Development initiatives in programming on privately-owned Arab satellite television and their reception among disadvantaged Saudi women

Najat Alsaied

School of Media, Arts and Design

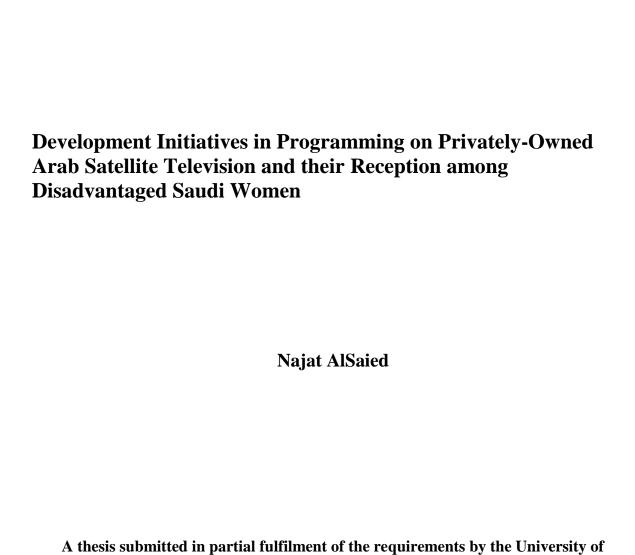This is an electronic version of a PhD thesis awarded by the University of Westminster. © The Author, 2013.

This is an exact reproduction of the paper copy held by the University of Westminster library.

Development Initiatives in Programming on Privately-Owned Arab Satellite Television and their Reception among Disadvantaged Saudi Women

Najat AlSaied

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements by the University of Westminster for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, September 2013

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree at the University of Westminster is my own work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Undertaking academic research can be likened to going on a journey in pursuit of knowledge and one that involves a great deal of self-exploration. This study has afforded me new friendships, new insights andو as with all unforeseen eventualities, has taught me how to overcome all manner of obstacles. I would like to acknowledge below those who have made this study possible.

A very heartfelt thank you to my Director of Studies, Professor Naomi Sakr, a wonderful 'educator', who went well beyond the call of duty in encouraging and inspiring me on my journey. I am deeply indebted to her for supervising this research and her 'golden stars' and encouraging comments will continue to inspire me for the rest of my academic career. I would like also to thank my Second Supervisor, Professor David Gauntlett, for his feedback on my methodology.

I would like to thank Sheikh Saleh Al-Turki, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Nesma Company. I consider him an excellent model of a Saudi business man who is not only successful in business but also in philanthropic projects. His financial support helped me a great deal, especially before I was sponsored with a scholarship from the Ministry of Higher Education. It would have been impossible to conduct my ethnographic study and my focus groups with the disadvantaged women in the village of Goz Al Jaafarh in Jazan without his introducing to me the lady with whom I stayed in the village. I am also very grateful to her for introducing me to the women in the village, as well as to her daughters, who were so helpful and hospitable. Many thanks also to the women of Goz Al Jaafarh, who were not only excellent 'informants', but also very significant 'informal educators'.

I am also grateful for the generosity of Queen Rania's Media Office and to Ethar Khawasnah, the Chairman, for orginising everything, from booking my hotel in Amman to setting up the interview with Suzanne Afaneh. I am also thankful to the MBC Group for their support and coordination. A special thanks too to Sheikh Al Waleed for his cooperation and for the written materials he gave me. I would also like to thank Abdulrahman Al Rashed, who granted me access to all the DVDs that I asked for from the MBC Group library, that were very useful for my textual analysis.

No words can describe how grateful I am to my father, Fawzy Al Saied, for his encouragement and active involvement in my PhD, especially in accompanying me during my fieldworks in Jazan. The completion of this thesis would have been impossible without his support and inspiration.

ABSTRACT

This study analyses how media initiatives have sought to improve the coverage on private pan-Arab television channels, of poverty, illiteracy, and violence against disadvantaged Arab women. This was achieved by studying how women's status has been critiqued on *MBC1*, an entertainment channel, and on *Al Arabiya*, a news channel. Programmes on *MBC1* that related to poverty, illiteracy and violence were examined through the eyes of young disadvantaged women in a Saudi Arabian village. How *Al Arabiya* and *MBC1* applied media initiatives in their programming to improve women's status was also examined through interviews with key players in Queen Rania's Media Office and in the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Group. A textual analysis of programmes on *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* was also undertaken.

The study not only contributed to knowledge by covering areas not generally explored in existing research, such as development related programmes about women's status on privately-owned pan-Arab satellite television, but it also explores the tug of war between two opposing powers in Saudi society: the reformists and the conservatives. The study used different methods, including ethnographic research, focus groups, and interviews with disadvantaged Saudi women, interviews with key players and decision makers involved in media output and, finally, a textual analysis of programmes dealing with the issues of poverty, illiteracy and violence. It discovers that the contradictory forces in Saudi society are reflected in the way women's status and female empowerment are handled in television programmes. This study underlines the dominant ideology that forms the essence of initiatives aimed at developing women's status through media, especially those launched by 'first ladies', and the policies made by MBC Group officials in broadcasting development programmes for women. This dominant ideology was also examined in the light of the preconceptions and responses of disadvantaged women.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

This study started from the premise that poverty, illiteracy and violence against women are the three main obstacles to development in Saudi Arabia, and it investigates how these obstacles are covered on private, Saudi-owned, pan-Arab satellite channels. The private channels selected in this study are owned by the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Group. The first channel is *MBC1*, an entertainment channel, and the second is *Al Arabiya*, which is a news channel. The study aims to discover the impact of the policies and codes of practice that guide television coverage of development issues, specifically with regard to disadvantaged Arab women.

For this study, *MBC1 and Al Arabiya* were selected from the MBC Group for several reasons. Firstly, *MBC1* is an entertainment channel watched by an audience of millions including disadvantaged women. In contrast, *Al Arabiya* is a news channel that is viewed by the elite and the decision-makers, who may be inspired by these programmes to help those in need. Secondly, they both broadcast in Arabic, which means they reach the entire population, irrespective of education or knowledge of foreign languages. Lastly, these two channels are managed by sophisticated media specialists whose expertise merits analysis.

By watching the two channels, I found that there are programmes about disadvantaged women that address the points on which I am focusing in this study; namely poverty, illiteracy and violence against disadvantaged women[1]. These programmes were useful for the focus groups I conducted with disadvantaged women in the village of Goz Al Jaafarh in Sabya Province, Jazan (in the south of Saudi Arabia).; the DVD that I showed participants

---

[1] Violence against women in other classes also exists but here I focus on the incidence of violence against disadvantaged women.

was composed of clips from different *MBC1* programmes, illustrating the study's three development focal points.

Moreover, when I read that Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim, the MBC Group's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), wants to "make a difference in the Arab world" and has ambitions to achieve greater progress with regard to modernity and the development of women's status in that world, I realised that the MBC Group is not simply a private satellite television channel concerned only with profit margins, but that it also has much wider development objectives. It became apparent that my expectations were true when I interviewed Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim and Abdul Rahman Al Rashed, Director of *Al Arabiya*. It was clear that both are committed to achieving progress towards modernity and development in the Arab world, particularly with regard to women.

This study covers new ground because it explores voluntary media codes of practice in the coverage of poverty, illiteracy, and violence against disadvantaged Arab women in village communities by private pan-Arab television channels. Previous studies of Arab television that have targeted disadvantaged groups have mostly focused on state-run channels, despite the fact that private channels have more viewers and can, as a result, have a greater impact on public opinion.

1.1 Saudi Arabia and the Development of Women's Status

There is a dearth of statistics in Saudi Arabia on women's status, especially on poverty, illiteracy and violence against disadvantaged village women. In this study, poverty in Saudi Arabia is defined as relating to those who are dependent on the government's social security. According to data from the Human Development Report, 2008, unemployment among Saudi

women is up to 79.9%. Globally, Saudi Arabia has the highest proportion of women who were economically dependent on men (quoted in Metcalfe et al, 2011, pp.151-152).

One of the main ways to assist those in need in Saudi Arabia is through social security benefits. Any Saudi individual is eligible for social security if their income is SR1,291 (Saudi Riyals) a month (the equivalent of approximately £219 GBP), or less. Where the head of the household (usually the father) has eight or more members in his nuclear family, he is eligible for social security if the family's monthly income is SR4,275 or less. Social security in Saudi Arabia has seen several transformations. When first introduced in 1961, it consisted of SR360 a year, and for a family of seven, SR1,540. In 1992, the security benefits were raised by 138%. In 2005, King Abdullah bin Abulaziz increased the upper limit to SR28,000 per year. In 2006, further changes were made to the social security system by adding the eighth individual to the family, bringing the maximum to SR 31,100 annually (The Annual Statistical Book, 2005/2006, pp.198, 199). Since the head of the household, is usually the father or husband, which means they are usually in charge of social security benefits, women depend on men for access to them.

The General Administration of Girls' Education was established independently from the Ministry of Education in 1960 and was put under the administration of the Ministry in 2002. Girls' education became the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, after a fire at a girls' school in Mecca, killed fifteen young girls in 2002. The religious police (Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice) prevented girls from leaving the burning building and hindered rescue workers from rescuing them, because the girls were not wearing the correct Islamic dress (Hamdan, 2004, p.44). The number of women receiving education in Saudi Arabia has steadily increased since the 1960s (World Bank, 2009) and the amount spent on

education for both girls and boys in Saudi Arabia in the period 1995-2012 was in the region of SR1.7 trillion (Human Resource Development, 2012). However, this spending is out of synch with the high unemployment rate among Saudi women. This may be explained by the fact that the degrees that women are permitted to undertake do not always match market needs and women are still prohibited from studying certain subjects, such as engineering, politics and architecture. In Saudi Arabia, women in the labour force are mainly within the education sector. The shortage of public and private universities for women has caused a large number of young, single women to stay at home, particularly as work opportunities remain limited (World Bank, 2009). The requirement for a male guardian's approval for a woman to receive education has deprived women of the right to education in numerous cases, and this has led to a high illiteracy rate among women compared with men. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, in 2007 the number of illiterate women reached 62,441, while the number of illiterate men stood at only 22,623, so the ratio of illiterate women to men was just under three to one (Al Abdeen, 2008, p.9). It is important to highlight here that primary education in Saudi Arabia is not compulsory.

