaiti case. The analysis addresses four major themes that have been identified from the interviews. They generally cover the internal dynamics that surrounded feminist activism, their mode of organizing, feminist identification and the types of feminist actions that take place in relation to the feminist campaigns that I am examining. By including frequent quotations from participants in reporting the interview's results, I hope to transmit accurately the contributions of the participants to the discussions that took place.

4.5.1 Negotiating Diversity and Cohesion from within: The Intra-Movement Dynamics Surrounding Feminist Activism in Saudi Arabia

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When asked about elaborating on the internal dynamics of the Saudi feminist movement, several interviewees demonstrated an awareness of the internal diversity and the differences that exist among the participants of the movement. In that respect, many emphasized that the Saudi women's movement is diverse. It is composed of distinctive individuals and groups with different levels of involvement who happen to vary significantly in terms of their political complexion, ideological positions and social locations. While I do not attempt to provide an exhaustive list, I briefly outline some of the key tensions voiced by the interviewees, such as their position on the ideological spectrum and compliance with state actors. Reflecting on the heterogeneity of the movement, one of the interviewees has stated the following:

The Saudi feminist movement is not a homogenous movement, mainly because it is not a centralized movement. It is being conducted by women who don't have any direct relationship with each other, yet most or all of them identify themselves as feminists, which serves as the unifying principle. I have personally come across many feminists whom I fundamentally disagree with. Feminists are diverse and everyone has their own set of ideas and ideals. There are many of them with whom I don't even consider myself standing in the same line because of the different fundamental values that we hold. I personally support the rights of political detainees. I don't want anyone to be punished based on their opinion, whether they are Islamists or not, if they don't engage in any violent act. This issue though, is very contested between feminists in Saudi Arabia. (Interview 10)

The above testimony paints the Saudi feminist movement as a plural field of contesting perspectives that have been embroiled in profound disagreements over a variety of issues, rather than a unified body of thought and practices. It also further demonstrates that movements, including the feminist movements, are amalgamations phenomena that are comprised of "internally differentiated actors operating within complex social settings" (Rucht, 2004, p. 197); the Saudi feminist movement is not an exception. Social movement scholarship has long suffered from a tendency to treat social movements as single, unified entities. The internal heterogeneity within the movement serves as a counter-argument to long-standing, essentialist discourses, which perhaps emerge most strongly within the very discourse of feminism. The discourse of feminism presumes the unity of its object of inquiry (women), even when it is at pains to highlight the differences within this admittedly generalizing and imprecise category (Fuss, 2013).

This contradiction is much evident in the current scholarly work on women in the MENA region in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular. It tends to homogenize the profiles and experiences of women, while placing them under one umbrella and turning a blind eye to the internal diversity of women in these locations. Women in this region, to take one example, are often assumed to be ontologically stable, coherent categories that derive their coherency from their unchangeability or lack

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of agency. Below is a testimony of one activist who eloquently elaborated on the nature of ideological differences among women in the Saudi feminist movement:

The movement is diverse; there are Islamist and secular women as well. We may disagree on issues such as homosexuality or atheism, but we share similar objectives when it comes to abolishing restrictive gender rules. For instance, one feminist would say, “My red line is that I don’t support homosexuality,” while other feminists might say, “My red line is that Saudi Arabia is for Saudis.” Women claim agency via multiple ways within both camps. We operate within an open mindset and we shouldn’t dismiss that some find emancipation in Islamist references. Personally, as a progressive woman, I engage in debates with women who are in the other camp and try to initiate some conversations. I ask them, does punishing a gay person reverse their sexual preferences? Would it do any good? They don’t think so. I think that the movement has managed to create a common ground. I think that many women weren’t aware of the fact that there are other women who share their desire to change the reality of women in Saudi Arabia and change the current status quo. (Interview 5)

Yet again, this personal account invalidates the presumption of sameness among all Saudi women that portrays them as unitary actors. It also emphasizes the multiple belongings of women, who can be classified as feminists with secular or Islamist leanings or as individuals who refuse to be identified with the secular/religious divide. The existence of such plurality, however, can be a source of conflict and contention, impeding the formation of collective identities necessary for activists to take action and maintain commitment (Miguel & Gugerty, 2005). It seems that these differences are perceived by some interviewees as strengthening and complementing to their shared struggle to a certain extent.

It also emerged that for some, such differences do not impede mutual practical support expected of each other, nor thwart mobilization potential. Instead, they give to the cross-fertilization between possible common interests and political claims. Touching upon the theme of the internal diversity of the actors within the movement and the difference it entitles on the choice of tactical repertoires, one activist stated:

Feminism is less popular among Islamist women! Conservative women in Saudi Arabia do not have much visible media presence! If your media presence is limited, your ability to create an impact on society will be limited as well! Our society is more affected by individual media presence! In the case of Lujain alhathloul [a liberal Saudi feminist], what was different in her case was her extensive media presence! This is lacking when it comes to conservative women who don’t utilize the power of media. (Interview 1)

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In the same vein, one respondent, who is currently holding a refugee status in a European country, elaborated on the differences and heterogeneity of actors that she witnessed when she recounted her experience of joining the campaign for driving:

I joined a Whatsapp group for mobilizing that was mostly composed of highly educated women from upper economic classes. These women had access to governmental channels and knew how to mobilize and deal with the state safely. The group also included young women with fewer resources who didn't have anything else to lose. They were more confrontational and willing to engage in risk-taking behavior. The group also consisted of old veterans who mobilized during the 1990s protest. The group was a melting pot for all three diverse groups. It was a learning experience. We collectively learned how to compromise to reach a middle ground and to challenge each other in a constructive way. But I need to admit that some women only joined this group to take credit, as they wanted to be affiliated with the next big trendy thing, which happened to be being an activist. They eventually lost relevance, as the others were more willing to take risks. (Interview 6)

From the previous two extracts above, we can see that the recognition of differences underlies women's understandings of the composition of the feminist movement. This realization is not relativistic, however, nor does it deny the tensions and contradictions between different forms of feminism. It also appeared that many of the interviewees did not feel represented by one or another strand of feminism and did not believe that there are easy alliances to be made with these strands. Rather, by giving voice and legitimacy to the variety of feminisms that emerge, they make visible tensions among feminists and suggest that it is only by taking these seriously that we can collectively think through the possibilities and parameters of alliances. During the interviews, the topic of compliance with state actors also surfaced as a source of contention. A few interview participants pointed out that some women within the movement had shown support to the political establishment. In this regard, one activist commented that: "Some women come from a privileged class, that they are not trying in any way to subvert the government. They instead work within the existing state structures. Those who claim that they are bargaining beyond the state." (Interview 2)

Similarly, one interviewee expressed her frustration with Manal al-Sharif, who is considered by international media to be the face of the driving campaign:

I have an ideological issue with Manal al-Sharif. I don't see her the way people see her. She is a volatile individual who holds a different opinion every day. One day she is against the government and after two weeks she publishes posts on Twitter announcing her support of the

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government while praising the crown prince. I don't view her as an icon of the Saudi feminist movement the way that international media portrays her. (Interview 9)

Other facets of difference were also present and constituted significant concerns for movement actors. Some interviewees commented on the fact that the movement mirrored an elite structure, represented mostly by educated, privileged women, who were university level educated and had driving licenses issued abroad; they felt the movement excludes female immigrants and domestic labors as well as Saudi women from different socioeconomic classes. Commenting on this dimension, one of the interview participants stated

Ordinary women were excluded from the driving movement. Their roles were confined towards discourse and contribution in the ongoing debates. When it came down to ground actions, only privileged women were capable of participating in it—women who already knew how to drive and had international licenses issued. It was a movement that was led by a group of women with special privileges. (Interview 2)

When it comes to the efforts to mitigate differences among movement's participants, one interviewee shared the opinion that the level of experienced repression has encouraged individuals to join forces and articulate a broader identity in which their differences were set aside. More specifically, she explained

You know! There are great differences that made it highly unlikely for female activists to agree on something, until the level of oppression started to increase to the extent that many individuals started to feel that they are not capable of expressing their opinions. At that moment, women started to act as if these differences are no longer there. (Interview 1)

Other interviewees emphasized the importance of the usage of shared-struggles frames as discursive tools to foster a sense of unity among feminist activists. Such frames encompass a wide range of ideas that are not confined to particular issues or locales. Additionally, such frames are often deployed in conjunction with acknowledgments of intra-movement differences and/or references to diversity as explicit movement strengths to tackle the movement in the broader societal context. Movement actors have repeatedly disrupted significant boundaries and negotiated cultural, national, religious and material differences, ultimately achieving what Manisha Desai (2005) has termed "solidarities of difference." The development of strategic discourses that connect seemingly disparate issues has been a vital piece of this process. The majority of interviewees pointed to several challenges they encountered that are shaped by intersecting hegemonic systems—familial, legal, economic, political and societal. One activist stated the following:

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We can't think of the Saudi feminist movement in the separation of the composition of Saudi society. If we take a look at the layers of oppression that Saudi women are currently experiencing, we see that they don't only originate from political institutions alone, but from society, from the economy, from everywhere. This means that even if the economic situation of the woman is good, the woman remains subjected to other forms of oppression. For instance, a woman can belong to an upper class, but she can still be part of a religiously conservative family who doesn't allow her to work. So she ends up remaining under the mercy of her patriarchal family who controls her life. As you know, if someone doesn't have economic independence, then she/he doesn't have freedom. Let me give you another example. A woman might belong to a lower economic class, but she might have the freedom to work. The degree and the form of gender-based oppression can be found extremely different in different economic classes, different cities and even within families themselves. Every story of struggle is unique in its own way. We struggle in different ways and at different levels. Someone is not allowed to work; someone is not allowed to travel by herself. Some situations are more severe than others. Some women are not allowed to get married; some women are not even allowed to leave their rooms. (Interview 5)

What is significant from the previous accounts is the realization of the impact of the multiple and overlapping nature of social differences and the fact that women in this context are simultaneously located within different social groupings. The central issue for feminist politics is the complexity and the partially overlapping and crosscutting nature of social divisions, rather than reified differences (Jakobsen, 1998). Thus, systems of oppression related to one's class, gender, as well as other marked identities cannot be understood in isolation from one another; each of these types of inequalities is in fact interconnected and therefore they create a new system of domination that reflects this intersection of multiple forms of discrimination.

It appears from activists' accounts that the ban on driving has brought together women from different backgrounds, classes and communities who, in spite of their heterogeneity, were at least cognizant of differences; differences were put on hold to preserve a collective unity that engendered a crucial sense of shared interests and build common understandings of the contentious issues at hand. That unity accommodated different orientations in alliances and solidarity networks, stressing differences as a positive quality of the movement (della Porta & Diani, 2006).

This difference is not a strange case to feminism because it is an identity-based movement that can potentially encompass a multiplicity of identities, ideologies, issues and organizational forms, often eschewing formal structures (Starr, 2005). According to the perceived threats, these actors collaborated in different networks that were activated to pursue mobilization efforts and sustain different interactions between a plurality of individuals and groups at different capacities. This observation

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corresponds to studies within the field of social movements that tackle movement actors not as unitary challengers, but as a shifting set of actors who share a central identity and have malleable allegiances and potentially divergent ideologies. These newer studies contrast with much previous research that examined social movements and often assumed stable group boundaries and identities that were relatively unified, acting on behalf of bounded individuals.

In sum, the interviews' data is significant in terms of mapping out the breadth of the Saudi feminist movement that emerged as a multivalent and inherently contested site with multiple boundaries, identities, tactics and participants. It is characterized by diversity, complexity, multiplicity and contradiction, which simultaneously demonstrate insights to visible resistance, cooperation, contentious action and opportunities for the articulation of claims. This provides a promising avenue of research that looks beneath abstract "unified movements" to groups, alliances, ad-hoc networks and even feminist mobilization that takes place at an individual level (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour, 2012; Cabezas, 2014).

4.5.2 Locating the Locus of Feminist Activism

When asked to elaborate on the organizational structure of the Saudi feminist movement, several interviewees pointed out that they rely on social networking platforms to coordinate and promote their cause. The interviewees also stated that the general landscape for independent feminist activism is extremely restricted and regulated, which makes it difficult to channel institutionalized forms of activism into routine statuses.

Accordingly, due to the lack of formalized central organizing bodies and women's rights organizations, feminist activism is usually carried out unofficially or virtually using digital means. Activists operate in the form of circulation of claims and demands online via writing tweets, Facebook entries, blog posts and online petitions. The following extract from an interview with the administrator of an active Facebook group is a particularly good example of this dimension:

We mainly operate as activists who communicate with each other through technological means such as Whatsapp and Telegram groups to organize ourselves and promote quality content that will get us attention and support. We can't fully function because of the systematic targeting of activists and the difficulties to establish women's rights or feminist organizations on the ground. (Interview 7)

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Similarly, another interviewee elaborated on the virtual nature of her communication practices with the other activists

My relationship with the other activists is mediated through social networking platforms. It is mainly virtually based! There are some feminist activists whom I have known for ten years, yet we haven't even met face to face! We didn't even shake hands in real life— activists like Manal al-Sharif, etc. With the exception of one activist who used to be my teacher. There is no hierarchy, no leaders. Any individual who identifies with our cause can join us and this is why there is a diversity of views. (Interview 6)

As seen in the previous quotes, the perception of digital networks as sites of non-hierarchical modes of connection (Terranova, 2004), seems to have underpinned the narrations of most of the participants. Interviews revealed a belief that the current communication practices run without formal ties, commitments to organizations or other forms of group memberships. Feminist activism in this vision is based on a decentralized structure that allows individual women to connect in an optimum way. Thus, being part of the network for many interviewees implied belonging to the wider movement.

In addition, an emphasis was put on the organizational functions that are embedded within social networking platforms. They were perceived as positive in facilitating the process of participating in public discourse and joining networks that are self-organizing and composed of different individuals who are loosely connected and may only encounter each other through the digital sphere, yet they mobilize toward similar objectives (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). This observation aligns with the recent theories in political communication that expanded on social media's overtaking of the role of organizing agent that used to be exclusively tied to formal organizations, as well as on the horizontal communication practices that take place accordingly (Castells, 2012). Other testimonies emphasized the leaderless structure of the movement. This feminist movement was described as being horizontally organized and more loosely structured than those of the past, allowing individuals to act together with little need for prominent leaders and formal social movement organizations. Some groups formed sporadically and appeared in reaction to an event, only to be dissolved quickly. Other groups had a permanent structure in which members self identify regardless of current events. One Interviewee expressed an explicit rejection of hierarchy and centralized leadership, while portraying the movement as horizontally structured:

One needs to take into account that civic activism can get you arrested, which is contrary to what happens in Kuwait, for example. Every unlicensed activity can get you in trouble, no matter how trivial it is. This is the reason for women's reliance on digital media. Digital media allow us to carry out horizontal activities and I am very happy because of this. Horizontal

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feminist activities make it hard to weaken the movement, to dissolve it, to demonize it, or accuse it of treason. It is, therefore, difficult to stop. The strength in our movement lies in the fact that it is horizontal and nobody is capable of controlling it entirely. (Interview 4)

Nonetheless, two interviewees drew attention to the fact that, even though formal social movement organizations were mostly absent in the mobilization against the driving ban, prominent activists and well-known Twitter users acquired a disproportionate degree of influence over the movement's communication and actions. This observation was articulated in the testimony of one interview participant: "This is the problem with the Saudi feminist movement. It is run by four or five individuals who speak to each other and run the show." (Interview 3)

These accounts insist that leadership did not entirely vanish, as evident in the digital practices of key social actors such as activists, bloggers and journalists. Key actors play an important role in producing and sharing of mobilization materials and addressing different targets ranging from the youth to international news media. In other words, for some, it appears that the movement relied on the engagement of a small number of core activists who were influential in the networks and involved in the managerial tasks. So, despite the claimed horizontalism, it seems that some activists are aware that some individual actors who are centrally positioned in social media networks come to fulfill many of the functions traditionally associated with social movement leaders, such as connecting previously separate individuals and groups in common action.

Reflecting on these practices, della Ratta and Valeriani (Ratta & Valeriani, 2014) labeled these prominent twitter users and top Facebook admins as "connective leaders," which suggests that connective leadership is becoming increasingly vital to digital political action and even extends to the movements that present themselves as leaderless and horizontal. So, whereas social movement leadership operates through the mobilization of organizational resources, connective leadership works through the construction and activation of digital networks and streams.

Moreover, the portrayal of the Saudi feminist movement as leaderless should be understood in the broader context of the ongoing individualization of politics, which has undermined the legitimacy of social movements and the overall optimistic theories surrounding the capabilities and functions of social media networks. As Alberto Melucci (1996) already pointed out more than two decades ago, to ensure the survival of social movements, particular tasks that often require some form of leadership have to be completed. At the same time, in the current cultural setting of individualization and rejection of hierarchy, it is difficult to make leadership explicit as this would lead to the breakdown of the "interpersonal relations and solidarity on which movements are built" (pp. 345).

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According to him, movements attempt to resolve this dilemma by minimizing or concealing the decision-making and representative functions (Melucci, 1996). This strategy can clearly be observed in the attempts made by connective leaders in social media communication to remain anonymous or at least refrain from identifying themselves as leaders. The point here is that leadership functions continue to be exercised even in highly distributed forms of social media political communication practices. Even though formal women's rights and feminist organizations are mostly absent in the Saudi context and social networking platforms could play a potential role in minimizing the role of movement leaders, it is important to not quickly dismiss new forms of hierarchy and modes leadership that could potentially emerge via social networking platforms themselves.

The point of departure in this discussion here is to problematize the idea that traditional modes of organization in social movements (with structural features like identifiable leaders and persistent collective identities) have been largely replaced by more distributed, fluid connective action networks capable of self-organization using technology (e.g., Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). We must begin to consider that connective leadership within the Saudi feminist movements does not simply imply an underestimation of the increased facility with which individuals and groups are able to organize themselves today.

These observations allow us to better understand the dynamics of the organization of contemporary social movements, avoiding the adoption of the univocal and misleading distinction between "leaders," who often take on an active role, and "followers," who are perceived as playing a passive role (Valeriani, 2011). While this analysis of the articulation of leadership doesn't necessarily invalidate arguments about connective action, it does indeed complicate these ideas. The challenge for us as researchers now is not just to explore how these processes take shape through distributed user practices, but also to trace how these practices are steered through new forms of leadership. Examining these relationships, it is important to see that activist leadership and social media activity are not necessarily contradictory but can be mutually reinforcing. Social networking platforms can contribute to the rise of new leadership and new organizational practices.

4.5.3 Reclaiming the Feminist Act: Reclaiming the Feminist Label

Listening to women's own interpretation of what constitutes to be a feminist activist is important especially because of the stigmatization of feminism in the MENA region, where the label feminist is not widely used nor is it agreed upon by women working on women's issues. Other descriptions like womanist or women's rights advocates are more common. Indeed, a large number of women's networks independently work on a variety of feminist agendas but avoid the term feminist activist or identifying their work as activism.

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Until recently, women adopted different labels to describe the objectives of their feminist activism (al-Ali, 2000); the feminist paradox is the dissociation between respondents' personal support for feminism and their willingness to identify as feminists (e.g., Scharff, 2010). Part of the explanation for this paradox might stem from the lack of a common established definition of feminism and the misrepresentation of feminists in the public eye as “deviant, man-hating, unrepresentative radicals who represent a threat to society” (Zucker, 2004, p. 425). This misrepresentation might leave individuals unwilling to describe themselves as feminists, even though they support the social justice goals that are inherent in feminist ideology.

I was therefore interested in getting my respondents' own definition of what constitutes feminist activism and whether they would be comfortable in identifying themselves as feminists to better capture how these actors are viewing and giving meaning to feminist activism. Rather than requiring participants to respond to a standard definition of feminism to see if they agreed or disagreed with embracing it, this inductive approach allowed them to define feminist activism for themselves and illuminated the strikingly diverse ways that women think about and practice feminism.

This section, therefore, examines how the participants conceived of feminism and the reasons they offered for their self-identification or the lack of it, what it means to be a feminist in these times and how they understand their position in relation to feminist activism. What emerged was a diverse sample that not only defined and engaged with feminism in multiple ways, but also used online spaces and social networking platforms in different capacities with differing levels of engagement. I was surprised by the high number of respondents who self-declared that they had begun identifying themselves as feminists, especially throughout their online engagement. The definitions that were given to me varied to a great extent. Most respondents agreed that their feminist activism addresses the structural inequality and oppression arising from gender-based discrimination, such as the one that occurred with the driving ban. In some instances, respondents provided simple, clear and direct statements reflecting their identifications: “I am a feminist because I believe in the basic concept of equality between the sexes.” (Interview 5)

Some offered more pragmatic reasons: “In our region, people identify themselves by their profession. Thus, labeling yourself with the term feminist activist allows journalists, media outlets and human rights organizations to contact you based on that capacity.” (Interview 7). While for others, the question elicited a longer and more in-depth explanation:

I remember that I was naive and not aware of people's struggles. Women's driving was a trivial issue to me. When women launched the driving campaign here in 2011, I thought about our neighboring Arab countries calling for democracy and political rights, while we are here calling

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for this trivial demand to be able to drive. I was young at that time and I didn't understand that women's driving has a direct impact on women's independence, their socioeconomic situation, their status at home, their economic autonomy and their chances of finding employment, accessibility for healthcare. All these things. I was furious and I genuinely thought that we need to call for more important demands. Why? Because I had a private chauffeur. My school was right next to our home. Even if the driver was late for 10 minutes, I could have easily walked back home. This didn't change until I had enrolled in university, when I started to interact with different people. I started to acknowledge and realize women's struggles. I had experienced situations when my driver was late, was late for hours and I needed to arrive at university before my classes began to be on time. The implications of why I am dealing with this started to sink in. Even when it came down to the choice of university, I didn't choose a relatively far university that is located in another province because I didn't want to deal with the long-distance. I picked a major to specialize in based on the courses that were offered in the closest university to my hometown, which was one hour away. Thank God my decision regarding the choice of major has proven to be the right one, although it was not based on the right factors at that time. At this moment, I realized that the ban on driving is really affecting me and I need to fight. (Interview 2)

Others embraced more radical identifications. One activist has stated the following:

I am an anarchist! I am against authority! I am a feminist and I am a leftist! I identify myself in this way! I know three or four women who would agree with this label. There are not a lot of us. And what is ironic is that many people already assume that I am an Islamist just because I refuse to endorse the oppression of Islamists, while Islamists view me like a whore or something like it. (Interview 10).

Three respondents provided on an intersectional definition of feminism that links gender oppression to other forms of inequality with some actively focusing on issues of economic oppression, commitment to LGBT rights and other transnational concerns. Thus, claims were made in an intersectional fashion, combining feminism with concerns about national, class, or sexual oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). Correspondingly, these interview participants demonstrated an awareness that women's social position—such as nationality, socioeconomic situation, family background and other axes of power—cut through women's lives. A united women's movement cannot survive in a society riven with other hierarchical distinctions, but only in tandem with the elimination of other social bases of subordination besides gender.

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As one respondent noted, “I don’t believe in feminism within a capitalist state structure! It is all about tackling oppression in all sorts and forms! Inequality doesn’t only come from men! It comes from wider structures that need to be questioned! This is the kind of feminism that I am into.” (Interview 4). The linking of different systems of oppression which is central to intersectionality appears to form a central element in many feminists’ beliefs. The following extract also exemplifies this tendency:

I am a leftist feminist; being half Palestinian had a major effect on me when it came down to my identity on how I define myself. I identify myself as an intersectional feminist. I am not only interested in defending or supporting causes that merely support women. I believe that there are many intersecting layers of injustice and oppression. Every day I struggle and I resist. Two weeks ago, I managed to convince my family to accept me moving out of the house. This is a major victory for me, especially because I came from a typical Bedouin family on my father’s side. Most of the injustice that is faced by women around me—my friends, my sisters, my mother—is because they are women. I think it is logical for me to be a feminist. (Interview 8)

Thus, it appears that feminism in this sense is perceived as a set of values and beliefs that embody an awareness of the persisting gender inequalities and provide some critical accounts on how social norms disadvantaged women; it is also perceived as explicitly pointing to the instrumental role that feminism plays by offering a set of lenses for examining and understanding gender discrimination in the inequitable society they inhabit and aims to dismantle it. Feminists activists are, therefore, those who are embracing feminist critiques and activism and have greater involvement and determination than individuals who are just adherents to a cause.

As regards women’s relationship with technology and the role that social networking platforms play in their understandings and practices of feminism, the majority of the respondents stated that they perceived social networking platforms as allowing a more nuanced form of activism. Almost all of them agreed that they used digital media for specific political causes and they engaged with diverse acts of digital activism. Moreover, they reported that any information regarding the driving campaign or any related online connective action was conveyed to them through social networking platforms. They also confirmed having used Twitter or Facebook to engage with and mobilize people.

The level of engagement also varied. Most of the respondents stated that they used social networking platforms on more or less a daily basis as a sort of individualized “everyday form of activism” in an individual capacity. For example, one interviewee had described her engagement in

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feminist activism as self-motivated and self-organized. She engaged in specific actions on an intermittent basis (Interview 4). Others reported that they used it mostly as part of a collective.

Most respondents stressed their commitment towards creating an egalitarian society through their actions, including their engagement with digital technology, such as the launch of movements' specific hashtags to generate a wider feminist consciousness amongst them. The respondents also pointed out the expanding possibilities of linking social media activism to offline initiatives. What was brought up by the interviews is the recognition that new digital technologies have accelerated and put forward a new kind of political activism that enabled women to form networks of solidarity and be part of consciousness-raising groups. It also emerged from activists' accounts that cyberfeminist activism involves critical reflection of the ways in which oppression faces women and the perception that technology has facilitated their political engagement.

Hence, women's feminist activism that is being carried out online has extended not only the nature, but also the content of what is thought of as "political." Concerning this aspect, Mouffe (2002) argued that there is no inherent distinction between what constitutes the social and what constitutes the political; rather, she argues, social issues become political when they are brought into the public sphere for discussion. That is what feminist digital activism is doing—putting new issues into public contention, which can serve to critique the existing dichotomies between Saudi feminism and Saudi political activism.

The interviewees seemed guided by strong visions of social change in which digital and network communications featured prominently. Digital feminist activism, in this instance, represented a new iteration of feminist activism, offering new tools and tactics for feminists to utilize in order to spread awareness, disseminate information and mobilize constituents. Like feminist activism at large, it is based on a larger critique of structural inequalities and issues and may have much to offer to the overall movement. It became clear when coding the transcripts of the interviews that the sample truly reflected interdependent and fluid trajectories of feminist identifications of women with diverse and unique lived experiences that shaped their understanding of feminism. Independently of their feminist identification, the ways and means of political participation also varied tremendously among participants. This variation goes in line with Harris's (2010) argument that women's feminisms and activisms are practiced altogether differently within the marginalized spaces they can safely occupy. It also supports Baer's suggestion that digital media offer great potential for reconstructing feminist discourse and nurturing new modes of feminist activism (2016). Thus, it appears that digital media are commonly perceived as a new source of empowerment for feminist activism.

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As this section demonstrates, the diversity of such understandings is important because feminist engagement and communicative activity in digital networks is not just a matter of transmitting information. It also redefines what it means to be a feminist activist by facilitating the construction of feminist public spheres where the voices of marginalized actors can be heard. The small sample size and the highly context-specific case prevents the formulation of any generalizations and is in no way representative of all feminist activists using social media. The predominance of an English-educated, city-based population belonging to an upper-middle-class necessitates a reflection on questions of unequal reliance on digital technologies.

Taken together, this section highlights the changing definitions of feminist activism facilitated by digital technology and the diversity of conceptions of feminist activism. I understand women's sense-making of digital feminist activism as an agentic practice. The research is arguably indicative of a wider rejection of unitary conceptions of feminist identity and an increased emphasis on what has variously been called "transversality" or coalitional understandings of feminism (Yuval Davis, 2006).

4.5.4 The Multiple Modalities of Feminist Activism

When asked about the employed tactics, it became apparent that activists had utilized a wide array of actions which included crafting messages to the public, gaining outreach, posting explicit calls for on-ground action, sending press releases to international media outlets, collecting signatures for online petitions, sending collective emails to authorities, making buzz online and promoting particular hashtags as well as connecting and collaborating with other activists.

When it came down to the drafting of public messages to the masses, several interviewees stated that their ultimate goal was concentrated on making visible the imperceptible aspects of the ban on driving. Consequently, they were keen on developing strategies to ensure that their claims were seen, read and widely circulated. One activist stated that she focused on building up her presence on social networking platforms and on television because she began to recognize the "power of been seen," which is empowering. She further commented, "I felt part of something bigger when I became a public figure in 2011. I realized that I am not only addressing policy-makers, but the general public as well." (Interview 4)

The expectations for digital media to produce visibility were high. Numerous interviewees indicated that they gained the opportunity to represent themselves and affirmed that social networking platforms had provided them with a reach that they could hardly gain via print media alone. The interview analysis also indicated that, for Saudi feminist activists, online platforms had been masterfully deployed as an alternative means to the controlled press. One activist stated, "At that time

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our access to the press was becoming more and more limited. So, online platforms were the only place through which we could have our say.” (Interview 7)

The notion that digital media has the potential to amplify the voices of activists who could not pass press restrictions is further clarified through two additional testimonies. Both of the interviewed activists asserted their marginalization by traditional media and described their reliance on digital activism; they explained how all the official information sources did not distribute reliable information about the events. They also revealed, through personal accounts, that while the press might publish some articles about the driving ban, these articles usually featured the opinions of journalists or institutional actors and that they often portrayed the issue in a way in which they don't agree, neglecting the inclusion of their voices. Tacking this aspect, one interviewee asserted

If digital media did not exist, very few people would have known about us, what we are aiming for and what we do. Social network platforms enabled us to present ourselves to the public, as our voices were not given enough of a presence in the mainstream media coverage. And now the reverse is happening. Our discourse on digital media helps to attract mainstream media coverage, mostly internationally though. (Interview 9). While the other interviewee revealed the following:

We soon realized while disseminating the news concerning the arrest of women who challenged the driving ban that covering the news from activists' perspectives is a defiant act on its own. It is an act that challenges the mainstream narrative and claims ownership over it. We became aware that the government couldn't control the overall narrative surrounding the events. It can only control its own narrative, not the narrative of the UN, the international community or the the narrative of international media. (Interview 6)

As these quotations demonstrate, activists realized the importance of gaining control over their own narratives and producing credible self-managed alternative, activists' centered perspectives to mainstream media coverage of events. Indeed, this realization suggests a far more substantial role for digital media than the existing literature on meaning-making indicates (e.g., Milan, 2015) because digital media use enables movements and campaigns not only to create a shared narrative, but also to challenge the existing narrative that is portrayed by the mainstream discourse (Mundt, Ross & Burnett, 2018). It also corresponds with my theoretical expectation that digital media now gives a chance to interested actors to bypass the traditional mass media filters and to mobilize people directly, obtain public visibility and start the political claim process. It also highlights the agency of social actors in seizing the features that are provided by digital media and appropriating them to achieve their end

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goals. They can exert horizontal pressure on information flows that previously were organized vertically to reflect the interests of the most powerful class of actors (Costanza-Chock, 2012).

Activists have also asserted their reliance on counter-hegemonic discourses to intervene in the public discourse to open up new spaces of engagement. Platforms such as Twitter, for example, have been extensively used in the discursive debate on women's right to drive. Commenting on the impact of their counter-hegemonic discourses, one interviewed activist stated that the "Women to Drive" online campaign resulted in the emergence of public discourse that pushed the topic of women's driving to the agenda of the Consultative (Shura) Council. She also recalled the international condemnation that the campaign managed to call down on the government after the arrest of one activist who received lashing sentence; it was later overturned as a result of public outrage and the international media pressure that was exercised (Interview 2). Additionally, another interviewee expressed the following:

Twitter is the most popular and mostly used political medium by Saudis to express social and political concerns and start discussions. While many people in other nations use it for socialization, we use it to discuss politics. The discourse on Twitter can cause real changes on the ground. This is huge! Also, the use of Twitter in initiating feminist related discussions has led feminist thinking to find resonance among the public. (Interview 5)

Hence, it appears that activists have attempted to create alternative discursive spaces where it is permissible for them to engage in counter-hegemonic discourse as well as redefine patriarchal gender roles while questioning the socio-cultural and political institutions limiting them. It is possible to use social networking platforms to increase public claims-making and initiate movement messages that are directed towards the public sphere. One commonality observed in all the interviews is the respondents' view of digital media as a facilitator of connection and communication. Interviewees valued new media for its flexibility, accessibility and ability to reach large groups of individuals. There was a degree of awareness among those who had mobilized digitally of the fact that digital media contracts the time between the production and the representation of events, which can be quasi-simultaneous. The respondents also reflected on their ability to document, almost in real-time, unfolding events and to instantly share their opinions about what is going on (Poell and Borra, 2012).

Scholars including Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2012) use the term "instantaneity" to depict the instant online recording and communication of unfolding events as well as the tone and urgency of the language that activists deploy on digital platforms. These real-time features and ubiquitous forms of political communication are of great strategic importance to activists. To this end, aside from dissemination information about the issues at hand, the campaigners utilized their Facebook

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and Twitter pages to publicize a steady stream of their tactical strategies and on-the-ground actions. Several activists described announcing local events on social networking platforms as an important tactic. For example, one activist described the responsibility she felt toward disturbing accurate information:

Disseminating informing was a crucial mission for me. I definitely use Twitter to let other people know what is going on. The lack of full information affects everybody's judgment, especially because our access to independent sources of information is limited. There is no free press and no media freedom! This is why I rely on social networking platforms to provide information as accurate as possible to the public. (Interview 7)

As with regards to setting up online actions, some interviewees represented themselves as experts in organizing and mobilizing. They claimed to have mastered the art of the production of visual content and creating online buzz. These interviewees thought that appropriating the codes of the digital culture is essential for allowing creative modes of dissent to emerge and to produce positive visibility for the activists' cause. This scale of activism was made possible by allowing individualized forms of action to emerge in order to circulate original content; for example, they urged women to participate in certain trending hashtags and submit videos of themselves driving in defiance of the driving ban. Hence, we see the activists capitalizing on the promotion of virality (Papacharissi, 2015) and for encouraging users to like, share and retweet the content that they create. While most respondents were unequivocal in their opinion of how digital networking platforms aid the process of organizing individuals for the driving cause, envisaging online feminist activism independent of offline modes of action drew polarizing opinions.

Some respondents were confident that digital technologies have the potential to be the future of feminist activism and gave digital media activity primacy over "offline" practices. Emphasizing this point, one interviewee argued, "On-ground activism can only take you to a certain place in terms of visibility. With digital technology, you have networks from all around the world participating." (Interview 8). Another interviewee stressed that activism carried out solely on digital media cannot be viable and needs to be supplemented by offline action as well. It is important to rely on activists on the ground, although she admitted that due to the involved risks few women are willing to be involved in on-ground action in comparison to women who mobilize in the digital sphere. (Interview 10). Commenting on a related point, one interview participant stated that

Giving credit to the activists who only took on-ground action and drove their cars is unfair. Let me explain. When one woman drives her car, she is only seen by 100 individuals at most. The real battle is to circulate this action widely, to engage in debate about this issue, to write about

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it and to normalize this act. And here comes the role of social networking platforms in circulating this content and creating discourses about it. So, on-ground actions are part of the campaign, but they don't constitute the overall actions that are carried out throughout the campaign. All types of actions, whether online or offline need to complement each other. (Interview 4)

What also emerged throughout the interview was the significance of sharing personal narratives and naming the oppression that women experience in their daily lives as an important form of consciousness-raising, while attributing it to the larger patriarchal structure that affects them. It also became clear that illuminating the individual struggles experienced by women is an empowering act that demonstrates the interplay of individual stories and collective modalities enabled by digital platforms; it shifts their framed positions from victims to activists with agencies. One interviewee insisted on her commitment to creating small-scale ideational change:

Right now, I seek to make people rethink what ideas they hold. I do this on a smaller scale. This is much more doable and realistic than creating a hashtag and thinking that I will speak to the entire world and that 100,000 individuals will be influenced by my writings and change their opinions accordingly. I am focusing more on changing people's perceptions at a smaller scale, one by one. So that when these ideas started to be disseminated, everyone spread it in his/her own surroundings, community, etc. This will create a more lasting and meaningful impact. I am focusing on spreading awareness and making people aware of the existing power relations surrounding us. I prefer using doable tactics, things that I am actually capable of and see their direct impact on my own surroundings. (Interview 1)

Overall, these accounts shed some light on how social networking platforms have been interpreted as a sociotechnical space of connected visibility in which coordination of physical actions, remote participation, mobilization, solidarity networks and information dissemination all occur on a continuum. It became clear from the interviews that activists employed different tactics individually and collectively to inform, motivate and produce positive visibility for their cause, mobilize political action on behalf of other women and critique the content of traditional media. This diversity of such practices is important because, as witnessed, feminist engagement and communicative activity in digital platforms is not just a matter of transmitting information or calling for some concrete action.

Digital platforms can assist in feminist campaigns as well as in the struggle against gender discrimination to negotiate the boundaries imposed upon them by the state and society and disrupt the power dynamics present. Nonetheless, some of the accounts that I obtained from the interviews were cautious and disclosed that the use of social networking platforms is not without its risks. Despite the

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reported benefits, digital media can significantly exacerbate some risks associated with the high visibility of their feminist digital activism. Hence, several interviewees articulated a long-standing concern about digital surveillance by national security forces as well as concerns about arrests as a result of their digital activism. Some interviewees stated that being cautious is necessary because anyone can take a snapshot of their posts and report it back to authorities. For example, one interviewee recalled a significant incident that occurred to her:

For me, there was a particular incident that changed the way I tweet. I was very active during the Arab Spring in 2011, when everything seemed possible. My Twitter account was very controversial as I was very politically outspoken. At that time, I was a student in Canada. One day, I received a call from the educational attaché that someone reported me in relation to my activity on Twitter. They threatened to withdraw my scholarship unless I signed a pledge to delete my Twitter account and never talk about these issues again. (Interview 4)

Interviewees also recounted numerous experiences with cyberbullying and harassment in online environments, ranging from discomfoting remarks to threats of physical abuse and arrest. One activist stated

One of my friends was arrested! After that, I closed off my public Twitter account due to the threats that I received. My account is now private with a small number of followers. But when I had a public account, whenever I posted something against the government or against patriarchy, I used to receive so many inappropriate comments and racist remarks because I made it public that I am half Palestinian. The series of arrests affected the feminist movement and reformist political movement because everybody became afraid of speaking out about any cause. I have many friends who closed off their accounts permanently. It was not just out of fear... it was hopelessness. You know, the feeling that nothing could change. (Interview 8)

Similarly, one activist commented on the phenomenon of hiring trolls to force activists to be self cautious:

Today, it is important to realize that the government has started to hire trolls to flash out our hashtags. This has entirely changed how Twitter functions. I am afraid that nowadays, Twitter is no longer representative of the voice of people. The credibility of information that can be found on Twitter is now compromised. The majority of activists have been arrested. And those who have not been arrested yet were forced to sign pledges not to post any critique against the state online. Many activists now self censor and prefer to remain silent. Also, they shifted to Signal and Telegram, which are more secure encrypted software. (Interview 10)

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It was not surprising to hear that activists have experienced online defamation campaigns, censoring of online activities and discrediting in the mainstream media. One activist brought attention to the challenges of building alternative spaces using corporate social media:

We need to realize that platforms like Twitter are not primarily made for female activists per se. They are made for profit. Al-Waleed Bin Talal [a Saudi businessman] used to own 40% of it and now they transferred his shares to the Saudi State. Activists' voices are now drowning in the sea of bots, trolls and fake accounts. We should realize that Twitter is not *the* way to connect, but it is one of the ways to connect. For me, for example, I don't entirely rely on Twitter per se, but I use it to disseminate the work I do. I also took extra steps and managed to verify my Twitter account in order to protect my account from being hacked. I am afraid that we are currently facing a battle in which platforms such as Twitter have started to lose their influence. (Interview 9)

Overall, these testimonies demonstrate activists' realization of the double function that is taken by digital platforms as sites of empowerment on the one hand and of surveillance on the other because of the climate of media censorship and the harsh consequences associated with speaking out (Carstensen, 2013). Interviewing Saudi activists also revealed the complexity of activism in authoritarian regimes. We realize social networks are not unaffected by censorship and control policies or the media's corporate character. It is easy to forget that platforms, above all facilitate systemic collection and analysis of user data to enable various forms of targeted advertising and services (Couldry, 2015). The business model of social networks can cause tension between these embedded techno-commercial features and activist tactics and values.

4.5.5 The Kuwaiti Feminist Movement: Between Hegemony and Contesting Pluralisms

Interviewing and obtaining reflections of members of the Kuwaiti feminist movement was a necessary step to grasp the structural features of organized feminist action in Kuwait. Accordingly, questions were asked that relate to the overall configurations and the intra-movement dynamics of the Kuwaiti feminist movement. In what follows, I present the reflections that emerged out of interviews with various activists who occupied different positions in the political spectrum and held differing views. Thus, I draw on accounts recorded during semi-structured interviews with eight Kuwaiti activists.

What was observed from the interview data is that in Kuwait, similar to the case of Saudi Arabia, feminist activists are simultaneously located within several different social groupings and are divided by categories of class, political ideology and religiosity. Interviewees have also highlighted the

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multiple complex hierarchies that exist among them in contrast to the simplistic portrayals of them as homogenous actors or simply as liberal versus Islamist women. This nuance posed a direct critique of the common depictions of Kuwaiti women as unitary actors who are either progressive or inspired by Islamism and traditionalist precepts. The most urgent concern voiced by Kuwaiti interviewees was the lack of a cohesive feminist movement that is currently united on all the fronts. Moreover, they pointed out that the efforts to improve the status of women through women's organizations are inevitably permeated by the divisions extant in society. The divisions may actively, even if inadvertently, work against the creation of a united women's movement. Some were also convinced that strong patriarchal class and kin structures still prevent women from forging large, effective gender solidarity.

Dr. al-Khatib, a Kuwaiti academic and prominent activist in women's issues, stated that, although secular feminist activism has co-existed, challenged and collaborated with the Islamist women's groups in the past over the issue of suffrage rights, something so seemingly simple as a united women's movement is difficult to develop in a society riven with other hierarchical distinctions. It can only be done in tandem with the elimination of other social bases of subordination besides gender. She continued:

Currently, the women's movement seems to be shattered. You probably read the work of Simone de Beauvoir. She talks about how we lack the "We" that brings us all together as women. Unfortunately, we are a society that mixes religion with customs and traditions, which makes it difficult for women to unite considering differences among us in the level of commitment to modernization and economic development or the commitment to traditional norms. (Interview 11)

The complexity of women's intersecting social positions was also mirrored in the structural makeup of women's organizations in the Kuwaiti civic sector, which is made of two main types of organizations—ad-hoc voluntary groups and professional organizations (Rizzo, 2005). Different types of organizations might adopt liberal, Islamist, moderate or government-aligned orientations. What emerged from the interviews was the perceived dominant role of the liberal WCSS within the Kuwaiti civil society sector. This perception is not surprising due to its long historical role within the women's rights movement beginning with its establishment in 1963, right after Kuwaiti independence. WCSS continues to be perceived by many as an effective player in the Kuwaiti civil scene and one of the main forums for women to engage in public activity.

Nonetheless, a common thread was a criticism of WCSS. It was described as an organization that is primarily run by elitist, upper-class women who tend to speak on behalf of the movement as a whole. Additionally, some interviewees voiced their objections towards the exclusionary practices of

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WCSS or that it has worked to empower those who are already in power. Another criticism brought up by one of the interviewees, who did not wish to be identified, was that leadership in WCSS is already agreed upon and determined in advance; there is little competition or renewal in the leadership posts. She mentioned that WCSS has had only six or seven presidents in its 56-year history and that a small core of established members could be guilty of this inner circle promotion. (Interview 12)

Al-Dulami is the coordinator of the voluntary group “Kuwaiti Women without Borders”, which is a grassroots voluntary group that solely campaigns for the nationality issue. She stated the group was established because they “did not feel represented by other established women’s organizations including WCSS”. During her interview, she affirmed that her voluntary group was formed to be autonomous and develop claims and discourse that speak to the needs of women who have nowhere else to go. She maintained the position of recognizing the rights of other activists to take different paths in voicing their demands and that the “Kuwaiti Women without Borders” group is not against collaborating with the other organizations that operate in the civic sphere in Kuwait if it will end up benefiting women in the end. (Interview 14)

Another interviewee, Dr. al-Khatib, who was a former board member of the WCSS, ‘did not deny the tensions and contradictions in the Kuwaiti feminist movement and criticized the predominance of elitist feminism. In her opinion, more legitimacy is given to feminism(s) that emerge as a response to women’s struggles because a struggle is what creates a movement. Elaborating on the configuration of the Kuwaiti feminist movement, al-Khateeb stated

My issue with organizations such as WCSS is that it is led by elitist women who become in charge of the executive board for many years to follow. This puts distance between the organization and everyday women, women who live in areas like Al-Jahra or Solibiya [cities with underdeveloped infrastructure in Kuwait], although I have to admit that WCSS had tried to reach out to them by attempting to establish branches there. Let’s face it: WCSS is led by not, your “everyday women,” but by women who come from certain socioeconomic classes and hold certain educational backgrounds. On the one hand, I understand that in this particular field, you need powerful individuals who have resources with good networks and connections. Otherwise, how are you supposed to handle the work? But on the other hand, you can see this pattern turning into an obstacle that prevents the formulation of a powerful women’s movement that truly responds to women’s needs. I have many reservations about the position of WCSS, although many members are friends of mine. (Interview 11)

The above account aligns with the reflections made by the Kuwaiti historian Al-Mughni (1993), who has long argued that class struggles in the context of Kuwait have kept women from forging

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solidarities that challenge gender discrimination. In her analysis, in order to maintain class privileges, women of the elite classes tend to preserve their kinship organization; for them, privileges of class replace gender issues—intentionally or not. Women’s organizations in Kuwait have historically supported this elite group to the detriment of women from low-income groups; it is the latter who are most affected by the state’s discriminatory policies, as well as patriarchy in both the public and private arenas (Al-Nakib, 2015).

For their part, leaders of the WCSS did not share this point of view and dismissed the claims that members of WCSS do not suffer from the same obstacles as the women they claim to represent. WCSS Chairwoman Lulwa al-Mulla says she sees no issue in the fact that most members of WCSS come from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. For her, it is an enabling factor as these women were able to travel, see the world, interact with other cultures and bring back the best of that knowledge to serve their fellow countrywomen. As with regards to the leadership positions, she correlated leadership positions with seniority in the organization. She also insisted on clarifying that WCSS is in fact in touch with the marginalized groups in society and that they serve as an umbrella organization that is open for everyone—for the youth, university students and different factions of society. Al-Mulla took great pride in mentioning some of the organization’s achievements throughout the Middle East and beyond in the fields of social development, cultural activities, charitable care and fighting for women’s political rights—which proved to be agonizing processes that consumed their energies for more fifty years. (Interview 13)

The contradiction between the official discourse of WCSS and the discourse of other women’s groups could be seen as an indicator of how social imaginaries of a unified feminist identity are often problematic when they are at odds with the material reality from which feminisms are constructed and demonstrated. Nevertheless, even though these fragmentations and differences might be seen as threatening to splinter the Kuwaiti feminist movements, several activists appeared to be committed to finding common paths to solidarity. Despite the tensions that some interviewees made visible among women’s organizations, interviewees also suggested that it is only by taking these differences seriously that they can think through the possibilities and parameters of forming alliances. It appears that the issue of nationality has found resonance with the civil sector in Kuwait due to its urgency. Al-Khatib commented on the urgency of this matter:

The problem is severe! There are documented cases of women who legally obtain a divorce from their non-Kuwaiti spouses just to appeal to authorities about their case and attempt to request Kuwaiti citizenship for their children! There are cases of women who live with their ex-husbands under the same roof under temporary marriage contracts [alternative forms of marriage that unite man and woman as husband and wife for a limited time]. This creates a

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secret community, a community within a community, as these women are being considered adulteresses in the eye of Kuwaiti law. (Interview 11)

Many groups have come together under the umbrella of the recent campaign “Ensaf,” which was launched in 2014 by a coalition led by WCSS and ten other Kuwaiti associations and public interest groups dedicated to the cause. These groups included the Kuwaiti Human Rights Society, the National Association for Family Protection (Rawasi), the Islamic Al-Bayader Al-Salam Women’s Association, as well as the Kuwaitis without Borders grassroots group dedicated solely to this cause. This alliance sought to mount an active campaign for full citizenship rights for women and lobby for laws that would permit them to pass their citizenship to their noncitizen children and enjoy equal opportunities in education, employment and welfare benefits. Commenting on this issue, al-Hindi, a Kuwaiti engineer and the founder of the Kuwaiti Women without Borders group stated, “Once we speak about the nationality issue, I see that our differences start to vanish. We, as different groups and organizations, unite when we pursue a similar goal.” (Interview 16)

For some, the coalition between different organizations and groups has signaled that WCSS has started to adopt a more cooperative model with other civil society organizations and groups; it has shifted its position from sole centralization towards cooperation through advocacy and coalition building. Activist al-Mekaimi argued that for the sake of achieving unity, it is crucial for women to develop a strategic discourse that is grounded within constitutional frameworks; they must target governmental institutions because the current violated rights are civil rights. Moreover, she claims that everyone, despite their different political and ideological leanings, agrees that Kuwaiti women have a constitutional right to be treated equally with men according to the constitution. (Interview 15)

Other accounts obtained from the other interviewed activists also converged on the importance of framing arguments in constitutional terms. Using constitutional language not only targets governmental institutions in a language they understand, but also fosters a sense of unity among the involved women who belong to different organizations or classes or hold disparate ideological leanings or declared objectives. It also promotes the notion of citizenship as built on logical civic ideas and not on tribalism or gendered prejudice.

To sum up, while some interviewees voiced some tensions arising from differences among feminist activists themselves—from their disparate ideological leanings, class or declared objectives—it appears that the women’s movement in Kuwait had the potential for finding some paths to unity over the nationality issue. This unity was made possible through the ad-hoc alliance that was formed to pursue the common cause of fighting against gendered citizenship. Feminist activism took the form of organized networks that were mobilized more through activity than ideology as soon as groups

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recognized that cooperation had the potential for realizing more rights for Kuwaiti women. Moreover, it also emerged that common discursive framing practices were deeply implicated in forging solidarity and fostering broader mobilization, transcending the dichotomy between the secular and the religious while maintaining the recognition of differences as well as respect for the choices that women make. This framing is an indicator that it was the partially overlapping and cross-cutting nature of social struggles that was the central issue for feminist action, rather than that of reified differences (Jakobsen, 1998).

4.5.6 Mapping the Terrain of Feminist Activism in Kuwait

When interviewees were asked to elaborate on the organizational structure of the Kuwaiti feminist movement, several pointed out that the women's movement began pursuing "institutionalization" in the early 1960s because of the establishment of several women's organizations which addressed the improvement of the status of Kuwaiti women from differing, sometimes opposing, perspectives. The same observation was made by Meyer et al. (1989), who argued that women's organizations characterize the first stages of women's efforts to bring about social change for women in the Middle East, which applies to the case of Kuwait. Since the 1960s, the feminist movement in Kuwait has operated within organizations and structures in pursuit of voice, recognition and publicity, as well as to deal with established structures of institutional power, where issues on the agenda were already set and defined by powerful actors. Commenting on this aspect, Dr. al-Mekaimi, who is now a consultant for and member of the Kuwaiti Women's Union stated

We have a strong and deeply rooted institutionalized civil society. Kuwaiti society is a civil society to begin with. Women are working within the concept of civil society more than acting on behalf of a stand-alone feminist ideology. Civil society is the overall umbrella that accommodates different points of view. (Interview 15)

Several interviewees commented on the fact that the majority of women's organizations are professional and bureaucratic in the pursuit of reaching out to institutional actors. They saw the rationale for the setting up of women's organizations in the creation of enduring structures to pursue sustainable social change. For instance, Chairwomen of WCSS Lulwa al-Mulla stated that collective protest action is not always suitable in the case of Kuwait and that it is better for women's claims to be adopted by institutions that are capable of carrying feminist claims forward.

In her opinion, the professionalization of movements gives women's claims more legitimacy. It is important to be included in established state structures and maintain links with policymakers in order to secure further gains for Kuwaiti women. She emphasized WCSS's efforts to maintain a balanced

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conflictive and/or cooperative approach towards the state by shifting the politics of contention with the politics of engagement to maximize their sociopolitical leverage. (Interview 13)

The mainstream strand of literature in social movement studies has traditionally treated institutionalization as synonymous with the end of social movements or equated it with co-optation. For instance, Meyer (1993, p. 157) argued, “movements end when they reach some sort of accommodation with the state and/or are either no longer interested or able to mount extra-institutional challenges.” Since routinization is considered to be in opposition to emotion and enthusiasm, theoretical specifications of the stages of social movement development have usually stressed emotion in the early stages and institutionalization in the later stage (Hiller, 1975). Under this logic, the state exemplifies the “co-opting body” and embraces a particular movement in order to echo its own legitimacy and to avert threats to its stability. Once movements are institutionalized, they change their goals in ways that make them attainable through bureaucratic, legislative and judicial procedures; they regularize and moderate their overall stance to pressure the government to enact policies and laws that reflect movement areas of interest (Suh, 2011). Such movement institutionalization is thus regarded as detrimental to social movements. By defining institutionalization in similar ways, social movement scholars tend to view it in terms of its (negative) impact on the capacity of a movement to sustain extra-institutional challenges.

Katzenstein (1998) argues that this line of thinking presumes the existence of fundamental differences in the form, location and content between the domain of movement politics and institutional politics. Movement politics are viewed as disruptive rather than peaceful; they take place in the street rather than in institutions and they seek radical rather than incremental change, as opposed to institutional politics. What appeared from the interviews, though, is that the institutionalization of women’s organizations in the case of Kuwait is generally understood by the interviewees as the creation of established channels of advocacy and activism on the part of women’s organizations who opt to be more formal and professionalized in structure. Such organizations are usually headed by highly accomplished women.

This pragmatic approach of commitment to institutionalization is shared by many women’s activists and committed individuals from a variety of political factions and schools of thought. Some women might criticize the leadership of these institutionalized organizations, yet they still believe that institutionalization is beneficial overall. One interviewee pointed out that it is “difficult to imagine their movements succeeding without having to deal with institutional actors to introduce their feminist claims for them.” (Interview 16)

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The institutionalization of the women's movements in the Kuwaiti context is therefore not necessarily the outcome or the end-stage in the life cycle of a social movement that routinizes over time and comes with the risk of co-option as many social movements theorists argue (Kriesi, Jan Willem Duyvendak, & Giugni, 1995). Instead, it is a process that signifies the origin of Kuwaiti women's movements and creates the impetus for social change. Taking these testimonies into account, it might be useful to view institutionalization not as just a predestined stage in a 'movement's trajectory, but as a strategic choice made in relation to the 'movement's particular political climate and external environment.

