

## **ABSTRACT**

AL-QIMLASS, AISHA MELISSA. Examining Kuwaiti Women's Process of Circumscription and Compromise through the Lens of Islamic Feminism: A Mixed Methods Study (Under the direction of Sylvia Nassar-McMillan).

Despite higher levels of literacy rates and post-secondary graduation rates, a gender gap exists in which Kuwaiti women lag behind Kuwaiti men in terms of workforce participation. The current study developed a greater understanding of Kuwaiti women's sense of self and overarching gender identity, its connection to their career development process, and how the resulting association can be used to help explain the current gender gap associated with Kuwaiti women's low rate of employment. An embedded and transformative mixed methods design was used in which Islamic feminism provided the overarching framework for the study, because of its direct applicability to female gender identity development within an Islamic community. Additionally, Gottfredson's theory of career development provided the career foundation for the study. The study utilized an electronic survey to collect the quantitative data and initial qualitative data, as well as follow up in-depth interviews to collect the remaining qualitative data. Quantitative data was used to determine perceived sextypes and prestige levels of 30 occupations common in Kuwait, as well as the most cited reasons for participation in the workforce or not based on age and socioeconomic status. Qualitative data was used to examine the lived experiences of Kuwaiti women in regards to their gender identity and career development. Participants of the study were Kuwaiti women above the age of 18. A total of 546 participants completed the electronic survey, and a total of 15 participants completed the one on one in-depth interviews. Frequency distributions and Pearson's chi-squares were used to analyze the quantitative data, and a phenomenological approach was used to analyze the qualitative data.

Both forms of data were analyzed together using a side by side comparison to provide a mixed methods analysis. The perceived sextype and prestige level data was used to create a replica of Gottfredson's Map of Occupational Images. The results of the emergent map indicated that as the prestige level of an occupation rose, its corresponding sextype became more neutral. Data regarding reasons to participate in the workforce or not were examined, and results indicated a statistical significance between Kuwaiti women's age and personal interest, as well as age and ambition, when choosing to participate in the workforce. No significance was found in regards to the impact of socioeconomic status and Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce or not. Results from the phenomenological analysis of Kuwaiti women's gender identity and career development included emergent themes of: 1) the significance of societal messages, 2) family influences, 3) aspects of personal choice, 4) compromise created by external factors, 5) seeking work-life balance, 6) facets of Islamic feminism, and 7) change across generations. When the two forms of data were subsequently combined and compared, the mixed methods results indicated that the gender gap within the labor market stems from the highly valued role of mother and wife for Kuwaiti women. A discussion of the findings are presented in relation to proposed hypotheses, and recommendations for practice, policy, and research within various counseling settings and counselor education are provided.

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Examining Kuwaiti Women's Process of Circumscription and Compromise through the  
Lens of Islamic Feminism: A Mixed Methods Study

by  
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## **DEDICATION**

My father has always told my sisters and me to put our academics and schooling first. He has proved his dedication to this philosophy time and again through emotional support, financial support, and any other means necessary for us to reach our goals. His commitment to supporting his daughters' education was crystallized during this process by also being a substantial source of logistical help and guidance during the planning and execution of my research. During the past year or so, his role has ranged from cultural expert to translator and even to chauffeur when he felt it was needed. Without him, without his availability and willingness to help, my research would have stalled indefinitely at several points.

In my world, in my experience, the things that my father has done (and continues to do) for me have been things that I assumed fathers did for their children. However, throughout this process, I have come to realize the significance of the type of father that he is and the impact it has had on my view of the world.

To my father, the first embodiment of an Islamic feminist I ever met.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Aisha Al-Qimlass, born to an American mother and Kuwaiti father, grew up in Kuwait and moved to the United States full time to pursue her post-secondary education. After graduating high school, Aisha was awarded a full academic scholarship from Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education to complete her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling. Under the auspices of this scholarship, she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Rehabilitation Services from East Carolina University in 2008 and a Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from San Diego State University in 2010. Between 2010 and enrollment into the Counseling and Counselor Education PhD program at North Carolina State University in the fall of 2013, Aisha worked as a clinician and applied to various psychology PhD programs, none of which "fit just right". Aisha is currently licensed and certified as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Licensed Professional Counselor Associate, and a Licensed Clinical Additional Specialist Associate.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The concept of a gender gap is the phenomenon by which gender-based disparities in economics, politics, and social life are identified and explained. In 2006, the World Economic Forum (WEF) began reporting on gender gaps across various parts of life in an effort to raise awareness about the issue and to track international progress (WEF, 2015). Every year, the WEF compiles a score for each country between zero and one, indicating their place on a spectrum between inequality (0.00) and equality (1.00), and publishes them in an annual Gender Gap Report. One of the most noteworthy outcomes from the discussion on gender disparity worldwide is the emphasis on the role that women have in building their nation's economy and consequently, the need to improve the rights and status of women in many countries.

According to the 2015 Global Gender Gap Report, Kuwait ranked 117th out of 145 countries, with a score of 0.646 (WEF, 2015). Positively contributing to Kuwait's overall score were health and survival factors and educational attainment, specifically Kuwaiti women's higher literacy rates and higher post-secondary graduation rates compared to their male counterparts (Al-Masah Capital Limited, 2012, 2015; Groeblacher, 2012; WEF, 2015). Factors associated with political empowerment and those associated with economic opportunity and participation negatively impacted the country's overall score; specifically, though Kuwaiti women's employment and leadership rates have increased in recent history, they are still largely underrepresented in the world of work (Al-Masah Capital Limited, 2012).

When comparing women's economic and political growth within the six Gulf Middle Eastern countries that make up the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) (i.e. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman), Kuwait ranks highest in women professionals and technical workers and second highest in legislators, senior officials, and managers (Al-Masah Capital Limited, 2012). However in the most recent parliamentary elections, this resulted in just one female member being elected (Kuwait News Agency, 2016). Additionally, Kuwaiti women are outnumbering men in engineering, medicine, law, and business degrees, a trend that may be because of the increased attractiveness of women to work in the private sector (i.e. non-government jobs) because of higher wages and greater opportunity (Al-Kazi, 2011). Nevertheless, as stated previously, women are still outnumbered by men in the actual workforce.

Kuwait's modernization has led to a change in the status and role of both men and women and an economic need to build human resources (Al-Kazi, 2011). Traditionally, gender norms within the nuclear family (i.e. private sphere) were reflected within the public sphere (e.g. politics, labor market, etc.) (Groeblicher, 2012). Through the development and expansion of an Islamic based feminism, both public and private spheres in Kuwait are undergoing a change as Kuwaiti Muslim women are broadening their understanding of their gender role and status. It is, therefore, worth a deeper look into how these changing roles and statuses are contributing to the recent positive changes for women in Kuwait and how they can contribute to continued improvement within this field.

## **Historical Background and Context**

Kuwait was settled by nomadic desert tribes in the early 1700s; however, it quickly developed into a seafaring society to support itself (Casey, 2007). During the pearl trade in the late 1800s to early 1900s, Kuwait engaged in commerce both domestically and abroad. This point in Kuwait's history is typically viewed through the role the men played (e.g., making long and arduous journeys to supply goods and build the economy); however, this was also a pivotal time in defining the role of women (Juliá & Ridha, 2001). In particular, it allowed women to be in charge of the household, decision making, etc. when their husbands, brothers, and fathers were away for up to six months at a time (Al-Sabah, 2013).

As a port town, Kuwait interacted with many leading European countries of the time, such as France and Great Britain. These interactions were both political and economic and ultimately led to Kuwait taking on the status of British Protectorate from 1899 to 1961 (Casey, 2007). It is important to note here that Kuwait was not a European colony, as some other Arab countries were during this time (e.g. Egypt, Morocco etc.), and the termination of their Protectorate status was a mutually agreed upon decision. This distinction of ruling power enabled the influences of a Western/"Enlightened" political and social structure to occur more naturally and symbiotically versus the authoritarian and apartheid policies seen in other European colonies in the Middle East. A notable example of the cohesion between Kuwait and European influence at the time was the development of Kuwait's constitution in 1962 under Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah, which drew heavily on the British version in terms of human rights and regulations (Yanai, 2014). The development of Kuwait's constitution set it

apart from other Arab countries in two major ways: the right of its citizens to exercise freedom of speech and as a western-style democracy rooted in Arab culture and customs (Yanai, 2014). The impact of the constitution, and corresponding freedom of speech, is that each Kuwaiti citizen has rights, and is able to play a role in the governing of his or her country. While women at times felt that they were able to achieve this under the pre-2005 laws, they soon sought to fully integrate their rights within the government and society (Al-Sabah, 2013). The fight for full inclusion under the law included gaining the right to vote, qualifying for equal inheritance with male relatives, and gaining citizenship for their descendants, some of which are still being sought today.

In 1946, Kuwait began to participate in the commercial exportation of oil. After a dramatic increase in revenue, Kuwait began to modernize at a rapid pace (Casey, 2007). This modernization included building infrastructure and adding technological advances throughout the country. With the improvement of infrastructure, education became mandatory for both girls and boys, setting the stage for women's empowerment by building and supporting a population of educated women (Gonzalez, 2013).

The Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait also played a great part in the development of women's gender roles. During the occupation, men had to restrict their visibility because of possible attaches by Iraqi soldiers. Therefore, women served as a great asset to the Resistance and day-to-day life in Kuwait by taking over the duties that the men in their families could no longer complete (Al-Sabah, 2013; Juliá & Ridha, 2001). Overall, this



new found personal freedom and respect from others led to a resurgence in the Kuwaiti women's movement and particularly the fight for voting rights.

While organized women's rights movements in Kuwait began in the 1960s and 1970s, women's right to vote was not passed until 2005, well behind that of other Middle Eastern countries (Al-Sabah, 2013). The next major milestone came in 2009 when four women were elected to Parliament (Al-Sabah, 2013). Since then, women have been slowly redefining their role in society, and with it, redefining their culture.

### **Statement of the Problem**

After the Iraqi invasion and occupation of 1990-1991, Kuwait's economy saw an increase in Kuwaiti women occupying professional and leadership roles (Al-Sabah, 2013). Additionally, more Kuwaiti women than men have been enrolling in higher education programs and obtaining college degrees in traditionally male-dominated fields (Gonzalez, 2013). However, even with the rise of women in both educational and professional settings, they are still underrepresented in the general workforce.

Currently, the total population of Kuwaiti women outnumber Kuwaiti men by almost 51% (Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau, 2013a; Kuwait Public Authority for Civil Information, 2016). Though this is not an uncommon occurrence around the world, as of 2015, the global dispersion of women to men was 49.5% (The World Bank, 2016). However, looking specifically within Kuwait's labor force, Kuwaiti men's participation outnumbers Kuwaiti women with the ratio of women to men at 0.53 (World Economic Forum, 2015). As a result, the remaining demand for manpower is filled by migrants and expatriates (Ibrahim,

1988; Labor Market Information System, 2016). According to Al-Kazi (2011), “The social capital that has not been fully realized and developed in Kuwait is the national women” (p.168). Though the number of Kuwaiti women who occupy leadership positions has risen, Kuwaiti women still only account for 5.5% of the total within both the public and private work sectors (Al-Kazi, 2011), an issue that possibly stems from the overall lack of representation of Kuwaiti women within the general workforce.

Moving from employment to education, Kuwait’s general literacy rate is 96% (Al-Masah Capital Limited, 2015), and women’s enrollment in higher education outnumbers men with a ratio of 2.24 (World Economic Forum, 2015). Why then are some Kuwaiti women not putting their education and degrees to use in the world of work?

This question related to the gap between the high rates of education and low rates of employment among Kuwaiti women has been reviewed for a number of years (e.g. Al-Masah Capital Limited, 2012, 2015; Groeblacher, 2012; and Ibrahim, 1988). These reviews show that the majority of women’s low workforce participation has been related to social and cultural customs, including established gender roles (Al-Masah Capital Limited, 2012; 2015). Al-Kazi (2011) echoes this finding and mentions the regulation in Kuwait that allows married Kuwaiti women to retire after 15 years of work and single women after 20, which provides women with a much earlier exit from the labor market than men. Along with these regional/cultural barriers, there are also general barriers experienced by women worldwide. For example, balancing work and family, less than favorable government and organizational policies, lack of role models, a reduced need to work for women from higher socioeconomic

statuses, discrimination in the work place, and poor job opportunities (Al-Masah Capital Limited, 2015; Groeblacher, 2012) all create barriers for women in the workforce. These issues are of paramount importance if Kuwait's national development is to advance in the future; specifically, an "untapped pool of educated women would be a huge loss to the economy and society if left unutilized" (Al-Masah Capital Limited, 2012, p.2).

Compounding the issues regarding loss of social capital and possible loss of future national product, none of the above publications have attempted to address the issue of the current employment gender gap from the perspective of women regarding their concept of self, world of work, etc. Without a greater understanding of Kuwaiti women's sense of self and overarching gender identity, Kuwaiti women's career development process will never be fully understood, and the resulting gender gap will never be adequately addressed.

### **Significance of the Study**

Kuwait's current society can best be described as transformative. It incorporates modern elements while also remaining faithful to its traditional values (Cooke, 2014). This makes Kuwait a unique environment in which to study the development of gender roles, gender identity, and career aspirations of women.

**Gender identity.** Within the Arab world, articles and published materials related to Islamic feminism found within Kuwait have been reviewed. Though there are publications related to this topic, the majority focus on the evolution of Kuwaiti women's political rights, specifically the analysis of women's suffrage in 2005 and election of female parliament members in 2009 (e.g. Al-Sabah, 2013, Groeblacher, 2012, and Tetreault, 2000). As it is now

eleven years removed from the passing of women's voting rights, the bulk of published works regarding Islamic feminism focus on dated content. Some articles have moved beyond the framework of politics to seek a more general understanding of developing gender identities. Some examples include popular opinion related to male and female equality (Wutfu & Al-Ansari, 2000), the socialization of gender roles and the importance of masculinity in Arab culture (Al-Tarrah, 2000), and the process of female identity development within Kuwaiti college students (Al-Ma'seb, 2012). Of all of the published works reviewed regarding Islamic feminism and the broader topic of gender identity either within Kuwait or the greater Muslim community, none exist within the counseling literature. This leads to a lack of understanding from a human development standpoint of the process of Kuwaiti women's gender identity development. In an effort to fill this gap, Islamic feminism has been chosen to explore this process and its impact on both the individual and the larger community. Furthermore, adding to the counselor education literature, Islamic feminism has been chosen in an effort to build and expand counselors' multicultural and social justice competencies and provide new ways of interacting with Muslim clients in a variety of counseling settings (e.g. college counseling, career counseling, school counseling, clinical mental health counseling, etc.).

**Career development.** Few articles found within the current literature focus on the intersection of women and work in Kuwait. The majority of career related studies in Kuwait focus on the careers and employment of expatriate and migrant workers, those coming from other countries to work in Kuwait. Though some articles do seek to understand Kuwaiti

women's experiences in the country's workforce, they tend to be narrow in scope and not within the counseling literature. Specifically, they aim to build productivity instead of promoting personal career exploration and growth. Articles associated with women and work in Kuwait include the topics of work values (Al-Fadli & Al-Moutairi, 2008; Ali & Al-Kazemi, 2005), job satisfaction (Al-Kandari, 2016; Metle, 2001), leadership skills (Higan, 1998; Kemp, Madsen, & Davis, 2015), career aspirations (Al-Kendary, 2004), public perception (Askar & Ahmad, 2003; Mahamoud, 1989), and training (Al-Fadala, 2005). In an effort to fill the gap in the literature related to the process of career development of Kuwaiti women, including personal growth and exploration, Gottfredson's Theory of career development has been chosen. Additionally, while Gottfredson's Theory of career development has been applied to international populations including Australians (Beavis, 2007), New Zealanders (Henderson, Hesketh, & Tuffin, 1988), and South Koreans (Hwang, Kim, Ryu & Heppner, 2006), it has not yet been applied to an Arab, or for that matter, a Kuwaiti sample.

**Gender and career.** No current literature or research seeks to identify career development factors related specifically to women in Kuwait when examining the combined topics of women's gender identity within the Arab world and career development. This research seeks to fill this gap in literature by exploring how Kuwaiti women's gender identity is developed within their religion, culture, and changing society and how it is then connected to their overall career path. Additionally, this study aims to pave the way for future research

in both career development by way of Gottfredson's Theory of career development and Islamic feminism in Kuwait.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This mixed methods study will address factors contributing to Kuwaiti women's career development. It aims to develop a greater understanding of Kuwaiti women's sense of self and overarching gender identity, its connection to their career development process, and how the resulting association can be used to explain the current gender gap associated with Kuwaiti women's low rate of employment.

Mixed methods is an appropriate and necessary approach to this research study to add depth and richness to the quantitative findings and to determine if and/or how the qualitative and quantitative data are linked. Additionally, a transformative design was used within the mixed methods design through which Islamic feminism will provide an overarching framework for the study. This lens was used because of its direct applicability to female gender identity development within an Islamic community. The study includes both quantitative and qualitative data strands with the quantitative strand embedded within the larger qualitative strand. Both data strands were gathered first concurrently and were then followed with a second qualitative collection. The qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed separately and then merged to provide the mixed methods analysis. The quantitative data was used to test Gottfredson's Theory of career development, which predicts the influence of perceived occupational sextype and prestige level on ultimate occupational choice of Kuwaiti women. The quantitative data was used to test the impact of age and

socioeconomic status on Kuwaiti women's motivation for work. The qualitative data explored the way in which Kuwaiti women internalize the principles of Islamic feminism and how it manifests itself through their career development.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

Key terms used within the present study are defined below. Other related terms and definitions associated with the theories found within the study are reviewed in Chapter 2.

**Islamic feminism.** A feminism that works within the legitimacy of the Islamic religion, one where women advocate for their rights and roles as women within their specific cultural context (Badran, 2001, 2005; Khamis, 2010; Mir-Hosseini, 2011).

**Occupational sextype.** The degree of perceived masculinity or femininity associated with an occupation (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

**Occupational prestige level.** The amount of desirability ascribed to an occupation based on the associated power and respect within the position (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

**Circumscription.** The process through which adolescents begin to reject occupational options perceived to be unacceptable based on their developing self-concept (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

**Compromise.** The process whereby adolescents and young adults begin to give up their most preferred occupational goals for those that are more accessible. (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

## **Research Questions**

Research questions utilizing a mixed methods approach are listed below:

### *Mixed Methods:*

What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about Islamic feminism and career development in Kuwaiti women with quantitative survey data measuring perceived sextype and prestige level of occupations in an effort to explain Kuwaiti women's marginalization in the Kuwaiti labor market?

### *Quantitative:*

1. To what extent do Kuwaiti women's perceived sextype of occupations match Gottfredson's cognitive map of occupations?
2. To what extent do Kuwaiti women's perceived prestige level of occupations match Gottfredson's cognitive map of occupations?
3. Do Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce compare based on age?
4. Do Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce compare based on socioeconomic status?

### *Qualitative:*

5. How do Kuwaiti women describe their experiences with gender identity and subsequent career development as it relates to Islamic feminism?

## **Organization and Overview of Study**

Chapter 1 has provided the statement of the problem, its significance, historical context, and the study's purpose. Chapter 2 will expand on topics discussed in Chapter 1 and



review the relevant literature regarding women's career development and gender role within Kuwait. Additionally, Chapter 2 will examine the theoretical frameworks behind the study (Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development) and provide a hypothetical conceptual framework that was developed to make sense of the moving parts. Chapter 3 will then discuss the methodology particular to this line of inquiry. The rationale for the use of a mixed methods research design will be evaluated and a discussion of the participants, data collection, and data analysis used to answer each research question will be provided. Chapter 4 will provide the findings from the qualitative and quantitative research strands and the findings from their integration. Statistical analyses and qualitative themes will be presented along with a step-by-step review of their development. Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the findings within the broader context and provide implications for practice, policy, and further research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The current chapter reviews the literature and research for the theoretical frameworks guiding the present study: Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development. Along with a general overview and critique of the theories, a more specific look at their use in Kuwait is also reviewed. Finally, the conceptual framework, which incorporates both theories, is presented to show the hypothesized interaction of the theories and provide the structural base of inquiry for the study.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The purpose of a theoretical framework within research is to provide the structure for the study and to also provide the point of reference for which the results will be interpreted (Rokko & Plakhotnik, 2009). Additionally, within the transformative mixed methods design, a transformative theory is used to "advanc[e] the needs of underrepresented or marginalized populations" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 96). The following two theories provide the context for which the study is built and have been chosen for their ability to help conceptualize the phenomenon of Kuwaiti women's career development: Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development.

The purpose and relevance of Islamic feminism is to provide the transformative framework for Kuwaiti women's gender and corresponding religious identity development as it relates to their roles in both the professional and domestic worlds. Also, as the transformative theory, Islamic feminism provides the overarching lens through which all data is reviewed. The purpose and relevance of Gottfredson's theory of career development is to

inform the ways in which sextype and prestige level of various occupations may impact a woman's career-related aspirations and decisions. This theory, of all career theories, is especially relevant because of Kuwaiti women's enrollment in traditionally male dominated fields of study and the division of Kuwaiti's social class based on nationality status.

Therefore, Gottfredson's theory provides the basis upon which the research questions will be framed.

### **Islamic Feminism**

The term Islamic feminism may be seen as an oxymoron to some because Islam has become more associated with Islamic fundamentalism, and feminism is typically viewed as a liberal and secular frame of thought (Cooke, 2001). The concept of an Islamic based feminism was developed out of a need to differentiate a culturally specific form of feminism separate from Westernized feminism (Cooke, 2001). There are numerous explanations for this theory; however, the most basic explanation available is a form of feminism that is based within the framework of Islam (Gonzalez, 2013; Khamis, 2010; Mir-Hosseini, 2011).

**Definitions.** A few definitions associated with the discussion of Islamic feminism are reviewed below in an effort to provide clarity to the subsequent review and critique of the theory.

**Feminism.** A socially and politically driven frame of thought that calls for the same rights and opportunities given to women as to men (Nicolas & Welling, 2015).

**Islam.** A monotheistic faith similar to Judaism and Christianity that was revealed and delivered through Mohammed, a prophet of Allah (God), in the 7th century. Followers of the Islamic faith are known as Muslims.

**Quran.** The main text found in Islam. It contains the direct word of God (Allah) delivered through the archangel Gabriel to the Prophet Mohammed.

**Hadith.** Supplemental teachings in Islam; taken from the words, sayings, and teachings of the Prophet Mohammed.

**Sunna.** The practice of Islam; taken from hadith and acts of the Prophet Mohammed.

**Islamism.** A term associated with the politicization of Islam; also termed as ‘political Islam’.

**Islamist.** A proponent of political Islam.

**Muslim feminism.** A term some men and women prefer to use instead of Islamic feminism so that it has no connotations relating it to Islamism (Mir-Hosseini, 2011).

**Sharia.** Islamic law developed through the Quran, Hadith, and Sunna. However, there are arguments within this definition, outlined by Mir-Hosseini (2011) below:

In the Western context, and for some Muslims, Sharia has become synonymous with patriarchal laws and cruel punishments; with polygamy, stoning, amputation of limbs. Yet, for the mass of Muslims, Sharia is the essence of justice, while for Islamists, Sharia is a powerful political ideology. In Muslim tradition, however, Sharia is generally a theological and ethical concept more than a legal one; it is associated with

the sacred, denoting the totality of God's will as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.  
(p. 69)

**Gender jihad.** Jihad means "struggle". In this context then, Badran (2005) defines it as "strugglers in the cause of gender justice that includes promoting the practice of full equality" (p. 16).

**Premises and precision.** Islamic feminism has been and is currently being developed by Muslim women and men of all backgrounds and viewpoints, including secular, religious, and Islamist (Badran, 2001). This diverse set of opinions allows a multitude of understandings, which greatly enhances its relevancy from a human development standpoint but also confounds operationalization from a research standpoint. The current section aims to provide some clarity to the margins of Islamic feminism.

**Development.** Islamic feminism, like other feminisms, is a product of its time (Khamis, 2010). Though the specific theory currently being termed Islamic feminism was developed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Al-Sabah, 2013; Badran, 2005; Mir-Hosseini, 2011), some people argue that feminism in the Middle East started more than a century ago (Badran, 2005). For example, Bint Al-Shati (1967), a renowned author and gender activist in Islam and the Middle East, stated:

[E]ven the Arab woman in the darkest ages of her trials of slavery and metaphoric suffocation, she was not incapable of imposing her will and her existence and of standing behind all the significant events of our history, even if she remained hidden from sight behind a curtain, shackled in fetters. (p. 2)

Regardless of its time of origin, Islamic feminism saw a boost in popularity during the 1980s and 1990s for two main reasons: a reaction against Islamism and the rise of education (Al-Sabah, 2013; Badran, 2005; Khamis, 2010; Mir-Hosseini, 2011). As the Islamist movement spread throughout the Muslim world, both secular and more religiously oriented women grew concerned with the conservative interpretation of Islamic texts (Badran, 2005), particularly with their second-class status within this interpretation (Badran, 2005; Khamis, 2010; Mir-Hosseini, 2011). Women around the Muslim world felt the need to find new meaning for their role as women in their religion and culture (Badran, 2005). Along with a movement against political Islam, education was also a major catalyst for the development of Islamic feminism. Specifically, more women were gaining access to education, more women were gaining access to higher levels of education, and more women were gaining access to the internet and the information available through technology (Badran, 2005).

The birthplace of Islamic feminism can be predicted from its name: the Muslim world. Based on writings and verbal histories, it seems that this type of feminism developed concurrently around the Islamic Middle East and other Islamic communities around the globe: e.g. Malaysia, South Africa, and “the West” (Badran, 2005). During its genesis in the Islamic Middle East, certain countries were also addressing the issue of European colonialism and the desire for independence. Colonialism, therefore, is a theme seen throughout the writings on Islamic feminism, one where the Muslim woman argues that her

strength, desire, and fight for gender equality is innate and not a byproduct of foreign influence:

For those who consider that this is a product freshly arrived from the West, they are then ignorant of the truth of Islam. Understanding of Islam has escaped them, as their eyes fixate on the West. In their estimation, it is the West that supplies us with concepts of freedom and principles of development. This is a grave error. (Bint Al-Shati, 1967, p. 3).

*Parameters.* Touched upon earlier, the term Islamic feminism has many different definitions. For example, Cooke (2001) states that “Islamic feminists... are claiming their right to be strong women within this tradition, namely to be feminists without fear that they be accused of being Westernized and imitative” (p. 60). Graham-Brown, (2001) offers another understanding by stating that “the majority of Middle Eastern women activists seek some kind of accommodation with religious belief, because of its critical role in indigenous culture” (p. 33). Yet another definition of Islamic feminism is a feminism “where men and women enjoy equal rights but maintain gender-specific roles” (Al-Sabah, 2013, p. 2). Though the term “Islamic feminism” is still open to interpretation among scholars in the field, it is also open to interpretation among the Muslim women participating within its framework.

This was best highlighted in an interview conducted by Vanzan (2012):

Basically there is no need for feminism in Islam, as women are not inferior according to our religion. On the other hand, massive misinterpretations of the Qur’an and of Sunnah, lack of dealing with the original sources of Islam, traditional influences and

lack of education of men and women have led to an inferior position of women in Muslim societies. I am not a feminist if you consider “feminist” a person who aims to change the religion: I am a feminist if you think of a person who tries to understand the religion's original message in the current context. (p. 6)

Though one absolute definition of Islamic Feminism is still being consolidated within the literature, clear delineations can be found when compared to other schools of thought.

*Islamists versus feminists.* The division between Islamists and feminists is found in the much older argument (dating back to colonialism) between Islam and the West. Within this debate, Islamists argue that feminism is a Western attempt to disrupt “the Muslim way of life” (Mir-Hosseini, 2011, p. 69), and feminists argue that conservative Islamist policies are only able to find justifications through their specific and narrowed readings and interpretations of Islamic texts (Mir-Hosseini, 2011).