Women in Saudi Arabia experience both physical and psychological violence. Physical violence involves the use of physical force by one person (usually a male) over another (usually a female) in order to exert power and often to enforce their will. In Saudi Arabia there are two human rights associations; the National Society for Human Rights, a non-governmental body set up in 2004, and the Human Rights Commission, a government association established in 2005. According to the National Society for Human Rights, psychological violence includes emotional deprivation, verbal abuse and depriving women of their right to choose a spouse, and to be free to hold their own opinions (National Society for Human Rights, 2006, p.93). Sexual violence includes being forced into prostitution or sexual

harassment or rape by a family member. The number of cases involving sexual violence reported to the National Society for Human Rights between its inception in 2004 and the end of 2006, was 80 (Ibid, p.94). Financial violence includes the imposition of guardianship and custody by men over women, depriving them of their inheritance, their salaries and any household income. The number of cases of financial abuse reported to the National Society for Human Rights in the same period was 156 (Ibid, p.94). Social abuse includes reinforcing the perceptions that women are inferior and preventing women from demanding their rights; depriving them of their right to education, denying their rights to marriage, custody of their children after divorce, or preventing them from seeing their children, and rejecting divorce even where cohabitation is impossible. The number of cases of such abuse reported to the National Society for Human Rights between 2004 and 2006 was 644 (Ibid, p.94). The number of instances is likely to be much higher, as violence goes unreported by women for several reasons, including fear of recrimination from their partner, fear of being without a husband's financial support, fear of losing their children and the risk of defamation.

The seventh report from the National Society for Human Rights stated that 20% of the cases reported to the association in 2010 related to domestic violence, the highest since the association's establishment in 2004. Among these cases, husbands make up the majority of perpetrators, followed by fathers. Physical and sexual violence is the most common form of violence in these reports, followed by denying women the right to marry. Husbands were the primary cause of personal status[2] cases, followed by ex-husbands. The most common problems in these cases were mothers being deprived of their rights to see their children and of their right to alimony (Saudi Women's Rights Forums, 2011).

---

[2] Personal status: Laws related to family relationship such as divorce, children's custody, and legal guardian.

1.1.1 Disadvantaged Saudi women in the village of Goz Al Jaafarh

I chose Jazan for my fieldwork because the specific issues that I am addressing in my research, namely poverty, illiteracy and violence against Arab women in village communities, are prevalent in Jazan. To narrow the focus area down, I chose a village I consider representative of the area, called Goz Al Jaafarh. Jazan is in the south-west of Saudi Arabia near the Yemeni border, and has the highest rate of illiteracy among women in Saudi Arabia at 31.6%. Illiteracy is much higher among Saudi women than among Saudi men in all regions within the Kingdom (Ministry of Economy & Planning, Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2007, p.31). Poverty, in this study, is defined as relating to those who are on government subsidies, including social security and a pension, as well as those reliant on charity handouts. There are 30,000 people receiving social security in Sabya Province alone. There are six social security offices in the Jazan region, which are located in the following provinces: Sabya, Al Dayer, Farasan, Samta, Markaz Eban (Ibid, p.203). Training subsidies distributed by charities to women in Jazan total SR 100,000, and the total amount of emergency relief subsidies was SR 150, 000 for the fiscal year 2005-2006 (Ibid, 2006, p. 166). Jazan does not have the highest recorded incidence of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia; in 2009 there were a total of 30 reported cases, compared with 91 in Riyadh and 77 in Jeddah (Statistics Issues of the Society, 2009). However, the number of cases recorded may be far fewer than the actual number, as only 31% of reports made to the National Society for Human Rights were by women, compared with 69% by men (Ibid, 2009). Women are constrained by traditions and by fear, which I observed first hand in the village, preventing them from reporting to the National Society for Human Rights.

1.2 <u>The Study's Contribution to Knowledge</u>

The study aims to contribute to knowledge by covering three areas that are not generally explored in existing research. The first is the study of media initiatives in the coverage of poverty, illiteracy, and violence against rural/village Arab women on private pan-Arab television channels, which has not been covered by the existing literature. The second area is the study of the development of women's status programmes on pan-Arab television, such as the MBC Group, which is a private, commercial media conglomerate. The third area is the study of young disadvantaged Saudi Arabian village women's media consumption of *MBC1* programmes relating to poverty, illiteracy and violence. Most studies that deal with Saudi women focus on the privileged and the educated; disadvantaged Saudi women are not only voiceless, but are treated as if they simply do not exist.

The Arab media tend to centre on either politics or entertainment programmes specifically directed at the elites, rather than on the immediate local development concerns of each Arab country, and they completely ignore rural or village areas. Both rural/village women and poor/urban Arab women are almost totally absent from the media, which are arguably more preoccupied with educated and privileged women. Sahar Khamis commented during her research that the media focus on images of rural women and the effects of media on women in general, rather than on women's responses to media messages that are specifically targeted at them (Khamis, 2007, p.107). Such responses were investigated in my ethnographic study of young, disadvantaged Saudi Arabian women. There is a lack of research on Saudi women's media consumption and nothing on the underprivileged, as there is a widely-held belief worldwide that disadvantaged Saudis do not exist and everybody in Saudi Arabia is well-off.

Most studies on women's reception of Arab television focus on state television channels rather than private ones, although the latter have more viewers and so may have a greater impact on public opinion, e.g., Abu-Lughod analysed Egyptian state television through the eyes of marginalized women. My main reason for choosing this commercial private media group is, as Ayish discussed in his study (Ayish, 1997, p.480) that private commercial television channels, such as MBC, allow greater freedom of expression in news provision and information programming, in contrast to government-controlled satellite channels. *MBC1* was chosen for my ethnographic study as it is considered the channel of Arab family issues and is the most watched channel in Saudi Arabia, reaching as many as 70% of all viewers (Arab Media Outlook, 2009-2013, p.45). Even though the MBC Group, mainly *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya*, is widely watched in the Arab region, especially among Saudis, there are hardly any academic studies on it. *MBC1* is always studied as a commercial channel, as in Ayish's article, 'Arab Television Goes Commercial: A Case Study of the Middle East Broadcasting Centre', but no academic studies have examined it as socio-educational entertainment, by analysing the programmes that cover the development of women's status issues.

In my study of *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* I will look at the development of women's status in relation to poverty, illiteracy and violence on these two channels, with special reference to drama, situation comedy, and talk shows. I aim the extent to which voluntary media codes of practice, such as Queen Rania's Media Initiative, are being applied on *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* and, where they are under-applied, to discover the reasons for this. More generally, I aim to find out how pan-Arab television or private television programming, can affect the development of women's status in the region.

1.2.1 Research Questions

Main Research Question: To what extent have *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* applied pan-Arab media initiatives in their programming on the development of Arab women's status? How and why have they been implemented? How do disadvantaged Saudi village women perceive television programmes that cover development issues?

Sub-Research Questions:

- How do the commercial objectives of *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* influence their scheduling of programmes about development in general, and those for disadvantaged women in particular?

- What kind of cooperation exists between these channels, development organizations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that tackle poverty, illiteracy, and violence against Arab women? Are these examples of cooperation reflected in the programmes?

- What has been the impact of the elite's media initiatives on the development of women's status?

- What kind of barriers or obstacles might make managers and decision-makers in *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* opt out of producing development programmes?

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores some key theories in development and media and is divided into four parts. The first discusses development theories related to the international arena: the Arab world's struggle with development; women's struggle with development, particularly poverty, illiteracy and violence; and attitudes towards development in Saudi Arabia. The second part discusses private pan-Arab satellite television, employing theories about media policies and the political economy of media. The third part focuses on communication for development theories and the fourth on women and television genres, including women's views of entertainment channels and theories about women and news. This theoretical overview creates a framework for investigating, among other things, whether a dominant ideology pertaining to women and development underlies the development policies and media strategies adopted by private pan-Arab satellite television channels and, if so, what this dominant ideology is.

2.1 <u>Dominant Ideologies of Development</u>

Since this study focuses on disadvantaged Saudi Arabian women as a development issue and, in relation to private pan-Arab television, the first term that must be critically examined is the definition of development. Historically, there has been a general consensus among development experts that the word's current is economic development. As Rist has shown (2008), there have been several development theories and studies supporting this definition, but what will be revealed in this study is the dominant ideology of this economic development, for example, the Point Four Programme, a development assistance programme announced by the United States President Harry S. Truman in his inaugural address on 20th

January, 1949, marked the beginning of the 'age of development'. Below is an extract from Truman's speech, illustrating the emphasis on development and 'underdevelopment' as economic phenomena.

> *"Fourth, we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas"* (quoted in Rist, 2008, p.71)

Here, underdeveloped means economically backward and also initiates the dichotomy between the developed North and the underdeveloped South. As Rist has shown, this hegemonic view gave rise to the dependency school of thought, by stressing the responsibility that the North industrial countries have with regard to the poor countries of the South (Ibid, p.71). Underdeveloped countries, here, are the poor that "lack" what the rich possess in terms of financial wealth, and thus economic development is seen as the solution to poverty eradication. This assumption is made without taking into account the historical backgrounds of the poor, and also disregards any non-economic or cultural issues as priorities (Ibid, p.79).