If we agree that social movements frequently entail both confrontation and collaboration with power holders (Tilly, 1994), movement institutionalization can be understood as one possible outcome of that process, especially because the relationship between the social movement and the state is by nature interactive—neither static nor unilateral. Nonetheless, it is not accurate to imply that forming professional organizations is the only available means for feminist activists in Kuwait. Another alternative is the creation of informal voluntary groups that are incorporated within the broader spectrum of Kuwaiti civil society.

The skepticism concerning the utility of formalized organizations offers some insights into why informal civic spaces have started to gain traction in recent years. It is worth mentioning that informal voluntary groups have been observed in multiple post-Arab uprising contexts in which an increasing section of the citizenry has come to regard formal organizations as slow in channeling grassroots activism in opposition to the state. Many people have therefore turned to informal civil society groups (Khatib and Lust, 2014). One primary explanation for the emergence of informal groups is their potential ability to improvise and circumvent the conditions imposed by the state on formal associations. Unlike formal women's organizations, these voluntary groups are not fixed institutions with designated functions. Rather, because of their casual arrangement/format, they have ad-hoc configurations and functions. Accordingly, voluntary groups can be identified and distinguished from professional women's organizations by the characteristics they do not possess—i.e. formal structure, in the sense that they are not registered and have not obtained official legal status from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs to operate as a recognized professional entity.

These voluntary groups share the perception that formal organizations, although still capable of fulfilling an important function, have certain constrained capabilities to tackle sensitive issues. Yet, they do not mind engaging in collaborations with them on a variety of matters of public concern, including most notably the "Ensaf" campaign. Meanwhile, al-Hindi, founder of the grassroots voluntary group "Kuwaiti Women without Borders", was enthusiastic while explaining that their group is completely independent because it was formed by Kuwaiti women who had experienced the struggle of being subjected to gendered citizenship laws. She emphasized that they specifically opted to not join

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the Kuwaiti Women's Union or any other organizations, but preferred to operate at a grassroots level and remain autonomous. Nevertheless, she still expressed the importance of maintaining links with policymakers and access to institutional means; the group has cooperated previously with the Women's Committee of the National Assembly and some members of the executive branch to advance for their interests. She also expressed that they rely on social networking platforms and especially Twitter to make their presence noticeable and articulate their claims.

Al-Hindi's testimony emphasizes that, despite the fact that the structure of voluntary women's groups is different from professional women's organizations, they also embrace and reconfigure the commitment to deal with state institutions. Overall, what we can understand from the interviews is that institutionalization is perceived positively by some social actors as a dynamic, complex process that does not always entail the risk of depoliticization or demobilization of contentious feminist claims. It enables women's claims to acquire stable platforms and channels the otherwise underrepresented collective interests to the policymaking domain. Movement institutionalization is not always perceived as associated with co-optation or as signaling the end of the movement. This understanding goes in tandem with some of the underlying observations concerning many developing countries, in which non-governmental women's organizations constituted the first manifestation of a nation's feminist movement; that is, the institutional form of a nation's feminist movement at its outset may be as an NGO (Alvarez 1999). In contrast, this dynamic is less common in Western contexts, in which the institutionalization process may come at a later stage as be part of a movement's cross-time transformation or as a response to internal changes.

The majority of the testimonies illuminated that institutionalization in Kuwait is perceived to be beneficial in building cooperative links, allowing moderate tactics to achieve the movement goals and spanning the boundaries of a politics of identity and politics of engagement (Reinelt, 1995) in which women's organizations serve as institutional fixtures in which counter-hegemonic discourse emerge. By comparing these testimonies with those in the Saudi case, it appears that the obtained reflections demonstrated that both cases vary significantly in terms of their level of engagement with institutionalized politics and autonomy from state structures. Organizations with explicit structure and decision-making bodies exist side by side with more loosely organized groups in one case; ad hoc networks mobilize around specific issues of concerns in the other.

4.5.7 Pathways to Feminist Identification

Similar to the case of Saudi Arabia, I seek to interrogate the genealogy of feminism and capture the meaning of feminist identification for the interviewed participants. Hence, I am interested in examining whether my interviewees embrace the feminist label and what it means to them. I sought, therefore, to make the interviewees comfortable enough to share their personal history and relationship with

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feminist activism in Kuwait. One commonality, which I found, was that most of them stepped on the path of activism at a young age and were encouraged by their family members.

Another commonality was the influence of their experiences studying abroad and their involvement in the student body politics on their feminist identification. Many of them agreed that they perceive feminism as the rejection of gender-related inequalities and found it interchangeable with women's rights activism. For instance, al-Mulla, who describes herself as one of Kuwait's "pioneering women's activists," stated that she was brought up in a supportive environment that contributed to forming her current political and social leanings. She fondly remembers her two-years of study abroad in Lebanon, where she took an active part in the vibrant political environment there. Al-Mulla recalled:

The liberal atmosphere there affected me tremendously. I was part of the Arab Cultural Club. I attended all of their seminars and took part in the protests they organized. I helped to organize charity events to raise funds for Palestinian refugees. When I came back to Kuwait and resumed my studies at the University of Kuwait after I got married, I continued my activism and ran for the students' council. When Kuwait was invaded, my husband took us to Cairo, which was the closest destination from which we could do something meaningful for our country. In Cairo, I insisted on working for the 30,000 Kuwaitis who had been relocated there. Together with some friends and colleagues, we established an association that dealt with the needs of the Kuwaitis in exile. We formed different committees and I was the head of the committee that looked after children and women. (Interview 13)

Upon al-Mulla's return to Kuwait after its liberation, she and a group of women restarted WCSS and held their first election of new board members. She was elected as vice president of the organization. Her activism continued during the following years through her call for women's suffrage rights. For example, she camped with fellow activists outside the places where male-only campaigns and political debates were held, determined to be allowed to take part in the discussions and to insist on their presence. They also entered the elections registration centers and attempted to register themselves as voters; when they were not allowed, they even took the legal route by filing lawsuits in court. Their efforts continued throughout the years and did not stop with them gaining their political rights. (Interview 13)

Similarly, activist al-Mekaimi affirmed that she does not have any problem with identifying herself as a feminist and find the term synonymous with being a women's rights activist. She revealed the most significant factor for her becoming a feminist activist was her political involvement in the students' front during her university years abroad; she took part in running the Kuwaiti Student Union in the United States in 2002. Although such unions tend to be controlled by students who support the

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Muslim Brotherhood, the Kuwaiti liberal democrats' fraction she belonged to managed to take over the union because of the 9/11 attacks in the States. Following her return to Kuwait, she became an active part of the Kuwaiti feminist movement until women were granted their long-awaited suffrage rights in 2005. She was also one of the 30 female delegates among those who traveled with the former ruler of Kuwait to France, the United Kingdom and the United States to speak about their experience in advocating for women's rights in Kuwait. (Interview 15)

When asked about her feminist identification and the factors that led her to embrace it, al-Khatib explained that she finds feminism to be interconnected with political activism. She became interested in the public political scene at an early age due to the influence of her father, who was a member of parliament. Following her university graduation, she became a member of WCSS, in which she worked for a couple of years. For her, it was hard to pinpoint a particular moment in which she realized that she is a feminist. Emphasizing this point, she stated:

Those who carry women's issues at heart. It is hard for them to pinpoint the moment when they started realizing it. It seems that these principles were always with you. They were always a part of your character. I am very much comfortable with identifying myself as a feminist and I hope that I deserve it. As much bad reputation [the term] has gotten, I don't shy away from embracing it. Feminism is still perceived somehow negatively in the Gulf. It is perceived as connected with homosexuality, which I personally don't have any problem with. There is no clear definition of what feminism is. The general public thinks of it as men-hating, which is simply inaccurate. Women in Kuwait and the in the Gulf who embrace the feminist label are being accused of two main things. First, being slaves to Western ideas and second, putting out trivial issues ahead of important issues. Most often, whenever we bring up a feminist issue, the typical answer is, "Oh, we have so many important things and you are bringing that up?" And it is always women's issues that stand at the end of the line, perceived as being less important. There is a trend of trivializing women's issues, not understanding that every single reform in society starts with women. If women's status doesn't get better, it doesn't improve; nothing will move along. This is a realistic reading of the situation. Familial issues take precedence over women's issues; tribal issues are prioritized before women's issues. (Interview 11)

The above testimony reflects al-Khatib's frustration about the lack of seriousness taken by politicians in regard to tackling women's issues once they are in the office and no longer need women's votes. It also identifies that the most common accusation leveled at self-identified feminists is their perceived embrace of a nefarious concept imported from privileged intellectuals of the West, an accusation that excludes the utility of feminism on the basis of its Western origin and its perceived destructive repercussions on the structure of the family in the MENA region. Al-Khatib also stressed her involvement with the "Ensaf" campaign, while criticizing the gendered notions of citizenship that

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often conflate citizenship and nationalism and construct an exclusive, singular and fixed cultural identity with other affiliations presented as threats to national hegemony. She proposed providing human rights education as a potential solution and interruption to the nationalistic and Islamic hegemony in Kuwait because it might provide opportunities for more inclusive ideas of citizenship. (Interview 11).

Wafa al-Obaid, the head of the women's committee in the National Association of Familial Security (Rawasi), identified herself as an Islamist feminist who sees a great deal of overlap between authentic Islam and women's equality. When asked to elaborate on her position, she expressed that she generally advocates for women's active participation in the public sphere as active citizens who still adhere to the moral code of Islam. She expressed that women had greater rights and public involvement in early Islamic history, including roles as political leaders, religious scholars and teachers. Hence, she understands feminism as being able to emphasize women's rights as part of the broader commitment to human rights and religious devotion at the same time. (Interview 18)

Her reasoning implies that, for some, it is important to develop a local indigenous solution to the woman question. Proponents of this reasoning most often see the justification for their fight for women's rights and gender equality in their own interpretation of Islam's sacred text. Their aims are therefore at once theological and socially reformist to confer on feminism an Islamic character. Unsurprisingly, these ideas have found a great level of resonance within Kuwaiti society, starting from the early 1980s. The 1980s coincided with the rise of Islamist women's organizations and their alliance with the state in promoting its model of ideal women both within the family and in society at large. Such ideas have gained a foothold within the Kuwaiti community since then, creating another strand in the evolving struggle for women's rights that demands women's rights as stipulated by Islamic tradition.

Al-Dulaimi sees feminism as a set of economic, political and social solutions that enable women to emancipate themselves from the injustices arising from the discriminations that occur. She attributed her involvement with feminist activism to two intersecting factors—her personal struggle, further complicated by having children who are denied citizenship and her usage of social networking platforms in relation to this issue. Elaborating on this point, she explained that she used Twitter to vent about the unjust citizenship laws in Kuwait, only to be later approached by some women who faced similar struggles. They offered her encouragement and brought up the idea of organizing themselves to advocate on this issue. This encounter was the starting point of establishing the Kuwaitis without Borders group, for which she later became the coordinator of activities. (Interview 14)

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Thus, we can witness that the deployment of Twitter enabled al-Dulaimi, who is a non-institutional actor, to expose her viewpoints to the public, which played a factor in her involvement with the feminist scene. This experience is consistent with previous research that found social media to be useful in providing a counter space for individuals whose voices are typically marginalized or silenced in mainstream media (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015; Yang, 2007). Al-Dulaimi stated that the absence of many voices, especially non-institutional voices, from the current socio-political debates was upended by the frequency and prevalence of social media use. She later expressed that she sees great potential in platforms such as Twitter to broadly disseminate feminist ideas, shape new modes of discourse about gender and citizenship, find solidarity networks and allow creative modes of dissent to emerge. Her optimism highlights the renewed feminist politics arising from the conjunction of digital platforms and activism by individuals and activists who draw on the opportunities that social networking platforms provide to embrace new understandings of activism and even feminism itself. (Interview 14)

Nonetheless, unlike the interviews that were conducted with Saudi feminist activists, many Kuwaiti respondents expressed that, despite their awareness that social networking platforms do not serve solely individualistic functions, they prefer not to rely exclusively on social networks to advocate for their cause. They believe their cause is better addressed, or better be complemented by relying on institutional channels. For instance, al-Khatib stated

There are good feminist voices on Twitter. But we have to realize that concentrating on Twitter is not enough. There are several feminist writers who write in electronic magazines like *Manshoor* or *Raseef22*. Their content is amazing. But the problem is that shattered voices on Twitter don't take us anywhere. If you write a tweet and I write a tweet, what will happen? This is just venting; we better complement this by organizing ourselves in other ways. (Interview 11)

Unlike the respondents in the Saudi case who attributed the emergence of digital feminist activism to a direct response to civil society deficiency and low levels of media development, it seems that activists in Kuwait still believe in the efficacy of institutionalized feminist politics and channels. Their confidence is not surprising because formal civic spaces have long been a feature of the Kuwaiti civic and institutional landscape. In sum, the interviewees demonstrated that the independent trajectories of feminist identifications are incredibly complex and potentially contradictory. Some adopt secular feminist thought; others believe that Islam is compatible and in harmony with the main principles of women's rights and deploy religious arguments in addition to the medley of arguments based on the constitution and international human rights declarations and conventions. Some even turn to digital activism and draw on the opportunities that the internet and social networking platforms provide to embrace new understandings of feminist activism.

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It is hard to reach a consensus about one definition of feminism, as feminism does not form a unitary clearly defined category (Skeggs, 1997). It also became apparent that the perceived contributors to feminist self-labeling were the positive evaluation of feminists and previous exposure to political thought as well as the recognition of discrimination and support of feminist goals. This section sheds some light on how feminists define feminism and the plural and heterogeneous visions of feminism that emanate from the identity and subjectivity of women themselves. It also shows that what unites the feminist activists in the case of Kuwait is their embrace of feminism as a set of attitudes and beliefs that support gender equality and actions that promote the advancement of women.

4.5.8 How to Proceed? Strategies, Actions and Tactics

When speaking about their implemented strategies and actions taken in relation to the “Ensaf” campaign, the interviewees stated that they utilized a wide array of action repertoires that included arranging extensive media interviews and T.V. appearances, reaching out to both the legislative and executive branches, organizing seminars for the public, filing up reports to transnational organizations including the United Nations and articulating their claims via social networking platforms.

The interviewees who were members of women’s organizations expressed that they concentrated their efforts on lobbying the National Assembly as soon as they became aware of the importance of targeting the legislators to induce change regarding this matter. Echoing this point, al-Mulla stated that WCSS has maintained a level of cooperation between several members of parliament and the executive branch in order to sustain cooperative links with these institutional actors and ministers. She later revealed “not all politicians are supportive of changing the existing legislation for the advantage of women on the grounds that it will change the demographics of Kuwait, which is a prejudiced opinion.” (Interview 13)

Al-Dulaimi pointed out that the “Kuwaiti Women without Borders” group has worked with the Women’s Committee in parliament for years. They prepared and sent to all members of the National Assembly a bill prepared for the introduction and implementation of permanent residence of the family members of Kuwaiti women married to non-nationals. She later stated, “We tried to get the approval of the deputies to hold a meeting to discuss this proposal and we got some support, but many of the deputies told us that such a case is bigger than the capabilities of the National Assembly because it is linked to a sensitive matter.” (Interview 14)

While, al-Khatib expressed her frustration with the continuation of the status quo:

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Women are becoming increasingly frustrated. For instance, a group of women approached me recently to tell me about their plan to organize a rally near the ruler's palace to appeal to him. I told them that with all due respect, "We are a civilized country. What do you mean that you want to appeal to your 'father' to give us our rights? This will not benefit anyone. It is better to deal with this issue as a civil matter. Plan it ahead of time. Give it a long-term plan." (Interview 11)

This example is significant because it mirrors al-Khatib's preference to address the issue through civil channels and her refusal to engage with the state in a patriarchal bargain that would not resolve the issue at a structural level. Rather than simply calling on the state to save them, these feminists prefer to use other means that focus on how the state is not their "savior." In this way, although they are ultimately referring to the state in their demands, as any other movement must, I argue that they increasingly seek to do so on their own terms rather than those of the state. Complementing this argument, it appeared from the interviews that the activists have increasingly embraced constitutional and legal arguments while seeking to endorse a female citizen's right to confer citizenship to her children by emphasizing that the current nationality law violates article 29 of the constitution: "people are equal in human dignity, public rights, and duties, and... there is no distinction between them on the basis of sex or language" (Constitute project, 2019). They also emphasize that the current nationality law violates the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), that Kuwait has signed which prohibits such discrimination in nationality laws.

Additionally, the campaign resorted to legal means when it bankrolled three separate constitutional appeals in 2016 to look into the issue of equalizing Kuwaiti mothers' housing allowances and the rights of their children to inherit with those of Kuwaiti men; the court dismissed the cases in May 2017. It was also discussed in the interviews that the campaign has opted to form partnerships with other transnational organizations, such as Equality Now and the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, that urge the Kuwaiti state to comply with its international legal obligations and commitments. Moreover, the National Association of Familial Security (Rawasi) was involved in writing regular reports for the Universal Periodic Review by the United Nations Human Rights Council and inviting members of international embassies in Kuwait to attend their publically held seminars. (Interview 18)

One activists reported on her usage of social media platforms to coordinate the "Kuwaiti Women without Borders" activities and further advocate for their cause. She recalled sending an emergency appeal to the members of the National Assembly via Twitter, urging them to take any action regarding the nationality issue. She viewed social networking platforms as a site of struggle for addressing women's issues and a communication venue through which their concerns could reach officials. (Interview 14)

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This understanding was also shared by the head of the main organization WCSS, who believed that mastering the skills of online communication among women's organizations is necessary. For instance, Al-Mulla stated that Twitter could be useful for the organization in disseminating and sharing relevant information (Interview 13). However, she brought up the importance of diversifying the campaigns' tactics. Lastly, interviewees expressed that their involvement with the campaign has contributed to getting rid of the stigma that was attached to women who marry non-Kuwaiti nationals. One Interviewee stated, "Women used to shy away from mentioning that they are married to non-Kuwaitis. Now we are proud of our choices; there is no stigma about it. Among us, you would find doctors, teachers and engineers. We give back to our society." (Interview 12)

To summarize, it came to light that the topic of gendered citizenship is probably one of the most politicized issues in the Kuwaiti scene and that women's activists have mobilized to affect legal and policy changes under conditions of both authoritarianism and democracy in order to strengthen female citizenship laws in Kuwait. Activists were aware that the merits of assertive versus acquiescent strategies are contingent on economic and political situations. In their pursuit, they used a wide variety of actions that included resorting to legal and institutional channels within the realm of formal politics to avert gender discrimination, blending the politics of contention with the politics of engagement. They also sought to raise awareness about this matter and took advantage, to a lesser degree than Saudi Arabian activists perhaps, of new digital technologies. It also emerged that matters that only a decade ago were regarded as sensitive, such as gendered citizenship, are discussed now in public in a new way. A discourse that is built on constitutional and legal arguments opens new opportunities for activism and mobilization.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter sought to better situate activists' sense-making of feminist activism as an agentic practice by adopting an actor centric approach to uncover activists' perceptions in the context of two case studies that included the "Women to Drive" campaign in Saudi Arabia and the "Ensaf" campaign in Kuwait. The analysis of interview data was therefore encapsulated into four main themes that covered the interviewees' reflections on the overall configurations and the intra-movement dynamics surrounding both of the Saudi and Kuwaiti feminist movements, their mode of organizing, the ways in which activists define their feminist involvement, in addition to the array of tactical actions that they have undertaken during the campaigns that took place.

The findings of the interviews revealed the majority of interviewees in both cases have emphasized on the internal diversity and multiple belongings that characterized the conduct of the campaigns, in which activists have converged on viewing their respective feminist movements as a multivalent and inherently contested field with various boundaries, identities, complexity and contradictions. These testimonies also served to counter the existing accounts and the often-invoked

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representations of women in the Gulf Region that hold the presumption of sameness among all women in this context. By comparing and contrasting the testimonies made by several activists in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, it appeared that women could not be lumped into one monolithic group, but instead referred to in the plural, inserted in quite diverse contextual arrangements and happen to hold different, often conflicting ideological leanings about religiosity, secularism, the role of the state and how they view the emancipation of women.

Given this tremendous diversity, caution needs to be exercised before generalizing the trajectory of women's and feminist movements or assuming that they are the same in this complex region. However, one should bear in mind that while plurality is a positive phenomenon, it can simultaneously be a source of conflict that may hinder the formation of solidarity or collective identities necessary for activists to take action and maintain a commitment to their causes. The interviewees did not deny or attempted to conceal the tensions and rifts among the campaign participants. For instance, some interviewees have acknowledged that Saudi activists had profound differences among themselves and they disagreed on important issues such as compliance with state actors on their relationship with the political establishment. A similar view was held by the adherents of the Kuwaiti feminist movement who were critical of the predominance of elitist feminism. It emerged from the taken interviews that activists appeared to be committed to finding common paths to solidarity and that such differences did not impede mutual practical support expected of each other nor hinder mobilization potential, giving way to the cross-fertilization between possible common interests and political claims.

It came to light from activists' testimonies that the issue of the ban on driving and the existing restrictions on female citizenship rights as seen in the case of Kuwait have brought together women from different backgrounds, who in spite of their heterogeneity, have managed to produce a crucial sense of urgency and build shared understandings of the contentious issues of concern. Concerning the mode of organization's aspect when it comes to the running of the campaigns, the majority of Saudi interview participants have disclosed that their activism is generally carried out virtually using digital means, as feminist activism often takes the shape of ad-hoc collective networks mobilizing around specific issues or tasks that are formed and dissolved by activists.

Given the absence of visible developed civil society sector in Saudi Arabia which makes it challenging for activists to channel their efforts into institutionalized structures, the interviewees perceived digital media as alternative spaces for activism and asserted that platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are indeed fulfilling the functions of independent women's organizations, as they allow activists to interact with each other through a decentralized and leaderless structure and circulate claims and demands online by writing tweets, Facebook entries, blog posts and collective online petitions, among others.

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This finding is unique to the case of Saudi Arabia, where prior to the advancement of digital media, the level of authoritarianism had led to repress any attempt to broad-reaching feminist activism that reached any sort of meaningful scale in terms of public outreach as seen with the “Women to Drive” campaign. In contrast, interviews with a cross-section of activists in Kuwait have painted a different picture to the Kuwaiti feminist scene, in which they referred to it as characterized by the existence of formalized women’s rights organizations that were established since the early 1960s, with clear structures and decision-making bodies, which exist side by side with more loosely informal organized groups.

Many interviewees also elaborated on the central role that established women’s organizations such as the WCSS has played in the Kuwaiti feminist movement, while pointing out that the ad-hoc alliance that was formed in 2014 and launched the “Ensaf” campaign, led by the WCSS and ten other Kuwaiti associations dedicated to improving female citizenship rights, has signaled that the WCSS has started to adopt a more cooperative model with other civil society organizations and groups. By contrasting the testimonies of the Kuwaiti and Saudi activists, it emerged that both cases had to contend with drastically different engagement patterns with institutionalized politics. In which unlike Saudi activists, the Kuwaiti interviewees have acknowledged that the Kuwaiti feminist movement has been able to maintain sustained and concentrated engagement with state institutions and work much more closely through existing state institutions as pathways to realizing their goals.

So while Saudi activists described digital media platforms as the central locus of feminist activism and acknowledged its pivotal role into the development and continuity of Saudi feminist movement, the majority of Kuwaiti interviewees acknowledged that women’s organizations constituted the first manifestation of a national women’s movement and put an emphasis on formalized women’s organizations as enduring structures to pursue sustainable social change in incremental steps. Yet, activists testimonies have principally converged on that feminist activism in relation to the examined campaigns has generally taken the form of organized collective campaign that mobilized more through activity than ideology as soon as they realized that this has the potential for realizing further rights for women.

Furthermore, although the mainstream strand of literature in social movement studies has traditionally treated institutionalization as synonymous with the end of social movements and equated it with co-optation. What appeared from the interview data with Kuwaiti activists is that the institutionalization of women’s organizations is generally understood by a large number of interviewed activists as the creation of established channels of advocacy and activism on the part of women’s organizations, who opt to be more formal and professionalized in structure. Despite the tendency to view institutionalization as signaling the end of the potentially transformative phase of political action, the majority of the testimonies have illuminated that institutionalization in the Kuwaiti context is a

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process that signified the origin of Kuwaiti women's movement and viewed it as a mean for realizing pragmatic objectives.

While the majority of Saudi interview participants have stressed on the leaderless structure of the movement, in which the feminist movement was referred to as being horizontally organized and more loosely structured with little need for prominent leaders, other accounts problematized the idea of digital media as non-hierarchical modes of communication. To elaborate, some testimonies have brought up the uneven influence in digital space and drew attention to the fact that even though women's rights and feminist organizations are mostly absent in the mobilization against the driving ban, digital media platforms did not entirely manage to replace the role of movement leaders, as prominent activists remain to acquire a disproportionate degree of influence over the movement's communication and actions and that leadership has not entirely vanished, as evident in the influence of prominent actors who happen to play an essential role in terms of the production and sharing of mobilization materials.

As with regards to their feminist identifications, despite the fact that feminism is quite a highly charged concept in the Arab Gulf States and viewed as a Western phenomenon, the interviewees in both case studies embraced being identified as feminists. Within the interviewees, activists differed in terms of their personal motives for becoming actively engaged, their ideological orientations, their proclaimed aims and their scope of engagement with feminist activism. The interviewed activists, therefore, have demonstrated independent trajectories of feminist beliefs and varying ideological positions (secular, religious, liberal) that are incredibly complex.

So, while arriving at a universal definition of feminism is challenging because the patriarchal relations against which feminisms constitute a resistance differ in their configuration from one location to another. The obtained fluid trajectories of feminist identifications have converged on the centrality of embracement of feminism as a set of attitudes and actions that advocate for gender equality and the advancement of women. Some testimonies that commented on the Saudi case, even capitalized on the opportunities that social networking platforms provide to embrace new understandings of feminist activism, as they embraced visions of social change in which digital and network communications have been featured prominently.

Taken together, these accounts contributed to shedding some light on the multifaceted understandings of feminism and activism in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. However, it is worth mentioning that the varying entries into feminist activism shared here only provide a small glimpse into the range of experiences and trajectories of feminists identifications in overall. Regarding activist's employed tactics, it came forward that Saudi activists had been engaged in multiple forms of action, as they

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developed a sophisticated interrelated practices carried out on digital media platform and beyond, such as to creating and spreading out content, mobilizing constituent, promoting particular hashtags, diffusing of feminist discourses and claims and documenting ongoing events.

The personal accounts of Saudi activists went beyond the often-uncritical celebration of digital media platforms, in which they have reflected on their experiences with cyberbullying and surveillance and demonstrated an understanding of the double functions of digital media as sites of empowerment on the one hand and of surveillance on the other hand, in which patterns of exclusion and oppression such as patriarchy continue to be replicated in online spaces. Similarly, when the Kuwaiti respondents were asked about the employed tactic repertoires in relation to the “Ensaf” campaign, they revealed that they have utilized a wide array of action which included: policy advocacy, resorting to legal and institutional channels, filing periodic reports to transnational organizations. They also expressed that they started coupling their policy advocacy efforts by using digital media platforms to disseminate and articulate their claims. As the comparison between the two cases has shown, the “Ensaf” campaign has relied on digital media for mobilization and to get their message across, in which Kuwaiti activists have expressed hesitation towards completely relying on digital media to advocate for their cause, since they believe that it is better to be addressed through institutional channels and that digital media can be a complementary component of the campaign to augment its connective capabilities.

Chapter 5: The Discursive Visibility of Feminist Claims in the Public-Mediated Sphere

Struggling to get media attention is a significant challenge on the part of feminist movements. Many of their demands and claims are perceived as not being of sufficient size or scale to warrant mainstream media coverage. Because of the political sensitivities associated with their demands, mainstream media outlets are reluctant to report on any potentially polarizing topics. And while discursive opportunity structure theory suggests that activists nowadays are harnessing the power of digital media and becoming increasingly enabled by digital media to inform their public independently (Cammaerts, 2012), numerous studies have pointed out that activists still compete to push their issues into the mainstream media agenda in order to reach a broader audience (Cammaerts, 2016).

According to Rucht (2004), traditional mass media remain important as “pre-selectors of credible information and as serious political commentators” (p. 26). Some researchers paid attention to the agenda-building potential of digital media in terms of influencing the mainstream media agenda. A key premise about activists’ ability to influence mainstream media coverage is around the inter-media agenda-setting impact of digital media platforms. For instance, Pfetsch and Adam (2011) focused on the nature of online-offline inter-media diffusion from the perspective of the “interplay and dynamics” (p. 7) between these two communication realms. From this approach, they explained two types of online-offline spillover of challengers’ issues and frames. According to them, the first direct spillovers happen “when messages from the discourse of challengers get selected by journalists of mainstream media” (p. 7). The second type occurs through involvement with challengers’ issue networks and when their claims and discourse resonate with the public.

Subsequently, the main objective of this chapter is to examine the salience of the claims made by feminists activists and organizations whom I am investigating in the Kuwaiti and Saudi mediated public sphere prior and during the mobilization that took place and possibly the contribution of feminist activism to the formation and diffusion of feminist discourse in the mass media by employing discursive opportunities structure theory. This will be made feasible by analyzing the coverage, salience and media attention of the issues at different points of time before and during the mobilization. For instance, how many times (e.g. a year prior to the women’s to drive movement in Saudi Arabia) did a mainstream Saudi newspaper pick up the topic of women’s right to drive and in what context? Did the issue of driving receive low-profile press coverage? Does the newspaper coverage imply a preference towards featuring the position of institutional actors who are against it? And if conventional media structures have unknowingly allowed feminist activism to flourish by ignoring non-institutional voices?

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What this chapter offers is a close examination of the media coverage of the contentious issue at hand to assess feminists' visibility in mainstream media by exploring the position of different actors who are involved, the action repertoires they used and the framing process (Beyeler & Kriesi, 2005). I employ a form of quantitative content analysis that is Political Claims Analysis (PCA). I first intend to conduct a preliminary political claim analysis both in Arabic and in English on newspapers articles in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait regarding two of the main issues advocated by the feminist campaigns I have included in the case selection, the "Women to Drive" campaign in Saudi Arabia and the "Ensaf" campaign in Kuwait.

The time frame of this political claims analysis is set one year prior to the actual mobilization/turning point events that took place in each of these cases, followed by a further political claims analysis which extends to subsequent periods in order to assess the salience of the concerned issues and find out if there is any degree of variance among the two in terms of the nature of the position of actors, competing frames, etc.

The structure of this chapter goes on in this particular manner: I first conceptually define political claims and provide an operational definition for them, present the article and claim-level variables that have been coded, the move to discuss the findings of my analysis for both cases. This analytical venture is significant as it offers a glimpse into the mediated context within which women carried out their feminist activism. It also draws attention to how the claims advocated by feminists and organizations are predominately portrayed in broader society and presented to the local and possibly the international audience.

5.1 Defining Political Claims

PCA originates within the field of social movement studies and is generally associated with Ruud Koopmans (Koopmans and Statham 1999, Koopmans and Statham 2002, Koopmans 2002, Koopmans and Erbe 2004, Koopmans et al. 2005, Koopmans 2007). It has been developed to bring together the two relevant methodological strands of social movement studies, protest event analysis (PEA) and (qualitative) frame analysis (Snow et al. 1986). PCA tries to establish the missing link between actors and contents by employing a distinct set of methods, particularly a classification of actors as well as frames on a one-dimensional pro/contra scale and time-series graphs of discourse activity.

This method was originally proposed by Koopmans and Statham (1999) to overcome the weaknesses of protest event analysis and to expand its scope by collecting data not just on the actors and forms of action, but also on the interpretations by actors involved in political encounters. PCA goes beyond traditional media content analyses. The latter often focus on newspaper articles as the unit of analysis and use article-level variables to investigate the way in which journalists frame the news.

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Traditional approaches to content analysis are media-centric and neglect the role of other political actors in shaping the nature of public discourse and contestation. PCA, on the other hand, examines the relations between actors, their role in public debates and the positions they take with regard to issues. Therefore, it manages to capture information about who addresses whom, on which issues and in the name of whose interests. It takes as the central focus instances of claims-making, where claims-making refers to “a unit of strategic action in the public sphere that consists of a purposive and public articulation of political demands, call for action, proposals, criticism or physical action that addresses the interest of the claimants and/or other collective action” (Koopmans et al, 2005). Thus, claims must be the result of purposive action and political in nature.

Accordingly, the act of claims-making is normally broken down into such elements as a claimant, an actor who makes a demand, proposal, appeal or criticism; an addressee, who is the target of the criticism or support; an object actor, whose interests are affected by the claim and finally the substantive content of the claim, which states what is to be done (aim) and why (frame) (Koopmans & Erbe, 2003). Each time an actor makes a claim, this action or statement is manually coded along with various other variables containing information about the actor, the context, addressees, opponents, aims and frames, among others. Consequently, the main objective of PCA is to “trace the shifting alliances and oppositions between actors that evolve in the dynamic process of political conflict” (Koopmans & Statham, 1999).

I draw on the PCA codebooks developed for large-scale comparative European projects, notably, *The Transformation of Political Mobilization and Communication in European Public Spheres* (Europub) (Koopmans 2002); *Mobilization on Ethnic Relations, Citizenship and Immigration* (MERCIC) (Koopmans et al. 2005); *Finding a Place for Islam in Europe: Cultural Interactions Between Muslim Immigrants and Receiving Societies* (EurIslam) (UNIGE 2010); *Support and Opposition to Migration: A Cross-National Comparison of the Politicization of Migration* (SOM) (Berkhout and Sudulich 2012) and *Multicultural Democracy and Immigrants’ Social Capital in Europe: Participation, Organizational Networks and Public Policies at the Local Level* (Localmultidem) (Palacios and Morales 2013). My constructed codebook can be found in Appendix C.

It is worth mentioning that PCA has come under criticism for its reliance on newspaper data which makes it vulnerable to selection and researcher bias (Mügge, 2012). Due to editorial preferences, contentious and large-scale events are more likely to be covered. Moreover, there may be errors in the reporting of events and researchers may interpret codes differently regardless of the sophistication of the codebook. Mügge (2012) suggests combining newspaper data with ethnographic research to tackle these three biases and provide more depth. Thus, this project does not rest wholly on PCA and this codebook, therefore, only assists in one part of the data collection effort.

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Political claims analysis (PCA) has been set to be the appropriate empirical data analysis method to be used to systematically examine the visibility of the issues of women's driving in the public sphere, assess the position of different actors who are involved, the action repertoires used as well as the framing efforts. In this part of the research, an attempt will be made to code the related claims made by interested actors as reported in the newspapers in order to measure the publicly visible side of their political involvement and communication and to study political contention produced by actors' contributions to public discourses in the media through interviews, press conferences, petitions, digital protests and by other visible acts of political mobilization, such as protest demonstrations (Koopmans and Statham, 2002).

Thus, a "claim" is defined as a unit of strategic and purposeful communicative action in the public sphere that consists of public articulation of political demands, calls for action, proposals, criticism or physical actions that address the interest of the claimants and/or other collective action (Koopmans et al, 2005). Each time an actor makes a claim, this claim is considered to be the unit of analysis. The action or statement is manually coded along with a range of variables containing information about the actor, the context, addresses, aims and frames, among others. PCA was conducted on two major Arabic newspapers in Saudi Arabia in addition to a third English-speaking newspaper in order to examine the coverage of the campaign in the mediated public sphere.

The time frame for conducting the PCA was set to be one year prior to the actual mobilization that took place (2010) in order to get a picture of the situation before the actual mobilization through analyzing the salience of the issues and constructing timelines of media attention towards these matters. I follow with another year (2011), which marks the actual mobilization. As a result, a total of 250 articles have been coded and analyzed, covering the concerned time period under investigation and an Intracoder reliability measure has taken place after the initial coding procedure to ensure that the coding procedure has been reliable and consistent. The same process was also duplicated in relation to the Kuwaiti case.

5.2: Data Collection and Sampling

5.2.1: The Women to Drive Campaign in Saudi Arabia

As with regards to the Saudi newspapers, a total number of 250 articles were coded for a reference period of two single years, stretching from 2010 till 2011. 2010 marked the year before the actual campaign that took place. The articles were selected according to full online sampling criteria. I had relied on the built-in search query function in the official websites of the selected Arabic speaking newspapers in order to retrieve the articles. As regards the English speaking newspapers, I used ProQuest, a digital news archives service that provides a single source for newspapers, reports and datasets, along with millions of pages of digitized historical primary sources. Additionally, those two

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procedures were complemented by conducting a further data retrieving procedure through the restricted domain search feature available through Google. What is clear from Table 5.1 below is that, as expected, the number of articles that covered the driving issue prior to the actual campaign that occurred in 2011 was significantly lower than the number of articles that were collected in 2011. They only constituted 27.20% of the overall collected sample.

Year	Number of articles (%)
2010	27.20
2011	72.80
Total	100.00
(N)	(250)

Table 5.1: The number of articles coded per year

Table 5.2 demonstrates the breakdown of the articles that were retrieved from the main three newspapers that served as a source. Of the two Arabic-speaking quality daily national newspapers one was conservative and one relatively liberal for the sake of having a broader overview of different political opinions and views. One point to be made is that the press in Saudi Arabia, which consists of approximately 13 daily newspapers, is privately owned. But it is in fact controlled by individuals affiliated with the government (Freedom House, 2015), which undermines the relative freedom of expression that is supposed to be enjoyed by the press.

The majority of the retrieved articles within the two-year period stemmed from *Al-Riyadh* newspaper (50.50%), one of the leading Saudi daily newspapers with a circulation of around 140,000 copies in the Kingdom (Kraidy, 2012). It is well known for its pro-government and relatively liberal views. 32.80% of the overall sample came from *Al-Jazirah* newspaper, which has been issued by Al-Jazirah Corporation since the 1960s. It is known for its conservative and pro-Islamic editorial line. While lastly, the remaining articles were collected from *Arab News*, a subsidiary of the Saudi Research and Marketing Group (SRMG) that is currently chaired by Prince Badr bin Abdullah Al Saud. It is recognized as being a pro-government, yet liberal newspaper in the Saudi context that distinguishes itself for being Saudi Arabia's first English-language newspaper that aims to provide a Saudi perspective in English on a wide range of national and global issues.

Moreover, the ex-editor of *Arab News*, Khalid Al-Maenna, was well known for his sentiments favoring greater political participation in Saudi Arabia. He openly admits to having tested the accepted boundaries by carrying stories on the role of women in Saudi society and also highlighting coverage of the proclaimed Kuwaiti commitment to democratization. The articles which were retrieved from *Arab News* constituted only 17.20% of the overall sample in 2010 and 2011 combined. It was interesting to

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observe that *Arab News* gave more concentrated coverage in 2011 on the “Women to Drive” campaign in comparison to the other two newspapers in the sample.

Year	Paper	Number of articles (%)
2010	Al-Riyadh	12.00
	Al-Jazirah	11.20
	Arab News	4.40
2011	Al-Riyadh	38.00
	Al-Jazirah	21.60
	Arab News	12.80
Total	100.00	
(N)	(250)	

Table 5.2: Articles by newspaper

Table 5.3 illustrates that the vast majority (84.00%) of all the collected articles were found to be relevant for the study and contained new claims. Only 12.80% of all articles found in the three different newspapers contained mere factual texts on the selected topics with no specific inserted claims. Also, 3.20% of the retrieved articles contained claims that have already been coded in other articles. Overall, a total number of 276 claims have been identified and coded within 210 articles, meaning that the statistical average number of claims per article is 1.3. It is worth noting, though, that there is a noticeable increase in the number of claims in 2011, the year of the campaign; 2011 accounted for 67.39% of the overall sample as demonstrated by Table 5.4.

Articles	Number of articles (%)
Articles without claims	12.80
Articles with claims (new claims)	84.00
Articles with claims (already coded claims)	3.20
Total	100.00
(N)	(250)

Table 5.3: Articles with or without claims

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Year	Number of claims (%)
2010	32.60%
2011	67.39%
Total	100%
(N)	(276)

Table 5.4: The number of claims coded per year: total, full sample

5.2.2: The Ensaf Campaign in Kuwait

Print media coverage of the expressed political claims regarding permitting Kuwaiti women to pass their nationality to their children in case they are married to non-nationals was used as the data source for our research. Table 5.5 shows that a total of 190 articles have been retrieved from the relevant Kuwaiti newspapers and coded to trace the discursive trends over the nationality issue over a two-year period from 2013 until 2014. 2013 was the year that preceded the campaign, which took place in 2014.

It is crucial to mention that the results we have obtained are counter-intuitive to our original expectation; the total number of articles collected prior to the actual campaign exceeded the number of articles that covered the campaign in 2014. Articles from before the campaign represented 67.89% of the overall sample.

Year	Number of articles (%)
2013	67.89
2014	32.10
Total	100%
(N)	(190)

Table 5.5: The number of articles coded per year

The influx of relevant articles in 2013 and the more salient coverage of the issue can be attributed to the fact that the year 2013 coincided with Kuwait's third parliamentary elections since February 2012. Many parliamentary candidates and politicians adopted the nationality issue in their reported claims and pre-election policy agendas in an attempt to appeal to female voters. My approach in selecting the relevant articles was identical to the approach applied in the Saudi case. Articles were collected according to full online sampling criteria. We relied on the built-in search query function in the official websites of the selected Arabic-speaking newspapers in order to retrieve the articles. While for the English speaking newspapers, the digital news archives service ProQuest was used, followed by

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conducting a further data retrieving method which is available through Google’s restricted domain search feature.

Table 5.6 below shows the breakdown of the national newspapers according to the number of articles coded for each paper in total. The newspapers selected were (1) *Alanbaa*, a leading pro-government daily newspaper that is owned and published by Bab Al-Kuwait Press Co. and one of the most circulated publications in Kuwait; (2) *Al-Rai*, a widely distributed liberal newspaper published by Al Rai Media Group and (3) *Kuwait Times*, the oldest English-language newspaper in the Gulf, which delivers an all-round news coverage of both local and international issues. It is clear from the Table that more relevant articles were identified and coded from the pro-government broadsheet *Alanbaa*, than the other two newspapers. *Alanbaa* accounted for 58.93% of the overall retrieved articles in 2013 and 2014 combined.

Year	Paper	Number of articles (%)
2013	Alanbaa	41.57
	Alrai	23.15
	Kuwait Times	3.15
2014	Alanbaa	17.36
	Alrai	10.00
	Kuwait Times	4.73
Total	100.00	
(N)	(190)	

Table 5.6 Articles by newspaper

Meanwhile, Table 5.7 illustrates that the vast majority of articles (80.52%) contain political claims, while only 14.73% of all articles which have been found in the three different newspapers contained mere factual texts on the selected topics with no specific inserted claims. Moreover, only 4.73% of the sample contains claims that have already been coded in other articles. Table 5.8 outlines the number of political claims that were coded for each year in the study. It is apparent 176 claims were found in 153 articles. A higher number of claims were coded in 2013 (68.75%) than 2014 due to the parliamentary elections that occurred in 2013, which led to the adoption of the nationality issue in the pre-election policy agendas of the aspiring politicians and parliamentary candidates.

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Articles	Number of articles	Percentage
Articles without claims	28	14.73%
Articles with claims (new claims)	153	80.52%
Articles with claims (already coded claims)	9	4.73%
Total	190	100%

Table 5.7: Articles with and without claims

Year	Number of claims	Percentage
2013	121	68.75%
2014	55	31.25%
Total	176	100%

Table 5.8: The number of claims coded per year: total, full sample.

5.3 Discussion of the Findings of Political Claim Analysis in the Saudi Case

5.3.1 The Depoliticalization of The Issue of Women's Driving

The findings of political claims analysis showed that women's driving is a complex and multifaceted issue that encompasses various interrelated political, social and religious discourses. It was observable that states' actors who are associated with the executive, legislative and judicial powers were less visible in the discussions. They merely constituted 6.15% of all claim makers in 2010 and 2011 combined (Appendix C).

Additionally, most of the official and state actors' claims that were analyzed in relation to the ban on female drivers tended to portray the issue as a "societal issue" that had little to do with state policies and ultimately fell beyond the realm of the government. Such actors placed blame on the country's ultra-conservative culture, which they claim does not seem ready to accommodate the idea of female drivers. Clear examples are manifest in the following coded press statements:

His Majesty Prince Sultan al-Suad announced that the approval of women's driving is up to society... which means that is up to the fathers, husbands, and brothers of women and not up to the government per se. Once they accept and approve this matter, the government will look in to

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it. Otherwise, the government won't impose anything that goes against the will of people. (Baltyor, 2011)

The Deputy Minister of labor, Dr. Abdulwahed Al-Hameed, stated that society stands between women and driving. Hence, there is an urgent need for making society more accepting of the necessity and urgency of allowing women to drive. (Khazndar, 2010)

This discursive tactic of removing the agency of political actors and placing the political responsibility on an indigenous system of customs and cultural rituals could be understood as an attempt to downplay the role of the state in this matter and overlook holding the government accountable for the ban. Hence, such tactics contribute to the “depoliticized” label that is attached to the issue—politicians tend to distance themselves from it, leaving it to society. A similar trend was observed while examining the content of the circulated claims that emerged from other actor categories, such as media and journalists. Individuals—not religion or the government—were directly pointed out as the main hindrances in the way of allowing women to drive. Saudi society was targeted and held responsible for the persisting stigma against female drivers. Such claims are mirrored in the newspapers extracts below:

“I believe that the issue is a social one. I think that men and women should be taught in school and at home from an early age how to respect each other. If everyone knew how to respect each other as Islam states, then women’s driving would be more socially acceptable and it wouldn’t cause any problems in relation to sexual harassment,” said Aymen Red. (Sarah, 2011)

Driving is an individual need that has societal implications. We need to distinguish between driving for the sake of luxury and driving out of necessity. I think that driving in the cities is different than rural villages and it will cause many cultural and safety-related problems. (Alkhoshiabn, 2011)

Intuitively, the usual addressees of public claims are often state actors and the institutions that are associated with executive powers granted by the constitution. However, the most noticeable target of claims in this case as reported in Appendix C was “society.” “Society” served as the main addressee for more than a half (55.80%) of all reported claims in 2010 and 2011 combined; the government only accounted for 26.50% of all the cases. This phenomenon could be explained by examining the characteristics of the media system in Saudi Arabia. Most of the newspapers are privately owned, but are subsidized and regulated by the government. The 1992 Basic Law concerns mass media. It gives the authorities broad powers to prevent any action that may lead to disunity or makes any direct criticisms of or demands on the government. Hence, self-censorship remains an effective method of

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self-preservation for Saudi media outlets.

Also, while looking at the evaluation of the addressees (Appendix C), who are often held responsible for implementing the claims and are the target of either support or criticism, our results show that on average, criticism predominates in public political communication, as is suggested by the negative average evaluation (-0.28 on a scale ranging from -1 to +1). In that respect, the actors who were perceived negatively were activists (-1), media and journalists (-1) and religious figures and organizations who hold extreme views and ideologies (-0.46), in addition to society, which was targeted in a negative way as well (-0.41). The government was viewed positively (0.08), which goes in line with our interpretation.

5.3.2 The Absence of Civil Society Actors, and the Rise of Grassroots Activism

The absence of civil society actors (i.e., NGOs) was clearly reflected in the findings of the analysis (Appendix C). Only two instances of claims-making made by the state-sponsored “Saudi Society for Human Rights” were coded. This finding resonates with the configurations of Saudi Arabia's political system—a monarchy with no formal democratic process nor elected institutions, where the king is both the head of state and the head of government. Traditional representation and consultation mechanisms intersect with the country's Islamic code and tribal customs and influence the ways in which gender roles are assigned in society.

This finding indicates the limited presence of associational life in Saudi Arabia, which is still curtailed by a legal system that does not leave great space for NGOs to operate outside state control. In fact, the Saudi government has constantly delayed publishing a long-promised civil society law and has made registering an association difficult. Most of the NGOs that are registered with and approved by the government tend to be charity oriented and engaged with the state through full-scale patronage networks. And while there are a few women-led NGOs, these for the most part do not engage in the issue of women's political and legal rights due to the difficulty of establishing independent organizations that address such issues freely.

Neither human rights NGOs nor women's NGOs have played an active role in reported claims made in the Saudi press, either as actors or as addressees. The results show how far the Saudi press is from presenting a stage for already fragmented civil society actors. Many observers suggest that this vacuum, which is created by the lack of active civil society organizational structures and representations, has forced the media-savvy, young educated generation to move online looking for alternatives. Social media has been utilized as an alternative locus of association of activism that could challenge the status quo, including the matters that are related to women's rights such as women's

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driving.

This reality was particularly observed in 2011, which also coincided with the Arab Spring and marked the emergence of new actors' category, the "cyber activists." Cyber activists started the "Women to Drive" campaign and injected more claims regarding the issue in the Saudi mediated public sphere, where there was no significant public protest during the Arab Spring to overshadow women's claims. The following coded claims describe the beginning of the driving campaign:

The campaign, Women2Drive, called on Saudi women to begin driving their cars on June 17. Although there is no law against women driving in Saudi Arabia, women cannot obtain drivers' licenses. The arrest and release of Manal Al-Sharif a few weeks ago for driving in the streets of Alkhobar did not discourage women from pressing this issue. The campaign was about enabling women to carry out their regular errands, similar to Saudi men. (Al-Mukhtar, 2011)

Hariri, in her 40s, drove for the first time in Jeddah last May. This was the second time she was breaking the rules banning women from driving. She told *Al-Watan* newspaper that if she was forced by circumstance to get behind the wheel, she would do it again. The newspaper said Hariri was part of an Internet campaign titled "Women2Drive" on the social networks Twitter and Facebook in which a number of Saudi men and women call for the right of women to drive cars in the Kingdom. ("Najla Hariri released after arrest for defying driving ban", 2011)

Consequently, digital activists constituted 8.06% of the main claimants in 2011 (Appendix C), which reflects the rise of grassroots digital activism. The move online was not surprising due to the rapid growth of digital media usage. Overall internet penetration rate has reached over 91% among Saudis. Saudi Arabia has over 17.2 million active Twitter users, the highest number of any Arab country, accounting for more than 40% of all active Twitter users in the Arab world. However, the results are not enough to conclude that a large scale "direct spillover" (Pfetsch & Adam, 2011) successfully occurred in this case or that activist claims became a primary source of information for mainstream media journalists.

5.3.3-The Relatively Low Number of Reported Emancipatory and Feminist Supporting Frames

In the claims structure, frames are defined as the justification of a claim made by its initiator, i.e., the answer to the question of why the claim is made or why it should be implemented. In that respect, about 89.13% of the reported claims contained frames related to the support of or opposition to women's driving (Appendix C). The overall position towards women's driving as reported by the Saudi

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press (and again measured on a scale from -1 to +1, indicating opposition or support, respectively, for the campaign) shows general support for the campaign (0.64) as reported in Appendix C.

The codebook lists various frames that belong to five broad types of categorical frames, introducing few modifications to the categorical classification of arguments as proposed by Habermas (1993): (1) Instrumental/pragmatic related frames; (2) Collective identity related frames; (3) Emancipation and Human rights related frames; (4) Moral principles related frames and (5) Constitutional and institutional related frames in addition to other types of frames.

While analyzing the most dominant broad types of frames, as reported in Appendix C, I found that instrumental/pragmatic related frames came first and accounted for 40.52% of the reported claims that contained frames, followed by the collective-identity based frames (31.25%). Emancipatory and human rights related frames came third as they accounted for 15.45% of frames-based claims which came mostly from media and journalists, respectively. Frames can be used in different ways. For instance, they can reflect what allowing women to drive stands for in the view of the speaker or what it does not stand for but ought to. Thus, in the coding procedures, the direction of a specific frame and the actor's position should be taken into account to determine if the frame is being used to support or oppose the issue at hand or as a description of a status (is/is not now) or a wish (should be/should not be).

Consequently, when I examined how those specific frames were used to justify the support for women's driving (Appendix C), I found that the most frequently utilized frames were defensive and not proactive in nature. They were used so as to conform to and negotiate between the needs of women and the existing socio-cultural norms and customs. Frames such as aligned societal based frames (16.30%) and religious compatibility frames (10.59%) gained dominance. They sought to confirm that driving already conforms with the existing societal norms that govern the behavior of women in society or that women's driving is not religiously forbidden in Islam and that there is no religious justification behind the ban. Examples of that are illustrated in the coded extracts below:

We should come up with proposals to allow women to drive according to certain conditions that fit the specificity of the situation in our country. These conditions can vary and they can include the following: (1) the woman has to be an employee, responsible for a household or a contributor to it, (2) the woman has to be at least 30 years old and (3) women won't be allowed to drive their cars on the highways unless the situation is urgent. (Alsarami, 2011)

Allowing women to drive is only a matter of time because society, in the end, won't be able to stop or resist the calls for change that do not go against our religion or social norms. (Alkhodar,

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2010).

We can observe the relatively small role of frames that are directly emancipatory and related to women's rights in nature (8.69%), such as the following:

“I'm just doing this to support women on this issue,” she told *Arab News* as she drove down the streets within eyesight of families strolling by the Red Sea on a calm Friday afternoon. “They need our help and this campaign is all about standing together to earn our right to drive. When I drive, I feel that I’m free and in control of my life. Sometimes I feel like I have to get things done all by myself and this is what I’m aiming for. People don’t care who is driving,” she said, “And Saudi society is supportive of this cause. I can only think of a few people who are against this, not the whole society. I believe the Saudi streets are ready for women to drive.” (Al-Mukhtar, 2011)

The relatively low number of emancipatory frames falls in line with the findings of previous studies, which concluded that in the past, Saudi women’s rights discourse has often been framed within the rubric of societal norms, both tribal and religious. For instance, the demand to expand women’s rights has been justified by the desire to develop more capable and competent wives, revered mothers or supportive daughters (Al-Dosari, 2016). Furthermore, the low number of emancipatory frames shows us that the issue of women’s driving has been rarely featured within a women’s rights lens in the Saudi mediated public sphere; the adoption of women’s rights-based discourses is often criticized for being anchored in the Western, liberal tradition.

The effort to present universal women’s rights as “foreign” or “Western” concepts represents a political dismissal of women’s claims, attempting to deny local women’s movements national legitimacy. This dismissal is the consequence of the general reluctance and skepticism that defines the attitude towards featuring and circulating human rights and therefore women’s rights-based discourses in the press. It is particularly reflected throughout the next coded press extracts:

We will not allow anyone to harm our national unity. Speaking to international media about our domestic matters is not acceptable. It is not a patriotic act. Women are allowed to demand their rights by relying on Islam as a framework and not by relying on others, women’s NGOs, etc. Everything is mentioned in the Quran. Our government supports this activism and endorses it. Hence, we don’t need any outside support. (Almanea, 2011)

Relying on [Hillary] Clinton for help is not acceptable. Our issues and problems should be discussed internally, inside our institutional settings. The issue of women’s driving is on its way

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to being resolved without these feminist screams on the internet and on the streets. Those activists should accept that our society needs to be ready for that on a gradual basis, as our society is full of contradictions. Women already drive in rural villages and it will be only a matter of time before society allows them to drive. (Al-Hoshani, 2011)

The dismissal could also be explained by examining the general perceptions and attitudes towards feminism, which is deemed a threat to society and perceived as loosening morals and threatening family cohesion. However, it would be interesting to examine if the recent campaigns about women's driving have altered the public discourse about feminism over time. It should be taken into account that media are the only claim makers who decide themselves on the final output of their claim in the mass media. Other involved actors may have used other types of frames in their discourses, but these may have been reported only partially in the media.