*Secular, Islamic, and western feminisms.* Some distinctions between secular and Islamic feminisms can be seen in their points of view regarding the analysis of their societies (Badran, 2005; Cooke, 2001). For example, secular feminists in the Muslim world tend to be critical of both their own governments and societies and those of the West. Within their communities, secular feminists tend to address issues of human rights and social justice from a legal and/or political platform (Treacher, 2003). Islamic feminists, on the other hand, address these same issues but from a social platform, building on pre-existing Islamic and cultural norms and values (Badran, 2005; Cooke, 2001; Treacher, 2003). A pivotal point of contention between secular and Islamic feminists regards sharia, or Islamic law. Secular



feminists see sharia as women's downfall because of the interlinking of religion, state, and law; however, Islamic feminists see it as a way to liberate women but also agree that there are sexist interpretations that have hindered women's rights (Treacher, 2003). The differentiation between secular and Islamic feminism became clear during the various Islamist movements around the Muslim world. During this time,

(f)eminism needed a new edge, and Islamic feminism provided it. Islamic feminism offered new thinking and new tools. Islamic feminism took from secular feminism its Islamic modernist strand and made progressive religious discourse its paramount discourse... Islamic feminism insists upon the practice of social justice, which cannot be achieved in the absence of full gender equality. (Badran, 2005, p. 13)

The differentiation between Islamic feminism and western feminism can be found in the desire of Islamic feminism to uphold Muslim culture. Additionally, some women fear that leaning too far into western feminism can be seen as a distancing from and/or shaming of their home culture (Cooke, 2001). Islamic feminists argue that western feminism has not liberated women by allowing them to be *women* (in the more traditional gender context) but by "forcing them to become more like men" (Treacher, 2003, p. 64). Treacher (2003) also states that when working from only a western ideal of feminism, "we end up in an all-too-familiar place where Western women are the real women, and the rest of us something lesser, not quite real, not quite the right thing" (Treacher, 2003, p. 70). Despite the differences between Islamic and western based feminisms, "Islamic feminism... has provided women with an alternative avenue through which they can manage to expand the boundaries of their

roles and agency in both public and private spheres” (Khamis, 2010, p. 251) just as western feminism has for members of western based cultures and societies.

***Diversity and generalizability.*** Islamic feminism has developed in a way that acknowledges the multitude of cultures found within the larger Muslim religion and therefore can be applied to each person’s (man or woman) individual cultural context (Badran, 2001, 2005; Khamis, 2010; Mir-Hosseini, 2011). For example, for Islamic feminism to be relevant to Muslim women of different cultures (e.g. Gulf Middle Eastern, Malaysian, Algerian) and to varying levels of religiosity within those cultures, a woman must be able to develop an individual meaning of this form of feminism for herself. Because of this type of development, Islamic feminism is an extremely generalizable framework, one that can be applied to any and all Muslim communities and societies. Acknowledging and celebrating this type of diversity within Islamic feminism is extremely important to proponents of the movement because it helps to attract potential activists.

**Key constructs.** Throughout the literature on Islamic feminism, common themes related to practice and ideology emerge.

***Arguments from within the religion.*** The argument for women’s rights and the progression of women’s gender roles comes from within the Islamic religious context, rather than an outside argument aimed at the whole Islamic faith itself (Khamis, 2010). This type of debate has allowed religiously oriented women and women who find pride within their Muslim culture and identity, to not set themselves outside of their community (Vanzan, 2012). As more women began to question the relationship between their patriarchal society

and Islamic ideals, “they saw no contradiction between their faith and their aspiration for gender equality” (Mir-Hosseini, 2011, p. 71). This point of view sets the stage for the second hallmark of Islamic feminism, an exegesis of Islamic texts and history.

*Exegesis.* Probably the most clear and distinguishable feature of Islamic feminism is the call to re-read and re-interpret Muslim history, Islamic law, and Islamic texts. This re-reading (i.e. exegesis) allows a new understanding of the religion to develop, one that was not created through a patriarchal lens (Abugideiri, 2010). Abugideiri (2010) explains the importance of this action: “The idea here is that if women's voices were included in Islam's foundational texts, Muslims today would be engaging a very different Islamic past, the basis of which would be more egalitarian gender norms and laws” (p. 134). Another important element of exegesis is that it allows feminists to maintain consistent religious beliefs in their overarching faith while also allowing for a debate and dialogue regarding some of its details (Khamis, 2010). Feminists argue that traditional interpretations have led to the oppression of women, but a return to the “true” interpretations through a re-reading/re-interpretation of the texts will lead to progress for women and other human rights issues (Treacher, 2003).

Utilizing exegesis also helps to address issues of honor found deeply rooted within the Arab culture. In many Arab societies, women have been idealized as the hallmark of the culture and those responsible for passing on culturally relevant norms and beliefs (Badran, 2005). Therefore, based on a woman’s adherence to her culture, both her honor and that of her family is measured and valued (Badran, 2005). When perceived cultural adherence is shaken, ramifications can be seen in both the woman’s honor and, in turn, the honor of her

extended family. One way to counteract this traditional understanding of culture and honor is through exegesis through which a new understanding is developed and cultural adherence then remains intact (Badran, 2005).

The significance of exegesis is found in many Islamic feminist writings and is typically argued as a form of jihad. This type of jihad states that women and men need to take a stand for the welfare of the larger Muslim community, which is currently in danger through the use of the old interpretations of Muslim texts. To participate in this jihad, each person must find the meaning of Islam for his or herself, to learn from the texts his or herself, and to not blindly follow the words of those before him or her (Cooke, 2002). Though the need for exegesis is great, Islamic feminists also contend that “there always have been, and will be, competing interpretations of Islam’s sacred texts. [However] the power of any interpretation depends, not on its correctness, but on the social and political forces supporting its claims to authenticity” (Mir-Hosseini, 2011, p. 75).

**Activism.** Because one of the tenets of Islam is charity, Islamic feminism has a rich foundation in social justice and human rights activism. A number of feminists in the Muslim world (whether they term themselves as secular, Islamic, or nothing at all), engage in activist work in an effort to improve the social injustices found within their communities (Mir-Hosseini, 2011). These activist works are seen at community, national, and even international settings; the United Nation’s Women’s Conference and the United Nation’s development of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (Badran, 2005; Mir-Hosseini, 2011) are examples of such settings. Though women and feminists tend

to be applauded for their social activist work, their gender activism has been received less warmly. Specifically, when Islamic feminists use their activism to promote women's rights and to question the power differential with men, they are quickly silenced by the argument that feminism is a western agenda (Treacher, 2003).

***Genders as complementary versus equal.*** This hallmark of Islamic feminism is at times contested by the varying viewpoints of what feminism in the Muslim world means or looks like. Its proponents argue that men and women are complementary to one another and not "equal" in the sense that western feminism states. Gender complementarity states that the integrity and respect for each gender and between the genders comes from understanding how the genders are different and how they work with each other (Treacher, 2003). Support by women for this argument of complementarity has led some to reject the term "feminist". However, support of this concept does not keep women from working towards their rights (Khamis, 2010). Some women accept their traditional gender roles but do not accept various forms of injustice that may come with these roles. Therefore, they maintain their traditional gender roles while implementing a set of standards (moral, ethical, and religious) for themselves, their spouses, and their families. (Khamis, 2010).

***Identity development.*** The topics of gender and religious identity are found throughout the counseling literature as important aspects of an individual's development of self. The same issues of gender and religious identity development are found within the literature of Islamic feminism (Cooke, 2002; Mir-Hosseini, 2011). Related to this development, the deconstructing of texts helps women to find a place to empower themselves

and learn how to situate themselves in a way that allows them to balance their national, gender, and religious identities, all in an effort to improve their society. (Cooke, 2002). This type of identity development also leads to a concern and struggle for some Muslim women (as well as men) when trying to define who they are and how they relate to the world around them.

Some of those defined by academics and journalists as ‘Islamic feminists’ rejected either the ‘Islamic’ or the ‘feminist’ part of the label. If they came from a religious background and addressed women’s rights within an Islamic frame of reference, they wanted to avoid any kind of association with the term ‘feminism’; their gender activism was a mixture of conformity and defiance. If they came from a secular background and addressed women’s rights from within broader feminist discourses, they rejected being called ‘Islamic’, even though many of them located their feminism in Islam. (Mir-Hosseini, 2011, p. 70).

**Implications.** Islamic feminism provides a different way of thinking about how Islam and feminism converge (Seedat, 2013) and a different way of creating a critical space and discourse for future analysis and critique (Cooke, 2001).

Feminist scholarship in Islam, as in any other religious tradition, has much to offer to both the understanding of religion and the search for justice. It can tell us how and why Islamic legal tradition became patriarchal and how the tension between the egalitarian and hierarchical voices and tendencies in the tradition played out (Mir-Hosseini, 2011 p. 72). With the expansion of media and technology, this discourse has become more available to women all over the world, allowing for greater dispersion, integration, and development

through their engagement and creation of individualized meanings and understandings. Islamic feminism shows substantiality and effectiveness for taking a deeper and different look at Muslim women and Islamic societies.

### **Islamic Feminism in Kuwait**

The majority of literature surrounding the development and expression of Islamic feminism in Kuwait has been linked to women's political rights. Of these sources, some provide a review of the factors contributing to both the delay and ultimate achievement of women's suffrage in 2005. For example, the role of women's social groups in both promoting and confusing the movement, the general political atmosphere, regional and international influences, and the Gulf War were all factors (Al-Kazi, 2011; Al-Mekaimi, 2010; Al-Sabah, 2013; Graham-Brown, 2001; Juliá & Ridha, 2001; Tetreault, 2000). Other sources seek to understand the social and cultural viewpoints that have surrounded the women's rights movement, including its change over time and the influence of factors such as tribal affiliation, religious affiliation, tradition, status, and social networks (Ali, 2005; Alshalal, 2005; Gonzalez, 2013; Meyer, Rizzo, & Ali, 2005).

Other literature found that related to Islamic feminism in Kuwait seeks a larger understanding of women's development. For example, in relation to other Arab countries, Al-Nakib (2013) found that there is a type of apathy among Kuwaiti women in advocating for gender equality and that Islamic feminism in the Gulf countries tends to work from within the current socio-political structure versus other non-Gulf countries who seek a more radical change. Additionally, Groeblacher (2012) used Kuwait's 2009 Parliamentary election, which

included four female Parliamentary members elected for the first time, as a case study to analyze the gender gap in Middle Eastern politics.

As stated previously, the topic of Islamic feminism is still relatively new to the literature and especially as it pertains to focused areas of inquiry. Because of this limitation, the review of Islamic feminism within Kuwait has been expanded to include gender-related issues found within the counseling literature, for example the impact of gender on an individual's lifespan development and the impact of gender on identity development models (Baruth & Manning, 2012; Sue & Sue, 2008). This approach aims to include varying types of literature bases and create a more holistic picture of women within Kuwait.

The larger issues of gender socialization and its impact on Kuwait culture was examined in the works by Al-Tarrah (2000), and Wutfu and Al-Ansari (2000). Al-Tarrah's (2000) manuscript outlines the theoretical basis for gender socialization and further highlights the value that is placed on masculinity in Kuwait and the larger Arab culture. Alternatively, Wutfu and Al-Ansari (2000) conducted a study of college students to assess perspectives on gender equality. Results of the study indicated that the education level, type of employment of students' parents, and type of work students' mothers performed were contributing factors to their view on gender equality. Specifically, higher education degrees of parents were associated with greater values placed on gender equality and mothers who were employed in more STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) related fields.

Only one article was found that sought to explore gender identity on a personal level. This study explored the stages of feminist identity development within Kuwaiti female



college students (Al-Ma'seb, 2012). Factors related to marital status, tribal affiliation, and degrees sought were examined. The overall rationale for the study was to provide a better way in which social workers could understand and work with their female clients.

### **Gottfredson's Theory of Career Development**

Gottfredson's theory of career development is also known as "Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription, Compromise, and Self-Creation" (Gottfredson, 2002, p. 85). It was originally developed in 1981, revised in 1996, and then expanded upon in 2002. The original theory sought to understand ways that gender and class impacted career development, a between groups difference. The latest version of the theory was expanded to seek a more individual (i.e. within groups) understanding of career development, for example, why do people who seem to be similar in most regards develop career choices differently? (Gottfredson, 2002). To build the original theory, Gottfredson utilized the findings of previous theories and research to support her assumptions of career development. Specifically, she states that her work:

is not a review of past research; it is a framework for understanding past research and planning future research. Much of the theory is speculative, but it provides testable propositions. To a large extent, the present theory builds on and complements previous theory, although a few areas of disagreement will be discussed. (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 546).

The 1996 revision did not make changes to the basic assumptions and concepts of the theory. Rather, Gottfredson sought to create a more precise definition for the process of

compromise, and to lay it out in a more understandable manner. In the 1996 version of the theory, Gottfredson also provides more information related to the impact of racial and gender difference and include more up-to-date research related to her theoretical hypotheses and premises.

Moving to the 2002 version of the theory, Gottfredson again remained true to the 1981 concepts and assumptions and incorporated updated research into the process of circumscription and compromise. Specifically, the 2002 version discusses the individual differences found within groups through nature versus nurture arguments and findings from recent behavioral genetic research.

**Assumptions.** The basis for Gottfredson's theory was outlined in the initial 1981 proposal. In this article, Gottfredson (1981) states that the groundwork for the theory is provided by both Super and Holland. In particular, like Super's theory, Gottfredson's theory is developmental, and like Holland's theory, it seeks to understand why people choose the occupations that they do and how the idea of self-concept influences occupational development and aspirations (Gottfredson, 1981). Furthermore, Gottfredson outlines six assumptions in the 1981 article that led to the development of her theory of circumscription and compromise. The first states that previous career theories focus on either occupational development or occupational choice and that an integrated approach may be more useful. The second states that previous theories don't pay enough attention to variables such as socioeconomic status, intelligence, and gender. The third states that socioeconomic status and intelligence should be included into the development of self-concept and that this self-

concept should then be used to further understand how occupational choice and development occurs. The fourth states that including both “psychological and non-psychological approaches” (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 546) would give a more thorough understanding of occupational development. The fifth states that there is a need to look at the vocational development that occurs at earlier stages in life. The sixth and final assumption states that there is a need to look at the types of compromises people make in their occupational decision making process.

**Definitions.** Gottfredson’s theory of career development includes overlapping definitions and key constructs. In an effort to delineate these issues, major definitions will be presented first.

***Self-concept.*** A person’s view of themselves, both publicly and privately. It includes factors such as gender, intelligence, interests, abilities, and socioeconomic status (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

***Images of occupations.*** These are the common stereotypes that most people have regarding a certain occupation, including the type of person that occupies this job and the type of life a job may provide (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

***Cognitive map of occupations.*** A graphical representation of occupations based on gender and prestige level (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

***Occupational preferences.*** The occupations that a person identifies as being most compatible with their self-concept (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

***Social space.*** Occupations that a person ultimately deems as appropriate and acceptable for themselves based heavily on social and environmental factors such as culture, gender, intelligence, ability, and social class (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

***Zone of acceptable alternatives.*** The graphical representation of social space on the cognitive map of occupations (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002).

***Occupational aspirations.*** The resulting product of occupational choices based on what an individual has deemed compatible and accessible (1981, 1996). Some of these aspirations may ultimately be realistic or idealistic, however (2002).

**Key constructs.** The two main constructs of this theory include circumscription and compromise. Circumscription is the process through which adolescents begin to reject occupational options because they are unacceptable based on their developing self-concept. Gottfredson (2002) identified five principles of circumscription and four stages of development through which the principles are seen. Compromise is the process where adolescents and young adults begin to give up their most preferred occupational goals for those that are more accessible. Gottfredson's (2002) theory identified three principles of accessibility as it relates to the process of compromise and degrees and principles of compromise.

***Principles of circumscription.*** The following principles were found in all three versions of Gottfredson's theory; however, the most up to date version is provided. Principle number one is the increasing capacity for abstraction. This focuses on the cognitive development of an individual, particularly how cognitive and reasoning abilities start off

more concrete and then develop to include more abstract and higher order cognitive development skills (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002). This principle corresponds to the development of self-concept and the stages of circumscription. Principle number two is the interactive development of self and aspirations. This focuses on the concurrent and collaborative development of both self-concept and occupational preferences, arguing that as people define themselves, they will also begin to determine what they want to be in the future (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002). Principle number three is overlapping differentiation and incorporation. This principle focuses on the integration of more complex images and information related to self and occupations before some of the simpler images have been solidified (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002). This means that one image (e.g. gender, social class, and prestige level) does not have to be finalized before another can start. Principle number four is progressive elimination of options. This principle may be the most directly related to the process of circumscription. It states that as the self-concept develops across the stages, occupational choices begin to be limited based on the individual's more specific view of themselves (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002). Furthermore, Gottfredson states that occupational choice is more of a process of eliminating options versus creating ones. Principle number five is "taken for granted lost to sight" (Gottfredson, 2002, p. 95). This principle states that the process of circumscription is so gradual and natural, that most people do not know that it has occurred and therefore are not aware of the limitations they have put on themselves (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002). It is through this principle that a number of clinical applications of Gottfredson's theory are drawn.

*Stages of circumscription.* This was initially termed “stages of development” (Gottfredson, 1981). The purpose of progressing through these stages is to develop a self-concept and occupational preferences. Though the ages and grade levels associated with each stage have the support of empirical evidence, they are not concrete and should instead be considered guidelines that can be tailored to each individual (Gottfredson, 1981, 2002). Stage one is between ages three to five years old, or preschool, and is when the individual becomes oriented to size and power. Here is when a child begins to understand adult roles, and in the process of circumscription, will begin to identify preferences for realistic occupations instead of fictional ones. Stage two is between ages six to eight years old, or grades one to three, and is when individuals become oriented to sex and gender roles. Here, in the process of circumscription, occupations that are not appropriate based on gender norms are eliminated. Stage three is between ages nine to thirteen, or grades four to eight, and is when the individual becomes oriented to social value. In the process of circumscription, occupations that have a prestige level that is too low for the individual or a difficulty level that is too high (based on actual or perceived ability), are eliminated. Finally, stage four is from the age of fourteen and above, or grade nine and above, and is when the individual becomes oriented to their internal and unique self. While the first three stages engage in a process of elimination, this last stage concerns itself with identifying which of the remaining occupational choices are more preferable and accessible. This is when an individual begins to create a more “personal sense of self” (Gottfredson, 2002, p. 99) through interests and abilities. Stage four also begins the process of compromise.

*Compromise of aspiration and principles of accessibility.* Building from the discussion above, compromise can also be thought of as how individuals adjust their aspirations to account for their environmental reality and/or accessibility of occupations (Gottfredson, 2002). The three principles of accessibility relate to how people gather information regarding the accessibility of various occupations (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002). The first accessibility principle is selective attention. This principle states that people will only focus on information that they feel pertains to them and their situation. The second accessibility principle is the need to implement a spur to action. This principle states that people will become the most concerned with information regarding the accessibility of occupations the closer they get to actually needing to use that information. The third and final accessibility principle is ease and proximity of search. This principle states that people tend to gather information from those resources most easily accessible and trusted. For most people, this means that they will stay within their comfort zone and will tend to only get information regarding the social space they have constructed for themselves instead of learning about other occupational options.

*Degrees and principles of compromise.* Degree of compromise range from high to low, which then corresponds to the level of concern and anxiety a person may face when making a compromise. Those compromises that seem to be more intense will create more concern and anxiety than those compromises that seem minor. The principles of compromise discuss how compromise occurs based on self-concept and an individual's need to protect it. The first principle of compromise is developing conditional priorities. This states that

occupational interests will be the first area to be compromised, then prestige level, and then finally sextype of occupational choices. The second principle of compromise is opting for 'the good'. This states that people typically tend to choose a good occupational option but not the best possible one because the best possible choice may be more demanding or overwhelming in some way. The third principle of compromise is staving off the 'not good enough'. This states that if a person is not satisfied with any of their occupational options, they will try to remain undecided for as long as possible. The fourth and final principle of compromise is accommodate to compromise. This states that a person will accommodate psychologically in either a major or minor way to account for the compromise made.

**Testability.** Gottfredson's theory of career development is testable, both empirically and clinically. One reason behind this is Gottfredson's own development of hypotheses related to the processes of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002). For example, in the 2002 version, Gottfredson's theory outlines three different predictions of career development: a) following the gender type of an occupation will be the most important factor when making decisions regarding career and work; b) keeping with society's expectations of the amount of prestige related to an occupation will be the second most important factor in making career related decisions, and c) meeting and satisfying the unique needs and interests of the individual will be the last and least important factor in making career related decisions. The majority of published research either attempts to test these hypotheses (e.g. Helwig, 2004; Henderson, et al, 1988; Hesketh, Durant, & Pryor, 1990; Leung & Plake, 1990), find clinically relevant ways to assist in the process of compromise



(e.g. Gottfredson, & Lapan, 1997; Prescod & Daire, 2013), or address the process of circumscription so that individuals have a larger zone of acceptable alternatives (e.g. Creed & Gagliardi, 2015; Cochran, Wang, Stevenson, Johnson, & Crews, 2011).

Issues with testing this theory do exist, however. These are based on the methodologies to study the constructs of circumscription and compromise: forced choice, card sort, and retrospective (Cochran et al., 2011; Holt, 1989; Leung & Plake, 1990). All of these methodologies are based on self-report and memory instead of assessing real-time phenomenon. Another issue with testability is the coding and operationalizing of occupation prestige level and sextype (Beavis 2007; Junk & Armstrong, 2010; Leung & Harmon, 1990; Leung & Plake, 1990). This is mostly because of the use of old census data that may not reflect current trends incompatible perceptions between coders and participants regarding these constructs.

**Generalizability.** Though Gottfredson's theory has some testability issues, research has shown it to be generalizable to different populations in the United States and internationally. Examples in the U.S. include Ivers, Milsom, and Newsome's (2012) use of this theory to promote school success in Latino students, Holt's (1989) review of the circumscription process between engineering and social work college age students, Helwig's (2004) application to adolescents, Cochran et al.'s (2011) exploration into career success of middle aged adults, and Hardie's (2015) exploration into the decision making process of men to enter traditionally female dominated work. Examples of the generalizability of Gottfredson's theory to international samples include Australians (Beavis 2007), New

Zealanders (Henderson, et al,1988), and South Korean students (Hwang, Kim, Ryu & Heppner, 2006),

*Usefulness.* Through the theory's testability and integration of previous theories and corresponding research, Gottfredson's theory of career development is both useful and applicable to different settings. Gottfredson herself provides implications for counselors and clients in all three versions of her theory. In her 1996 version, Gottfredson outlined practical applications of the theory in individual career counseling settings and career education programs. Included in the practical implications for individual career counseling, Gottfredson (1996) discussed methods for accurately identifying the issue of compromise, seeking information regarding the client's process of circumscription, and assisting the client in gathering information to widen his or her zone of acceptable alternatives. Included in the practical implications for career education programs, Gottfredson (1996) outlined interventions that could apply to elementary, middle, and high school settings. Other research based in Gottfredson's theory also include discussions of how findings could be applied to real-world settings. For example, Leung and Plake (1990) suggest the importance of discussing the process of compromise with clients because they may not even be aware of its impact. Additionally, Cochran et al. (2011) and Gottfredson and Lapan (1997) discuss the use of activities based on Gottfredson's theory for career exploration with youth. The importance for counselors to discuss workplace discrimination, especially gender related, was indicated by a number of results (Blanchard & Lichtenberg, 2003; Gottfredson & Lapan, 1997; Hardie, 2015). Finally, Hardie's (2015) work researching factors that contribute to men

entering traditionally female dominated work roles indicates the role that counselors, teachers, clinicians, etc. can make in reframing occupations based on gender roles and introducing more options to students.

**Diversity and social justice.** Gottfredson's theory of career development includes issues of multiculturalism and diversity in ways that other theories do not, specifically, by accounting for the impact of social and environmental factors such as gender, social class, etc. One factor that does not get as much attention, however, is race; though this is sometimes discussed in terms of social class (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996, 2002). Gottfredson's 2002 version elaborated on further evidence of diversity found within the theory which examines within group differences (i.e. individual differences). Though the cognitive map of occupations is dated (1981), the inclusion of social and environmental factors when assessing and addressing the process of circumscription and compromise allows the theory to be applied to a diverse population.

Additionally, utilizing Gottfredson's theory of career development allows us to address issues of social justice when discussing future research, practice, training, and policy. This is not always the case with other theories. The findings and support for Gottfredson's theory allow these implications to be supported by empirical evidence. Some of the major ways that this theory can be applied to our current knowledge is by advocating the importance of career awareness at an early age and educating people about the influences that impact circumscription (Henderson et al., 1988), opening up a dialogue for the impact of socioeconomic status on ability level (Cochran et al., 2011), continuing to look at the

relationship between occupations, socioeconomic status, and gender (Beavis, 2007), and using this theory to take a different look at both gender socialization and labor market gender segregation/obstacles (Hardie, 2015).

**Implications.** Overall, Gottfredson's theory of career development is useful for understanding how an individual's social environment impacts their career choices and development. Particularly, this theory provides a way to define aspects of career compromise in Kuwaiti women and the types of research methodologies to be utilized. Limitations of the various methodologies and how the operationalization of sextype and prestige level to match the current climate of Kuwait society must be taken into consideration, however.

### **Kuwaiti Women's Career Development**

The majority of literature related to careers in Kuwait focuses on the migrant and expatriate populations. Of the literature related to Kuwaiti women's career development, the existing gender gap is a clear theme. The disconnect between women's high rate of education and low rate of employment, which leads to a large group of highly qualified yet unemployed citizens (Groeblicher, 2012; Ibrahim, 1988), is of interest. Additionally, women in Kuwait are entering the labor market later because they are obtaining postsecondary degrees, and leaving the labor market earlier as a result of a young retirement age (Al-Kazi, 2011).

Analysis of women in the workforce consistently indicates a need to increase their participation (Al-Faraj, 2008; Ibrahim, 1988). Currently, Kuwait depends largely on foreign manpower (Ibrahim, 1988; Labor Market Information System, 2014). In an effort to reduce the reliance on foreign manpower, the government implemented a development plan in 2011

that included the theme of Kuwaitization (Labor Market Information System, 2014). This theme “is defined as a greater role for nationals in the labor market in general and especially in the private sector labor market” (Labor Market Information System, 2016). Though the systematic plan for Kuwaitization may be a recent implementation, efforts have been ongoing since the 1950s (Groeblicher, 2012). To address this need of increasing women’s workforce participation, Al-Shebab (2009) examined the role of religion and education, finding a significant relationship with religiosity. Additionally, Al-Faraj (2008) discusses the need to create incentives to attract women, including material incentives and a change in social values.

Further studies related to women in the workforce have focused on women in leadership positions. These studies include a comparative analysis of women leaders in five Gulf Arab states (Kemp et al., 2015) and how gender, culture, and success in leadership intersect (Al-Suwaihel, 2009). Particularly, Al-Suwaihel (2009) found that family support is a key factor for women and a significant yet reversed impact of women leaders’ role in redefining their own culture. Additional studies have focused on the importance of training to build women’s leadership skills to improve their productivity and bolster promotions to more influential roles (Al-Fadala, 2005; Higan, 1998) and the importance of education to prepare the general Kuwaiti population for the changing 21<sup>st</sup> century (Al-Hadhod, 2004).

Exploration of other factors related to career development include studies on aspirations, job satisfaction, work values, and motivation. Al-Kendary (2004) examined the career aspirations of Kuwaiti college students related to occupational preference. Results

indicated a higher preference for private versus public sector jobs and a gender-related difference for these preferences based on their perceived role in society. Studies on job satisfaction focused on only two areas of employment. Al-Kandari (2016) surveyed the level of job satisfaction among social workers and non-social workers within the social welfare sector in Kuwait based on varying demographic variables. Alternatively, Metle (2001) examined job satisfaction of Kuwaiti women employed in the private banking sector and found high correlates associated with education level and field of education. Studies related to work values aimed to analyze the values associated with work ethics and loyalty. Al-Fadli and Al-Moutairi (2008) reviewed the effects of demographic variables and organizational variables associated with work ethics in the public (i.e. government) sector, and Ali and Al-Kazemi (2005) assessed loyalty, work ethic, and work related principles of managers in Kuwait finding that both expatriates and female managers scored higher than others. Finally, related to motivation, Al-Dhafiri (1996) explored Kuwaiti women's motivation toward employment and found that it was more strongly related to personal satisfaction than to economic reasons as in other societies.

The issue of women's career development has also been explored within the larger social structure of Kuwait. For example, Askar and Ahmad (2003) found generally positive attitudes toward women in supervisory roles, and Mahamoud (1989) found that men who were categorized as having non-authoritarian traits had more positive attitudes toward working women than men who were categorized with having authoritarian traits. Al-Gowayer (2002) also examined the impact of women's employment, but within the realm of

family and its impact on children. In particular, Al-Gowayer (2002) focused on the problems and consequences associated with women's employment outside of the home and made recommendations for how social workers could address these issues with their child clients. Finally, taking a more focused view of career within the Kuwaiti community, Alqudsi-ghabra and Al-Moumen (2012) examined issues within the library and information science profession, a female-dominated profession, related to barriers and occupational image.

Within the reviewed studies of Kuwaiti women and the world of work, all have sought to explore the phenomenon but are based within the goal of improving productivity versus personal career exploration and development.

### **Synthesis**

After reviewing both Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development separately, it is necessary to review them together in terms of both constructs and research.