Rostow, an American economist and political theorist and author of *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-communist manifesto*-1960, developed an economic theory that supports Truman's views. Rostow was known for his evolutionist theory that played a role in development theory and was based on five categories of economic growth: traditional society, preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive for maturity, and the age of mass-consumption. For Rostow, development meant economic growth and so, everything should be employed to fulfil this goal. According to such thinking, societies should be transformed from those of the traditional South to those of the modern North. This is, a market society,

and such a change in the South would not be achieved without a shake up by the North. Such aid from the North was not to assist other nations, but to further economic growth (Ibid, p.94-99). In *The Passing of Traditional Society*, Daniel Lerner shares Rostow's conception of modernity, writing "the people of the Middle East wanted social change, development, and a better standard of living. These desirable goals were embedded in the living example of the USA: What America is … the modernizing Middle East seeks to become" (quoted in Sparks, 2007, pp.21-22).

François Perroux, French economist and Professor at the Collège de France, who founded the Institut de Sciences Economiques Appliquées in 1944, was critical of these dominant Western economic policies toward the Third World:

> *"Since the beginning of the modern industry, Western societies have been structures based upon domination…. As much as they could, they have denied workers and colonial peoples the right to speak, seeing them respectively as the 'the dangerous classes' and 'infant peoples'. When the right to speak was conceded, it was so that everything could be discussed except the essentials…. Political rights and colonial parliaments were not originally meant to challenge colonialist domination. The granting of the right to speak is itself a means of struggle: it maintains the forms of inequality and domination bound up with the social order"* (quoted in Rist, 2008, p.105).

Dudley Seers, Director of the Institute for Development Studies, Sussex University, 1967-1972, shared Perroux's analysis. Seers critiqued the dominant economic paradigm taught in universities, as it is based on developed countries' hegemony and is therefore inapplicable to

underdeveloped countries. For that reason, he implied that 'development economics' were more applicable to dominant countries. In this case, economics would become a 'local' discipline, not a 'science' one with global relevance. Gilbert Rist, Professor at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, argued that Seers did not recognise that the prevalence of the dominant economic paradigm limits the independence of 'development economics' as it obliges them to work within the dominant paradigm (Ibid, p.107).

Some experts in international development organisations have opposed the dominant economic paradigm but none could realise their visions of participatory development since the dominant economic development in international organisations limits the autonomy of such development (Esteva, 2010, p. 2, 3).

Although experts in rich developed countries think that economic development is the only means for development, they provide no justification for the number of poor citizens within their borders, e.g., the United States, the richest country in the world, has 30 million citizens living below the poverty line (Rahnema, 2010, p.184). In addition, no international development organisation can provide an explanation for the pessimistic forecasts given for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Rist's research suggests that conditions in countries of the South, except those in Southeast Asia, were worse than they were fifty years ago – particularly in Africa. If goals could not be achieved for decades, there should logically be other strategies put forward to fulfil them (Rist, 2008, p.235-239). The problems of the poor need to be investigated much more analytically to establish whether the problem lies with poverty itself, or with the excesses of the rich; whether the problem comes from values like solidarity, generosity, and brotherhood in traditionally

underdeveloped societies, or from the characteristics of economically obsessed individuals concerned with greed and exploitation. The ultimate end should be clarified: is it to create societies obsessed with having more or being more? (Rahnema, 2010, p.190).

Muhammad Yunus, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, 2006, explains how development should be defined as a human rights issue, not as a question of simply increasing a country's gross national product (GNP). When the national economy improves, the situation of the poor does not necessarily correspondingly improve. As a result, Yunus argues that development should be redefined. It should only refer to a positive measurable change in the per capita income of the bottom 50% of the population (Yunus, 2007, p.146).

Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economic Science in 1998, explained in *Development as Freedom* that development cannot be achieved without the individual's economic, social and political freedom. Sen's work highlights the role of social factors, such as gender equity, the availability of quality, affordable child-care, family size and fertility rates. He acknowledges the existence of prevailing values and social values that require an absence of corruption and the role of trust in economic social or political relationships. Freedom can be exercised where a society's values support such freedom, but values can only be proliferated by public discussions and social interaction, both considered participatory freedoms (Sen, 1999, p.9).

Even though, according to Sen, freedom is a crucial component of development, it is hard to apply it to entire nations, where traditions are forced upon citizens by religious leaders, political rulers or cultural experts. In such nations, there is an absence of participatory conflict-resolution and there is a unilateral rejection of modernity in favour of tradition by

religious authorities and political rulers, who both cling to what they claim to be the legacy of the past (Ibid, p.32). Most likely, in countries where democracy for development prevails, there is a 'political conception' of justice that requires tolerance and pluralism. This tolerance is composed of diverse beliefs applicable to everybody; all of these conditions are lacking in unilateral societies controlled by religious authorities (Ibid, p.233).

Against the background of struggles over the dominant ideology of development between North and South, there is also struggle in the South itself, particularly due to challenges posed by the participatory development paradigm in societies where only a few people possess the capital and reserve the right to make important decisions themselves (Sparks, 2007, p.67).

2.1.1 Dominant Ideologies of Development and Arab Identity

We cannot discuss the development of women's status without considering the core problems of development in the Arab world. If one were to ask an Arab individual the best ways to contribute to progress and development, the answer would probably be that this could be achieved through reviving Arab history and stimulating a combination of identities, namely Arab nationalism and Islamism. According to Coury, 'romantic nostalgia' has dominated much of Arab thinking and has blindly led many subscribers to these identities without any historical criticism of the past (Coury, 2005, p.2).

After the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the early years following independence, Arab countries struggled to assert new identities. Arab leaders not only dismissed the economic and social inheritance of their colonial predecessors, but they also wanted to be independent of any dominant Western theories of development. Their legitimacy depended on their ability to interpret political independence, both in national terms and in a manner compatible

with Islamic ideals (Findlay, 1994, p.19). Although Arab nationalist governments were secular, Islam was an integral part of Arab nationalism. The main argument was that Islam could not be set apart from Arab nationalist identity, but the state must be absolutely separated from religion. The Egyptian and Syrian pioneers of pan-Arab nationalism believed in an authoritarian state that would transform the heterogeneous populations in to one united nation and creed (Coury, 2005, p.4). Egypt, under General Nasser, in 1952 was the spiritual home of Arab nationalism. Other Arab nationalist countries were socialist dictatorships. Even though these countries experienced failures, they also achieved progressions in development, such as the minimising – of unemployment, the provision of health and education services, and the introduction of agriculture and industrial projects (Ibid, p.84). Advances in women's status in some Arab countries, such as Egypt, were reflected in the expansion of women's education and participation in social and vocational work. Nevertheless, nationalist and socialist ideologies declined due to internal and external factors.

Ironically, nationalist and socialist ideologies were regarded as being dominant in some Arab countries, making them similar to the Western dominant ideologies against which these leaders were fighting. The dominant Arab ideologies mainly emerged in opposition to Western capitalist hegemony, rather than being based on the needs to improve social development (Ibid, p.193). The core problem was that these ideologies did not appear because they were supporters of development, but because they were opponents of Western capitalism (Sparks, 2007, p.67). As Mohammed Abdel Al-Jabri, a contemporary Moroccan critic, Professor of Philosophy and Islamic Thought at Mohammed V University, Rabat, points out:

"In one word, we say that, in the Arab world, the socialist problematic was treated, not based on the circumstances of Arab society as a whole, and not based on the specificities of each of the Arab states....Thus, the modern Arab elite would prescribe for their society, not by analyzing its reality, but based on the results of the analysis of another reality, the reality of one Western state or another. That is why there was a gap, a huge gap, between thought and reality, between the elite and the masses in the Arab world" (quoted in Aksikas, 2009, p.89).

The same applies to the development of women's status. Women have been subjected to patriarchal authoritarian regimes based on domination through contradictory laws. One law does not differentiate between citizens on the basis of law, while another is based on gender discrimination, e.g., women are encouraged to participate in the job market so as to further economic development, yet, there are simultaneously no laws to protect them from honour crimes (Al Haidaree, 2003, p.356).

The external factor that caused the decline of these socialist nationalist ideologies was the 1967 Arab defeat in the war between several Arab states, led by Egypt, and Israel. This defeat was a serious setback to these ideologies as it fostered a sense of inferiority amongst Arab men. Jihad El-Khazen, a daily columnist at the Saudi-owned, Beirut based, *Al Hayat* newspaper, argues that these inferiority complexes led to Arab women's oppression. He said men:

"... see their lands being usurped and looted, their sacred places being attacked, and they cannot do anything about it. As a result, men turn to oppressing women, proving that they are no more sophisticated than porters on the street, or donkey herders, and

there is a saying that goes, "A man who can't flog a donkey, flogs the saddle"" (El Khazen, 2011).

After the failures and disappointments of the socialist nationalist ideologies, Islamist movements and ideologies emerged to overcome these breakdowns and to strive towards development. Arab intellectuals put forward various explanations for the rise of these movements and ideologies. There are both political and social factors that have contributed to the rise of Islamist ideologies in the Arab world. One of the main factors that spread Islamist ideologies was the struggle between the oppressed and the ruling classes. The oppressed classes are the poor peasants and some intellectuals, and the ruling classes are the foreign and political elites. Scholars, such as Jaafar Aksikas, argue (2009) that the oppressed Arab masses, who were mostly disorganised and uneducated, supported these ideologies because they found hope in religious principles; the Arab elites supported these ideologies in order to confront the leftist liberal ideologies. The Iranian Revolution in 1979, even though it was in a non-Arab country, fueled the rise of Islamist ideologies in the whole Middle East and North Africa (Aksikas, 2009, p.100).

Alongside these political and social factors, Al-Jabri adds that the rise of Islamist ideologies was due to the dominant thoughts inside the Arab mind. In his view, the lack of independent thinking by Islamists and the lack of critical analysis of the past caused a failure to achieve development. Dominant ideologies emerged because of a way of thinking that always tried to borrow pre-existing models rather than to stir the people's reason (Ibid, p.93). Al-Jabri put forward a reason for the block on development in the Arab world:

"As a whole, modern and contemporary Arab thought is ahistorical, and lacks minimum objectivity. That is why its reading of tradition is fundamentalist. It treats the past as if it were sacred, seeking to find in it ready-made solutions to all the problems of the present and the future…Thus, all Arabs model their renaissance project on some kind of past…It is the mechanical mental practice that seeks ready-made solutions to all emergent problems in some origin or another" (quoted in Aksikas, 2009, p.69).