5.3.4 The Lack of Legal Dimension

Although the Saudi Ministry of Interior banned women from driving by decree on the basis of a religious fatwa in the 1990s, the fact remains that there is no written law that technically bars women from driving per se. However, since the locally issued licenses that are required to drive are in fact not issued to women, driving is effectively illegal for them.

What is paradoxical in this case is that the absence of an official legal ban has, in fact, made it easier for state actors to trivialize the prohibition, rather than to treat it as a serious legal obstacle. This has also been reflected in the finding as reported in Appendix C as well, in which only 6.10% of the reported claims have relied on legal and constitutional frames that refer to the rule of law. This can also be seen in the following extract:

The issue of women's driving doesn't require laws or religious verdicts to legitimize it. Our political leaders are observing the situation and waiting for a rational collective decision that comes from society itself regarding this matter, which could be turned later into a policy. (Alkhamis, 2011)

As already discussed in Chapter 4, it is worth noting that the "Women to Drive" campaign made an attempt to overcome this ambiguity and encourage people to rely on the legal aspect; the campaign filed a lawsuit against the Saudi Traffic Department for denying Manal al-Sharif (the first activist who drove her car in 2011) her driver's license, despite the fact that there is no written law against issuing one to a woman. It also called on those who were interested to file similar lawsuits (Doaij, 2012).

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5.4: The Ensaf Campaign in Kuwait

The findings of the results of political claims analysis for the Kuwaiti case is structured along three main themes:

5.4.1 The Politicization of the Nationality Issue

Evidence from PCA points out the extensive politicization of the nationality issue in the Kuwaiti public domain. On average, state actors such as ministers, civil servants and current MPs accounted for 39.20% of the reported claim makers, as shown in Appendix C. Parliamentary candidates constituted 29.55% of the reported claimants in total. The prevalence of political actors can be attributed to the fact that 2013 marked Kuwait's third parliamentary elections since February 2012 and the sixth since 2006. This particular development was the result of a June 16 constitutional court ruling that disbanded the previous parliament, which was followed by calls for new elections to take place.

The elections also contextualize the counter-intuitive results that I obtained: the total number of articles collected from the year 2013 tended to be higher than the articles that covered the "Ensaf" campaign that occurred in 2014, which only constituted 32.10% of the overall sample. Thus, the vote-seeking behavior can explain the salience of the nationality issue in the Kuwaiti mediated public sphere through the adoption of the issue—at least rhetorically—by the aspiring parliamentary candidates in their pre-election pledges and policy agendas in an attempt to secure women's votes. This observation goes in line with Hillygus and Shield's (2008) idea of issue-targeted messages as an effective micro-targeting technique. It shows how claims targeted gender-related issues—such as the nationality issue in this case—are being employed to influence certain niches of voters and obtain their support. Examples are illustrated in the following coded claims:

Al Shamali pointed out that he will look into the problems of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis once he reaches the parliament, as those particular problems have been severely neglected by the government. He affirmed that he will focus on eliminating discrimination between men and women. (Nasser, 2013)

The parliamentary candidate Yaqoob Al-Sanea has promised to find convenient solutions through parliament that can ensure a better life for Kuwaiti women in general—whether they are divorced, widowed or married to non-Kuwaitis—in addition to granting citizenship and providing employment opportunities for the sons and daughters of Kuwaiti women who are married to non-nationals in order to ensure a stable life for Kuwaiti women and their families. ("Al-Sanea: Kuwaiti women lack equality with men in regards to rights and duties," 2013)

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The sampled coded claims exemplified the attempts made by several candidates to appeal to the female electorate, who account for more than half of those eligible to vote. It is worth mentioning that Kuwait's parliament had been the sole reserve of men and excluded women from all political processes; it was not until 2005 that women were granted the right to vote and run for elected office.

When analyzing the forms of action and the overall composition of public claims in national newspapers, it was noted that in general that a higher proportion of political actions and decisions is found (22.73%) in the Kuwaiti case than in the Saudi case; these claims mainly consisted of legislative proposals, parliamentary motions and committee reports. The second-highest proportion was of meetings (11.93%), such as constituency meetings with voters. These findings contrast with the findings of the Saudi case, where political actions and decisions only accounted for 0.72% of the acts of claims-making. Examples of these particular political forms of actions follow:

MP Ahmed Lari has proposed a new law regarding naturalizing the children of Kuwaiti women who are married to foreigners according to certain criteria, which are based on the points system that will qualify the requester to get his or her case approved. ("Lari suggests the naturalization of children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaiti based on the points system," 2013)

MP Masooma Al Mubraka has made a proposal to amend the provisions of the Emiri Decree No. 15 of 1959 of the Kuwaiti Nationality Act. This amendment is designed to avoid the shortcomings that dogged the implementation of the law and the problems that originated from the restrictions on allowing women to pass their nationality to their children based on certain criteria. ("Masooma is in favor of granting Kuwaiti citizenship for the children of Kuwaiti women," 2013)

The descriptive statistics in Appendix C shows us that most of the addressees targeted by claims regarding the nationality issue were state actors in 2013 (90.08%) and 2014 (80.00%). This data lines up with the standard premise that the usual addressees of public claims are state actors and the institutions that are assigned to the executive powers by the constitution.

5.4.2 The Role of Civil Society Actors: From Centralization to Cooperation

As illustrated in Appendix C, the aggregate category of women/human rights NGOs as active claimants came in third place and accounted for 8.52% of the total claim makers in 2013 and 2014 combined. These groups consisted of the Kuwait Civil Alliance, the Kuwait Society for Human Rights, Kuwaitis

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without Borders, the Women's Cultural and Social Society (WCSS) and the National Association for the Management of Domestic Security (Rawasi).

While analyzing the overall configuration of the civil society sector as mirrored in the newspapers' coverage of the nationality issue in the Kuwaiti mediated public sphere, we found that the majority of claims came from the WCSS. This reflects its central role in covering most of the structural makeup of women's organizations in the Kuwaiti civic sector, which is made of two main types of organizations—service (voluntary) and professional (activist) organizations (Rizzo, 2005). Moreover, we noted the overall degree of dominance enjoyed by WCSS over the campaigning, mobilization and claims-making processes.

As already discussed in Chapter 3, the centralized scope enjoyed by WCSS within the Kuwaiti civil society sector is not surprising due to its long-established, historical role within the women's rights movement that started in 1963. Accordingly, WCSS remains an effective player in the Kuwaiti civil scene and one of the few legitimate forums for Kuwaiti women to engage in public activity. However, today we can witness that WCSS has started to adopt a more cooperative model with other civil society organizations and voluntary groups through shifting from sole centralization towards cooperation throughout coalition building. WCSS's cooperative model was reflected in its recent 2014 campaign, "Ensaf." It coordinated with ten other associations and public interest groups in order to mount an active campaign for full citizenship rights for women and lobby for laws that would permit them to pass their citizenship to their noncitizen children.

WCSS also continued welcoming new organizations and committees to join the campaign, such as the "Kuwaiti Women without Borders" committee, the grassroots voluntary group that solely campaigns for the cause of Kuwaiti women's citizenship rights using a variety of means, particularly social networking websites. The following extracts shed light on the claims made by "Kuwaitis without Borders" in the reported media coverage:

The coordinator of the activities of the committee, Alia Al-Dulaimi, has stated that they ["Kuwaiti Women without Borders"] concentrate their efforts on social networking platforms, organizing seminars and reaching out to different media outlets to advocate for their cause. She also pointed out their cooperation with some members of the National Assembly on the issue of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis. They are currently targeting the executive branch and cooperating with legislators; she also mentioned that there is existing coordination with some ministers. (Atef, 2014)

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The representative of “Kuwaiti Women without Borders” has stated that they are working in two parallel lines—the pragmatic use of media and working with some members of the legislative and executive branches. They also submitted a proposal to amend Article II of the Constitution and they are trying to obtain the support of a majority of MPs. (Atef, 2014).

5.4.3 The Frequent Usage of Constitutional and Institutional Frames

Framing has been described by Benford and Snow (2000) as “meaning work.” It is a process in which social movements actors are “actively engaged as agents in a struggle over the production of mobilizing and counter-mobilizing ideas, concepts, and meanings.” It is also a contentious process, insofar as “it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones, but that may also challenge them” (Benford and Snow, 2000).

While analyzing the deployment of frames in the case study at hand, it was observed that that majority of actors have relied on legal and constitutional frames (35.52%), which can take on an inherent legitimacy, followed by emancipation and human rights related frames (29.18%), such as individual civil rights, freedom of choice and women’s rights (Appendix C). Constitutional and institutional related frames appear to trigger the highest rate of framing efforts through the reference to the “rule of law,” arguing that women have a constitutional right to be treated equally with men according to the constitution and to be considered as “equal citizens.” This type of frames can be seen in the following extracts:

Despite the fact that the Constitution of Kuwait, like any constitution in any civil state, is dedicated to organizing the rights and duties of every citizen without discriminating between male and female citizens, the Kuwaiti Nationality Act works differently. So while it allows male citizens to pass their nationality to their children regardless of the nationality of the mother, it doesn’t allow female citizens to do the same. The concept of citizenship does not accept masculinization or feminization, so the duties towards the nation are outside the orbit of masculinity and femininity. We believe that the granting of rights shouldn’t discriminate between them. Those who are concerned should work to achieve justice for Kuwaiti women and their children and propose new amendments to the current laws in order to change them for the better. (Al-Mahmeed, 2013)

Kuwaiti female citizens are not treated on the basis of full citizenship and they don’t enjoy the same rights that are enjoyed by men, despite the fact that Article 29 of the Kuwaiti Constitution asserts that the rights and duties of male and female citizens are equal. However, in reality, different interpretations of laws are applied that give preferential treatment towards males on the expense of female citizens. (Shoman, 2014)

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Meanwhile, frames that have relied on emancipatory discourses were also used:

She asserted that she would seek to empower Kuwaiti women to get their full civil and social rights such as adequate housing, monetary compensation for domestic work and the ability to pass nationality to their children. (“Corruption is widespread, and we lack adequate mechanisms to implement equality and Justice,” 2013)

Fajar Al Saeed stated that the rights of women are being taken away and that she will work hard to grant women their full rights, such as the ability to pass their nationality to their children. She indicated that she is preoccupied with women’s rights as she identifies with their suffering. (Alfarhan, 2014)

Also, when analyzing the type of actors using frames to debate the nationality issue, it emerged that the majority of claims with frames (94 of a total 281) stemmed from parliamentary candidates, who appear to make the most often use of frames (33.45% of all cases), followed by state actors (28.46%). Refer to Appendix C.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the publically mediated side of the issues advocated by both the “Women to Drive” and the “Ensaf” campaigns. I applied political claims analysis as a method of inquiry to examine the media coverage of these topics, the position of different actors involved and the target of their claims, as well the framing processes.

The findings of this chapter indicate that, when we look at the coverage of the topic of women’s driving within the sampled Saudi newspapers, we find it received far more media attention in 2011, the launch year of the official driving campaign. In contrast, counter-intuitive results were obtained concerning the Kuwaiti case; the issue of female citizenship rights was more extensively covered in the press during 2013, which in fact preceded the launch of the “Ensaf” campaign.

As regards to whether the newspapers’ coverage in both cases implied a preference towards featuring the position of certain institutional actors, it appeared that the claim makers who were most prominent in the Saudi press were those already involved with the media and journalism field. Journalists and media practitioners constituted the dominant aggregate category of claim makers both in 2010 (33.33%) and 2011 (48.38%). Their dominance may be attributed to their proximity and involvement with the newspapers at hand, which often makes the process of inserting their opinions and claims easier.

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Assessing feminist activists' visibility in mainstream media, it was noted that the category of established civil society actors as claim makers made few appearances in the Saudi sampled newspapers. Neither human rights nor women's rights organizations played an active role in the selected claims that have been analyzed, either as actors or as direct addressees. However, we noted the emergence of grassroots activists as a new encompassing category of claim makers that did not exist in the sampled newspapers that covered 2010.

Nevertheless, claims put forward by grassroots activists were rare, which could indicate the challenges that activists face to having their voices represented in mainstream local media. This low level of activists' representation in mainstream media aligns with scholarly discussions that emphasized that receiving mainstream media coverage of the voices of independent activists was a challenging process due to their marginal position outside the realm of elitist media (Pfetsch & Adam, 2011).

The absence of state actors as direct addressees of public claims was also notable, which reinforced the idea that the ban on driving was framed in the Saudi mediated public sphere as a societal matter that has little to do with state policies. In comparison, the analysis that was conducted in relation to the coverage of female citizenship rights on the Kuwaiti press pointed to the extensive politicization of the nationality issue, most notably during 2013, which coincided with Kuwait's third parliamentary elections since February 2012. Evidence from the political claims-making analysis can pinpoint which types of actors were featured in the mediated public sphere. Hence, when I turned to address the very same inquiry, whether the newspaper coverage in the Kuwaiti press indicated a preference towards featuring the position of certain type actors, it emerged that state actors, including ministers and current or aspiring MPs, accounted for the majority of claimants.

The coding of articles showed that many parliamentary candidates included the issue of women's citizenship rights in their pre-election manifestos to potentially appeal to female voters. This separate category of actors empirically accounted for 36.36% of the main claimants in 2013 and mainly targeted state or other governmental actors as direct addressees for their claims. While women's and human rights organizations constituted 7.44% of the total number of claim makers, journalists and media establishments in Kuwait made few claims (2.27%). This outcome potentially illustrates that the nationality issue was not an issue field where media actors played a major role, a finding that contrasts with the results that we obtained in the Saudi case (Appendix C).

The degree of politicization or depoliticization of the issues that are advocated by the selected campaigns has also intersected with other dimensions. For instance, when comparing the overall forms of public claims within both cases, it emerged that there was a relatively higher proportion of forms of political claims found in the Kuwaiti case, which mainly consisted of legislative proposals, parliamentary motions and committee reports centered around pushing for more equal citizenship rights

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for female Kuwaiti citizens. However, verbal statements remained the most widely used form of action employed by different actors in the Saudi case.

On average and for all actor types, instrumental/pragmatic related frames such as public interest, economic interest and necessity-based frames triggered the highest rate of framing efforts in public debate, in addition to the frames that sought to assert that female driving conforms with existing societal norms. However, there was a relatively low number of reported emancipatory and feminist supporting frames in the Saudi press (Appendix C).

Meanwhile, frequent usage of constitutional and institutional frames appeared to trigger the highest rate of framing efforts through reference to the “rule of law” in the Kuwaiti sample. Actors frequently argued that women have the constitutional right to be treated as equal citizens, followed by emancipation and human rights related frames that articulated their claims within individual civil rights, freedom of choice and women’s rights discourses.

In sum, the overall findings of this chapter shed some light on the mediated context, structural constraints and dominant ideological frameworks that can influence the ways in which women carry out their feminist activism. Additionally, the effort of different social actors and pressure organizations to become visible in the mediated public sphere was also touched upon in the findings; we found that activists remain underrepresented as subjects and actors in the media, especially in the Saudi case. Obtaining visibility, more particularly fair media representation throughout mainstream media outlet, is not a straightforward task; it is a locus of conflict and struggle.

Chapter 6: Feminist Activism on Facebook: Untangling the Multipurpose Uses and Feminist Discourses

This chapter which is led by the discursive dimension in my integrated relational approach to the study of feminist activism will attempt to answer the research question of how did activists and feminist organizations deploy Facebook during the examined feminist campaigns? Hence, I will elaborate on the multipurpose use of Facebook, as well as the arrays of meanings and feminist discourses that emerged and manifested themselves by looking at the expressive discursive content published through this platform.

The first part of this chapter will present an analysis of the content of the campaign's related Facebook pages for the "Saudi Women To Drive" (SWTD) Facebook page, which was one of the most active English-speaking pages in the Saudi driving campaign, with more than 37,000 users. It will also evaluate the Arabic-speaking "My Right To Dignity; a call for solidarity with the rights of Saudi women" (MRTD) Facebook page, which has over 17,000 followers. These particular Facebook pages were selected due to their active involvement in the campaign and their large following base. Moreover, the decision to examine Facebook pages that are in English, as well as Arabic stemmed from the desire to obtain a more representative and inclusive dataset and to detect any possible variations in terms of contents that might occur in relation to the language that is being used and the influence of the targeted audience domestically and internationally.

I started out my research inquiry from a specific research interest that mainly concerned the ways these pages served as means for feminist expression, claims-making, coordination and mobilization in the complex and multifaceted context of the campaign. So, to answer the research question, an elaborated strategy had to be developed consisting of three steps, in which the first step of the analysis was performed to get a broader sense of the unfolded dynamics that occurred on the examined Facebook pages and it included assessing the progression and development of content over time, followed by examining the characteristics of users engagement, classifying the various types of posts (links, status updates, photos, videos and events), as well as the composition of the participating audience.

The data was acquired using the Netvizz application v1.44 for Facebook (Rieder, 2013), which is a data collection and extraction application that allows researchers to export data in standard file formats from different sections of the specified Facebook page/s, including the complete list of posts, number of likes, shares and comments during a specific time period. The collection of the data concerning the English-speaking "Women To Drive" campaign took place covering the full period of

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posting activity from the day of the creation of the FB page on May 22, 2011 until the end of December 2013, which marked the end the second round of the driving campaign which started in October 2013.

Focusing on this particular period was deemed most appropriate for the sake of tracing the development of the campaign from its inception, reaching peak activities and later stabilization at the end of 2013. The two-and-a-half-year period in question represents a good trajectory and a snapshot of the events that unfolded during the course of the campaign. The data from “My Right To Dignity” Facebook page was collected from the date that also marked the creation of the FB page on January 10, 2012, until 31 December 2013 as well. It is worth noting though that all the Arabic-speaking campaign’s related Facebook pages I have sampled were created during the year 2012, almost half a year after the launch of the campaign.

I retrieved all the posts from both pages, as well as the comments and likes these posts received. While researchers often use counts of these elements as indicators for resonance or engagement, one can rightfully wonder whether ascribing “a single meaning to any of these behaviors masks the complexities of users’ actual intentions” (Driscoll & Walker, 2014, p. 1747). Consequently, the second step of analysis involved conducting a systematic in-depth qualitative analysis of the individual posts by the administrators of the Facebook pages, which were treated as the coding units. In sum, an overall of 449 posts published by the page administrators from the SWTD Facebook page, and 1,736 posts in the case of the MRTD Facebook page were retrieved and were read several times before being qualitatively coded.

As a final step, as the qualitative content analysis revealed the predominance of feminist-related posts, a further in-depth examination of the empirical materials that were classified as feminist took place to shed some light on the ways feminism has been discursively constructed within these pages and to examine how activists understand and base their feminism on. The same process was also applied to analyze the Facebook page of the Women’s Cultural and Social Society (WCSS) in the case of Kuwait, in which I will elaborate on in detail in the second part of the chapter.

6.1 Tracing the Development of Content Over Time on Facebook

The development of content over time was reflected by the number of posts published throughout the data collection period, including posts by the page administrators and posts by users that include any form of contribution, be it visual or textual, which was uploaded straight onto the wall of the page. In addition, the overall engagement summing up all likes and comments in reaction to posts of both pages was considered.

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Figures 6.1 and 6.2 tackle the monthly frequency of the posts made by the page administrators and by users and the development of their engagement indicators over the data collection period.

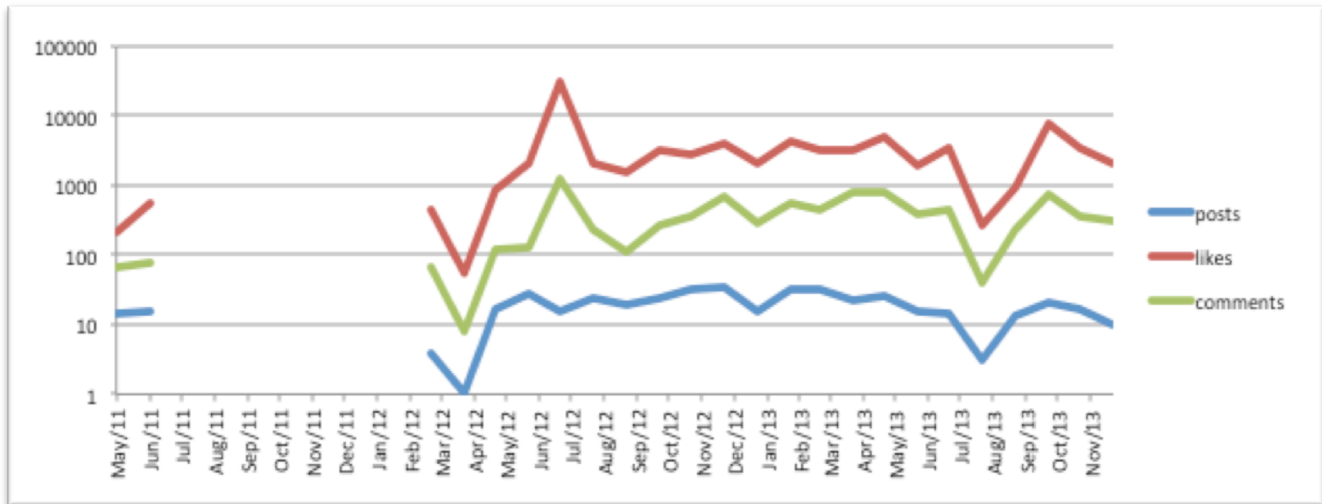


Figure 6.1: The monthly development of Facebook engagement indicators on the posts made by the page administrators of the SWTD Facebook page

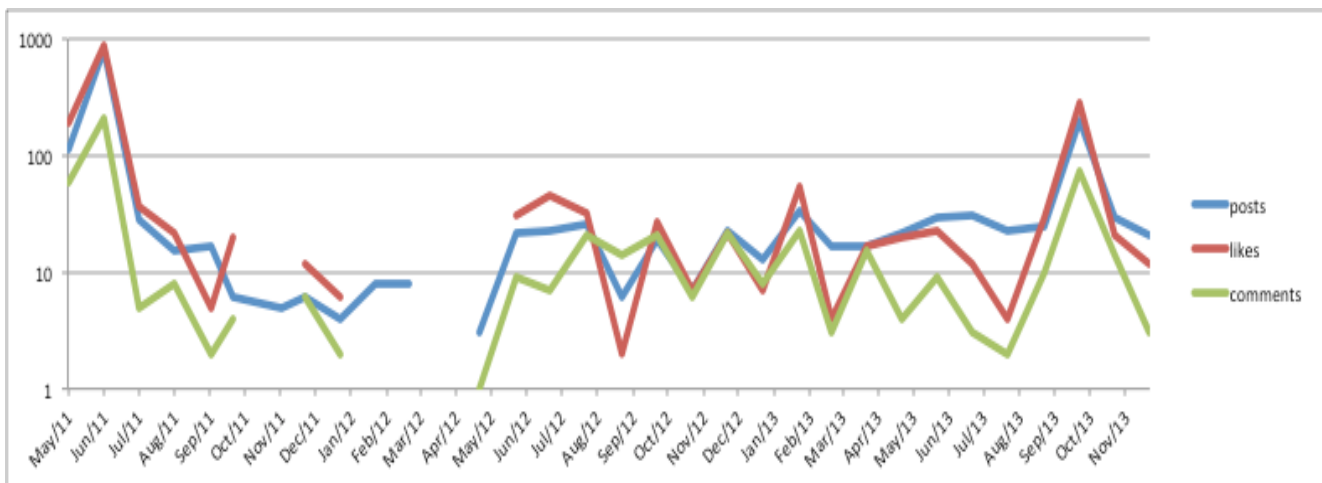


Figure 6.2: The monthly development of Facebook engagement indicators of the posts made by the page users of the SWTD Facebook page.

The analysis of the monthly development of Facebook engagement as illustrated in Figure 6.1 and 6.2, shows a general intermittent rise-and-fall pattern in user engagement, as well as three obvious peaks during the months of June 2011, July 2012 and October 2013. A total of 827 posts were published by page administrators (15) and page users (812) in June 2011—the month that coincided with the launch of the driving campaign that took place on June 17, 2011—which have received a total of 1,438 likes (represented by the red dot in the figure) and 288 comments (green line in the same figure).

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Such nuances become particularly visible when focusing on the shorter period between June 17, 2011 and June 30, 2011 as shown in Figure 6.3. We can see the spike in the number of posts on June 17 (338 posts) and the posts on the day that followed it (259), which points to the existence of an increased level of Facebook posting activity and users' involvement during the first active days of the campaign. Nevertheless, after the activity peaked, a slow decline ensued as user engagement progressively tailed off shortly afterward.

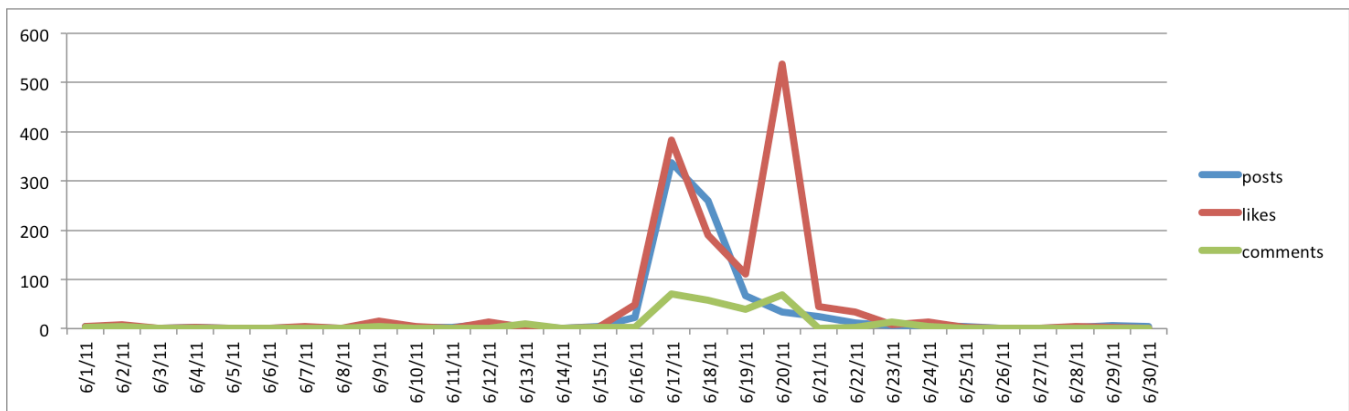


Figure 6.3: The development of Facebook engagement indicators of the posts made by the page users of the SWT D Facebook page during June 2011.

After an initial period of relatively slow growth, the page experienced a rapid acceleration of user engagement in the month of July 2012, which broke the record in terms of the level of Facebook interactions. And while only 16 posts were posted during the entire month by page administrators, those posts managed to attract a total of 31,267 likes and 1,211 comments. This enormous increase in activity in terms of likes and comments pushed me to conduct a more fine-grained analysis to determine the types of posts that were the source of the unexpected rise of user involvement. It emerged that the rise of user engagement during that month had coincided with Saudi Arabia's participation in the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

This marked a breakthrough for Saudi women because of the participation of the first two Saudi female athletes, Judoka Shahekani and Sarah Attar, and generated a great deal of online support. Hence, the posts that attracted the highest number of likes and comments in that period were mainly focused on supporting Saudi's female athletes' participation in the Olympics. For example, the most liked and commented post during that period was "YES we did it. The first female athletes are representing Saudi Arabia at the Olympic Games! Go girls go, we're so proud of you", which resulted in a total of 27,361 likes and 951 comments alone.

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Figure 6.4: Example of one of the most liked posts (Saudi Women To Drive, 2012).

Taking this into consideration, it appears that the scope and the content which was featured on the campaign's Facebook page had expanded from the original single-issue—the ban on driving—to a variety of other, broader women's issues that relate to women's achievements and presence in the public sphere. The third peak occurred in the month of October 2013, in which a total of 21 entries and 204 posts made by page administrators and page users respectively received over 7,959 likes and 832 comments overall. This period was characterized by posts that consisted of calls for action and motivational content to carry out challenging activities to defy the ban in the second round of mobilization that was set to start from October 26, 2013. The mobilization also clearly explains the plunge in engagement levels and posting activities that took place at the end of the month.

As regards the Arabic-speaking "My Right To Dignity" Facebook page, Figures 6.5 and 6.6 capture the monthly frequency of the posts made by the page administrators and by users as in terms of the development of engagement indicators, starting from the day of the creation of the page on January 10, 2012 until 31 December 2013. Accordingly, I observed the occurrence of four general peaks. The first occurred during the month of July 2012, followed by a second in December 2012. The third peak, on the other hand, occurred during the month of May 2013, followed by the final peak in October 2013.

Similar to the results obtained by the SWTD English-speaking Facebook page, the first peak in the level of user engagements coincided with Saudi Arabia's participation in the 2012 Summer

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Olympics in London. Ninety-seven posts by page administrators managed to attract 11,831 likes and 5,319 comments in total.

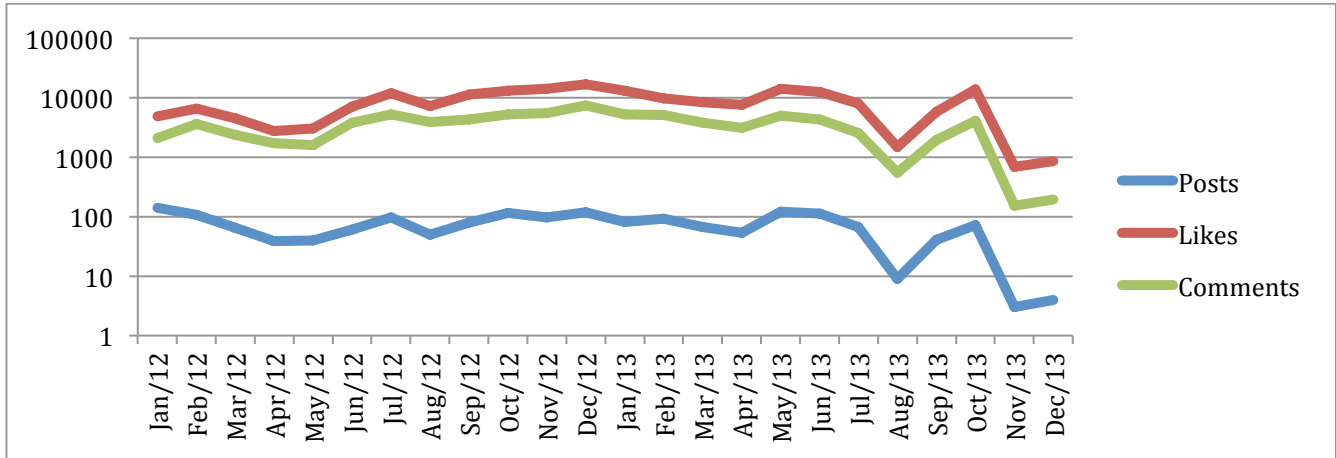


Figure 6.5: The monthly development of Facebook engagement indicators of the posts made by the page administrators of the MRTD Facebook page.

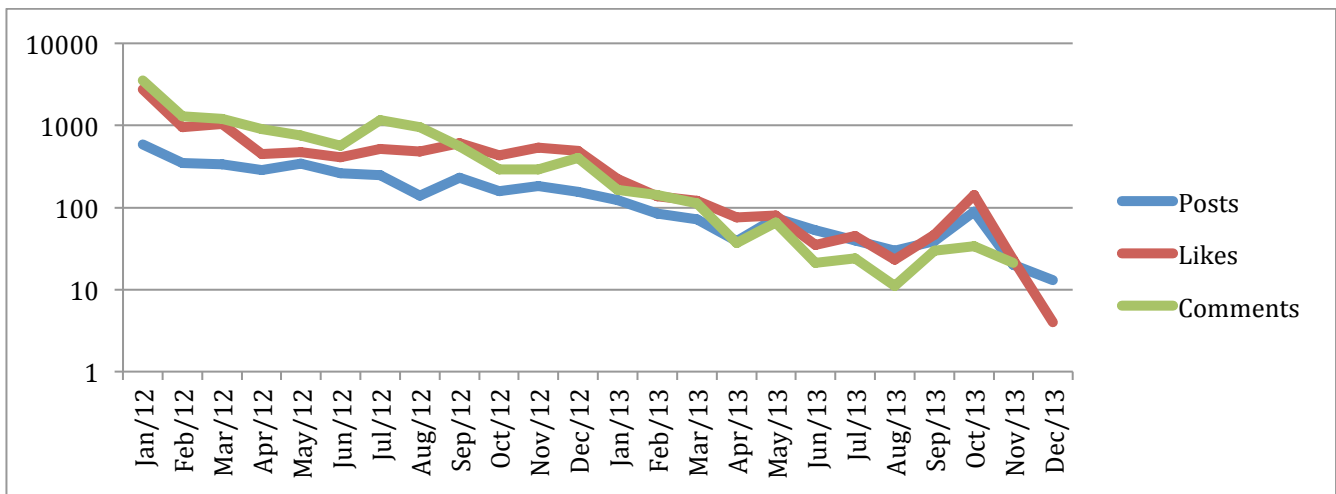


Figure 6.6: The monthly development of Facebook engagement indicators of the posts made by the page users of the MRTD Facebook page.

The second peak in December 2012 did not correspond to any campaign-related event. Nevertheless, while analyzing the content that attracted the most likes and comments, I found that the two most-liked posts were: 1) admiration for the behavior of a husband who shaved his hair in solidarity with his wife who was undergoing chemotherapy because of cancer and 2) a link to a story of a Saudi man who proposed to marry his colleague in a supermarket. The third peak in May 2013 corresponded with the one-year anniversary of the driving campaign. Finally, the fourth peak in

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October 2013 coincided with the renewed calls to re-activate the campaigning efforts again on the 26 October, which was declared and promoted as the day to drive in 2013.

6.2 Examination of the Posts

Regarding the sources of the posts, in the case of the SWTD page, it emerged that out a total of 449 posts published by the page administrator(s); such posts comprised 22% of the overall sample. Page users posted 1,620 posts, which constituted 78% of all posts. Concerning the MRTD page, a total of 1,736 posts were published by the page administrator(s), which comprised 30.5% of the overall sample. Page users posted 3,951 posts constituting 69.5% of all posts.

Facebook's default built-in classification of post types (links, status, updates, photos, videos and events) made possible further in-depth examination of the administrators' posts and users' reactions. Thus, when comparing the five types of posts used on the FB campaign page, I find a number of significant differences, pointing towards the idea that they indeed played different roles on the pages.

Types of posts	SWTD			MRTD		
	% of posts types	Mean likes (SD)	Mean comments (SD)	% of posts types	Mean likes (SD)	Mean comments (SD)
Links	33	63.4 (105.1)	10.5 (14.1)	7.9	57.5 (42.2)	29.1 (35.1)
Status updates	7	81.5 (85.3)	13 (21.2)	20	144.5 (80.9)	36.9 (33.6)
Photos	44	359.5 (1948.2)	32.3 (75.7)	59	123.4 (103.3)	56.5 (55.8)
Videos	14	45.4 (36.9)	5 (5.5)	13	66.1 (38)	36 (46.7)
Events	2	39.7 (34)	4.4 (5)	0.1	64.5 (71.4)	62.5 (88.3)
Total (N)	100 (449)	139 (1305.4)	19.2 (52.6)	100 (1,736)	115 (93.4)	47.8 (50.6)

Table 6.1: Overview of the different post types made by page administrators and their engagement indicators

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Table 6.1 summarizes the posting activity and the use of different post types over time. We can clearly observe that the posts made by SWTD page administrators published over the examined period received on average 139 likes, with a high standard deviation (SD) value of (1305.4) which is almost ten times greater than the mean and mainly caused by high SD value of the photos category that is 1948.2 and 19.2 comments on average with a 52.6 value of SD. The posts in the MRTD Facebook page received a total of 115 likes and 93.4 SD value and 47.8 comments with 50.6 SD value on average. Here, we can notice the heavy usage of photos. They comprised 44% of the overall composition of posts types in the case of the SWTD page, where they received 359.5 likes and 32.3 comments on average. Photos played a similar role on the MRTD page, in which photos comprised 59% of the overall composition of posts types and received 123.4 likes and 56.5 comments on average.

This finding supports similar research that concluded the frequent usage of visual hooks (photos or videos) is often emotionally rousing and thus particularly appealing to individuals (Cowart, Saunders & Blackstone, 2016). Consequently, the majority of the posts that contained photos provided material evidence of the success of the campaign. Photos often showed women responding to the calls of the campaign either by driving in the streets or visualizing instances of transnational solidarity from women around the globe.

The SWTD Facebook page widely used links. Direct links connected users to articles citing and reporting the activities of the campaign in various news outlets such as english.alarabiya.net or arabnews.com (see Table 6.2). Other links showed videos of Saudi women driving in defiance of the ban. This tactic, using content produced by some type of traditional media, comprised 33% of the sample and received 63.4 likes and 10.5 comments on average with 105.1 and 14.1 SD values, respectively. Links were used much less on the MRTD page. They only comprised 8% of the overall sample and received 57.5 likes and 29.1 comments on average with 42.2 and 33.6 SD values, respectively.

Link domains	Frequency (N)
youtube.com	24
english.alarabiya.net	10
arabnews.com	7
gulfnews.com	6
facebook.com	6

Table 6.2: The top 5 most frequently used link domains in the SWTD Facebook page

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Link domains	Frequency (N)
youtube.com	55
alriyadh.com	14
ksa.daralhayat.com	12
facebook.com	8
okaz.com.sa	6

Table 6.3: The top 5 most frequently used link domains in MRTD Facebook page

Videos accounted for respectively 14% and 13% of the sample in the SWTD and MRTD Facebook pages. They included recorded footage of women who responded to the calls of the campaign by driving in the streets of Saudi Arabia. Status updates, which are often short comments, updates about the campaign or propositions inviting users to react, comprised 7% of the overall sample in the SWTD page. MRTD used status updates more often and they constituted 20% of the collected sample. Administrators often used this post type to express themselves and engage in a dialogue with the page users, either by posting calls for action or asking for users' opinions and feedback. Finally, the category of events was the least used in both cases. It constituted respectively 2% and just 0.1% of the overall content of the two FB pages. Nevertheless, I was cautious against adopting fixed interpretations of content types. These observations need to be complemented by the qualitative assessment of the items that follows.

6.3 Conducting Content Analysis on Facebook

Further in-depth qualitative analysis of the types of Facebook posts was undertaken. The applied method is a systematic, rule-guided technique for examining information and content in written or symbolic materials (Mayring, 2004). This method is used when some degree of interpretation is required to understand the meaning of data. Henceforth, content analysis can be applied to a wide range of materials: documents, websites and entries on social media sites, other textual materials, etc.

The strength of this method lies in the fact that it generates observations that are valid, rigorous and replicable (Sampert & Trimble, 2010) because it involves systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories (Wright, 1986). Hence, given the type and amount of material available on Facebook, content analysis can provide an effective way to describe and summarize it because it allows organizing the volatile information stream in a meaningful way and making inferences about the discursive practices (Neuendorf, 2002).

As stated earlier, the collection of the data was conducted over a period of two years and six months, starting from the launch of the SWTD Facebook page and ending with the second round of campaigning that continued until the end of 2013. This length of time enables a longitudinal overview

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that systematically examines how the page administrators tried to direct general communication on the page by advancing particular ideas, proposals and topics. The overview also reveals how these examined Facebook pages were used to advocate for the driving campaign and possibly disseminate other women's related or feminist ideas.

The content of social media pages (Facebook in this instance) was the unit of analysis, while the individual posts by the administrators of the page were the coding units (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). In sum, a total of 449 posts published by the page administrators from the SWTD FB page and 1,736 posts from the MRTD page were gathered via Netvizz v1.44 and were read several times before being coded. Following that, I used a manual, inductive open coding approach based on the analysis of posts' usage types (intents) and content (Mayring, 2000).

First, I identified major themes that emerged from the intents and content of the sample I had. These themes were then coded into one or more categories according to a coding scheme. Posts that did not fit the codes formed new categories and some earlier categories were also merged and refined. This approach is in line with the classification scheme developed by Qu, Wu and Wang (2009), as well as Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) recommendations for iterative coding. It is worth mentioning that the posts made by page users were not qualitatively analyzed because I believe that the research questions are best answered by analyzing the posts made by page administrators. Feasibility was also an issue.

The analysis revealed four relevant categories of posts explained by the other 14 subcategories and their traits. Hence, this process identified the following four broader categories of posts: information-related, mobilization-related, feminist-related and emotional-related and user engagement. The fifth category of tweets (Others) was also identified but omitted in the analysis as it included posts not fitting in the other categories such as general articles that talk about Alzheimer's disease, climate change and anti-Bashar Al Assad posts. The general classification scheme for Facebook posts can be found in Appendix D.

6.4 The Main Findings of the Qualitative Content Analysis

The results of the content analysis (Table 6.4) display the detailed breakdown of the number of FB posts per post general category, sub-category and their percentage. We can see from the table that in both the SWTD and MRTD Facebook pages, feminist-related posts constituted the majority of the overall sample as they accounted for 52.3% and 66.1% respectively. After feminist-related posts, the next most common on the SWTD Facebook page were action-related posts (19.5%). The second-highest number of Arabic-speaking MRTD Facebook posts were information-related posts (21.7%). Information-related posts were the third most active category for the SWTD page (16.4%), followed by

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emotional-related and user engagement content (7.7%) and other (3.7%). Action-related posts came in third place in the MRTD Facebook page (6.5%), while the emotional-related and user engagement category represented 3.6% of the sample followed by other (1.9%).

Both pages converged on the issue of providing feminist-related content, either by sharing general feminist-related news or articles, featuring news that highlights Saudi women's achievements, providing empowering and motivational content and offering feminist critique. Nevertheless, the content in the case of the SWTD page was more action-oriented in comparison with the MRTD page, which was more focused on the ideational aspect of the campaign and the broader issues of women's rights in the Saudi context in general. As with regards to the time dimension, the number of posts made page administration in the case of the SWTD page increased over time, starting from 29 posts in 2011, 198 in 2012 and reaching 222 posts in 2013. The increase suggests an active involvement and investment in the campaigning efforts over time. There wasn't a clear-cut change in the MRTD case, as the number of posts made by page administrators went from 1010 posts in 2012 to 726 in 2013. It is worth mentioning that no clear trend has been detected in terms of the variance of posts types over time.

Category	SWTD	MRTD
	(%)	(%)
<u>A- Information-related</u>	<u>16.4</u>	<u>21.7</u>
1- Providing/sharing campaign-related news or information	10.9	8.5
2- Sharing of news articles on local issues	3.7	12.9
3- Sharing of news articles on international issues	1.7	0.2
<u>B- Mobilization -related</u>	<u>19.5</u>	<u>6.5</u>
1- On-ground Mobilization	4.6	5.0
2- Online action	4.8	1.4
3- Transnational solidarity and support	10.0	0.0
<u>C- Feminist-related</u>	<u>52.3</u>	<u>66.1</u>
1- Sharing general feminist-related news or articles	27.8	28.1
2- Saudi women's achievements	11.8	2.7

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3- Empowerment and motivation	4.8	5.2
4- Feminist critical posts	7.7	30.1
<u>D- Emotional-related and user engagement</u>	<u>7.7</u>	<u>3.6</u>
1- Expressing gratitude	1.3	0.5
2- Expressing solidarity	1.1	0.2
3- Occasional greetings	4.8	0.7
4- General quotes	0.4	2.0
E Other	3.7	1.9
Total posts	100.0 (449)	100.0 (1,736)

Table 6.4: The breakdown of Facebook posts per the identified categories

The results from content analysis suggest that both Facebook pages have played an informational role through broadly distributing and circulating information. The posts which were concerned with disseminating campaign-related news and information reached 10.9% and 8.5% respectively. They included circulating articles that reported the individual cases of women driving on the roads in defiance of the ban, the arrest of women who were caught driving, statements by government officials and commentary pieces and opinion articles that talk about the driving issue. This shows us that Facebook has been used instrumentally as a low-cost channel for the circulation of information and sharing real-life updates about the campaign (Earl & Kimport, 2011).

The posts that shared other local news articles comprised 3.7% and 12.9% respectively and included the sharing of articles that referred to general topics that are related to the Saudi local context. These included news about the government's social assistance schemes and the release of political prisoners as well as editorials and commentary pieces that stress the importance of maintaining national unity and adopting an anti-sectarian perspective. The sharing of other international news articles was less prominent in both cases as well (1.7% and 0.2%), but included news articles about the United Arab Emirates allowing women to receive pilot licenses and freedom of the press worldwide and Tunisian youth resistance of the Islamist Government (Enahdah Party).

Communication on Facebook may also catalyze mobilization, which was clear in the posts that were under the mobilization-related category as they were either (1) calling for on-ground mobilization through asking Saudi women to start driving in the streets in challenge of the ban; (2) calling for online action by urging the users to use the web for action through spreading the message, sharing the link to the page, or sending collective e-mails to the members of the Shura' consultation' council in Saudi Arabia; (3) showing acts of transnational solidarity and support through the circulation of support

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messages and organizing international marches near the Saudi embassy in many countries around the globe. Examples are provided below:

We are creating a petition to be sent to international organizations and media. The Saudi Government did sign on the CEDAW agreement, yet didn't make any efforts to stop the violence and discrimination against Saudi Women! We hope they will be penalized. We just need your suggestions now and signatures later. Thanks. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013)

Civil disobedience or social activism or whatever you call it, WE DID IT. Women of all ages went out and drove their cars on October 26th. 15 violation tickets were given to some women. We appreciate your help and support. Thanks to our supporters around the world. And the fight is still on... For our daughters and the new generation... <3. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013)

While analyzing the content of the posts which called for on-ground mobilization in the Arabic-speaking MRTD page, we observed types of on-ground action that were not talked about in the SWTD page, such as the calls to meet the Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Sheikh, the top-level religious cleric of the Kingdom, to explain the situation to him from the perspective of women. The activists behind the MRTD Facebook page also filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of the Interior (Traffic Department) demanding the issuance of a driver's license to women, announcing the willingness of the campaign to hire a lawyer (without fees) on behalf of women who want to file a suit against the Traffic Department for not granting them driver's licenses.

Within the MRTD page, the types of actions were elaborated and discussed in greater detail. Furthermore, the performed online activities ranged from issuing organized statements under the name of the campaign to requesting the followers to have a unified banner of the cause on their social media profiles. This greater detail can be exemplified in the extracts below:

We renew the call for women and men to take the lead and urge the authorities to accommodate the campaign's demands in one of these ways: Women can go ahead and start driving in the case of their possession of international driving license' and document their actions on 17 June 2012; men can drive while accompanying their wives, sisters, mothers or daughter and documenting this action in support of women's right to drive on June 17, 2012. Even if you can't drive, please send us a picture of you behind the wheel with any message in support of Saudi women's right to drive. Also, if you are a man who supports the right of Saudi women to drive, you can show your support by sending a video or picture with an encouraging message or even teaching your female relatives how to drive. Moreover, Facebook and Twitter users can show their support for our campaign

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by adding this logo (She has the right to drive) on your photo on these media platforms <http://twibbon.com/join/Women2drive-7>. (My Right to Dignity, 2012)

Traffic Police Lawsuit update: We just got the news that three Saudi women in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia (Nassema and Afrah al-Sadah and Enaam Alasfour) have applied today for driver's license. Mr. Mofarih Ali Alzahrani, the director of the traffic police officer was very understanding and welcoming. But their applications were rejected. We again emphasize that there is no written law anywhere that forbids women from applying for a driver's license. These three women have sent objection letters to the General Directorate of Traffic in Riyadh, but they were told to wait for an official reply within 90 days. If by then they haven't gotten a reply, they can file a lawsuit against the General Directorate of Traffic in the Administration Court. My Right to Dignity (the campaign) will provide free legal consultation to any woman who wants to file a lawsuit against the General Directorate of Traffic. (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

Notably, the English-speaking SWTD Facebook page focused on the transnational aspect of the campaign, encouraging international supporters and empathizers to perform symbolic acts of solidarity like contacting Saudi diplomats or honking near the Saudi embassies and consulates in their respective countries. The following examples show SWTD's more transnational focus:

Dear friends, now we are close to June 17th. Could you please send collective e-mails to the Saudi embassy, with this headline "Let Women Drive in Saudi Arabia" so we can get their attention? You can find all of the e-mails in the link below. Thank you. <http://embassy.goabroad.com/embassies-of/saudi-arabia>. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2012)

Just in case if you do not get our Honk for Saudi Women Campaign. We will appreciate any act of support to us, like in this video when Maria from Mission Free Iran org. honked for us in front of the Saudi embassy in Washington DC to show the Saudi officials that the world is waiting. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2012)

Thus, through the formation of transnational ties and the ability to promote offline events, the "Saudi Women To Drive" page demonstrates the potential online spaces offer for the creation of feminist alliances with women all over the world. These attempts to attain international support are potentially being pursued for the sake of giving the campaign external legitimacy and acknowledgment and for the sake of disseminating its claims and practices beyond the local scope. Moreover, the use of the page to organize offline events and actions contributes to the development of the grassroots movement and shows that offline action is a critical part of the collective's movement. These instances

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clearly show that Facebook is pragmatically used to create new dimensions and opportunities for action. On the contrary, the transnational aspect was missing in the MRTD Facebook page, which can possibly be explained by the fact that it was in Arabic and mainly directed to the domestic audience in particular.

By the same token, the posts which were under the emotional-related and user engagement broader category carried expressive and emotive evaluations of the actors and events. They were mainly devoted to (1) expressing gratitude by thanking the supporters for the campaign for their enthusiasm and dedication; (2) expressing solidarity and evoking a ‘we-feeling’ through the posts that commended the dedication of the campaign’s supporters; (3) posting greetings during special occasions and events; (4) sharing general quotations from a text or a well-known figure, usually with acknowledgment of the source. The following extracts are examples of emotional-related and user engagement category:

Good morning, friends. Much love and appreciation from your sisters in Saudi Arabia <3.
(Saudi Women To Drive, 2012)

A year ago, we made these English pages to support Manal Alsharif when she was detained and spread her story internationally. And to defend our cause. Thank you, everyone, for your support and the fight is still on. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2012)

These emotive posts are not surprising and go in line with the results of some of the studies which concluded social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have a strong emotional aspect; “digital, among other media, sustain effective feedback loops that generate and reproduce effective patterns of relating to others” while bolstering the level of emotional solidarity (Papacharissi, 2014, p. 23). Hence, reaching out to the supporters of the campaign represents an attempt to solidify internal cohesion. Social media and emotions nexus is particularly important in the case of grassroots campaigns. The tendency to target the Western audience was also witnessed through the inclusion of the names of world-renowned international figures or global events as references:

Happy birthday Marie Curie, the first female to win a Nobel Prize. November 7th, 1867. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2011)

9/11 a day to remember. RIP. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2012)

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These posts point to the administrators' attempts within the English-speaking SWTD to connect to and build bridges with the international audience through the use of references that it can easily identify and relate to. The feminist-related posts, on the other hand, were mainly concerned with (1) posting and disseminating general feminist-related news or articles that draw attention to the ubiquity of sexism, misogyny and violence against women; (2) covering news that relates to Saudi women's achievements in specific; (3) posting status messages that carry empowerment and motivational content; (4) providing critical opinions or evaluation of certain economic, political and ideological aspects of society from a feminist perspective. Examples of posts that embody these characteristics are shown below:

Saudi Arabia has one of the lowest female participation rates in the workforce in the region. A recent World Bank report has found this. <http://www.arabnews.com/news/445991>. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013)

After three years of petitioning the Ministry of Justice, Arwa Al-Hujaili (25 years old) has finally received her registration to practice as a trainee lawyer, she became the first woman to do so. "People tell me I'm a pioneer, and I feel I need to live up to what they expect of me," says Al-Hujaili. "There is a great sense of responsibility. From now on, people will look at everything I do." <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/09/business/saudi-arabia-first-female-lawyer/index.html>. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013)

A large majority of the posts belonging to this category contained links to articles or videos relating to topics of concern for women and feminists from news sources, feminist publications or personal blogs from all over the world. The topics of these posts were diverse, including women's political representation, their participation in the labor force, continued inequalities experienced by women and domestic violence. Three major themes emerged while analyzing the feminist critical posts category, which was mainly concerned with providing critical opinions or emergent issues from a feminist perspective. I found that the criticism was mainly devoted to religious, political and social targets. Correspondingly, posts that were directed towards regime used a highly charged critical tone towards some of the state officials, manifested in the following posts:

I'm a Saudi girl, and I say this country is a big joke. The regime is distracting people with women's and religious issues so they can steal as much as they want from the wealth of the country. We are just scapegoats. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2012)

Let me introduce you to our oppressors. The former minister of interior Prince Naif Bin Abdulaziz and his son Prince Mohammed Bin Naif, the current minister of interior [picture of

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them was included in the post]. They've been arresting, torturing and jailing more than 30,000 people in Saudi Arabia for years without trials! If you ever saw the little criminal in your country, please spit and throw eggs on him. May he follow his dad to hell soon. Amen (Saudi Women To Drive, 2012)

To our rulers, we are tired of hearing mere justifications. Women need a fair political decision from you and not from society. You are the ones who are in charge, and it is not right to blame it on society. We are witnessing great division between the Islamists and the liberals... Sunni and Shiite... the Northerners... the Easterners... the Central and the Westerners! Women in Saudi Arabia have become like a ball that is being thrown between those who hold different ideologies. We refuse to be a tool in your hands. We got tired of hearing the same rhetoric in every international speech. We want a real solution inside the country, not only improve our image to the international community. (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

As shown above, we can see page administrators' efforts to invoke a sense of "we are the people" and "we are the scapegoats." They set up "the people" versus "the regime" and "oppressors," placing their positions at opposite ends of the spectrum. Moreover, we can observe the diversity of the topics on the FB page, as these are no longer limited to the driving issues; they extend to human rights violations and political oppression. The political posts also contained calls for the installation of modern mechanisms that take people's opinions into consideration and guarantee a system of checks and balances, as displayed in the following posts:

In case the government does not lift the ban on driving while not providing justifications for the continuation of the ban, we demand that the government provide modern mechanisms in which members of society can express their opinions about it, through ballot boxes and a public referendum supervised by judicial and governmental bodies, and independent personalities recognized for their credibility and integrity. (My Right To Dignity, 2013)

When decision-makers state that women's driving is left to the wish of society, do these decision-makers wonder how individuals in society would express their desires? If elections are forbidden, while demonstrations are out of the question, and where online action and hashtags are considered to be heresy—how can we then understand what society truly desires? Is there an answer to this from those who claim that driving is up to society to decide? (My Right To Dignity, 2013)

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As far as the feminist posts that contained a religiously-oriented critique are concerned, page administrators in the English-speaking SWTD Facebook page adopted a critical stance towards the religious establishment who projected patriarchal attitudes towards women's emancipation, the feminist critique towards religious authority is reflected in the extracts below:

This is [referring to the picture of] Abdul Aziz al al-Shaikh, the current Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia [which is equivalent to the position of the Pope in our country]. This hypocritical man strongly opposed the presence of women in the Shura Consultive Council and then supported it when the king appointed 30 women in the Council!! He believes that he can solve all of our problems with some religious Fatwas! What do you want to say to him? (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013)

Yesterday around 50 religious men have gathered by King Abdullah palace in Riyadh to protest the appointing of women in Shoura council. What do you want to say to those cowards? (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013)



Figure 6.7: Feminist critique of religious extremism (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013).