**Connecting constructs.** Both Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development provide a space for understanding society's influence on an individual, and that individual's own personal development of self within that context, specifically, how individuals make meaning for themselves, how it develops, and what influences it. Gottfredson's theory does this through the notion of self-concept and by helping individuals to identify their process of compromise. Islamic feminism, on the other hand, does this through exegesis. Connecting Gottfredson's theory of career development and Islamic feminism within this study allows a unique space for understanding identity development.

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) highlights the ways in which the two theories are hypothetically interwoven; i.e. how Kuwaiti women's gender identity (as explained by their career development process) is influenced by their religion and its development over time. Particularly, development over time is framed within the processes of circumscription and compromise.

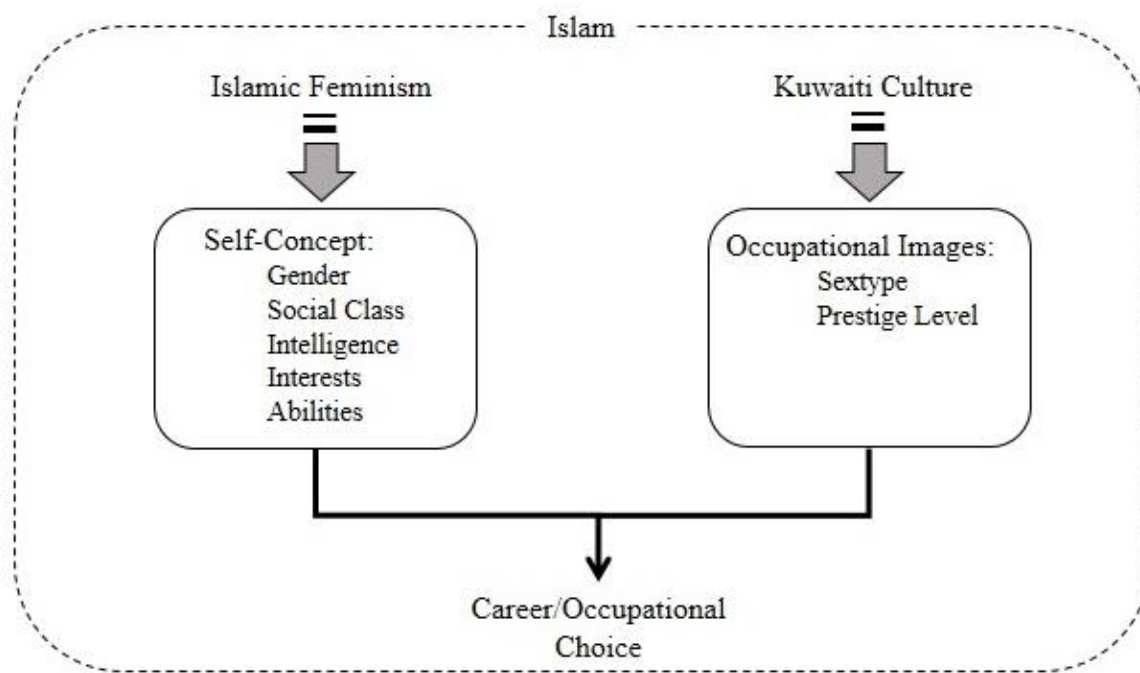
**Connecting research.** Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development utilize varying forms of empirical research. Islamic feminism uses qualitative forms of research and analysis to make sense of the phenomenon and give voice to the people. Gottfredson's theory uses more quantitative analysis to test the hypotheses laid out within the theory and develop clinical interventions. To connect both of these theories empirically, a mixed methods design was inevitably chosen to support the strengths of the different research methodologies utilized while also attempting to circumvent their inherent limitations.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Though both Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development individually provide an adequate frame of reference for a research study, the current study utilizes a hypothesized conceptual framework that incorporates both theories. The use of a conceptual framework is important because it "map[s] the research terrain" (Rokko & Plakhotnik, 2009, p. 128) and explains the relationship between the various ideas outlined (Rokko & Plakhotnik, 2009).



The hypothesized conceptual framework developed for the study describes the integration of both Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development as they relate to the research questions. Depicted below, the religion of Islam is the overarching concept that incorporates and influences both Islamic feminism and Kuwaiti culture. Within the Islamic faith, Islamic feminism influences Gottfredson's notion of self-concept, and Kuwaiti culture influence Gottfredson's notion of occupational images. Both self-concept and occupational images combine and result in the occupational choices made by an individual (in this case, a Kuwaiti woman).



*Figure 1.* Conceptual framework of the integration between Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development.

**Summary**

Chapter 2 provided a review of relevant literature regarding the theoretical frameworks of Islamic feminism and Gottfredson's theory of career development that serve as the basis for the current study. Along with an overview of the theories, literature pertaining to each within Kuwait was discussed. Both theories were then compared with each other on both constructs and research to showcase their ability to integrate and more general gaps found within both. Finally, a conceptual framework linking the two theories and thereby framing their relationship was provided. The following chapter will detail the specific methodology situated within the outlined theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter lays out the step-by-step procedures to answer the overarching mixed methods research question. A review of the research design chosen and utilized is given, along with participant selection, sampling, and demographics. Variables of interest, instrumentation, and methods for data collection and analysis are provided. In addition, researcher subjectivity and issues related to validity and reliability are also provided.

#### **Research Design**

A mixed methods research design was implemented to achieve the necessary breadth and depth of data to adequately address the overarching research question. Independently, neither a qualitative nor a quantitative research design would allow sufficient insight into the topic of interest. More specifically, a transformative mixed methods design is implemented to guide the overall study, which utilizes a theoretical framework “for advancing the needs of marginalized or underrepresented populations” (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 96). Inherent within transformative mixed methods designs are the philosophical assumptions of advocacy and participatory worldviews, which posit that the research itself is collaborative with the participants and aims to shed light on a topic in need of social attention. The purpose of a transformative design is to “conduct research that is change oriented and seeks to advance social justice causes by identifying power imbalances and empowering individuals and/or communities” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 96). Transformative design is typically selected when the researcher has identified a need within a marginalized or underrepresented population, the researcher thoroughly understands the theory being utilized,

the researcher aims to conduct research that is change-oriented, and the researcher is able to complete the study without further harming the population. Within a transformative design, one of the four typical designs are commonly used. In this study, an embedded design is also utilized. In an embedded design, a researcher emphasizes one form of data, either qualitative or quantitative, and uses the other in a supplemental role; in this case, the qualitative data is emphasized. The qualitative and quantitative data can be interactive or independent from each other; in this study, they are interactive. Qualitative and quantitative data were developed concurrently and distributed and collected concurrently during the first half of the design. During the second half, additional qualitative data was collected, building on the findings from the first. All results were then interpreted and integrated into a final presentation of findings. The rationale for this approach is that the overarching transformative theory warrants a need to assess the problem through both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The findings from qualitative data alone is insufficient to provide a complete understanding, so the use of quantitative data is needed to expand the findings to a larger group (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Hamilton, 2015; Morgan, 2013)

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

#### *Mixed Methods:*

What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about Islamic feminism and career development in Kuwaiti women with quantitative survey data

measuring perceived sextype and prestige level of occupations in an effort to explain Kuwaiti women's marginalization in the Kuwaiti labor market?

*Quantitative:*

1. To what extent do Kuwaiti women's perceived sextype of occupations match Gottfredson's cognitive map of occupations?
2. To what extent do Kuwaiti women's perceived prestige level of occupations match Gottfredson's cognitive map of occupations?
3. Do Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce compare based on age?
4. Do Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce compare based on socioeconomic status?

*Qualitative:*

5. How do Kuwaiti women describe their experiences with gender identity, and subsequent career development, as it relates to Islamic feminism?

**Research Hypotheses**

Though the overarching mixed methods question is exploratory in nature, the remaining qualitative and quantitative questions have hypotheses and purposes as to what they will find.

**Quantitative.** The first two quantitative questions regarding perceived sextype and prestige level of various occupations aim to analyze how Kuwaiti culture organizes the world of work. It is hypothesized that, because of the migrant work population and class structure, the prestige level of jobs will follow nationality lines. It is also hypothesized that, because of

both the importance of education of Muslim women and the migrant work population, prestige level of an occupation will outweigh the sextype of the occupation (contrary to Gottfredson's hypotheses) in Kuwaiti women's process of compromise and circumscription.

The last two quantitative questions regarding the impact of age and SES on women's reasons to participate in the workforce aim to analyze Kuwait culture's change over time and the differences between Kuwait's social classes regarding women's empowerment.

Regarding age and reasons for work, it is hypothesized that:

- those women who continue to work above the age of 45, Kuwait's average retirement for women (Kuwait Public Institution for Social Security, 2009), will cite reasons that reflect self-actualization (e.g. "personal interest", "ambition", etc.) more so than those women working under the age of 45; and
- those women who continue to work above the age of 45 will more frequently cite reasons that reflect self-actualization (e.g. "personal interest", "ambition", etc.) while those women working under the age of 45 will more frequently cite reasons that reflect basic needs (e.g. money, etc.).

Finally, regarding SES and reasons to work, it is hypothesized that those women from higher SES will cite reasons that reflect self-actualization (e.g. "personal interest", "ambition", etc.) more frequently than women from lower SES.

**Qualitative.** The qualitative question is overall exploratory in nature; however, it aims to test the proposed conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2. The developed framework hypothesizes that Kuwaiti women's career and occupational choices are

determined by both Islamic feminism and Kuwaiti culture. Elements of Islamic feminism, whether overtly or subtly, will influence and impact Kuwaiti women's development of their self-concept (to include their gender identity, social class, intelligence, interests, and abilities). However, Kuwaiti culture (including Islam, its tribal roots, and current labor division) will influence and impact Kuwaiti women's image of the sextype and prestige level of various occupations.

### **Researcher Subjectivity Statement**

As the researcher conducting the study, it is important and necessary to describe my role and worldview related to the topic because it will undoubtedly account for some understanding for both the qualitative and quantitative results (Peshkin, 1988). Related to this particular area of study, it is important for me to outline my personally held beliefs about feminism and to discuss other personal characteristics that will impact the lens through which I view the study and corresponding results.

Purely by the fact that I am a female, I can say that I am also a feminist. Until the time that I began studying the topic of Islamic feminism approximately two years ago, I would not have engaged in feminist discourse because of the lack of connection I felt with the popular western form of feminism found in mainstream U.S. society. Today, however, I define myself as a feminist because I support and believe in the idea that each person, regardless of gender, should have equal opportunities to engage in their societies at whatever level they choose and that both genders should be allowed to choose their role in society without repercussion. I do not support the idea that women or men who choose to stay at

home are by any way inferior to those individuals who choose to obtain paid employment outside of the home; nor do I support the idea that women who choose to have both a job outside of the home and children at the same time should sacrifice more than their partner. As a feminist, I support choice, which means that each person is afforded the ability to make choices for themselves. And as a feminist, I support the socialization of young girls to breakdown stereotypes related to male dominated fields and the socialization of young boys to breakdown stereotypes related to female dominated fields. For example, though women are now taught that they can “do anything” and “have it all”, are men being taught that they are able to take on more household and childrearing (i.e. traditionally female roles) without repercussion? These ideas, beliefs, and values I hold as a feminist may impact the current research by inadvertently skewing the results to support a feminist view that is more in line with my own and by identifying implications from the results that will support my understanding of gender equality.

Other personal characteristics that impact my subjectivity are that I am half Kuwaiti, I grew up in a higher socioeconomic group in Kuwait, my family in Kuwait is more liberal than others, I was raised within both the Muslim and Christian faiths, and I am a counselor and researcher trained within the United States. Each of these characteristics impacts the lens through which I view the world and will therefore be the lenses through which view the data and corresponding results and implications. Being half-Kuwaiti means that I may not be seen as fully capable, especially taking into consideration that I am not fluent in Arabic. I am not sure if this is only my personal perception of the situation or if the individuals involved in the



study have taken this stance as well, but either way, it will impact the study. Growing up in a higher socioeconomic group means that my experiences of daily living in Kuwait are different from other individuals. Though the types of housing, transportation, education, social activities, etc. that I was a part of in my youth and adolescence may be more of the norm in Kuwait than in other countries, they still may not have been the norm for all Kuwaitis. This will impact the study because I viewed women in the workplace as being less of a matter of necessity and more as an avenue for self-fulfillment, and I may assume that this is the case for the vast majority of women in Kuwait. Additionally, this form of socialization may have led me to become more surprised and upset if and/or when the data highlighted less than favorable economic situations for my fellow countrymen. Also, having a family that is more liberal means that I grew up learning that education and career are viable options for women and ones that are not restricted in obvious ways. This impacts the study in the same way the previously socialized belief/value does; I may have been more surprised and upset if and/or when the data highlighted restrictions being placed on Kuwaiti women. Growing up within both the Muslim and Christian faiths means that I do not ascribe to either faith directly but rather employ a mixture of the two within my spiritual identity. This may impact the study because there is a very limited chance that I have the same understanding of the Muslim faith as the participants. Finally, being a counselor and researcher trained in the United States, I have likely integrated western ideals into my worldview. This may impact the study because even though I have learned the multicultural competencies in a U.S. based context, I have not lived them as they relate to conducting

research in Kuwait. Additionally, I may have interpreted the results based on the western ideals of counseling and identity development, and may have forgotten to apply the cultural, political, social etc. lenses associated with Kuwait today.

Though these are the ways in which my personal attributes may have contributed to my subjectivity and bias within this research topic and population of interest, they may have also provided a unique strength and positionality. Being of two cultures, particularly the ones being combined in this study, I hope that they have been beneficial in conceptualizing the issue and analyzing the results. For example, to reconcile any cultural nuances that arose in the data collection, I engaged with the participants in a way that does not further marginalize them and have worked to report and discuss the results in a way that upholds the population of interest's culture and rigor of research.

### **Participants**

All participants in this study were adult (i.e. 18 years and older) Kuwaiti (i.e. holding Kuwaiti citizenship) women. The population sample size for the survey was calculated for a total Kuwaiti female population (age 18+) of 400,374 (Kuwait Public Authority for Civil Information, 2016) with a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval set at (+/-) 5, resulting in a total of 384 participants to create a normal distribution. Because of the ability, or lack thereof, to survey all of the 400,374 Kuwaiti women, it was determined that a participant pool of roughly 384 would provide adequate data. Follow up interviews were then conducted with 15 randomly chosen women who completed the survey and indicated that they were willing to participate further.

**Sampling.** Participants were recruited using purposeful and snowball sampling methods utilizing text, email, and social media materials. Community contacts and stakeholders were communicated with during initial participant recruitment and periodically throughout the recruitment phase. Snowball sampling procedures continued from each contact and stakeholder. Using the text, email, or social media material, each participant was directed to an electronic survey (available both in a website format and mobile-friendly format). Within the survey, participants underwent a screening process and informed consent. At the conclusion of the survey, each participant was asked if they would like to continue their participation with a follow-up interview. Of those who indicated “yes”, 15 were randomly selected.

### **Variables and Instrumentation**

Because the current study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies into the mixed methods design, variables will be discussed within the framework of the quantitative research questions. Instrumentation, however, will be discussed as it relates to both qualitative and quantitative strands of inquiry.

**Variables.** The variables associated with the quantitative research questions are defined below.

**Age.** The independent variable of age was collected as a continuous variable via self-report on the electronically distributed survey and during the interview.

**Socioeconomic status.** Based on the procedure of Shah, Shah & Radovanovic (1999), the independent variable of socioeconomic status was created using a combined score of six

different socioeconomic factors: father's education level, mother's education level, father's occupation, mother's occupation, total monthly income of participant, and number of persons in the home (including family members and live-in help). All socioeconomic factors were collected via self-report on the electronically distributed survey and during the interviews.

For each socioeconomic factor, a score was given (see Appendix A for a full description of scores). These scores were then added to create a combined total for each participant; scores could range from six to 26. All combined scores were then analyzed, and a median score was identified, which was then used as the delineation of high versus low socioeconomic status; six to 17 indicated a low SES status, and 18 to 26 indicated a high SES status. A lack of information provided meant that not all participants were included in this analysis. For example, those participants that responded with "other" or "unknown" for either mother or father's occupation or education without listing any explanation had to be excluded.

***Occupational sextype.*** Taken from Gottfredson's theory of career development, sextype is defined as the "perception of how suitable different occupations are for men and women, and thus... measure[s] how masculine or feminine different occupations are" (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 550). Perceptions are gathered on an individual level and ultimately pooled to provide an overall sextype rating that can be found on the cognitive map of occupations (Gottfredson, 1981). To remain consistent with the format for Gottfredson's Map of Occupations, which was developed using Shinar's 1975 *Sexual Stereotypes of*

*Occupations*, sextype was assessed utilizing a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from very feminine (1) to very masculine (7).

***Occupational prestige level.*** Gottfredson's Theory of career development defined occupational prestige as the "rank or rate [of] occupations according to their general desirability" (Gottfredson, 1981, p.550). Furthermore, perceptions of prestige (i.e. desirability) are based on societal notions of power and respect that individuals ascribe to various occupations. Average prestige levels are also found on the cognitive map of occupations (Gottfredson, 1981). To remain consistent with the cognitive map of occupation, prestige was assessed utilizing a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from very prestigious (5) to not prestigious at all (1).

***Instrumentation.*** Data was collected at two separate points. The initial phase of collection utilized an electronic survey that gathered general demographic information and information related to both the quantitative and qualitative strands of the mixed methods design. The second phase of collection utilized semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather the final information related to the qualitative strand.

***Survey.*** The electronic survey was comprised of instruments utilized in previous research on Gottfredson's theory of career development, along with demographic information including age, income level, employment, and education level. At its conclusion, the survey included a question asking the individual's interest in participating in a follow up interview to collect the remaining qualitative data. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

*Demographic data.* General demographic variables were collected, as well as those unique to Kuwait's population and those that ultimately determined a participant's SES status. The following were all the variables collected: mother's nationality, father's nationality, age, level of education (completed or currently seeking), if the participant studied outside of Kuwait and if so where, total monthly income, area of residence, mother's level of education, father's level of education, mother's occupation, father's occupation, number of family members living in the household, number of household live-in help, and employment status.

Mother's nationality, father's nationality, and studying abroad are demographic variables unique to Kuwait. Nationality in Kuwait is the preferred method of population analysis as opposed to race or ethnicity found commonly among Western studies and population censuses. Identifying both mother's and father's nationalities as demographic variables can provide further analysis of the participants and basic insight into the environment within which the participant grew up (i.e. uni-culturally versus bi-culturally). Collecting demographics associated with studying abroad for women can be an indicator of their family's level of conservative versus liberal views. For example, while education is highly valued within the Muslim religion and culture, the belief that a woman can only travel with family or a male escort could indicate their ability to study outside of Kuwait.

Monthly income, area of residence, mother's level of education, father's level of education, mother's occupation, father's occupation, number of family members living in the household, and number of household live-in help were collected to provide a collective score

of relative SES. These variables were taken from Shah et al.'s (1999) definition of social class within Kuwait. Within this list, "area of residence" was utilized because of the lack of rural versus urban areas in Kuwait. Kuwait has a total of five residential governorates (i.e. areas) that range based on level of development, amount of government housing, history of settlement, number of Bedouins, and number of ex-patriots residing there. Variables that were altered from Shah et al. (1999) were the inclusion of number of family members living in the household and number of household live-in help, to replace type of housing and number of persons per bedroom. The new variables were utilized in an effort to provide a more updated analysis of the participant's residence.

*Quantitative data.* A large part of the quantitative portion of the survey was developed around Hwang, Kim, Ryu, and Heppner's (2006) instrument for South Korean adolescents:

71 occupation titles were rated in desirability, masculinity vs. femininity, and prestige with 5-Likert scales. Students rated each of the occupations according to the following questions, "How desirable is it for you to be in this occupation in the future?", "Which of the following occupations do you consider a male occupation?", "How prestigious do you see the following occupations to be?" (p.135)

The instrument utilized in the Hwang et al. (2006) study was constructed by the researchers for their specific study. The list of 71 occupations was taken from the Vocational Interest Test for Youth which had been previously developed and validated by the South Korean Central Employment Information Office, and prior to actual administration, Hwang

et al. (2006) also tested the validity and clarity of their list of occupation titles (as well as each occupation's short description) by interviewing 30 fifth-grade students.

Occupations utilized in the current survey were taken from those in Shinar's *Sexual Stereotypes of Occupations* (1975), which was used to develop Gottfredson's Occupational Map of Images. Using Shinar's list, occupations were chosen to ensure representation along the means of sexual stereotypes. Only 30 occupations were used and were updated to reflect common occupations found within Kuwait. Additionally, Kuwait's labor market is stratified based on ethnicities occupying those industries; for example, migrant workers from Southeast Asia tend to occupy blue collar and manual labor type jobs with no contribution from Kuwaiti nationals (Longva, 1997). Pay structure and employment within the public versus private sectors are also divided based on ethnicity. Because of this ethnic division of labor, samples of occupations have been updated to reflect these underpinnings; for example, both a "cook" and "chef" are listed.

The second part of the quantitative portion of the survey asked participants to rank the top three reasons why they either chose to work or not. The reasons for working were: money, personal interest, familial expectations, independence, future planning, to meet future husband, ambition, boredom, and other. The reasons for not working were: no need (i.e. money), partner expectations, familial expectations, peer influence, no desire (i.e. interest), lack of options, role as mother/wife is more important, and other. All of the reasons listed above were developed utilizing the findings of a study that looked at Kuwaiti women's role



in the labor market, including reasons for seeking employment (Al-Dhafiri, 1996), and collaboration with cultural experts.

*Qualitative data.* A large part of the qualitative portion of the survey was developed around Creed and Gagliardi's (2015) 6-Item Career Compromise Scale and Junk and Armstrong's (2010) measure to determine occupational aspirations and career compromise but were used in an open-ended question format to gather qualitative data:

#### 6-Item Career Compromise Scale

1. To what extent do you feel your current career direction is a compromise on what you really wanted to do?
2. To what extent do you feel your current career direction will result in a less meaningful occupation than you really wanted?
3. To what extent do you feel your current career direction will result in an occupation with less responsibility than you really wanted?
4. To what extent do you feel your current career direction will result in an occupation that will make less of a difference to others than you really wanted?
5. To what extent do you feel your current career direction is a compromise on the status you really wanted to have?
6. To what extent do you feel your current career direction is a compromise on the interests you have? (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015, p. 31)

Compromise was assessed with a yes–no response question that stated, “Sometimes people feel their career plans are the result of some kind of compromise with what

they really want to do. What about you? Does your current career choice represent a compromise at all?" Participants were asked to indicate "No, it does not represent a compromise," "Yes, it's a bit of a compromise for me," or "Yes, it's very much a compromise for me." If participants indicated either of the yes responses, they were then asked to answer an additional question. The question addressed what the participants' ideal occupation would be if compromise were not necessary: "What other occupation would you like if this compromise were not necessary?" (Junk & Armstrong, 2010, p. 585).

Creed and Gagliardi (2015) developed the 6-item Likert scale for their study based on the dimensions from the job characteristics model. A factor analysis was conducted on their scale, and an internal reliability of .88 was reported (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015). Additionally, content validity was supported through expert review of the 6-item scale, and construct validity was supported through the results when associated with other variables within their study. Junk and Armstrong (2010) did not provide any details regarding the validity or reliability of their study. Instead, they focused on their coding procedure for participants' reported ideal occupation.

The second part of the qualitative portion sought to understand participants' ranking of their reasons for choosing to work or not to work. Simply, after the quantitative ranking question, participants were then asked to "explain their listed choices."

*Survey validity.* The survey was assessed by cultural experts to determine construct validity and focused on issues and concerns relevant to the greater Arabian Gulf culture and

Kuwaiti culture and society specifically. Also, following the recommendations by Hambleton and Kanjee (1995), translation and back-translation was used to create a survey in both English and Arabic. This method was also used to convert Arabic survey responses into English.

***Interview protocol.*** In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with randomly selected survey respondents who indicated that they were willing to continue their participation in the study. Interview questions were originally developed during the initial phase of the study. After the collection of the survey responses, an initial content analysis was completed, and the interview questions were updated to ensure appropriateness and focus to the research purpose. Major revisions included adding “marital status” to the demographics, re-wording of questions, re-organizing of questions, and adding questions to reflect the impact of social networks in Kuwait and role of family. A copy of both interview protocols can be found in Appendix C.

## **Procedure**

Utilizing an embedded research design within the overarching transformative mixed methods design, the current study was implemented in multiple phases. The initial phase focused on instrument development. The intermediary phase gathered the bulk of the data, including both quantitative and qualitative sources. The final phase gathered only qualitative sources of data with the goal of creating a rich and thick description of the phenomenon of interest. An analysis of data collected at phase two was completed to inform and refine the interview protocol utilized in phase three. A final analysis that included the interpretation and

integration of all data points was conducted after the completion of phase three. An overview of the research steps can be found in Appendix D.

**Phase 1.** An electronic survey, utilizing Qualtrics (an online survey software available to current students of North Carolina State University) was developed to collect demographic information, qualitative data in the form of open ended questions, and quantitative data. The bulk of the questions were taken from previously utilized surveys studying Gottfredson's theory of career development (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015; Hwang et al., 2006; Junk & Armstrong, 2010) and was adapted to meet the language and culture of the current study's population. Arab and Kuwaiti cultural experts evaluated the construct validity of the adapted assessment. Once consensus was reached, translation and back translation were utilized to create both an English and Arabic version of the survey.

At this time, a preliminary interview protocol was also developed for the in-depth interviews conducted during phase 3.

**Phase 2.** The electronic survey was distributed using emails, social media, and text messages to local contacts and stakeholders. From this initial contact, snowball sampling was utilized for further recruitment. Once the adequate number of participants was met, a process that took approximately three months, data collection at phase 2 was completed.

Initial analyses of the collected qualitative and quantitative data were conducted; a detailed description can be found in the following sections. Findings were used to refine the questions utilized in the follow-up interviews during phase 3.

**Phase 3.** From those survey respondents who had indicated willingness for further participation, 15 were randomly selected for one-on-one semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather follow-up data. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was conducted by the researcher individually; three of the 15 total interviews utilized an interpreter for Arabic to English translation. All interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy and transcribed for analysis. Member checking was then completed for trustworthiness and validity, at which point each interview participant was given the transcript of their interview and asked to review for “accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

### **Data Analysis**

The data gathered was analyzed separately according to the quantitative or qualitative needs and then analyzed together to provide a mixed methods understanding of the results.

**Quantitative analysis.** To answer the first two quantitative questions regarding sextype, prestige level, and Gottfredson’s cognitive map of occupations, an analysis similar to that found within Hwang et al. (2006) was conducted. A mean for sextype and prestige level was calculated for each of the occupations based on the responses. A two-dimensional occupational map was then graphed with sextype on the x-axis and prestige level on the y-axis. The newly created occupational map was then compared to Gottfredson’s 1981 map to determine any similarities or differences. The last two quantitative questions regarding the association of age and socioeconomic status with Kuwaiti women’s reasons to participate in the labor market was be analyzed using frequency graphs and chi-squares to test for

significance. Results were connected back to the quantitative research questions and applied within the mixed methods analysis. A full review of the results are found in Chapter 4.

**Qualitative analysis.** To answer the qualitative research questions, an analysis of the qualitative data occurred at two phases: after the survey collection and after the interviews. Phenomenology as outlined by Creswell (2013) and Wang (2008) was utilized. Phenomenology was chosen based on the need to explore and discover the shared lived experiences of Kuwaiti women's gender identity development and career development (Creswell, 2013; McCaslin & Scott, 2003; Wang 2008). The qualitative software NVivo was used throughout the analysis.

Bracketing, or epoche, occurred prior to the data collection and analysis to set aside any biases or preconceived notions of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, during the data analysis and data collection, memo writing was used to capture the coding process and to record any thoughts, intuitions, reactions etc. to the data (Creswell, 2013; Wang, 2008).

**Survey analysis.** Qualitative data from the survey was collected via the open-ended questions, including the explanation of participants' rankings for reasons to work or not. Data was then analyzed (i.e. coded for common themes) according to each individual question (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Saldana, 2013; Wang, 2008). Two rounds of analysis were completed for each question to identify salient categories and themes; the first was an open content analysis to categorize participant responses, and the second was a focused content analysis of the first round codes to organize the most salient and prevalent

codes. Results were used to update the interview protocol and were then connected back to the qualitative research questions and applied within the mixed methods analysis. A full review of the results are found in Chapter 4.

***Interview analysis.*** Interview data analysis followed the same process of the qualitative survey data but focused on both a thematic and content analysis which incorporated different methods of coding to ensure that the analysis was accurate and complete (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Saldana, 2013; Wang, 2008).