For Al-Jabri, the modernity that will lead to development can be achieved through a reconstructed, enlightened, rational and critical analysis of the past. This will set the Arab mind free of the dominant understanding of Islam by the development of a rational and critical interrogation of it. To achieve true development and modernity, the reading of Islamic texts must be based on critical rational thinking. A critical reading enables Islam to align itself with the present so that its positive aspects are put to use for the purpose of developmental needs (Ibid, p.70). Ironically, the fundamentalist Islamists resemble the unbelievers mentioned in the Qur'an, since they too did not use reason to obtain reality and guidance (Al-Jabri, 2011, p.27). However, Al-Jabri was critiqued for giving an interpretation of the Islamists' minds, which "tells us nothing about where and how cultural infiltration occurs." The phenomenon of "cultural infiltration" is not only reflected as an exterior action of the "cultural imperialist hegemony", but it also has a negative impact on identity. Al-Jabri, like other Arab scholars, failed to unpack the processes he described and moved to resolutions immediately. His processes were not explained empirically and accordingly the effect or action of "cultural infiltration" is unknown (Sabry, 2007, p.160). What the Arab world actually needs is not only reason in abstract theory, but also reason in society, in order

to develop. Essentially, this is the problem most Arab intellectuals share, whereas Islamist fundamentalists were successful in getting closer to the people (Aksikas, 2009, p.71).

While most Arab intellectuals, like Al-Jabri, try to modernise Islam for development purposes, Islamist fundamentalists try to Islamicise modernity. Islamist fundamentalists always try, through their interpretation of development, to emphasise the dichotomy between East and West in ways that are reminiscent of the dichotomy used by the Western development experts between the developed and the underdeveloped. Some analysts point to an Islamist tendency to always describe the West by shining a light on the West's aggressive self-interest, whilst turning a blind eye to its principles of liberal enlightenment (Saleh, 2007, p.242). There is a big difference between ideologies of identity (Arab nationalism and Islamism)[3] that strive towards enlightenment and development, and identities that lead to fundamentalism. The first focuses on what is common to all human beings, regardless of gender, language, religion or sect, whilst the latter focuses on the particularities of ethnic, religion and gender in order to differentiate between individuals. This is what Amin Maalouf, a Lebanese author, called the deadly identities (Ibid, p.176). This type of identity and the dichotomy between the West and the Muslim world are illustrated in most Islamist fundamentalists' speeches and comments. Abdesslam Yassine, leader of a Moroccan Islamist organisation, describes the West as 'the other', set apart from Islam and, although he concedes the West's development, he ultimately dismisses it because of its secular ideologies that he regards as being ignorant of Islam's true path. He said:

> *"In this perspective, they are jahiliya [ignorance] and we are Muslims. That is an*
>
> *essential difference, because someone who believes in God and Last Day is not like*

---

[3] The literal translation of the Arabic word 'Al Haweya' is identity, but in English, since these identities (Arab nationalism and Islamism) become 'ism's' and are therefore ideologies, the translation here is ideologies of identity.

someone who does not. The unbelievers and the jahiliya civilization are superior in the means of strength and the adornment of worldly life, but they remain on the scale of eternity in loss and bankruptcy" (quoted in Aksikas, 2009, p.103).

The rejection by Yassine and other Islamist fundamentalists of Western modernity is therefore not because of its capitalist hegemony, but because of its lack of God and religion. That is why Yassine writes, "Islam thus provides a direct target for modernism: it rests upon a sacred revelation and its authority is that of the Messenger of God—exalted by His name" (quoted in Aksikas, 2009, p.103). Such an Islamist view of modernity and the world produces dominant understandings that contradict the Islamists' own preaching about equality and justice regardless of religion, gender and ethnicity. Nobody suffers from these contradictions and interpretations more than women. Even though Islamists criticise the Western feminist movement because it is allegedly devoid of religion, and so recommends that women's liberation must be based on Islamic law and justice, all of these promises collapse under Yassine's claim that:

"The struggle of those who defend women's rights from the Westernized and immoral perspective is centered on a central demand, the demand for equality of men and women, and thus, erasing all the specific Islamic laws about the woman, starting by the denial of the superiority of men over women" (quoted in Aksikas, 2009, p.124).

Yassine, here, destroys any hope of women's liberation and the development of their status under Islamic law. Yassine and most Islamists always focus on and protest for gender segregation, but rarely discuss social issues such as poverty, unemployment and the role of women in a country's development (Ibid, p.108).

One of the most important accomplishments of Malaysian intellectuals that Arab intellectuals have not achieved, is the establishment of The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), a postgraduate institute of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, founded in 1987 by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, a Muslim philosopher. His studies are a mixture of Islamic sciences, philosophy, metaphysics, history, and literature. His ideas are reflected in this institute. They, distinguish between faith and thought in Islam. Faith is a blind unquestioning obedience while thinking requires reason and logic. The Institute stresses that Islamic civilisation is not about following rituals without thinking. On the contrary; it is about rationalising rituals and the interpretation of the Qur'an, Hadith and Sunnah. Through reason and logic, Islam can be a source of development, not an obstacle to progress, because it brings secular science together with Islam, which cannot be accomplished by a non-thinking society. One of the followers of this school is Mahathir Mohamad, the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia and author of *Islam and the Muslim Ummah*, which discusses ways to make Islam a stimulus for development, not a hindrance. He argues that one of the main reasons that Muslims countries are less developed is because they are pre-occupied with defending rituals and trivialities, forgetting their bigger problems and serious developmental issues like industry and information technology, focusing blindly on submission to faith (Mohamad, 2001, pp.255-256). Mohamad's ideas on Islam and development can be applied to Arab states.

Scholars argue that Arab people admire development models, but not for carefully considered reasons. For example, Arabs have been stunned by the success of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, which represents Islam in a secular state. However, Nafi (2009, p.78) shows how Arab admiration of the Turkish model is based on a nostalgia for the past, rather than because it may be a potentially successful development model for the

Arab world in the future (Ibid, p.78). Ready-made development models, whether Malaysian or Turkish, will not work without a self-critique of Arab ideologies of identity (Arab nationalism and Islamism) to enable Arabs to understand the deep philosophy behind such models, so they do not simply blindly copy them. A new home cannot be built without dismantling or renovating the walls of the old house. Analysts have suggested that Arabs were mistaken if they thought self critique could be avoided by simply importing ready-made models (Saleh, 2007, p.159).

In the following sections, there will be further discussion of how such Arab ideologies of identity (Arab nationalism and Islamism) have been seen to affect both the development of women's status and media policies. Since this study discusses disadvantaged women as a development issue and media with a focus on Saudi Arabia, it is relevant to consider ideologies of identity in Saudi Arabia and then to investigate how these have been said to influence attitudes to gender equality and the development of media policies.

2.1.1.1 Saudi Arabia:

Saudi Arabia is an exceptional Arab state as it has never been colonised by a foreign power and its system has thus emerged as a result of internal religious, social, and cultural factors not imposed by Western powers (Findlay, 1994, p.41). The previous section discussed how Arab ideologies of identity (Arab nationalism and Islamism) were a reaction to external factors. How, then should we interpret dominant ideologies of identity in the case of Saudi Arabia? The Saudi constitution is based on a specific form of Islam, which is Wahhabism, founded by Sheikh Muhmmad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (Al-Rasheed, 2007, p.46). Sheikh Abd al-Wahhab and his followers did not accept the "Wahhabi" label and instead referred to themselves as *"ahl al-sunna wa al-jama'a (people of tradition and community)*, or *ahl al-*

tawhid (the people of monotheism)" (Ibid, p.22). However, the Saudi regime is not a theocratic regime but a hybrid structure, neither wholly secular nor wholly religious. As such, the religious class functions under the authority of the ruling class. Oil wealth has enabled Wahhabism, the ruling group and Saudi society generally, to flourish economically, within the limits allegedly prescribed in the Qur'an and al-sunna[4] (Ibid, 2007, p.58). In sum, religion and oil revenues are the two main factors that have impacted on development in Saudi Arabia.

Wahhabi scholars or *ahl al-sunna wa al-jama'a* are from Najdi religious families who share the same regional religious traditions. The fact that for over two hundred years almost all religious scholars have originated from Najd (the central region of Saudi Arabia), has resulted in a unilateral interpretation of the Qur'an and al-sunna, particularly with regard to those verses relating to women (Ibid, p.28). Women are always the victims of the principle of *sad al-thara'i' (blocking the means)*, the prohibition of certain practices that are permitted under the pretext of preventing possible sins, such as the ban on women driving (Ibid, p.28). Wahhabi scholars have exerted strict control over men and women. There are numerous fatwas relating to social conduct, such as gender segregation, women's dress, false eyelashes, hair removal, sports centres, etc. These fatwas show that clerics are desperate to control every aspect of the social sphere, especially where women are involved (Ibid, p.55). Wahhabi scholars thus accept aspects of modernity only if they are in control of them, e.g., after opposing women's education in the 1960s, they gave it their approval after taking responsibility for the female curriculum and schools. In the 1960s, these scholars objected to television, but later agreed to it when they realised that they could dominate the broadcasting schedule. In the 1990s, they initially condemned satellite television channels, but later

---

[4] The Sunnah is the living example of the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

allowed them when they were assured of repeated appearances on religious programmes, sometimes offering their own satellite channels (Ibid, p.56). Socially, Wahhabism creates a struggle between the dominant religious powers and the people, mainly women, which ultimately has implications for Saudi Arabia's development.