Mohammed Al Arifi is a Saudi preacher. He hates women, and he doesn't like seeing women working in public, to appear on TV or mix with men; he wants us all covered up. This misogynistic preacher is enjoying his life, traveling everywhere freely while we, Saudi women can't do the same. He's in London now enjoying his summer break after he asked the Muslim

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youth to go and fight (Jihad) in Syria!! Why didn't he go and fight as well!! Please, England, kick him out. He is too sick to be in a free country. This video shows him teaching some Saudi youth how to beat their wives!! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOj9_X8lrC4. (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013)

We can observe the strong language that is used against several religious figures. Moreover, the vocabulary is clearly directed to the Western audience, exemplified by the fact that the position of the 'Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia' has been translated to a Western equivalent, the "Pope". Posts also use certain expressions such as "misogynistic preacher" and call on London to expel the Saudi preacher Mohammed Al Arifi because he should not be allowed in a "free country". The appeal to a Western audience reflects the fact that the Western-based audience constitutes a larger percentage of the overall audience of the page as reflected in Figure 6.8, retrieved on July 12, 2017. The largest proportion of page followers are based in the United States (24%), followed by Saudi Arabia (14%), the United Kingdom (9%) and Germany (6%). All other countries that only constituted 1% of the sample were aggregated in the "other countries" category.

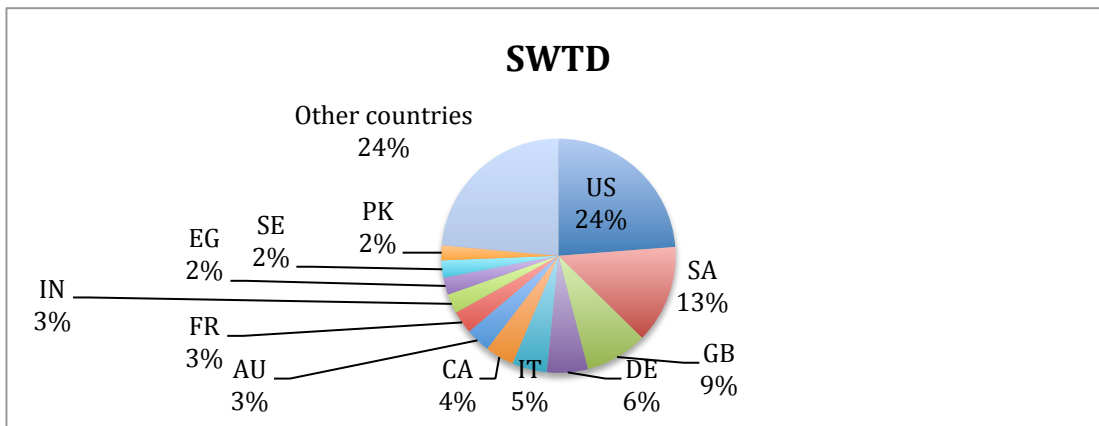


Figure 6.8: Breakdown of page followers per country

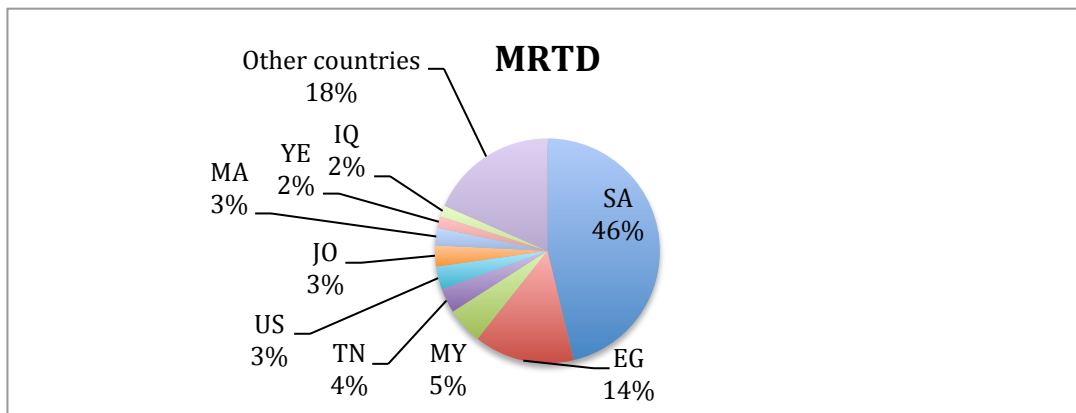


Figure 6.9: Breakdown of page followers per country

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In contrast, of 17,437 total followers of the MRTD Facebook page, the domestic Saudis constituted the largest percentage (46%), followed by Egyptians (14%) and Malaysians (5%), according to page statistics which from 19 September 2017 (refer to Figure 6.9) which was retrieved on August 25, 2017. Despite the largely Saudi audience, the same tendency of criticizing religious extremism was witnessed in the Arabic-speaking MRTD Facebook page:

After the religious cleric who claimed that driving harms women's ovaries, here comes the religious cleric Sheikh Alareifi stating why a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man due to the composition of the brain. (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

Those who follow how the "Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice" (which is the morality police in Saudi Arabia) treats women would think that their mission is to suffocate them with religion. And then people wonder about the spread of atheism! (My Right To Dignity, 2013)

Or the posting of this caricature with the caption, "This is how do extremists see women."



Figure 6.10: Feminist critique of religious extremism (My Right To Dignity, 2012).

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Finally, the majority of feminist posts that carried social commentary and critique were concerned with criticizing the existing social norms that are perceived to be no longer relevant:

Imagine if you bought a new laptop and then you installed Windows 95 on it. This is exactly what customs and traditions are doing. (My Right To Dignity, 2013)

Our society sees the slip of females as crimes, while dismissing the mistakes committed by males although God perceives guilt in the same way. We are one hell of a discriminatory society. That's scary. (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

6.5 Examining the Embedded Discursive Construction of Feminism

Because the majority of posts in both pages were classified as feminist-related, this section is mainly concerned with shedding some light on the ways feminism has been discursively constructed within these Facebook pages. As it became clear that the feminist centered discourses that surfaced with the “Women to Drive” campaign was being linked to a wider set of feminist claims that do not end with women’s mobility rights.

Until recently, a significant part of how feminism is understood by the public and processed by individuals is based on the way it is framed in media and mass communications. Media often represents and echoes the existing ideology and power that is embedded in social reality. Thus, traditionally, the gatekeepers who discuss feminism through media frame the subject however they deem beneficial to them by picking and choosing the way it is portrayed. Their portrayal is then consumed and understood by an audience.

Feminism as a theoretical perspective and practice that criticizes gender inequalities and aims at women’s empowerment has struggled to find footing within the Saudi society. It has been associated with negative anti-religious and neo-colonial connotations. Consequently, feminism was widely viewed as a Western phenomenon, deemed as a threat to society and perceived as loosening morals and not necessarily inclusive of family values, gender complementarity and community needs. Furthermore, the issue of whether Islam is compatible with feminism has been a subject of debate among women activists and scholars for a long time. The majority of the scholarly writings about feminism in this particular context tend to claim an inherent tension between Islam and feminism and often refer to the two as being ideologically incompatible.

An examination of the empirical materials centered around the representations and manifestations of feminism on the relevant Facebook pages will examine the multifaceted

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understanding of feminism and investigate the potential role that could be played by these platforms in the discursive production of feminist discourses that are connected to the driving campaign. Hence, I am particularly interested in providing a nuanced and detailed analysis of the different ways that feminists engage in the reclamation and re-appropriation of discourses concerning the expressions of feminism and the discursive references that they drew on to construct their own version of feminism.

6.5.1 The Emergence of Secular Feminist Discourse within the WTD Facebook Page

Given its mutability, secular feminist thought in and outside Muslim communities has been comprised of a cluster of discursive strands, including secular nationalist as well as the more generic Universalist human rights and the liberal strand of feminism, though there is often an overlap among them as well.

A clear manifestation of universalist human rights feminism can be observed in the description page of the SWTD campaign: “dedicated to the citizens of the world who support women’s freedom in Saudi Arabia, starting by allowing them to drive.” This Universalist discourse and display of inclusivity is the same approach used by secular feminists. It moves away from using religion as a framework to define gender roles, while basing the rationale for women’s rights on Universalist and human rights discourses that seek to enable and empower the individual. Thus, women’s rights and human rights presented as best promoted and protected in an environment of secular thought and secular institutions, including a state that defends the rights of all its citizens.



Figure 6.11: Manifestations of secular discourses (Saudi Women To Drive, 2012)

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Also, the emphasis on secular thought and the allocation of religious authority to the state and its institutions of law was stressed through the posting of direct quotes by the founder of the modern Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who governed Turkey by strictly secular principles. The activist behind this Facebook page faced criticism for defending her choice to quote him. She defended herself saying, “There is a crucial need for such as a secular extremist in Saudi Arabia, as there is no time for a slow change.”

The Page administrators also wove a humanitarian discourse into their feminist articulation, calling for equality and emancipation, as typical of secular feminists. They also called for the enjoyment of justice by all, naming women among the “all.” Thus, the framing of demands around “rights” and the reliance on universal secular discourses for gender equality reveal a liberal ontology that reproduces an approach to feminism assuming an individualistic premise. Liberal individualism is a key part of the secular metanarrative that informs feminist scholarship today.

They also announced their support for the LGBT community, exemplified by their pro-marriage-equality stance. However, they were careful in the comment section that marriage equality is not directly related to women’s issues in Saudi Arabia, nor in the Arab World. Instead, they stressed that equality is a basic principle that should be fully integrated and respected in the transnational realm; this language attempts to pass the stable (and binary) gender definition through demonstrating transnational solidarity and facilitating conversations about homosexuality and marriage equality that are often absent from discussions due to the lack of support for LGBT issues. This topic remains a taboo that is rarely featured and discussed in the Saudi public sphere.



Figure 6.12: Supporting LGBT rights (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013)

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In light of this taboo, such a particular notion of inclusiveness seems to be based on a desire to accommodate women of different statuses, ethnic-racial backgrounds and socio-economic positions, which appears to be motivated by the concept of intersectionality. Intersectional thought arose as a direct response to the exclusionary nature of much of mainstream feminism. It is built on the idea that women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity due to their race, class and ethnicity. Thus, cultural patterns of oppression are, in fact, not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. In other words, an intersectional approach to one's identity rejects the notion that gender is the primary criterion upon which feminist approaches should be based. It instead strives to achieve an understanding of how the myriad differences in women's lives and facets of one's identity intersect (rather than accumulate) to construct their social positioning(s).

Some attempts at demonstrating intersectional ties of feminist solidarity and enabling new kinds of intersectional conversations were apparent on the English-speaking page. For example, posts called for the protection of rights of domestic workers in the Arab Gulf and Lebanon and abolishing discriminatory gender laws in Jordan (Figg. 6.13 and 6.14).



Figure 6.13: Manifestations of intersectional discourses (Saudi Women To Drive, 2013)

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Figure 6.14: Manifestations of intersectional discourses (Saudi Women To Drive, 2012).

What emerged from analyzing the content of the English-speaking page is the constant preoccupation of the Western secular model (in all its complexities and contradictions) as the primary referent, as well as the uncritical assumption of its direct applicability and strict correspondence to the context. Hence, secular feminism was treated as if it holds positional superiority towards the others and was depicted as being modern and progressive, as opposed to “other” models perceived as backward and traditional. The result reinforces the same theoretical assumptions about secular feminism which have also been called out as Western-centric for associating the decrease of religiosity to the rise of modernity and assuming that such transition had universal validity (Casanova, 2009). Overall, these discourses dismiss ideas of “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt, 2000) and “multiple secularities” (Burchardt & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2013) as their paradigm assumes there is an immanent essence of female oppression within Islam; Muslim countries are presented as strong patriarchates characterized by gender inequality, which is seen as a foundational pillar of Islam in direct opposition to feminism and gender equality.

However, despite the reliance of this page on the concept of intersectionality, religion has received relatively little attention within the intersectionality framework as an axis of difference and was never conceptualized as a positionality but was disregarded otherwise. This points out to the fact that despite the recent wave of scholarship on intersectionality, feminist research has yet to adequately

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engage with the role of religion within discussions of intersectionality, other than to occasionally list religion as one in a list of relevant differences among the other collection of social divisions (gender, race, class) that are typically taken into account. This means that when movements such as Islamic feminism emerge, the response has been to either label them as further proof of false consciousness, or to not engage with them at all. The key tension remains the unwillingness to engage with religious women on their own terms, instead of the a priori assumptions of religious patriarchy that rely on the homogenization of religions.

This also echoes similar conclusions by feminist scholars in which Saba Mahmood for example, has observed that although there have been “serious attempts at integrating issues of sexual, racial, class and national difference within feminist theory, questions regarding religious difference have remained relatively unexplored”, so the religious/secular divide remains to be rarely integrated into the collection of social divisions (gender, race, class) that are typically taken into account (Mahmood, 2005, p.1). Thus, there is the risk that intersectional approaches could still reproduce the assumptions present in much of mainstream feminism.

6.5.2 The Manifestations of Islamic-reformist Stance of Feminism in the MRTD Facebook Page

In contrast, the page administrators on the Arabic-speaking page were more attentive to the tensions and changing meanings of “the secular” and “the religious” binary in terms of their frames of reference and the ways they intersect in the different modes of feminism. Thus, they contrasted the religious/secular divide exemplified by the open, inclusive nature that often typifies secular feminism with the failure of religious frameworks to eradicate injustices against women and safeguard their rights, as exemplified below:

The advocates of women’s rights are being classified as “secularists or liberals”, this implies that religion and society have failed women and the “secularists” have come to salvage them. (Women To Drive, 2013)

The Arabic-speaking page also had a relatively Islamic-reformist stance of feminism; it posed some criticism towards certain practices in Islam while attempting to reform the religious discourse about gender equality. The concept of women’s rights become rooted in discourses of religious righteousness. In this framework, Islam and interpretations of it become the center points for concentration. The MRTD approach constitutes a challenge to the monopoly over the divine held by the Saudi government and religious clerics. For instance, we can clearly observe from the extracts below the page administrators’ attempts to criticize several practices that are normally justified by religion as these practices violate the principles of fair treatment justice. These practices include

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inheritance laws in which men inherit more than women, despite the fact that the unequal division of inheritance has now been superseded by the contribution of women to economic activities and household incomes; the male guardianship system; the segregation of work duties by gender; and men's right to polygamy:

Don't tell me this is fair
that you inherit more than me
that you act as my guardian
that you are entitled to what I don't get
Not because of your educational qualifications... or your wisdom
but because I was destined to be born as a female. (My Right To Dignity, 2013)

What is a virtue and what does it mean? What are morals that give the man the right to marry more than one wife publicly? I never expected to find an advertisement on my phone that promotes temporary marriages... this sort of practice is similar to human trafficking. I don't want to hear anyone who speaks proudly about the fake virtues of the East and the sins of the West. (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

The most discriminatory law against women in Saudi Arabia is depriving them of making their own decisions, which eventually distorts their view about themselves so they view themselves as inadequate. The guardianship system is being exploited to treat women badly. (My Right To Dignity, 2013)

As we can see above, the male guardianship system, for instance, was criticized for facilitating abuse and misconduct against women. With this in mind, we can observe the efforts made by the page administrators to reconstruct and unpack the meaning of male guardianship. To them, it does not mean or translate to the absolute obedience from women for male's authority, but the decision making should be borne by those who are up for it either "men or women", or together according to the circumstances. It was evident throughout the Facebook page that women were navigating and negotiating issues of feminism and religiosity, criticizing and demanding a different reading of Islam that articulates new feminism in a modernist voice. Such a reading would transform the religious discourse on women. Page administrators also call for new theological interpretations of Islamic texts in order to challenge laws and policies that are based on orthodox, literalist, or misogynist interpretations. They push to deconstruct Sharia-related rules in a women-friendly, egalitarian fashion regarding issues such as marriage, polygamy, personal status law and inheritance. Hence, this call for the re-interpretation of religious texts is an exercise of power and a challenge to traditional male interpretations, traditionally

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considered the domains of men that have dominated for centuries. The re-interpretation would create a version of Islam that is compatible with feminism.

The activists behind the MRTD Facebook page, made a strong statement about the need for a modern version of Islam that does not pose restrictions on women. It also advocated that Islam should be reformed by each generation in order to be relevant to the lives of Muslims, navigating the issue of Islam and modernity. Examples of that can be seen below:

We need to transform the religious discourse on women to a discourse that makes them full of confidence and pride. Why do they insist on portraying their presence and role in the public sphere as being sinful? (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

Men always remember the Quranic verse which says that “Men are in charge of women”, and forget to mention the verse which states that “And they [women] have rights similar [to those of their husbands].” (My Right To Dignity, 2013)

Discrimination against women has reached a new low, in which religious clerics have started discriminating against them even in the afterlife. As there is a dispute among many religious clerks including ibn Taymiyyah, ibn Kathir regarding whether God sees women in paradise as he sees men there. (My Right To Dignity, 2013)

There have been also some attempts to expose some of the commonly circulating female-hostile hadiths (sayings and deeds attributed to the Prophet Muhammad) as spurious by showing their historical contradictions within hadith literature and how they were framed through patriarchal societal lenses. By doing so, a case was made for the necessity of reforming certain patriarchal claims and practices that were insinuated into Islam and transforming what has passed as Islam through a realignment with the claimed Quranic message of gender equality and social justice.

Correspondingly, it emerged that the administrators believe that what appears to be religiously ordained is in fact not and should be debunked. The discriminated plight of women has its roots in the male-dominated culture prevailing in these societies, not in Islam. Page administrators are attempting to reconstruct the “authentic” message of Islam in order to liberate it from its distorted male elitist (mis)interpretations and instrumentalizations, which can be noted in the next examples:

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Is there anything in our religion that states that women are the root of all evil and sins? Or that women are blindly following their emotions and desires without using their minds or morals? Please help me to figure this out. This is the source of this religious Fatwa which was found in the website of the religious scholar Saleh al-Fawzan <http://www.alfawzan.af.org.sa/node/10263>. Let's dismantle this! (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

“Every woman who dies while her husband is satisfied with her behavior... enters heaven.” This is a weak saying of Prophet Mohammed that Alalabi and Ibn Al-Jawzy—who happen to be prominent Islamic scholars—have stated is inaccurate and should not be circulated by preachers. Why do preachers keep referring to it? (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

Oh, these silly religious verdicts! Religion is being used to control women and exercise some sort of intellectual oppression. The Saudi religion is based on social customs, not the Qur'an and the guidance of Prophet Mohammad! (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

Moreover, the issue of Hijab has emerged as a major theme in the data, which was not surprising due to the nature of the headscarf as a highly contested, political gendered symbol within Muslim societies and the global political arena. Some posts critically sought to question the Hijab by stating that it is not originally rooted in Islam;

What's the first corner in Islam?

-Hijab

Does God forgive all sins except?

-Taking off the Hijab

What are the seven major sins?

-Taking off the Hijab, indecency, wearing short skirts, exposing the face, wearing the Abaya on the shoulders, wearing pants, wearing tight clothes

What are the causes of natural disasters like an earthquake?

Women wearing short dresses. (My Right To Dignity, 2013)

Also, several posts criticized the preoccupation with policing women's dress and the coercive nature of forcing women to wear the veil despite the fact there are different readings and interpretations of the Qu'ran. (Verse 31 is often cited for requiring women to cover.) Hence, posts argued that no one should exercise control over women's bodies and compel them to cover. Equally important, it was

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obvious that the page administrators knew that Hijab is not merely a religious practice or individual choice, but also one of the most visible markers of differentness. It carries multiple meanings and is used to construct various collective identities and gendered boundaries between men and women, as well as between the global West and political Islam.

It is worth clarifying again that what they criticized was not the Hijab per se, but the social practice or/and parental pressure of forcing women to wear it. Thus, the free choice by women to wear the Hijab was presented as a personal choice that should be respected and the Hijab should not be thought of as a hurdle in the success or professional advancement. This is demonstrated in Figure 6.15, which translates to “As if they are saying that our religion Islam, which is valid for all times and all places, is a religion where decency and modesty are not inconsistent with freedom and life”.



Figure 6.15: Discussions about the Hijab (My Right To Dignity, 2012).

These assertions challenge the stereotyped images of women in the veil as being dependent or oppressed; it remains an open question to what extent the semiotics of veiling align with the process of women's emancipation. This idea raises important observations about choice feminism, which has come to dominate critiques of mainstream Western feminism. The choice feminist argument assumes that choices exist and can be made outside of power relations. Choices are never “free” in the sense that they are never made outside of power structures or hegemonic systems and ideals. Nevertheless, it is

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clear that certain choices have been designated as feminist or emancipatory, while others have been designated as oppressive such as the choice to wear the Hijab for example.

Following this idea, women who make choices that are seen as oppressive, suffering from false consciousness and thus have not reached the stage of liberation other women have reached—again reproducing the linear view of time where progress is measured as a continuum, with Western women as the most advanced. Moreover, the way certain choices have been designated as emancipatory and others as oppressive is in itself enmeshed within power relations stemming from both (various forms of) patriarchy and Western mainstream feminism (Salem, 2013). The theme of women's visible role in society and the culture of shaming and concealing the presence of women stood out; some posts (Fig. 6.16. and 6.17) put an emphasis on the role of women in public life, the prominent historical role of women in the era of Prophet Mohammed and the disadvantages of entirely relegating women's presence to the domestic sphere. Posts also touched on different social roles assigned to men and women due to their different standing in society, roles that are in effect defined in accordance with the existing hegemonic, masculine ideals in society. An example of that is demonstrated below:

When Obama won the elections, he posted a picture of himself and his wife Michelle Obama hugging. The choice of his particular picture is interesting. How beautiful to witness women being praised by their husbands in front of millions. The culture of shaming and concealing the presence of women, or equating women with precious belongings that should be hidden in a box should be rejected because it takes away my humanity as a woman. I reject being someone else's shame. Thus, I refuse to marry someone who holds this ideology.



Figure 6.16: Discourses about women's presence in the public sphere (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

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Moreover, the post “We keep hearing in Saudi Arabia that women should not hold leadership positions because they are emotional beings!” is backed by the inclusion of these pictures of prominent female leaders internationally:



Figure 6.17: Discourses about women's in leadership positions (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

Again the following sarcastic post, which states, “Only in Saudi Arabia, a women’s targeted awareness campaign about breast cancer being presented by men!”:



Figure 6.18: Breast cancer awareness brochure (My Right To Dignity, 2012)

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These examples imply a critique of women's exclusion from society and a desire to position them as fully visible citizens and emancipated individuals who are capable of taking leadership roles. The critique questions the assumed complementary gender model that presents women as emotional beings and natural caregivers (either mothers or wives) who place their family's needs before their own; in contrast, men normally fulfill their role as breadwinners. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the page administrators were vocal and clear in stating the importance of women's role in the home as well. For example, they criticized the statements made by some women who consider women's interest in their homes and children a form of slavery.

In essence, the findings show us that the feminist centered discourses that have been articulated in the Saudi context and rose with the driving campaign are being articulated within a wider set of demands that do not end with women's mobility rights. Moreover, the discourse embedded in the MRTD page sheds light on the attempts to challenge the existing knowledge production and meaning-making of feminism; its applicability to Muslim societies; and the possibility of carrying out the efforts toward women's advancement and gender equality within an Islamic reformist discursive framework that accommodates direct feminist critique of certain religious practices that adversely affect women. Their religious legitimacy reminds us that there is not one Islam but different forms and interpretations of it; the determinant role of the application of religious order in society should be constantly questioned. The analyzed textual material also pushes us to reflect on the call for forging new critical engagement with secular feminists and religious thought as normative principles, especially in complex settings where the secular and religious both intersect and diverge.

Thus, the metanarrative of secularizing, which is built on the assumptions underlying much of mainstream Western feminism, should also be evaluated in order to address the agency of religious/spiritual women in non-simplistic terms. It also demonstrates the need for a more inclusive and cross-cultural understanding of feminism and the global women's movement. Nevertheless, comparing the constructed versions of feminism embedded in both the English-speaking page and the Arabic-speaking one raises the issue previously brought up by scholars like Fairclough (1995) regarding what is ultimately the consequence of all the different construed versions of feminism. That is, whether such a construction is determined by the "authors" of feminism, or the "audience" perceiving their discourse and if they were crafted in this specific way to seek domestic or international resonances. Thus, the dialectical tensions stemming from locality and universality and the potential role of audiences should also be taken into account rather than left out from the overall equation.

6.6 Examining WCSS's Facebook Page in the Kuwaiti Case

Several studies on digital media campaigns and advocacy demonstrate that the world of today, which witnesses a more individualized society, as well as a more digital one, carries serious implications for civil society organizations in terms of how they can work to engage the general public. The

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implications are especially clear with youth, who are no longer as keen on being members of organizations and instead want opportunities for individualized action with the freedom to choose which issues to engage in (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Social networking platforms, therefore, provide opportunities for these organizations to increase their community presence, impact and effectiveness because they offer embedded infrastructural capacities that reduce the costs of mobilizing supporters, maintaining activist networks and employing varying tactics in advocacy and activism. One of the most significant added values that digital networking platforms have also brought about for civil society organizations are the increased opportunity to gain support for their campaigns. They also have the ability to reach a much larger audience than their usual supporters by allowing individualized action frames (Katz-Kimchi & Manosevitch, 2015). Similarly, digital media platforms allow users to participate in virtual communities because they provide functions of sharing, communicating, collaborating and interacting with others with a click of a button (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucas (2009) also found that organizations use social networking platforms for activities related to fundraising and volunteering.

As a result of these advantages, digital media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, have become popular within and beyond the NGOs and women;s organizations context. Among other social media sites, Facebook remains the dominating social networking platform with over 2.38 billion monthly active users as of 2019 (Statista, 2019). Kuwait has more than 3 million Facebook subscribers as of 2019 (Internet World Stats, 2019). Still, the ways feminist organizations use particular social networking platforms such as Facebook for their online presence are still relatively unexplored. Thus, the exploratory aim of this section is to understand how online communication unfolds on Facebook by examining how did the WCSS utilized the potential embedded functionalities within Facebook to carry out its programs and services and engage with its members, sympathizers and the general public, as well as the ways that the WCSS Facebook page has been used as a means of claims-making, coordination and mobilization in relation to the “Ensaf” campaign.

It must be taken into account that, in contrast to the Saudi case analyzed in the previous section, there hasn't been a dedicated stand-alone Facebook page specifically assigned to the “Ensaf” campaign per se. The campaign's efforts were included within the official Facebook page of WCSS because of its role as the main women's rights organization that advocated for the “Ensaf” campaign. Also, no Facebook page could be traced to the Kuwaiti Women's Without Borders group. In order to answer the research question, I decided to analyze not only the Facebook posts that specifically concerned the “Ensaf” campaign, but instead to take into consideration the full sample of all the Facebook posts published by the WCSS's page administrators starting from January 2013 until December 2015. The decision to focus on this particular period was deemed the most appropriate for the sake of tracing the

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development of the overall WCSS activities as well as the Ensaf campaign that was officially launched in February 2014. The three-year period in question represents a good trajectory as well as a snapshot of both the overall activities and the events that unfolded before, during and beyond the course of the campaign. It provides a good vantage point from which to examine how the page administrators engaged the public through the Facebook page by advancing particular ideas and topics. It also reveals how the FB page was utilized to advocate for the Ensaf campaign in particular and possibly disseminate other women's related or feminist ideas.

6.6.1 Conducting Content Analysis

This section is based on close monitoring of the WCSS's Facebook page between January 2013 and December 2015. Thus, in a similar manner as that applied to the Saudi case, the development of contents over time was assessed, followed by an examination of the characteristics of users' engagement and an evaluation of the various usage types, the type of content disseminated and the composition of the participating audience.

While collecting data concerning the three-year period chosen, one striking difference that we observed is that, in comparison to the Saudi case, the posts made by page supporters only made up 2% of the overall posted content—11 posts made by page users were published on the WCSS Facebook wall and these were mainly advertisements to events. On the SWTD and MTRD pages, users created the majority of posts (respectively 78% and 69%). Thus, I have decided it is best to not include page user posts in the analysis as including them will not result in any added value. The collection, which was made via Netvizz v1.44, revealed a total of 492 posts by page administrators that were mostly in Arabic which were coded and analyzed in a later stage. Figure 6.19 tackles the development of content over time by displaying the monthly frequency of FB posts made by the page administrators and the development of their engagement indicators summing up all likes and comments over the data collection periods at hand.

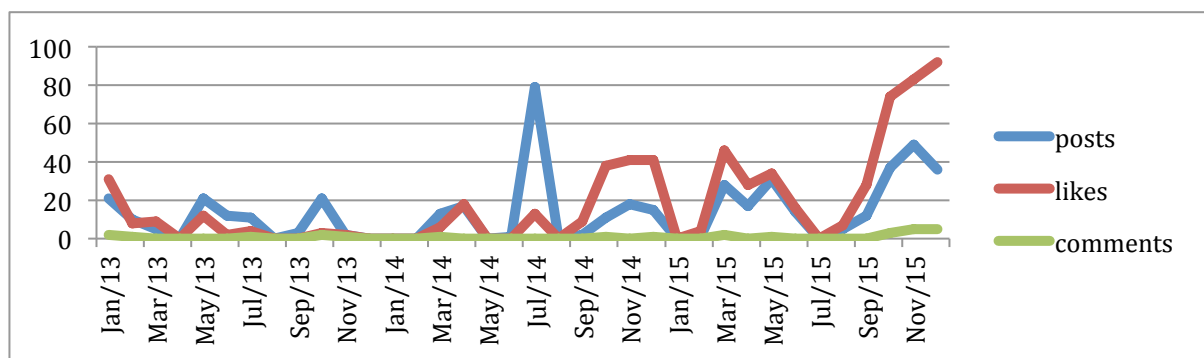


Figure 6.19: Monthly development of Facebook engagement over the course of the campaign according to the posts by page administrators (WCSS Facebook page)

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The analysis of the monthly developments of Facebook engagement levels shows generally low user engagement levels within the page, as evidenced by the low numbers of likes (an average of 18 per month) combined with a low number of comments in reaction to the posts; the total number of comments for the whole page didn't exceed 26 over the three-year examined period at hand. What was also notable is the occurrence of a sudden spike in July 2014, when page administrators shared 79 posts. This sudden increase necessitated conducting a detailed analysis to determine the types of posts that were published during the period. It emerged that the rise of the number of posts coincided with the Israel–Gaza conflict from July of that year. Many of the posts published over that period by WCSS declared WCSS solidarity and support towards the Palestinians. WCSS has historically been involved with lobbying for the Palestinian cause; it founded the Kuwaitis for Jerusalem Internal Committee in conjunction with the Kuwaiti Graduates Society in 2000. This July 2014 spike also sheds some light on the transnational action dimension incorporated within WCSS activities that we will elaborate on in the upcoming sections.

The low user engagement levels mostly indicate that WCSS hasn't fully utilized all the potential that is embedded within and afforded by Facebook. Also, the striking differences between these indicators in contrast to the Women to Drive Facebook pages can be interpreted as a consequence of the different configuration of the two campaigns. The Women to Drive campaign began as a grassroots campaign that has depended on social media due to the limited presence of associational life in Saudi Arabia, where the legal system does not leave space for NGOs to operate outside state control.

While there are few women-led NGOs in Saudi Arabia, these, for the most part, do not engage in the issue of women's political and legal rights because of the difficulty of establishing independent organizations that address such issues freely. This vacuum, therefore, forced the media-savvy, young, educated generation to move online looking for alternatives. Social media has been utilized as an alternative locus of activism. The situation is entirely different in Kuwait, where the legal system accommodates an active associational life and lively civil society; women's NGOs have emerged there since the 1960s. It is possible for Kuwaiti women's NGOs such as WCSS to assign more value to coordinated behind-the-scenes advocacy work, rather than its being solely mediated over Facebook.

A further in-depth examination of the administrators' posts and users' reactions towards them was made possible by Facebook's default built-in classification of post types (links, status updates, photos, videos and events). Thus, when comparing the different types of posts used on the WCSS FB campaign page, we identified a number of significant variances, indicating that they have played different roles over the page.

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WCSS			
Types of posts		Mean likes (SD)	Mean comments (SD)
	% of posts types		
Links	4.4	0.5 (0.8)	0
Status updates	7.6	0.2 (0.3)	0.05 (0.2)
Photos	81.3	1.46 (1.5)	0.06 (0.2)
Videos	6.7	1.1 (1.3)	0
Total	100	1.3	0.05
(N)	(492)	(1.4)	(0.24)

Table 6.5: Overview of the different post types made by page administrators in relation to the likes and comments they received

Table 6.5 summarizes posting activity and the use of different post types over time. We can see that the official WCSS Facebook page received a total of 649 likes and 26 comments over the three-year period. The median of likes for an individual Facebook post was 1.3, while the median for comments on a post was 0.05 with a standard deviation (SD) value of 1.4 and 0.24, respectively. The inclusion of photos was the most prominent type of post, as it comprised 81.3% of the overall composition of posts types. Photos received an average of 1.46 likes and 0.06 comments. This finding aligns with the statistical data that we computed in the Saudi case and falls in line with similar research results in the field of online communication that suggest the attachment of photos is an essential communicative action to make a message more powerful (Castells, 2009).

Conversely, videos, status updates and links were much less frequently used on the page; they only constituted 7.6%, 6.7% and 4.4% of the overall content, respectively. Nevertheless, the level of user engagement for all these types of posts remained relatively weak, as there was little engagement in relation to users' interactions with their content.

6.6.2 Analyzing the Audience of WCSS Page

Digital networking platforms attract a segmented, differentiated audience. Although it is potentially massive in terms of numbers, it is no longer a mass audience in terms of simultaneity and uniformity of the message they audience receives. Digital media are no longer mass media in the traditional sense of

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sending a limited number of messages to a homogeneous mass audience. Because of the multiplicity of messages and sources, the audience itself becomes more selective. The targeted audience tends to choose its messages, deepening its segmentation (Nonikashvili, 2013).

Audience segmentation is a process of identifying groups of people within a larger population who are homogeneous with regard to certain attributes (e.g. beliefs, behaviors, political ideology) that are most relevant to the objectives of a public engagement campaign (Slater, 1995). Thus, we can assume that the members of this Facebook page are individuals who support WCSS's work and mission. At the time of collection of the data, the WCSS Facebook had 554 fans, a relatively modest scale. Moreover, the detailed breakdown of page followers per country was as expected: the largest proportion fans were based in Kuwait (28%), followed by Egypt (17%) and then Algeria (7%).

So, the majority of the audience of the page turned out to be based in Arab countries, which is not surprising because the administrators of the page utilize mostly Arabic while communicating their messages out to the public. All countries that constituted 1% or less of the sample were aggregated in the "other countries" category.

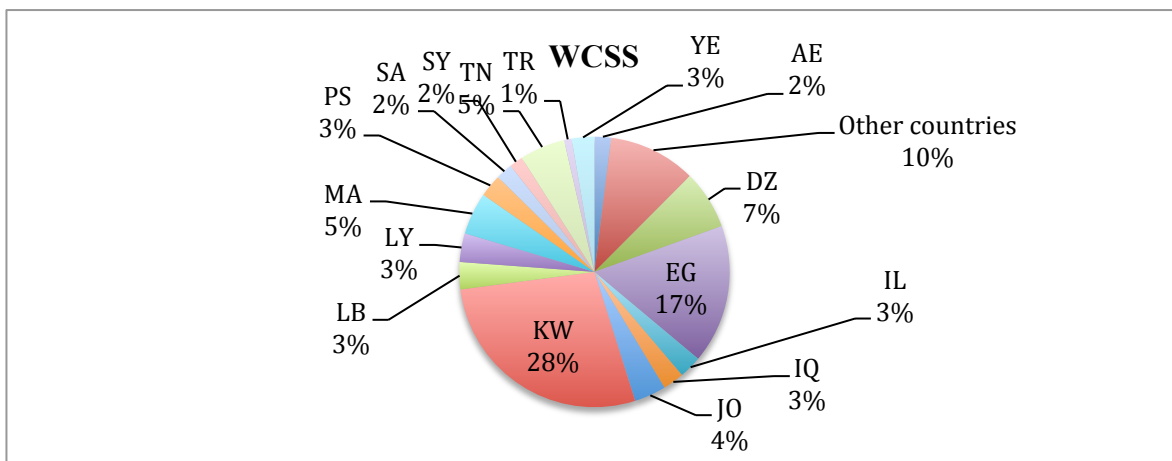


Figure 6.20: Breakdown of page followers per country

6.6.3 Conducting the Qualitative Content Analysis

The question of how WCSS is using Facebook requires an analysis of the content it disseminates. A more exhaustive qualitative content analysis was employed as a systematic technique for analyzing written materials to better understand the communication processes and their implications (Budd, Thorp & Donohew, 1967). For each Facebook post, I have analyzed the text embedded in the posts and the picture or video in the cases where there was one. The content of the social media pages (Facebook

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in this instance) was the unit of analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), while the individual posts made by the administrators were the coding units.

In total, I have repeatedly read all the retrieved 492 posts. As suggested by Crang and Cook (2007), I have used both pre-defined coding (derived from the theory) and open coding (derived inductively from the empirical material) in order to produce an analysis as comprehensible as possible. This technique was in line with the classification scheme developed by Qu, Wu and Wang (2009). The open coding was used to minimize the risk of missing important patterns. After the initial analysis, I re-read each post to find new patterns and apply new codes derived from the first read of the material. The analysis revealed four relevant categories of posts explained by the other 11 subcategories and their traits. Hence, this process identified the following four broader categories of posts: information-related, activities-related, feminist-related and user engagement. The fifth category of tweets (others) was omitted in the analysis as it included heterogeneous posts not fitting in the other categories. The coded general classification scheme can be found in Appendix D.

6.7 The Main Findings of the Qualitative Content Analysis

The results of the qualitative content analysis (Table 6.6) display the detailed breakdown of the number of Facebook posts per general category, subcategory and their percentage. The Information-related category, which relies on the most basic functions of social media—the ability to share news stories and information with others—accounted for 18.1% of the overall content. It included posts that describe WCSS’s programs and services, mission statements, organizational history, among others.

Category	SWTD
	(%)
<u>A- Information-related</u>	18.1
1- Providing information about WCSS	9.7
2- Visiting delegations and collaborations	4.2
3- WCSS in the media	4.2
<u>B- Activities-related</u>	32.9
1- Local activities	7.5

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2- Transnational activities	25.4
C- Feminist-related	43.8
1- Promoting full realization of women’s rights	13.6
2- Capacity building and empowerment	11.2
3- Nationality campaign	6.5
4- Combating Violence against women	4.8
5- Feminist critical posts	7.7
D-Users engagement	1.6
1- Occasional greetings	1.6
E-Other	3.0
Total posts	100.0 (492)

Table 6.6: Detailed breakdown of the number Facebook posts per post general category, sub-category and their percentage

Nonetheless, as communication in this category is mostly informational-promotional, the posts were formal in nature. The posts concerned with disseminating current or historical information about WCSS comprised 9.7% of the collected data, while posts that concerned spreading information about the recent visiting delegations and collaborations accounted for 4.2%. The same goes for posts that provided links to external news stories about WCSS’s activities in local media outlets.

The activities-related aggregate category comprised 32.9% of the overall content and contained posts that tackled the set of implemented programs and activities conducted by the WCSS aimed at the local Kuwaiti community (7.5%) or those that targeted the transnational arena (25.4%). For example, posts provided information about local initiatives such as spreading health awareness through lectures and symposiums, particularly ones related to women’s and children’s well being; launching countrywide awareness campaigns about breast cancer; founding Al-Bustan’s Nursery in 1998 with the mission of aiding children with special needs; and educating children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

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The posts that concerned transnational action mentioned WCSS's involvement with providing charitable activities and social services to the disadvantaged populations in Palestine, Syria and Sudan. Examples are manifested in posts that announced WCSS's efforts in raising awareness about the Palestinian cause; supporting the occupied Palestinian territories by assisting long-term projects of an educational, health-oriented nature; and cooperating with projects to rehabilitate wounded and disabled Palestinians. Another example of transnational action is represented by the posts that mentioned WCSS's organization of fundraising events for the victims of war in Syria and the provision of social services, such as the building of a village for disadvantaged people in Sudan.

One of the main differences that set the Kuwaiti case apart from the Saudi case is that WCSS's Facebook page did not involve any direct or indirect calls for action—either on-the-ground or online. Instead, it included the promotion of the actions that are carried out by WCSS. On the other hand, the fact that feminist-related posts as an aggregate category constituted the majority (43.8%) of the overall content implies that WCSS had a more explicitly feminist agenda than a service-providing women's organization. Posts related to promoting women's rights comprised 13.6% of the collected sample and mainly concentrated on mentioning the symposiums, training courses, workshops and regional conferences on women's rights that WCSS held or was invited to. In addition, posts raised women's awareness of their rights and opportunities in the arena of political rights, women's status in employment, access to welfare and familial matters such as marriage and divorce. One such initiative "My Paper Project" (in Arabic, "Wraqati project"), was an initiative funded by United Nations Development Program and the Regional Bureau for the Arab States. It was later implemented by WCSS to address the deficit of legal knowledge by facilitating access to legal information through the use of ICTs.

The women's empowerment and capacity-building category comprised 11.2% of the overall content and included disseminating information about WCSS's efforts in providing knowledge, techniques and tools for working women to develop their professional skills through the organization of workshops or seminars that specifically seek to enhance their professional capacities in work-related settings. Since I am particularly interested in the "Ensaf" campaign in this section and how it was mediated over Facebook. We found that only 32 posts (6.5%) explicitly mentioned WCSS's efforts in carrying out the "Ensaf" over the three-year period, averaging 0.9 posts per month. Examples of such posts included coverage of WCSS activities in relation to the "Ensaf" campaign in the press and news about the meetings of the campaign representatives with state officials.

The subcategory of posts that sought to combat violence against women made of 4.8% overall. These posts protested the lack of systematic data about this phenomenon and the inadequacy of laws concerning criminalizing domestic abuse and marital rape. The last subcategory included feminist critical posts that expressed strong views on several political, societal and ideological phenomena from

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a feminist perspective. Posts criticized the state's apathetic approach towards granting women their full rights or the new proposed legislation to govern civil society organizations. This subcategory overall accounted for 7.7% of the total posts. Finally, posts that were classified under the users'-engagement subcategory included posts that contained occasional greetings from the Facebook page administrators to the page audience and accounted for 1.6% of the content. The "other" category (3%) included posts that did not belong to any other established categories, such as posts that promoted events conducted by WCSS's allies.

6.8 Reflections and Findings about WCSS's Use of Facebook

Digital media can be an effective way of mobilizing individuals and promoting discussions and reflections around key topics while guiding target audiences to possible solutions. Yet, the qualitative content analysis revealed that WCSS has not entirely embraced the full capacities offered by the new social interaction technologies, as it did not manage to fully incorporate the interactive elements and two-way communication into its Facebook page.

Social media networks are potentially capable of exposing large audiences to messages, but much smaller numbers of people engage in activities. An even smaller number of people take concrete actions. WCSS's use of Facebook resulted in a very limited reach and extremely restricted engagement. Speaking of the WCSS overall Facebook page content at a general level, there was no sign of WCSS attempts to reach out to its audience, ask questions, recruit new members or activists or involve the page supporters in active dialogues or online discussions—apart from a few posts that sought to greet the page-members during public holidays or occasions of celebration and one post that urges the followers to change their display pictures to show support for protecting women against violence. Using relational functions to develop online communities geared toward women's issues may effectively promote contextual mechanisms to feminist action, specifically through developing a sense of community. Such was not the case with WCSS, as the low engagement level indicates that the majority of Facebook page members were mostly perceived as a passive audience with no intention of involving them in the NGO's activities.

It was difficult to measure involvement because WCSS provided little information on providing methods for Facebook fans to become active members and volunteers. Thus, I name a major part of group members as sympathizers, supporting WCSS's activities just by liking their Facebook page. However, there is no sign of communicative involvement, as evidenced by the low number of comments. There is also no sign of antagonism from those standing in opposition to the movement's values and beliefs. It appeared that WCSS was mainly concerned with creating a presence online, making people aware of its activities and promoting its events in pursuit of their social missions. It did not appear concerned with engaging and mobilizing the general public or their regular supporters to join forces.

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With regards to the ways in which the “Ensaf” campaign was mediated online on Facebook, it was observable that WCSS did not manage to transform its passive supporters into active participants among the wider public or target the general public to take part in the campaign activities. This conclusion was evidenced by the fact that the affordances of Facebook (such as likes, shares and events) were not used in a novel way to form e-tactics or mobilize and organize the supporters of the campaign into action. The administrators of the page rarely posted calls to action or encouraged their followers to take part in any offline activities; they did not even post summaries of the campaign, which would have been helpful in detailing the campaign evolution and success.

The entire discourse of the campaign was promotional in nature and close-ended, without providing opportunities for substantive debates or engagement or to create an active community online around the campaign that feels ownership of it. Cox’s (2010) classic strategy of mobilizing a secondary audience (usually the public) to influence the primary audience (the decision-makers) remains a crucial element in campaigning and advocacy work. Nonetheless, through tracing the manifestations of the “Ensaf” campaign online, I haven’t found indications that WCSS used Facebook to mobilize the public or “secondary audience” in order to reach the primary audience.

It seems that WCSS mainly used Facebook in a complementary way, say as a broadcasting network, to support a more traditional campaign pinned to traditional media, target addressees and on-the-ground events. It was not a campaign that used Facebook and social media on either of these levels. This echoes the same results of previously conducted research: that although most NGOs have websites and engage with technologies such as social networking platforms, many organizations simply use the internet to enhance existing programs and activities. Organizations are far less likely than individual activists to undertake cutting-edge, creative activities that utilize the potential of new technologies (Kingston & Stam, 2013).

Moreover, WCSS hasn’t provided its supporters with a space for individualized action as elaborated in Bennett and Segerberg’s (2012, 2011) ideas about how a more individualized society has changed the ways NGOs should work to engage the public: many (especially younger) people are not as keen on being members of organizations anymore, but instead want opportunities for individualized action with the freedom to choose which issues to engage in. Overall, the analysis reveals that WCSS used Facebook to inform and not to mobilize, as it did not capitalize on the interactive nature of Facebook. While reaching out to like-minded individuals, it did not give individual users a role in advocacy efforts or a dialogical platform to express their opinions. It used Facebook as a one-way information-sharing platform, instead of using it in a new, progressive way to engage and organize the public.

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6.9 The Discursive Construction of Feminism in the WCSS Facebook Page

Because the majority of posts in the WCSS page were classified as feminist-related posts, this section is mainly concerned with shedding some light on the ways feminism has been discursively constructed within the page. While analyzing the content of the feminist-related posts, it was observed that the majority of posts under the women's rights and feminist-critique category have (1) adopted a liberal feminist, rights-based discourse on gender equality; (2) referred to the rule of law and constitutional frames while advocating for a secular rule. These findings were not surprising because of WCSS's long historical involvement within the Kuwaiti context as a liberal feminist organization that has an orientation quite different from that of the more conservative Islamist or tribalist associations.

To begin with, it was noted throughout the collected materials that there is a pronounced tendency to use the human rights framework to promote the achievement of women's rights in the interrelated areas of political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. Moreover, posts that carried out a liberal feminist, rights-based discourse on gender equality rested on liberal notions of individuals, rights and representation by emphasizing the similarities between men and women rather than differences between them, while appealing to the state as the protector of individual rights. An example of such posts follows:

Justice, freedom, and equality are the pillars of today's society. You are free to believe in whatever you want, but you don't have the right to impose your beliefs on others. (The Women's Cultural and Social Society, 2013)

Today marks the World Human Rights Day; an occasion celebrated annually around the world on December 10. This day has been chosen to honor the United Nations General Assembly resolution of December 10, 1948, on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was the first universal declaration of human rights. On this occasion and under the exceptional circumstances of the region and the world, we emphasize the moral and legal obligations of the international community towards the individual and collective rights guaranteed by the declaration, by which the state members of the United Nations have pledged to ensure that it is achieved in the face of continuing violations and discrimination that we are witnessing today. (The Women's Cultural and Social Society, 2015)

As we can see, the employment of the rights discourse serves a symbolic function as well as provides a powerful vocabulary for challenging wrongs. Feminist activists advocate for the extension of human rights because of the way they contribute to a culture in which justice is furthered as an ideal (Chinkin & Evans, 1998), but this goes with the assumption of the universality and neutrality of human-rights based discourses. The influence of the liberal feminist thought was also manifest in

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WCSS's oppositional position towards a parliamentary proposal that sought to allocate monthly stipends to stay-at-home wives who don't work outside of the home. The position taken by the WCSS towards this issue gives us an insight into how this organization ideologically views unpaid domestic work: that it is a private task allocated to women in the gendered division of labor of capitalism, which typically includes housework and childcare for women, that permeates multiple aspects of women's lives (Parreñas & Boris, 2010).

This issue also reflects feminism's historically ambivalent and troubled relationship with domestic labor, which goes largely unseen, undervalued, unrecognized and unconsidered as work. The refusal of WCSS to consider state-sponsored compensation for domestic work stems from the premise adopted by the mainstream liberal strand of feminism that focuses on careerism. Compensation for domestic labor might disincentivize women from looking for jobs. Home-making further consolidates women's confinement as well as subordination in the domestic sphere instead of pushing them to enter the "emancipatory" paid labor force. Without entering the paid labor force, they cannot become economic actors in their own right (Friedan, 1981).

This also demonstrates that many women's organizations have subscribed to the neoliberal economic logic, separating the household from commodity production while neglecting to consider domestic work as a labor process. The gendered division of labor in the home remains fundamentally unchallenged with no consideration that women continue to bear the burden of emotional labor and the care of the family to mitigate some of the pressures of the restructured, neoliberal economy.

What can we deduce from this position is the lack of critique of the underlying gender relationships and class analysis when it comes to feminine domesticity, while women and their success are judged by male standards. A criticism that has been already raised in relation to the liberal strand of feminism is that it often supports neoliberal policies and the interests of a select group of elite women who predominantly belong to a middle and upper-class income level. Posts that referred to the rule of law and constitutional frames argued that women have a constitutional right to be treated equally with men according to the constitution and also aligned with the calls for a secular state that respects the democratic principles and the rule of law. This is manifest in the following extract:

We respect the rule of law and we seek to change the non-constitutional laws. We envision Kuwait as a secular and democratic state. (The Women's Cultural and Social Society, 2013)

We are part of a civil movement that believes in democracy and aims to:

1. Preserve the constitution and public freedoms

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2. Promote active citizenship and democratic principles
3. Raise awareness of rights and duties

We are keen to protect freedom and democracy in our homeland.

We envision Kuwait as a secular and democratic state.

(The Women's Cultural and Social Society, 2013)

Democratic State Requirements:

1. Well-managed governance.
2. Respectful citizens and individuals.
3. Clear separation of powers.
4. Respected and fully implemented laws.
5. Consciousness.

(The Women's Cultural and Social Society, 2013)

The use of references to the constitution lends legitimacy to WCSS's ideological positions and demands. Such posts transparently posed a strong critique of some of the Islamist members of parliaments who backed a bill to impose gender segregation in public universities. They also directed a critique to the Ministry of Justice, which publicized a recruitment call for the position of a legal researcher that explicitly required the candidates to be only males. WCSS has responded by stating that the recruitment call violates Article 29 of the Kuwaiti constitution and WCSS will do whatever it takes to restore justice to Kuwaiti women, including resorting to legal means.

As with regards to examining WCSS's position on intersectionality, apart from taking a liberal feminist approach to class and the issue of women's participation in the labor force as discussed above, we found little data that would support our evaluation. I have managed to find some references to popular feminist figures such as American civil rights activist and poet Maya Angelou and Clare Boothe Luce, the first American woman appointed to a major ambassadorial post abroad.

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Figure 6.21: WCSS and transnational figures (The Women's Cultural and Social Society, 2015)



Figure 6. 22: WCSS and transnational figures (The Women's Cultural and Social Society, 2015)

6.10 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with analyzing the content of the Facebook pages that were specifically set up to mobilize for the driving campaign in Saudi Arabia, in order to shed some light on how these pages served as means for coordination, mobilization and feminist expression. An identical analysis with the

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same aim in mind was carried out on the Facebook page of WCSS (that is the main women's rights organization that launched the Ensaf campaign in Kuwait). This alternative strategy was pursued because there has not been any dedicated Facebook page that was specifically created for the Ensaf campaign per se.

Using a qualitative content analysis of the individual posts by the administrators of the examined Facebook pages, the analysis revealed the multipurpose use of the embedded functionalities on Facebook which showed that the pages that were related to the driving campaign in Saudi Arabia have mainly served for spreading out feminist-related content as well as disseminating information. To elaborate, the qualitative analysis of the English-speaking WTD and the Arabic-speaking MRTD Facebook pages has indicated that both pages have converged on disseminating feminist-related content, as the majority of the coded posts have belonged to this aggregate category, which encompassed the sharing of general feminist-related news, featuring of news that highlight Saudi women's achievements, providing an empowering and motivational content, as well as offering critical opinions from a feminist perspective.

The analysis offered a great example of how Facebook can be used effectively to support a grassroots feminist campaign, enabled activists to expose their feminist viewpoints to the public and deconstruct the stereotypical image of Saudi Arabia. The findings also indicated that Facebook as a platform was pragmatically used as a low-cost channel for the circulation of information, through broadly reporting on events on the ground that could not pass print media filters, circulating articles that covered the campaign and feeding the information and videos to different media outlets, among others. While the exhaustive analysis of the content that was circulated by the WCSS's Facebook page has shown that feminist-related posts as an aggregate category have constituted the majority of the overall coded content, which indicated that the WCSS had a more explicitly feminist agenda than merely being a service-providing women's organization.

It also emerged that the activities-related category contained posts that tackle the set of implemented programs and activities that were performed by the WCSS inside Kuwait or abroad. Furthermore, since I was particularly interested in the "Ensaf" campaign and how it was mediated over Facebook, I found out that only a few posts (thirty-two to be exact) referred directly to the campaign. One of the main differences that sat the Kuwaiti case apart from the Saudi case in relation to the examined campaigns is that WCSS' Facebook page have rarely posted calls of action or encouraged their followers to take part in any offline initiatives, or even posting summaries of the campaign, which are in fact helpful in detailing the progression and evolution of the campaign.