The first round of analysis was more exploratory; the coding methods utilized were structural, In Vivo, emotion, values, narrative, and hypothesis (Saldana, 2013). These methods of coding were chosen based on their purpose and appropriateness to the research questions and population of interest. Structural coding is a form of content analysis that codes and categorizes data based on specific research questions. In Vivo coding uses direct words and phrases from the participants to “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (Saldana, 2013, p. 264). Emotion coding “labels the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant, or inferred by the researcher... [it] provides insight into the participants’ perspectives, worldviews, and life conditions” (Saldana, 2013, p. 263). Values coding “reflect[s] a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (Saldana, 2013, p. 268). Narrative coding explores “intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions to understand the human condition... [it is] suitable for such inquiries as identity development [and] critical/feminist studies” (Saldana, 2013, p. 265-266). Hypothesis coding employs codes stemming from the researcher’s

hypothesis to confirm or disconfirm the prediction; in this study, codes stemmed from the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2.

The second round of analysis was more focused and aimed to organized first-round codes into common themes. Pattern coding, which organizes “similarly coded data... into sets, themes, or constructs and attributes meaning to that organization” (Saldana, 2013, p. 266) was selected to complete this analysis. Final analysis occurred when the themes from the second round were organized and contextualized into textual and structural descriptions of the participants’ experiences to develop its essence. Results were connected back to the qualitative research questions and applied within the mixed methods analysis. A full review of the results are found in Chapter 4.

**Mixed methods analysis.** To answer the overarching mixed methods question, findings from the quantitative and qualitative data were compared and analyzed “as to “whether the results from both analyses converge and how they converge” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 223). Concurrent qualitative and quantitative data was collected during phase 2, and follow-up qualitative data was collected in phase 3. Because of the concurrent data collection, a merged data analysis comparison was employed, which “us[es] analytic techniques for merging the results, assessing whether the results from the two databases are congruent or divergent, and, if...divergent...analyzing the data further to reconcile...the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 223). A side-by-side comparison was the specific form of merged data analysis used; the side-by-side comparison presents both the qualitative



and quantitative findings so that they may be easily compared. A summary table was used (see Chapter 4) to provide a more clear and succinct depiction of the comparisons.

### **Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability**

The trustworthiness and validity of qualitative studies are related to issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the results. Strategies used to meet these standards include: a) peer review or debriefing; b) clarifying researcher bias; c) member checking; and d) the use of a rich and thick description (Creswell, 2013).

Additionally, to establish reliability within the qualitative strand of the mixed methods research, the use of recordings detailed transcriptions, and member checking were used (Creswell, 2013).

Statistical conclusion validity, construct validity, and external validity were the necessary types of validity considered when conducting the quantitative research component within the current mixed methods study (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). To meet these types of validity, the following was utilized: the appropriate use of statistical analyses, culturally appropriate operationalization of the variables of interest, and a representative population sample.

Treacher (2003) outlines the other considerations taken into account during the research study:

Writing about gender as it is experienced in Islamic/Arabic societies poses a number of theoretical and political challenges. How to write about gender without assigning superiority or supremacy to the Western construction of gender? How to represent

competing discourses without either wiping out or exaggerating differences? And how to capture those aspects of the Arab region that intone oppression or misery, while simultaneously capturing the resistance, power, commitment, and enjoyment of life that also characterize Arab/Islamic life? (p. 60).

### **Summary**

The current chapter outlined the methodology with which the current mixed methods study was implemented. The overall research design was provided, which included the research questions, research hypotheses, variables of interest, and instrumentation used. Additionally, the three phases of the research procedure were outlined with a review of the data analysis occurring afterwards. A researcher subjectivity statement and a discussion of trustworthiness, validity, and reliability issues addressed within the methodological design of the study were presented. The following chapter will provide the results from the data collection.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

This chapter reviews the results of the qualitative and quantitative data collected and the combined mixed methods results. Participant demographics are first provided, including both the survey and interview demographics, to create a clear picture of the sample population. Results are then presented in relation to each research question followed by the overarching mixed methods research question.

To answer the research questions, a number of analyses were conducted. Mean sextypes and prestige levels of 30 occupations were calculated and graphed to create an updated Map of Occupational Images. Frequency distributions and chi-squares were used to determine significance regarding women's reasons to participate in the work force or not based on age and SES. Phenomenological analysis of open-ended survey responses and one-on-one interviews was completed to develop a deeper understanding of Kuwaiti women's lived experiences. Finally, a side by side comparison and analysis of the merged qualitative and quantitative data addresses the overarching mixed methods question.

### **Participant Demographics**

Participant demographics were compared to two national population reports in Kuwait. The first population report is from the State of Kuwait's Central Statistical Bureau. The purpose of this government agency is to "disseminate reliable and timely statistics to all users in order to support the development, planning and decision making" of Kuwait (Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau, 2013b). This agency produces an Annual Statistical Abstract; the most recent was published in December 2015 but referenced the previous year (2014). Found

within the 2014 Annual Statistical Abstract are a population census (most recently conducted in 2011), more up-to-date data (i.e. 2014 Labor Force Survey), and midyear projections/estimates through 2014. The second population report is from the State of Kuwait's Public Authority for Civil Information. The purpose of this government agency is similar to the Central Statistical Bureau; however, it focuses a bit more attention to maintaining information of vital records and the Kuwaiti versus ex-patriot populations (Kuwait Public Authority for Civil Information, n.d.). This agency also publishes an annual Population Publication, most recently in June of 2016. This publication breaks down the population of Kuwait via a multitude of variables. The two reports were used to gain the most complete demographic data set possible; however, at times, the data provided by the two agencies differ and therefore supported the use of both data sources.

**Survey participants.** Over a three month period (August to October 2016), 741 participants attempted to complete the electronic survey. Of this number, 182 did not meet the screening criteria (i.e. Kuwaiti, female, 18 years of age or older), and 13 opted out (i.e. selected "I Do Not Agree" on the informed consent form), leaving a total of 546 complete survey results.

**Nationality.** Four hundred and sixty-five participants indicated that both their mother and father were of Kuwaiti nationality, and 69 indicated that their father was of Kuwaiti nationality though their mother was not. Twelve participants indicated that their father was not Kuwaiti, four of which indicated that their mother was of Kuwaiti nationality, and eight indicated that neither was Kuwaiti. Most commonly, Kuwaiti nationality is passed through

the father only, although naturalization is an option (albeit less frequent). Because it cannot be known how the 12 participants received Kuwaiti nationality, their responses were kept under the notion that the participant is better aware of their citizenship status than the researcher.

*Age.* Participants ranged from 18 years of age to 70 and were compared to the total female Kuwaiti population in Table 1. For this comparison, only the population report from the Kuwait Public Authority for Civil Information was used because it provided a more up-to-date population count and also provided the ability to look at each year separately, which provided better comparison to survey participants.

Table 1

<i>Comparison of Survey Participants – Age</i>				
Age	Survey		2016 Population Publication	
18-20	9.5%	(52)	9.8%	(39,145)
21-30	50.7%	(277)	28.2%	(112,994)
31-40	21.3%	(116)	22.4%	(89,590)
41-50	10.3%	(56)	17.2%	(69,101)
51-60	6.4%	(35)	11.9%	(47,805)
61-70	1.8%	(10)	6.6%	(26,601)
71+	0.0%	(0)	3.9%	(15,498)

Note: Percentages are provided with frequency to the right.

Of the survey participants, an adequate range of ages was presented; however, the 21-30 age range was more representative than the national average, the 41-50 age range and the 51-60 age range were less representative than the national average, and there were zero participants in the 71+ age range.

**Education.** Seven participants reported receiving a high school diploma, 22 an Associate's degree, 355 a Bachelor's degree, 107 a Master's degree, and 51 a Ph.D or M.D. Four participants indicated "other," which they described as leaving university in their final semester, leaving high school in the ninth grade, receiving training certificates, and wanting higher education. These entries were then coded as university, secondary, above high school but below university, and high school respectively. Table 2 compares surveyed participants to the national averages (Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau, 2013a; Kuwait Public Authority for Civil Information, 2016).

Table 2

*Comparison of Survey Participants - Education*

Survey		
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	1	0.2%
High School Diploma	8	1.5%
Above Secondary, below University	1	0.2%
University <sup>a</sup>	379	69.0%
Post Graduate Studies <sup>b</sup>	158	29.0%
2014 Annual Statistical Abstract		
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	82166	38.9%
Above Secondary, below University	49501	23.4%
University & Post Graduate Studies	79622	37.7%
2016 Population Publication		
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	100884	43.6%
Diploma	51793	22.4%
University	77278	33.4%
Post Graduate Studies	1412	0.6%

<sup>a</sup> University include Associate's and Bachelor's degrees

<sup>b</sup> Post Graduate Studies include Master's and PhD/MD

Survey participants represented greater university and post-graduate degrees and fewer high school diplomas than the national average. Furthermore, educational ages supplied by both the 2014 Annual Statistical Abstract and the 2016 Population Publication include ranges that begin at 15 and, therefore, do not match exactly with survey participant age.

Of the survey participants, 347 reported that they did not complete any part of their studies outside of Kuwait, and 199 indicated that they had. Those participants who had completed some of their education abroad (i.e. outside of Kuwait) were asked to indicate in which country/countries they studied. Countries and regions listed included Australia, India, Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and North America. The top listed country was the United States (at 102) followed by the United Kingdom/Britain (at 67) and then Bahrain and Egypt (at 7 each).

**Monthly income.** Participants were asked to provide their total monthly income, from all sources to include salaries, National Labor Subsidies, and other. It is customary for women to live in their parents' home until marriage, and it is also not typical for women (married or not) to contribute to their household bills; therefore, the "other" was meant to try and account for any benefits not directly paid to the participant. However, the consistency with which participants responded to this question is not known. A breakdown of reported monthly incomes are provided below in Figure 2. As a point of comparison, the mean monthly incomes in Kuwait (as reported in Kuwaiti Dinar) are

- between 2,570 - 3,350 K.D. per household;
- between 1,080 – 1,410 K.D. per working individual; and
- between 335 – 435 K.D. per-capita (Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau, 2013a).

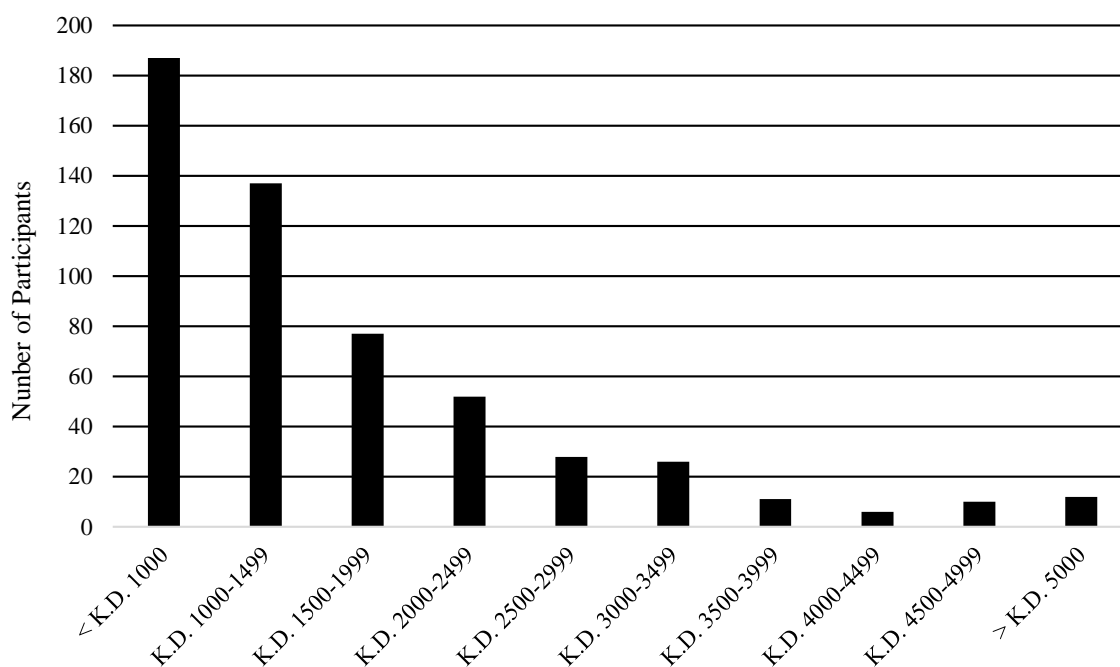


Figure 2. Reported monthly incomes of survey participants.

**Area of residence.** Participants were asked to report which of the six governorates they currently resided in. Of note, some individuals may still be listed in one governorate (e.g. vote in that district) but may live in another. This may have altered the way in which participants reported area of residence. Table 3 compares reported participant area of



residence to the national averages using percent of the total and indicates that survey participants are over represented from the Capital and Hawally governorates and underrepresented from Al-Ahmadi, Al-Jahra, and Al-Farwaniya governorates.

Table 3

*Comparison of Survey Participants – Area of Residence*

Area	Survey	2014 Annual Statistical Abstract	2016 Population Publication
Capital	45.4%	13.7%	18.3%
Hawally	27.3%	17.7%	17.0%
Al-Ahmadi	5.5%	20.9%	21.0%
Al-Jahra	1.8%	14.1%	14.4%
Al-Farwaniya	9%	19.8%	17.8%
Mubarak Al-Kabeer	11%	13.8%	11.5%

**Employment.** Three hundred and fifty participants reported that they were either currently employed or currently seeking employment; the remaining 196 reported that they were not. Of those 196, 131 reported that they were still currently students, 33 reported that they were retired, 17 reported that they were housewives, and 15 selected “other”. Explanations listed for “other” included recent graduate, volunteering, personal time off, family medical reasons, and recently left employment. Table 4 compares survey participants to the national averages based on employment status. It shows that survey participants make up a larger percentage of employed women than both national averages and a smaller percentage of housewives than the national average reported in the 2016 Population Publication. The definition of “out of labor force” is unknown in the 2014 Annual Statistical Abstract but could include those individuals who are reported as housewives, retired,

students, etc. Because of this lack of definition, determining how survey participants compare is difficult.

Table 4

<i>Comparison of Survey Participants - Employment</i>	
Survey	
Status	Percentage
Employed <sup>a</sup>	64.1%
Student	24.0%
Housewife	3.1%
Retired	6.1%
Other	2.7%
2014 Annual Statistical Abstract	
Status	Percentage
Employed <sup>b</sup>	43.9%
Out of Labor Force <sup>c</sup>	55.8%
Unemployed	0.3%
2016 Population Publication	
Status	Percentage
Employed <sup>d</sup>	45.9%
Student	27.9%
Housewife	16.8%
Retired	7.4%
Unemployed	2.0%

<sup>a</sup> includes currently employed and currently seeking employment  
<sup>b</sup> includes currently employed and seeking employment for the first time  
<sup>c</sup> possibly includes retired, housewife, students, etc.  
<sup>d</sup> includes government and non-government employment

**Interview participants.** Two hundred and twenty-eight participants who completed the survey indicated that they would be willing to continue in the study with a follow-up interview. Participants were then selected at random (using STATA software) to contact and schedule 12-20 interviews. Forty-three participants were ultimately emailed and asked for

their continued interest and participation in a follow-up interview. Fifteen of these 43 were scheduled (six reported being unavailable, and 22 did not respond). Table 5 provides the participant profiles of the 15 interview participants, including demographics similar to the survey participants.

Table 5

<i>Interview Participant Profiles</i>				
<b>1</b>	Age:	31	Mother's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Marital Status:	Married	Mother's Education:	Bachelors & Certificates
	Occupation:	Advertising	Mother's Occupation:	Yoga & Holistic Lifestyle Coach
	Education:	Bachelors	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad:	Yes, USA	Father's Education:	Bachelors
	Income:	1700	Father's Occupation:	Business
	<b>2</b>	Age:	30	Mother's Nationality:
Marital Status:		Never Married	Mother's Education:	MBA
Occupation:		Interior Design Consultant	Mother's Occupation:	Investment
Education:		BArch	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
Studied Abroad:		Yes, USA	Father's Education:	Masters, some PhD
Income:		2200	Father's Occupation:	Investment Consultant
<b>3</b>	Age:	26	Mother's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Marital Status:	Never Married	Mother's Education:	Bachelors
	Occupation:	Seeking	Mother's Occupation:	Teacher
	Education:	Bachelors	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad:	No	Father's Education:	Bachelors
	Income:	200	Father's Occupation:	Ministry of Finance
<b>4</b>	Age:	33	Mother's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Marital Status:	Married	Mother's Education:	Bachelors
	Occupation:	University Professor	Mother's Occupation:	Teacher/ School Principal
	Education:	PhD	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad:	Yes, USA	Father's Education:	Bachelors
	Income:	2800	Father's Occupation:	Kuwait Oil Company

Table 5 continued

<b>5</b>	Age:	31	Mother's Nationality:	Lebanese
	Marital Status:	Never Married	Mother's Education:	Bachelors
	Occupation:	Consulting	Mother's Occupation:	Investment
	Education:	Bachelors	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad:	No	Father's Education:	High School
	Income:	2000	Father's Occupation:	Air Traffic Controller
<b>6</b>	Age:	39	Mother's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Marital Status:	Married	Mother's Education:	PhD
	Occupation:	University Professor	Mother's Occupation:	Ministry of Education/ University President
	Education:	DMD	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad:	Yes, USA	Father's Education:	Masters
	Income:	7500	Father's Occupation:	Business
<b>7</b>	Age:	30	Mother's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Marital Status:	Married	Mother's Education:	Bachelors
	Occupation:	Student	Mother's Occupation:	Business
	Education:	MPH	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad:	Yes, UK	Father's Education:	High School, some College
	Income:	4500	Father's Occupation:	Electrical Engineer
<b>8</b>	Age:	30	Mother's Nationality:	Iranian
	Marital Status:	Never Married	Mother's Education:	Masters
	Occupation:	Interior Designer	Mother's Occupation:	Ministry/ Private Catering Company
	Education:	Bachelors (x2)	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad:	Yes, Lebanon & Italy	Father's Education:	Masters
	Income:	1340	Father's Occupation:	Civil Engineer
<b>9</b>	Age:	32	Mother's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Marital Status:	Married	Mother's Education:	2-year Diploma
	Occupation:	English Teacher	Mother's Occupation:	Phlebotomist
	Education:	Masters	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad:	No	Father's Education:	Masters
	Income:	4000	Father's Occupation:	Ministry of Education Supervisor
<b>10</b>	Age:	25	Mother's Nationality:	Saudi, with Kuwaiti nationality
	Marital Status:	Never Married	Mother's Education:	Bachelors
	Occupation:	Investment Marketing	Mother's Occupation:	Housewife
	Education:	Masters	Father's Nationality:	Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad:	No	Father's Education:	Masters
	Income:	1200-1300	Father's Occupation:	Banker

Table 5 continued

<b>11</b>	Age: 27	Mother's Nationality: Kuwaiti
	Marital Status: Never Married	Mother's Education: Bachelors
	Occupation: Medical Resident	Mother's Occupation: District Attorney
	Education: Masters	Father's Nationality: Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad: Yes, Ireland & Canada	Father's Education: Masters
	Income: 2200	Father's Occupation: Kuwait Petroleum Company - Training
<b>12</b>	Age: 47	Mother's Nationality: Irish, with Kuwaiti nationality
	Marital Status: Divorced & Re-Married	Mother's Education: Nursing Diploma
	Occupation: Retired/ Educational Administrator	Mother's Occupation: Educational Administrator
	Education: PhD (x2)	Father's Nationality: Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad: Yes, UK & Egypt	Father's Education: Bachelors
	Income: 3000+	Father's Occupation: Kuwait Airways Company
<b>13</b>	Age: 29	Mother's Nationality: Kuwaiti
	Marital Status: Never Married	Mother's Education: 2-year Diploma
	Occupation: Teacher	Mother's Occupation: Civil ID Dept.
	Education: Bachelors	Father's Nationality: Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad: No	Father's Education: 2-year Diploma
	Income: 1300	Father's Occupation: Teacher
<b>14</b>	Age: 42	Mother's Nationality: Bahraini
	Marital Status: Married	Mother's Education: PhD
	Occupation: Housewife	Mother's Occupation: University Professor
	Education: Bachelors	Father's Nationality: Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad: Yes, USA	Father's Education: PhD
	Income: 2000-3000	Father's Occupation: University Professor
<b>15</b>	Age: 51	Mother's Nationality: Kuwaiti
	Marital Status: Married	Mother's Education: Bachelors
	Occupation: Government & Volunteer Groups	Mother's Occupation: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	Education: Bachelors	Father's Nationality: Kuwaiti
	Studied Abroad: Yes, USA	Father's Education: Masters
	Income: 4000-5000	Father's Occupation: Central Bank of Kuwait

Note: All income is reported in Kuwaiti Dinar (K.D.)

## **Quantitative Results**

The quantitative results are provided according to research question. All results are reviewed again during the final side by side merged mixed methods analysis.

**Research question 1.** The first quantitative research question aimed to determine the extent to which Kuwaiti women's perceived sextypes of occupations match Gottfredson's cognitive map. Data was collected via the electronic survey for 30 occupations (the same as those collected for Research Question 2). Each participant ranked the occupations using a seven point Likert scale with one indicating "very masculine" and seven indicating "very feminine"; four indicated a neutral sextype. A total of 546 data points for each occupation was gathered, and a mean sextype was calculated. Figure 3 plots the mean sextypes calculated for the surveyed occupations. Those occupations most outlying have been labelled. As plotted, the majority of occupations fell within the "neutral" range for sextype.

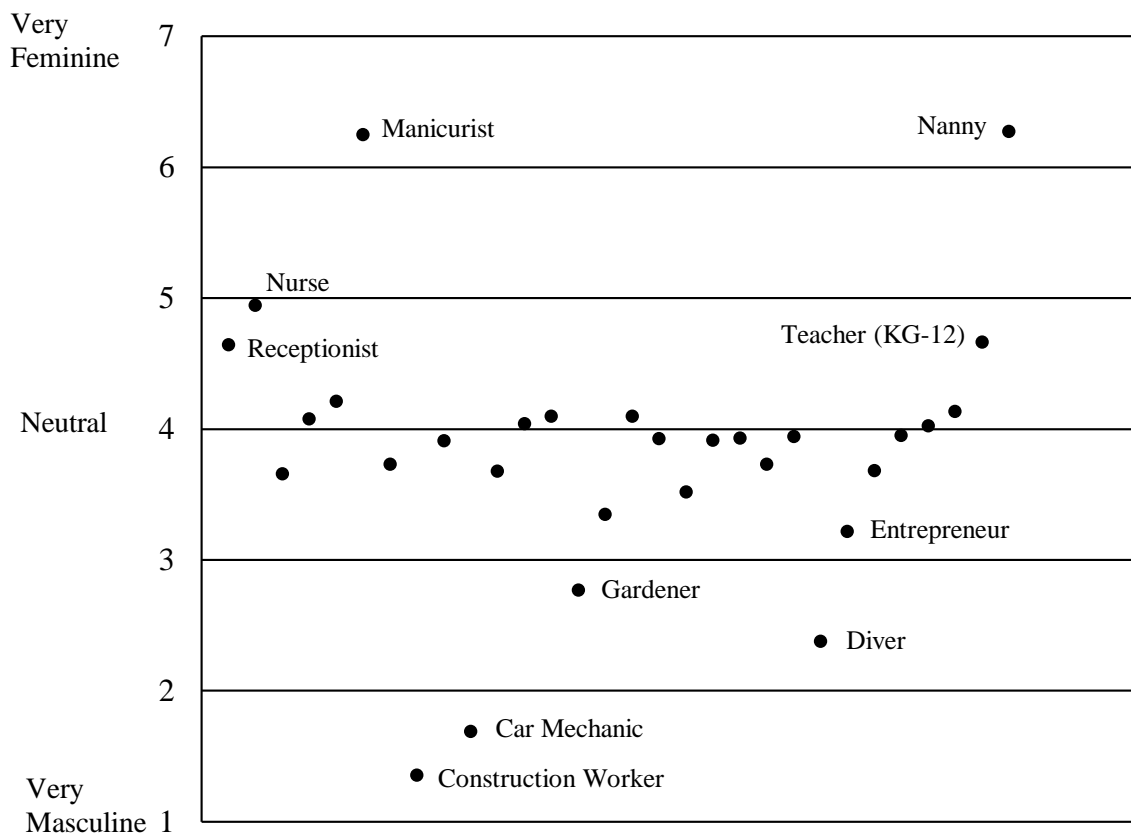


Figure 3. Plotted Sextypes of Surveyed Occupations.

Means were also obtained from Shinar's (1975) list of sexual stereotypes, which Gottfredson then used to develop the Cognitive Map of Occupational Images. Table 6 compares occupational sextype means based on survey findings and Gottfredson along with the difference between the two means. Of the comparable occupations, "receptionist" moved furthest from feminine to neutral, and "dentist" moved furthest from masculine to neutral. Additionally, "car mechanic", "construction worker", "lawyer", and "journalist" remained the most consistent.

Table 6

*Mean Sextypes from Survey & Gottfredson*

Occupation	Sextype: Survey	Sextype: Gottfredson	Difference
Construction Worker	1.352	1.333	0.019
Car Mechanic	1.689	1.583	0.106
Driver	2.375	---	
Gardener	2.766	2.00	0.766
Entrepreneur	3.214	---	
Politician	3.348	2.500	0.848
Surgeon	3.516	2.167	1.349
Cashier	3.654	5.167	-1.513
Computer Programmer	3.676	3.417	0.259
Chef	3.682	---	
Engineer	3.731	1.917	-0.102
Lawyer	3.731	3.833	1.814
Journalist	3.907	3.833	0.074
Banker (Account Manager)	3.914	2.500	1.414
Doctor	3.925	2.667	1.258
Architect	3.929	2.500	1.429
Dentist	3.941	2.083	1.858*
University Professor	3.949	---	
Public Relations/ Marketing Executive	4.022	---	
Psychiatrist	4.037	3.667	0.37
Occupational Therapist	4.077	4.833	-0.756
Pharmacist	4.095	3.000	1.095
Therapist	4.097	3.583	0.514
Cook	4.132	---	
Social Worker	4.212	4.750	-0.538
Receptionist	4.641	6.333	-1.692*
Teacher (KG-12)	4.661	---	
Nurse	4.943	6.583	-1.64
Manicurist	6.247	6.667	-0.42
Nanny	6.273	---	

Note: Difference was calculated as (survey mean) – (Gottfredson mean).

\* indicates greatest difference



**Research question 2.** The second quantitative research question aimed to determine the extent to which Kuwaiti women's perceived prestige level of occupations match Gottfredson's cognitive map. Data was collected via the electronic survey for 30 occupations (the same as for Research Question 1). Each participant ranked the occupations using a seven point Likert scale with one indicating "not at all" and five indicating "a lot"; three indicated a neutral prestige level. A total of 546 data points for each occupation was gathered, and a mean sextype was calculated. Figure 4 plots the mean prestige level calculated for the surveyed occupations. Those occupations most outlying have been labelled. As plotted, the majority of occupations fell within the "neutral" to "high" range for prestige level.

Table 7 compares occupational means of prestige levels based on survey findings and Gottfredson. Means were obtained from Gottfredson and Brown's 1977 report, which Gottfredson then used to develop the Cognitive Map of Occupational Images. In the 1977 report, prestige level was scored using a range of 10 to 90. To accurately compare the two scores (based on two different ranges), percentiles were calculated and used for both. Of the comparable occupations, "journalist" moved furthest toward neutral prestige, and "university professor" moved furthest toward high prestige, while "cashier", "gardener", and "car mechanic" have remained the most consistent.