Louis Pierre Althusser, a French Marxist philosopher, argued that societies differ in the kinds and relationships of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The ISAs are the religious and educational institutions, trade unions, radio, television, press and family structures. In pre-capitalist societies, religion dominates all of these elements, whilst in capitalist societies the educational system is dominant (Abercrombie et al, 1980, p.23). Accordingly, religion can be manipulated to the political advantage of the dominant class, and religious parties are used as agents to transmit the dominant ideologies to society (Ibid., p.159). Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher, accepted Marx's analysis from the 19th century and believed that the struggle between the ruling class and the subordinate working class was the driving force that moved society forward. At the same time, however, he rejected the economic reductionism of such an analysis. Instead, Gramsci stated that hegemony presents a constant contradiction between the dominant ideology and the social experience of subordination, engendering ideological struggle. To reduce this struggle, most authoritarian regimes sustain popular support and legitimacy by using different tools, such as religion to maintain stability. However, the struggle emerges after the working-class develop an awareness of this dominant ideology as a result of intellectual encouragement (Abercrombie et al, 1980, p.15). This transformation of social consciousness should not be imposed on people but must emerge from their working lives and experiences. Intellectuals are not to be seen as being confined to an elite class, but are to be grounded in everyday life. Gramsci wrote that "the mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence … but in active

participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator" (Gramsci, 1971). It could thus be said that Saudi society is still under a pre-capitalist system, since all the ISA elements to which Althusser referred to are dominated by the religious group.

The second factor that has played a significant role in the development of Saudi Arabia is oil. The emergence of oil in Saudi Arabia in the 1930s, and the rapid rise in oil wealth in the 1970s and 1980s produced an era of infrastructural development and increased the wealth. This wealth and these oil revenues helped to build large numbers of schools, colleges, hospitals, clinics and other social services (Findlay, 1994, p.90). The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia is based on oil companies, in order to control oil prices, costs and returns. This relationship stands in contrast to all the other Arab countries that were colonised by Western countries. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia did not oppose capitalist production, and there was a willingness to accept direct foreign involvement in development projects (Ibid, p.93).

While oil revenues have brought economic development and material progress, human development, and particularly that of women, has not progressed in the same way. For example, at the end of the 1970s, private investors began to take a serious interest in agricultural development. The capital from oil revenues artificially stimulated the commercialisation of agriculture and increased productivity. Such development was not brought about by the Saudi people, and women are absent from the labour markets, such as agriculture, for several religious and social reasons. Evidence suggests that this path of development eventually leads to a constant dependence on the government's support and on Western technical managerial skills (Ibid, p.155).

Here, the definition of development falls in-to the same category as that which became accepted in the West – economic growth – but this time it is not only the fault of Western capitalist hegemony, but is also due to internal social, religious and political factors. Saudi Arabia, when it was celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of its National Day, boasted in an advertising supplement in a UK national newspaper that it had accomplished '60 years of progress without change'[5]. Even though oil revenues have brought remarkable economic progress, change in human development, and mainly the advancement of women's status, has been limited (Ibid, p.195). Capitalist growth has been reflected in Saudi Arabia's economic progress, but, as argued above, its society is still run under a pre-capitalist system dominated by the religious group. The status of women has thus not developed in parallel with the rapid economic progress, so the richest state in the Arab world has remained socially undeveloped. Women are controlled by a dominant patriarchal institution and are constrained by Islamic laws that hinder their advancement (Al Haidaree, 2003, p.349).

Abdullah Al Gethame, a Saudi academic and literary critic, called the development that occurred in Saudi Arabia *"Tafra"*, which means "economic boom". "Boom" is the negative face of development, because building the place was achieved much faster than building the person. One of the main reasons for this was the absence of social experts in the first development plan. As a result, the place has become more modern than the person. Modernity has therefore only arrived in a physical sense, while, according to Al Gethame, backwardness of the mind remained (Al Gethame, 2005, p.169-173). Therefore, Saudi society is considered pre-capitalist owing to an absence of freedom and society being controlled by religious leaders who unilaterally reject modernity (Sen, 1999, p.32).

---

[5] *The Times*, September 23, 1992.

Development requires pluralism and tolerance, which are lacking in unilateral societies controlled by religious authorities (Ibid, p.233).

2.1.2 Women's status in development

This section is divided into three parts: the first discusses feminism and gender issues in development organizations; the second highlights issues around class and gender; and the final part elaborates on the development of women's status and Islam.

2.1.2.1 Feminism and development

Rathgeber outlines the general frameworks that have guided most development researchers and practitioners to date. She identifies three distinct theoretical paths in the field: Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) (Visvanathan, 1997, pp.18-19).

The notion of Women in Development emerged in the early 1970s and was articulated by American liberal feminists. WID is grounded in traditional modernisation theory, which wrongly assumed that women were not integrated in the process of development. It accepted existing social structures and did not question the sources of women's subordination and oppression or why women had not benefited from development strategies. Instead it focused exclusively on the productive aspects of women's work, as a result ignoring or minimising the reproductive side of women's lives (Beneria & Sen, 1997, p.49).

WAD emerged from a critique of modernisation theory and the WID approach in the second half of the 1970s. It draws on dependency theory, and focuses on the relationship between women and developmental processes. For some critics, it fails to analyse the relationship

between patriarchy, differing modes of production and women's subordination and oppression. Like WID, it is preoccupied with the reproductive side of women's work and lives. WAD does not question the relationship between gender roles.

In the 1980s, GAD emerged as an alternative to the two previous approaches. It is influenced by socialist feminist thinking. It offers a holistic perspective that considers all aspects of women's lives. It questions the basis of assigning specific gender roles to different sexes and rejects the public/private dichotomy. It gives special attention to women's oppression in the family by entering in-to the private sphere. Women are seen as agents of change, rather than as passive recipients of development assistance. It focuses on strengthening women's legal rights, including the reform of inheritance and property laws. It talks in terms of challenging existing power structures in society between men and women (O'Brien et al, 2000, p. 125).

The key themes of the above, are power and self-empowerment. The World Bank, the world's most influential international development agency, has been criticised for not taking power into account. Critics argue that it is preoccupied with macro-economic restructuring in developing countries, whereas feminist economics and self-empowerment begin in micro-economics and the politics of decision-making between women and men in the household. The World Bank has ignored all of these things. In working papers, World Bank economists have discussed the visible (predominantly male) and invisible (predominantly female) economies. Here, the visible economy is productive work in the labour market, and the invisible the economic value attributed to women's unpaid domestic labour, or 'reproductive' work (Ibid, p.37). Exploitation arises when women's inevitable involvement in both paid productive and unpaid reproductive work is taken for granted, resulting in a weakening of

their position in the labour market and their dependency on a male's wage (Beneria & Sen, 1997, p.49).

This economic system has led to a feminisation of poverty worldwide, and particularly in the Arab world, where traditions underlie a huge gap between women's and men's participation in economic activity, based on the premise that men should be responsible for supporting the family. Arab women perform domestic work that is praised by traditional Arab society. However, this work is not calculated economically and does not factor in the calculation of gross national product; thus, working women bear the responsibility for both domestic and professional tasks because there has been little change in Arab family structure or redistribution of roles that will assist women to enter the job market. The economic participation of Arab women is consequently the lowest in the world. It does not exceed 33.3%, while the global average is 55.6% (Arab Women's Organisation, 2010, p.198-199).

It should be noted that where there are banks for the poor and the family, which give women specific loans with low interest rates such as the Muhammad Yunus Grameen Bank for the Poor, they are more successful in reducing poverty than where there are banks that do not give advantages to women (Ibid, p.253). This is an indication that using the participatory model in female poverty reduction has higher returns in terms of reducing poverty rates generally. Yunus explains that this banking system empowers the poor by giving them control over capital, while other banks do not give them access to capital, because they do not consider them credit-worthy. Yunus is critical of the World Bank. He said, "We at the Grameen Bank have never wanted to, or accepted World Bank funding because we do not like the way that the bank conducts business. Their experts and consultants often take over the projects they finance." He calculates that the World Bank's projects usually spend 75%

of the financial assistance on equipment and experts from the donor country itself. The remaining 25% goes to the elites of the local suppliers and to the politicians who have helped them in these contracts. The rich thus get richer, and the poor get poorer. Yunus believes that if foreign aid donors were truly serious about poverty alleviation, aid should reach poor households directly (Yunus, 2007, p.137-146).

There are several differences between the World Bank and feminists in the definition of empowerment. Feminists stress the multi-dimensional nature of power: 'power-from-within', 'power to', 'power-with' and 'power over' (Wong, 2003, p.308). 'Power-from-within' examines the psychological power in people's minds and focuses on self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect. 'Power-to' refers to the capacity to take action and highlights the individual's productive capacity. 'Power-with' emphasises collective forces, where people cooperate to solve problems to attain goals. It is mainly concerned with a sense of solidarity, capacity-building, social networks and organizational strength. 'Power-over' can be negative because it forces someone, or some groups, to do things against their will, but it can also be positive if it overrules dominance and unequal access to power. According to experts, the World Bank focuses only on the 'power-to' and 'power with', while feminists focus on all four aspects. The World Bank's rationale is economic efficiency and equality, whereas the feminist's rationale is overruling women's internal and external oppression by men. Wong states that the World Bank's approach is through projects and empowerment as means to achieve economic goals, whilst the feminist's approach is process and empowerment as means through which to achieve equality and empowerment as ends in themselves (Ibid, p.312). The Bank's focus on economic efficiency has imposed on the poor, particularly on poor women, an emphasis on the poor's contribution to development rather than the contribution of development to the poor's empowerment. Blind faith in the positive sides of

'power-to' and 'power with' has limited the scope of most empowerment-related programmes. Neglect of the 'power-over' aspect has prevented the Bank from adopting a more complete and drastic transformation of existing unequal power relations (Ibid, pp.308-318).