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It appeared that the WCSS Facebook page was primarily set up to promote its activities and events, rather than engaging and mobilizing the general public and their regular supporters, as it did not capitalize on the interactive nature of Facebook, as the entire discourse that related the campaign was close-ended and promotional in nature and there was not any attempt made by the WCSS reaching out to the audience, to ask questions, to recruit new members or activists, nor even to involve the page supporters in active dialogues about the campaign, apart from few posts that sought to occasionally greet the page-members during public holidays or occasions of celebration.

Moreover, due to the fact that the majority of posts were coded as feminist-related, a further in-depth qualitative content analysis was performed on them. Hence, I was interested in shedding some light on the ways feminism has been discursively constructed within these pages and to explore the multifaceted understanding of feminisms that are manifested over the relevant Facebook pages. What appeared from the analysis is the emergence of secular feminist discourse within the English-speaking WTD Facebook page, as evidenced by the posts that attempted to move away from Islamic references which are considered to be responsible for restrictions on women's lives, towards new forms of Saudi feminism that is based on the human-rights discourse inspired by the transnational flow of feminist ideas and politics which value women's autonomy, emphasizing gender equality in all domains.

Also, some attempts of demonstrating intersectional ties of feminist solidarity were relatively apparent in the page as exemplified by the posts that called for the protection of the domestic worker's rights in the Arab Gulf and Lebanon and for abolishing discriminatory gender laws in Jordan. A different tendency was detected on the MRTD Facebook page, in which page administrators were more attentive to the tensions and changing meanings of "the secular" and "the religious" binary in terms of their frames of reference and the ways they intersect in the different modes of feminism. Many posts appeared to draw inspiration from Islam as a framework of reference and were open to the idea of reinterpreting and reconciling religious discourse about gender equality. Other posts emphasized on the often neglected point is that religious stipulations are not only mediated by cultural codes and customs which are often not actually rooted in religion per se, but are also, in most cases, subjectively interpreted by a male clergy who attribute misogynist tendencies to religion.

These posts advocated for the necessity of reforming certain patriarchal claims and practices that were insinuated into Islam such as inheritance laws, the male guardianship system and men's right to polygamy in order to counter conservative male interpretations and held Islam in its totality as a system that could accommodate women's rights only if it was perceived and analyzed through the feminist lens. Meanwhile, the analysis of the feminist coded content of the Kuwait WCSS Facebook page revealed that the majority of posts had adopted a liberal feminist rights-based discourse to gender equality and consistently referred to the rule of law and constitutional frameworks while advocating for

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a secular rule. These findings were not surprising because of the WCSS long historical involvement within the Kuwaiti civil society sector as a liberal feminist organization that has an orientation that is quite different from that of the more conservative Islamist or tribalist associations.

The posts that shared liberal feminist rights-based discourse to gender equality have referred to the liberal notions of individuals, rights by emphasizing the similarities between men and women rather than the perceived differences between them while the posts that referred to the rule of law and constitutional frames have argued that women have a constitutional right to be treated equally with men according to the constitution and also aligned with the calls for a secular state that respects the democratic principles and the rule of law.

In essence, the findings demonstrate that feminism is not a phenomenon with a certain essence that is derived from an abstract model, rather it is a collective process of subjective constructions of meanings with uncertain outcomes that challenge the existing social order through gendered claims-making and women-centered discourses. There was a great variety in the range of positions toward secularism and personal religiosity echoing by the different ways in which women shape their own version of feminism in a challenge to the patriarchal norms imposed on them in such complex settings where the secular and religious both intersect and diverge.

Notwithstanding the particularities of national and cultural contexts, the analysis displayed great differences in terms of their vision of women's roles the possibility of a new generation of feminists who seek to reconcile their feminism with faith-based politics, or work within secular frameworks to pursue self-reflexive engagement with these ideational approaches to feminism. This also confirmed the findings obtained in Chapter 2, which pointed out that women are empowered differently and cannot be taken as homogeneous collective affected by patriarchy in uniform ways and that Facebook was utilized to open up new spaces of feminist engagement, as it has provided previously excluded actors with the possibilities of engaging in the feminist scene and create counter-hegemonic discourses that are fragmenting and contesting the hegemony of existing discourses.

Chapter 7: The Manifestations of Feminist Activism on Twitter: Network- Centric Lenses

During the earlier interviews that are documented in Chapter 4, many feminist activists stated that they heavily used Twitter in their mobilization activities to disseminate information and connect with each other. Activists genuinely believed this micro-blogging platform was a site for feminist solidarity, bridging discourse and drawing supporters from across all divides. However, relying only on activists' accounts is not sufficient to reach solid and rigorous research findings; just because someone states that they used Twitter and that Twitter is a significant platform does not necessarily make it so. Thus, as informed by my relational theoretical framework— which pays equal attention to the agency of actors, discourse and network—here I seek to validate and strengthen the findings that I obtained in Chapter 4 in relation to activists' understanding and use of Twitter.

By drawing on network theories and social movement theories, this chapter seeks to adopt a network-centric perspective to shed some light on the deployment of Twitter by feminist activists and organizations in the context of campaigns that took place in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. To do so, I will be mainly concerned with making sense of the embeddedness of the most active Twitter users in the relational context of the campaigns to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the central hubs in the Twitter networks of the campaigns in the earliest months of mobilization? And (2) What is the content that is being disseminated by the Twitter accounts that claim to be representative of the campaign?

I will answer the first research question by mapping out the general structure of the online Twitter network that revolved around the identified campaigns to recognize the focal nodes that have been active in this mobilization process and uncover important features of the movement's composition and communication patterns. Viewing the elements of social movements as components of a network can provide us with valuable insights not obtainable in any other way. Social network maps provide overviews of social spaces, highlighting subgroups and individuals that hold important positions within the network and capturing insights about their roles.

Contemporary collective action dynamics are often manifested by individuals alongside organizational actors. By focusing on the positions and the attributes of nodes, it is possible to analyze how and how much personal agency is taking place in this sense. Thus, an evaluation of nodes' prominence, the level at which an actor is involved in relationships with others, can help us to detect which actors are more central than others in the online relational context and whether they are single individuals who speak in their personal capacities or organizations.

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To address this particular question, this chapter will seek to connect social movement concepts with network centrality measures to provide a clearer picture of movements in the digital era. It will also identify the prominent users who are important to the core of the network and those who are in influential positions to disseminate content to a wide audience and community of Twitter users. I will answer the second research question by analyzing the content produced and circulated in the Twitter accounts that identified themselves as the official or organizational accounts of the campaign to gain a better understanding of their interaction with other activists, news media and the public.

I intend to show how certain accounts on Twitter used tweets as the building blocks for connectivity—constructed, thematically linked networked action in 140 characters or less. I will also show how the content was utilized in the networked exchanges that took place, contributing to the literature concerning the structure and content of the Twitter-based networks in relation to feminist activism. Compared to the overall contribution of network approaches to the study of activism in general, this method can provide a balance between depth and breadth in the examination of activism over Twitter. Referring to networks provides us with clues to assess the social location of key actors and identify the general structural patterns from a relational perspective. Moreover, the content and social media linked in tweets revealed a sample of the organizational dynamics and information sources pertinent to particular movement ecology.

7.1 Twitter: A Particular Social Media Platform

Twitter is a relatively recent social networking platform, released in 2006 as a micro-blogging site that would allow individuals to post short text updates of 140 characters or less to a network of others. The number of characters was later increased to 280. It has a directed “following” model, a form of subscription to others' Twitter messages. If user A is “following” user B, user B does not have to follow user A. This differentiates Twitter from other networking platforms, making it less prone to capturing pre-existing ties but instead enforcing bi-directionality (Takhteyev, Gruzd & Wellman, 2012).

This model makes Twitter more akin to blogs, where the costs of establishing a unidirectional tie by becoming a reader is similarly low; yet, “unlike the weak ties between bloggers and their readers, which most often stay invisible, Twitter ties can be easily observed and analyzed” (Takhteyev et al., 2012, p. 74). The interactions take place in real-time, allowing users from across the world to post and exchange written and multimedia content through private and public messages. The types of tweets also carry different meanings. Tweets are messages that a user posts on his or her timeline. Retweets use to the forwarding function for distributing messages. Replies, on the other hand, are “markers of addressivity,” as they demonstrate a specific level of interest in notifying a response to a communicative stimulus addressed by another Twitter user (Pavan, 2013, p. 11).

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Mentions occur when a specific Twitter user is mentioned within the tweet by using the @user syntax. Hence, mentions and replies can be considered the most “intense” social relations because they denote specific attention to a particular Twitter user (Pavan, 2013, p.12). The content of a tweet typically contains text and hashtags. A hashtag is a keyword designated by a “hash” symbol (#) assigned to the information that describes a tweet and aids in searching (e.g. #Women2drive). The practice of using keywords to label tweets most likely parallels the use of “tags” to freely categorize web content or blogs; the inclusion of hashtags fulfills an organizational function to organize the discussions around certain topics or events (Kortuem, Kawsar, Sundramoorthy & Fitton, 2009).

Hashtags can enlarge a message’s potential audience beyond the network of followers to a community of users interested in a topic or event. Tweets containing hashtags not only provide a macro-level of visibility for aggregated communication, but also define and identify an intended audience for communicative action because they can be searched for via open, searchable interface. Contrary to the “members-only” access to profiles that other digital platforms like Facebook permit, tweets are generally available to the public unless the individual user opts to set up a private, protected Twitter account (Boyd, Golder & Lotan, 2010). With such unique features, including effortless accessibility, Twitter generates massive amounts of data, up to 500 million tweets per day from 330 million average active monthly users (Internet Live Stats, 2018).

Thus, unsurprisingly, the volume of users, tweets and hashtags have made Twitter a favorable platform for quantitative and qualitative data analysis and academic research because it allows us to capture and analyze information flows, communicative practices and behavioral patterns of exchange. For instance, in a prior study of Twitter, Krishnamurthy and colleagues (2008) gathered data on nearly 100,000 users to create a categorization of Twitter users, classifying them into broadcasters, acquaintances and evangelists based on the ratio of following-to-follower. Similarly, Java et al. (2007) used a sample of 1.3 million tweets from 100,000s of users to pinpoint the reasons why people use Twitter; they summarized uses as information sharing, information seeking and relationship building.

Topics of discussion on Twitter can range from daily life updates and personal interests to links to current events and news stories. In fact, a study done in 2010 showed that more than 85% of popular topics mentioned on Twitter are headline news (Kwak, Lee, Park & Moon, 2010). Chew and Eysenbach (2010) found that news websites were the links most commonly shared among users.

7.2 Twitter Usage by Activists and Organizations

With hashtags and trending topics, Twitter has not only gained new functionalities, but became a popular organizing and communication platform for activists and concerned organizations alike. Notable demonstrations where Twitter has played a significant role include the civil unrest in Moldova

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in 2009 (Mungiu-Pippidi & Munteanu, 2009), the Tunisian revolution of 2011 (Zuckerman, 2011), the Egyptian uprising (Attia, Aziz, Friedman & Elhousseiny, 2011) and the Occupy protests that took place in multiple cities around the globe (Tremayne, 2014).

The exponential growth in Twitter's popularity has been paralleled by increasing attention from a wide range of scholars. Extensive literature has discussed the added value of Twitter for social movements participants (Earl & Kimport, 2011; Shirky, 2008). A number of empirical studies explored the role of Twitter among activist communities (Penney & Dadas, 2014). It has been studied for its role in disseminating news (Brunns & Burgess, 2012), real-time logistical coordination in the Arab Spring (Lotan et al., 2011) and communicative possibilities as a facilitator in organizing crowds (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013).

Lotan and his colleagues (2011) state that both the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions featured the prominent use of social media and Twitter, particularly by activists organizing the marches and by those disseminating news of the events locally and globally. Similarly, Howard et al. (2011) argue that the usage of Twitter in these uprisings has informed political discourse and preceded revolutionary events on the ground. In the same vein, Meraz and Papacharissi (2013) point out that Twitter allows decentralized actors to engage in horizontal conversational practices while enabling crowds to create their own thematic categories through hashtags to organize the conversation around specific themes or keywords (e.g. #ows, #15M and #greenrevolution). Penney and Dadas (2014) demonstrate in their qualitative study of Occupy Wall Street protesters that content circulation via Twitter was highly significant in enabling the widespread creation of counter-publics that can be critical of the power structures outside the mainstream media.

In his analysis of network power, Castells theorizes that activist hashtags act in a similar way as occupied spaces have traditionally worked for social movements. He argues that they create a public space for deliberation "which ultimately becomes a political space, a space for sovereign assemblies to meet and to recover their rights of representation" (2012, p.11). When it comes to feminist movements, the work of Bear (2016) marks the emergence of hashtag feminism in relation to Twitter actions of #YesAllWomen, which is concerned with the digital sharing and storytelling of encountered examples of misogyny and violence against women. Peuchaud (2014) points out that feminists in Egypt use Twitter to report specific details and locations to map the extent of experienced sexual harassment.

Overall, research shows that Twitter has been a significant political communication platform with diverse functions for communication, conversation and information distribution during diverse mobilizations (Lotan et al., 2011). Although the extent to which Twitter has benefited social movements has been a subject of heated debate between academics, pundits and public commentators

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(Howard 2010; Morozov 2011), only a few studies have provided empirical analyses of the fundamental changes in movement dynamics due to the use of Twitter (e.g., Bennett and Segerberg, 2013; Earl et al. 2013).

When it comes to the deployment of Twitter by organizations, recent research has begun to explore organizations' digital media use of the inherent interactive features that networking platforms offer. Greenberg and MacAulay (2009) analyze Canadian environmental organizations' use of the internet, including Twitter and demonstrate that the majority of them capitalize on the potential these platforms afford. Other relevant research on the deployment of organizations to Twitter is done by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012). The research Twitter use among the large nonprofits in the United States and point out that the platform was used as a one-way communication medium to enable networking and inform the stakeholders about their activities; Twitter was hardly utilized for engagement purposes, as only a small percentage of the tweets generated some form of conversation and engagement with stakeholders. Similarly, Waters and Jamal's (2011) work on public communication of non-profit organizations on Twitter concluded that such organizations tended to deploy Twitter to broadcast information rather than build relationships. Guo and Saxton's (2014) findings reveal that, although Twitter was a powerful communication tool for information dissemination, it was less prevalent in its role as a mobilization tool. Organizations' tweets were being instrumentalized to publicize public events, direct action and facilitate grassroots lobbying less frequently than might be expected.

Concerning feminist organizations, Fotopoulou (2016) researched the Women's Resource Centre, a leading UK-based national umbrella organization for women's charities. She claimed that Twitter proved to be significant for the WRC in multiple ways, especially when it came down to locating available funding opportunities and recruiting new members. Thus, empirical studies that have been conducted in relation to organizations' use of Twitter have yielded mixed results, yet many of them acknowledged its important contribution to the failure of organizations as compared to individual activists to undertake cutting edge, creative activities that utilized the full capabilities and dialogic potentials of Twitter (Kim, Abels & Yang, 2012).

7.3 Twitter in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait

As already indicated in Chapter 4, the trend of finding refuge in social media platforms in Saudi Arabia is coupled with a high internet penetration rate—up to 80% of the country's 32.9 million people (Freedom House, 2018). The usage of Twitter has flourished in Saudi Arabia despite it being monitored and censored (Noman, Faris & Kelly, 2016). While Twitter users constitute a fraction of the social media population, a 2015 study showed that 5.4 million Saudi Arabians use Twitter, generating an average of over 210 million tweets a month (The Social Clinic, 2015). Saudis also account for 29% of active Twitter users across the Arab world and are responsible for posting more than 32% of the overall tweets coming from the MENA region (Salem, 2017).

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Kuwait also ranks highly in terms of Twitter penetration in the MENA region. Aladwani (2015) cited statistics that Kuwaitis constitute 30% of all Arab Twitter messages, despite making up less than 1% of the population of the MENA region. Kuwaitis have been the most active producers and consumers of Twitter content, posting an average 4.2 million tweets daily, the largest average of tweets per day in the region by a relatively wide margin (Salem, 2017).

Concerning the demographics in the Saudi case, it has been reported that 51% of Twitter users are female and the majority of them are young (50% aged 18–34 and 23% aged 34–55) (The Social Clinic, 2015). Salem (2017), who analyzed the gender breakdown of active Twitter users, stated that men had outnumbered women on Twitter by 67% percentage points as for 2016. The Saudi government has acknowledged the widespread use of Twitter; many different official entities have started utilizing Twitter to speak directly to citizens and become more efficient and transparent (Alasem, 2015). The present ruler, King Salman, acquired a Twitter account in 2015, making him the first Saudi Arabian ruler to speak to his populace directly through digital media (Jones and Omran, 2015). Similarly, many media organizations, religious preachers, journalists and politicians have also shifted to Twitter to communicate with the public (Noman et al., 2015).

Concerning Kuwait, Miller and Ko (2015) reported that Twitter had emerged as an integral part of the political scene. They investigated the wide usage of Twitter by Kuwaiti Members of Parliament starting from the 2012 parliamentary election and concluded that Twitter was used as an engagement medium rather than as an information-sharing platform between parliamentary candidates and their electorate. Similarly, Al-Sumait (2014) examined Kuwait's political actors' attitudes towards Twitter adoption and found that it could help to augment communicative channels and create new venues for reaching the electorate. Furthermore, he emphasized that the fragmented nature of the opposition groups in the Kuwaiti political scene paradoxically allows significant openings for political discussion on Twitter; as the political battles are mostly among different factions and “rarely pose a direct threat to the monarchy itself” (p.12).

The growth of Twitter in the Gulf States has inspired many to seek explanations for its widespread adoption. One crowd-sourced attempt took place on Twitter itself to answer this question, which used the hashtag #Why_did_Twitter_succeed_in_Saudi_Arabia and the hashtag's Arabic equivalent. BBC trending (BBC Trending, 2014), a blog that monitors trending hashtags on Twitter, mentioned some of the answers that responded to the hashtag which included the ability for users to state on Twitter what they cannot say offline for fear of repression and the idea that Twitter is a democratic tool. Many have stated that Saudi Twitter users engage in conversations that would not have taken place publicly in the past. Unprecedented open criticism of the Saudi regime, as well as the conservative forces in society have become commonplace (Al-Jenaibi, 2016).

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Noman et al. (2015) argued that Twitter, along with Facebook, has replaced blogging as the main venue for Saudis for public discussions and facilitated opening up public space to engage in political and social discourse in a country that heavily restricts political speech, civic engagement and media freedom. The distinctive features of Twitter have also allowed it to serve as a unique discursive arena in which women can articulate their discontent about the status quo, particularly the restriction of movement that arises from being banned from driving and other practices that constrain them (Agarwal et al., 2015).

In the same vein, it appears that Twitter's use has risen considerably in Kuwait. A sizeable proportion of the population has referred to Twitter as a platform for initiating political discourses (Aladwani, 2015), an essential source of news and a generator of public opinion in Kuwait after the Arab Spring (Kareem, 2012). Others stated that Twitter also became a space for Kuwaiti women to express their views regarding political, social and religious matters (Dashti, Al-Abdullah & Johar, 2015).

7.4 Method: Social Networking Analysis

Following the dual focus of this chapter, I rely on two sets of complementary methods, a Social Network Analysis of Twitter data and a Qualitative Content Analysis. Social Network Analysis (SNA) has emerged as a key technique geared towards the analysis of social structures and investigation of their relational aspects (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Relational aspects have historically been an overly esoteric research topic performed only by professionals in highly specialized areas such as intelligence analysis.

SNA is defined as “the application of the broader field of network science to the study of human relationships and connections” (Hansen et al., 2011, p. 4). It is a quantitative analytical method that traces the set of social relations among a group of actors representing individuals, groups, organizations, etc. and who assume a varying degree of influence. Growing interest and increased use of Social Networking Analysis has formed a consensus about the central principles underlying the network perspective. Graphically, nodes represent the involved actors, while edges mirror the relationships among them. Conceptually speaking, nodes can represent many things, including people, organizations and websites, while edges can depict friendship ties, follow relationships, hyperlinks or even e-mail exchanges.

As individuals and organizations send mentions, retweets and replies, they create networks of information flow. SNA makes visible the otherwise invisible patterns of interaction to identify important nodes that are behind the exchange process (Cross, Parker, Prusak & Borgatti, 2003). Two distinct types of networks emerge through using SNA, including ego-centered networks with a focal

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actor and a set of alters who have ties to the ego surrounding it as well as full-scale networks that consist of relational ties among the actors. Within network analysis, one can calculate different measures of centrality, in which each centrality measure provides a different perspective on how important (central) a node or actor is within a specific network. Network metrics such as in-/out-degree, betweenness, closeness and eigenvector centrality provide mathematically precise metrics for identifying important nodes based on network position (Borgatti, 2005).

For instance, in-degree centrality calculates the number of incoming ties (Jalali, Mohammad & Park, 2017) that reflect the number of mentions and replies received by a particular node in this network. A higher score means that the particular node is popular because it is frequently mentioned and replied to by other nodes in the network, which typically signifies importance in a network (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). Out-degree centrality indicates a node's connection to other nodes via tweets. The nodes that send tweets to many unique users will score highly on this particular measure.

Betweenness centrality, on the other hand, calculates the likelihood of a particular node to act as a bridge between two other nodes. It refers to how often a node lies on the shortest path between any two interacting nodes in the network. Users who rank highly on betweenness centrality have the potential to influence others near them in a network (Friedkin, 1991). This influence may occur through direct or indirect pathways by facilitating, hindering or even transforming the form of communication between others (Newman, 2003). This framework is significant in understanding how influence flows through networks. Finally, Eigenvector centrality is a measure of the importance of a node in a network that assigns particular scores to all nodes based on the principle that being closest to high-scoring nodes contributes more to the score of the node in question than equal connections to low-scoring nodes (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010).

7.4.1 Data Collection and the Visualization of the Twitter-based Network

I first collected historical tweets using a Python script that was obtained from Github (<https://github.com/Jefferson-Henrique/GetOldTweets-python>) that was specifically written by Jefferson Henrique to obtain historical Twitter data. Accordingly, 74,766 Twitter messages were retrieved with their associated metadata; these tweets were under the #Women2Drive hashtag. The dataset included original tweets, replies and mentions from the period that coincided with the beginning of the mobilization in May 2011 until the end of December 2011. Table 7.1 illustrates the classifications of the retrieved tweets.

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Type of tweet	<i>Percentage</i>
Original tweets	56.6
Mentions	18.2
Replies	15.3
Retweets	9.9
Total	100
(N)	(74,766)

Table 7.1: The composition of retrieved tweets

The network was created by 22,009 users who included the hashtag #Women2Drive in their tweets and 32,415 social ties (mentions, replies and retweets). The specific hashtag was chosen because it is one of the most active and prominently used hashtags that were included in both Arabic and English tweets. Once the tweets were retrieved, they were stored in a database in CSV format to be available for further analysis. To answer the first research question, the data was imported into NodeXL, a free and open-source network analysis and visualization software package that works with Twitter API. To make sense of the rich and complex dataset, I chose to employ social network mapping techniques to analyze the profiles of the core users who contributed to the #Women2drive Twitter-based network.

To visualize the network, a Harel-Koren fast multiscale graph was generated to get an overview of the entire network and to locate the position of influential nodes. A cluster using the Clauset-Newman-Moore algorithm was also used to get a clearer picture of the density and shape of the cluster to which these influential nodes belonged. The network was directed, meaning that each link had a direction. It consisted of 22,009 nodes (i.e. unique accounts that tweeted the hashtag) along with 32,415 distinct interactions among them as represented by the edges in addition to 42,351 duplicate connections. Edges in this context refer to the number of interactions between nodes within the network of Twitter users who are including the hashtag #Women2Drive. These interactions can be categorized into three different relationship types: mentioning, replying to a tweet and retweeting established content.

Three network-level metrics are indicators of information flow characteristics that cover the density, modularity and centralization of the network. Network density captures the interconnectivity of individuals in a network and is represented as a ratio of the number of links present to the maximum number of links possible (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Density values can fall between 0 and 1 (Hansen et al., 2011). The extent to which a network is densely interconnected affects the rate of information flow within it. Carley (1991) demonstrated that interactions between individuals lead to shared knowledge and shared knowledge leads to even more interaction—a finding that has important

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implications for the stability of a group and its interactions with individuals outside its boundaries. Granovetter (1973) also noted that tightly interconnected individuals are typically connected by strong ties. Similarly, Coleman (1994) demonstrated that an important outcome of strongly embedded relationships is an increase in trust between individuals, which can lead to increased information transfer. The calculation of the density value shows us that the #Women2Drive network has a 0.126 density value, indicating an extremely low density. Modularity, on the other hand, evaluates the quality of the divisions imposed on the network. Modularity values range between 0 and 1. The higher the modularity value, the more distinct or separated the clusters are; that is, the clusters are less interconnected. Thus, the modularity value of our network is 0.203, indicating low separation among clusters.

Number of Nodes	22009
Edges (unique)	28367
Edges with weight >1	46399
Total edges	74766
Self loop	42351
Reciprocated Vertex Pair Ratio	0.011
Reciprocated Edge Ratio	0.022
Density	0.125
Modularity	0.203

Table 7.2: Network's overall metrics

Furthermore, an evaluation of nodes' centrality and more precisely of their in-degree, out-degree and betweenness centrality measures (Borgatti, Everett & Freeman, 2002) can help us to identify who most involved in the network and thus has more prestige (Knoke & Burt, 1983). Indeed, as edges in our network are a mix of mentions, replies and retweets, actors who receive more ties will also be those who attract other nodes' attention to a larger extent (Barash & Golder, 2010), hence displaying a higher communicative potential (Pavan, 2014).

I have opted to adopt the in-degree centrality measure to indicate the unique or almost unique position of the central nodes in the #Women2Drive network and assess their contribution in order to answer the first research question at hand. Thus, Table 7.3 represents the top 30 accounts and their classification after calculating their in-degree value.

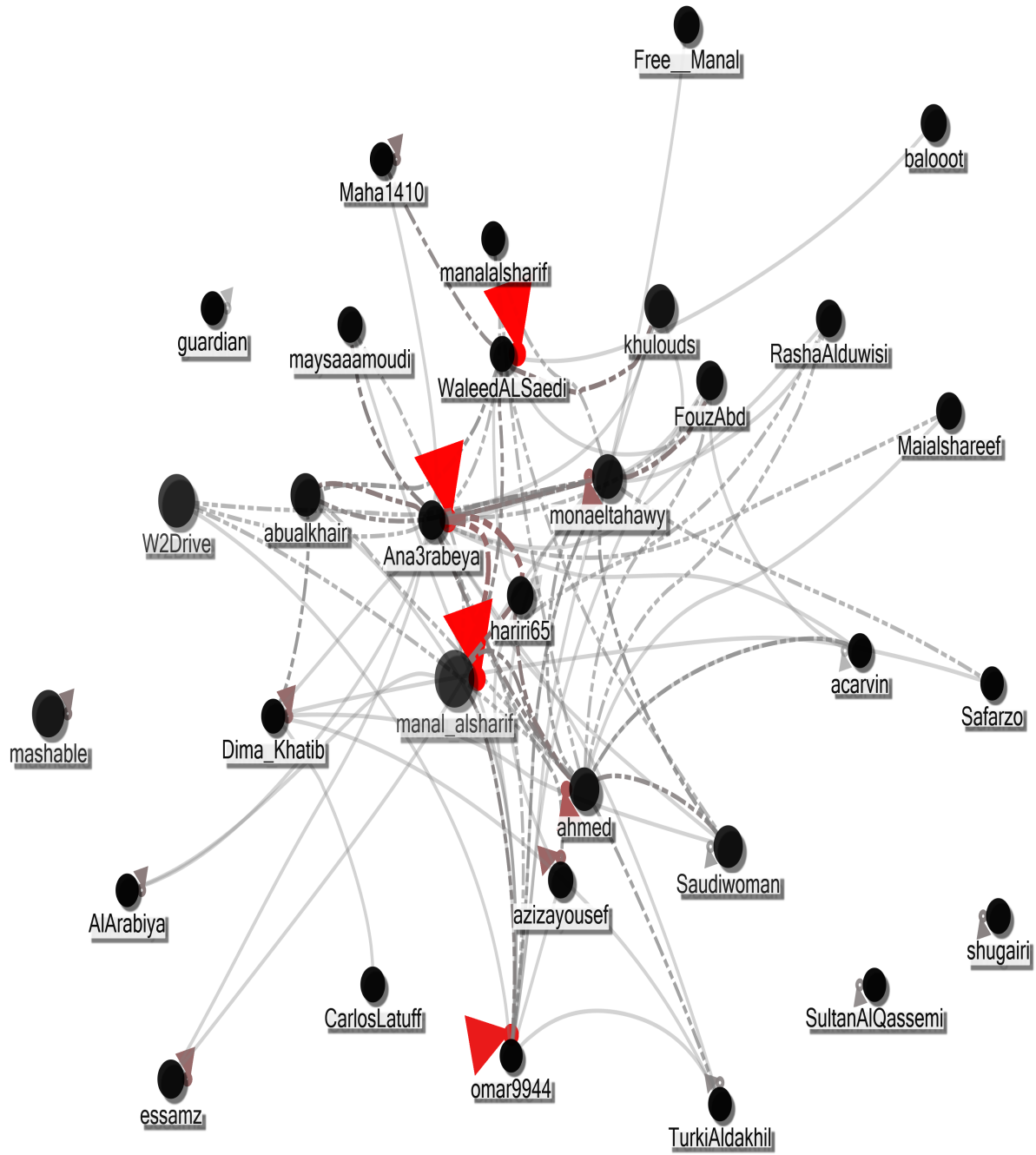
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Node	In-degree Centrality	Classification
Manal_alsharif	516	Saudi feminist activist
W2Drive	423	Online organizational account for the campaign
Mashable	295	Online media website
Monaeltahawy	243	International feminist activist
Khulouds	231	Saudi feminist activist
Ahmed	222	Saudi journalist
Abualkhair	219	Saudi human rights activist
Saudiwoman	204	Saudi feminist activist
Ana3rabeya	152	Saudi feminist activist
Essamz	146	Saudi journalist
Hariri65	136	Saudi feminist activist
RashaAlduwisi	123	Saudi feminist activist
Free_Manal	122	Online organizational account for the campaign
Maialshareef	117	Saudi feminist activist
Azizayousef	109	Saudi feminist activist
Maysaaamoudi	102	Saudi feminist activist
WaleedALSaedi	97	Individual
Shugairi	95	Saudi public figure
CarlosLatuff	95	Political cartoonist
Dima_Khatib	80	International journalist
Maha1410	71	Saudi feminist activist
Safarzo	70	Saudi feminist activist
Fouzabd	65	Saudi feminist activist
Balooot	63	Individual
SultanAlQassemi	57	Emirati journalist
TurkiAldakhil	55	Saudi journalist
Guardian	51	British newspaper
Acarvin	49	American journalist
Omar9944	44	Individual
Alarabiya	42	Saudi television channel

Table 7.3: Higher indegree nodes in the #Women2Drive Twitter network

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Social media network connections among Twitter users



Created with NodeXL (<http://nodexl.codeplex.com>) from the Social Media Research Foundation (<http://www.smrfoundation.org>)

Figure 7.1: Figure 7.2: The core of the #Women2Drive network (created with NodeXL)

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Figure 7.1 visualizes the structure of the core of the #Women2Drive Twitter network, depicting 30 core users, with the edges representing the replying to, mentioning and retweeting relationships among them and node size representing the levels of in-degree centrality, that is, the number of "mentions" and "replies to" the users received. Due to the fact that being mentioned and replied to has been widely considered in the network analysis literature as a rough indicator of influence. Accordingly, the more frequently a participant was targeted by others via mention or reply to, the more central and the important the position that he or she takes (Xu, Sang, Blasiola & Park, 2014).

The figure demonstrates that a few users are most connected and the nodes are not necessarily well connected to each other. Accordingly, among actors with the highest value for in-degree centrality as measured by the number of mentions and replies to received, I found Manal al-Sharif, who is the activist who started the driving campaign in 2011, was mainly responsible for disseminating campaign-related content on Twitter. The next highest in-degree centrality was that of the official Twitter account of the “Women to Drive” campaign “@W2Drive.” Other accounts that had high in-degree values included the account of the digital media website Mashable, which was frequently referred to during the campaign due to its extensive coverage of Women to Drive. Nevertheless, it was apparent throughout the visualization that this account did not engage in any replying to or mentioning relationships with the other core actors in the network. Its silence is not surprising due to its professional status as a reporting account that is mainly responsible for reporting news.

The core of the network was also occupied by the prominent Egyptian-American feminist and journalist Mona Eltahawy, with a 243 in-degree value, followed by the account of the Saudi feminist activist Kholoud Saleh al-Fahed, who defied the driving ban. Other actors with high in-degree centrality measures included the Saudi journalist of *The Financial Times* Ahmed Al-Omran (@ahmed) with 222 references and Waleed Abualkhair (@abualkhair), a Saudi Arabian lawyer and human rights activist who is currently serving a 15-year prison term after being arrested in 2014.

The account of the Saudi feminist activist Eman Alnafjan (@saudiwoman), the author of the Saudiwoman's blog followed. Alnafjan has also been in jail since May 25, 2018, due to her feminist activism. Nora Doaiji (@Ana3rabeya) is a Saudi feminist and researcher at Harvard University. Other key actors also included Essam al-Zamel (@essamz), who is jailed since September 2017, followed by the account of the Saudi feminist activist Najla Hariri (@hariri65) and @Free__Manal, an online organizational account which advocated for the release of the activist Manal al-Sharif when she was in prison.

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Four additional accounts that belong to Saudi feminist activists were also included in the core of the network and belonged to Mai AlShareef; Aziza al-Yousef, a veteran women's rights advocate who was also detained on May 15, 2018; Maysaa al-Amoudi and Rasha al-Duwisi. The Twitter account of Waleed al-Saedi belongs to an individual whose Twitter bio testifies that he is a Saudi national who is interested in politics and literature. He was also found within the network, followed by Ahmad al-Shugairi, a Saudi media figure. It is also noticeable that this particular account did not make any relationships with the central actors surrounding it. Carlos Latuff CarlosLatuff, a Brazilian political cartoonist was also included in the network. In the 20th position was the account of Dima Khatib (@Dima_Khatib), a Syrian journalist who is currently the Managing Director of AJ+, award-winning digital news launched by *Al Jazeera Media Network*.

What are the characteristics of these prominent nodes? And do they share some traits in common? The SNA revealed that a diverse set of actors have been actively engaged in the #Women2Drive network; about 10 out of the 20 actors who occupied a central position in the core network were feminist activists. The rest assumed different social and professional roles including human rights activism, journalism. Others simply shared a common interest in relation to human rights and women's activism. The diversity of the profiles of involved actors also indicated that some of the accounts were completely devoted to the campaign and that they can be referred to as true "issue-professionals," exemplified by the Twitter accounts that are specifically set up for the campaign, @Women2Drive and @Free_Manal. The geographic distribution of this network hinted to the presence of a transnational dimension to the campaign. These high in-degree nodes were not only concentrated in Saudi Arabia, but in different geographic locations. This finding resonates with previous research that indicated that Twitter allows the formation of networked information flow and engagement within diasporic publics (Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira, 2012).

What was also notable was men's participation in the core of the network. Their inclusion indicates that the driving issue was not exclusively portrayed as a women's issue that would solely benefit women. This finding also problematizes the notion that men are often seen as a monolithic group that would directly benefit from the inequality at hand and therefore are reluctant to change the status quo. It is worth mentioning that removing peripheral and less prominent accounts may reduce the range of views and ideas represented in the map. The communities discussed above are not necessarily inclusive or representative of the entire #Women2Drive discursive network. Alternative points of view of less prominent accounts may not be captured in this chapter. However, I do not believe that this omission detracts in anyway from the analysis and observations in this chapter, which focuses primarily on the key actors in the core of the network and their intense interactions.

One might raise the question, though, if centrality in the network is connected to the quality of content generated by the users (Pavan, 2013). To answer this question, I follow Pavan's (2013)

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approach in looking at retweets, which can provide useful insights. In this sense, the number of retweets can be thought of as a proxy for the quality of the content (Barash and Golder, 2011). Figure 7.2 visualizes the same Twitter network by the in-degree value in relation to the retweet rate. The size of each node is reflective of the in-degree value, while nodes' color corresponds to the number of retweets on a scale from black (fewer retweets) to red (more retweets). The location of each node relative to the others is based on the interaction decisions of all of the nodes in the network. In this way, one can think of the map as a picture of the pattern of influence and information flow in the network.

By the frequency rate of retweeted central nodes, we can observe that central nodes are more often retweeted in comparison to others. In this sense, their influential position seems to be connected with the quality of the information they post, which, in turn, can incentivize other users to interact with them.

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Social media network connections among Twitter users

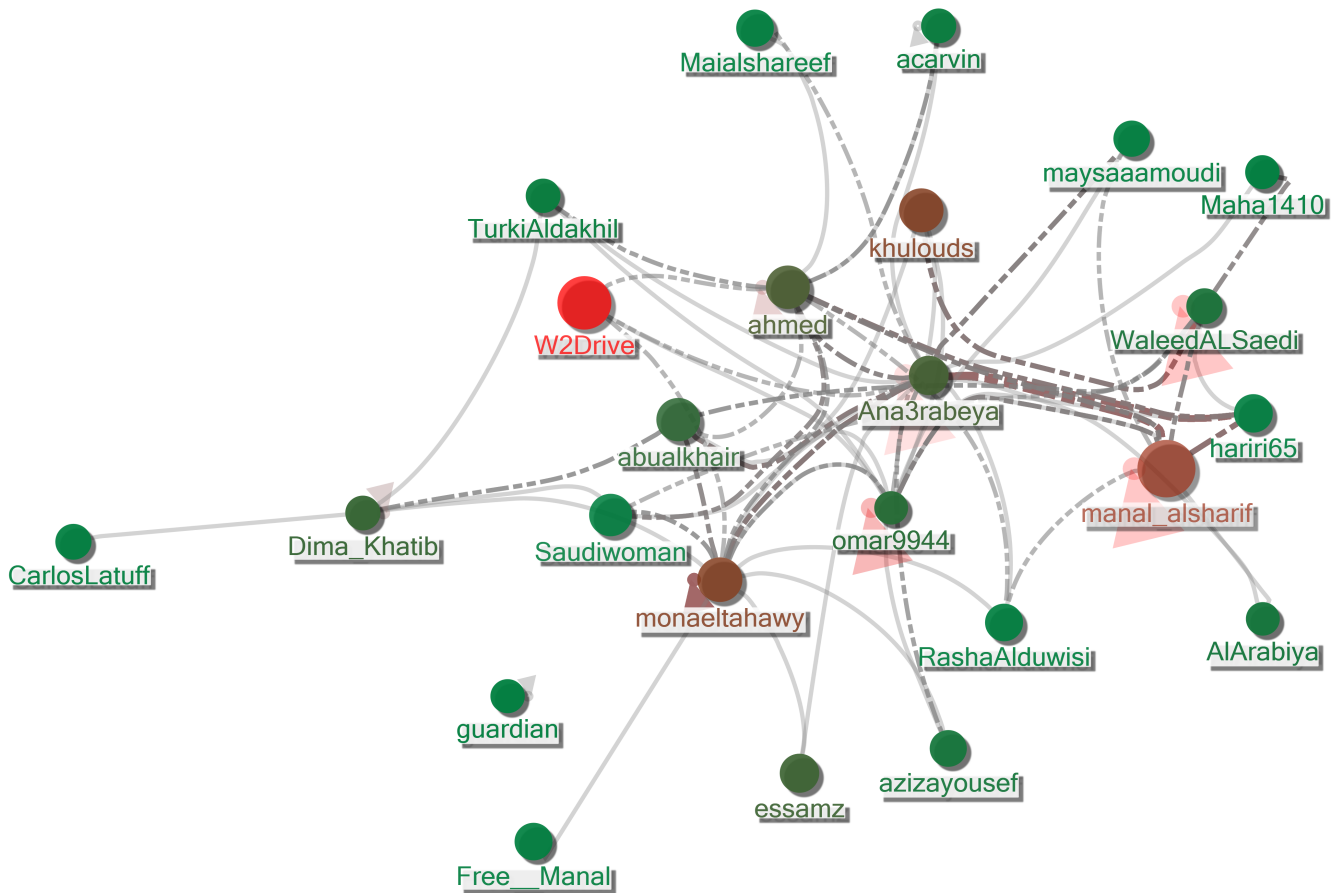


Figure 7.3: The Women2Drive twitter network, nodes are representations proportional to in-degree and number of retweets (created with NodeXL)

While investigating the Kuwaiti Twittersphere and the Twitter accounts of the organizations and the actors who are involved in the “Ensaf” campaign, it was noted that there was not any use of hashtag related data that referred to the campaign at any way. Hence, I could not find any equivalence to the #Women2Drive hashtag in the Kuwaiti case, which was unfortunate since this poses challenges to the symmetry of this comparative study. I will later elaborate in the limitations section of my conclusion.

Upon reflecting on this matter and the overall mode of organizations for both campaigns as discussed in Chapter 4, I accepted that the Saudi case is peculiar since it is a loosely, digital- based campaign to a large extent. Hashtagging offered an easy and inexpensive way for activists, particularly those who lack voices in mainstream media, to draw attention to issues they deem as important. The absence of campaign-related hashtag data in the Kuwaiti campaign is a finding in itself that points to the differences of conduct of communicative practices and that the “Ensaf” campaign was not oriented

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towards the deployment of hashtags in this context. Also, I also sought to compensate for the lack of data in this particular section by conducting a Qualitative Content Analysis on the tweets of the accounts that were associated with the campaign for each of the Saudi and Kuwaiti cases.

7.4.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

Content analysis is a systematic, step-by-step procedure for examining information and content in written, spoken or audio-visual format (Neuman, 1997). It is widely considered as a methodological approach within which various approaches of textual and non-textual analyses can be applied. Content analysis can be used to identify, enumerate and analyze the occurrences of specific words, phrases or other meaningful patterns embedded in texts. By interpreting the frequency distributions and co-occurrences of the single analytical units, this methodological approach allows for systematically drawing valid conclusions from data to the context of their use (Krippendorff, 2004). It therefore generates results that are valid, rigorous, reliable and replicable (Sampert & Trimble, 2010).

This method can be conducted either in a qualitative or quantitative manner—although combinations of both are possible—where quantitative content analysis typically involves “systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1). Qualitative approaches to content analysis require a close reading of textual materials and the reticulation (interpretation) of given texts into new (analytical deconstructive, emancipatory, or critical) narratives accepted within particular scholarly communities. Consequently, the results that emerge from both approaches often take the form of frequency counts or categorized content or even typologies identified in the content.

Anderson and Kanuka (2003) pointed out that content analysis is an appropriate method for online research. Given the type and amount of material available on Twitter, content analysis can provide an effective way to describe and summarize the content because it allows organizing the scattered information stream in a meaningful way and making inferences about the content at hand. The manner in which content analysis is applied can be as versatile as the versatility of the available methodological procedures. For example, the metrics of tweets can be evaluated by analyzing how many replies two particular accounts exchanged within a certain hashtag-based discourse or the most frequent phrases used by a certain cluster of users in the dataset. Qualitative Content Analysis can break down the linguistic features of discourses on Twitter. Using it, one might also be able to compare the topics that emerge on Twitter and the types of users who discuss similar or diverging topics.

Taking these possibilities and the research questions that I previously identified into consideration, I opted for qualitative content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) categorized qualitative content analysis (CA) into three distinct approaches: conventional CA or the “inductive approach;” directed CA, “deductive approach” and a summative CA that is also referred to as the

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"manifest approach." According to Kaid (1989), all three approaches adhere to the naturalistic paradigm and can be used to interpret meanings from the content of text data. In addition, he proposed a 7-step process to qualitative content analysis: (1) deciding on the research questions, (2) choosing the sample for analysis, (3) formulating the categories to be applied, (4) defining the coding process, (5) applying the coding procedures, (6) establishing the trustworthiness of data and (7) analyzing the overall findings of the coding procedure. The major differences between the approaches described above are the initial codes developed by the coder(s), which are generally determined according to the established research purpose.

Because there is insufficient knowledge about the phenomenon I am examining—the usage of Twitter in relation to the driving and nationality campaigns—and bearing in mind the exploratory nature of my research, conducting inductive qualitative content analysis was considered the most appropriate approach. It will accommodate new, emerging, data-driven research categories of analyses which may not be apparent until immersed in the data as well as to develop the aspects of interpretation—the categories—as near as possible to the empirical materials. Elo and Kyngäs (2008) implied that a content analysis approach based on inductive data can be used if the researcher aims to develop a theory, as this approach allows the researcher to move from specific details to the general picture of the phenomenon.

Accordingly, the adopted inductive qualitative content analysis will involve the following: purposive selection of content that is driven by the research questions; an iterative, open inductive approach to content coding (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016), while keeping an eye on the context to increase the authenticity of interpretation and eventually findings that can potentially result in theory building, such as typologies.

7.4.3 Sampling

This section utilizes a purposeful sampling of the collected tweets. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases. Although there are several different purposeful sampling techniques, criterion sampling appears to be widely used. It involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups that are especially knowledgeable about the particular phenomenon of interest.

Accordingly, a criterion sampling of all the tweets that are generated by @W2Drive and @Oct26drive took place. These two accounts were specifically chosen because of their status as issue-specific Twitter accounts that were entirely dedicated to the campaign. Examining these accounts will help us to understand how the content is being utilized in the networked exchange that took place.

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Concerning the Kuwaiti case, the same sampling strategy was implemented in relation to the official account of the Women's Cultural and Social Society (@WCSS_Q8) and the account of the grassroots "Kuwaiti Women without Borders" group (@KWWNLC), which is a relatively small account, that is currently not active, with an overall of 424 tweet messages and 590 followers. The tweets from all accounts were retrieved using R, an open-source programming language that can perform data mining related tasks such as data extraction, clustering and classification (Kosorus, Honigl & Kung, 2011).

The usage of the `twitteR` package, whose main purpose is to provide an access to Twitter API, has resulted in retrieving 2,626 tweets in Arabic and English (original tweets, mentions and replies to, but not retweets) from the @W2Drive Twitter account. The tweets spanned the range from the creation of the Twitter account on May 6, 2011, to October 19, 2013, the date of the last tweet in that account. It is worth pointing out that the last posted tweet in @W2Drive account is a tweet that expressed the account's support for the women who were initiating the new stage of the driving campaign in October 2013, while inviting their followers to join the new campaign's Twitter account @Oct26driving and back up the new group's campaigning efforts.

Thus, 2,048 tweets (original tweets, mentions and replies to, but not retweets) in Arabic and English were also extracted following the same procedure from the @Oct26driving Twitter account starting from the date of the creation of the account, October, 9 2013 to the end of December 2015. Similarly, 1398 tweets were harvested from the @WCSS_Q8 account which covered the period from March 2012 till December 2014 in addition to 253 tweets (original tweets, mentions and replies to, but not retweets) from the @KWWNLC Twitter account from June 2013 until April 2014. All tweets that have been collected were later converted into a .CSV (Comma Separated Values) file for data cleaning and coding.

7.4.4 Procedure

When performing content analysis on Twitter data, tweets can be regarded as single sampling units (e.g., Krippendorff, 2004). In principle, defining a tweet as the sampling unit follows clear-cut formal means (syntax): a posting, restricted to 140 characters, which may include in-text URLs and attached visual materials, sent by a unique user at a particular moment. Thus, except for a few cases, tweets can also be regarded as units of meaning (semantics).

The coding procedure took place without relying on predetermined categories. I have read every single tweet in the dataset, while qualitatively evaluating the associated keywords, phrases, images and the overall intent and content of each tweet to determine the overall theme. Thus, I perceived codes as

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descriptive labels, usually one or two words long that describe condensed meaning units (the tweets in our case).

After this initial examination, certain general categories began to emerge from the data itself that resulted from sorting the initial codes into categories and grouping together those codes that were related to each other through their content or context. Others proved to be irrelevant. As the coding procedure resulted in a plethora of codes, I found it useful to assimilate smaller groups of closely related codes into subcategories that related to each other through their content and could then be grouped into categories. The coding relied on the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), whereby newly coded tweets were compared to those previously coded to ensure that the validity and integrity of emergent constructs held. This process was revised step-by-step through a feedback loop (Kohlbacher, 2006) as the categories that emerged went through multiple stages of revision. They were constantly modified, merged or even discarded as an outlier if other tweets could not be combined in the category.

Relying on this approach allowed me to develop new insights from the data. Also, the inductive nature of this approach means that a potential outcome is theory building in the form of typologies (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009), which characterizes the content and can also be used for exploratory research when little is known about the phenomenon being studied.

7.5 The Results of the Qualitative Content Analysis

The data analysis brought out about six major categories of tweets explained by another 25 subcategories based on their relatedness. This process identified the following six broader categories of tweets: media-related, campaign-related, mobilization-related, action-related, feminist-related and public-outreach-related. Another category of tweets, others, was also identified but omitted in the analysis as it included posts not fitting in the other categories such as the sharing of general quotes or posting tweets that celebrated the Saudi national day. The general classification scheme for the tweets can be found in Appendix E, while Tables 7.4 and 7.5 below display the detailed breakdown of the tweets per general category and sub-category, with their percentage of contribution to the total makeup.

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Category	W2Drive	Oct26 Driving
A- Media related	20.1	14.2
1- Local mainstream media coverage	6.6	2.6
2- Regional mainstream media coverage	1.2	0.7
3- International mainstream media coverage	2.3	2.2
4- Alternative media coverage	2.6	2.9
5- Campaign's own alternative communication channel coverage	1.2	5.0
6- Dissemination of local news	5.2	0.5
7- Dissemination of international news	0.4	0.0
8- Targeting influential media outlets	0.6	0.3
B- Campaign related	10.7	23.4
9- Providing information and updates about the campaign.	8.1	8.3
10- The articulation of the campaign's demands and claims.	1.2	7.7
11- Raising criticism	1.4	7.4
C- Mobilization related	9.5	11.6
12- Call for on-ground action	2.7	1.0
13- Call for online action	5.2	7.0
14- Encouragement and moral support	1.6	3.6
D- Action related	5.4	35.7
15- Providing physical evidence of success	2.4	13.2
16- Sharing personal testimonies.	1.4	17.3
17- Demonstrating Saudi public figures' support	0.6	2.8
18- Demonstrating transnational support	1.0	2.4
E- Feminist related	37.0	4.9
19- Feminist critical posts	6.9	4.0
20- Sharing general feminist-related news or articles	25.8	0.5
21- Empowerment and motivation	4.3	0.4
F- Public outreach	13.4	10.0
22- Engaging in arguments and debates	3.6	2.9
23- Answering users' questions	8.7	5.9
24- Users' input	0.1	1.0
25- Expressing gratitude	1.0	0.2
G- Other	3.9	0.2
Total posts	100.0 (2626)	100.0 (2048)

Table 7.4: The breakdown of the tweets per general category, sub-category

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Category	WCSS_Q8	KWWNLC
A – Media related	24.3	19.3
1- Local mainstream media coverage	5	10
2- Regional mainstream media coverage	0.0	0.0
3- International mainstream media coverage	0.0	0.0
4- Alternative media coverage	2.9	1.7
5- Campaign’s own alternative communication channel coverage	2.1	2.5
6- Dissemination of local news	14	4
7- Dissemination of international news	0.0	0.0
8- Targeting influential media outlets	0.3	1.1
9- Providing information and updates about the campaign	3.2	12.2
10- The articulation of the campaign’s demands and claims	4.1	3.1
11- Raising criticism	2.1	6.5
C – Mobilization related	12.5	10.4
12- Calling for on- ground action	6	4.3
13- Calling for online action	4.8	3.6
14- Encouragement and moral support	1.7	2.5
D – Action related	14.6	13.7
15- Providing physical evidence of success	6.8	8.5
16- Sharing personal testimonies.	0.0	0.0
17- Demonstrating public figures support	7.8	5.2
18- Demonstrating transnational support	0.0	0.0
E – Feminist related	19.7	20.6
19- Feminist critical posts	7.2	5.3
20- Sharing general feminist-related news or articles	11.4	14.6
21- Empowerment and motivation	1.1	0.7
F – Public outreach	7	6.2
22- Engaging in arguments and debates	3	1.5
23- Answering users’ questions	2	3.2
24- Twitter Users’ input	0.8	0.0
25- Expressing gratitude	1.2	1.5
G – Other	12.5	8
Total posts	100.0 (2,048)	100.0 (253)

Table 7.5: The breakdown of the tweets per general category, sub-category.

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We can see from Table 7.4 that in the case of the @W2Drive Twitter account, feminist-related tweets constituted the majority of the sample as they accounted for 37% of the overall content, followed by media-related category (20.5%) and the tweets that were under the public outreach category (13.4%). The fourth place was reserved for the tweets that were specifically related to the campaign (10.7%), followed by the mobilization-related category which accounted for 9.5%. The tweets that belonged to the action-related category made up about 5.4% of the overall collected data. The other category made up 1.9%. The picture was a bit different when it came to the @Oct26driving Twitter account. Action-related tweets accounted for the majority of tweets (35.7%), followed by the campaign-related category (23.4%), media-related category (14.2%) and then the mobilization-related category (11.6%). The tweets under the public outreach category constituted up to (10.0%) of the collected tweets, followed by the tweets that did not fit elsewhere and were under the other category (0.2%).

It appears that both Twitter accounts converged on being media-focused as well as campaign-focused because both of these categories were in their top four most prominent categories in terms of the classification of the tweets. It was noticeable that the content in the case of the @W2Drive Twitter was more feminist-oriented, providing feminist-related content either by sharing general feminist-related news or articles, providing empowering and motivational content and offering feminist critique. In comparison, the @Oct26Driving was more outcome-oriented, providing physical evidence of the success of the campaign, sharing personal testimonies from its supporters and demonstrating the local level and transnational support of the campaign.

As far as concerned the Kuwaiti campaign, feminist related posts constituted the largest category of the tweets sent by @WCSS_Q8 (37%). The majority of the tweets that belonged to this general category included the circulation of general feminist news about women's empowerment (25.85%). The media-related category, which included the circulation of news articles that covered the activities of WCSS, made up 14%. Almost a quarter of the tweets that were generated by @KWWNLC were about the "Ensaf" campaign (23.4%), which included providing information and updates about the campaign, articulating of claims and demands and raising criticism about the lack of political solution regarding nationality. Media-related content tackled the coverage of the campaign in local media and made up 19.3%. This data shows us that @KWWNLC was more involved in tweeting about the campaign than @WCSS_Q8, which is not surprising because @KWWNLC was dedicated entirely to the nationality cause, in contrast to WCSS, which adopted different causes.