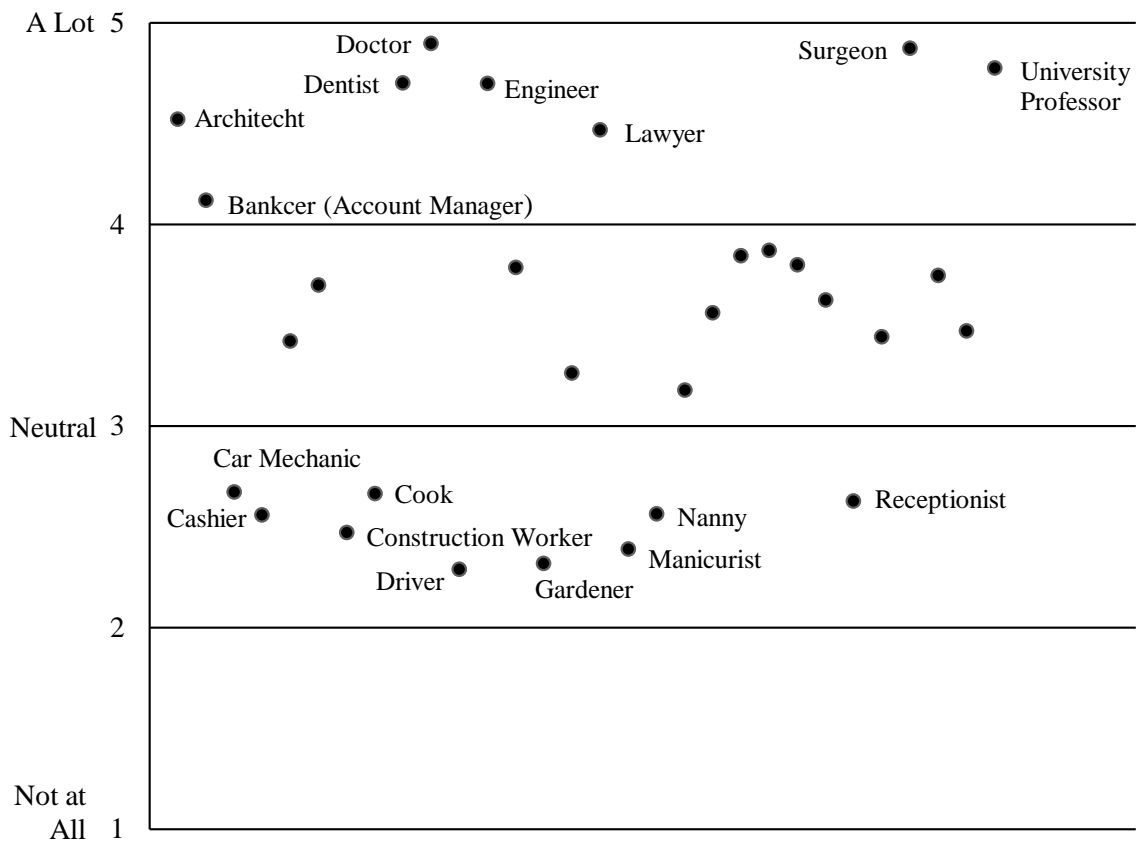


Figure 4. Plotted Prestige Level of Surveyed Occupations.

Table 7

*Mean Prestige Levels from Survey & Gottfredson*

Occupation	Prestige Survey	Percentile		Difference: Percentiles	
		Rank: Survey	Prestige Gottfredson		Rank: Gottfredson
Architect	4.52	80.75	70.9	65.78	14.97
Banker (Account Manager)	4.117	74.29	60.1	56.10	18.19
Car Mechanic	2.67	29.07	36.6	28.16	0.91
Cashier	2.557	16.15	27.4	13.64	2.51
Chef	3.419	38.76	---	---	---
Computer Programmer	3.698	54.91	---	---	---
Construction Worker	2.469	12.92	20.5	7.04	5.88
Cook	2.663	25.84	17.4	5.28	20.56
Dentist	4.701	87.21	76.7	70.40	16.81
Doctor	4.896	96.90	88.4	70.84	26.06
Driver	2.288	3.23	24.2	10.56	-7.33
Engineer	4.698	83.98	66.2	61.38	22.60
Entrepreneur	3.786	61.37	---	---	---
Gardener	2.317	6.46	15.5	4.18	2.28
Journalist	3.26	35.53	65.3	60.94	-25.41*
Lawyer	4.467	77.52	76.4	70.18	7.34
Manicurist	2.388	9.69	---	---	---
Nanny	2.562	19.38	9.8	1.76	17.62
Nurse	3.176	32.30	53.8	51.92	-19.62
Occupational Therapist	3.559	48.45	---	---	---
Pharmacist	3.842	67.83	61.4	57.42	10.41
Politician	3.87	71.06	---	---	---
Psychiatrist	3.797	64.60	---	---	---
Public Relations/ Marketing Executive	3.623	51.68	---	---	---
Receptionist	2.625	22.61	36.3	27.72	-5.11
Social Worker	3.44	41.99	60.7	56.54	-14.55
Surgeon	4.872	93.67	---	---	---
Teacher (KG-12)	3.744	58.14	49.1	47.52	10.62
Therapist	3.471	45.22	56.0	53.68	-8.46
University Professor	4.775	90.44	67.4	62.26	28.18*

Note: Difference was calculated as (survey percentile rank) – (Gottfredson percentile rank).

\* indicates greatest difference

**Survey's map of occupational images.** Taking the mean scores of prestige level and sextype, a map of occupational images was created and displayed in Figure 5. The map shows the interplay between sextype and prestige level of the 30 surveyed occupations. Using Figure 5, those occupations falling within a low to neutral prestige level have a much wider range of sextypes, and those falling within a neutral to high prestige level tend to cluster around a neutral sextype. Applying this map to the current Kuwaiti labor force, Kuwaitis tend to occupy only those occupations perceived as having higher prestige levels; leaving the low prestige level jobs to be occupied by migrant workers (Labor Market Information System, 2014; Longva, 1997). Indicating that Kuwaitis, including Kuwaiti women, are not primarily persuaded by occupational sextype when choosing an educational or career path. Appendix E shows a side-by-side comparison of Gottfredson's original Map of Occupational Images and the newly created one.

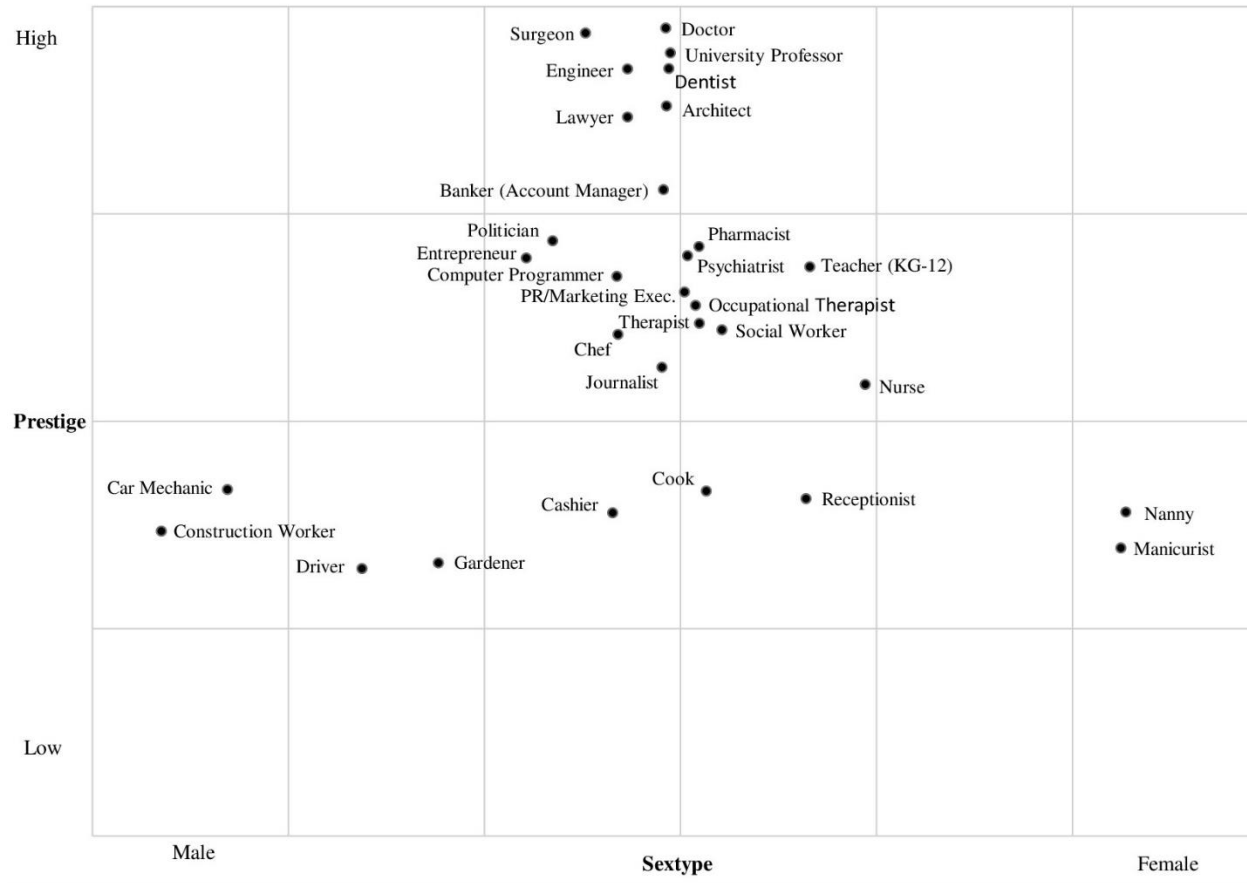


Figure 5. Survey Map of Occupational Images.

**Reasons to participate in the workforce or not.** Research questions 3 and 4 aim to explore the differences between Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce or not. This section provides the results for all reasons cited for participating in the workforce or not. Within the survey, women who indicated that they were 1) currently in the workforce, 2) a student planning to enter the workforce, 3) retired from the workforce, or 4) once in the workforce but no longer currently, were asked to rank their top three choices out of a list of nine possible options. Those possible options included money, personal interest, familial expectations, independence, future planning, to meet their future husband, ambition, boredom, and other. Figure 6 shows the top three reasons for all women who chose to participate in the workforce. Looking at overall frequencies, money, independence, and ambition are the top three reasons cited by Kuwaiti women for why they chose to enter the workforce. Reasons listed under "other" include a desire to help others and the larger Kuwaiti community, a desire to continue to learn and experience new things, personal interest and motivation, peer influence, social expectations, and the reality of the situation.

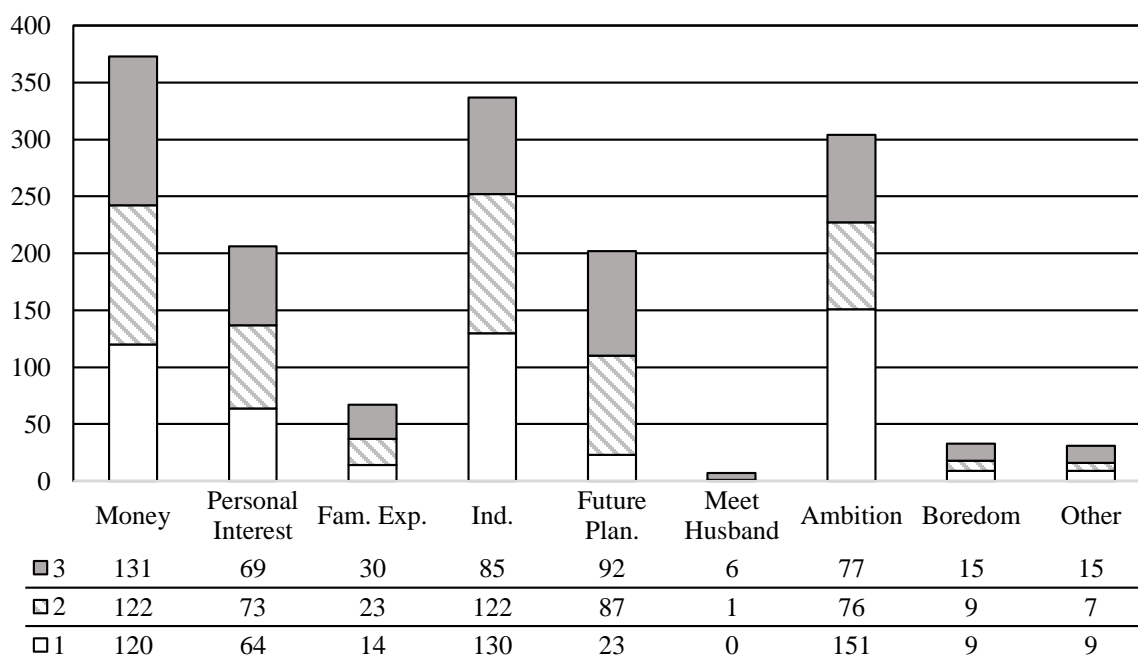


Figure 6. Reasons to participate in the workforce.

Additionally, within the survey, women who indicated that they were 1) never in the workforce, 2) a student not planning to enter the workforce, or 3) left the workforce early, were asked to rank their top three choices out of a list of eight options. Those options included no need (money), no desire (interest), lack of options, role as mother/wife is more important, partner expectations, familial expectations, peer influence, and other. In an effort to accurately identify reasons for not participating in the workforce, those participants who indicated reasons related to school or seeking employment as “other” were removed from the analysis. Figure 7 shows the top three reasons for women who chose to not participate in the workforce. Looking at overall frequencies, lack of options, the importance of mother/wife role, and no desire (i.e. interest) were the top three reasons cited by Kuwaiti women for why

they chose to not participate in the workforce, or leave the workforce early. Reasons listed under “other” included working conditions and work-life balance.

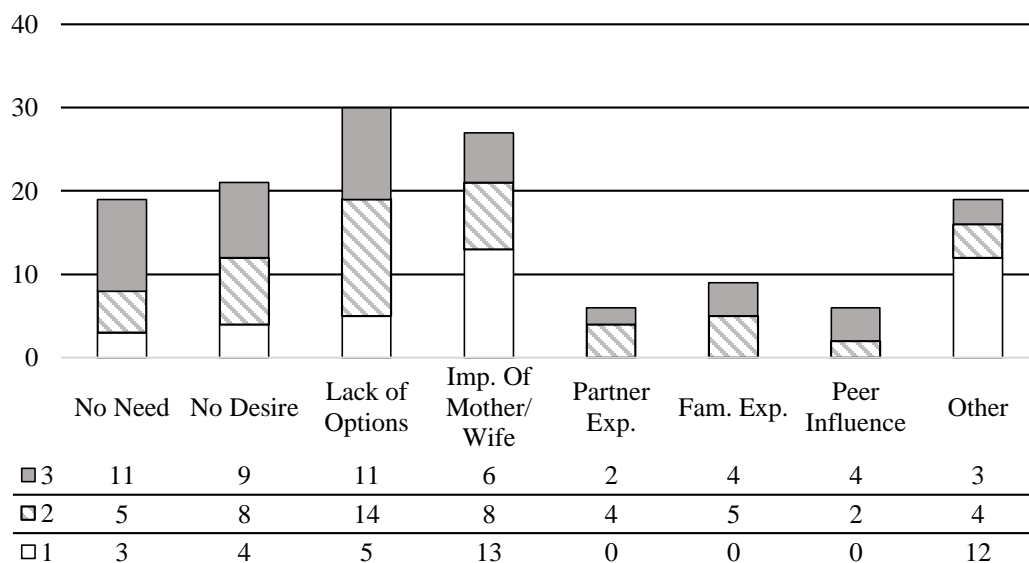


Figure 7. Reasons to not participate in the workforce.

**Research question 3.** This research question aimed to determine the differences between Kuwaiti women’s reasons to participate in the workforce or not compared by age. The delineation of age was set at 45 to account for Kuwait’s average retirement for women (Kuwait Public Institution for Social Security, 2009).

**Reasons to participate in the workforce.** Figures 8 and 9 show the top three reasons women indicated for participating in the workforce based on age.



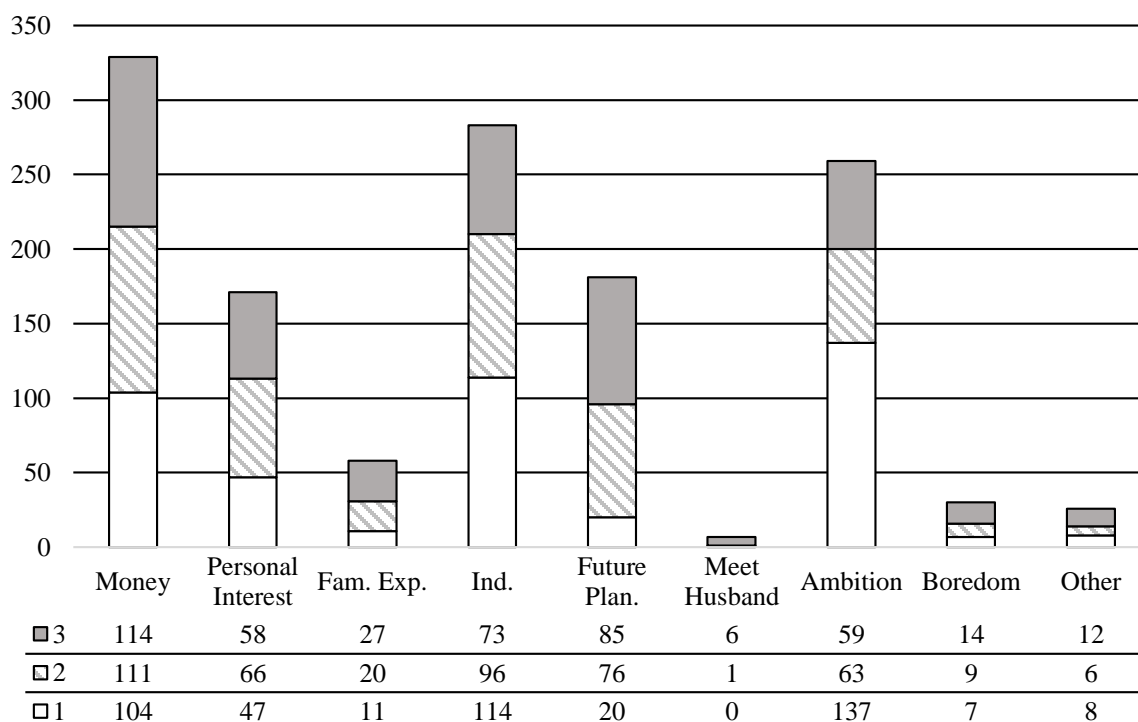


Figure 8. Reasons to participate in the workforce; ages 18-45.

Based on the frequency distribution and overall reasons, money, independence, and ambition (in order) are the most important reasons that women ages 18-45 cited for why they chose to participate in the workforce. However, ambition is the most cited reason. Of those who indicated “other”, the main reasons provided included desire for experience, desire to give back/help build the country, and as the common path that others were taking.

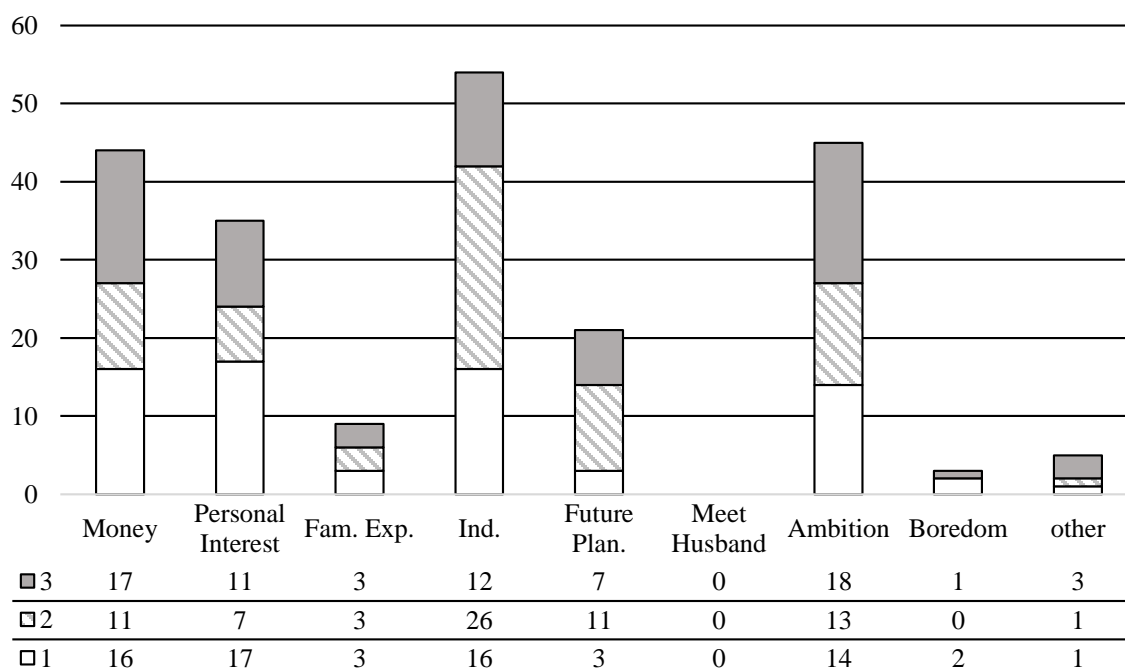


Figure 9. Reasons to participate in the workforce; ages 46+.

Based on the frequency distribution and looking at overall reasons, independence, ambition and money (in order) are the most important reasons that women ages 46 and older cited for why they chose to enter the workforce. However, personal interest is the most cited reason. Of those who indicated “other”, the main reason provided was a desire to give back/help build the country.

*Significance testing.* Pearson’s chi-square test for significance was performed on each association between the reasons for participating in the workforce and age, as well as reasons for not participating in the workforce and age. Because some categories did not have enough data points to prove a true significance (i.e. the chi-square test could then designate a false positive), a two-sided Fisher’s Exact Test was also completed for accuracy. Using the two-

sided Fisher's Exact Test, only two associations showed a significant finding: age and personal interest ( $p = .03$ ) and age and ambition ( $p = .01$ ). This finding indicates that there is a significant difference in the role that age plays (either 18-45 or 46+) in determining the role that personal interest and ambition have for Kuwaiti women entering the workforce.

***Reasons to not participate in the workforce.*** Figures 10 and 11 show the top three reasons surveyed Kuwaiti women provided for why they chose to not participate in the workforce based on age.

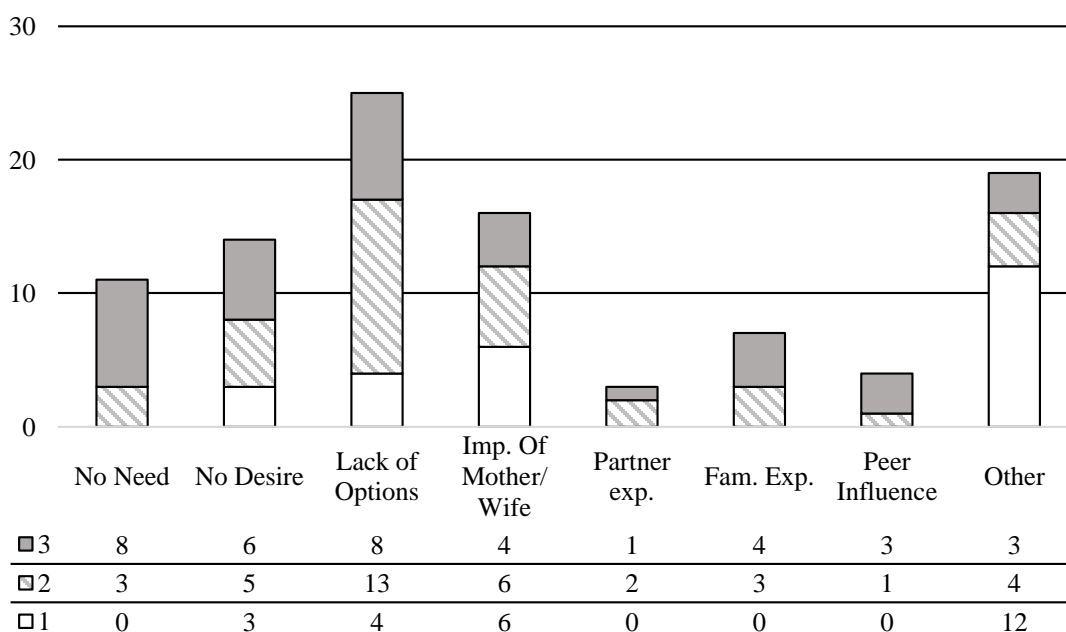


Figure 10. Reasons to not participate in the workforce; ages 18-45.

Based on the frequency distribution, and looking at overall reasons, lack of options, “other”, and the importance of mother/wife role (in order) are the most important reasons that

women ages 18-45 cited for why they chose to not participate in the workforce with “other” as the most cited reason. Of those who indicated “other”, the main reasons provided included work-life balance and working conditions.

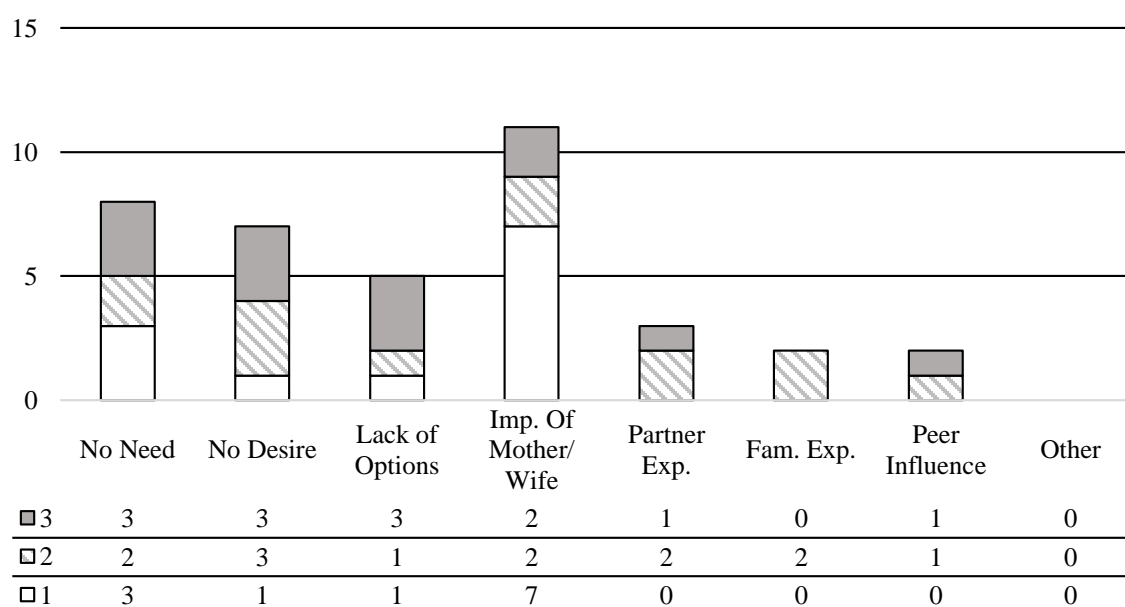


Figure 11. Reasons to not participate in the workforce; ages 46+.

Based on the frequency distribution and looking at overall reasons, the importance of the role of mother/wife, no need (i.e. money), and no desire (i.e. interest) in order are the most important reasons that women aged 46 and above cited for why they chose to not participate in the workforce with the importance of the mother/wife role as the most cited reason.

*Significance testing.* Pearson's chi-square test for significance was performed on each reason for not participating in the workforce to age, and a Fisher's Exact Test was performed for accuracy. No significance was found between any associations.

**Research question 4.** This research question aimed to determine the differences between Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce or not compared by SES. SES was calculated using five different factors and were then delineated into categories of high and low. The full procedure for calculating SES is described in Chapter 3.

**Reasons to participate in the workforce.** Figures 12 and 13 show the top three reasons why surveyed Kuwaiti women chose to enter the workforce based on SES.

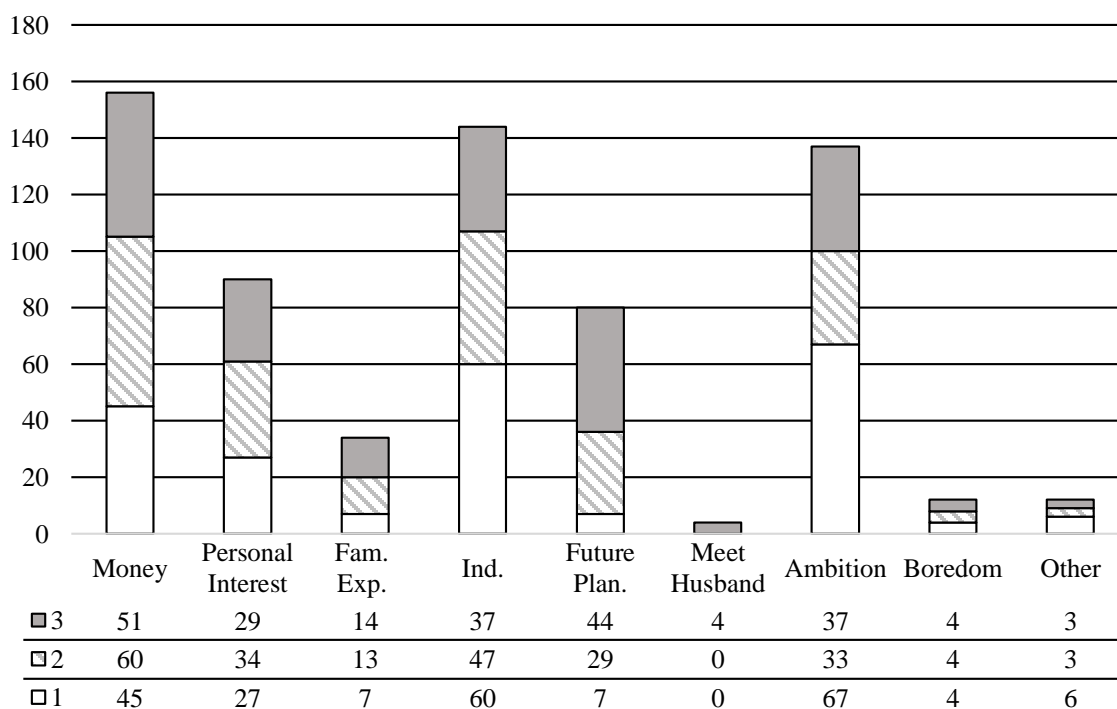


Figure 12. Reasons to participate in the workforce; high SES.