Some feminist activists have suggested that what is actually taking place in international development organisations and other economic and social institutions should not be called gender subordination, but male bias. This male bias is embedded in organisations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and has three typical forms: sexual division of labour, unpaid domestic work and household work. This bias is allocated subtly in human resources and in the conceptual framework. To overcome male bias women must be more visible in policy-making. As argued by feminists, they must also make sure that they are available as producers and agents of development, rather than simply as recipients of welfare, in order to design development projects that encapsulate gender awareness. In addition, there must be alternative forms of development through "women's collective action" that underpins an "empowerment approach to gender and development", as well as through gender aware re-conceptualisation. Women must consider that they will continue to face challenges from economic and political powers that will hardly allow equal gender relations in social or economic structures. So, women must work concurrently and cooperatively with and against the society until their aims are achieved (Elson, 1991, p.24-26).

Abu-Lughod contended that the elites prefer a superficially feminist interpretation of gender equity rather than being concerned with practical needs, especially with regard to the employment and education of disadvantaged women, as outlined in the *Arab Human*

Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World. She says that in this report, Arab women are treated as a homogenous group, irrespective of differences. She adds that Arab intellectuals and activists, who were involved in writing this report, think the only way to overcome backwardness is through education, and they confuse literacy with creativity and knowledge, depicting illiterate women as less human. They also state that illiteracy is caused by a lack of access to education, but it is more likely that poor quality public education for girls is to blame (Abu-Lughod, 2009, p.87). There is also far too great an emphasis on the importance of women's employment without questioning whether poorly-remunerated jobs are worth the cost of transportation, childcare, and exposure to harassment. For these reasons, it makes economic sense for women to be housewives, because the household may lose less money than it would were the women to go out to badly-paid jobs, and they can even earn money working from home, engaging in small-scale trade, sewing, etc. As a result, women's unemployment is here due to economic factors, not to Islam or culture (Ibid, p.88).

Moreover, the report discussed the main causes of violence against women in the Arab world as being gender inequality and the 'impairment of personal liberty', and only briefly mentioned the link between violence against women and poverty and so with women's political, economic and social disempowerment. In addition, the absence of any comparative perspectives from other parts of the world gives the impression that women elsewhere do not face violence. The absence of discussion about ways in which women in other societies deal with violence, fails to teach Arab women how they can react if they face similar violence. Women in other parts of the world suffer violence in the form of trafficking, exploitative labour, HIV/AIDS contraction, substance abuse, starvation, the feminization of poverty, domestic violence and murder (Ibid, p.86).

The problems listed above are captured by Sen's explanation that inequality between women and men in the family is accepted as 'natural' and 'appropriate' and that providing better health-care to, or nutritional support for boys rather than girls is deemed acceptable. The dilemma is when such inequalities are accepted by women themselves (Sen, 2007, pp.260, 270). Gender equality requires freedom, which is an individual's ability to make both simple and complex choices, from avoiding disease by consuming nutritious food to playing important roles in society and being completely free to try and achieve one's goals (Ibid, pp.267, 269).

2.1.2.2 Class and Feminism

Disadvantaged women are seen as poor women who "have nothing and know nothing". These common meanings of deprivation, and the ignorance about this class, make the disadvantaged – especially women – claim "refusal of recognition" rather than "right to be recognised". Feminist theories show how class is a form of subjectivity because it emphasises "inequality" and "exploitation" (Skeggs, 2002, p.74-75). According to these negative meanings, disadvantaged women aim for "disidentification" with this class and want to improve their economic status and overcome poverty through education or through marriage. The media tend to perpetuate the image of disadvantaged women as being inferior, ignorant or passive, which further emphasises these feelings of inferiority. This makes working class women want to be in the position of respected, sophisticated, middle class women. If disadvantaged women are thus devalued in the labour market because of a lack of proper education, they may start to invest in their femininity in order to get married. Moreover, in conservative cultures, single women are not socially valued until they are married. This is why disadvantaged women invest in their femininity in order to marry, not just for economic reasons, but also for social, cultural and emotional support (Ibid, p.76-115).

This can be seen in disadvantaged Arab women's situations, particularly in rural and village communities, which are usually dominated by tribal, patriarchal systems and where the social and material conditions of life for women are extremely difficult. In addition, girls' enrolment in schools is weak, which will reduce their employment opportunities and contribute to their ignorance of women's legitimate rights, inducing a lot of girls to marry at an early age (Arab Women Organisation, 2010, pp.203-204). The problem is that middle class feminists cannot readily identify with the sufferings of disadvantaged women, nor can they understand the reasons behind their investment in femininity. Feminism has to take into account economic, social, and cultural explanations, so as to be transformed from individual reactions towards injustice and, instead, to provide frameworks that incorporate everybody's experiences of injustice to embrace feminist principles. It has to be sensitive to serious differences and inequalities that exist between women in different classes (Skeggs, 2002, pp.157-158).

Disadvantaged women face two kinds of domination: class and gender. Even though disadvantaged women marry to have more economic, social, cultural and emotional support, they later discover that they are under masculine domination. Christine Delphy, a French sociologist and feminist theorist, argued:

> *"Even though a marriage with a man from the capitalist class can raise a women's standard of living, it does not make her a member of that class. She herself does not own the means of production. Therefore her standard of living does not depend on her class relationship to the proletariat; but on her serf relations of production with her husband"* (quoted in Adkins & Skeggs, 2006, p.44)

Based on this male domination, women try to resist domestic patriarchal power through "weapons" of slyness and stratagem. Bourdieu realised that these "weapons" are used to fight and manipulate in order to "manoeuvre", but concluded that "the weapons of the weak are weak weapons" (quoted in Adkins & Skeggs, 2006, p.52). Confronting gender and class domination can result in resistance among disadvantaged women and sometimes they are powerful enough to make changes. For Gramsci, the motor for resistance and change is with intellectuals who recognise these inequalities and injustices, and believe development will not happen without intervention. However, it must be remembered that resistance to achieve change is not an easy task, as it faces powerful domination (Adkins & Skeggs, 2006, p.121-125).

2.1.2.3 Islam and disadvantaged women in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia applies Sharia law in its constitution and has never been colonised or received foreign financial aid for developmental projects due to its oil-based prosperity. This section explores how certain interpretations of the Qur'an and al-Sunna lead to the unfair treatment of women, contributing to poverty, illiteracy and violence against women in Saudi Arabia. It also compares two approaches that have emerged from female critics of Islamism: one based on "liberal Islam", and the other on "secular Islam" (Cliteur, 2011, p.154).

The advocates of "liberal Islam" state that Islam has been hijacked by radical interpretations of the texts and that sometimes the ambiguity of certain verses of the Qur'an are open to exploitation by clerics who are in charge of interpretations (Mernissi, 1991, p.129). On the other hand, the advocates of "secular Islam" believe that there are actual verses that do justify violence and discrimination against women, and these verses violate women's rights and should not be applied. Advocates of this approach, such as Chahdortt Djavann, a French

novelist and public intellectual of Iranian origin, oppose the veil and consider it a form of women's submission to men, suggesting that it reduces women to sexual objects (Cliteur, 2011, p. 155). Irshad Manji, a Canadian born to parents of Egyptian and Gujarati descent, is an advocate of the "liberal Islam" approach. She argues that the problem is with the textual interpretation, so *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) must be encouraged. She argues that this approach is closer to Muslim women than is the secular one, because if you ask any simple woman in the Muslim world about human rights she may not be responsive, but if you ask her about whether she believes in God, she will be affirmative (Ibid, p.157). Mina Ahadi, a German intellectual of Iranian descent, advocates the "secular Islam" approach. Ahadi is against the stoning of women, as derived from the Qur'an. She criticises penalties, such as stoning or honour crimes, arguing that they must not be tolerated simply due to tradition and culture (Ibid, p.158). Taslima Nasreen, a Bangladeshi ex-physician, advocates the "secular Islam" approach on the grounds that society and religion have always been owned and directed by men (Ibid., p.158). Both approaches have their own rationale based on arguments around texts relating to women in the Qur'an, but I will focus here on Suhaila Zain Al Abdeen, as she is a Saudi scholar with a doctoral degree in Sharia law from Cairo's Al Azhar University[6], and leans towards a "liberal Islam" approach. As she is from Al Madinah Al Munawwarah (the second holiest city in Islam after Mecca, located in the Hejaz region of western Saudi Arabia), her interpretations of the Qur'an will highlight issues of gender equality in Saudi Arabia different from the unilateral interpretation of the Wahhabi scholars from Najd (the central region of Saudi Arabia). Al Abdeen is a member of Saudi Arabia's National Human Rights Society and, has written more than forty books and articles relating to Islam and women. She argues that the patriarchal and tribal interpretation by Saudi

---

[6] This University is a centre of Islamic learning. Its students study the Qur'an and Islamic law in detail, along with logic, grammar and rhetoric. It brings together secular subjects in its Islamic law curriculum.

Arabian clerics of Qur'anic verses relating to women, has led to poverty, illiteracy and violence against women.

Al Abdeen believes that one of the most important topics to be addressed is Islamic discourse, and there should be a re-reading of this discourse, because most of the interpretations of Qur'anic verses relating to women are derived from tradition and cultural heritage. Accordingly, the provisions of jurisprudence *(fiqh)* are based on these traditions and tribal heritage, which are inconsistent with God's justice. As a result of these interpretations, men practice various forms of violence against women in the name of Islam, and women are deprived of their social, financial and educational rights (Al Abdeen, 2011, p.3).

In Al Abdeen's view, Islamic discourse has been able to reduce the status of women and to extend the dominant power of men through the interpretation of this verse:

> *"Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and (as to) those whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great".* [7]

---

[7] An-Nisa: 34-35-translated by I-Qur'an and produced by "Guided Ways of Technologies"

According to its interpretation by Ismail ibn Kathir[8], a faqih commentator, "maintainers" (which in Arabic are *"Kawamoon"*), means *"AlKayem"* and in this context means the guardian who can punish if not obeyed. Here, as Al Abdeen shows, the actual meaning was transferred from the original meaning, which is *"Kawam"*, to *"Kayem"*, and there is a big difference in meaning. *"Kawam"* means those who are in charge of serving women and this is linked to the degree of qualifications rather than the preference for men over women. Al Abdeen argues that "beat" in the verse does not mean physical abuse, but means desertion, and this meaning is actually consistent with al-sunna because the prophet never beat his wives. If "beat" meant physical abuse and had been a divine order, the Prophet would have been the initiator (Ibid, pp.13-16).