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7.5.1 Media Coverage Tweets

Concerning the driving campaign, both Saudi accounts played a role in closely monitoring the media coverage of the campaign. The subcategory of tweets that were concerned with disseminating campaign-related news from local mainstream media outlets constituted 6.6% of all tweets within the @W2Drive account and 2.6% in the case of the @Oct26Driving account.

The coverage that originated from regional mainstream media made up 1.2% and 0.7% in each account respectively. The international mainstream media coverage sub-category, on the other hand, accounted for 2.3% and 2.2% of the tweets. These three sub-categories included the circulation of articles that reported individual stories of women driving on the roads in defiance the ban, the detention of some activists, statements by government officials about this issue and links to televised interviews with the activists in addition to commentary pieces that discussed the driving issue. The results indicated that both Twitter accounts sought to incorporate the coverage of the campaign from mainstream newspapers and outlets to fulfill the function of providing an effective news stream to their followers. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 6, most often, the process of getting media attention is difficult for activists due to the limited carrying capacity of traditional media outlets and government censorship as our Saudi cause indicates.

Thus, circulating links about the campaign from accredited and widely read news outlets such as CNN, BBC and Aljazeera served the purpose of demonstrating the diffusion and increasing visibility of movement messages into the mediated public sphere. It also showed that the campaign managed to capture the attention of major local, regional and international press outlets. Some attention was paid to incorporating the coverage of the campaign by alternative media outlets into the accounts' feeds, as they included high traffic blogs (Saudiwomanblog, Maialshareef.blogspot), WordPress and electronic journals (Sabq.com). About 2.6% of the collected tweets coming from the @W2Drive account belonged to this sub-category in comparison with 2.9% of the tweets in the @Oct26driving Twitter stream.

A separate sub-category was dedicated to the tweets that were passing information from/and about the campaign's official communication channels such as its websites, Facebook pages and YouTube channel in the case of the Oct26driving campaign, which operated live stream broadcasts interviewing activists through its own YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/oct26driving/videos>). The tweets that belonged to this category have accounted for 1.2% and 5.0% of the tweets in each account, respectively. Examples are included below:

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We have changed the link to our Facebook page after it was blocked in Saudi. The new link is [#Right2Dignity](http://www.facebook.com/right2dignity). (@W2Drive, 2012)

The live stream broadcast will begin in half an hour with journalist and activist Maysa al-Amoudi through the campaign's channel on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/user/oct26driving>. (@Oct26Driving, 2014)

This move of leveraging the capabilities offered by commercial media platforms to the advantage of the movement points to the activists' realization of the potential advantages of gaining autonomy through the establishment of movement-associated, media-mediated counter-publics (McDonald, 2015). They could also reclaim the affordances potentials provided in these platforms and to shift power away from journalists. These platforms provide a relatively open and interactive infrastructure for disseminating movement-oriented content; news, pictures and videos can be easily published and distributed as well as communicated beyond the traditional media outlets. The Twitter posts that shared other local news articles comprised 3.7% and 12.9% of the overall tweets. They usually contained hyperlinked URLs or quotes that referred to general topics related to the local Saudi context, ranging from traffic collisions to human rights violations. The sharing of other international news articles was less prominent in both cases (0.4% and 0%).

Finally, the Twitter posts that were under the media outreach sub-category were those that targeted and interacted with influential media outlets or media figures for attention, usually in requests for reporting or retweets. Those tweets constituted 0.6% and 0.3% of the overall tweets in each account, respectively. What was striking in the Kuwaiti campaign was the complete absence of the transnational dimension when it came down to the reporting aspect of the campaign. So, while both @WCSS_Q8 and @KWWNLC featured media coverage of the campaign or the activities that were being carried out, all the reporting came from local news sources exemplified by Kuwaiti newspapers such as *Alanbaa* and TV channels such as *Alqabas* and *Alrai Television*.

The findings indicate that mainstream media outlets remain an important source for the reporting dimension of movements and that they have not been replaced yet by digital media. Hence, the use of digital media by no means removes the former dependency of social movements on the media. What is typical, rather, is the increasing degree of differentiation within media infrastructures and the interdependencies of the overall media ecology, in which digital media plays a critical but not exclusive role (van Dijck & Poell, 2013).

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7.5.2 Campaign-related Tweets

As regards the tweets that were under the campaign-related category, providing accurate information about the campaign has comprised 8.1% and 8.8% of the tweets in @W2Drive @Oct26Driving accounts, respectively. The articulation of the campaign's related demands accounted for 1.2% and 7.7%. I defined making claims as the articulation of political demands with specific content—the claim—and the public staging of this demand—claims-making (Lindekilde, 2013). Posts that posed direct criticism of the situation accounted for 1.4% and 7.4% of the total percentage of posts.

The content analysis brought to light that Twitter was utilized as a first-hand account to provide precise information about the campaign, its objectives and the individuals behind it. It was also used to provide real-life updates that originated from the source, debunking any false information. The following extracts, which originate from the @W2Drive, account are examples of the tweets that sought to clarify the campaign's objectives:

The objective of our campaign is to end all forms of discrimination against women and to restore their rights, which have been limited by the current restrictive social traditions that are contrary to the Islamic Shari'a. (@W2Drive, 2011)

Our campaign is concerned with all women's issues in the country [of Saudi Arabia]. For those who accuse us of dismissing more important women's issues, we have one simple question: what have you done to address these important issues? (W2Drive, 2011)

When it came to the articulation of political claims, @W2Drive denounced the arrests of women, appealed to the authorities to release the detained activists and published an annual periodical that stressed the necessity of lifting the driving ban. The @Oct26driving Twitter account issued statements demanding the independence of the judiciary system and the establishment of a suitable political climate that respects human rights. Examples are being presented below:

We stress the need for an independent judiciary system and the implementation of procedural safeguards to protect women's activists from facing sanctions that lack a legal basis. (@Oct26driving, 2014)

The Kingdom is bound by the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights to guarantee the right of movement for all of its citizens without discrimination based on sex. (@Oct26driving, 2014)

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These examples demonstrate that Twitter was viewed as beneficial to the visibility of political claims on the premise that it could potentially offer better opportunities for non-institutional actors to participate in the political claims-making process and public debates, as mentioned in Chapter 5. Tweets were coded as critical if they expressed a critical introspection, opinion or evaluation. Satirical jokes and rhetorical questions were also included in this category. The proportion of critical posts was much higher in the @Oct26Driving account (7.4%) and sharper in terms of tone; they were also directly addressed to the government and/or religious establishment. In comparison, the critical Twitter posts in the @W2Drive account only accounted for 1.4% of all tweets. Extracts of critical tweets from @Oct26driving can be found below:

\$30 billion have been given to Egypt in the form of financial assistance package, while Saudi women remain confined and not able to move freely, needing to hire drivers which takes a toll on their budgets. Until when this will continue? (@Oct26driving, 2015)

One question! How are we supposed to fight religious extremism when the government intimidates the activists who fight religious extremists with imprisonment and flogging charges? Such as [listing the name of the activists] Suad al-Shammari, Loujin, Maysa, Rafiq, and many others? (Oct26driving, 2015)

The demands to allow women to drive have continued through the reigns of three kings, two Gulf wars, the revolutions of the Arab Spring and at every single time we are being told that the time is not right. When is the right time then? (Oct26driving, 2015)

These tweets expressed disapproval of the decision to Egypt a \$30 billion aid package to boost its economy while Saudi women waste their monthly budgets on hiring drivers to drive them to work. Moreover, some tweets questioned the willingness of Saudi Arabia in its efforts to counter terrorism; several tweets raised the question, “Why are the authorities harassing the ‘progressive’ figures who are actually fighting the manifestations of religious extremism in the Saudi society?”

In the framing counter-terrorism as an issue of common interest for both parties, the state and the activists, lies an attempt to reach a consensus with the state by capitalizing on the state’s efforts to improve its image to the West and to promote itself as a modern society, especially after 9/11, when the West criticized Saudi Arabia for its alleged role in breeding and sponsoring Wahabi extremism (Alrasheed, 2013).

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Both @KWWNLC and @WCSS_Q8 used Twitter to disseminate information about the campaign, articulate the campaign's demands and raise criticism. Viewing both accounts, it was clear that @KWWNLC to a greater extent than @WCSS_Q8 attempted to explain the campaign and provide a clear picture of the campaign to the audience. This intention is exemplified by the following extracted tweets:

We prefer to resolve this issue at a local level by reaching out to officials and raising awareness about its scope to the public through arranging local events and seminars. (@KWWNLC, 2014)

We are going to publicize the campaign in various local media outlets. And if this doesn't work out, we are going to internationalize this issue in case we exhausted all our means to resolve it internally. (@KWWNLC, 2014)

What was observable throughout was that the @WCSS_Q8 contained information about the organization's activities, events or other news, facts, reports or information relevant to the organization's stakeholders—more than the campaign itself. This content was expected due to the diversity of issues that are covered by this organization and the wide range of issues that it adopts, including fighting obesity in children, raising awareness about women's health, organizing charity and fundraising for Palestinian children and displaced people inside Syria. @WCSS-Q8's tweets publicized its social initiatives, transnational campaigns and local events. The articulation of claims was less prevalent on both accounts, which was surprising. The presence of basic political claims in the account of WCSS_Q8 concerned the necessity of democratic rule. While Criticism was not very prevalent on these examined accounts, with the exception of one tweet by @KWWNLC that criticized the positions of parliamentary candidates who did not support granting women's full citizenship rights.

7.5.3 Mobilization- related Tweets

Similar to communication on Facebook, communication on Twitter may catalyze mobilization, which was clear in the posts under the mobilization category. These posts were (1) calling for on-ground action; (2) encouraging online action or (3) providing encouragement and moral support to the participants, supporters and sympathizers with the campaign. The results concerning the @W2Drive and @Oct26driving accounts show that calls for participation in on-ground action were hardly explicitly mentioned in the tweets.

The attempts to mobilize people through direct calls for action were relatively scarce in both cases (2.7% and 1.0%, respectively). A possible explanation of this result lies most probably in the

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context; opportunities for collective action are restricted because public protests and direct actions are prohibited by law in Saudi Arabia. Another alternative explanation is that women's movements most often mobilize through gendered structures and frames in what Ferree and Mueller (2004) have "gendered repertoires of contention." As a result, there is a good reason to assume that feminist mobilizations are more likely to use non-confrontational tactics or unobtrusive repertoires (Katzenstein 1990; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004).

Regardless of the reason, the few calls for on-ground action ranged from asking women to start visibly driving in the streets in challenge to the ban to filing individual lawsuits against the traffic directorate to writing direct letters to the king:

For those who are willing to drive, the purpose of this action is not to drive discreetly to avoid being caught, but to declare your resistance to the ban publicly. Even if you get caught, it is recognition of the exercise of your right and your resistance. (@W2Drive, 2011)

Don't confine yourself by driving in the back alleys without being seen. This act needs witnesses. (@W2Drive, 2011)

While analyzing the content of the Twitter posts that called for on-ground mobilization in the @Oct26Driving, I observed the occurrence of new type of on-ground action that did not pop up in the previous account: encouraging the male supporters of the campaign to stop using cars for one day in solidarity with women, while documenting their experience by using the campaign's hashtag and the Arabic equivalent for #He_for_she hashtag. Again, men were perceived by the campaign as potential allies in this struggle. This also brought to light the evolution and diversification of the campaign's tactics towards more innovative acts. Here, the line between on-ground and online action becomes increasingly blurry. What appears to be an on-ground act (men temporarily refraining from driving cars), is, in fact, an action that intersects with the mediated aspect of the campaign, especially if men opted to use the campaign's hashtag.

There was a larger volume of tweets that contained calls to action on the web; they comprised 5.2% and 7.0% of the overall tweets. This sub-category contained a wide range of activities, including urging users to tweet about the campaign, participating in collective e-mail campaigns, circulating online petitions and initiating discourses around hashtags in which like-minded people can join:

A Saudi hashtag #women2king has been launched. It might help Saudi women to speak up. (@W2Drive, 2011)

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More than 70,000 signatures have been collected so far that demand to drop all charges against Manal Alsharif <http://bit.ly/kg7EIL> # Women2Drive #Sawagna #FreeManal. (@W2Drive, 2011)

As shown above, we can clearly see that activists tended to diversify their action repertoires besides introducing online dimensions of existing offline repertoires (e.g., petition signing or letter writing). The last sub-category was comprised of the tweets that sought to encourage others to persist in their support of the campaign:

If Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks had been indifferent towards the injustices that they faced, African Americans would still be barred from entering white restaurants and being treated as full humans. (@Oct26Driving, 2014)

The participation rate in the campaign is promising. People are no longer in support of the campaign because of the driving issue, but because they are genuinely interested in protecting human rights. (@Oct26Driving, 2014)

These tweets attempt to provide encouragement and moral support to the participants, supporters and sympathizers of the campaign. There has been long-standing interest within social movements in the larger question of how social movements can arouse people's motivation for participation once ideological affinity for the cause has been generated (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). Growing technologies have also been a topic of interest in regards to impacting the motivations of social movement participation. Social movements have increased access to people and an increased ability to publicize their cause through emerging technologies; it has been observed that new technologies could be a contributing factor in motivating individuals who might not have shown an interest in movements before (Garrett, 2006).

Concerning the Kuwaiti accounts, a marginal number of tweets directed coordinated action or resistance tactics, which made up only 12.5% and 10.4% of the overall sample. There were not enough examples in my sample to make Twitter an important impetus for mobilization efforts as the posts were too infrequent to be considered representative of a larger trend of spreading action through Twitter. It was interesting to observe that the typologies of actions differed significantly in the Kuwaiti accounts, in which the call for online-actions was limited to calling for following the account or retweeting its content. The call for on-ground action meant inviting people to register as members in the "Kuwaiti

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Women without Borders” group or supporting parliamentary candidates who might be favorable towards legislating women-friendly policies once they reach parliament:

Our group announces the opening of membership to those wishing to join. Please communicate with @kalhendi or @Omfahad_1960. Thank you. (@KWWNLC, 2013)

After closely monitoring the performance of the Members of Parliament in the past period, our group has announced that it supports some upcoming candidates. Our choice was difficult as many former deputies have failed us and didn’t serve well our cause. (@KWWNLC, 2013)

It was interesting to observe that the @KWWNLC account called people to avoid sit-ins or demonstrations and take the approach of discretion and working within the existing legal frameworks, as can be seen in the following summary of a series of tweets that tackled this matter:

Despite the injustice and blatant discriminatory behavior against Kuwaiti women who are married to non-Kuwaitis, we as a group reject any calls that would endanger people's lives. Thus, we ask you not to join any demonstrations or sit-ins, as it is better to address our claims through the existing legal frameworks. The constitution has guaranteed to regulate our civil matters. (@KWWNLC, 2013)

7.5.4 Action related Tweets

Social movements typically address their message simultaneously to two distinct targets, the state and the general public. On the one hand, they press the authorities for recognition in order to get their demands met, at least in part. On the other hand, they seek to obtain public support and try to sensitize the population to their cause, making the attention of public opinion extremely important (Taylor, Kent & White, 2001).

Given the national context in the case of Saudi Arabia, the limited supply of information under an authoritarian regime means that individuals can expect to pay high personal costs (arrest, incarceration, legal action) if they take part in unsuccessful movements. The key challenge for the formation of a successful movement is that potential sympathizers will only join the movement if they are convinced that others will do the same. Twitter can be helpful in terms of providing individuals with information that allows for a better calculation of their “individual risk threshold;” the responses and reactions to the movement may trigger informational cascades that inspire those who are on the fence to join the movement (McAdam, 1996).

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By circulating tangible evidence that displays the positive reactions the campaign has received so far in the form of photo or video evidence of individuals who responded positively to the on-ground calls of the campaign (2.4% and 13.2%), movements demonstrate the social support that the campaign is enjoying and possibly alter people's perceptions about the political opportunity structure in place that is connected to their rationale for acting. Of course, the opportunities and threats in the context of social movements are not objective categories per se, "but depend on the kind of collective attribution that the movement gives" (McAdam et al. 2001, p. 45).

The sharing of personal testimonies accounted for 1.4% and 17.3% of the overall tweets in @Women2Drive and @Oct26Driving, respectively. These written, audio or visual testimonies were mainly concerned with providing first-hand accounts about women's real experiences with the ban and the daily struggles that accompanied it. These testimonies reflect an awareness of public opinion when it comes to the outcomes of social movements. While it seems rather obvious that movement related-action raises the awareness of the population over certain political issues, outpourings of support in public opinion can also help movements to reach their goals by making decision-makers more responsive to their demands; several scholars have stressed the role of public opinion in legislative change (e.g., Costain & Majstorovic, 1994), though not always related to the direct impact of social movements.

Tweets that sought to demonstrate solidarity statements coming from elites accounted for 0.6% and 2.8%, respectively. I conceptualized elites as high-profile, influential figures who were well known in the public sphere. Thus, obtaining their support could be helpful in increasing the legitimacy of the campaign in the eyes of their supporters. Examples of such tweets can be read below:

The Saudi Princess Ameera Altaweel announces that she will drive her own car in defiance of the ban. #Women2Drive #SaudiWomen #WomenRights #KeepDriving. (@W2Drive, 2011)

The Saudi religious clerk Salman Alawdah backs up women's driving http://youtu.be/EM6xU_rXmwA. (@W2Drive, 2011)

Lastly, some tweets were devoted to demonstrating evidence of transnational solidarity actions; these tweets accounted for 1.0% and 2.4% in each account, respectively. This sub-category is concerned with showing the transnational impact of the campaign that transcends the local scope, where solidarity is forged on the basis of activism against the material realities of gender discrimination. In connection to that, some researchers have argued that Twitter in particular has facilitated the development of "weak ties" that allow activists to reach to new constituencies and contribute to the construction of collective modalities and transnational solidarity action as evidenced

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by the transnationally inflected protest actions taking place at the conjunction of digital spaces and street protests in support of lifting the ban (Valenzuela, Correa & Zúñiga, 2018). Concerning the “Ensaf” campaign, the action-related tweets comprised 14.6% and 13.7% of the overall tweets, respectively. They were mainly concentrated on providing evidence of the progress of the campaign in terms of taken actions, such as updating their followers with the latest meetings with deputies, ministers:

Our group is very thankful for receiving the invitation of the candidate of the first constituency Dr. Masouma al-Mubarak, whom we met and who listened to our demands. We wish good luck to everyone. (@KWWNLC, 2013)

The General Coordinator of the Kuwaiti Women without Borders group, Alia al-Dulaimi, has contacted the managing director of the Association of Social Workers and Board Member Dr. Sana al-Asfour. A date has been set for a meeting regarding Kuwaiti women citizenship rights. (@KWWNLC, 2014)

7.5.5 Feminist-related Tweets

For @W2Drive and @Oct26Driving, the tweets that belonged to the feminist-related category contained links to general feminist news (25.8% and 0.5%), posed feminist critiques (6.9% and 4.0%) or sought to empower and motivate women (4.3% and 0.4%). The messages that posted general feminist-related news contained links to articles and commentaries that discussed a wide array of topics including women’s political participation, their role in the labor force, equal citizenship, and gender-based violence as well as sexism and misogyny. I defined feminist critique as making judgments about things with reference to a certain standard (Humm, 1986). The tweets that were coded as feminist critique centered primarily on criticizing the ban of driving, the male guardianship system and the lack of codified personal status law:

Women’s fate, regardless of their age, still hangs in the hands of their fathers/husbands/male judges, while the Ministry of Justice is still discussing the codification of personal status law. (@W2Drive, 2012)

Most of the Saudi decisions on women’s rights are in sum: preventing women from halal [permissible] actions so that men do not fall into haram [forbidden] actions. (@W2Drive, 2012)

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We can see that the focus of the coded tweets is on the localized core feminist issues, such as inclusion and the access to the justice system, oppressive practices found in the male guardianship system and violence against women. These are large-scale social issues that should be understood as systemic rather than isolated phenomena. For the @WCSS_Q8 account, the tweets the disseminated feminist related news concentrated on the achievement of Kuwaiti women such as Kuwaiti women being appointed as judges for the first time and news associated with international women's days:

The Administrative Court overturns the Ministry of Justice's decision to allow only males to apply for the post of the prosecutor. (@WCSS_Q8, 2014)

Photos for the celebrations that took place in the headquarters of the Office of the United Nations in Kuwait on the occasion of International Women's Day under the theme "Equality for Women." (@WCSS_Q8, 2014)

Some tweets also posed criticism of discrimination against women in public office, particularly women's in the case of a governmental job application ad that specified men are only the ones who should apply for the job, as well as blatant institutionalized discrimination. Only a few tweets included motivating content. Those that did express enthusiasm for the recent decision that allowed women to be appointed as prosecutors, empowering women and women not allowing anyone to take away their rights from them.

7.5.6 Public Outreach

The tweets that were evaluated for public outreach were based upon four sub-categories: conversational tweets (3.6% and 2.9%), answering to users' questions (8.7% and 5.9%), asking for users' input and feedback (0.1% and 1.0%) and expressing gratitude (1.0 and 0.2%). This category has mostly contained tweets with an @ symbol or a question mark, any direct question (Naaman et al., 2010) and any tweet link to a poll.

The analysis indicated that conversational tweets have represented live discussions and debates with Twitter users, in which arguments and counter-arguments were expressed and exchanged. Accommodating users' questions also constituted a separate sub-category on its own, where the administrators of the accounts made an effort to provide answers to users' questions and queries. These responses give the perception of reciprocity between account administrators and their followers. Asking for users' input was composed of the tweets that sought to get users' opinions and/or feedback through using polls about certain issues, such as asking their followers to mention one of the difficult

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situations that they might have encountered as a result of the driving ban, how many of the women had a valid driving license that was issued abroad and what ways express their discontent with the status quo.

The final sub-category was mainly concerned with expressing gratitude and appreciation to the supporters of the campaign. Overall, I found that the public outreach category sought to fulfill the function of facilitating interaction between the account administrators, Twitter users and the development of a discursive community. As regards the Kuwaiti accounts, the majority of tweets that belonged to this category included broad rhetorical slogans and statements or sending greetings to women on Mother's day or the month of Ramadan, making up 7% and 6.2% of the collected tweets for the WCSS and "Kuwaiti Women without Borders" accounts, respectively.

Given that it is common to use Twitter in a conversational manner with commentary under tweets, it is surprising that this functionality was rarely used in the case of the Kuwaiti groups and organizations. Both failed to engage users in debates and discussions about the nationality issue; thus the interactivity dimension emerged as less significant than expected because there were few attempts to start a conversation with the audience or initiate interactive discourses.

7.6 Conclusion:: What Can we Infer from the Results?

My inquiry is motivated by the conviction that analyzing the tweeted messages can provide us with rich information concerning the context, content and dynamics of the campaigns that took place in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Taking the example of the "Women to Drive" campaign, analyzing the content of the tweets allows us to address the question of who is involved in the campaign, as there have been a series of tweets aimed at revealing the identities of individuals who were part of the original Women to Drive campaign in 2011.

These tweets stated that 42 Saudi citizens (33 female and 9 male activists) were involved with the core of the network. They were divided into three teams: (1) a team of consultants to guide the other members of the campaign and give advice on matters concerning access to media and legal channels; (2) a planning and implementation team to draft an awareness plans, write reports and communicate with officials and lastly (3) a media and communication team to spread awareness about the demands of the campaign throughout social networking sites and other media channels.

The members of the campaign were Areej Al-majed, Alaa Al-ghamadi, Emthethal Al-otabi, Amjad Al-omari, Ameena Al-enzi, Eman Al-omar, Eman Al-enzi, Dr. Badriya Alboshar, Bashayer Abdullah, Thani Al-gehani, Hosni Al-shrif, Dana Al-faqeeh, Rasha Al-dowasi, Rasha Al-malaki, Rawan Kurdi, Sara Al-saif, Souood Al-dosari, Talal Al-ateeq, Abdullah Al-alami, Abed Almohsen Al-ajami, Aziza Al-yousef, Fouz Abdullah, Luluwa Eed, Mohammed Al-khalidi, Mohammed Al-shari,

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Mariam Al-balousi, Manal Al-sharif, May Al-sharif, Maisaa Al-amoudi, Maisaa Al-manea, Najlaa Hariri, Nawal Al-zoori, Noora Al-rooqi, Noora Mansoori, Noora Abdulkarim, Hatoon Al-rasheed, Hadeya Al-mahana, Hend Al-zahed, Hanadi Al-rasi, Haya Al-hajeelan, Wael Al-roomi and Yazeed Al-harbi.

It was also emphasized that the campaign was administered and run by Saudi nationals and that none of the organizers referred to any “external” organization or entity. Nonetheless, if non-Saudis opted to support the campaign, then we are open to welcome them. Portraying the campaign as entirely Saudi revealed a cautionary position when it comes to the leadership and ownership aspect. This caution is also indicative of the “back-then” and current resurgence in nationalist discourse in the public sphere, in which feminists’ potential involvement with foreign alliances, presence abroad or even dealings with foreign media is often met with suspicion or accusations of treason and disloyalty to the state.

The tactic of declaring the “sovereignty” of the campaign—at least on a discursive level—seems to be used to legitimize the campaign in the eyes of those who might be skeptical of it. Sovereignty claims also assured the audience that the campaign did not aim to endanger the national fabric of the country, but was an integral part of it instead. The tensions over who belongs to the movement and who does not, also hint at the consequences of the deployment of nationalist discourse, not only as a part of the political project but also as a cognitive, affective discursive category. The major part of Yuval-Davis’s work describes “politics of belonging” as “the dirty work of boundary maintenance,” separating the world into “us” and “them” (Yuval-Davis, 2007). Her contribution shows that the construction of monolithic, single collectivities through nationalist narratives is a central instrument in the nationalist repertoire to legitimize the exclusion of the “other.” Thus, the question of belonging becomes a strong marker not only of collective and individual identities, but also of distinction and social exclusion within social movements. It could be instrumental in undermining the transnational feminist solidarity aspect in our case.

As with regards to men’s relationship with the campaign, men’s relationship to feminism in general is complex and contested (Bryson, 1999). There is much debate about what men can and should contribute to the feminist project that is underpinned by different understandings of feminism. Beliefs about men’s relationship to feminism also rest on particular assumptions about the nature of gendered power relations. Consequently, men have responded in various ways to feminist movements, engaging in forms of gender politics from pro-feminist support to reassertion of male power through “men’s rights” movements (Ashe, 2007).

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At the “pro-feminist” end of the spectrum, men occupy a range of different positionings based on varied feminist beliefs and commitments (Holmgren & Hearn, 2009). In addition to how they position themselves, men are positioned differently by others. Some feminist women have welcomed them as allies (Hooks, 2000), while others have viewed them with suspicion and feared that their involvement would lead to the co-optation of the movement (Hester, 1984). As with regards to the women’s to drive campaign in relation to the “man question” in the movement, the group was open in addressing men as supporting allies who remained accountable to feminist women, while emphasizing the important role they played, as shown by the following tweets:

A question has been raised about the role of men in this campaign. We want to make it clear that many men have stood up and supported the campaign because empowering women leads to empowering our nation. (@W2Drive, 2012)

Men are part of this campaign and part of every other campaign for reform. We appreciate the supportive role played by our fathers, husbands, brothers, sons and media figures. (@W2Drive, 2012)

Thus, it was perceived that men’s and women’s interests were not inherently contradictory and that men could support the movement. Support for the movement challenged their own power and privilege, a situation that is replete with struggles and pitfalls, “positional dilemmas and ambivalences” (Holmgren and Hearn, 2009, p. 412). The findings also highlight the blurring boundaries between conventional and alternative media and how social movements intertwine with various media outlets from mainstream to alternative, from the press to the web. This observation goes in line with Mattoni’s (2012) elaboration on the media environment as a complex and fluid set of relations among subjects and objects, social actors and technologies.

She also asserted that the media environment is not something external to the daily lives of media and non-media individuals. Rather, it is continuously created and re-created through complex interactions. Social movements scholars interested in understanding the role of media in mobilization should bear in mind the complexity of communication flows that shape contemporary, media-saturated movements. The media environment should, therefore, be perceived as an open, unpredictable and controversial space of mediatization and communication, made up of different layers that continuously combine with one another due to information flows circulating within the media environment itself (Terranova, 2004).

The analysis of the Saudi campaign also demonstrated that the interactive and participatory capabilities of Web 2.0 signaled a way for activists who might be excluded from mainstream media to

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circumvent the gatekeepers of traditional media, allowing them to take control of their own messages in terms of production, content and dissemination (Kahn & Kellner, 2004). Hence, activists are increasingly creating their own alternative forms of communication that serve as communication channels for activists and an actual “field” of activism itself (Lievrouw, 2011). The various practices that activists enact to produce and diffuse their alternative knowledge were apparent, as was the heterogeneity of media practices enacted by and within movements. Activists develop multiple media practices that frequently overlap, in which trans-media mobilization involves engaging the social base of a movement in participatory media, making practices across multiple platforms to communicate directly with other potential activists, specific groups and the general public.

The findings also demonstrate that media platforms converge on the practice of sharing and cross-promoting content from a variety of media platforms. Visual images of one medium easily overwhelm other media. Pictorial material of television news is easily usable as a visual communication in the press or when alternative media are becoming producers and transmitters of content or even the primary news sources for traditional media.

There is a complex relationship between social movements actors and mainstream media (especially state-owned media platforms). The press might marginalize or overlook the claims of the activists (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993), but mainstream media remains an important source for the dissemination of movement-related information and for the demonstration of legitimacy of the claims and impact of the movement. The two types of media reinforce each other and will continue to coexist. Concerning the analysis of the feminist tweets in the Saudi case, while not explicitly thematized as knowledge-related practices, social movement studies have often dealt with practices oriented to the production of knowledge and cognitive resources that tend to vary, in the actors that carry them as well as the location and mode of production, according to the main object they address.

Despite these multiple and rich expressions of knowledge-practice, social movements’ visibility in public and academic debates is still confined to media-captivating mobilizations, concrete and measurable peak victories or moments when physical repression is suffered and sustained. Another reflection that emerged from the findings concerning both of the Saudi and Kuwaiti cases is the feminist production of knowledge over Twitter when it comes to the visibility of feminist content; social movement theories can be beneficial in making visible different goals and effects of knowledge production. Della Porta and Pavan (2017) advocated for the value of viewing the continuous circulation and networked nature of heterogeneous knowledge that can be generated by these movements. We need to acknowledge that movements, including the feminist movements, produce, process and diffuse knowledge. The production of knowledge on possible alternatives often combines local knowledge with expert knowledge.

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Building on the rich literature on the nexus between movements and knowledge, della Porta and Pavan outlined the peculiarities of movement knowledge. “Repertoires of knowledge practices” are the set of organizational practices that foster the coordination of fragmented, local and highly personal experiences and rationalities within a shared cognitive system. These repertoires provide movements and their supporters with common ground for making claims and acting collectively to produce social, political and cultural changes. So, in fact, rather than only engaging with the macro-political dimensions, knowledge-practices appear to work as much on the level of the micro-political, a level of analysis and intentional and ongoing critique (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Hence, produced outside of institutional spaces, movements’ knowledge can be considered as inherently “local,” grounded in social origins and experiences.

Connecting this concept with the findings of the qualitative content analysis, it might be useful to think of the “Women to Drive” and the “Ensaf” campaigns as a context and space for feminist knowledge production. It might also be useful to address knowledge practices as a meaningful part of contemporary progressive activism, especially at a time when feminist scholars have described online discursive feminist activism as a departure from conventional modes of doing feminist politics; this scholars argue that it represents a new moment or a turning point in feminism in a number of ways, but also promotes dynamic new engagement within feminism itself. Thus, we should look beyond the #Women2Drive hashtag’s ephemeral moment of virality, in which the aggregation of feminist claims and critique resulted in a searchable rich archive of experiences.

The campaign presents a case for examining the renewed feminist politics that intersect with the use of digital platforms today. It appears that digital platforms can facilitate the dissemination of feminist claims and shape new modes of discourse about gender. They also allow for substantive and self-reflexive engagement with feminist discourses that echo locally rooted “lived experiences” that emphasize the experiences of women and the challenges they face on a constant basis. The feminist production of knowledge, in its form, content and production process across the online/offline boundary, also points to the structural nature of patriarchy. It links the specific, local stories of individual women (such as the limitations of mobility exemplified in our case) to larger narratives of gender inequality, while making visible the scale of gender oppression. It allows feminist subjectivity to make its mark on knowledge-production and empowers women to take control of the sociocultural narratives associated with their identities and position.

It might be useful to think of feminist knowledge production as a process of collective, but subjective construction that is transmitted within and outside collective endeavors with uncertain outcomes. Moreover, by arguing—as we do—that when we recognize movements as spaces and processes in which knowledge is generated, modified and mobilized by diverse actors, we gain important insights into both the politics of contemporary movements and society more broadly.

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The second part of the analysis analyzed how the “Ensaf” campaign unfolded over Twitter to test the claim that digital media help organizations to effectively engage with their existing or potential stakeholders by fostering dialogic interactions and mobilizing supporters in near-real time (e.g., Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009).

The findings of the content analysis gave us a sense of how established feminist organizations and groups use Twitter and revealed that the examined feminist organization pay varying degrees of attention to the various potentialities of Twitter. Overall, groups use Twitter mostly for spreading information or circulating existing information. Thus, it turned out the use of Twitter for mobilizing online and socializing users was particularly limited. Accounts such as WCSS’s failed to leverage the core dynamic, interactive features such as using hashtags for campaigning purposes or building dialogic relationships and engaging in two-way communication with the audience. That failure highlighted the tension between instrumental and dialogical logic of usage; the mere creation of an interactive social networking profile is not sufficient for dialogic communication.

For instance, WCSS used Twitter to a large extent as a platform for Public Relations purposes. It used its Twitter account to feature its activities and existing programs for self-presentation to the general public in a way considered by activists as “electronic business cards” reflecting and representing their identity and past history (Mosca & della Porta, 2009). This finding aligns with the findings of other studies (Kingston & Stam, 2013), which reached the conclusion that organizations are less likely than individual activists to undertake cutting edge, innovative activities that utilize the potential of digital media. The data also shows that the feminist campaign in Kuwait operates with a different logic than the driving campaign in Saudi Arabia. Much more attention was given to digital media and its embedded functionalities in the latter case. On another note, the analysis also brought up that the campaign in Kuwait was targeting locals within Kuwait and did not rely on the transnational dimension in comparison to the Saudi case.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

Following the widespread enthusiasm about the role of digital media in uprisings worldwide such as those in Egypt and Tunisia, many scholars have celebrated digital feminist activism as a turning point for feminism as a social movement in the MENA region and beyond. Particularly because of its apparent horizontality and capacity to facilitate productive dialogues, these researchers argue that digital activism represents a new mode or a turning point for feminism in a number of ways.

Yet, the Gulf States have been absent in the discussions that celebrated digital media as a new source of empowerment for feminist activists due to the common assumptions that presume the absence of feminist movements in this region altogether. Correspondingly, this Ph.D. thesis adopts a comparative interdisciplinary perspective that aims to bridge central concepts in social movement studies with media and communication studies in order to situate, rather than exceptionalize, the current configuration of Gulf feminisms as part of a complex fabric of feminist action in the forms of activism, alliances and mobilizations that take place within different arenas, including the digital sphere.

The thesis begins with a key concern to explore the ways in which activists and organizations have utilized digital media. It reflects on the role of digital media in contemporary feminist activism by taking the case study the “Women to Drive” campaign in Saudi Arabia and the “Ensaf” campaign in Kuwait. It adopts an integrated, relational approach that is centered around discursive opportunities structures, networks and actors’ agency. In doing so, I intend to contribute to a growing body of critical research on digital-mediated communications and feminist activism in which countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait with their own social and political particularities have been insufficiently examined. Thus, in this concluding chapter, I discuss the major findings of my Ph.D. project, as well as their theoretical relevance. In the process, I also elaborate on my study’s main limitations and explain the possibilities for future research.

8.1 Major Findings

The four analytical chapters of this thesis have provided empirical evidence in response to four main research questions directing the overall direction of this research on feminist activism in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait: (1) What are activists’ perceptions and experiences while carrying out feminist activism? (2) How do we capture the salience of the claims made by activists and the publicly visible side of their involvement in the mediated public sphere? (3) How did activists and feminist organizations deploy Facebook during feminist campaigns? (4) Who are the main actors involved in networked action on Twitter and what content is being produced and disseminated in these networks?

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In response to the first research question, Chapter 4 sought to adopt an actor centric approach to uncover activists' perceptions and beliefs that accompany their on-ground and online practices in order to better understand their sense-making of feminist activism as an agentic practice. The chapter was therefore organized into four main sub-sections that covered the interviewees' reflections on the overall configurations and the intra-movement dynamics of the feminist movement; groups' modes of organizing; the ways in which activists define their involvement and the array of actions that they have deployed during the campaigns.

The interview data revealed that the activists viewed the contemporary Saudi feminist movement as a plural field of contesting perspectives that have been embroiled in profound disagreements over a variety of issues, rather than a unified body of thought and practices. While plurality is a positive phenomenon, it can also lead to a level of contentiousness that may hinder solidarity among different groups. Nonetheless, it emerged that for some, such differences did not hinder mutual practical support other nor block the mobilization potential. Instead, they gave way to possible cross-fertilization between the claims of different actors that called for the lift of driving ban.

Thus, it came to light from activists' accounts that the ban on driving brought together women from different backgrounds and classes who, in spite of their heterogeneity, managed to produce a crucial sense of shared interests and build common understandings of the contentious issue at hand. Concerning the mode of organization aspect of the campaign, the interviewees disclosed that they generally operated through a decentralized and leaderless network of activist groups and individuals by relying on social networking platforms to coordinate and promote their cause. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter actually fulfilled the functions of independent civil society organizations, which are currently severely restricted in Saudi Arabia, making it difficult to channel activism into institutionalized structures and settings.

The findings of Chapter 4 have also contributed to problematize the idea that digital media as non-hierarchical modes of communication have largely replaced the traditional modes of organization in social movements. Compared to traditional modes, digital media lack features such as the existence of identifiable leaders or persistent collective identities; some testimonies drew attention to the fact that in some cases prominent activists acquired a disproportionate degree of influence, especially on Twitter and came to fulfill many of the functions traditionally related with social movement leaders.

The interviews revealed that most of the respondents were more than willing to identify as feminists. However, it emerged from the data that plural and heterogeneous visions of feminism emanated from the identity and subjectivity of women themselves. The interviewed activists embodied different strands and ideologies, rather than one coherent approach to feminism with shared tenets; their feminisms were informed by differences of political ideology, class, generation and ways of thinking about the role of religion in public life. These fluid trajectories of feminist identifications

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converged on the embrace of feminism as a set of attitudes and actions that support gender equality and the advancement of women.

The respondents did not only define and engage with feminism in multiple ways, but also used online spaces and digital platforms in different capacities with varying levels of engagement, ranging from targeting specific media infrastructures and institutions to gain coverage to engaging in self-mediated activism, employing different media platforms to promote a cause. When it came down to their relationships with technology and the role that digital networking platforms play in their understandings and practices of feminism, the interviewees seemed guided by strong visions of social change in which digital and network communications featured prominently. Many of them perceived digital platforms as allowing a more accelerated and nuanced form of feminist activism.

And finally, when asked about the employed tactics, it came forward that activists engaged in multiple forms of action via social media and beyond and developed sophisticated, interrelated practices of hybrid synchronization between online and offline action to create and spread content, organize, mobilize constituents, promote particular hashtags, spread feminist consciousness and document events. Yet not all the testimonies were optimistic. Some activists reflected on their experiences with cyberbullying and surveillance and demonstrated an understanding of the double functions of digital media as sites of empowerment on the one hand and of surveillance on the other

Hence, I understood the deployment of digital media for feminist activism as a complicated process. While digital networking platforms continue to mimic discrimination seen in the offline world through the replication of gendered power relations, it simultaneously offers new possibilities to participate in feminist related actions. Interviewing and obtaining reflections of the adherents of the Kuwaiti feminist movement was also carried out. Interviewees brought up the tensions and contradictions within the movement and criticized the predominance of elitist feminism. These tensions made reaching a frame unity and consensus in advocating for their objectives a challenging task. Yet the activists seemed committed to finding common paths to solidarity through collaborating on the issue of nationality, which has found resonance with the civil sector in Kuwait due to its urgency.

Concerning the organizational structure of the movement, the respondents commented on the fact that the Kuwaiti feminist movement has operated within institutionalized parameters since the early 1960s in the forms of organizations and structures in the pursuit of voice and recognition. Yet, it emerged that women's professional organizations are no longer the only available means for feminist activists as informal voluntary groups are on the rise, especially in the post- Arab Spring era.

When asked about their feminist identifications, the Kuwaiti feminist activists demonstrated independent trajectories of feminist beliefs and varying ideological positions (e.g., secular, religious, modern) that are incredibly complex and potentially contradictory. Some of them located themselves at the most liberal end of the broad spectrum of feminist approaches, while others testified about the

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compatibility between religion and the main ideas and ideals of feminism. Few even turned to digital activism and drew on the opportunities that the internet and social networking platforms provide to embrace new understandings of feminist activism.

However, unlike the Saudi interviewees, many Kuwaiti respondents expressed hesitation towards completely relying on digital media to advocate for their causes as they believe they are better addressed through institutional channels; digital media can be a complementary component of the campaign to augment its connective capabilities. This admission shows that, despite the dissatisfaction felt by Kuwaiti activists in relation to the continuation of the status quo, the majority of them still believe in the relevance of institutionalized feminist politics as the accepted ways of doing things.

When the respondents were asked about the employed tactic repertoires in relation to the “Ensaf” campaign, they revealed that they utilized a wide array of action which included advocating for specific policies, resorting to legal and institutional channels, filing periodic reports to transnational organizations such as the United Nations, organizing public seminars. They also took advantage of social networking platforms to articulate their claims, but perhaps to a lesser degree than Saudi activists. Chapter 4 illuminated that both of the campaigns that I examined belong to a heterogeneous feminist movement. Within each movement, there were differences in emphasis on the approaches to feminist activism, depending on an individual woman’s positions. Nonetheless, at certain times, specific issues surfaced that might constitute the focal point around which women gather and activism occurs.

Moreover, feminism constitutes a multivalent and contested site for negotiations with the present conditions, simultaneously offering visible resistance, cooperation, contentious action and immediate opportunities for the articulation of gender-related claims. Digital feminist activism, therefore, represents a new iteration of feminist activism, offering new means on which feminist activists can capitalize. Similar to feminist activism at large, digital activism is based on critical reflections of structural inequalities and may have much to offer the overall movement.

The rise of digital feminist activism is also linked to the advent of a new generation of digitally skilled women. As Chapter 4 demonstrates, these women deploy a variety of feminist efforts whether digital media is deployed as a replacement to activists’ restricted on the ground activism as in the Saudi case or as a complementary component to their institutional means of activism as in the case of Kuwait. In either case, women were active agents and constituted intersecting forces fully capable of disrupting, subverting, resisting and appropriating a wide ecology of digital media platforms.

In Chapter 5, I examined the salience of the topic of female driving and discriminatory citizenship laws in the Saudi and Kuwaiti mediated public spheres. I conducted Political Claim Analysis on selected national newspaper articles in both countries to get a sense of the position of the

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different actors who were involved, the action repertoires they used and the framing process at different points in time, before and during the mobilization.

Concerning the Saudi case, the findings of the PCA pointed out that the topic of women's driving was extensively covered in the Saudi press in the year of 2011, which coincided with the driving campaign, in comparison to the year before. The absence of state actors from the discussions in Saudi newspapers was also notable observation. It reinforced the claim that the ban on driving was a societal issue that has little to do with state policies. Intuitively the usual addressees of public claims are often state actors. The most noticeable target of claims in this case, as mentioned in the press, was "society." Society served as the main addressee for more than half of the reported claims. Besides the depoliticalization of the issue of women's driving, the absence of civil society actors and the emergence of grassroots action was also reflected in the findings; feminist activists constituted a new category of claim makers in 2011, although they didn't constitute more than 8% of the overall claimants in that year. This low percentage is indicative of the difficulties that activists face to having their voices included in mainstream media.

As with regards to the framing process in the Saudi mediated public sphere, the analysis demonstrated the relatively low number of reported emancipatory and feminist supporting frames in the Saudi press. The topic of women's driving was rarely featured within a women's rights lens; this absence could be attributed to the fact that the adoption of women's rights-based discourses is often criticized for being anchored in the Western, liberal tradition. Concerning the "Ensaf" campaign in Kuwait, evidence from Political Claims Analysis points to the extensive politicization of the nationality issue in the Kuwaiti public domain, especially during the year of 2013. 2013 coincided with Kuwait's third parliamentary elections since February 2012, which led many parliamentary candidates and politicians to adopt the nationality issue in their pre-election policy agendas to appeal to potential female voters. This also explains the counter-intuitive results that I obtained, which indicated that the issue of female citizenship rights was more heavily covered in the year that preceded the campaign.

The empirical data of the chapter also pointed to the predominant role that is taken by the civil society sector in pushing for a solution for full citizenship rights for Kuwaiti women. Frequent usage of constitutional and institutional frames appeared to trigger the highest rate of framing efforts through reference to the "rule of law." Kuwaiti activists frequently argued that women have a constitutional right to be treated equally with men according to the constitution and to be considered as equal citizens.

The overall findings of Chapter 5 are significant in the sense that they offer a glimpse into the context, structural constraints and dominant ideological framework within which women carried out their activism. They also draw attention to how women's activism is predominately portrayed in broader society and presented to the local and international audience. Additionally, the effort of different social actors and pressure groups to become visible in the public mediated sphere was also reflected in this chapter. The quest for visibility indicates that, although some activists were enabled by

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digital media to inform their public independently, they still competed to push their issues into conventional media agenda in order to reach a broader audience and make them aware of the main issues at hand.

Transitioning to Chapter 6, I follow the premise that by ignoring the voices of non-institutional actors, especially those from counter-hegemonic movements, conventional media structures have unknowingly allowed digital activism to flourish (Cammaerts, 2012). It is not coincidental to see actors who are not well represented in the media (as indicated in the previous chapter) to turn to other alternative platforms. Certain platforms do indeed amplify the voices of individuals and groups otherwise isolated from each other and dismissed by mainstream media and political organizations, as seen specifically in the Saudi campaign.

Hence, Chapter 6 first deals with analyzing the content of the driving campaigns' related Facebook pages in order to shed some light on how these pages served as means for feminist expression, claims-making, coordination and mobilization. It also illuminates the local appropriations and discursive references that occurred through Facebook in relation to the campaign. Because there was not a dedicated Facebook page specifically created for the Kuwaiti "Ensaf" campaign, an analysis of the Facebook page of the WCSS—the main civil society organization that launched and advocated for the nationality campaign—was carried out. Campaigning efforts were included within its official Facebook page.

The development of content overtime on Facebook was traced, followed by an analysis of the posts which were published by the page's administrators. The analysis for the Saudi campaign revealed the emergence of four main categories of posts: information-related, mobilization-related, feminist-related and emotional-related and user engagement. The analysis for WCSS showed the emergence of four main categories of posts: information-related, activities-related, feminist-related and user engagement.

The findings of the qualitative content analysis of two Facebook pages that were dedicated to the driving campaigns revealed that both of the Facebook pages converged on disseminating feminist-related content, which constituted the largest category of coded posts. This category included sharing general feminist-related news, featuring news that highlight Saudi women's achievements, providing empowering and motivational content as well as offering feminist critique. It also indicated that both Facebook pages played an informative role, through broadly distributing and circulating information and that Facebook was instrumentally used as a low-cost channel for the circulation of information and sharing real-life updates about the campaign.

The exhaustive analysis of the content disseminated by WCSS revealed that the organization did not entirely embrace the full capacities offered by Facebook or incorporate the interactive elements and two-way communication into its Facebook page. There were no attempts to reach out to its

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audience, ask questions, recruit new members or activists or even involve the page supporters in active online discussions to transform them from it passive supporters into active participants. The affordances of Facebook (such as likes, shares and events) were not used in a novel way to form online based tactics or mobilize and organize the supporters of the campaign into action; the administrators of the page rarely posted calls to action, encouraged their followers to take part in any offline activities or even detailed the campaign's evolution and progress.

Due to the predominance of feminist-related posts, an examination of the empirical materials that are centered on the representations and manifestations of feminism took place to explore the multifaceted understanding and constructions of feminisms that are manifested over Facebook. What emerged from the analysis was filled with feminist discourses that echoed locally rooted "lived experiences" and emphasized the experiences of women. Secular feminist thought coexisted beside the Islamic reformist stance of feminism, which is open to the idea of reinterpretation of religion and reconciles the religious discourse about gender equality; the pages demonstrated self-reflexive engagement with these ideational approaches to feminism.

In the same vein, while analyzing the content of the feminist-related posts on the WCSS page, it was notable that the majority of posts adopted a liberal feminist, rights-based discourse on gender equality and referred to the rule of law and constitutional frames while advocating for a secular rule. Overall, Chapter 6 demonstrated that Saudi feminist activism's public communication was enhanced by the deployment of platforms such as Facebook through two major opportunities. First, the deployment of this platform enabled activists to disseminate information that could not pass print media filters, which was touched upon in Chapter 5. Second, it enabled activists to expose their feminist viewpoints to the public.

For Saudi feminists, it appeared that the multipurpose use of the embedded functionalities allowed them to foster feminist efforts to spread information about feminist causes and other social justice issues. They were able to question given social orders and open up new spaces of engagement because platforms like Facebook seem to have provided previously excluded and marginalized non-political actors with the possibilities of engaging in the feminist scene in a way which contrasts with the difficulties encountered in trying to be heard via mainstream media. With regards to the Kuwaiti case, the analysis uncovered that, although social media platforms provided the potential for the engagement of gendered issues and concerns, WCSS did not fully capitalize on its full functionalities and did not manage to encourage bilateral communication between the group and its audience. The chapter also demonstrated that feminism is not a phenomenon with certain essences, but is it a process of collective but subjective constructions with uncertain outcomes that challenges the existing social order through gendered claims-making and women-centered discourses.

Finally, Chapter 7 adopted a network-centric approach that connected social movement concepts with network centrality measures to shed some light on the role of Twitter in aiding feminist activism and

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making sense of the embeddedness of the most active Twitter users in the relational context of the campaigns. The Social Networking Analysis revealed that a diverse set of actors was actively engaged in the Women to Drive Twitter network. About ten out of the 20 actors who occupied a central position in the core network were feminist activists, while the rest took different professional roles, including human rights activists, journalists, a political cartoonist, public figures, individuals and general media. “Issue-professional” accounts were specifically set up for the campaign, including @Women2Drive and @Free__Manal Twitter accounts. What these core accounts shared was their interest in the issues that relate to women’s rights and human rights in general.

What was also observable was the participation of men in the core of the campaign. The driving issue was not exclusively depicted as a “women’s issue” that would solely benefit women. Instead, men took part in it. The findings also illustrated that it might be useful to look beyond the #Women2Drive hashtag’s ephemeral moment of virality. The aggregation of feminist claims and critique resulted in a documented archive of experiences and claims, presenting a case for examining the renewed feminist politics arising from the conjunction of digital platforms and activism today. As regards the Kuwaiti case, it was noted that the campaign didn’t launch any Twitter hashtag to mobilize for the campaign, which is an interesting fact in itself. The content analysis of the tweets revealed that Twitter was not used as a mobilization platform.

8.2 Theoretical Implications

This part takes the contribution to the existing knowledge one level further. Aggregating the findings of the way feminist activists in Saudi Arabia and feminist organizations in Kuwait have utilized digital media, this section provides insights on the grand theories that were denoted in the theoretical framework chapter to better situate the theoretical implications of this Ph.D. thesis. This thesis contributes to the existing theoretical debates on the nexus between feminist activism and digital technologies by proposing the an integrated relational approach that moves beyond the technological-centric lenses that imply a universal manner of using certain platforms and the mere constructivist approaches that often privilege the very act of activism but potentially lose sight of the specificities and affordances of digital media platforms.

By placing these three interrelated dimensions—discourses, networks and actors’ agencies—at the core of my theoretical framework and incorporating them into the analysis, I sought to prioritize a relational approach to examine how digital media platforms are connected to the contemporary forms of feminist activism in the Arab Gulf States. The proposed relational approach therefore accounts for the multiplicity of dimensions underpinning feminist activism and the dialectical interplay between technology-mediated practices.

Concerning the first dimension that revolves around the agency of feminist actors, I devoted my attention to extract and highlight an emergent situated knowledge that is actively informed from the

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standpoint of feminist activists concerning the material and socially situated aspects of carrying out feminist activism. This dimension, therefore, aimed to reposition feminist activists, their acts and their subjectivities from the margin to the center, highlighting by that the hybrid dynamics between technologies and actors that are often missing in this field of research. By examining this dimension, I have managed to get a grasp of activists' motivations and tactics leading up to the visible representation of feminist action and offer a more nuanced understanding of their sense-making of feminist activism as an agentic practice.

To elaborate, focusing on activists' agency has allowed me to uncover their perceptions and experiences in carrying out feminist action and encapsulate their insights. Throughout the interviews, it emerged that activists differed in terms of their personal motives for becoming actively engaged in activism, priorities, their proclaimed objectives and their level of engagement in feminist action. For instance, when the Saudi activists were asked about the employed tactics that they utilized, it came forward that they had been engaged in multiple forms of action to make visible the imperceptible aspects of the ban on driving and ensure that their claims were seen, read and widely circulated. Activists' testimonies also revealed that for Saudi feminist activists, digital media platforms not only extended their existing tactics, but rather constituted the central locus of activism, due to the existing restrictions on women's organization through institutional means.

So, while Saudi activists acknowledged the pivotal role of digital media into the development and continuity of the Saudi feminist movement, the majority of Kuwaiti interviewees put an emphasis on formalized women's organizations as enduring structures to pursue sustainable social change. The comparison between the two cases has demonstrated that Kuwaiti activists have relied on to a lesser extent on digital media for mobilization and to get their message across, as they assigned a complementary role to digital media in their feminist efforts that included policy advocacy and addressing legal and institutional channels.

The findings that emerged in this thesis concerning the Saudi case support the theoretical arguments that digital media can assist in feminist campaigns in the MENA region as well as in the struggle against patriarchy and in favor of improving women's rights (e.g., Gheytañch and Moghadam (2014); Lim (2018); Newsom, 2014) and that it facilitated for them the creation of distinctive forms of tactical repertoires that were made possible only through digital platforms. While the findings in the Kuwaiti case further debunk the view that digital media are used in a universal manner to promote sociopolitical change everywhere.

Hence, I believe that utilizing the actor's agency dimension has allowed me to examine feminist activism as a deeply situated act that materializes within and in response to specific societal arrangements and does not exist independently from the existing larger sociopolitical structures. This attention is conceptually crucial for realizing a more nuanced understanding of feminist activism and avoiding the mystification of the role of digital media in women's struggles. It also restores women's

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voices and portrays them as active agents beyond the reductionist accounts that present them as passive, misguided subjects. Meanwhile, the second dimension which is rooted in the discursive opportunity structures theory was utilized to account for the role of digital media in feminist contention, in terms of examining if digital media platforms provide somewhat better opportunities for marginalized feminist actors who have no voice in the bourgeois mediated public sphere to carry out feminist action than is possible through the available traditional mass media outlets.