Based on the frequency distribution and looking at overall reasons, money, independence, and ambition rank (in order) are the most important reasons that women who fall within the higher SES category cited for why they chose to enter the workforce.

Ambition is the most cited reason. Of those who indicated “other”, the main reason provided included helping others or giving back to the community.

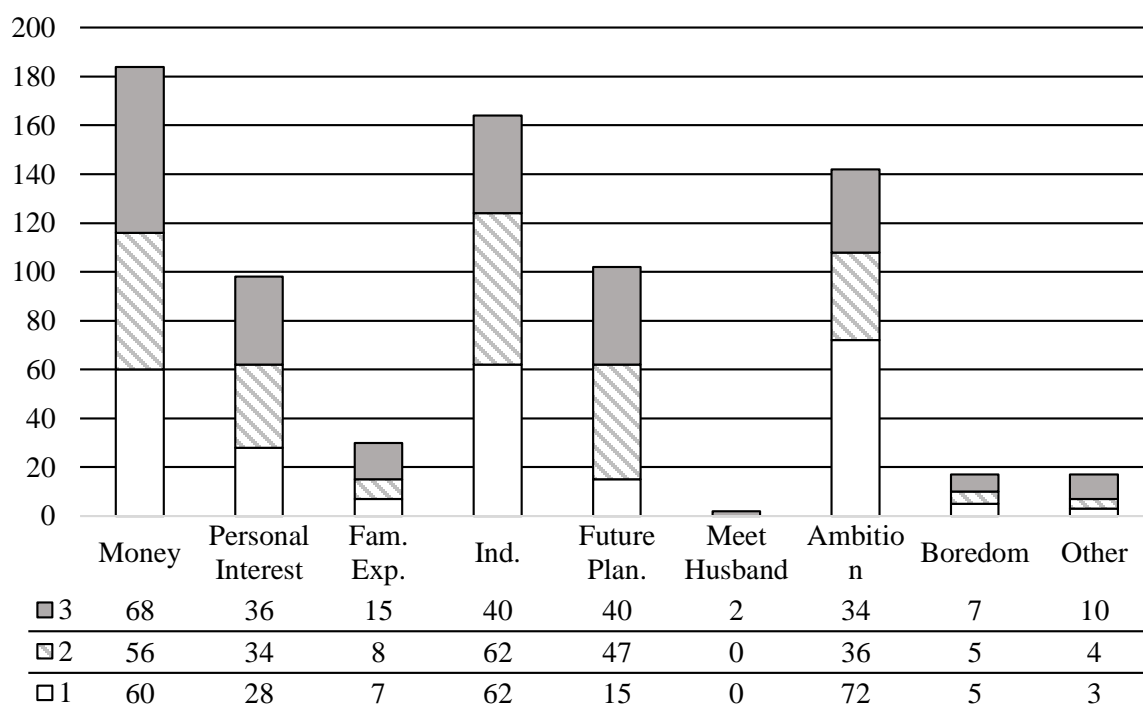


Figure 13. Reasons to participate in the workforce; low SES.

Based on the frequency distribution and looking at overall reasons, money, independence, and ambition (in order) are the most important reasons that women who fall within the lower SES category cited for why they chose to enter the workforce. However, ambition was the most cited reason. Of those who indicated “other”, reasons provided

included learning and gaining new experiences, the best option available to them, helping others, and improving the community.

*Significance testing.* A Pearson's chi-square test for significance was performed on each reason for participating in the workforce to SES, and a Fisher's Exact Test was performed for accuracy. There was no significance found between SES levels and reasons to participate in the workforce.

***Reasons to not participate in the workforce.*** Figures 14 and 15 show the top three reasons why surveyed Kuwaiti women chose to not participate in the workforce based on SES.

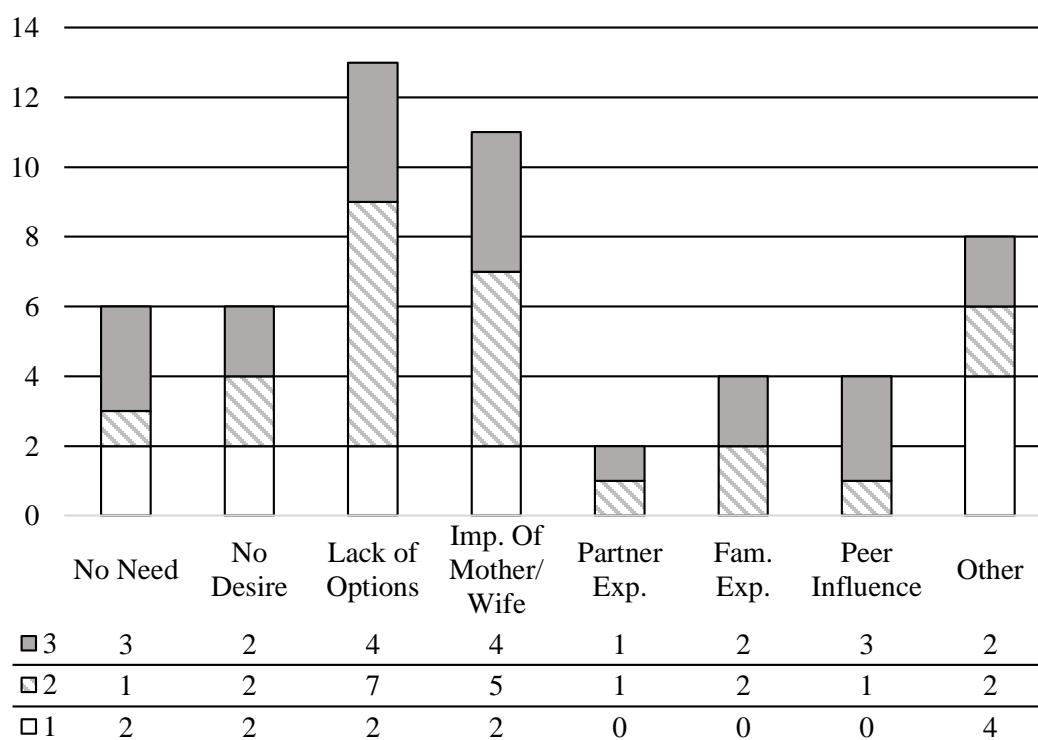


Figure 14. Reasons to not participate in the workforce; high SES.

Based on the frequency distribution and looking at overall reasons, lack of options, “other”, and the importance of the role as mother/wife (in order) are the most important reasons that women who fall within the higher SES category cited for why they chose to not participate in the workforce. “Other” was the most cited choice with reasons including work conditions, work-life balance, and changing interests provided. Interestingly, no need (i.e. money), no desire (i.e. interests), lack of options, and the importance of the role as mother/wife all tie as the second most cited top reason.

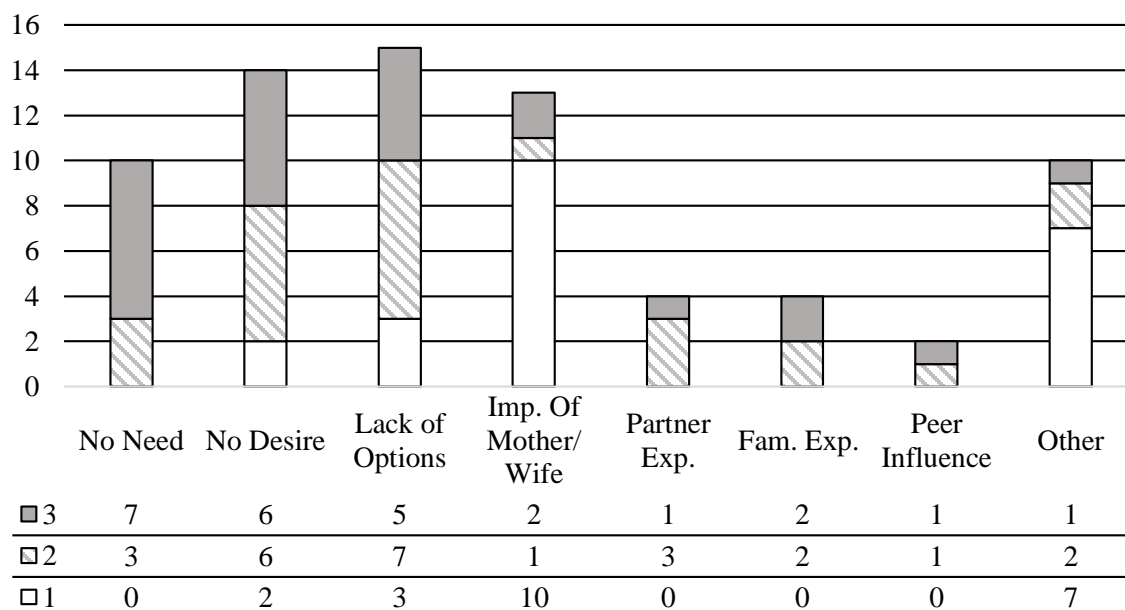


Figure 15. Reasons to not participate in the workforce; low SES.



Based on the frequency distribution and looking at overall reasons, lack of options, no desire (i.e. interest), and the importance of the role as mother/wife (in order) are the most important reasons that women who fall within the lower SES category cited for why they chose to enter the workforce. The importance of the role as mother/wife was the most cited top reason.

*Significance testing.* Pearson's chi-squared test and Fisher's Exact Test were performed on each reason for participating in the workforce to SES to test for significance. Pearson's chi-squared test was the initial test performed, followed by Fisher's Exact Test to confirm significance. There was no significance between SES levels and reasons to not participate in the workforce.

### **Qualitative Results**

Qualitative data was gathered through both the electronic survey and follow up interviews. Within the survey, certain responses provided additional information for research questions 3 and 4, and others supported research question 5. The results for each are below.

**Research questions 3 and 4.** One question in the survey asked respondents to explain the choices they selected for their reasons to participate or not to participate in the workforce. The purpose of this question was to obtain a deeper understanding of participants' motivating factors. The results are provided below.

**Reasons to work.** Of the survey responses, participants explained their reasons for choosing to work in three main categories. The first was their relation between earning an income and being independent from their parents or spouses (as much so as Kuwaiti culture

and society will allow). “I don’t want to depend on others (parents) to spend on me; if I wish to travel or do such things I would be free to do so as an independent working woman.” – Survey Respondent.

The second, was a desire to live up to their families’ expectations and make their families/parents proud. “To carry on the family business and name”. – Survey Respondent.

The third was to obtain a sense of personal achievement and build their community and country. “I have gone to school and educated myself; it would be pointless to come back home after I’ve spent all that time and money [to do nothing]. We are members of our society, and we should be making changes to it by involving ourselves in the society.” – Survey Respondent.

***Reasons to not work.*** Identifying main themes was more challenging because of the small number of women reporting that they had chosen to not participate in the workforce. One of the most frequently cited reasons was family responsibilities. “[I] couldn’t devote fully to my job when I had my kids, especially when it came to their raising and education.” – Survey Respondent.

The other most frequently cited reasons was working conditions. “[I] hated my job, [it] was mundane, repetitive, and uninspiring. My husband could support us both so I quit.” – Survey Respondent.

**Research question 5.** Research question five aimed to determine the lived experiences of Kuwaiti women regarding their gender identity and career development; this

question also searched for evidence of Islamic feminism within these lived experiences.

Themes emerging from the survey and interviews are provided below.

*The significance of societal messages.* Messages regarding the role that women play within a society come from various sources including family, peers, and media. These messages can be portrayed and perceived both directly and indirectly, but nonetheless, support and perpetuate the values and gender norms placed on a community's citizens. This theme encompasses the messages that Kuwaiti women received while growing up, messages they see in their society today, and how all of this has influenced their gender and self-identities.

“But for sure within society, the culture, and family. I don't know how, it's just there, without even talking about it.” – Participant 8 (30, never married, Bachelor's degree, employed)

*Childhood messages.* Growing up, participants reflected on the messages that they received about the role of a woman, mostly from family. These messages included the importance of marriage and having children to validate a woman's worth. Other messages included issues related to societal taboos such as women travelling abroad without a suitable male escort (*muhamaram*), women divorcing, and women intermingling with men.

“Oh, yeah. Tons. Tons, yeah. We grew up hearing that a woman has to get married. A woman has to get married by this age, or else you'll sit and you'll never get married. You need to have your kids right away. So yeah, a lot of stereotypes. A lot of talk about what a woman should

be. Yeah, that was Kuwait. That's society.” - Participant 9 (32, married, Master’s degree, employed)

Participants also reported that their families, and especially mothers, conveyed messages in their day to day actions, for example working mothers, working aunts and female cousins, fathers supporting working mothers, and mothers continuing to fulfill the caretaker and homemaker roles within the household.

“[My mother played a] huge role. Because, first of all, she's always worked. So I grew up thinking that's what mothers did. My mom never cooked...she was very, very strict about school, about academics, about grades, when we were kids. And then, even past that...when it came to career, she tried to help out as much as she could...[My dad is] extremely supportive of my mother which made us, growing up, think that this was just the norm.” – Participant 6 (39, married, Doctorate degree, employed)

*Present-day messages.* Reflecting on the messages circulating in today’s society, participants overwhelmingly reported that the issue and concern regarding a Kuwaiti woman’s marital status was still the most prevalent though less rigid than before. Participants also reported that with more women in the workforce, the notions of female gender norms were infiltrating workplace dynamics, for example, employers preferring to hire men over women to avoid maternity and childcare issues.

“I inquired as to why I was not hired since a person less qualified was accepted, and I was told, with no apologies, it was because I was a woman - simple and straightforward...Because women get married and have kids and this job requires someone who will prioritize it over family, and frankly once a woman gets married she turns into a nuisance. She takes maternity leaves, she might resign, she will take days off if her child is sick, her husband might prevent her from traveling etc.” – Participant 14 (42, married, Bachelor’s degree, unemployed)

Most of the messages that participants reported receiving as children were still witnessed in today’s society but at varying levels depending on the family and background (i.e. conservative, traditional, closed-minded, Bedouin [nomads] vs. liberal, modern, open-minded, Hadar [merchants]).

“I’ve been to a couple of meetings and I was sort of-- I felt like I went back in time because of the way they were looking at me or talking to me because I’m a woman. And my friend...tells me the stories that the guys at work with her who don't look her in the face when they talk to her. They don't know how to behave around women. They don't believe a woman should be in a position of power. And unfortunately, today they are the majority. Sometimes because I'm surrounded by open-minded people I get the false notion that we are the majority, but

we're really not.” – Participant 5 (31, never married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

Participants also credited technology and social media, along with the intellectual and cultural exchange it has supported, with this change in rigidity to gender stereotypes.

“But no, with social media, honestly it has become so much more open.” – Participant 1 (31, married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

*Impact of messages on identity.* Finally, participants reflected on their own identities and how societal messages have shaped their development.

“But there are some times where I feel like people want me to conform. And I have to bite my lip and sometimes do it...I'm scared that because I'm here for a long time, I will start to conform...So I get scared that I will lose a lot of myself.” – Participant 2 (30, never married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

Some participants acknowledged their acceptance and internalization of certain social messages, while others were surprised when evidence of these messages colored the way in which they interpreted a social situation.

“And I, honestly, and I do not come from any kind of conservative background, think to myself, ‘does your father see this?’ And it's strange because our society, that's what's guiding it. – Participant 6 (39, married, Doctorate degree, employed)

Additionally, all participants reported some level of rebellion against those messages that they did not feel fit the idea of who they wanted to be. Ultimately, Kuwaiti women recognize their social standing and role as a woman, yet they want to express their individuality and unique sense of self.

“No, I don't think the messages have changed. I just think we have changed as women, our thinking, that fear.” - Participant 14 (42, married, Bachelor's degree, unemployed)

***Family influence.*** As a tribal and collectivist society, the importance of family is seen throughout everyday life in Kuwait. It is supported through cultural traditions and religious teachings and traditions. The theme of family influence describes the significant role that a Kuwaiti woman's family has on her decision making and development, especially in terms of support.

***Mothers versus fathers.*** As the heads of the household, the influence that parents have are most tangible and evident over the course of each interview participant's life. At times, the ideals and values that participants' mothers had versus participants' fathers were harmonious, but at other times, they differed.

“My mom would encourage it because in her head, ‘this will secure your future, and you don't have to be dependent on anyone if you're a doctor...’ While my father was like, ‘yeah, do whatever you want.’” – Participant 11 (27, never married, Master's degree, employed)

There was no consistency, however, in these differences being attributed to the mother's concerns or hesitations as compared to the father's, or vice versa.

“My dad was always hesitant about us studying abroad. And my mom wouldn't have it. She told him, ‘I don't care. They're not going to study in Kuwait.’” - Participant 8 (30, never married, Bachelor's degree, employed)

Though both parents were sources of support, participants' mothers more consistently provided emotional support, and their fathers provided more financial support. Additionally, mothers tended to be more practical and encouraging of new experiences. When mothers were concerned or hesitant regarding a participants' choice of career or education, it typically came from a place of familial connectedness and duty, for example, not wanting their daughters to be too far away from them.

“When she retired, she told me, ‘I hated accounting and I can't believe I did it for the past 30 years of my life. That is not what I wanted to do. I wanted to be an interior designer or something, or I wanted to work for the UN.’ So it's funny how me and my siblings are kind of taking that on in different ways.” – Participant 2 (30, never married, Bachelor's degree, employed)

Fathers, alternatively, tended to be more protective and serve in an advisor role to their daughters (and other children). When fathers were concerned or hesitant about a participant's choice of career or education, it typically came from a place of what was



appropriate or best, for example, the type of degree or career path their daughter wanted. Furthermore, as follows in a collectivist society, the men of the family (especially the fathers) are responsible for the well-being of their female family members (especially the daughters). Reflecting on this, many participants discussed their fathers' support of "modern" goals for their daughters and the difficulties they had trying to reconcile these goals with the traditional society within which they both lived.

"Because he doesn't know what to do or how to feel that says 'respect Kuwait, respect tradition. But on the other hand, but I empower you. So make the right decision. Bear into account that you are Kuwaiti from a traditional society, but do what you think is right.'" –

Participant 15 (51, married, Bachelor's degree, employed)

*Education, career, and marriage.* Focusing on the issue of education, participants consistently reported their parents' focus and persistence on the importance of education. Moving from education to work, or career, participants also contended that their parents expected and encouraged them to seek employment but at a lower intensity level than completing their education. Regarding home-life, participants reported that their family also played a role in their thoughts about marriage like the type of person that they would marry and when. Interestingly, though participants acknowledged their parents' concerns regarding their marital status, over time, their concerns seemed to lessen, and they let their daughters make their own choices even though this was not the case with extended family members.

*Duty to family.* The influence or support of family members (and especially parents) on the choices and trajectory of a Kuwaiti woman's life is paramount. This influence is at times direct but is also (and possibly more significantly) based on a duty to family. This duty is sometimes connected to the needs of the family.

“My mom was devastated, she said, ‘Don't leave the business. I need you, I'm looking at you being my heir.’ ...I felt my mom's pain, and I decided to give up that dream.” – Participant 12 (47, divorced and re-married, Doctorate degree, employed)

While at other times, it is more of a desire to pay tribute to the family.

“And when [my dad] died, me and my sister, we said, ‘We'll do our master, we'll do our PhD just to make him proud.’ And people will say, 'Yeah. They are their father's daughters.’” – Participant 7 (30, married, Master's degree, student)

A few main areas of influence are Kuwaiti women's decision to study abroad or not (as well as occupations that will include travel), field of study, and seeking continued education.

*Spousal influence.* Finally, in discussing the influence of family, it is also necessary to assess the impact that spouses of Kuwaiti women have on their career and educational choices. This type of influence can be fully supportive and collaborative between the spouses.

“My husband. A Master of Public Health, I didn't know exactly what it is about, and he helped me to understand. And when I know what it is

about and what it can be, I thought, ‘This is what I want to be.’” –

Participant 7 (30, married, Master’s degree, student)

However, it can also come in the form of rejection and denial; either of continuing education, employment or any kind, or the type of employment.

“I know for sure a friend of mine, she said even if she wants to leave the government schools she can’t. She says, ‘My husband won’t allow me.’ She knows for sure he wouldn’t allow her to work anywhere because it would be mixed.” – Participant 9 (32, married, Master’s degree, employed)

While the varying levels of spousal support are common in any community and culture, within an Arab-Muslim culture, it is important to take into account how family dynamics and influence fluctuate based on family of origin versus family by law.

*Aspects of personal choice.* In making life decisions, including those concerning education and career, it is hoped for and sometimes assumed, that personal choice and interest have been the greatest motivating factors. Delving into this aspect of Kuwaiti women’s gender identity and career development, we see that personal choice can be experienced in different ways.

*Pathways from childhood.* Across all participants, as would be supported by Gottfredson, childhood ideas about career and future work were all a matter of choice based on personal interests. As participants recounted their career trajectory, their interests began to take different forms. The minority of interviewees held an interest in their field of study and

subsequent career from the beginning, yet others developed an interest as they progressed through. Others also decided to pursue their interests outside of paid work (e.g. arts, sports, volunteerism, etc.).

“I did my bachelor's; I double majored in finance and marketing. And my master's, I did the Masters of Arts in Marketing Communications. So I went with the marketing aspect. I thought it was more me than finance and numbers.” – Participant 10 (25, never married, Master's degree, employed)

Due to some of the compromises made by the interviewees (described in the sections above and below) in selecting their initial career field, several reported the need and desire to change paths once they had experienced the world of work, the reality of what their education/career was, and/or how it intersected with their own motivations and interests.

“And then I worked [at a bank] for two years. I hated it, and it made me follow my other passion which is interior design.” – Participant 8 (30, never married, Bachelor's degree, employed)

*Future goals.* Most noticeably, when discussing future goals for themselves, aspects of choice and interest resurfaced. Participants discussed the desire to figure out the best path for them and their lives. The idea of “best path” included wanting to push themselves to achieve more and have a greater impact on their community.

“There's not really someone here in the Middle East that I could look up to. I kind of want to be that person, you know? That's what it's

looking to now because I kind of want to fill the void of a female designer that actually listens and produces good work. I hear in the market that there isn't enough of people like me. So this is why I'm kind of filling the void.” – Participant 2 (30, never married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

As well as trying to figure out what they wanted to do so that it would best suit their personal interests, needs, and their lifestyle.

“But right now, with my growing family, I realize that I cannot and more importantly, should not simply be satisfied working in a company so as to know that I will have cash in my bank account at the end of the month.” – Participant 1 (31, married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

This was also echoed in the reasons of working conditions (cited within “other”) for those individuals who chose to not participate in the workforce.

*Compromise created by external factors.* External to the participant themselves are factors that have forced them to compromise, or re-evaluate, the direction of their education and/or career pathways. An important area of focus in this theme is the determination of a job to be acceptable/appropriate or not. Other main areas of compromise came from a coincidence of circumstances and the university and scholarship systems with Kuwait.

“So if time goes back, I might have done things differently. But I'm very happy where I am now...as if someone came and planned your

future. And now it's great, especially with my having kids and the family and having a stable career. I don't know what my life would have been if I chose the other route, if it might have been better, I don't know. But I'm happy where I am now.” – Participant 4 (33, married, Doctorate degree, employed)

*Appropriateness.* Interview participants who discussed career and educational options in terms of their acceptability were careful to not identify their parents as the source of determination. However, perceptions of career acceptability typically came from their family and the broader society. Some methods with which acceptability was determined included if a career/educational path was financially/economically sound (versus a hobby), the issue of studying or travelling abroad in terms of complete rejection or just limiting the locations to places where other family members were or had been, hours of work, non-traditional forms of employment (e.g. theater, culinary arts, etc.), and the Islamic movement after the 1990-1991 Gulf War.

“My older sisters, they were in the UK doing their bachelor's degree, but in a different area. So I choose an area that is away from them. I wanted to be independent...and I told my parents ‘I want to go alone. I want to take care of myself.’ And I did it.” – Participant 6 (39, married, Doctorate degree, employed)

*Coincidence.* Coincidence of circumstances include those life events that occur, that are not planned but which altered the participant’s trajectory regardless.

“Let's say there was no choice. Because when you graduate with an English certificate diploma you'd be a teacher. What else is there with a high-paying salary and a nice environment? You're going to a friendly environment, safe as a woman, and you have the summer vacations coming, you get your holidays with your kids. So it was the only choice and the most perfect choice.” – Participant 9 (32, married, Master's degree, employed)

Issues that arose here included fields of work being closed to women at certain times, timing of applications and acceptances, visa issues, and available jobs upon graduating.

“I couldn't fulfill that dream because it was not permitted for girls to go into the airline business in Kuwait at my time. Nor would we get sponsorship for it. Nor would we be recruited in that field were we to choose-- my dad would pay for my education had I gone on to that choice as a career. Come back, Kuwait wouldn't employ me. That's what we were told at the time. And so I didn't want that to happen to me.” – Participant 12 (47, divorced and re-married, Doctorate degree, employed)

*Kuwaiti scholarship and university systems.* A frequent issue that was discussed both in the electronic survey and the follow-up interviews was Kuwait's scholarship and university systems. Within Kuwait's most prominent scholarship system, the fields of study are typically restricted to those being supported that year by Kuwait's Ministry of Higher

Education. Additionally, as with other types of scholarships, there are rules and stipulations that awarded students must follow. For some individuals, this scholarship was a way to explore areas of interest.

“My sister [thank God], she got a scholarship so she was able to get out of pharmacology, and she went into communications.” –

Participant 14 (42, married, Bachelor’s degree, unemployed)

But for others, it created discord in terms of interest and even in terms of the logistics of their education.

“And so they were like, ‘But you didn't take two classes.’ And I'm like, ‘What do you want me to do now? I've already taken summer A and B.’ And they were like, ‘You have to go back to Kuwait, or you have to go to [kuwaitculture.com](http://kuwaitculture.com), look at the list of universities, and apply to them.’... I applied to [different schools] and got accepted to one in the mid-west. I moved my stuff [there] and started, but I didn't really like it.” – Participant 1 (31, married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

Within the public university system, majors must be decided on upon application, which does not allow for a great deal of career exploration once accepted into the university. Even in private universities in Kuwait, the types of degrees offered are limited.

“And then when I applied to Kuwait University, they have priorities. You choose your priorities. So I had English department, and then the



second was medicine. Because I had a very high GPA, you enter straight away as your first priority. When she told me, ‘Congratulations. You have entered the English Department, Kuwait University,’ I’m like, ‘Why not medicine school?’ I was still hoping that I might enter medicine.” – Participant 9 (32, married, Master’s degree, employed)

***Seeking work-life balance.*** All interview participants and some surveyed participants discussed the struggles and concerns they have achieving work-life balance. In particular, for those surveyed participants who indicated reasons for not choosing to participate in the workforce, seeking work-life balance was commonly cited. For some women, this struggle manifests itself in perceived (or actual) pressure to “do it all”, which includes the impact of social media. For others, it is recognizing the balance and deciding what is most important to them. For some others still, the struggle to create work-life balance played out in their work schedules.

***Social media.*** With the increase of technology and the subsequent use of social media, participants reported the ability to see different types of women and be exposed to an image of a woman that is in control, managing all aspects of her life, and doing it with ease.

“Of course with the social media, you’re exposed to so much. And I think if the social media wasn’t part of our lives today, things would have been different. But nowadays, the social media is setting new standards on what a woman is like. You see people who [are] doing so

much, and you see the progress they're making in their careers and all that. And sometimes I do feel like I need to do something.” –

Participant 4 (33, married, Doctorate degree, employed)

Some women felt that this created added pressure, while others viewed the impact as creating a positive image in that it did not limit women.

“I strive to be the woman that can do it all. I know that they talk-- everybody talks now about how we shouldn't be expected to do it all. But I feel that in this society, we have the ability to do it all. So that's the kind of woman I aim to be. I'm not there, but that's my working goal.” – Participant 6 (39, married, Doctorate degree, employed)

*Experiences with their own mothers.* Several interviewees discussed their own mothers and how they remember them maintaining both a career and family. Though this served as a starting point of what having both a career and family could look like, participants reported that it also made them want to set forth their priorities more clearly and take care of their interests and goals without losing themselves in their family.