Based on what Al Abdeen describes as misconceptions, men practice physical abuse against women, and judges give unfair provisions to women who are abused and murdered by their men. She gives examples: of a trial, in which a man, who physically abused his wife until she died, was sentenced to three years in prison and two hundred lashes; while, a man who stole two sheep was sentenced to three years in prison and two thousand lashes. If the woman's death had been recognised as murder, Sharia law would have demanded the murderer's life as a penalty. Al Abdeen finds judges base their verdicts on unsubstantiated hadiths (the Prophet's sayings) such as, "A man will never be killed because of his murder of his wife since he owns her through the marriage contract" (Ibid, p.20).

What Al Abdeen explains may be true, but she did not clarify how the fact that Qur'anic texts, especially texts relating to women, are subject to different interpretations, some of which may oppress women, because it is not known whether such interpretations are a matter

---

[8] Ismail ibn Kathir (1301–1373) is a leading Faqīh of the ulema. He is influenced by ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328) who was a member of the school founded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780–855), a school dominated by orthodox Sunni scholars.

on which governments should legislate, or that come down to an individual man's conscience. Take polygamy; even though the Qur'an permits men to take up to four wives, he is obligated to treat all of his wives fairly and equally and must not marry more than one woman if he cannot treat all wives fairly. It is unclear whether this condition is a matter for the government to legislate on, or whether it can be judged by each man himself, leaving women at the mercy of their husbands (Ahmed, 1992, p.88).

That a women's fate and Qur'anic texts relating to women are subject to different interpretations, mostly carried out by men, caused women in various parts of Arabia to rebel against Islam after the Prophet Muhammad's death. For example, Salma bint Malik, who claimed she was a prophetess and revolted against the Islamic state, dying in battle against the apostates of Islam. Another revolt was staged by Sajah bint Aws, who also declared she was a prophetess and opposed Islam; numerous women joined her because of the limitations that Islam had brought to them. Abu Bakr, the first Muslim Caliph after the Prophet Muhammad's death, fought these women and other apostates of Islam (Ibid, p.59).

Al Abdeen's argument comes down to issues of power and property. The power given to male relatives of women under Saudi law underpins a sense of the male ownership of women's money, bodies and lives. Families give absolute power to brothers over their sisters; therefore, some of these men think that they can do anything, e.g., adultery or sexual harassment. In addition, there is no deterrent punishment to those who commit such crimes. Penalties do not exceed imprisonment for a limited period of time, and they may commit the same crime again after they are released. Al Abdeen notes that there must be strict judicial punishment, which is the stoning to death penalty, as has been stated in the Qur'an. This is not about being in favour of stoning, but about using the 'power-over' approach, which could

be positive if it overrules dominance and unequal access to power. For Al Abdeen, applying such a penalty and publicly defaming the criminal will contain the irresponsible actions of male relatives. Al Abdeen's research shows that there are numerous hidden cases of incest and other undisclosed crimes (Al Abdeen, 2011).

The requirement for the male guardian's approval for a woman's education has deprived women of the right to education in numerous cases. This has led to a high rate of illiteracy among women if compared to men. This should not happen, because education is obligatory in Islam for both sexes and does not require a guardian's consent (Al Abdeen, 2008, p.9). The same thing is true of women's labour. That there are restricted employment opportunities for women in certain areas due to fatwas from clerics has increased women's unemployment (Al Abdeen, 2011).

The Arab elites, like Al Abdeen, claim that the problem is with the interpretation of Islam, rather than with 'true' Islam. This may not convince other nations, because misinterpretation of the Qur'an and using it for political objectives occurs not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which also applies Sharia law in its constitution and is a Shiite theocracy. The Islamic Republic's constitution denies women equal rights and the constitution itself was part of an overarching policy of excluding women from public life. The Islamic Republic withdrew many rights that women had gained under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi-Shah of Iran. Measures to bring back the glorious tradition of what was perceived of as 'true' Islam included segregation of the sexes in public spaces, compulsory wearing of the hijab (veil), and excluding women from certain professions (Khiabany & Sreberny, 2001, p.21). However, it seems that such strict Islamic rules for women can be loosened for a political agenda. This was evident when the Iranian Revolutionary Leader,

Ayatollah Khomeini, opposed Mohammad Reza Pahlavi on granting women their political rights in 1963, accusing him of not abiding by the rules of Islam. Nonetheless, after his triumph in the Iranian Revolution in 1979 with the successful women's participation in the revolutionary demonstrations, he declared that 'women have the right to intervene in politics' (Ibid, p.22).

Al Abdeen has fought for the right for women to issue fatwas. A fatwa is a religious opinion on Islamic law issued by an Islamic scholar. Al Abdeen says there are qualified Saudi, female, Islamic, scholars but they are not recognised because the ruling class in the religion in Saudi Arabia is all male. According to Maha Akeel, a Saudi journalist and the Managing Editor of the Organization at the Islamic Conference (OIC), even the notion of 'Islamic feminism' would be problematic in Saudi Arabia, due to the negative connotations of feminism in Saudi society. Akeel has suggested using the term "Islamic Development Movement for Saudi Women", since this indicates the link between Islam and the development of women's status (Akeel, 2010, p. 96, 98, 120).

One of the central debates, and also one of the most continuous, is whether Islam is compatible with feminism and whether the gender consciousness movement and campaigns for changes in the law can be regarded as feminist. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, an Iranian anthropologist, specializing in Islamic law, gender and development, thinks it can, whereas Shahrzad Mojab, Iranian Professor at the University of Toronto, and Haideh Moghissi, Professor of the Department of Equity Studies at York University, find the term 'Islamic feminism' misleading and inaccurate, and criticize those who use it for falling into the trap of cultural relativism and for backing away from feminist ideals (Khiabany & Sreberny, 2001, p.29).

Valentine Moghadam, an Iranian feminist scholar and Professor of Sociology, Director of International Affairs at North-Eastern University, criticizes Islamic reformists who insist that change will only arrive through the 'modernization' of Islam and who thus seek a different interpretation. She argued that: "Women, and not religion, should be the centre of that theory (feminism). It is not possible to defend as feminist the view that women can attain equal status only in the context of Islam" (quoted in Khiabany & Sreberny, 2001, p.29).

Although Al Abdeen's interpretation is considered "liberal" in terms of Saudi Arabian standards, her interpretation and justification are considered conservative by other Islamic feminist scholars. Both approaches have their own rationale based on arguments around texts relating to women in the Qur'an, but Al Abdeen's approach might be expected to find sympathy in an in ultra-conservative country, like Saudi Arabia. The following chapters will examine whether Al Abdeen's "liberal approach", which is considered more conservative than some Islamic feminist scholars who take a "secular approach", will find sympathy among clerics in Saudi Arabia on account of her sometimes controversial interpretation of verses in the Qur'an relating to women and the ambivalence with which the media has treated her views.

The main purpose of discussing how 'Islamic discourse' on women in Saudi Arabia has contributed to poverty, illiteracy and violence among the disadvantaged is to consider the ways in which interpretations of the Qur'an have influenced programmes about development and women's status on privately owned television channels, mainly on *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya*.

2.2 <u>Privately-owned Arab Satellite Channels</u>

Before discussing the privately-owned Saudi satellite channels, I will shed some light on the history of Saudi broadcasting. Saudi citizens started listening to radio after World War II, first tuning in to Arabic programmes on foreign stations to hear the news and other programming. Jeddah Station was launched in 1949. Service was restricted to 5 hours per day, and neither women's voices nor music were allowed on the air. Most broadcasting time was devoted to religious programming, including some broadcasts originating from Mecca. No other major development in broadcasting took place in Saudi Arabia in the 1950s, and listeners interested in news events turned to the BBC. Those more interested in entertainment, especially popular Arabic music, tuned into Egyptian radio services. Saudi Arabian radio started to expand to challenge the attacks on the Saudi royal family in the late 1950s by the Egyptian Government that was calling for a revolution (Boyd, 1999, p.146).

Construction began in Riyadh in the mid 1960s to broadcast a Voice of Islam programme to compete with the anti-Saudi Egyptian radio services. At the end of the 1960s, the fact that the Kingdom was no longer under constant attack from other countries on the airwaves gave planners an opportunity to review the future of radio broadcasting in Saudi Arabia. A new central radio studio and its administration building was completed in 1972. It became operational in 1974 (Ibid, p.147).

The Saudi Government had several reasons for announcing, in late 1963, that a national television system was to be built. Firstly, it needed to provide the population with national television to give the government control over the kind of news, developmental and entertainment programming they were consuming, even though these were Wahhabi interpretations of television entrainment programming. Secondly, television would provide

an attractive alternative to Radio Cairo and the Voice of the Arabs, and would therefore be able to challenge the hostile broadcasts from Egypt's radio stations. Thirdly, television can be used for educational purposes to help with basic health and literacy training. Finally, television can contribute to a sense of national unity (Ibid, p.153).

Saudi media, and especially television, have moved from initially being quite open to discussion about a woman's place in society, in the 1960s, to a far greater degree of conservatism in the 1980s and 1990s, and to more openness in 2005, in the reign of King Abdullah (Sakr, 2008, p.391, 392). Two extremist, Islamist-led actions, one internal, the other external, both of which took place in 1979 – changed the direction of Saudi society and, mainly, the Saudi media, especially in how they treated women. One was the attack on, and takeover, by Juhaiman Al-Otaibi and his Islamist followers of the Al-Masjid al-Haram (The Grand Mosque) in Mecca, and the second was the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Both the Al-Otaibi assault and Iran's Khomeini Revolution were widely condemned in Saudi Arabia but, because both criticized and embarrassed Saudi Arabia – the country that includes the two holiest mosques, at Mecca and Medina – as not correctly representing Islam, the Islamist outlook was adopted as Saudi Government policy, and the foundational Wahhabism of the Kingdom was aggressively reinforced (Al Saied, 2012). Before 1979, women's presence in the media had been established for many years. The number of women working in broadcasting grew in the 1960s, in parallel with the expansion of local Saudi broadcast media. Abeer Mishkhas, a journalist with *Ashar al-Awsat*, recalls open-air film screenings run by a state-owned company in the 1970s, where segregation was not enforced (Sakr, 2008, p.392).