Accordingly, the dialectic relationship between the strategies of visibility and discursive content enacted by feminist activists and organizations in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were critically explored to shed some light on how feminist discourses are articulated within digital media and the mediated public sphere as well as to unpack the variations in how feminist references claims are discursively constructed and negotiated. Through focusing on this discursive dimension in relation to the driving campaign, it was brought up that an important part of the significance of digital media platforms to feminist activism- lies primarily in providing activists who could hardly maintain visibility through traditional media with the ability to create counter-hegemonic discourses. It also facilitated the process of engaging with the multifaceted understanding of feminisms that are manifested over the relevant Facebook pages. For instance, the findings captured in Chapter 6 demonstrated the feminist centered discourses that rose with the driving campaign are being articulated within a wider set of feminist claims and demands that do not end with women's mobility rights. Such feminist claims and discourses appeared to be derived from different feminist frames of references, including secular feminist thought and Islamic-reformist stance of feminism.

While the analysis of the feminist coded content of the Kuwait WCSS Facebook page revealed that the majority of coded feminist-related posts had adopted a liberal feminist rights-based discourse to gender equality and constantly referred to the rule of law and constitutional frameworks while advocating for a secular rule, which was not surprising due to the WCSS's position within the feminist scene as a liberal feminist organization that carries an orientation that is quite different from that of the more conservative Islamist women's rights organizations.

Utilizing this dimension also raised the question of what counts as activism and reinforced the argument that much feminist activism – as seen in the Saudi case- takes place at the level of discourse and the act of making gendered related claims. Feminist activism does not just need resource mobilization to undertake its actions, but also entitles some discursive work, which involves “the efforts to reinterpret, reformulate, rethink and rewrite the norms and practices of society... its [discursive politics'] premise is that conceptual changes directly bear on material ones” (Katzenstein, 1998, p.17).

The discursive dimension appeared to be the key aspect of the driving campaign and the feminist movement in Saudi Arabia. It is most often neglected in the accounts of traditional social

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movement theories, which are more accustomed to thinking of feminism as merely visible protest, privileging that one mode of organizing over others. Such traditional theoretical accounts also insist on the use of disruptive actions as markers of social movements and cling to the taxonomy of contentious political approaches and the protest waves paradigms. These paradigms might not necessarily be applicable in different settings, especially authoritarian and semi-authoritarian countries where public feminist activity can be potentially a very high cost/high-risk activity.

Lastly, by paying attention to networks, I sought to bridge some key social movement concepts with network centrality measures to shed some light on feminist activism in the digital era and draw inferences from the relational dimension between networks, content and ties that govern the deployment of digitally mediated practices. In terms of the added value of this dimension, viewing some elements of the examined feminist campaigns as components of a network can provide us with interesting insights not obtainable in any other way. As this dimension re-directs the focus from individual traits to relational ties between social actors, points to the larger network of relations involved in a particular phenomenon and provides valuable insights about the focal nodes which have been active in this mobilization process, uncovering by that important characteristic of the campaign's composition.

To capitalize on the contributions that are offered throughout applying this dimension, I guided my research inquiry into the direction of examining the deployment of Twitter by feminist activists and organizations in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, in order to capture the essence of the central hubs involved at the core of the examined networks, as well as the content that these networks of exchange produce for public dissemination and outreach. Hence, my efforts concentrated on evaluating the nodes' prominence of the key users who hold important positions within the core of the Twitter networks of the campaigns in the earliest months of mobilization, capturing insights about their roles in the relational context of the campaigns and analyze the content that is produced and disseminated by the Twitter accounts that claim to be representative of the campaigns.

In essence, I believe that the utilized integrated relational approach offers an important contribution to the discussions surrounding the nexus between feminist activism and digital technologies, both empirically and in terms of theoretical interventions, paving the way for us as researchers to bridge the existing separation between structures, networks and actors' agency that has so far characterized research in this particular domain. I also believe that it has wider applicability beyond the circumscribed context of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that are viewed as critical cases illustrative of broader trends that can exist in other settings and contexts.

8.3 Limitations

While I acknowledge that conducting comparative research has its outstanding merits, I will elaborate here on the challenges and limitations that resulted from my application of the comparative approach. One major issue that I had encountered was achieving comparability across data gathered and ensuring

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equivalence at all levels in order to make sure that the comparison is characterized by equally precise and equally comprehensive attention paid to all the units compared.

I was also faced with the issue of data unavailability in some instances (Chapter 7). No equivalent Twitter hashtag data was available in the Kuwaiti case, which was a finding in itself: activists and organizations who were involved in the “Ensaf” campaign did not create campaign-related hashtags and did not capitalize on the hashtag function on Twitter. When faced with challenges of this kind, I attempted to follow Holtz-Bacha and Kaid’s (2011) advice to ensure the “harmonization of the research object and the research method” (p. 397-398) for the sake of guaranteeing the best levels of comparability. Relying on triangulation that can reduce the asymmetry as can making proper adjustments to the detected differences once realized.

Moreover, due to the peculiarity of the Saudi case, I felt that I treated it in some instances as the comparative reference point in this research. Also, since I adopted a comparative perspective, I found it challenging to deal with asymmetrical data sources and information. Additionally, although the breadth of access afforded by retrieving online data can be extremely beneficial to the researcher, harvesting digital data must always be tempered by an awareness of the different types of limitations produced by online retrieval methods. There were also unavoidable limitations to my method of retrieving Twitter data, as I faced the practical challenges of data accessibility due to Twitter’s strict API policies. These policies put researchers like me at the mercy of the changing limits and access policies of social media platforms. At any time, the retrieved results are capped at 1% of the overall real-time Twitter traffic volume.

Thus, I found it challenging to access historical data as I was not provided with any institutional access to data services providers, nor did I have the financial recourses on my own to purchase Twitter data. This issue is common among researchers who are without sufficient financial resources to pay premium data costs. Puschmann and Burgess (2013) provided a detailed account of the consolidated control over data as a business asset changes, while Bruns and Burgess (2016) drew attention to the impact of severe data access restrictions and tight API policies on academic research. Consequently, limitations of relying on Twitter relate to the representativeness of such data, as the nature of APIs and retrieval algorithms are far from being neutral entities and indeed affect the retrieved data at hand (Van Dijck, 2013). Thus, Twitter data collected via the APIs carries implications regarding representativeness and the characteristics of the data as a sample of a larger population.

There are also additional limitations concerning the completeness of datasets and how representative data is of all Twitter users who participate in a conversation. As noted by Bonilla and Rosa (2015), data for research on Twitter hashtags, for example, maybe incomplete as users might carry on the conversation but stop the use of the relevant hashtag(s).

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8.4 Possible Future Research Avenues

This thesis has opened up many potential avenues for future investigation about feminist activism. First, as mentioned already in the introduction, the current study is among very few academic, empirically grounded works on activists' and organizations' usage of digital media technologies in the context of the Arab World. Hence, I believe that there is a promising research opportunity that comes along with conducting further research on feminists movements in this context, or to research about the Arab Spring as a trajectory on women's digital mobilization and beyond across the MENA region.

Moreover, since I have applied a relational approach to the study of feminist activism, I hope that I have provided a strong case for future research to adopt the same approach that can extend to other contexts, time periods and typologies of women's movements that operate in different contexts.

The empirical findings of the chapters in the thesis could also be further supplemented and solidified by future research on other dimensions. For example, while the findings of Chapter 5 supplied evidence of the salience and resonance of activists' online campaigns in the print media agenda, more explicit research could be done on the two-way spillover of content and the online-offline transition of issues. The spillover of women-related content from traditional media into activists' online sites would also be an intriguing area of inquiry. Thus, future inter-media or cross-platform research might be carried out to examine the online-offline dynamical transition of issues and frames.

And finally, since I did not have the chance to examine the resonance of feminist discourse on digital media platforms, I believe that further research could move the debate forward by investigating the public engagement and resonance of the mediated feminist discourses, which would be of great theoretical and practical significance.

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Facebook Data- Quoted Facebook posts

- My Right To Dignity. (2012, January 20). This is how do extremists see women [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/photos/a.254691737934755/260915623979033/?type=3&theater>
- My Right To Dignity. (2012, February 2). Traffic Police Lawsuit update: We just got the news that three Saudi women in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia (Nassema and Afrah Al-sadah and Enaam Alasfour) have applied today for driver's license. Mr. Mofarih Ali Alzahrani, the director of the traffic police office.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/254674944603101/posts/272355106168418>
- My Right To Dignity. (2012, February 9). We need to transform the religious discourse on women to a discourse that makes them full of confidence and pride. Why do they insist on portraying their

presence and role in the public sphere as being sinful? [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/274694745934454>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, March 20). To our rulers, we are tired of hearing mere justifications. Women need a fair political decision from you and not from society. You are the ones who are in charge, and it is not right to blame it on society... [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/299534396783822>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, April 4). Oh, these silly religious verdicts! Religion is being used to control women and exercise some sort of intellectual oppression. The Saudi religion is based on social customs, not the Qur'an and the guidance of Mohammad! [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/254674944603101/posts/308421952561733>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, June 14). We renew the call for women and men to take the lead and urge the authorities to accommodate the campaign's demands in one of these ways: Women driving in the case of their possession of international driving license' and document their actions on 17 June 2012; men driving .. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/photos/a.254691737934755/354666147937313/?type=3&theater>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, July 11). Is there anything in our religion that states that women are the root of all evil and sins? Or that women are blindly following their emotions and desires without using their minds or morals? Please help me to figure this out.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/photos/a.254691737934755/367968023273792/?type=3>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, July 29). As if they are saying that our religion Islam, which is valid for all times and all places, is a religion where decency and modesty are not inconsistent with freedom and life [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/photos/a.254691737934755/374111785992749/?type=3>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, October 2). Only in Saudi Arabia, a women's targeted awareness campaign about breast cancer being presented by men [Facebook status update- translated from

Arabic]. Retrieved from
<https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/photos/a.254691737934755/396941247043136/?type=3>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, November 5). What is a virtue and what does it mean? What are morals that give the man the right to marry more than one wife publicly? I never expected to find an advertisement on my phone that promotes temporary marriages.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from
<https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/photos/a.254691737934755/410230262380901/?type=3>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, November 7). When Obama won the elections, he posted a picture of himself and his wife Michelle Obama hugging. The choice of his particular picture is interesting. How beautiful to witness women being praised by their husbands in front of millions.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from
<https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/photos/a.254691737934755/410882918982302/?type=3>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, November 21). Our society sees the slip of females as crimes while dismissing the mistakes committed by males, although God perceives guilt in the same way. We are one hell of a discriminatory society. That's scary [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/416362545101006>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, December 3). “Every woman who dies and her husband is satisfied with her behavior... enters heaven.” This is a weak saying of Prophet Mohammed that Alalabi and Ibn al-Jawzy have stated is it inaccurate and should.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/421198534617407>

My Right To Dignity. (2012, December 8). Discussions about Hihab [Picture] [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from
<https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/photos/a.254691737934755/423280344409226/?type=3&theater>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, April 18). What's the first corner in Islam? Hijab. Does God forgive all sins except?-Taking off the Hijab. What are the seven major sins?-Taking off the Hijab, indecency, wearing short skirts, exposing the face, wearing the Abaya on the shoulders, wearing

pants.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/482194795184447>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, May 9). The advocates of women's rights are being classified as secularists or liberals, this implies that religion and society have failed women and the secularists have come to salvage them [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic] Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/490051854398741>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, June 25). Discrimination against women has reached a new low, in which religious clerics have started discriminating against them even in the afterlife. As there is a dispute among many religious clerks including ibn Taymiyyah, ibn Kathir regarding whether God sees women .. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/510196652384261>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, June 25). Imagine if you bought a new laptop and then you installed Windows 95 on it.This is exactly what customs and traditions are doing [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/510235532380373>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, July 1). Those who follow how the “Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice” treats women would think that their mission is to suffocate them with religion. And then people wonder about the spread of atheism [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/513448318725761>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, July 2). We keep hearing in Saudi Arabia that women should not hold leadership positions because they are emotional beings [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/photos/a.254691737934755/513828418687751/?type=3>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, September 14). Don't tell me this is fair, that you inherit more than me, that you act as my guardian that you are entitled to what I don't get, not because of your educational qualifications... or your wisdom but because I was.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/547406755329917>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, September 21). In case the government does not lift the ban on driving while not providing justifications for the continuation of the ban, we demand that the government provide modern mechanisms in which members of society can express their opinions about it.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/254674944603101/posts/550930321644227>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, September 21). When decision-makers state that women's driving is left to the wish of society, do these decision-makers wonder how individuals in society would express their desires? If elections are forbidden, while demonstrations are out of the question, and where online action.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/550886528315273>

My Right To Dignity. (2013, October 22). Men always remember the Quranic verse which says that “Men are in charge of women”, and forget to mention the verse which states that they have rights similar to those of their husbands [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/woman2drive/posts/567853666618559>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2011, September 11). 9/11 a day to remember. RIP [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/503718149658330>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, May 24). A year ago, we made these English pages to support Manal Alsharif when she was detained and spread her story internationally. And to defend our case. Thank you, everyone, for your support and the fight is still on [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/466437730039138>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, May 30). I'm a Saudi girl and I say it, this country is a big joke. The regime is distracting people by women's and religious issues so they can steal as much as they want from the wealth of the country.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/471052602910984>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, August 2). Good morning friends. Much love and appreciation from your sisters in Saudi Arabia [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/506849692664608>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, August 7). Just in case if you don't get our Honk for Saudi Women Campaign. We will appreciate any act of support to us, like in this video when Maria from

Mission Free Iran org. honked for us in front of the.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/453685057996657>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, August 12). “Rape and marry for free (308)” Law 308 in Jordan allows man to escape prison if he marries the woman he rapes... he is not allowed to divorce her before 5 years of marriage... Other Arab countries have similar SHAMEFUL laws [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/445679055476362>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, June 2). Dear friends, now we're close to June 17th. Could you please email the Saudi embassies “Let Women Drive in Saudi Arabia” so we can get their attention? You can find all of the emails in the link below. Thank you.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/155326567934275>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, July 27). Sarah Attar looks happy and proud over there. Go girls go [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/504496486233262>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, July 27). YES we did it. The first female athletes representing Saudi Arabia at the Olympic Games! Go girls go we are so proud of you <3 [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/504487059567538>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, August 5). “Those who use religion for their own benefit are detestable. We are against such a situation and will not allow it. Those who use religion in such a manner have fooled our people; it is against just such people that.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/508056075877303>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, November 8). Happy birthday Marie Curie, the first female to win a Nobel Prize. November 7th, 1867 [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/551456821537228>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2012, December 26). Let me introduce you to our oppressors. The former minister of interior Prince Naif Bin Abdulaziz and his son Prince Mohammed Bin Naif the current minister of interior. They ve been arresting torturing and jailing more than 30.000 people in.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/575704119112498>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2013, January 15). Yesterday around 50 religious men have gathered by King Abdullah palace in Riyadh to protest the appointing of women in Shoura council. What do you want to say to those cowards? [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/587088304640746>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2013, January 31). We are creating a petition to be sent to international organizations and media. The Saudi Government did sign on the CEDAW agreement, yet didn't make any efforts to stop the violence and discrimination against Saudi Women! We hope they will be penalized. We just need your.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/148920881931082>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2013, March 25). Saudi Arabia has one of the lowest female participation rates in the workforce in the region, a recent World Bank report has found this. <http://www.arabnews.com/news/445991> [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/635705096445733>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2013, March 26). I know this has nothing to do with KSA nor women s issues in the Arab world. I just want to show solidarity. Equality is a basic right for everyone. I hope someday KSA and the Arab world will realize.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/636642799685296>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2013, May 1). This is Abdul Aziz al al-Shaikh, the current Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia (the Pope). This hypocritical man strongly opposed the presence of women in the Shura Consultive Council and then supported it when the king appointed 30 women in.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/655194901163419>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2013, May 10). After three years of petitioning the Ministry of Justice, Arwa Al-Hujaili, 25, has finally received her registration to practice as a trainee lawyer, the first woman to do so."People tell me I'm a pioneer and I feel I need to.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/659733417376234>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2013, May 18). We demand the Arab Gulf and Lebanese governments to issue a domestic workers bill of rights. This modern-day slavery has to stop. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2yb3TYPt4> [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/663653840317525>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2013, June 17). Mohammed Al Arifi is a Saudi preacher. He hates women, and he doesn't like seeing women working in public, to appear on TV or mix with men; he wants us all covered up. This misogynistic preacher is enjoying his life.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/679581815391394>

Saudi Women To Drive. (2013, October 27). Civil disobedience or social activism or whatever you call it, WE DID IT. Women of all ages went out and drove their cars on Oct 26. 15 violation tickets were given to some women. We appreciate your help and support, thanks to our supporters around the world. And the fight is.. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/227817097234537/posts/753793077970267>

The Women's Cultural and Social Society. (2013, July 13). We are part of a civil movement that believes in democracy and aims to:1. Preserve the constitution and public freedoms. 2. Promote active citizenship and democratic principles. 3. Raise awareness of rights and duties. We are keen to protect freedom and democracy in our homeland. We envision Kuwait as a secular and democratic state [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/440440912696115/posts/523334824406723>

The Women's Cultural and Social Society. (2013, July 15). Democratic State Requirements:1. Well-managed governance. 2. Respectful citizens and individuals. 3. Clear separation of powers. 4. Respected and fully implemented laws. 5. Consciousness. We envision Kuwait as a secular and democratic state [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/440440912696115/posts/524352100971662>

The Women's Cultural and Social Society. (2013, July 15). We respect the rule of law and we seek to change the non-constitutional laws. We envision Kuwait as a secular and democratic state [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/440440912696115/posts/524339944306211>

The Women's Cultural and Social Society. (2013, July 16). Justice, freedom, and equality are the pillars of today's society. You are free to believe in whatever you want, but you don't have the right to impose your beliefs on others [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/440440912696115/posts/524683987605140>

The Women's Cultural and Social Society. (2015, September 22). Quotes and references to Maya Angelou [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/kwtwcss/photos/a.590902544316617/981200971953437/?type=3&theater4>

The Women's Cultural and Social Society. (2015, September 30). Quotes and references to Clare Boothe Luce [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/440440912696115/posts/524339944306211>

The Women's Cultural and Social Society. (2015, December 10). Today marks the World Human Rights Day; an occasion celebrated annually around the world on December 10. This day has been chosen to honor the United Nations General Assembly resolution of December 10, 1948, on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.. [Facebook status update- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/kwtwcss/photos/a.443968092343397/1023256507747883/?type=3&theater4>

Twitter Data- Quoted Tweets

@KWWNLC. (2013, July 3). Despite the injustice and blatant discriminatory behavior against Kuwaiti women who are married to non-Kuwaitis, we as a group reject any calls that would endanger people's lives. Thus, we ask you not to join any demonstrations or sit-ins, as it is better to address our claims.. [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/352486983798493184>

@KWWNLC. (2013, July 6). Our group is very thankful for receiving the invitation of the candidate of the first constituency Dr. Masouma al-Mubarak, whom we met and who listened to our demands. We wish good luck to everyone [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/353600691345948672>

@KWWNLC. (2013, July 27). After closely monitoring the performance of the Members of Parliament in the past period, our group has announced that it supports some upcoming candidates. Our choice was difficult as many former deputies have failed us and didn't serve

well our cause.. [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/412283249974207809>

@KWWNLC. (2013, December 15). Our group announces the opening of membership to those wishing to join. Please communicate with @kalhendi or @Omfahad_1960. Thank you [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/412283259977207809>

@KWWNLC (2014, February 6). We are going to publicize the campaign in various local media outlets. And if this doesn't work out, we are going internationalize this issue in case we exhausted all our means to resolve it internally [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/431334688557637632>

@KWWNLC (2014, February 6). We prefer to resolve this issue at a local level by reaching out to officials and raising awareness about its scope to the public through arranging local events and seminars [Tweet] - translated from Arabic. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/431334406888779776>

@KWWNLC. (2014, February 8). The General Coordinator of the Kuwaiti Women without Borders group, Alia al-Dulaimi, has contacted the managing director of the Association of Social Workers and Board Member Dr. Sana al-Asfour. A date has been set for a meeting regarding Kuwaiti women citizenship rights [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/432193398515462144>

@Oct26driving (2014, January 2). The live stream broadcast will begin in half an hour with journalist and activist Maysa al-Amoudi through the campaign's channel on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/user/oct26driving>. [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/415750526169399296>

@Oct26driving. (2014, February 17). We stress the need for an independent judiciary system and the implementation of procedural safeguards to protect women's activists from facing sanctions that lack a legal basis [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/113492166474608640

@Oct26driving (2014, April 12). The Kingdom is bound by the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights to guarantee the right of movement for all of its citizens without discrimination based on sex

[Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/540304028539035649>

@Oct26driving (2015, January 9). One question! How are we supposed to fight religious extremism when the government intimidates the activists who fight religious extremists with imprisonment and flogging charges? Such as [listing the name of the activists] Suad al-Shammari, Loujin, Maysa, Rafiq, and many others? [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/553532353469890562>

@Oct26Driving. (2014, July 8). The participation rate in the campaign is promising. People are no longer in support of the campaign because of the driving issue, but because they are genuinely interested in protecting human rights. [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/486563709771603969>

@Oct26Driving. (2014, December 28). If Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks had been indifferent towards the injustices that they faced, African Americans would still be barred from entering white restaurants and being treated as full humans. [Tweet] - translated from Arabic. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/549131459580022784>

@Oct26driving. (2015, March 18). The demands to allow women to drive have continued through the reigns of three kings, two Gulf wars, the revolutions of the Arab Spring and at every single time we are being told that the time is not right. When is the right time then? [Tweet] - translated from Arabic. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/578192593193807873>

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@WCSS_Q8. (2014, March 19). Photos for the celebrations that took place in the headquarters of the Office of the United Nations in Kuwait on the occasion of International Women's Day under the theme "Equality for Women." [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/446175907041259520

- @WCSS_Q8. (2014, April 24). The Administrative Court overturns the Ministry of Justice's decision to allow only males to apply for the post of prosecutor [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/460705042035933184
- @W2Drive. (2011, June 6). More than 70000 signed a petition 2drop all charges against @manal_alsharif <http://bit.ly/kg7EIL> #Women2Drive #FreeManal #Sawagna #KSA #News [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/77512884074196992
- @W2Drive. (2011, June 17). Don't confine yourself by driving in the back alleys without being seen. This act needs witnesses [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/81765716260425728
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- @W2Drive. (2011, June 22). The Saudi Princess Ameera Altaweel announces that she will drive her own car in defiance of the ban. #Women2Drive #SaudiWomen #WomenRights #KeepDriving [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/83270644460040192
- @W2Drive. (2011, June 22). The Saudi religious clerk Salman Alawdah backs up women's driving http://youtu.be/EM6xU_rXmwA [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/115190966285123585
- @W2Drive. (2011, September 13). Our campaign is concerned with all women's issues in the country For those who accuse us of dismissing more important women's issues, we have one simple question: what have you done to address these important issues? [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/114668544695861248
- @W2Drive. (2011, September 13). The objective of our campaign is to end all forms of discrimination against women and to restore their rights, which have been limited by the current restrictive social traditions that are contrary to the Islamic Shari'a [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/113492166474608640

- @W2Drive. (2011, September 27). A Saudi hashtag #women2king has been launched. It might help Saudi women to speak up [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/118684015304769538
- @Women2Drive. (2012, April 12). Most of the Saudi decisions on women's rights are in sum: preventing women from halal actions so that men do not fall into haram actions. [Tweet-translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/111679016481722370>
- @W2Drive. (2012, July 8). We changed the link to our facebook page after it has been blocked in Saudi. The new link is <http://facebook.com/right2dignity> #Women2Drive #Right2Dignity [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/222037923606966272
- @W2Drive. (2012, July 19). Women's fate, regardless of their age, still hangs in the hands of their fathers/husbands/male judges, while the Ministry of Justice is still discussing the codification of personal status law [Tweet- translated from Arabic]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Women2Drive_/status/225700533984436225

Appendix A
List of Interviews

Interview 1 – Skype interview with an independent Saudi activist, September 18, 2018.

Interview 2 – Skype interview with an independent Saudi activist, September 26, 2018.

Interview 3 – Skype interview with an independent Saudi activist, November 10, 2018.

Interview 4 – Skype interview with an independent Saudi activist, October 26, 2018.

Interview 5 – Skype interview with an independent Saudi activist, September 14, 2018.

Interview 6 – Telegram interview with an independent Saudi activist, October 2, 2018.

Interview 7 – Skype interview with an independent Saudi activist, September 19, 2018.

Interview 8 – Skype interview with an independent Saudi activist, November 2, 2018.

Interview 9 – Telegram interview with an independent Saudi activist, October 12, 2018.

Interview 10 – Skype interview with an independent Saudi activist, September 9, 2018.

Interview 11 – Skype interview with Dr. Ibtihal Al-Khatib, an independent women's rights activist, December 2, 2018.

Interview 12 – Skype interview with a Kuwaiti activist, November 28, 2018.

Interview 13 –interview with Lulwa al-Mulla, from the “Women's Cultural and Social Society” organization, Kuwait, June 3, 2017.

Interview 14 – interview with Alya al-Dulami, from the “Kuwaiti Women without Borders” group, Kuwait, June 2, 2017.

Interview 15 – Skype interview with Dr. Haila al-Mekaimi, from the “Kuwaiti Women's Union” which is sponsored by the Kuwaiti government, November 4, 2018.

Interview 16 – Skype interview with Khalood al-Hindi, from the “Kuwaiti Women without Borders” group, December 11, 2018.

Interview 17 – Skype interview with Noor al-Mazidi, a Kuwaiti self-identified feminist and a PhD candidate at the Gender Studies department at London School of Economics, January 16, 2019.

Interview 18 – Skype interview with Wafa Al-Obaid, from the women's committee in the National Association of Familial Security “Rawasi” which has Islamist leanings, November 15, 2018.

Appendix B

The Codebook for the Political Claim Analysis

Defining Political Claims

PCA originates within the field of social movement studies and is generally associated with Ruud Koopmans (Koopmans and Statham 1999a, Koopmans and Statham 1999b, Koopmans and Statham 2002, Koopmans 2002, Koopmans and Erbe 2004, Koopmans et al 2005, Koopmans 2007). It has been developed to bring together the two relevant methodological strands of social movement studies, Protest event analysis (PEA) and (qualitative) frame analysis (Snow et al. 1986; Gamson & Modigliani 1989), as it tries to establish the missing link between actors and contents by employing a distinct set of methods, particularly a classification of actors as well as frames on a one-dimensional pro/contra scale and time series graphs of discourse activity.

Hence, it was firstly proposed by Koopmans and Statham (1999) to overcome the weaknesses of protest event analysis and to expand its scope by collecting data not just on the actors and forms of action, but also on the interpretations by actors involved in political encounters. Thus, it takes as the central focus instances of claims-making, where claims-making refers to ‘a unit of strategic action in the public sphere that consists of a purposive and public articulation of political demands, call for action, proposals, criticism or physical action that addresses the interest of the claimants and/or other collective action’ (Koopmans et al, 2005). Thus, claims must be the result of purposive action and political in nature.

Accordingly, the act of claims making is normally broken down into such elements as: a claimant, an actor who makes a demand, proposal, appeal or criticism; an addressee, who is the target of the criticism or support; an object actor, whose interests are affected by the claim; and finally the substantive content of the claim, which states what is to be done (aim) and why (frame) (Koopmans & Erbe, 2002).

Consequently, each time an actor makes a claim, this action or statement is manually coded along with various other variables containing information about the actor, the context, addressees, opponents, aims, and frames, among others. Consequently, the main objective of PCA is to “trace the shifting alliances and oppositions between actors that evolve in the dynamic process of a political conflict” (Koopmans & Statham, 1999). In that regards, I draw on the PCA codebooks developed for large-scale comparative European projects, notably, The Transformation of Political Mobilization and Communication in European Public Spheres (Europub) (Koopmans 2002), Mobilization on Ethnic Relations, Citizenship and Immigration (MERCIC) (Koopmans et al. 2005), Finding a Place for Islam in Europe: Cultural Interactions Between Muslim Immigrants and Receiving Societies (EurIslam) (UNIGE 2010), Support and Opposition to Migration: A Cross-National Comparison of the Politicization of Migration (SOM) (Berkhout and Sudulich 2012), Multicultural Democracy and

Immigrants' Social Capital in Europe: Participation, Organisational Networks, and Public Policies at the Local Level (Localmultidem) (Palacios and Morales 2013).¹

However, PCA has come under criticism for its reliance on newspaper data, which makes it vulnerable to selection, description and researcher bias (Mugge 2012). Due to editorial preferences, contentious and large-scale events are more likely to be covered (Ibid). Moreover, there may be errors in the reporting of events, and researchers may interpret codes differently regardless of the sophistication of the codebook (Ibid). Mugge (2012) suggests combining newspaper data with ethnographic research to tackle these three biases and provide more depth. Thus, this project does not rest wholly on PCA and this codebook therefore only assists in one part of the data collection effort.

Newspapers as Sources

Taking news as the important source of empirical data for identifying which specific issues are salient at a given time, and within a given country is a useful starting point for our proposed method. Hence, when aggregated, this combination of salient issues will provide an empirically based measure for the 'public discourse' within a country, at a specific time and place.

Moreover, newspapers are one of the most important sources for retrieving information on significant topics and events. Compared to other media, such as Television, Radio, or Internet, newspapers produce a more detailed and more (cross-nationally) standardized format, and contain more of the type of elaborated political information that we aim to retrieve. There are also practical considerations. Newspaper sources also allow us to cover earlier periods, enabling the actual recording and coding in different countries to take place at different paces.

Thus, to determine the extent of the public discourse, claims will be recorded by coding newspapers. Hence, for the three countries in my case selection, I selected three daily national newspapers, one in English, in addition to two quality daily national newspapers in Arabic, preferably one left- and one right-orientated, or more conservative to more liberal. This is to have a broader overview of different political opinions and views.

Focusing on the (part of the) public discourse represented in the newspapers does not imply that these are the only arenas where claims are presented. In particular, some actors are less dependent upon the mass media, as they enjoy direct access to decision makers; others are less able to influence the mass media and therefore need to resort to alternative communication channels, where the PCA will be conducted later on.¹

¹ I essentially reproduce the questions asked, though I amend them for my research project

Unit of Analysis

Similarly to the previous PCA codebooks, my unit of analysis is instances of claims-making, not articles. Hence, I also adopt Koopmans' definition of a claim as 'a purposive and public articulation of political demands, calls to action, proposals, criticisms or physical attacks, which actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants, and/or other collective actors' (2007). Therefore, all acts were included in the data which involved demands, criticisms, or proposals relating the matters which are linked to the selected campaigns.

Such a unit of strategic action may involve several actors acting in concert, it may extend over several days or even longer, and it may involve coordinated action over a larger geographical area simultaneously. An instance of claim-making is NOT identical with individual statements. E.g., at a press conference a speaker may make several statements, perhaps even on completely different topics. Nevertheless, this is one instance of claim-making because both statements are made in the context of one strategic action in the public sphere.

An individual or collective subject must be present in order for a statement/action to count as an instance of claim-making. The subject may not be missing in the case of verbal statements. Additionally, simple attributions of attitudes or opinions to actors by the media or by other actors do not count as claim-making. Neither do speculations about opinions or actions of others.

Moreover, in his codebook for the Europub project, Koopmans (2002) breaks down a claim into seven main components, for each of which a number of variables have been constructed.

1. Location of the claim in time and space (WHEN and WHERE is the claim made?)
2. Claimant (WHO makes the claim?)
3. Form of the claim (HOW is the claim made?)
4. Addressee of the claim (AT WHOM is the claim addressed?)
5. Substantive issue of the claim (WHAT is the claim about?)
6. Object actor (FOR/AGAINST WHOM is the claim?)
7. Justification for the claim (WHY should this action be undertaken?)

In a simple form: at a time and place (1) an event occurs, where an actor (2) mobilizes a speech act (3) that raises a claim about an issue (4) which addresses another actor (5) calling for a response, on the basis of a justifying argumentation (6). The claim is made with reference to a public constituency, whose interests are affected (7).

Compared to traditional media content analysis methods, this approach captures more detail on the interactive and argumentative structure of public communication. By focusing on actors, their speech acts and issues, the concept of 'event' is expanded beyond description of 'what happened' to a focus on the 'meaning that was attributed to what happened'. This approach retrieves data on the public

discourses around events. Importantly, it codes precisely the type of information on the values and meanings attributed by collective actors to events.

Nonetheless, Koopmans (2002) acknowledges that it is not always possible to retrieve information on all seven aspects, and that as such, the minimum information needed is that on the form of the claim, substantive issue, object actor or justification. I thus follow Koopmans in coding claims that contain this minimum level of information. Hence, it is important to note that claims tend to be incomplete and consist of only several of the abovementioned aspects.

Sampling Procedure

As with regards the practical steps in relation to the procedure of sampling, I have selected specific newspapers to locate and code claims pertaining to 3 women's related campaigns: the women's to drive campaign in Saudi Arabia, the personal status law campaign in Bahrain, and the campaign for nationality law in Kuwait. For the Arabic newspapers, I used the built-in search query function in the official website's of the selected newspapers, and for the English newspapers, I used ProQuest, which is among many other things, a digital news archives service, which provides a single source for newspapers, reports, and datasets along with millions of pages of digitized historical primary sources. Moreover, I complemented this by conducting a further data retrieving procedure through the restricted domain search feature which is available through Google.

The electronic search procedure for the Arabic content newspaper is described below:

- 1- Go to the official website of each newspaper.
- 2- Enter the relevant keywords in the search bar.
- 3- Select the appropriate date ranges if this feature was available, otherwise manually check the date of the article.
- 4- Start determining if each article contains relevant claims.

While, the electronic search procedure for the English content is described below:

- 1- Go to ProQuest.
- 2- Click on the publication section, enter the name of the selected newspaper, pick it as a source and then search within it.
- 3- Enter the relevant keywords in the search bar.
- 4- Use OR connectors, to broaden a search and retrieve records containing any of the words it separates, as well as truncation to include word variations.
- 5- Select the appropriate date ranges.
- 6- Start determining if each article contains claims relevant to the scope of my research.

The Identification Process of Claims and Articles

The coding procedure begins by identifying and retrieving articles that are relevant for coding. Instead of reading through each newspaper article, checking the headline, the photos (if present), and reading the first 200 words plus headline of the main text would suffice (of course, if it is perfectly clear from headline and lead that the article is not relevant, then reading the first 200 words is not necessary either).

Moreover, if the 200 word-limit falls in the middle of a sentence, the rest of that sentence should still be included in determining whether the article should be added to the sample or not. If this body of text contains a reference to one of the seven elements, the article should be coded. In all other remaining cases (even if there is a reference to one of our topics further down in the article text), the article should be disregarded.

In applying the 200 words-rule, it is of course not the idea to start counting words for each article. The most efficient way to go about this is to determine how many lines of text in the article correspond to about 200 words; that way counting the lines suffices.

The next step involves identifying if the article contains any claims which are related to my main topics under consideration. This is best done on a copy or printout of the article, where it is possible to mark and number the claims. If the article contains no claims, neither by third actors, nor by the journalist or guest commentator, then the coding takes place on the article level only.

Additionally, like the prior work which has been conducted on PCA, I conceptualize a claim as being the result of purposive strategic action on the part of the claimant(s), and political in nature. Thus, to code instances of claim-making, I similarly draw the following conditions:

- The text must include a reference to an ongoing or concluded physical or verbal action in the public sphere. This includes attributions of positions, activities or opinions to actors by journalists. However, attributions of a claim by other political actors do not count as claim-making on the part of the actor to whom it is attributed.
- I do not count the presentation of survey results as an instance of claims-making, unless they are used by the organizers of the survey to make a political point (e.g. to formulate demands or criticize other actors). However, in this case, either the journalist reporting this, or the organizers of the survey are the claimants, not those part of the survey sample. Additionally, interviews with random people by journalists are treated like surveys, and therefore, the statements by these random citizens are not strategic claims by the respondents.
- Claims are usually phrased in active terms and include terms such as “said”, “stated”, “demanded”, “criticized”, “published”, “voted”, “wrote”, “demonstrated”, “decided”, “arrested” etc. Nouns referring to such actions include: “statement”, “letter”, “speech”, “decision”,

“petition”, etc. The occurrence of such verbs or nouns indicating action is a precondition for the coding of a claim. Simple attributions of attitudes to actors by others so not count as claim-making. Additionally, statements that only refer to speculations about the attitudes and actions of others are not coded. Finally, verbal statements by anonymous actors, for which neither the name nor the institutional affiliation, nor their social group, are detailed, are not coded as claims.

- Since claims must be political, they must relate to collective social problems and solutions to them, and not refer to individual strategies of tackling isolated problems.
- Journalist claims in such articles may be coded if they qualify as claims.
- A single instance of claim-making may consist of various claims. An actor can thus make multiple claims at a time, each of which requires separate coding. For instance, if an actor formulates three different demands to three separate addressees, three claims should be coded. Claims cannot have multiple addressees as those should be coded as new claims, as described in the previous point.
- A claim can be made by multiple actors if the claimants act in concert, the claim takes place at the same location in time and place. However, exceptions include: a) substantially identical statements by the same actor on different days or in different localities, b) if speakers in the same location in space express substantially different and strategically incompatible claims, these are coded as separate claims, c) part of peaceful demonstration breaking away from the march. However, if there is temporal or spatial continuity between actions, then these should be coded as one instance of claim-making (e.g. ongoing hunger strike involving the same claimants and aims, actions by the same actors with the aims in different localities on the same day).
- A claim should at the minimum have information on the form, issue, object actor, or justification (i.e. frame) to be coded. While, missing values are coded as 999.

In sum, a claim may: a) involve several subject actors acting in concert, b) have only one addressee, c) extend over more than a day, and d) simultaneously cut across geographical areas. The process of identifying claims is similar to Haunss and Kohlmorgen (2008: 8): the first step involves identifying if the article contains any claims relating to the issues which are relevant to the campaigns which are included in my my case selection. This is done on a printout of the article, where I can mark and number the claims. If there are no relevant claims, the coding stops at the article level.

Therefore, instances of claims-making have been included irrespective of their form, and range. Actors making claims have been coded regardless of their type, which means that my sample included civil society group such as women’s rights NGOs and also institutionalized and state actors.

Missing Values

Unless otherwise indicated, the zero code has a substantive meaning 'no' or 'none', or sometimes 'neutral' and should not be used for missing information. The codes 9, 99, 999, 9999, etc. (depending on the number of reserved digits for the variable) are reserved for 'missing' or 'unknown' values . They should only be used where there is a strong suspicion that the correct coding is not 'no' or 'none' even though the newspaper article does not contain the information.

Summary of Variables

The tables below provide a summary of the variables included in the analysis. Further description is provided in the following sections.

Article level variables

Concept	Description	Variable(s)
ID	Article Identification Number	ARTID
Date	The date of publication of the article	ARTDATE
Title	Heading or title of article	ARTTITLE
Name of publication	Name of publication containing the article (i.e. name of newspaper)	ARTPAPER
Genre	Journalistic genre of news source containing the article	ARTGENRE
Relevant claims	Does the article contain relevant	ARTSELECT

	claims?	
Main topic	Is one of our themes the main topic of article	ARTMAINTOP
Topic	Main form of topics addressed in article	ARTTOPIC

Claim-level Variables

Concept	Description	Variable(s)
Location & Date	Where and when does the claim take place?	CLAIMLOC, CLAIMDATE
Subject Actor	Who is making the claim?	ACTORxNAME2² ACTORxORG ACTORxSUM ACTORxTYPE ACTORxSCOPE

Form	How is the claim made?	FORM
Addressee, Opponent and	At whom is the claim	

² x is not used in the naming of variables, but is replaced by numbers, to identify whether the variable refers to the first/second/third subject actor etc. This is the same for other categories.

Supporter	directed? Who supports/opposes the claim?	ADREVAL ADRNAME ADRORG ADRSCOPE ADRSUM OPPNAME OPPORG OPPSCOPE OPPSUM SUPPNAME SUPPORTORG SUPPSUM SUPPSCOPE
Topic	What is the claim about?	ACTORPOSITION CLAIMTOPIC SCOPEISSUE STATUSQUO
Object Actor	For/against whom is the claim?	OBJECTx OBJECTxVAL OBJECTxSCOPE OBJACTORxORG
Justification (frame)	Why is the claim made?	FRAMEx

		FRAMEDESCx
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1) x is not used in the naming of variables, but is replaced by numbers, to identify whether the variable refers to the first/second/third subject actor etc. This is the same for other categories.

Description of the Article -level Variables ³

Variable name: **ARTID**

Variable label: Article Identification Number

Note: Assigned automatically when a new article is coded.

Note: running count per year and per newspaper 1-9999; restart with 1 in a new year or for another newspaper. A unique identification number for each article will be composed afterwards from PAPER, AYEAR, and ARTID. The number only serves identification purposes in the data file and on paper or electronic copies of the article. It is therefore no problem if there are gaps or 'jumps' in the count of article numbers. E.g., if you decide to delete a coded case, you can do so without altering the numbers of other cases. Note that continuations of an article on a different page are still considered as part of the same article.

Variable name: **ARTDATE**

Variable label: Date of publication of article

Note: dd/mm/yyyy

Variable name: **ARTTITLE**

Variable label: Heading or title of article

Note: String variable

Variable name: **ARTPAPER**

Variable label: Name of the newspaper containing the article

³ Unless otherwise stated, all variables are numeric.

Note: Numeric value

Value labels:

- 1 = Al-Riyadh newspaper
- 2 = Al-Jazirah newspaper
- 3 = Arab News newspaper
- 4 = Alanbaa newspaper
- 5 = Alrai newspaper
- 6 = Kuwait Times newspaper

Variable name: **ARTGENRE**

Variable label: Journalistic genre of news source containing the article

Value labels:

- 1 = news article (i.e. day to day coverage of events)
- 2 = Background article (e.g. correspondents' background report, analysis, feature, documentation)
- 3 = Interview (of the newspaper itself; references to interview statements drawn from other sources are coded as 1 or 2)
- 4 = opinion/commentary piece by a guest author/columnist/other media actor

Filter variable: Variable name: **ARTSELECT**

Variable label: Does the article contain relevant claims?

Value labels:

- 0 = no (stop coding)
- 1 = yes, but only already coded ones
- 2 = yes, include new claims (continue to claim-level variables)

Note: if an article contains claims, but those were already coded in another article, they are not coded again. The article is then treated similarly to articles that do not contain claims at all. For articles containing claims, information on main actor, topic, and scope of the article can be derived from the main claim (the first coded claim in the article, defined as “the claim around which the information (in as far as relevant to our seven fields) in the article is organized”, see further below under CID). This is not only economical and avoids double coding of the same information, but also allows us to link the full detail of the claim coding to the article level: e.g., information on addressees, frames, forms, etc.

IF 2 > END OF ARTICLE LEVEL CODING: IF 0 or 1 > ON TO ATOPIC

Variable name: **ARTMAINTOP**

'Is one of our themes the main topic of article?'

0= no

1 =yes

Variable name: **ARTTOPIC** (only for ARTTOPIC =10, string variable)

Variable label: Main form of topics addressed in article

Value labels:

1= Women's driving

2 =Women's mobility

3= Women's rights in general

4= Women's empowerment

5= Women's married to foreigners

6= Nationality law

7= Other

End of article level coding

Description of claim-level Variables

1. Identification and Location

Variable name: **CLAIMID**

Variable label: Identification number of the claim

Note: Automatically assigned, hierarchically related to **ARTID**, and count (1-99) within each article.

The main claim of the article gets CLAIMID=1. Subsequent claims within the article get CLAIMID=2,3, etc. Each claim is coded in only one article. If the main claim of an article has already been coded in another article, but the article contains other claims that were not coded yet, the second most important claim of the article is coded in the first position with CLAIMID=1.

Variable name: **CLAIMDESCR**

Variable label: description of claim

Notes: String variable that contains at least the main actor(s), form, addressee, object actor and frame if available.

Variable name: **CLAIMLOC** (only for CLAIMLOC =8, string variable)

Variable label: Location where the claim is made

Value labels:

- 1 = Saudi Arabia
- 2 = Kuwait
- 3 = Other Arab Gulf states
- 4 = Other Middle Eastern countries
- 5 = EU
- 6 = North American country
- 7 = Other

Variable name: **CLAIMDATE**

Variable label: Date of claim

Note: dd/mm/yyyy

Note on the coding of the date in the absence of explicit information in the article: If the article does not mention the date of a claim, the default option is to code it on the day before the newspaper issue (i.e., "yesterday").

2. Subject actors

The subject actor or claimant is the most important part of the claim, without it cannot exist. Here, I coded the functional type (government, civil society etc.), the scope (local, regional etc.) and the name of the actor. This information is registered in a separate list which is used for subsequent data entry. This should improve consistency across claims and increase coding efficiency.

Variable name: **ACTOR1NAME (ACTOR2NAME, ACTOR3NAME)**

Variable label: Full name of the actor. Format: Huda, Alsahi, etc.

Note: String variable

Variable name: **ACTOR1ORG (ACTOR2ORG, ACTOR3ORG)**

Variable label: Organizational affiliation of first subject actor

Value labels: string variable

Variable name: **ACTOR1SUM⁴ (ACTOR2SUM, ACTOR3SUM)** (only for ACTORxSUM =8, 14, 20, 29, 36, 42, 48, 54, 61,63,64, 65, 75, string variables)

Variable label: Summary of first subject actor

Value labels:

1. = None (only used for second and third actors)
2. = Whole polities (if names of whole polities like ‘Saudi Arabia’, ‘Kuwait’, ‘the EU’ are used)
3. = Parliamentary candidates
4. = Head of states/ crown prince/King
5. =Saudi government/executive
6. = Kuwaiti government/executive
7. =Other GCC states governments/executives
8. =Middle Eastern governments/executives
9. = Foreign government/executive – govts
10. = Saudi legislatives
11. = Kuwaiti legislatives
12. =Other GCC states legislative
13. =Middle Eastern legislative
14. = Foreign legislatives
15. = Saudi judiciary
16. = Kuwaiti judiciary
17. =Other GCC states judiciary
18. =Middle Eastern judiciary
19. = Foreign judiciary
20. =Saudi police and internal security agencies
21. =Kuwaiti police and internal security agencies

⁴ If a claim has more than one actor, I apply the following priority rules used in the Europub project: 1) actors mentioned as leaders/spokespersons/organisers take precedence, 2) organisations have priority over unorganised collectivities, 3) active actors or speakers have priority over passive audiences. If there are several actors and none has priority according to these criteria, the order with which they are mentioned in the article decides. If one actor has two functions mentioned, the highest level capacity in terms of the scope variable (below) should be selected.

22. = Saudi state executive agencies specifically dealing with women
23. = Kuwaiti state executive agencies specifically dealing with women
24. = Other GCC states executive agencies specifically dealing with women
25. = Middle Eastern states executive agencies specifically dealing with women
26. = Foreign state executive agencies specifically dealing with women
27. = Intergovernmental organisation specifically dealing with women
28. = Saudi opposition/ activist
29. = Kuwaiti opposition / activist
30. = Other GCC states opposition
31. = Middle Eastern opposition
32. = Foreign political party
33. = Saudi media and journalists
34. = Kuwaiti media and journalists
35. = Other GCC countries media and journalists
36. = Middle Eastern media and journalists
37. = Foreign media and journalists
38. = Saudi think tank/researcher/intellectual / public figure
39. = Kuwaiti think tank/researcher/intellectual/public figure
40. = Other GCC states think tank/researcher/intellectual/ public figure
41. = Middle Eastern think tank/researcher/intellectual/ public figure
42. = Foreign think tank/researcher/intellectual/ public figure
43. = Saudi women's NGO
44. = Kuwait women's NGO
45. = Other GCC states women's NGO
46. = Middle Eastern women's NGO
47. = Other national women's NGO
48. = Transnational women's NGO
49. = Saudi human rights NGO/ general NGO/ Association
50. = Kuwaiti human rights NGO/ general NGO/ Association
51. = Other GCC states human rights NGO
52. = Middle Eastern human rights NGO
53. = Other national human rights NGO
54. = Other transnational human rights NGO
55. = Other civil society organizations and groups
56. = Saudi cybergroup/campagin
57. = Kuwaiti cybergorup/campagin
58. = Saudi religious figure/s
59. = Saudi religious organisation
60. = Kuwaiti religious figure/s
61. = Kuwaiti religious organisation
62. = Other type of organisation
63. =the general public' (e.g., 'citizens', 'the citizenry', 'the population'; society, only if explicitly

- mentioned)
64. Individuals
65. 65/another actor

999 =Missing value

Variable name: **ACTOR1TYPE** (**ACTOR2TYPE**, **ACTOR3TYPE**)

Variable label: Type of first actor

Value labels:

0=N/A

1= Individual

2= Activist/s

3=Media/Journalism

4= Religious Figure

5=State institutions/ figures

6= organization / NGOs/ committee

7= named spokesperson(s) for organization/institution

8= unorganized collective -group members

9=Intellectuals/ judges/ public figures/candidates

10=Others

Note 0= N/A if there is not second and/or third subject actors

Variable name: **ACTOR1SCOPE** (**ACTOR2SCOPE**, **ACTOR3SCOPE**)

Variable label: Scope of first actor

Note: The notion of “scope” refers to the organizational extension of the organization or institution. In the case of non-organized collective actors (e.g., 'protesters') it refers to the scope of mobilization. The scope of the claim

Value labels:

0=N/A

1 = transnational (e.g. intergovernmental organizations such as the UN, EU, Arab League)

2 = translocal (e.g. diaspora organizations)

3 = national (national-level organizations, political societies, etc.)

4 = regional (regional branches of national organizations)

5 = local (local governments, local women's NGOs, etc.)

999 = unclassifiable

3. Form of Claims

Claimsmaking includes a broader range of behaviours than that is commonly understood as 'a political claim'. This is important when identifying claims in newspaper articles; for instance, parliamentary motions, executive action and think-tank reports are all acts of claimsmaking.

Variable name: **FORM**

Variable label: form of claim

Note: if there are several forms of action, the following priority rules apply: 1) political decisions and executive action have priority; 2) the category verbal statement is only used if none of the other categories applies; 3) among protest forms, the more radical (confrontational, violent) ones have priority over moderate ones (demonstrative, petitioning). If these criteria still not allow a decision, the order in which the forms are mentioned decides.

Value labels:

1 Formal political actions and decisions

(only for FORM = 109, string variable)

101 = Royal Decree

102 = legislation (proposal)

103 = Parliamentary vote / passage

104 = parliamentary motion (non-legislative) / QUESTION

105 = resolution/ RULING COURTS (political societies, etc.)

106 = ruling (courts) / COMMITTEE REPORT

107 = binding agreement (among several parties) / agreement

108 = Administrative decrees / decisions (e.g. management or personnel decisions like resignation/dismissal from/appointment to office)

109 = other formal political decisions/ AMENDMENTS

2 Executive Action (only for FORM = 203, string variable)

201 = financial and other material support

202 = repressive measure (e.g. arrest, ban, raid)

203 = other

3 Judicial Action⁵ (only for FORM = 305, string variable)

301 = criminal lawsuit

302 = civil lawsuit

303 = administrative lawsuit

304 = constitutional lawsuit

305 = other

4 Verbal Statements (only for FORM = 412, string variable)

401 = non-specified statement

402 = press statement/conference/release

403 = public speech

404 = interview

405 = public letter or or newspaper article

⁵ Appeals to the judiciary, not actions by the judiciary.

406 = other publication (book, research report, leaflet, etc.)/ Ongoing project

407 = graffiti

408 = presentation of survey/poll results/ report recommendations

409 = campaigning

410= meetings (conventions, campaign meeting, etc.)

411= Online action (Twitter, website)

412 = other verbal statement

5 Meetings (only for FORM = 505, string variable)

501= state-political meeting (e.g., summits, state visits)

502= party convention/congress

503= parliamentary session/debate / Committee in Parliament

504= election campaign meeting

505= other conferences/meetings/assemblies

6 Petitioning / lobbying (only for 603 = 8, string variable)

601 = petition/signature collection

602 = letter

603 = other / lobbying

7 Street politics'/ Challenging acts (only for FORM = 707, string variable)

701 = public assembly

702 = march, demonstration (legal and non-violent)

703= strike

704= confrontational protests

705= Challenging act

706 = cyber protest

707= other

4. Addressee, Opponent and Supporter⁶

A claim potentially constitutes a relationship between actors. The subject actor could call upon, criticize or support, other political actors. When it does so, this actor is the addressee of the claim. The subject actor relates to the addressee in the public discourse, so the addressee need not be involved in a material sense. Addressee are explicitly mentioned in the article and must be concrete organized actors, potentially making counter claims. The type of relationship (supporting, opposing) is coded, and the same variables as with the subject actor are coded (name, scope, etc.)

In this section, I adopt the Europub's classification of three types of addressees/indirect object actors:

- the addressee of the claim in the narrow sense of the word, referring to the actor who is held responsible for implementing the claim or at whom the claim is directly addressed in the form of a call or appeal to do or leave something;
- the opponent/criticized actor identified in the claim, referring to the actor who is seen as standing in the way of the claim's realization or advocating a position contrary to that of the claimant;

⁶ I follow previous codebooks in distinguishing between the identified addressee, opponent and supporter of claim. I use the definitions provided by Haunss and Kohlmorgen (2008: 29) in their codebook. The address refers to "the actor at whom the claim is directly addressed in the form of a call or appeal to do or leave something." The opponent/criticised actor refers to "the actor who is seen as standing in the way of the claim's realisation or advocating a position contrary to that of the claimant". The supported actor refers to "the actor who is seen as contributing to the claim's realisation or advocating a position congruent with that of the claimant."

- the supported actor, referring to the actor who is seen as contributing to the claim's realization or advocating a position congruent with that of the claimant.

If there are more than one addressee, criticized actor or supported actor, the following priority rules apply: (1) organizations or institutions (or their representatives) have priority over unorganized collectivities or groups; (2) state actors have priority over non-state actors. If these rules do not allow a decision, use the order in which the addressee or criticized actor are mentioned, unless it is possible to find a priority rule according to other information in the article.