“I mean, looking at her now, and it's amazing how she had three kids and had a full-time job. I don't think I would do that...But it's just amazing. It's like, ‘How did she do it?’ Because I remember her. I was in school, and I saw her at school. She'd come to the parent-teacher conferences. She would pick us up. She wouldn't take us to school, but she was there doing our homework or helping us with our homework,

or helping us with whatever, or taking us out to tennis lessons, or taking us out to practice. So, it's crazy. Yeah. I mean, she's definitely a role model in terms of what she did as a mother.” – Participant 2 (30, never married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

*Adjusting work to life.* Interviewed participants discussed their management of the pressure to achieve work-life balance by discussing how their jobs and careers had adjusted. Each participant, when discussing this issue, reported that it was their job and their career to which they decided to make changes (with a few discussing the increase of household staff). However, no participant discussed the modifications made by their husbands, though some were described as very hands-on.

“I worked full-time for two years up until I got married. Staying in the office until 6 PM put a hamper on my marriage... I mean, the timing works for me with my son and stuff, because I drop him off, and take him. They know that they've anchored me at that point. And so we'll see what happens.” – Participant 1 (31, married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

*Facets of Islamic feminism.* The concept of feminism and its suitability to Kuwaiti culture and society were asked about within the electronic survey, and the concept of Islamic feminism was asked about within the follow-up interviews. Responses to these questions were analyzed directly, as were all of the survey and interview responses, for more indirect influences of Islamic feminism.

*Ideas about feminism.* Regarding feminism in general, there was a majority yet shallow understanding of the idea.

“I personally demand to be treated equally, and frankly sometimes enjoy being treated as a woman” – Survey Participant

Several surveyed women portrayed aspects of Islamic feminism in their responses, such as feminism being more western-influenced and the need to have women’s rights but also supporting men and women as different.

“There is no such thing as ‘equality’ between men and women, there are men duties and women duties. But can we live our lives without having any western ideas shoved down our throats?!” – Survey Participant

A few surveyed women showed marked disdain for the idea and concept of feminism.

“Some bullshit term generated by girls who have nothing better to do.” – Survey Participant

*Feminism in Kuwait.* In its connection with Kuwaiti culture and society, there was a span of responses that indicated that either feminism completely fits or does not fit at all and that it has already been implemented in Kuwait society, that it is currently being implemented, and that it needs to be implemented. Aspects of Islamic feminism appeared in the responses that indicated Islam (one of Kuwait’s tenets of culture) as being symbiotic with women’s rights and empowerment.

“I believe -not only think- that it is part of what makes our society in Kuwait unique because it has always been there in so many ways but not realized and appreciated by the west because it does not conform to their ideas.” – Survey Participant

However, Islam at times became misconstrued through the values and beliefs of the society, therefore hindering women’s progress.

“It is not Islam that prohibited women from doing some things, it is the expectations and ideas of society that force the females to stop doing something or start doing anything that they do not want.” – Survey Participant

*Ideas of Islamic feminism.* When discussing the specific form of an Islamic-based feminism during the interviews, only one woman had heard of it previously.

“Because now you're adding a layer of religion to things. So for me, I wouldn't consider myself an Islamic feminist, okay. But I'm trying to imagine someone else in that role. Okay, now it makes sense...I guess sure, if that works, yeah, they should do it. I mean, taking it from that retrospective, I'd call myself an Islamic feminist.” – Participant 2 (30, never married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

Prompted to state what they thought an Islamic based feminism was or meant, interviewees naturally cited tenets of Islamic feminism described in Chapter 2, including Islam as being supportive to women, going back to the true meaning of Islam within the holy writings, and

looking at culture versus religion. A few reported that they were unsure if these two concepts could in fact work together.

“So feminism is wanting rights for women and being pro-female rights. And I guess Islamic Feminism is to be against men but still be Islamic. So, listen to your husband but not be okay with what other people telling you to do, I guess? I don't know. That's how I'd interpret it. Like feminism with a border would be Islamic Feminism, with a limit.” – Participant 11 (27, never married, Master's degree, employed)

*Indirect examples of Islamic feminism.* Examples of Islamic feminism were demonstrated in the discussions of other topics with interviewees, regardless of the participant's awareness of the idea or not.

“But I would hope for [my future daughters and granddaughters] to be very, very well-educated. I would hope for them to have those Kuwaiti traditions still within them. So I don't want them to lose their values and lose their ethics because of modernity. So some people think that in order to become modern, I should lose my Kuwaiti traditions and I should lose my ethics and values and all of that. Which, if I would have daughters or kids, I would want them to still have those Kuwaiti traditions instilled in them.” – Participant 10 (25, never married, Master's degree, employed)

Some examples came from the participant themselves in the ways in which they empowered themselves and those around them.

“[My parents are] concerned a lot. But they can't tell me, ‘No’...

Before, I hear everything they say. Then, at the start of 2007, I told them, ‘Don't tell me what I do, what I don't do. I'll do what I want.’...

It's hard, first of all. It's not easy. But it start when I'm losing my way.

What I want to do, like the work and the job, I didn't get it. I want to study abroad the master, the first year after I graduate, I couldn't do it...So my dream, when I volunteer, or helping somebody, or going abroad to help people, it was the step that I choose now. So it was like losing my way, I found something to do.” – Participant 13 (29, never married, Bachelor's degree, employed)

Others came from friends and family members, including their fathers.

“I remember before I got engaged, when I told my father that I know someone who wants to propose, and all that. The first thing he said, he's like... ‘Make sure that he does respect women, respecting woman in terms of knowing that in the Quran, how woman should be treated.’ And my father is just an average Kuwaiti person who prays and all that, but he's not religious, but he told me that, ‘If he knows his Quran, and knows how woman should be treated, he would never hurt you.’

He said that.” – Participant 4 (33, married, Doctorate degree, employed)

### **Mixed Methods Results**

The overarching mixed methods research question aimed to consolidate the quantitative and qualitative results to explain the gender gap within the Kuwaiti workforce. To complete the mixed methods analysis, a side-by-side comparison of the merged data was created and laid out in Table 8. The table restates findings outlined in the qualitative and quantitative results sections; however, a new qualitative theme was added and is described first.

**Change across generations.** This theme developed as a way to assess the changes that have occurred over time within Kuwaiti culture and society and their possible impact on Kuwaiti women’s marginalization within the workforce. Overall, there was a consensus that from around the 1950s up until the 1990-1991 Gulf War, Kuwait was a much more progressive society. For example, during this time strides were made in women’s empowerment due to the activism of both men and women, possibly because of the education reform that had recently occurred. However, after the Gulf War, participants reported that there seemed to have been a shift in Kuwait society toward a more religious and conservative mindset. Participants reported currently seeing a gradual shift back to the time before the Gulf War, but it has been slow, and the current generation is a bit stagnant in pushing for change.



“I just think it's going to take a long time. I mean, you feel like we're succeeding, and then we're not.” – Participant 2 (30, never married, Bachelor's degree, employed)

Other topics that arose when discussing the societal changes within Kuwait (over a relatively short span of time) included demographics, the impact of social media, marriage, employment, education, and current challenges.

*Demographics.* Kuwait was settled by two main groups of people; Bedouin (i.e. nomads) and Hadar (i.e. merchants). From this original division, Kuwait society has stratified into further categories (including religion, nationality, etc.); however, some are less obvious than others. Participants reported that these divisions are typically seen more within the social setting versus the work or educational settings; however, there is *wasta* (a form of favoritism) that can typically play a role in securing employment or other opportunities. Within the societal divisions, participants discussed the impact that being of a conservative or liberal mindset has like familial/parental/spousal views and influence on issues such as travel, wearing the hijab, employment, etc. Participants even reported that though they classified themselves and their immediate families as liberal or open-minded and surrounded themselves with similar people, the conservative faction on Kuwait society is much larger than immediately recognized.

“And unfortunately, today [conservatives] are the majority.

Sometimes, because I'm surrounded by open-minded people I get the

false notion that we are the majority, but we're really not.” –

Participant 5 (31, never married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

Participants also reported that one of the biggest changes seen in the overall Kuwait society is that even just one or two generations ago, most Kuwaitis were more similar to each other, but now there are more individual differences. Furthermore, in the past, you could more easily generalize the type of person someone may be (e.g. the values they held, etc.) by what family they came from, but now it really depends on the person themselves and their immediate or nuclear family (not extended). Even within these changes, however, participants still reported that those Kuwaitis who are Bedouin tend to be more traditional, more conservative, and even tend to live in certain areas of the country versus Hadar.

“There's still people, especially in this area, in Jahra, half of them, are close-minded. Here is Bedouin. It's not civil like inside the city. Most of them, like 90%. And the way they live...they're sticking to their old traditions. Like I think all my neighbors [are] wearing [the] Abaya. It's not about religion. It's about just tradition. My house, we are like the free over here.” Participant 13 (29, never married, Bachelor’s degree, employed)

*Impact of technology.* The increase of technology and social media is an issue that has arisen in other themes and has been cited as a catalyst to numerous changes. Here again, when describing the reasons for the major changes within Kuwaiti society over the past two to three generations, participants referenced the impact of social media. They explain that

social media has allowed for increased modernization (or westernization) and provides information on different ways of life both within Kuwait and abroad.

“Now, because Kuwait society is more westernized with all the social media and all the media in general, so I think people are more aware of the differences between men and women and they're more aware of feminism, let's say.” – Participant 10 (25, never married, Master’s degree, employed)

*Marriage, employment, and education.* In terms of marriage, employment, and education, participants reported that the most change has occurred in the realm of education, and the least has occurred with the issue of marriage.

“I think this is one of the most important things that has happened and one of the most positive things that has happened. That people are much more aware of their education, and that education is one of the important things.” – Participant 10 (25, never married, Master’s degree, employed)

Regarding education, several participants reported having illiterate grandmothers and mothers who had university degrees (including PhDs).

“I think this is a thought in Kuwaiti society [even though] you get free education [at Kuwaiti University], or you get a scholarship. Now, private universities, there's scholarships for private universities. So, even though college is optional in the Kuwaiti law, but still, I talk to

my students sometimes and all of them they're like, 'No. We never thought in high school that we would not go to college. It wasn't an option.' And I have students from all types of backgrounds from Kuwait.”– Participant 4 (33, married, Doctorate degree, employed)

In terms of employment, participants reported that, in comparison to other G.C.C. countries, Kuwaiti women have always been encouraged to work in some capacity or another.

“Women were never put down or asked not to work. When you can compare Kuwait to the rest of the Gulf region and also to the Middle East, women have always been expected to study and work... [In other countries] people who have money don't work. Women are not expected to work. [In] Kuwait, if you have money or you don't, you work. So I think maybe there was an encouragement. Women have always been from a work experience point of view, from giving back to society. However, of course there's always the glass ceiling... and it hasn't changed. From my mom's times to today, it hasn't changed.” - Participant 15 (51, married, Bachelor's degree, employed)

Additionally, that having wealth previously or having conservative ideals does not preclude them from engaging in work.

“[My sister is an educator, although] discreetly without her husband knowing. She's a fabulous teacher. She does home teaching for other

people in the community and takes nothing for it. All she would do is say...‘You teach my kid English, I’ll teach your kid math.’” – Participant 12 (47, divorced and re-married, Doctorate degree, employed)

Finally, in terms of marriage, participants reported that though this issue is gradually becoming less of a focal point (e.g. the marriage age is getting older, the idea of whom to marry is becoming less strict, etc.), there is still pressure and taboo surrounding it. There is also the continued pressure of women to be the head of the household and to make sure that those types of activities and the child-rearing are taken care of.

“I graduated when I was 24 and then I did [another] program. And I was in the workforce when I was around 26... I remember within that time, I wanted to go back and study masters, PhD, and I remember my mother and she was relentless about this...she was like, ‘No, you’re not leaving because if you leave, you’re never going to get married.’ That was the first time I heard that from her. That was weird to me, and it put a fear in me...I didn’t even understand why I [cared] about being married or not, but I remember that fear.” – Participant 14 (42, married, Bachelor’s degree, unemployed)

*Current challenges.* Along with the issues and progress outlined above, more specific challenges related to society and the political system in Kuwait exist. Some of the social issues have already been described, but overwhelmingly, they include the large impact that

norms and conventions can have on a person's day to day life, even more so than politics or laws.

“But when I was in [abroad] I was freer... I just felt free.” –

Participant 14 (42, married, Bachelor's degree, unemployed)

Political challenges that are current in today's society in Kuwait and affect women include women's rights to nationalize their children, women's rights regarding government subsidies, gender-based violence, and the need to have more women elected into parliamentary positions. Additionally, there is a need to create a discussion regarding those laws that negatively impact women, both those that support the abuse of women and those that create a negative or hostile work environment for women and mothers.

“There are two trends, the trend of [women's] professionalism that moved on, [and is currently moving]. But then comes all the [issues] that pertain to her well-being, her family, and none of them are moving. They're actually being put down, suppressed by the parliament, and maybe because we got our rights late, but even when we didn't have rights, men should have addressed these issues too. But women don't want to talk about them, men don't want to talk about them, it's a taboo for some reason.” – Participant 15 (51, married, Bachelor's degree, employed)

**Mixed methods chart.** Table 8 provides a side-by-side comparison of the merged data. An in-depth discussion of the table is provided in Chapter 5. Because of the responses

included within the category of “other” (i.e. mostly referring to continuing education and seeking employment), the option was left out of the mixed methods analysis.

Table 8

*Comparison of Information from Survey Data and Interviews*

Area of Inquiry	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings
Circumscription & Compromise	Sextype and Prestige Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupations falling within a low to neutral prestige level have a much wider range of sextypes.</li> <li>• Occupations falling within a neutral to high prestige level tend to cluster around a neutral sextype.</li> </ul>	Emergent Themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Significance of Societal Messages</li> <li>• Family Influences</li> <li>• Aspects of Personal Choice</li> <li>• Compromise Created by External Factors</li> <li>• Seeking Work-Life Balance</li> <li>• Facets of Islamic Feminism</li> <li>• Change Across Generations</li> </ul>
Reasons to Participate in the Workforce	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Money</li> <li>2. Independence</li> <li>3. Ambition</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relation between earning an income and being independent from parents or spouses</li> <li>• Desire to live up to families' expectations and making families/parents proud</li> <li>• Obtain a sense of personal achievement and building community/country</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Age</u></p> <p><i>18-45</i> (Overall)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Money</li> <li>2. Independence</li> <li>3. Ambition</li> </ol> <p>(Top Cited)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambition</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SES</u></p> <p><i>Higher</i> (Total)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Money</li> <li>2. Independence</li> <li>3. Ambition</li> </ol> <p>(Top Cited)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambition</li> </ul>



Table 8 Continued

	<p><i>46+</i> (Overall)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Independence</li> <li>2. Ambition</li> <li>3. Money</li> </ol> <p>(Top Cited)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Interest</li> </ul> <p><i>Statistical Significance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age &amp; Personal Interest</li> <li>• Age &amp; Ambition</li> </ul>	<p><i>Lower</i> (Overall)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Money</li> <li>2. Independence</li> <li>3. Ambition</li> </ol> <p>(Top Cited)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambition</li> </ul> <p><i>Statistical Significance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Reasons to not Participate in the Workforce	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of Options</li> <li>2. Importance of the role as Mother/Wife</li> <li>3. No Desire (i.e. interest)</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family responsibilities</li> <li>• Working conditions</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Age</u></p> <p><i>18-45</i> (Overall)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of Options</li> <li>2. Other</li> <li>3. The Importance of the role as Mother/Wife</li> </ol> <p>(Top Cited)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SES</u></p> <p><i>Higher</i> (Overall)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of Options</li> <li>2. The Importance of the role as Mother/Wife</li> <li>3. Other</li> </ol> <p>(Top Cited)</p>

Table 8 Continued

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
<p>46+ (Overall)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Importance of the role as Mother/Wife</li> <li>2. No Need</li> <li>3. No Desire</li> </ol>	<p><i>Lower</i> (Overall)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of Options</li> <li>2. No Desire</li> <li>3. The Importance of the role as Mother/Wife</li> </ol>
<p>(Top Cited)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Importance of the role as Mother/ Wife</li> </ul>	<p>(Top Cited)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Importance of the role as Mother/Wife</li> </ul>
<p><i>Statistical Significance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<p><i>Statistical Significance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>

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**Summary**

Chapter 4 provided the results obtained from both the electronic survey and interviews, as well as the demographic information for the participants from both sets of data. Results were reported in relation to all research questions and the overarching mixed methods question. Further discussion of the findings, their implications, and limitations are discussed in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

The purpose of the present study is to develop a greater understanding of Kuwaiti women's sense of self and overarching gender identity, its connection to their career development process, and how the resulting association can be used to help explain the current gender gap associated with Kuwaiti women's low rate of employment. This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4. It also reviews implications for practice and policy within a variety of counseling and educational settings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

### **Discussion of the Results**

Similar to Chapter 4, each of the following research questions will be addressed individually with the overarching mixed methods question addressed at the end. Findings presented in Chapter 4 will be interpreted and discussed based on the theoretical frameworks and the transformative design with which the study is framed.

#### ***Mixed methods:***

What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about Islamic feminism and career development in Kuwaiti women with quantitative survey data measuring perceived sextype and prestige level of occupations in an effort to explain Kuwaiti women's marginalization in the Kuwaiti labor market?

#### ***Quantitative:***

1. To what extent do Kuwaiti women's perceived sextype of occupations match Gottfredson's cognitive map of occupations?

2. To what extent do Kuwaiti women's perceived prestige level of occupations match Gottfredson's cognitive map of occupations?
3. Do Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce compare based on age?
4. Do Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce compare based on socioeconomic status?

***Qualitative:***

5. How do Kuwaiti women describe their experiences with gender identity, and subsequent career development, as it relates to Islamic feminism?

**Discussion of Research Question 1**

The first quantitative research question sought to determine how current Kuwaiti women's perceptions of occupational sextype compare to Gottfredson's original Map of Occupational Images (1981). Reviewing the results in Chapter 4, there is an overall trend for the majority of occupations to be clustered within the neutral sextype range as opposed to Gottfredson's Map of Occupational Images which provides a broader range of occupational sextypes (see Appendix E). Using the principles of Gottfredson's Theory of Career Development, these results indicate a zone of acceptable alternatives (occupations) that is not as heavily influenced by occupational sextype. Furthermore, having occupations cluster around a neutral sextype, indicate that Kuwaiti women's circumscription process is not as quickly impacted by gendered stereotypes of occupations. While gender may have an impact on Kuwaiti women's personal identity development, there is a differentiation between this development and the development of their corresponding educational and career goals. This

differentiation allows Kuwaiti women to develop a self-concept and social space that includes occupations independent of perceived sextype.

The results of women's perceptions regarding occupational sextypes may be due to the overall global shift and progress in developed and developing countries since the late 1970s and early 1980s regarding gender stereotyping of occupations. Within Kuwait specifically, this phenomenon may be a result of the importance of education for Muslim women and men and Kuwaiti women's higher enrollment in education majors traditionally dominated by men. Results can be further interpreted to mean that whether or not Kuwaiti women apply their education to the world of work, their education is not being deterred by a preconceived notion of what men and women "should do".

When the findings are applied, we can tentatively claim the hypothesis from Chapter 3 that because of the importance of education of Muslim women and the migrant work population in Kuwait, prestige level of an occupation will outweigh the sextype of the occupation (contrary to Gottfredson's hypotheses) in Kuwaiti women's process of compromise and circumscription to be supported. Sextypes for occupations that fall under the neutral level of prestige have a much higher span of sextypes than those above the neutral level (a span of 1.352 to 6.273 versus 3.214 to 4.943 respectively) and require less formal education and training than those above a neutral prestige level.

### **Discussion of Research Question 2**

The second quantitative research question sought to determine how current Kuwaiti women's perceptions of occupational prestige level compare to Gottfredson's original Map

of Occupational Images (1981). The results in Chapter 4 reveal that there is a range of occupational prestige levels. As compared to Gottfredson's original Map, the tendency for those occupations that require a higher level of preparation continue to rank as having a higher level of prestige than those that do not. Using the principles of Gottfredson's Theory of Career Development, these results indicate a zone of acceptable alternatives (occupations) that is and continues to be influenced by perceived occupational prestige; thus indicating its impact on Kuwaiti women's process of circumscription. In particular, these results point to the development of self-concepts and social spaces within Kuwaiti women that are more heavily influenced by factors of society that determine occupational prestige.

Applying these findings to the stated hypothesis in Chapter 3 that because of the migrant work population and class structure, the prestige level of jobs will follow nationality lines, we can tentatively claim support. This is because those occupations that fall below a "neutral" prestige level tend to be filled by lower class migrant workers who do not hold degrees. Those occupations that fall above the "neutral" prestige level tend to be filled by Kuwaitis and higher class migrant workers with university degrees.

### **Discussion of Research Question 3**

The third quantitative research question sought to determine how Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate or not participate in the workforce compared based on age. Reviewing the results in Chapter 4, we see that age does play a significant role in Kuwaiti women's reasons of ambition and personal interest when choosing to participate in the workforce.

There was no significant difference, however, regarding age and reasons to not participate in the workforce.

***Reasons to participate in the workforce.*** Looking at the frequency distributions for both age groups (18-45 and 46+), the reasons of money, independence, and ambition were provided as the top overall reasons for choosing to participate in the workforce. Money for women ages 18-45 outweighed that same stated reason for women ages 46+. Additionally, women ages 18-45 cited ambition as their number one reason for choosing to participate in the workforce, and women ages 46+ cited personal interest. This may reflect the average retirement age in Kuwait; women now receive a retirement income (therefore making money less of an issue) and have time to pursue personal interests. When compared to the qualitative data, the connection between money and independence is supported, as well as the reason of ambition, which could be explained by the participant's desire to live up to family expectations, make family members proud, and obtain a sense of freedom.

***Reasons to not participate in the workforce.*** The frequency distributions for ages 18-45 and 46+ show that lack of options, and the role as mother/wife as more important as the top overall reasons to not participate in the workforce. For women aged 46+, the reasons of no need (i.e. money) and no desire (i.e. interest) are also top reasons, and the role of mother/wife outweighs that for women aged 18-45. For women aged 46+, the reason of no need (i.e. money) may be impacted by the age of retirement and a retirement income, and the role of mother/wife may contribute to the reason of no desire (i.e. interest). For women aged 18-45, the role of mother/wife may be influenced by life circumstances such as getting



married and starting a family, which would be supported by the emergent theme of work-life balance. Additionally, for women ages 18-45, the reason of “other” was also a top overall reasons; with issues such as working conditions and seeking work-life balance most often provided. When compared to the qualitative results from the survey, the reasons provided are supported. In particular, family responsibilities support both age groups’ reason regarding the importance as mother/wife, and working conditions support the reason of lack of options for women aged 18-45.

*Connecting to hypotheses.* When the findings are applied to the hypothesis in Chapter 3 that states that those women who continue to work over the age of 45 will cite reasons that reflect self-actualization (e.g. personal interest, ambition, etc.) more so than those women working under the age of 45 is tentatively supported; however, women aged 18-45 also reported high levels of ambition. Additionally, the hypothesis in Chapter 3 that states that over time (i.e. age), reasons that women will cite to work will move from those of more basic needs (e.g. money, etc.) to those that reflect self-actualization (e.g. personal interest, ambition, etc.) is also tentatively supported because women aged 18-45 cited money as a reason to work more than women aged 46+ and women over the age of 46 listed the reason of no need (i.e. money).

Relating to the circumscription process of eliminating occupational options based on developing self-concepts, Kuwaiti women tend to follow Gottfredson’s outlined principles and stages. In particular, regardless of age, Kuwaiti women tend to eliminate those occupations that will not provide access to money, independence, and the chance to meet

familial expectations. This unique process of circumscription supports the generalizability and applicability of Gottfredson's theory to other societies and cultures, as well as highlighting the need to test and reconfigure the theory to be as appropriate and meaningful as possible.

#### **Discussion of Research Question 4**

The fourth quantitative research question sought to determine how Kuwaiti women's reasons to participate in the workforce, or not, compared based on SES. Reviewing the results in Chapter 4, we see that SES does not play a significant role in women's reasons to choose to enter or not to enter the workforce.

*Reasons to participate in the workforce.* Looking at the frequency distributions for reasons to participate in the workforce for both SES categories, money, independence, and ambition ranked in the same order for both SES categories, and ambition was the top reason for both. Comparing these results to the quantitative findings of the association between money and independence, sense of achievement, and living up to familial expectations, support is found. It is possible that there is no difference in reasons to participate in the workforce based on SES because of the government subsidies provided to Kuwaiti citizens that creates less division between high and low SES. Additionally, when reviewing the emergent themes from the phenomenological analysis, another reason for the lack of difference could stem from the general and consistent encouragement for Kuwaiti women to work regardless of their income status.

***Reasons to not participate in the workforce.*** The frequency distributions for reasons to not participate in the workforce for both SES categories show that lack of options, and importance of mother/wife role were listed as top overall reasons. Women within the higher SES category also cited “other” which included reasons such as working conditions, changing interests, and work-life balance; while women within the lower SES category cited no desire (i.e. interest). Women within the higher SES category cited “other” as the top reason, but more interestingly created a four-way tie for the second top reason: no need (i.e. money), no desire (i.e. interest), lack of options, and the importance of mother/wife role. This indicates that women within the higher SES category have more options available to them regarding working, and therefore can be a bit more selective in what they choose. Women within the lower SES category cited the importance of mother/wife role as the most important, which could be explained by a more conservative or traditional life style/values. Comparing these findings to survey qualitative results, we again find support with the categories of working conditions and family responsibilities.

***Connecting to hypotheses.*** Applying these findings to the stated hypothesis in Chapter 3, that those women from the higher SES category will cite reasons that reflect self-actualization (e.g. personal interest, ambition, etc.) more so than those women from the lower SES category, is not supported, because both high and low SES women cited the same reasons to participate in the workforce. This may be because of the increased cost of living expenses in Kuwait and the division (or lack thereof) between high and low SES.

Similarly to the findings for research question three, when relating to the circumscription process of eliminating occupational options based on developing self-concepts, Kuwaiti women tend to follow Gottfredson's outlined principles and stages. In particular, regardless of SES, Kuwaiti women tend to eliminate those occupations that will not provide access to money, independence, obtaining a sense of achievement, and the chance to meet familial expectations. This unique process of circumscription continues to support the generalizability and applicability of Gottfredson's theory to other societies and cultures, as well as emphasizing the need to test and reconfigure the theory to be as appropriate and meaningful as possible to various societies and cultures.

#### **Discussion of Research Question 5**

The qualitative research question sought to understand how Kuwaiti women describe their experiences with gender identity, subsequent career development, and their relation to Islamic feminism. Based on the emergent themes outlined in Chapter 4, family, had the biggest influence on all three of the issues in question. This is supported by Kuwait's collectivist society/culture and the high value placed on family and connections. Regarding gender identity, societal messages and an undercurrent of Islamic feminism were the most impactful for a Kuwaiti woman developing her sense of self and how she identified as a woman. Furthermore, personal choice, external compromising factors, and seeking work-life balance were the most impactful aspects of Kuwaiti women's career development.

Applying these findings to the stated hypothesis in Chapter 3, based on the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2, support is found. The hypothesis stated that Kuwaiti

women's career and occupational choices are determined by both Islamic feminism and Kuwaiti culture. Specifically, elements of Islamic feminism, whether overtly or subtly, influence and impact Kuwaiti women's development of their self-concept (to include their gender identity, social class, intelligence, interests, and abilities). Using the results of the present study, this manifested itself in the ways in which Kuwaiti women described themselves as women and their interaction with societal messages around them. The hypothesis also stated that Kuwaiti culture (including its tribal roots, current labor division, and Islam) influences and impacts Kuwaiti women's image of the sextype and prestige level of various occupations. Using the results of the present study, this manifested itself in the ways in which occupations or educational degrees were deemed appropriate or not and the family's influence on the career and educational choices being made by Kuwaiti women. Furthermore, the demographic makeup of Kuwait (including those of a conservative or traditional mindset versus those of a liberal or modern mindset and the labor market division) continue to impact the way in which certain occupations are viewed.

Relating to the circumscription process of eliminating occupational options based on developing self-concepts, Kuwaiti women tend to follow Gottfredson's outlined principles and stages, yet are influenced in a unique way. Kuwait's collectivist structure, connection to religion, and tribal roots are factors that are most connected to the process of circumscription; versus those factors that tend to be more individualistic within the Western world where the theory originated. This particular process of circumscription supports the generalizability and

applicability of Gottfredson's theory to other societies and cultures, as well as highlighting the need to test and reconfigure the theory to be as appropriate and meaningful as possible.

### **Discussion of Mixed Methods Research Question**

The overarching mixed methods research question sought to explain Kuwaiti women's marginalization in the Kuwaiti labor market when comparing the qualitative and quantitative data. Analyzing the perceived sextypes and prestige levels of occupations obtained through the electronic survey, Kuwaiti women are not being deterred from pursuing certain jobs based on a gender stereotype. Additionally, Kuwaiti women, regardless of age or SES, are motivated by finances, independence, and ambition when choosing to enter the workforce (and based on this study's sample size, the majority of respondents were either currently in the workforce or currently seeking employment). Therefore, there is another reason supporting Kuwaiti women's marginalization within the workplace. The emergent qualitative themes reveal that the most impactful reasons behind women's interaction with the world of work are messages regarding the role of women (especially those of wife and mother), and seeking work-life balance. When taking these two things into consideration, it can be stated that while Kuwaiti women are still encouraged to achieve (either academically or economically, or both), they are also just as encouraged to marry, have children, and maintain a household. It is at the intersection of these two roles and images of women that decisions are being made. These include family influence regarding the appropriateness of certain jobs, seeking jobs and even academic degrees that support flexible or shorter hours away from the home, and delaying career growth to allow time and space for family. Because

of this tendency to continue to lean towards traditional gender roles, two things can be inferred: 1) that the role of mother and wife is still more highly valued for women than the role of professional; and 2) those jobs and degrees that support flexible/short working hours are more sought after and therefore continue to allow men to fill more “intensive” positions. Based on these two reasons, women in Kuwait continue to be marginalized in the labor market, which leads to a gender gap in employment.

It is interesting to note here that one possible reason behind the continued support of more traditional gender norms for Kuwaiti women is the rate at which modernization occurred within the country. Within one generation (that of participants’ grandmothers and mothers), women not only became literate, but were also pursuing post-graduate degrees and traveling around the globe to study and work. On the tails of this rapid transformation within the country was the advancement of technology, which continued to increase the pace of progress for women (in education and the workplace). However, this rate of progress was happening independent of social progress (including norms, values, and laws). When compared to other countries with a much longer history such as the United States, social and professional progress for women occurred more simultaneously and at a slower rate (i.e. change over time). Therefore, traditional gender roles for women in Kuwait may still be supported, not only because of the collectivist culture, but also because there has not yet been time enough for the social world to meet the professional world. It is hopeful, and possible, that since the progress that occurred regarding women’s academic and professional roles happened naturally (albeit quickly), that corresponding policy and legal progress will happen

naturally as well and address some of the current challenges outlined in ‘*Change Across Generations*’ theme.

Relating to the circumscription process of eliminating occupational options based on developing self-concepts, Kuwaiti women tend to follow Gottfredson’s outlined principles and stages in a unique way. While Gottfredson poses that the final stage of circumscription is around age 14, findings within this study show that the process continues well into adulthood (possibly due to the collectivist values of the community and culture) when Kuwaiti women connect their education and occupational choices with society’s messages regarding appropriateness and work-life balance for women. Particularly, the process of circumscription, and corresponding compromise, culminate when Kuwaiti women enter the “real world” and must apply their education and degrees to the world of work. It has been up until this point that societal and familial values related to prestige and the importance of education have supported gender-neutral occupational goals. However, once in the “real world”, the experience (and related stress) leads them to make their final decisions regarding the types of jobs that they will occupy; ones that tend to support a more traditional view of a woman’s role. This particular process of circumscription supports the generalizability and applicability of Gottfredson’s theory to other societies and cultures, as well as highlighting the need to test and reconfigure the theory to be as appropriate and meaningful as possible.

### **Conceptualization of Implications**

The following implications of the discussed results follow two lines; that of the counselor education community within the United States as well as that of the current state of



affairs within Kuwaiti society. In conducting international research, it is important to be aware of and balance the standards and values central to each party involved. Therefore, when constructing the implications and recommendations, both the transformative framework supporting this methodology and principles from the theory of Islamic feminism were undertaken to ensure that neither party's viewpoint took precedence, or were imposed on the other. Particularly, with recommendations directed towards Kuwait specifically, efforts were made to be participatory, collaborative, and organic to the circumstances.

### **Implications for Professional Practice**

A number of implications can be drawn about how the study's findings could be applied. This section reviews these implications in terms of both practice as applied to various counseling settings, and counselor education.

**Career counseling.** Career exploration, self-exploration, and career guidance need to be more systematically incorporated into Kuwait's early educational system starting at least in middle school. This would allow Kuwaiti students, both men and women, to learn more about their own personal interests, values, and abilities related to the world of work and how to seek those out within viable career options. This career guidance should take place within the classroom and with school and/or guidance counselors with specific training in this field.

Building on the current scholarship and university application system already in place, a prime implication for career counseling in Kuwait would focus on adult women. The current systems in Kuwait do not allow for a great deal of career exploration or self-exploration prior to deciding on a university degree. This can lead to increased stress for the

individual once they realize that their current area of education or employment does not align with their personal interests, abilities, and/or values. Within a college setting, the career counselor and/or academic advisor may need to help the individual identify which fields of study align more with their personal interests, abilities, and values, while staying within the confines of their scholarship or graduation plan. Post-college, career counselors need to work with adult women who are realizing the need to make a career shift or those adult women who are trying to enter the workforce (or volunteerism) once their primary role as mother/wife has subsided. As a career development program, this could take the form of workshops, sessions, etc. that assist women who are seeking a career change by providing interest inventories and work values assessments, building on transferable skills, and determining avenues to reach their goals. Furthermore, in both settings, college and post-college, there is a need to include more exploratory inventions and space for women to discuss their career development process.

**Mental health counseling.** Mental health professionals need to be aware and offer services surrounding the stress that Kuwaiti women are under when making decisions related to education, career, and work-life balance. Within secondary and post-secondary settings, guidance counselors and counseling offices should be in contact with teachers and academic advisors to identify those students who may be struggling and offer workshops and outreach to create awareness and act as a preventative measure. Community mental health professionals need to continue to build outreach networks that provide education and promote awareness regarding the stressors that may arise when trying to achieve work-life

balance or to make a mid-life career change. Furthermore, community mental health counselors must include career related stress and work-life balance as parts of their clinical assessments to ensure a complete and comprehensive evaluation.

Based on the overwhelming consensus among study participants regarding work-life balance and the pressures to “do-it-all”, mental health professionals in Kuwait need to be mindful of how this balance and pressure may impact other areas of their life and reach out to these women. One way of creating a supportive environment would be to leverage the use of social media and create a virtual support group. Another implication for mental health counseling in Kuwait refers to the dilemma presented in the previous section regarding mid-education or mid-life career changes. It is imperative for counselors to recognize the stress that individuals may face when exploring a new education or career option. For example, counselors could help women address their lack of awareness regarding career counseling and exploration and the impact (perceived or otherwise) about how a change on their part may affect their role in school and/or their family members. Furthermore, within the counseling setting, it could be helpful for counselors to create dialogue with the client regarding social norms and messages and how they are being internalized.

**School counseling.** School counselors must work in conjunction with career counselors (as outlined previously) to provide comprehensive career development services to students in grades K-12. School counselors either need to be trained specifically in the theories and techniques related to career counseling and guidance, or specialized career counselors need to be incorporated into the school staff and administration.

To pro-actively address the stress that can accompany the scholarship and university systems, school counselors need to provide more academic and career counseling to students in both middle and high school. In the government schools where students are assigned a science or arts track in high school, school counseling in middle school may help students be aware of their academic abilities and their personal interests and how to merge the two. For high school students who are applying to colleges and universities, school counselors need to offer more guidance to help students understand what each degree major entails and how that degree can be used in both traditional and non-traditional ways so that the student is aware of different options that they may have.

**Counselor education.** Implications for counselor education follow two lines; recommendations for current counselor education programs within the United States, and recommendations for proposed counselor education programs within Kuwait. Within the US, current multicultural and career theory courses taught in both Master's and Doctoral level counselor education programs would benefit from expanding current ideas and theories to those that include a more global view. Addressing the concept of Islamic feminism in multicultural courses could benefit counselors-in-training to be more adequately prepared for and aware of identities associated with their female Muslim clients (whether they are recent immigrants or native US citizens). In particular, challenging possible stereotypes or biases students may have; as well as becoming more educated on advocacy and social justice initiatives in the post 9-11 climate of the US (currently being exacerbated by the Trump presidential administration). Addressing the application of career theories to different

international communities could benefit students by gaining greater understanding of role that cultural standards, values, and beliefs have on theory development and implementation; as well as better preparing students for international and global counseling efforts that are becoming increasingly more popular.

Recommendations for counselor education programs within Kuwait are hypothetical at this stage, due to the lack of programs present. Current recommendations surround the development of counselor education programs within Kuwaiti colleges and universities; including accreditation, educational standards, graduate-level courses and programs, and scholarships (Al-Qimlass, 2015). Building on these recommendations, the current study's finding further supports the need to develop counselor education programs to meet the needs of Kuwaiti women. Additionally, the current study's findings emphasize the need to create counselor education programs that are appropriate and applicable to the communities and cultures they are applied to.

### **Implications for Policy**

Policymakers across government, labor, and education need to be involved to create and implement policies that address the unique circumstances of Kuwaiti women. Policies across all domains need to accommodate and support women, and men's, role as a family member. Within government, laws need to be removed, updated, and added that reflect women as first-class citizens. Within the labor force, policies and procedures need to be enacted that prohibit discrimination against women based on their gender. Within education,

procedures within the university and scholarship systems that do not support women need to be updated.

Due to the amount of current government related subsidies within both the world of work and educational system in Kuwait, policy changes need to occur at the government level to be most effective. Legislation that supports the abuse or neglect of women needs to be assessed and hopefully addressed. Also, regarding employer policies for male versus female employees, discrimination based on gender must become a clear legal violation. Other implications for policy change at the labor market level include training for both employees and employers and increased support services for women.

### **Limitations**

Limitations found within the present study are both inherent to the study design and are areas to improve on for future research. The main areas of limitations outlined include methodology, sample size, and other. While there are a number limitations associated with the scope and sample of the study, the findings can still be deemed as both valid and reliable, as well as significant in creating an initial foray into the topic areas and setting the stage for future inquiries.

**Methodology.** Research designs are not without their limitations. Some of the methodological ones present in the current study include the occupations surveyed. For example, only 30 occupations were used. Additionally, the comparison to Gottfredson's Map of Occupational Images can only provide limited information related to Kuwaiti culture and its change over time because of the lack of occupational images being reported in Kuwait

prior to this study and Gottfredson's use of a U.S. population based in the late 1970s. Also, within the survey, the method that was used to rank top reasons to participate in the workforce or not was not as statistically sound as it should have been. Finally, the survey itself may have posed some complications for respondents, resulting in inconsistent responses; this may have been addressed ahead of time with a pilot test.

*Sample size.* The sample size used in this study aimed to be as representative of the entire adult Kuwaiti women's population as possible. The first limitation to sample size came in the inability to include every Kuwaiti adult woman in the recruitment phase. Other limitations include demographic variables reported; for example, this sample did not include any individuals over the age of 71 and was completed by a majority of women who spoke English and had university degrees. Furthermore, the demographic variable of income was meant to be as inclusive of living standard as possible but was up to the discretion of the participant to report; during the interviews it became evident that there was not a consistent understanding of what was meant by "income". Additionally, it did not include individuals of Kuwaiti mothers and non-Kuwaiti fathers, religious demographics, and tribal demographics. Religion and tribal demographics were not collected in this study because of the concern by the cultural experts in how those demographics may be used or perceived, especially in an ISIS era that aims to divide. A further limitation related to sample size stemmed from survey respondents who indicated "other" for not participating in the workforce, yet cited education or seeking employment as the reason. Based on the survey flow, these participants should

have been directed to different questions based on their student/seeking employment status; therefore leading to other possible data results.

*Other.* Gathering data internationally, and within a community that is not familiar with research provided additional limitations. A number of limitations were inherent to international/non-English speaking populations. For example, translation issues (of the survey itself and of survey responses), as well as those colloquia, phrases, and/or concepts that participants may have had difficulty trying to convey in English versus Arabic. Other limitations were specific to the actual community in which the research was being conducted (Kuwait). For example, the need to use two population censuses from the Kuwait government. Also, though the rate of women obtaining college degrees is and enrolling in traditionally male-dominated programs is higher than that for men, it is not determined whether this includes domestic only or domestic and international enrollment/graduation rates. Another limitation was the issue of confidentiality in that participants (as well as friends and family members) wanted to know who each other was.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Areas of future research include broadening the sample and focusing on other variables of interests. To broaden the sample, future research should include individuals who come from Kuwaiti mothers and non-Kuwaiti fathers (therefore not holding Kuwaiti citizenship), Bedoon individuals living in Kuwait (i.e. individuals not holding citizenship to any country), men, women who do not speak English, Bedouin women, and older women. Broadening the sample to include these sub-populations will allow for a greater



understanding of Kuwaiti women's marginalization within the workforce, as well as more general experiences with Islamic feminism. A further broadening of the sample should include expanding this field of research to other GCC and Arab League nations, to identify similarities and differences between them.

Other variables of interest for future research include men and their perception of gender differences within the workplace, the specific influence of fathers versus mothers, the experience of individuals merging traditional values with modern ideals/goals for the future, and the impact of religion and tribal affiliation on Islamic feminism and gender identity development. Additionally, focusing on women who work versus those who do not, the impact of role models, the impact of studying abroad versus not, and exploring statistical relationships between various factors are other areas for future research. Expanding the current study to include these other variables of interest will provide a deeper understanding of the marginalization of Kuwaiti women within the workforce, as well as Islamic feminism within Kuwait, which will lead to more impactful implications.

## **Conclusion**

The overall study aimed to explore the marginalization of Kuwaiti women within the labor market using both Gottfredson's theory of career development and Islamic feminism. The results indicated that the processes of compromise and circumscription occur within this population and that Islamic feminism is a variable in Kuwaiti women's gender identity development and subsequent career development. Furthermore, the marginalization of Kuwaiti women within the labor market stems from the highly valued role of mother and

wife. Future research is needed to build on and support the results found. Programs and initiatives also need to be developed to address the policy and practice implications outlined.

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**APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: SES Score

*Calculating Combined SES Score*

<u>SES Factor</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Score</u>
Education (Mother & Father)	No Formal Education	1
	Less than High School	2
	High School Diploma	3
	University	4
	Post grad	5
Occupation <sup>a</sup> (Mother & Father)	Unemployed	1
	Clerical/Skilled work	2
	Professional	3
	Unknown – Outside of the Home <sup>b</sup>	2
Income (Participant)	< K.D. 1000	1
	K.D. 1000-1999	2
	K.D. 2000-2999	3
	K.D. 3000-3999	4
	K.D. 4000-4999	5
	K.D. 5000+	6
Number of People in the Household <sup>c</sup>	High Family + Low Live-in Help	1
	Medium Family + Low Live-in Help	2
	Low Family + Medium Live-in Help	3
	Low Family + High Live-in Help	4



## Appendix B: Survey

*Demographics*

Mother's Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of education (completed or currently seeking):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School       | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associates Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> PhD/MD          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____    |

Did you study outside of Kuwait?

- Yes. Where did you study (country)? \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Monthly Income (include total source; for example salary + National Labor Subsidy + other):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than K.D. 1000 | <input type="checkbox"/> K.D. 3000-3499      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> K.D. 1000-1499      | <input type="checkbox"/> K.D. 3500-3999      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> K.D. 1500-1999      | <input type="checkbox"/> K.D. 4000-4499      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> K.D. 2000-2499      | <input type="checkbox"/> K.D. 4500-4999      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> K.D. 2500-2999      | <input type="checkbox"/> more than K.D. 5000 |

Area of Residence:

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Asimah         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hawally   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Farwaniya      | <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Ahmadi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mubarak Al-Kabeer | <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Jahra  |

Mother's Level of Education:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School       | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associates Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> PhD/MD          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____    |

Father's Level of Education:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School       | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associates Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> PhD/MD          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____    |

Mother's Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of People in Household

Family Members: \_\_\_\_\_

Live-In Help: \_\_\_\_\_

*Employment Data*

Are you currently employed, or seeking employment?

Yes

No

Display this question if "Are you currently employed?" **Yes** is selected

What is your job? \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if "Are you currently employed?" **Yes** is selected

Why did you choose to work? (please select your top 3 reasons, ranking them in order of importance - with #1 being the most important reason)

\_\_\_ Money

\_\_\_ Personal Interest

\_\_\_ Familial Expectations

\_\_\_ Independence

\_\_\_ Future Planning

\_\_\_ To meet future husband

\_\_\_ Ambition

\_\_\_ Boredom

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- In a few sentences, please explain your listed choices: \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if "Are you currently employed?" **No** is selected

What best describes your current position?

Retired

Housewife

Student

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if "What best describes your current position?" **Student** is selected

Do you plan to work after graduating?

- Yes  
 No

Display this question if “Do you plan to work after graduating?” **Yes** is selected

Why do you want to work? (please select your top 3 reasons, ranking them in order of importance - with #1 being the most important reason)

- \_\_\_ Money  
 \_\_\_ Personal Interest  
 \_\_\_ Familial Expectations  
 \_\_\_ Independence  
 \_\_\_ Future Planning  
 \_\_\_ To meet future husband  
 \_\_\_ Ambition  
 \_\_\_ Boredom  
 \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- In a few sentences, please explain your listed choices: \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if “Do you plan to work after graduating?” **No** is selected

Why do you not want to work? (please select your top 3 reasons, ranking them in order of importance - with #1 being the most important reason)

- \_\_\_\_\_ No Need (money)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Partner Expectations  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Familial Expectations  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Influence  
 \_\_\_\_\_ No Desire (interest)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of Options  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Role as Mother/Wife is more important  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- In a few sentences, please explain your listed choices: \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if “What best describes your current position?” **Retired** is not selected; AND “What best describes your current position?” **Student** is not selected; AND “Are you currently employed?” **No** is selected

Have you ever had a job?

- Yes, but I left early (before retirement).  
 No, I have never worked.  
 No, I have never worked, but I spend a lot of time volunteering.

Display this question if “Have you ever had a job?” **No, I have never worked, but I spend a lot of time volunteering** is selected

What organizations do you volunteer most with? \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if “Have you ever had a job?” **No, I have never worked** is selected;  
OR “Have you ever had a job?” **No, I have never worked, but I spend a lot of time volunteering** is selected

Why did you choose not to work? (please select your top 3 reasons, ranking them in order of importance - with #1 being the most important reason)

- No Need (money)
- Partner Expectations
- Familial Expectations
- Peer Influence
- No Desire (interest)
- Lack of Options
- Role as Mother/Wife is more important
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- In a few sentences, please explain your listed choices: \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if “Have you ever been in the workforce?” **Yes, but I left early (before retirement)** is selected

Why did you choose to work? (please select your top 3 reasons, ranking them in order of importance - with #1 being the most important reason)

- Money
- Personal Interest
- Familial Expectations
- Independence
- Future Planning
- To meet future husband
- Ambition
- Boredom
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- In a few sentences, please explain your listed choices: \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if “Have you ever been in the workforce?” **Yes, but I left early (before retirement)** is selected

Why did you choose to stop working? (please select your top 3 reasons, ranking them in order of importance - with #1 being the most important reason)

- No Need (money)
- Partner Expectations
- Familial Expectations
- Peer Influence
- No Desire (interest)
- Lack of Options
- Role as Mother/Wife is more important
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- In a few sentences, please explain your listed choices: \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if “What best describes your current position?” **Retired** is selected

Why did you choose to work? (please select your top 3 reasons, ranking them in order of importance - with #1 being the most important reason)

- Money
- Personal Interest
- Familial Expectations
- Independence
- Future Planning
- To meet future husband
- Ambition
- Boredom
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- In a few sentences, please explain your listed choices: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Prestige Level*

Think about the status (desirability) that each of the listed jobs below has, and answer the question: How much do people respect the person who has the following job or career?

1 – Not at all; 2 – Very little; 3 – Neutral; 4 – Some; 5 – A lot

Occupation	Scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
Construction worker					
Surgeon					
Chef					

Engineer					
Gardener					
Dentist					
Car Mechanic					
Politician					
Banker (Account Manager)					
Architect					
Doctor					
Nanny					
Pharmacist					
Computer Programmer					
Psychiatrist					
Receptionist					
Journalist					
Lawyer					
Occupational Therapist					
Cashier					
Nurse					
Manicurist					
Cook					
Therapist					

Teacher (KG-12)					
Public Relations/Marketing Executive					
Social Worker					
Entrepreneur					
University Professor					
Driver					

*Sextype*

Think about how "manly" or how "girly" each of the jobs list below are, and answer the question: How masculine or feminine is this job or profession?

1 – Very masculine; 2 – Somewhat masculine; 3 – A little masculine; 4 – Neutral; 5 – A little feminine; 6 – Somewhat feminine; 7 – Very feminine

Occupation	Scale						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Construction worker							
Surgeon							
Chef							
Engineer							
Gardener							
Dentist							
Car Mechanic							
Politician							
Banker (Account Manager)							

Architect							
Doctor							
Nanny							
Pharmacist							
Computer Programmer							
Psychiatrist							
Receptionist							
Journalist							
Lawyer							
Occupational Therapist							
Cashier							
Nurse							
Manicurist							
Cook							
Therapist							
Teacher (KG-12)							
Public Relations/Marketing Executive							
Social Worker							
Entrepreneur							
University Professor							
Driver							



### *Open Ended Questions*

The following questions ask you to reflect on your life and personal experiences. Please take the time to answer as fully as possible. While the questions below use the term "career" etc. they refer to any current life position (for example: retired, house wife, student etc.)

Sometimes people think that their career plans are the result of some kind of compromise with what they really wanted to do. What about you? Does your current career choice represent a compromise at all? (choose one)

- No, it does not represent a compromise
- Yes, it's a bit of a compromise for me
- Yes, it's very much a compromise for me

Display this question if "Sometimes people think that their career plans are the result of some kind of compromise with what they really wanted to do. What about you? Does your current career choice represent a compromise a..." **No, it does not represent a compromise for me** is not selected

To what extent do you think your current career path is a compromise on the interests you have? \_\_\_\_\_

Display this question if "Sometimes people think that their career plans are the result of some kind of compromise with what they really wanted to do. What about you? Does your current career choice represent a compromise a..." **No, it does not represent a compromise for me** is not selected

What factors have contributed to the compromise you experienced/ are experiencing?

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe the path to your job? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you familiar with the term "feminism"?

- Yes
- No

How do you/ would you describe the term "feminism"? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think feminism can/does fit within Kuwaiti culture and society? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

- Yes
- No

*Thank you for your time and participation. As a follow up to the survey, several in-person interviews will be conducted. These interviews will look further into your career development and life experiences related to your gender, education, and career choices.*

Are you willing to participate in an interview with the researcher?

- Yes
- No

If “Are you willing to participate in an interview with the researcher?” **Yes** is selected, a separate survey opens and asks:

What is the email address that the researcher can best reach you? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you prefer the interview to be conducted in English or Arabic?

- English
- Arabic

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

*Original*

## Demographics:

- Age
- Are you full Kuwaiti?
  - What other nationality/nationalities are you?
- Level of education (completed or currently seeking):
- Income
- Did you study outside of Kuwait?
  - Where did you study? (country)
- Area of Residence
- Mother's Level of Education
- Father's Level of Education:
- Mother's Occupation
- Father's Occupation
- Number of People in Household
  - Family Members
  - Live-In Help

## Questions

- 1a. What type of job are you currently in? What does this line of work entail? (currently employed)

- 1b. How do you typically spend your day? (retired/housewife)
2. Growing up, what was your childhood like?  
(prompt: family structure, daily routine, holidays, etc.)
3. What messages did you receive about the role of women when you were a kid?  
(prompt: family, school, media)
4. How do you think those messages shaped your own identity as a woman?
5. What messages do you currently see in Kuwait regarding the role of women?  
(prompt: media, society, etc.)
6. How would you describe the path that led you to your current occupation/situation?  
(prompt: education, role models, experience)
7. Who and/or what have been the biggest influences on your choice of occupation?
8. To what extent do you feel your current career direction is/was a compromise on what you really wanted to do? Please explain.
9. To what extent do you feel your current career direction will result/ resulted in a less meaningful occupation than you really wanted? Please explain.
10. How do you understand the difference between women's high educational achievement but low employment rate?
11. How would you describe the evolution of Kuwaiti women within your lifetime?  
(prompt: education, employment, social life, politics)
12. What do you think have been Kuwaiti women's biggest achievements?
  - a. How were these achievements reached?

13. What do you think are today's biggest challenges for women in Kuwait?
14. How might various demographic variables impact a woman's career path and/or choice of career?  
  
(prompt: age, income, tribal affiliation, nationality)
15. How do Kuwaiti women compare to other women in the Gulf? In the greater Middle East/Arab region? In the world?
16. How do you define yourself as a woman?
17. What has contributed to your personal identity development?  
  
(prompt: religion, education, etc.)
18. What is your perception of the abaya and hijab within your personal understanding of your religion and culture?
19. What is your response to the Western stereotype that Muslim Arab women are oppressed?
20. If you had to describe a defining moment in your life, what would that be?

*Revised*

Demographics:

- Age
- Marital status
- Are you full Kuwaiti?
  - What other nationality/nationalities are you?

- Level of education (completed or currently seeking):
- Income
- Did you study outside of Kuwait?
  - Where did you study? (country)
- Area of Residence
- Mother's Level of Education
- Father's Level of Education:
- Mother's Occupation
- Father's Occupation
- Number of People in Household
  - Family Members
  - Live-In Help

Questions:

1. How did you hear about the survey?
2. Growing up, what was your childhood like?
  - i. (prompt: family structure, daily routine, holidays, etc.)
3. What did you want to be when you grew up/what is the first memory you have regarding your choice of occupation?
4. What type of job are you currently in?
  - a. (currently employed) - What does this line of work entail?
  - b. (retired/housewife) - How do you typically spend your day?

5. What choices and compromises did you make in your life to get from your childhood ideas/goals about jobs and careers to where you are now?
6. Do you remember a time when you were discouraged from a career related choice or job (either directly or indirectly)? Please explain.
7. Did you, or did you know of someone, who went against what their family and/or society deemed as “appropriate” in regards to their job and/or career? Please explain.
8. Who and/or what have been the biggest influences on your choice of occupation?
  - i. (prompt: role model)
    - a. What role did your mother play?
    - b. What role did your father play?
9. How do you define yourself as a woman?
10. What messages did you receive about the role of women when you were a kid?
  - i. (prompt: family, school, media)
11. How do you think those messages shaped your own identity as a woman?
12. What messages do you currently see in Kuwait regarding the role of women?
  - i. (prompt: media, society, etc.)
13. How would you describe the evolution of Kuwaiti women within your lifetime?
  - i. (prompt: education, employment, social life, politics)
14. What do you think are today’s biggest challenges for women in Kuwait?
  - i. (prompt 1: political, legal, etc.)
  - ii. (prompt 2: societal etc.)

15. How might various demographic variables impact a woman's career path and/or choice of career?

i. (prompt: age, income, tribal affiliation, nationality)

16. What differences are there between yourself, your mother, and your grandmother?

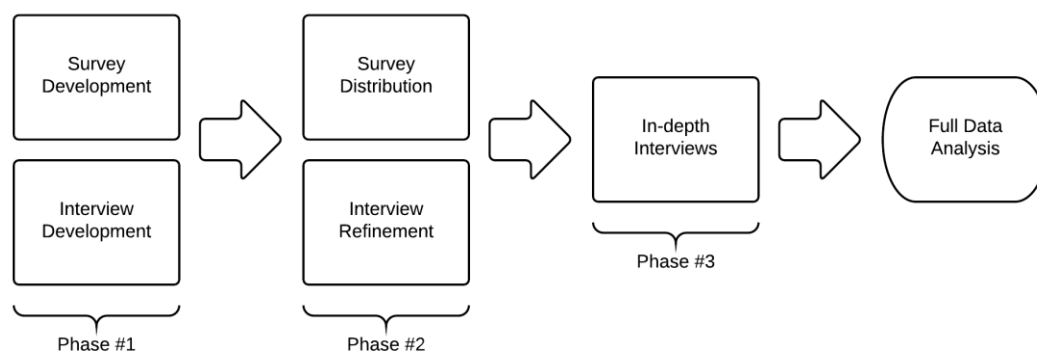
i. (prompt: education, marriage, career)

17. What aspirations do you/ would you have for your daughter/ granddaughters?

18. Have you heard of the term "Islamic Feminism"? What is your understanding and/or reaction to it?



## Appendix D: Research Steps



Appendix E: Map of Occupational Images (Survey & Gottfredson)