Variable name: **ADRNAME**

Variable label: personal name of addressee

Note: string variable

Variable name: **ADRORG**

Variable label: name or organisation addressee is affiliated with

Note: string variable

Variable name: **ADRSUM**

Variable label: summary addressee of claim

Value labels: same as **ACTOR1SUM**

Variable name: **ADRSCOPE**

Variable label: scope of addressee

Value labels: same categories as **ACTOR1SCOPE**

Variable name: **ADREVAL**

Variable label: evaluation of addressee

Value labels:

-1 = criticism

0 = neutral

1 = support

99= N/A

999= Unclassified

Variable name: **OPPNAME**

Variable label: name of opponent actor of claim

Note: string variable

Variable name: **OPPORG**

Variable label: organizational affiliation of opponent actor of claim

Note: string variable

Variable name: **OPPSUM**

Variable label: summary of opponent actor of claim

Value labels: Same categories as **ACTOR1SUM**

Variable name: **OPPSCOPE**

Variable label: scope of opponent actor of claim

Value labels: same categories as **ACTOR1SCOPE**

Variable name: **SUPPNAME**

Variable label: personal name of supported actor

Note: string variable

Variable name: **SUPPORG**

Variable label: name or organisation supported actor is affiliated with

Note: string variable

Variable name: **SUPPSUM**

Variable label: summary supported actor of claim

Value labels: same as **ACTOR1SUM**

Note: If a claim has several supported actors, the priority rule is that organizations, institutions or representatives thereof have priority over unorganized collectivities or individuals. If there are several supported actors or no supported actor at all who have priority according to this criterion, the order in

which they are mentioned in the article decides (with, again, the main headline as the start of the article).

Variable name: **SUPPSCOPE**

Variable label: scope of supported actor of claim

Value labels: same categories as **ACTOR1SCOPE**

5. Aims/Topic

A claim can only deal with a single topic (only one category allowed). Topics should be understood as issues. That is, actors can position themselves on different sides of the issue. This enables the coding of positions as mentioned below.

Subject actors, contextualized by journalists, construct the scope of the topic, the level of government responsible in terms of actors involved and persons affected. This is coded under the 'scope of the issue'.

Variable name: **CLAIMTOPIC**

Variable label: Topic of claim

Value labels: same categories as **ARTTOPIC**

Variable name: **SCOPEISSUE**

Variable label: scope of claim

Value labels: same as **ACTOR1SCOPE**

Variable name: **ACTORPOSITION**

Variable label: position of claim towards issue

EX: Relation of issue position (aim) towards ----

-1 = Criticism

0 = Neutral

1 = Support

99= N/A

999= Unclassified

Variable name: **STATUSQUO**

Variable label: preference of claimant for change of policies or political practices

Value labels:

-1 = policies or political practices regarding the related women' issues should become more restrictive

0 = policies or political practices regarding the related women' issues should not change (i.e. defends status quo)

1 = policies or political practices regarding the related women' issues should improve

999 = claim does not refer to policies or political practices

6. Object Actor

In case a claim becomes reality, it is likely to affect the interests of certain political actors or a specific section of society. Those affected are object actors. By making a claim the subject actor thus constructs a material relationship with the object actor. This relationship need not be explicitly mentioned in the newspaper article. Further, the object actor may be an unorganized section of society . The object actor categories include a broader range of categories than the subject actor categories. Whether object actors are affected negatively or positively is coded under OBJEVAL.

Variable name: **OBJECT1 (OBJECT2, OBJECT3)**

Variable label: First object actor whose interest is, or would be affected by the claim if it were to become reality

Value labels:

0 = no object actor

1= unspecified broad category of actors (i.e. "the general public", "public interests")

2 = organized political actor (i.e. political societies , women's NGO)

3 women

301 = women in general

302 = women from a particular religious group

303 = women from a particular area

304 = women from a particular social class

305 = women from a particular social status

4 men (only for **OBJECTx** = 4, string variable)

401 = men in general

402 = men from a particular religious group

403 = men from a particular ethnic/cultural group

404 = men from a particular social class

405 = men from a particular social status

5 = other sections or groups in society

6 = the family

7 = no object actor specified or implied

Variable name: **OBJECTOR1ORG (OBJECTOR2ORG, OBJECT3ORG)**

Variable label: name of organization first object actor is affiliated to

Note: only code if **OBJECT1** = 1, string variable

Variable name: **OBJECT1SCOPE (OBJECT2SCOPE, OBJECT3SCOPE)**

Variable label: scope of first object actor

Value labels: same categories as **ACTOR1SCOPE**

Note: Add “.” If there is only one object actor, which means that OBJECT2, OBJECT3 don’t exist hence the scope of the object actors which is illustrated by the variables “OBJECT2SCOPE, OBJECT3SCOPE” don’t exist

Variable name: **OBJECT1VAL (OBJECT2VAL, OBJECT3VAL)**

Variable label: effect of claim on first object actor

Value labels:

-1 = criticism

0 = neutral

1 = support

99= N/A

999= Unclassified

Note: Add “.” If there is only one object actor, which means that OBJECT2, OBJECT3 don’t exist hence the effect of claim on first object actor which is illustrated by the variables “OBJECT2VAL, OBJECT3VAL” can’t take place.

7. Frames

In order to justify their position, subject actors may provide arguments. Following Habermas (1993), these may be instrumental, identity or moral arguments. These are coded under the FRAME variable which further includes various sub-categories (partially derived from Helbling et al. 2008). These arguments may be attributed by journalists to subject actors but should always be mentioned in the article. Coders need not evaluate whether the arguments are convincing or not. Subject actors may combine different types of arguments. Up to two categories are coded. Certain rhetoric or language (form) used may be different from actual, substantive arguments (content) made.

Variable name: **FRAME1 (FRAME2, FRAME3)**

Variable label: first justification or argument given or implied by the subject actor with respect to the claim

Value labels:

0 = no argument provided

1 Instrumental/pragmatic frames

11 = Public interest

12 = Economic

13 = Necessity

14 = Social-political interest

15 = Normalization argument

16 = Infrastructural

17 = Safety / dangerous consequences

18 = International reputation

19 = Other cost/benefit arguments

2 Arguments about collective identity

21 national identity (general)

211 = specific national traditions

212= Sub national traditions

22 cultural traditions and norms

221 = specific norms part of the social structure of the community

222 = family-related norms / gender roles

223 = religious identity and norms

3 Arguments about universal moral principles and rights (including legal arguments)

31 human rights

311 = individual civil rights/

312 = freedom of choice/ expression

313 = equal treatment

314 = religious rights

315 = women's rights / emancipation

32 Moral principles (or absence thereof)

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Appendix C

The Findings and the Descriptive Statistics of the Political Claim Analysis

The Saudi Case: Claim level Variables

Actors (main claimants)

C.1 The distribution of the main actors in the Saudi case

Main actors	2010		2011		2010 & 2011	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Government	6	6.66	11	5.91	17	6.15
Activists	0	0.00	15	8.06	15	5.43
Media and Journalists	30	33.33	90	48.38	120	43.47
Researchers/ Intellectuals	13	14.44	16	8.60	29	10.50
Women's NGOs/Human Rights NGOs	2	2.22	0	0.00	2	0.72
Religious figures/ Organizations	6	6.66	6	3.22	12	4.34
Individuals	29	32.22	40	21.50	69	25.00
Other	4	4.44	8	4.30	12	4.34
Total	90	100	186	100	276	100

When analyzing the distribution of the main claimants, who make a demand, proposal, appeal, or criticism; it appeared that the claim makers who are the most prominent in the Saudi press are those who are involved with the media and journalism sector, as they were the most dominant aggregate category of claim makers both in 2010 (33.33%) and 2011 (48.38%) respectively. Their dominance could be attributed to their prior involvement with the newspapers at hand, which often makes the process of inserting claims easier and more accessible.

While the category of unorganized individuals, which was mainly composed of ordinary individuals who were interviewed for their opinions in the newspapers came in the second place, as they constituted (25.00%) of the total claim makers on average. While the category of

researchers/intellectuals came in third place and contributed one-tenth (10.50%) of all claims made in 2010 and 2011 combined. Cyber activists on the other hand only accounted for 5.43% of the overall average sample, due to their involvement in 2011 with the “Women to Drive” campaign.

It is noticeable though that government and states actors category (which includes the legislative and executive branches of government, the judiciary, public administration, the police department, as well as individual politicians) was less visible in comparison to the other categories as it merely constituted 6.15% of all the claim makers combined.

Action forms

C.2 Forms of action

Forms of action	2010		2011		2010 & 2011	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Political actions and decisions	1	1.11	1	0.53	2	0.72
Verbal statements	88	97.77	147	79.03	235	85.14
Petitioning	1	1.11	9	4.83	10	3.62
Challenging acts	0	0.00	29	15.59	29	10.50
Total	90	100.00	186	100.00	276	100.00

C.3 Forms of action by broad actor categories (on average)

Main actors	Forms of action								Total	
	Political actions		Verbal statements		Petitioning		Challenging acts		Freq.	%
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)		
Government	2	0.72	5	5.43	0	0.00	0	0.00	17	6.15
Activists	0	0.00	4	1.44	1	0.36	10	3.62	15	5.43
Media and Journalists	0	0.00	118	42.75	1	0.36	1	0.36	120	43.47
Researchers/Intellectuals	0	0.00	25	9.05	1	0.36	3	1.08	29	10.50
Women's NGOs / Human Rights NGOs	0	0.00	2	0.72	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	0.72
Religious figures / Organizations	0	0.00	11	3.98	1	0.36	0	0.00	12	4.34
Individuals	0	0.00	57	20.65	1	0.36	11	3.98	69	25.00
Other	0	0.00	3	1.08	5	1.81	4	1.44	12	4.34
Total	2	0.72	235	85.14	10	3.62	29	10.50	276	100

If one disregards the claims made by the press, which are often by definition newspaper articles, that constituted 43.47% of the overall verbal statement category, verbal statements remain the most widely used form of action employed by different actors categories such as individuals, and researchers and intellectuals who rely on verbal interviews with media sources, press releases, and non-specified statements, which read “as XY said, stated, criticized, supported, claimed, etc” without any further details. The remaining forms of claims consisted of challenging acts such as the act of driving itself as a micro-act of resistance, in addition to cyber protests (10.50%) on Facebook and Twitter. While petitioning, on the other hand, constituted only 3.62 % of the overall reported forms of action.

It not surprising to observe though the low number of reported political actions and decisions as acts of claims-making (0.72%), due to the attributed “depoliticized” label which is attached to the campaign, in which politicians tend to distance themselves from it, leaving it to society. The overall composition of public claims-making in national newspapers, tell us that the general picture of the Saudi public sphere is that protest action is almost nonexistent and political resistance seems to be limited to discursive action, cyber protests and micro challenging acts of resistance. This choice of action repertoire obviously depends on the power and resources of individual actors, which are confined to verbal action anyway. And also aligns with the characteristics of the campaign in hand and the political climate that shapes the collective action repertoire, as it tends to be not conformed to confrontational protests as convenient forms of action.

Addresses

C.4: The classification of Addresses

Main addresses	2010		2011		2010 & 2011	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Government	30	33.33	43	23.12	73	26.45
Parliamentary candidates	3	3.33	0	0.00	3	1.09
Activists			7	3.76	7	2.54
Media and Journalists	2	2.22	4	2.15	6	2.17
Researchers/Intellectuals	2	2.22	1	0.54	3	1.09
Religious figures/Organizations	7	7.78	8	4.30	15	5.43
Society	33	36.67	121	65.05	154	55.80
Individuals	2	2	2	1.08	4	1.45
Other	1	1	0	0	1	0.36
N/A	10	10	0	0	10	3.62
Total	90	100.00	186	100	276	100.00

In about 96.37% of all cases, claim makers addressed other individuals or organizations, either by asking them to take action or to stop a specific action, by holding them responsible for implementing the claim, or even by supporting or criticizing them. All these forms are summarised here as direct addressees in general. The usual addressee of a public claim is often state actors and the institutions that are attributed to the executive powers by the constitution. However, due to the “depolitized” nature of the issue of women’s driving, the most noticeable target of political claims was “society” which served as the main addressee for 55.80% of all cases, as it was considered the main target of claim both in 2010 (36.67%) and 2011 (65.05%).

While, the government only accounted for (26.45%) of all the claims made on an average level, which could be attributed to the characteristics of the media system in Saudi Arabia in which direct criticism of, or demands on, the government side are rarely featured in the press. Moreover, in about 5.43% of all cases, claim makers addressed religious figures/organizations.

C.5: Main evaluation of the addressees by their categories

Main Addressees	2010				2011				2010 & 2011			
	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%
Government	-0.33	0.76	30	39.47	.16	.92	43	23.49	.08	.86	73	28.40
Parliamentary candidates	.33	.57	3	3.94	0	0	0	0	0.33	0.57	3	1.16
Activists	0	0	0	0	-1	0	7	3.82	-1	0	7	2.72
Media and Journalists	-1	0	2	2.63	-1	0	4	2.18	-1	0	6	2.33
Researchers/Intellectuals	0	1.41	2	2.63	1	0	1	0.54	0.33	1.15	3	1.16
Women's NGOs / Human Rights NGOs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Religious figures/Organizations	-.57	.78	7	9.21	-0.37	0.74	8	4.37	-0.46	0.74	15	5.83
Society	-.65	.72	29	38.15	-.35	.79	118	64.48	-.41	0.78	147	56.7
Individuals	-1	0	2	2.63	0	0	0	0	-0.5	1	4	1.55
Other	1	0	1	1.31	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.38
Total	-.34	.80	76	100	-.26	.84	183	100	-.28	0.83	259	100

Claim makers can address other actors in a neutral way, or with a positive or negative evaluation of the addressee. Hence, for each actor or actor category, it is possible to calculate the mean evaluation based on all cases in which this actor is addressed by others. The value can range between very negative (-1) to very positive (+1); in which the mean is 0.0 when either the actor is always addressed in a neutral way (if the standard deviation is zero) or when positive and negative evaluations of this addressee are equally present (if the standard deviation is high).

Echoing that, the overall pattern of claims-making in the Saudi press is that criticism of other actors (mostly of society) is more frequent than support (the mean for all addressees being -0.28). However, given the low number of cases, these figures only have an indicative value. In general, it can be said that society has a more negative image (-0.41) with a standard deviation of 0.78 than state actors (0.08) with a standard deviation of 0.86. While religious figures/organizations who possess extreme views and ideologies were also addressed negatively (-0.46). Moreover, it is worth noting that both the categories “activists” and “media and journalists” received negative evaluations when addressed as direct addressees.

Actors

C.6: The position regarding women's driving

Positions	2010		2011		2010 & 2011	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Criticism	7	7.78	30	16.13	37	13.14
Neutral	8	8.89	15	8.06	23	8.33
Support	75	83.33	139	74.73	214	77.54
Unclassified	0	0	2	1.08	2	0.72
Total	90	100.00	186	100.00	276	0.72

C.7: The position regarding women's driving by actor type (on average)

Actor	Criticism		Neutral		Support		Unclassified		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Government	5	1.81	5	1.81	6	2.17	1	0.36	17
Activists	0	0.00	0	0.00	15	5.43	0	0.00	15
Media and Journalists	10	3.62	13	4.71	97	35.14	0	0.00	120
Researchers/ Intellectuals	1	0.36	2	0.72	25	9.05	1	0.36	29
Women's NGOs/Human Rights NGOs	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	0.72	0	0.00	2
Religious figures/ Organizations	3	1.08	1	0.36	8	2.89	0	0.00	12
Individuals	15	5.43	1	0.36	53	19.20	0	0.00	69
Other	3	1.08	1	0.36	8	2.89	0	0.00	12
Total	37	13.38	23	8.32	214	77.49	2	0.72	276

Table C.7 shows us that the overall position towards women's driving as reported by the Saudi press is generally positive, where – on average– support far exceeds criticism (77.54). While 8.33% of the actors remained neutral. Moreover, the most dominant aggregate actors category which exhibited support to the cause was media and journalists (35.14%).

C.8: The overall position regarding women's driving

Main actors	2010				2011				2010 & 2011			
	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%
Government	0.5	.54	6	6.66	0.2	.91	10	5.43	.06	.85	16	5.83
Parliamentary candidates	0.00	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.00
Activists	0.00	0	0	0.00	1	0	15	8.15	1	0	15	5.47
Media and Journalists	0.86	0.43	30	33.33	0.67	0.65	90	48.91	0.72	0.60	120	43.79
Researchers/ Intellectuals	0.84	0.37	13	14.44	0.86	0.51	15	8.15	0.85	0.44	28	10.21
Women's NGOs/ Human Rights NGOs	1	0	2	2.22	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	1	0	2	0.72
Religious figures/ Organizations	1	0	6	6.66	-.16	.98	6	3.26	0.41	0.90	12	4.37
Society	0.00	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.00
Individuals	0.68	.71	29	32.22	0.45	0.90	40	21.73	0.55	0.83	69	25.18
Other	0	1.15	4	4.44	0.62	0.74	8	4.34	0.41	0.90	12	4.37
Total	0.75	0.58	90	100	0.59	0.75	184	100	0.64	0.70	274	100

Meanwhile, Table C.8 shows that almost the whole range of involved actors took an overall pro women's driving position, as the overall position towards women's driving constituted a positive mean value of (0.64). However, the most obvious actors defending the cause are activists with (1) mean value, in addition to researchers and intellectuals (0.85), and media and journalists (0.72). While government and state actors remain somehow more cautious in their approval of women's driving (0.06). It is also noticeable that women's NGOs and Human Rights NGOs make little appearance in the sample, which could be attributed to the restricted scope of the civil society sector in Saudi Arabia.

Frames

C.9: Presence of frames

	N	In %
Yes	246	89.13%
No	30	10.86%
Total	276	100

In the claims structure, frames are defined as the justification of a claim by its author, i.e. the answer to the question why the claim is made or why it should be implemented. In that sense, the codebook introduces five broad types of frames: 1- Instrumental/pragmatic related frames; 2- Collective identity related frames; 3- Emancipation and Human rights related frames; 4- Moral principles related frames; 5- Constitutional and institutional related frames, in addition to other types of frames. Consequently, about 89.1% of the selected articles contain frames in relation to women's driving.

C.10: Presence of frames by broad actor type

Major Frames	Gov	Act	Med	Res	Hum	REL	Ind	Oth	N	In%
Instrumental/ pragmatic	5	10	85	22	2	6	53	3	186	40.52%
Collective identity	10	4	70	15	1	12	27	4	143	31.15%
Constitutional and institu- tional	3	1	9	5	1	0	6	3	28	6.10%
Moral principles	1	2	13	1	0	0	2	1	20	4.35%
Emancipation and Human rights	4	3	38	6	2	6	9	3	71	15.45%
Other	1	0	0	0	0	1	8	1	11	2.39%
Total (N)	24	20	215	49	6	25	105	15	459	100%
(%)	5.22	4.35	46.84	10.67	1.30	5.44	22.87	3.26	100	100%

The table above exhibits that on average and for all actor types, instrumental/pragmatic related frames such as public interest, economic, sociopolitical interest, and necessity-based frames managed to trigger the highest rate of framing efforts in public debate (40.52%), followed by collective identity-based frames (31.15%) like specific national traditions, and specific norms part of the social structure of the community. The aggregate category of Emancipation and Human rights related frames such as Individual civil rights, freedom of choice, emancipation and women's rights, came third and accounted for 15.45% of the overall sample.

Moreover, media and journalists are the actors that make most often use of frames, precisely (46.8%) of all cases, followed by individual actors (22.4%). Both actor types do not hold own decision-making power and therefore depend more on the usage of frames for convincing, or at least by influencing public opinion. It should also be noted that media are the only claim makers who decide themselves on the final output of their claim in the mass media. Other involved actors may have used frames in their discourses, but these may have been reported only partially in the media.

C.11: The usage of specific frames (on average, combine)

Utilized Frames	Freq.	%
Public interest	18	3.92
Economic	35	7.62
Necessity	36	7.84
Sociopolitical interest	7	1.52
Normalization	24	5.22
Infrastructural	6	1.30
Safety	42	9.15
International reputation	7	1.52
Other cost/benefit arguments	11	2.43
Rule of law	26	5.66
Participation in public sphere	1	0.21
Specific national traditions	5	1.08
Specific norms part of the social structure	77	16.77
Family-related norms	14	3.05
religious identity and norms	45	9.80
Individual civil rights	13	2.83
Freedom of choice/expression	6	1.30
Equal treatment	11	2.39
Religious rights	9	1.96
Emancipation and women's rights	32	6.97
Good governance and fair procedures	11	2.39
Respect for other persons and groups	4	0.87
Solidarity	4	0.87
Sub national traditions	2	0.43
Justice	1	0.21
Active citizenship	1	0.21
Other	11	2.39
Total	459	100

C.12: The most often used frames

Frame	Number of claims (N)	In % of all frames (total= 459)
Specific norms part of the social structure	77	16.77%
Religious identity and norms	45	9.80%
Safety	42	9.15%
Necessity	36	7.84%
Economic	35	7.62%
Emancipation and women's rights	32	6.97%
Total	267	58.15%

C.13: The most often used frames by those who supported the campaign

Frame	Number of claims (N)	In % of all frames (out of 368 frames)
Specific norms part of the social structure	60	16.30%
Religious identity and norms	39	10.59%
Necessity	36	9.78%
Emancipation and women's rights	32	8.69%
Economic	31	8.42%
Safety	29	7.88%
Total	227	61.66%

Table C.12 and Table C.13 demonstrate the most frequent used frames that were utilized in the framing process, where we can see that the actors relied more on the normative and identity-based frames (the frames that both refer to specific norms part of the social structure, and religious identity and norms) to justify their positions. Moreover, frames can be used in different ways, for instance, they can reflect what allowing women to drive stands for in the view of the speaker, or what it does not stand for but ought to for example. Hence, in the coding procedures, the direction that a specific frame and the actors' positions should be taken into account to determine if the frame is being used to support/oppose the issue at hand, or as a description of a status (is/is not now) or of a wish (should be/should not be).

Hence, when one examines how those specific frames were used to justify the support for women's driving, the most frequent frames were defensive in nature that sought to confirm that driving already conforms with the existing societal norms that govern the behavior of women societies, in addition to the frames that justify that women's driving is not religiously forbidden in Islam and that there is no religious justification behind it. Whilst, we can observe the relatively small role of frames that are directly considered to be emancipatory and related to women's rights in nature (8.69%), which might be an indication of a general reluctance and scepticism that define the attitude towards featuring human rights and therefore, women's rights-based discourses in the Saudi press, due to the fact that the adoption of women's rights discourses is often criticized for being anchored in the Western liberal tradition.

The Kuwaiti case: Actors (main claimants)

C.14: The distribution of the main actors, full sample

Main actors	2013		2014		2013 & 2014	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Government	48	39.67	21	38.18	69	39.20
Parliamentary candidates	44	36.36	8	14.55	52	29.55
Activists	1	0.83	8	14.55	9	5.11
Media and Journalists	3	2.48	1	1.82	4	2.27
Researchers/Intellectuals	2	1.65	3	5.45	5	2.84
Women's NGOs/Human Rights NGOs	9	7.44	6	10.91	15	8.52
Individuals	5	4.13	8	14.55	13	7.39
Other	9	7.44	0	0.00	9	5.11
Total	121	100	55	100	176	100

Evidence from the political claims-making analysis can determine which types of actors are being featured in the public domain. Table C.14, overleaf, shows which actors appear making claims about the nationality issue in the Kuwaiti public sphere. Hence, in 2013 state actors accounted for (39.67%) of the total claim makers while parliamentary candidates constituted (36.36%) of the main claimants in the same year, followed by women's and human rights NGOs (7.44%). While in 2014, government and state actors such as ministers and MPs were responsible for the majority of claims (38.18%), followed by parliamentary candidates, activists and individuals who accounted for (14.55%) of the claims made respectively.

Turning to look at the claims made by journalists and media establishments, it is apparent that few claims have been made by media and journalists in general (2.27%), which makes us conclude that the nationality issue was not an issue field where media actors played a major role in print media coverage over the two years sampled here, which contrasts with the results that we have obtained in the Saudi case, in which media and journalists played a significant role as they constituted (43.47%) of the main claimants in 2013 and 2014 combined.

Action Forms

C.15: Forms of action

Forms of action	2013		2014		2013 & 2014	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Political actions and decisions	31	25.62	9	16.36	40	22.73
Verbal statements	71	58.68	41	74.55	112	63.63
Meetings	17	14.05	4	7.27	21	11.93
Petitioning	2	1.65	1	1.82	3	1.70
Total	121	100.00	55	100.00	176	100.00

As Table C.15 indicates, when media coverage of the issue of female citizenship rights is analyzed, verbal statements – whether the exact form (press release, public speech, etc.) appear as the most dominant forms of action (63.63%) in 2013 and 2014 combined. Moreover, a higher proportion of ‘political actions and decisions’ is found (22.73%) which mainly consists of legislations, proposals, parliamentary motions and amendments, followed by ‘meetings’ (11.93%) which are mostly constituency meetings with the voters. Additionally, few petitioning events were reported, constituting just (1.70%) of all forms of action reported.

Main actors	Forms of action								Total	
	Political actions		Verbal statements		Meetings		Petitioning			
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Government	38	21.59	22	12.50	9	5.11	0	0.00	69	39.20
Parliamentary candidates	1	0.56	45	25.56	6	3.40	0	0.00	52	29.54
Activists	0	0.00	9	5.11	0	0.00	0	0.00	9	5.11
Media and Journalists	0	0.00	4	2.27	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	2.27
Researchers/ Intellectuals	1	0.56	3	1.70	1	0.36	0	0.00	5	2.84
Women's NGOs/ Human Rights NGOs	0	0.00	9	5.11	3	1.70	3	1.70	15	8.52
Individuals	0	0.00	12	6.81	1	0.36	0	0.00	13	7.38
Other	0	0.00	8	4.54	1	0.36	0	0.00	9	5.11
Total	40	22.71	112	63.60	21	11.29	3	1.70	176	100.00

C.16: Forms of action by broad actor categories (on average)

Due to the politicized nature of the issue, it is unsurprising that state actors appear as making political decisions more frequently than the other types of actors since this is a key part of their political role. The proportion of 'political decisions' made by state actors though is higher in the Kuwaiti case than the Saudi case, which only accounted for (0.72%) of the reported actions. Moreover, verbal statements remain the most widely used form of action (63.60%) employed by different actors categories such as government, parliamentary candidates, activists, and women's NGOs who tend to rely on verbal interviews with media sources, press releases, and non-specified statements. The remaining forms of claims consist of formal meetings arranged by state actors and legislative committees (5.11%), and parliamentary candidates with the constituency (3.40%). While petitioning, on the other hand, constituted only 1.70 % of the overall reported forms of action.

Addressees

C.17: The classification of addressees

Main addressees	2013		2014		2013 & 2014	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Government	109	90.08	44	80.00	153	86.93
Media and Journalists	0	0.00	1	1.82	1	0.57
Women's NGOs/Human Rights NGOs	1	0.83	1	1.82	2	1.14
Society	0	0.00	8	14.55	8	4.55
N/A	11	9.09	1	1.82	12	6.82
Total	121	100.00	55	100	176	100.00

Table C.17 points out to the types of actors targeted by claims about the nationality issue in the Kuwaiti public sphere. Hence, the findings show that in 2013 alone, almost (90.08%) of the targeted addressees were state or governmental actors, while government actors accounted for (80.00%) of the addresses in 2014, followed by society (14.55%). Meanwhile, the presence of civil society actors is extremely low, as very few claims were addressed to non-state actors, such as women's NGOs or other civil society actors, as just (1.14%) of claims were targeted at women's organizations and NGOs.

C.18: Mean evaluation by category of addressees

Main Addressees	2013				2014				2013 & 2014			
	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%
Government	-0.06	0.82	76	98.70	-0.09	.87	42	82.35	-0.07	0.83	118	92.18
Media and Journalists	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.00	1	1.96	1	0.00	1	0.78
Women's NGOs/Human Rights NGOs	-1	0.00	1	1.29	1	0.00	1	1.96	0	1.41	2	1.56
Society	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.71	0.48	7	13.72	0.71	0.48	7	5.46
Total	-0.07	0.82	77	100.00	0.05	0.88	51	100.00	-0.02	0.84	128	100.00

Claim makers can address other actors in a neutral way, or with a positive or negative evaluation of the addressees. Hence, for each actor or actor category, it is possible to calculate the mean evaluation based on all cases in which this actor is addressed by others. The value can range between very negative (-1) to very positive (+1); in which the mean is 0.0 when either the actor is always addressed in a neutral way (if the standard deviation is zero) or when positive and negative evaluations of this addressee are equally present (if the standard deviation is high). Echoing that, as indicated by Table C.18, on average addressees are evaluated on balance in a slightly negative way as the mean for all addressees being (-0.02). Where government and state actors were particularly more likely to be criticized (-0.07). However, given the low number of cases, these figures only have an indicative value. In general, it can be said that the government has a more negative image (-0.07) with a standard deviation of 0.83 than society (0.71) with a standard deviation of (0.84), while other actors very rarely become the targets of demands by other actors.

Actors' Positions

C.19: The position regarding the nationality issue

Main actors	2013		2014		2013 & 2014	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Criticism	2	1.65	0	0.00	2	1.14
Neutral	1	0.83	2	3.64	3	1.70
Support	118	97.52	53	96.36	171	97.16
Total	121	100.00	55	100.00	176	100.00

C.20: The position regarding the nationality issue by actor type (on average)

Actor	Criticism		Neutral		Support		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Government	2	1.13	1	0.56	66	37.50	69
Parliamentary candidates	0	0.00	0	0.00	52	29.54	52
Activists	0	0.00	0	0.00	9	5.11	9
Media and Journalists	0	0.00	1	0.56	3	1.70	4
Researchers/Intellectuals	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	2.84	5
Women's NGOs/Human Rights NGOs	0	0.00	1	0.56	14	7.95	15
Individuals	0	0.00	0	0.00	13	7.38	13
Other	0	0.00	0	0.00	9	5.11	9
Total	2	1.14	3	1.70	171	97.16	176

The above tables indicate that the overall position towards the nationality issue as reported by the Kuwaiti press is generally positive, where – on average– support far exceeds criticism (97.16%). While (1.70%) of the actors remained neutral. Moreover, the most dominant aggregate actors category which exhibited support to the cause was stated actors (37.50%) followed by parliamentary candidates (29.54%).

C.21: The overall position regarding the nationality issue

Main actors	2013				2014				2013 & 2014			
	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	%
Government	1	0.00	30	38.96	0.94	0.23	18	35.29	0.97	0.14	48	37.70
Parliamentary candidates	1	0.00	24	31.16	1	0.00	7	13.72	1	0.00	31	24.21
Activists	1	0.00	1	1.29	1	0.00	8	15.68	1	0.00	9	7.03
Media and Journalists	1	0.00	2	2.59	1	0.00	1	1.96	1	0.00	3	2.34
Researchers/ Intellectuals	1	0.00	1	1.29	1	0.00	3	5.88	1	0.00	4	3.12
Women's NGOs/ Human Rights NGOs	1	0.00	7	9.09	0.83	0.40	6	11.74	0.92	0.00	13	10.15
Individuals	1	0.00	4	5.19	1	0.00	8	15.68	1	0.00	12	9.37
Other	1	0.00	8	10.38	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.00	8	6.25
Total	1	0.00	77	100.00	0.96	0.19	51	100.00	0.98	0.12	128	100.00

Analysis of the positions taken by various types of actors towards the nationality issue gives a measure of what degree of consensus or conflict exists between the different actors in the Kuwaiti public sphere. Nevertheless, the above table indicates that almost the whole range of involved actors took an overall pro campaign position, as the overall position towards the nationality constituted a positive mean value of (0.98).

Frames

C.22: Presence of frames

	N	In %
Yes	157	89.20
No	19	10.79
Total	176	100

The efforts of political actors to influence how different actors interpret political issues and events have become a central focus of social science research in recent years, which led to the emergence of the framing perspective. Frames thus define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest solutions (Entman, 1993). In line with this, Benford and Snow view frames as “interpretative schemata that simplify the world by selectively encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions,” thus allowing individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label events within their living space or the world at large (Snow and Benford, 1992). Accordingly, in recent years, framing and counter-framing processes in the media (e.g. Berinsky and Kinder 2006; Sieff 2003) have become a central object of analysis. Echoing that, table C.22 illustrates that in about 89.20% of the articles contained frames in relation to the nationality issue.

C. 23: Presence of frames by broad actor type

Major Frames	Gov	Par	Act	Med	Res	Hum	Ind	Oth	N	In%
Instrumental/ pragmatic	10	4	2	1	0	0	4	2	23	8.18
Collective identity	8	6	4	9	2	3	0	0	22	7.82
Constitutional and institu- tional	33	32	7	5	4	10	5	5	101	35.94
Moral principles	23	19	1	0	2	3	3	3	52	18.50
Emancipation and Human rights	13	33	6	2	0	8	9	6	82	29.18
Other	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.35
Total (N)	80	94	21	17	8	24	21	16	281	100.00
(%)	28.46	33.45	7.47	6.04	2.84	8.54	7.47	5.69	100.00	

The above table exhibits that on average and for all actor types, constitutional and institutional related frames managed to trigger the highest rate of framing efforts in public debate (35.52%), followed by Emancipation and Human rights (29.18%). Examples of the constitutional and institutional related frames that were particularly dominant in the coded sample was the constant reference to the ‘rule of law’, and the rights of ‘active citizens’, while the emancipatory frames that were found in the data included direct references to ‘women’s rights’, ‘and ‘equal treatment’. Moreover, the table also shows the kinds of actors using frames to discuss the nationality issue. As it turned out that the vast majority of claims with included frames about the campaign (94 of a total 281) stemmed from parliamentary candidates who appear to make the most often use of frames, precisely (33.45%) of all cases, followed by state actors (28.46%).

C.24: The distribution of specific frames (on average)

Utilized Frames	Freq.	%
Public interest	18	3.92
Economic	35	7.62
Necessity	36	7.84
Sociopolitical interest	7	1.52
Normalization	24	5.22
Infrastructural	6	1.30
Safety	42	9.15
International reputation	7	1.52
Other cost/benefit arguments	11	2.43
Rule of law	26	5.66
Participation in public sphere	1	0.21
Specific national traditions	5	1.08
Specific norms part of the social struc	77	16.77
Family-related norms	14	3.05
religious identity and norms	45	9.80
Individual civil rights	13	2.83
Freedom of choice/expression	6	1.30
Equal treatment	11	2.39
Religious rights	9	1.96
Emancipation and women's rights	32	6.97
Good governance and fair procedures	11	2.39
Respect for other persons and groups	4	0.87
Solidarity	4	0.87
Sub national traditions	2	0.43
Justice	1	0.21
Active citizenship	1	0.21
Other	11	2.39
Total	459	100

C.25: The most often used frames

Frame	Number claims (N)	of In % of all frames (total=281)
Rule of law	86	30.60
Equal treatment	56	19.92
Good governance and fair procedures	33	11.74
Justice	17	6.04
Emancipation and women's rights	14	4.98
Individual civil right	11	3.91
Total	217	77.19

The above tables reflect the most frequent used frames that were employed in the framing effort, where we can clearly observe that in general, the majority of actors have relied on framing their claims within the rule of law rubric, which comes as no surprise since the most of the actors are considered to be whether state actors or aspiring parliamentary candidates. Moreover, what followed next was the frames that endorsed “equal treatment” between the two genders and called for the abolishment of gendered nationality laws. While the claims which primarily addressed state actors have called for “good governance and fair procedures” conduct by the government.

Appendix D

The General Classification Scheme for Facebook posts

D.1: General Classification Scheme for Facebook posts in the Saudi case

Category	Explanation	Example- Translated
A- Information-related		
1- Providing/sharing campaign-related news or information	Conveying factual information relating to the causes of the campaign and its recent updates, as well as references to various news sources covering them.	More than 3,000 nationals of the Kingdom including prominent writers and academics have endorsed a study that recommends lifting a ban on women driving.
2- Sharing and commenting on news articles covering domestic issues	Disseminating and citing the coverage of Saudi-related news and articles in local and international media outlets.	Raif Badawi is a Saudi human rights activist and freethinker who is facing the death penalty for apostasy! Welcome to the stone age!
3- Sharing and commenting on news articles covering other countries or international issues	Disseminating and citing the coverage of other countries or international news and articles in local and international media outlets.	The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has been ruling Egypt for 9 months so far. Egyptians have revolted against poverty, injustice and corruption. They were hoping for a bright future and then they have trusted the Muslim Brotherhood. Check this video! The MPs were beating some protesters and then that pig has slapped that girl on her face!
B- Mobilization-related		
1- On-ground Mobilization	Posting explicit calls for on-ground action and protests.	Plz Drive. We hope the international media will cover our campaign this year too.
2- Online action	Posting explicit calls for online action such as: sending collective e-mails and signing online petitions.	This is the Saudi Shura Council's email (webmaster@shura.gov.sa). Let's take action and send so many emails to them with "Let women drive in Saudi Arabia" in English. You can send it in Arabic, too. I will appreciate any kind of help from you guys so I can know that I'm not wasting my time on Facebook. Thanks.
3- Transnational solidarity and support	Calling for transnational acts of solidarity or sharing some performed transnational acts of solidarity in relation to how the international audience had perceived and	This year we need you to help us honk for us around the Saudi embassy or consulate in your country. Please check this event and share it with your friends. Thank you.

	responded to the campaign.	
C- Feminist-related		
1- Sharing general feminist-related news or articles	Disseminating and citing the coverage of general feminist-related news and articles in local and international media outlets.	Juffali Automotive Company says it has trained 13 Saudi women to assemble trucks for Mercedes-Benz and its Jeddah partner, marking a breakthrough in having women work in a male-dominated jobs in the Kingdom. Thanks for the support. Way to go ladies. http://www.arabnews.com/news/452233
2- Saudi women's achievements	Conveying factual information relating to some examples of Saudi women who made notable achievements in the Saudi society, as well as references to various news sources covering their success.	Raha Moharrak, a 25-year-old graduate student from Jeddah, has made history by becoming the first Saudi woman to reach the world's highest peak, Mount Everest. She said convincing her family to agree to her climb was as great a challenge as the mountain itself. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22580140
3-Empowerment and motivation	Posting of content that seeks to empower women and increase their capacity as individuals.	They tell us we are too delicate to drive cars... that we are too precious to travel alone... too pretty to play rough sports. We are queens. Queens who have been deprived of the right to make our own decisions. Have you ever heard of a queen without authority? Well, they exist in Saudi Arabia. We will drive on December 28.
4-Feminists critical posts	Providing critical opinions or evaluation of certain political, societal, religious and ideological aspects in society from a feminist perspective.	Customs and traditions are nothing but a set of imposed laws that are imposed by an older generation who violated them tremendously.
D- Emotional-related and user engagement		
1- Expressing gratitude	Expressing gratitude and appreciation to the supporters of the campaign.	A thank you letter to all the supporters of this campaign.
2- Expressing solidarity	Offering moral support and solidarity to women in general, and/or the supporters of the campaign.	Our thoughts are with our brave mothers and sisters in Gaza.
3- Occasional greetings	Interacting with the users by posting occasional greetings to them during specific occasions such as the new year or the Eid.	Happy holidays and winter solstice. I'm glad we all survived this time. :)
4- General quotes	Sharing quotations from a text or a well-known public figure, usually with acknowledgment of the source.	"Rights are not given to those who are silent. A person must make a noise in order to get what he/she wants"—Malcolm X

E- Other

D.2: General Classification Scheme for Facebook posts in the Kuwaiti case

Category	Explanation	Example
A- Information-related		
1- Providing factual and/or historical information about WCSS	Providing factual information about WCSS, its objectives, and historical involvement in the Kuwaiti civil society and beyond.	Photos from the archives of WCSS that date back to 1969, including the first ever WCSS women's delegation to Abu Dhabi to get to know the status of women in the United Arab Emirates.
2- Visiting delegations and collaborations	Disseminating information about the recent visiting delegations to the headquarters of WCSS (high-profile representatives, international visitors, officials, advisers) and the outcomes of these visits, either in the form of signing of agreements or planned future collaborations	Mr. Jacques Lang, the former Minister of Culture of France and Chairman of the Arab World Institute, visited the headquarters of WCSS, where he was welcomed by Lulouh Al Mulla, the chairperson of the Board of Directors and Faeza Al-Awadhi, a board member of WCSS. Together, they discussed the best ways to promote women's rights in the region.
3- WCSS in the media	Citing and disseminating the coverage of the activities conducted by WCSS, or interviews given by some members of WCSS to the local media outlets.	Read about the Golden Jubilee celebration of WCSS in today's newspapers.
B- Activities-related		
1- Localized activities	Disseminating information about WCSS's efforts in providing social services to the local community in the arenas of healthcare, childcare and care for people with disabilities.	Take a look at the Women's Social and Cultural Society's new project regarding Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month http://youtu.be/YTBMmE6yB1Q
2 - Transnational activities	Disseminating information about WCSS's efforts in providing aid and support to several transnational causes in Palestine, Syria and Sudan, such as: building up schools and	The participation of Mrs. Lulwa Al Mulla, the Chairperson of the Women's Cultural and Social Society, at the third donors conference to support the humanitarian effort in Syria on March 31, 2015 at Bayan Palace in Kuwait. The conference was opened by His Highness

	supporting refugees.	the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, followed by the speech of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.
C- Feminist-related		
1- Promoting women's rights	Promoting women's enjoyment of their rights in the political, economic and social arenas.	As part of WCSS efforts to raise the political and legal awareness of Kuwaiti women and enable them to exercise all their full civil and political rights, WCSS has been committed towards the implementation of the Warkati Project (to promote women's rights and legal empowerment).
2- Capacity building and empowerment	Introducing actionable strategies and work plans that aim to empower women and increase their capacity as individuals.	Aspire Woman in collaboration with Women Cultural & Social Society, is inviting you to attend the women's empowerment event under the title "Aspire Woman: The Power Within." Women from various age groups and backgrounds come together to inspire women about entrepreneurship and the use of Information Technologies in running a successful business. The event will be held at WCSS's Auditorium on April 15 at 5:00 pm.
3- Ensaf campaign	Disseminating information and updates about the series of campaigning efforts which were employed in relation to the Ensaf campaign.	Mrs. Lulwa Saleh Al Mulla, the chairperson of WCSS, discusses the sufferings felt by Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaiti citizens. These women are discriminated against and excluded from getting the basic rights that are enjoyed by their Kuwaiti sisters who are married to Kuwaitis. Since 1993, WCSS has adopted this issue and is still fighting on women's side so they can obtain their full rights as guaranteed by the Kuwaiti Constitution.
4- Combating Violence against women	Highlighting the measures and actions that are taken by WCSS to work on the prevention of all forms of violence against women.	Join us today in the first Walkathon to stand up against violence against women. Standing against violence is a protection for you and the generations to come. Your family members might be exposed to it while you do not know! Do not stay silent. Participate with us and send the world a message about your rejection of violence.
5- Feminists critical posts	Providing critical opinions or evaluation of certain political, societal and ideological phenomena in society from a feminist perspective.	Luluah Mulla: Where are the MPs who were chasing women's votes when they needed it in the elections!! http://t.co/Wu7Iemf18Y
D- Users engagement		

1- Occasional greetings	Interacting with the users by posting occasional greetings to them during specific occasions such as the new year or the Eid.	The Women's Cultural and Social Association congratulates you all for the Happy Eid al-Adha. May god bless everyone with well-being and fortune.
E-Other		

Appendix E

The General Classification Scheme for Twitter Posts

E.1: General Classification Scheme for Twitter Posts for the Saudi accounts

Category	Explanation	Example
A- Media related		
1- Local mainstream media coverage of the campaign.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of the campaign in local media outlets.	Manal's 1st TV interview since her release from prison will air today at 2pm on al-Arabiya with @TurkiAldakhil https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/111745780133535744
2-Regional mainstream media coverage of the campaign.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of the campaign in the regional media outlets.	Watch Manal AlSharif interview today on AlHurra channel w/ Maysa AlAmoudi at 8:10 pm #Saudi #Women2Drive https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/116833540884283393
3-International mainstream media coverage of the campaign.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of the campaign in international media outlets.	Noura Mansouri and Muna AbuSulayman both are live on BBC World News discussing women rights in Saudi @nymansouri @munaabusulayman https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/119799840111738880
4- Alternative media coverage of the campaign.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of the campaign in alternative media platforms such as blogs and electronic newspapers.	#saudiwomen Global Post: Women's rights key to Saudi Arabia's future http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/saudi-arabia/110902/women%27s-rights-key-saudi ... 's-future https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/111094858751553536
5- Campaign's own media coverage.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of the campaign in the campaign's specific alternative media platforms such as the campaign's Facebook pages.	The official Facebook page for My Right to Dignity Initiative http://www.facebook.com/myright2dignity https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/165817520304029696
A2- Other media-related practices		
6-Dissemination	Disseminating and citing the coverage of Saudi-related news	Two million unemployed: What is the solution? http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?meth

of local news.	and articles.	od=home.regcon&contentid=20121224146958 #saudi https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/283087500635947008
7- Dissemination of international news.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of other international news and articles.	The 10 Most Dangerous Cities in the World in 2011!!! http://urbantitan.com/10-most-dangerous-cities-in-the-world-in-2011/... https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/155871728873123842
8- Media outreach.	Targeting influential media outlets with news about the campaign in order to report it.	@CNN Saudi Women will hit the street driving their cars on 17th Jun #Women2Drive #Saudi #Jeddah #Riyadh #Dammam #Khobar #Rights https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/66484687794741248
B- Campaign-related		
9-Providing information about the campaign.	Conveying factual information relating to the campaign and its causes.	Around 30% to 60% of the Saudi average class salary goes on foreigner drivers! #Women2Drive #Saudi #KSA #WomenRights #June17 #CNN #News #ABC https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/75169068105216000
10- Articulating the campaign's demands and claims.	Explicit articulation of campaign's demands in the public sphere.	Press Release-A year passes on the 1st lawsuit against the #Saudi DMV 2 more lawsuits & the 1st standstill #women2Drive http://twitmail.com/email/293769086/36/Press-Release-A-year-passes-on-the-1st-lawsuit-against-the--Saudi-DMV-2-more-lawsuits---the-1st-standstill--women2Drive... https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/72280326306660352
11- Raising criticism.	Raising criticism about the injustices resulting from the ban on driving.	https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/68629346474131456
C- Mobilization-related		
12- Calls for on-ground action.	Posting explicit calls for on-ground action and protests.	Looking 4 volunteer female drivers 2 teach other women how to drive women2drive@gmail.com.Ur info will b handled confidentially #women2drive https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/86802192144666625
13- Calls for online action.	Posting explicit calls for online action such as: sending collective e-mails, and signing online petitions.	Do you support #Saudi women and their right in driving? Add this twibbon to your avatar. http://twibbon.com/join/women2drive-7... #women2drive

		https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/105394822218661888
14- Encouragement and moral support.	Providing encouragement and moral support to the participants, supporters and sympathizers with the campaign.	@DaphneAbuSulaym Manal paid her freedom 2 inspire women around the world.Don't let that 2 go 4 a waste. It is the time for women to speak up https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/79687904913391616
D- Action related		
15- Providing physical evidence of success.	Providing persuasive tangible evidence of the success of the campaign either in the form of photo or video evidence of women who responded positively to the calls of the campaign.	A video of Saudi woman driving near 2 the police car for a few minutes without any arrest or detention http://twitvid.com/KPW3W YES WE CAN https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/112869680267526144
16- Sharing personal testimonies.	Providing first-hand written testimonies about the acts of resistance performed by individuals.	The 1st episode of @RayanAlduwaisi and his one week experience without driving his car http://rayanalduwaisi.blogspot.com/ https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/119916419579256832
17- Demonstrating influential public figure support.	Demonstrating acts or testimonies of solidarity from influential public figures.	Prince AlWaleed Bin Talal supports #women2drive http://youtu.be/Lf72_5bXT6k https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/115009948747968512
18- Demonstrating transnational support.	Showing transnational acts of solidarity, in relation to how the international audience had perceived and responded to the campaign.	Another #Rally to be held in front of the #SaudiEmbassy #US #Washington #DC supporting #Women2Drive in #Saudi on #Jun17 http:// on.fb.me/m3sLVQ https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/79618596883542016
E- Feminist related		
19- Feminist critical posts.	Providing critical opinions or evaluation of certain political, societal, religious and ideological aspects of society from a feminist perspective.	You know there's something wrong in the society when one of their biggest and most controversial issues is women selling at lingerie shops" https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/155874047278845952
20- Sharing general feminist-related news or articles.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of general feminist-related news and articles in local and international media outlets.	A conversation about #Islamic #Feminism ; featuring @EbtihalMubarak & @monaeltahawy http://nsc.newamerica.net/events/2011/is_lamic_feminism ... V @Maysa_M https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/207370413188190208

21- Empowerment and motivation.	Posting content that seeks to empower women and increase their capacity as individuals.	Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going."~Jim Rohn #saudiwomen #w2drive #women2drive" https://twitter.com/W2Drive/status/111780811010871296
F- Public outreach		
22- Conversational posts.	Engaging in debate with Twitter users in which arguments and counter-arguments are expressed and exchanged.	@HaifaAlroqi true patriotism are ppl like Loujain & Maysaa who risk their freedom & jobs for future of fellow citizens https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/558460469275394049
23- Answering to users questions.	Providing the necessary answers to the questions proposed by Twitter users.	@dakota29160785 they haven't been released but their families were allowed to see them. https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/540943053033201664
24- Users input.	Asking for users input and feedback about certain issues.	Here You Can Write Your Comments Of Support Or Even Opposition To The Campaign. #IWillDriveMyself #Saudi https://oct26driving.com/comments/ https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/526422953651490817
25- Expressing gratitude.	Expressing gratitude and appreciation to the supporters of the campaign.	@msarrar thank you so much for your bravery and your invaluable input! https://twitter.com/oct26driving/status/435152622945697792

E.2: General Classification Scheme for Twitter Posts for the Saudi accounts

Category	Explanation	Example
A- Media related		
1- Local mainstream media coverage of the campaign.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of the campaign in local media outlets.	The president of the Kuwaiti Women Without Borders group Mrs. Khalood al-Hindi will be a guest on Al-Kut Channel with Ahmed Rifai on Sunday at 10: 45 p.m. Stay tuned. https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/424531054285049856
2-Regional	Disseminating and citing	N/A

mainstream media coverage of the campaign.	the coverage of the campaign in the regional media outlets.	
3-International mainstream media coverage of the campaign.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of the campaign in international media outlets.	N/A
4- Alternative media coverage of the campaign.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of the campaign in in alternative media platforms such as blogs and electronic newspapers.	N/A
5- Campaign's own media coverage.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of the campaign in the campaign's specific alternative media platforms such as the campaign's Facebook pages.	If you are on Instagram please make sure to follow us on @wcss_q8, to get to know about our efforts in empowering women in the past 50 years https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/299910504351141889
A2- Other media-related practices		
6-Dissemination of local news.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of Kuwaiti-related news and articles.	Read Lulwa al-Mulla's interview with Alnahar newspaper on the relationship between the legislative and executive authorities in the current National Assembly. http://t.co/1raOUts3 https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/210034885421826049
7- Dissemination of international news.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of other international news and articles.	N/A
8- Media outreach.	Targeting influential media outlets with news about the campaign in order to report it.	We talked to the reporters and we shared our demands to them as well as our concerns about the fate of our children. Our ultimate goal is to be able naturalize our children. https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/431336953368576000
B- Campaign-related		
9-Providing	Conveying factual	Yesterday we attended a press conference that was organized by the

information about the campaign.	information relating to the campaign and its causes.	Women's Cultural and Social Society on the occasion of the launch of the “Ensaf” campaign https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/431332955928403968
10- Articulating the campaign’s demands and claims.	Conscious articulation of campaign’s demands in the public sphere.	We are demanding to amend Article II of the Kuwaiti Nationality Act to ensure the implementation of the principles of justice, equality and equal opportunities between all citizens. https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/35453740855919001
11- Raising criticism.	Raising criticism about the injustices resulting from the current citizenship laws.	Women are still facing unjust, arbitrary discriminatory laws that are taking huge toll on their wellbeing and welfare. https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/352480135401836545
C- Mobilization-related		
12- Calls for on-ground action.	Posting explicit calls for on-ground action.	We are pleased to invite you to attend the first public seminar that will discuss women’s citizenship. https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/525215967467425792
13- Calls for online action.	Posting explicit calls for online action.	This is our official account @KWWNLC. Please add us, follow us, and keep retweeting us. https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/357103416864022530
14- Encouragement and moral support.	Providing encouragement and moral support to the participants, supporters and sympathizers with the campaign.	We are asking everyone who is concerned with the issue of women's equal citizenship to cooperate with us, in order for us to be united in achieving our justifiable demands. https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/410398031520231424
D- Action related		
15- Providing physical evidence of success.	Providing persuasive tangible evidence of the progress of the campaign.	This week has been very eventful, in which some of our group members have visited the National Assembly and held meetings with several deputies discussing the severity of the situation.

		https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/430734546708226048
16- Sharing personal testimonies.	Providing first-hand written testimonies about the acts of resistance performed by individuals.	N/A
17- Demonstrating influential public figure support.	Demonstrating acts or testimonies of solidarity from influential public figures	Today we met Mr. Mohammed al-Hamidi, the Deputy President of the Kuwaiti Human Rights Association. During the meeting Mr. al-Hamidi offered his support to our cause and the possibility for further cooperation. https://twitter.com/KWWNLC/status/433896387663912960
18- Demonstrating transnational support.	Showing transnational acts of solidarity, in relation to how the international audience had perceived and responded to the campaign.	N/A
E- Feminist related		
19- Feminist critical posts.	Providing critical opinions or evaluation of certain political, societal, religious and ideological aspects of society from a feminist perspective.	Please read our joint statement with the other civil society organizations and groups against the Ministry Of Social Affairs and Labor attempt to legislate a law to grant salary to women who do not work. https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/338523563944452097
20- Sharing general feminist-related news or articles.	Disseminating and citing the coverage of general feminist-related news and articles in local and international media outlets.	A new achievement for Kuwaiti women. Trained pilot Muneera Bouaerki joins the Kuwaiti airways, making her the first female pilot in the history of Kuwait https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/489040680279232518
21- Empowerment and motivation.	Posting content that seeks to empower women and increase their capacity as individuals.	N/A
F- Public outreach		

22- Conversational posts.	Engaging in debate with Twitter users in which arguments and counter-arguments are expressed and exchanged.	<p>@bosammy @poshahantos Everybody who believes that the Constitution equates women and men with rights and duties should stand against the current discrimination</p> <p>https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/181276671209508865</p>
23- Answering to users questions.	Providing the necessary answers to the questions proposed by Twitter users.	<p>@AwaTiFALReFaie The organization organizes many activities and events, and it publishes announcements in the press. Our work is well known among the civil society sector.</p> <p>https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/181269313750179841</p>
24- Users input.	Asking for users input and feedback about certain issues.	<p>In case of any inquiry about the conference we are pleased to receive your inquires on our e-mai address l Wcss.sec@hotmail.com and we will respond to them as soon as possible.</p> <p>https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/249537978853109760</p>
25- Expressing gratitude.	Expressing gratitude and appreciation to the supporters of the campaign.	<p>@m__alibrahim We thank you for your support of our work.</p> <p>https://twitter.com/WCSS_Q8/status/299931138745593857</p>
G- Other.		