As a result of the Juhaiman siege and then the Khomeini Revolution, all plays, fashion shows, international events and cinemas were banned in Saudi Arabia. The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, known as the "religious police," or "the Commission" (*hai'a* in Arabic), increasingly harassed people on the street, and "control" became the watchword of the 1980s, particularly for women. Female broadcasters were prevented from reading the news, all female singers and other women vanished completely from the television screen; women without their ID cards could not walk around, even with their husbands, and sometimes even ID cards were not enough for the "religious police" (Al Saied, 2012). After the shock of September 11, 2001, when 15 of the 19 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom was under pressure to reform, and this included its media.

Although Saudi female broadcasters were much more visible after 2005, others think that changes were slow and imperceptible. Akeel said that little had changed with the situation of women in the media either quantatively or qualitatively between 2004 and 2006. Akeel stated that only 5% of those employed in radio and television in Saudi Arabia women and none had been promoted to senior positions in the Ministry of Information. This shortage is down to a lack of professional and academic training, driven by laws restricting women in the media (quoted in Sakr, 2008, pp.396, 397). Due to these restrictions in local media, privately-owned satellite channels located abroad might be expected to give greater visibility to women and allow greater freedom to discuss sensitive social matters related to women.

Privately-owned satellite channels first came to the Arab region with the launch of the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Group in London in 1991. As the first privately-owned Arab broadcaster, it transformed Arab television from the traditional school of coverage confined to national boundaries, to the modern school of channels judged not only

in terms of their programme topics and technical excellence, but for contributing to critical and constructive debate on issues facing Arab societies (Ayish, 2007, pp.473, 474). However, these privately-owned channels 'amplify the picture of state-private interpretation' because their owners have links to governments (Sakr, 2002, p.6). Due to these links, private Arab satellite channels are not entirely financially independent and are therefore still under the influence of the state (Saeed, 2006, p.35).

Private satellite channels have emerged as competitors to local television channels in several Arab countries, especially in Saudi Arabia. Despite these satellite channels being owned by Saudi businessmen or members of the Royal Family, they are located outside Saudi Arabia, either in neighbouring Arab countries or in Europe, which frees them from governmental or clerical control and makes them more courageous in dealing with sensitive subjects and interesting controversial debates. Many Saudi media professionals, whether men or women, prefer to work for these channels, and some Saudi specialists want to participate as guests on their talk shows, to discuss the problems and issues of Saudi society. These subjects include women's status and the barriers that hinder their development (Akeel, 2010, p.114).

These channels address liberal topics and seem to lack bias towards any gender. They are still constrained by political considerations and legal regulations, but the proportion of local channels' viewers has decreased, because the satellite channels offer entertainment and educational programmes presented in a professional manner and containing up-to-date events, which is not the case in the local television channels that are censored by the government. Drama serials and soap operas that are shown on local channels are out-dated and censored, having already been broadcast, uncensored, on satellite channels (Ibid, p.130).

2.2.1 Media economics and power

In order to reveal what powers drive privately-owned television, this section examines ideas about media and dominant ideologies. Since private pan-Arab satellite television channels have adopted the business models of privately-owned television stations in Western countries, the section will also shed light on the function and economics of Western media.

2.2.1.1 Western private television and economics

Marx stated that "the ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas: i.e. the class, which is the dominant material force in society, is at the same time its dominant intellectual force" (quoted in Strinati, 2004, pp.116). Murdock and Golding used this theory of dominance to analyse the economics of the media. They argued that the production of ideas is under the control of those who run the media and, as a result, their ideas will dominate the thoughts of the subordinate class. This dominant media perpetuates the idea of class inequalities and makes them look natural, as it generates these ideas as popular culture (Golding & Murdock, 1991, pp.117-122). Gramsci accepted Marx's analysis from the previous century and believed that the struggle between the ruling class and the subordinate working class was the driving force that moved society forward. At the same time, however, he rejected the economic reductionism of such an analysis. Instead, Gramsci stated that hegemony presents a constant contradiction between the dominant ideology and the social experience of subordination, engendering ideological struggle (Abercrombie et al, 1980, p.15). In order to reduce this struggle, most authoritarian regimes sustain popular support and legitimacy by using different tools, such as the media, because they can be the cultural means by which the dominant class gains the consent of the dominated class. This is accomplished by "the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups" (Strinati, 2004, p.148).

One of the most important means by which media diffuses ideology is through television. The key characteristic of television, particularly of privately-owned channels, is that the diffusion of ideologies is restricted to powerful media conglomerates, while its consumption is unrestricted. Ideologies diffused through television are transmitted to large and varied audiences, regardless of their level of education or knowledge, compared to print media, because the prerequisites for decoding are less erudite (Thompson, 1990, p.267).

The struggle to obtain the consent of the dominated class, to which Gramsci refers, is revealed in – different media forms in the television sectors, public service: broadcasting and private commercial satellite television. Initiated by John Reith, the founder of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), public service broadcasting (PSB) rejected the idea of commercialisation because programmes should be for everybody. There should be strict regulations in broadcasting, and high standards needed to be upheld (Ibid, p.255). However, PSB as exemplified by the BBC, has been criticised for several reasons. The following limitations were found: the concentration of power in the hands of a bureaucratic elite; the government as the dominant power; and a traditional broadcasting service that could not compete with the new private sector (Ibid, pp.256-257). PSB was also challenged by social phenomena, such as the "rise of feminism" and the "expansion of ethnic communities." The other factors that have undermined PSB have been the emergence of a gigantic lobby against PSB led by Rupert Murdoch; an Australian-American media magnate, and the advent of satellite television (Curran, 2002, pp.200-201).

Liberal media theory says that the media should examine the state, monitor its actions and disclose its violations. This definition is actually that of a watchdog, and its main function is to protect people by preventing those in power from controlling them (Ibid, pp.215, 225).

However, although this theory is ideal on paper, it has played out differently in reality. Private satellite television mostly broadcasts entertainment programmes, and news on public affairs is allocated only a small amount of air-time, with only 'official' wrongdoings being disclosed. The consumer has little influence, because the channel is owned by giant media conglomerates that control competition, making them less concerned with audience demand. That most media are controlled by a few media moguls increases the market cost, making it difficult for competitors who might enter the market to enlighten the public with their programmes. This can be interpreted as indirect censorship (Ibid, pp.219, 229)

Governments increasingly depend on media to maintain power, so there is a growing relationship between governmental officials and media business moguls. This is best illustrated by the relationship between Tony Blair and Rupert Murdoch in the 1990s and such collaboration can be theorised as being fundamental to the extent that media owners are actually part of the dominant power. In fact, privately-owned media have not played the role of an independent watchdog that serves the public interest, but rather that of a commercial company that serves both the media owners' investments and the ruling elites. In sum, this overly simplistic media theory did not take into account the collective power of the media (Ibid, pp.220-222).

2.2.1.2 Arab private satellite television and economics

Most Arab private satellite television channels operate according to the same strategy as Western channels, using the approach referred to in the preceding sections. This illustrates the "modernization theory"; the Arab media have been encouraged to imitate the West. This imitation of Western media promotes capitalist and consumerist values, which bolster America's hegemony in global media. Hall describes it as the "American conception of the

world" (quoted in Curran, 2002, pp.169, 171). However, media theory that assumes that the ultimate goal of commercial media is only to make profit does not always apply to Arab private satellite channels. In fact, there are businessmen who are motivated by other factors, such as political influence or philanthropy. Each company or organisation has its own organisational structure and different priorities depending on the owners (Doyle, 2002, p.5).

Even though the structure and framework of Western, and mainly American, broadcasting have been adopted by Arab private satellite television, the content also contains Arab cultural and hegemonic dynamics, which means the Arab media are subject to both external and internal influences. Despite the paradigm shift in Arab private satellite television away from state ownership, the Arab private market is still under state control, reflecting what is called "political capital". This term suggests that the main purpose of launching this private market was political, not commercial. It also suggests that the majority of these Arab private satellite channels cannot afford to rely on commercial revenues alone without the financial and political support of the state (Saeed, 2006, p.35). As mentioned above, these privately-owned satellite channels show how inter-linked the private and the state are, because the channels' owners have links to governments (Sakr, 2002, p.6). For example, Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim, the MBC Group's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is King Fahd's brother in-law, and is connected to the Saudi royal family, which helped him to finance the MBC, especially when it was in its infancy (Sakr, 2001, p.12). Arab Radio and Television (ART) is owned jointly by the Saudi businessman, Sheikh Saleh Kamel and Prince Al Waleed bin Talal bin Abd Al Aziz, a member of the Saudi royal family (Sakr, 2002, p.5). Dream TV is a private Egyptian television channel co-owned by Ahmad Bahgat, an Egyptian businessman whose, close ties with the Mubarak government, enabled him to launch Dream TV on 2nd November, 2001 (Sakr, 2006, pp.70, 72).

Mamoun Fandy, an Egyptian-born American scholar and president of a research group and think tank, elaborated on this idea, *(Un) Civil War of Words: Media and Politics in the Arab World*. Despite the claims of some private Arab satellite channels that they are independent, the state remains a major player in the establishment of private satellite television channel; it is not solely subject to market forces. This is reflected in the state's influence over programme content, a standard practice in private channels. This is evidenced by the large amounts of money given by the state for very little, if any, financial return. For example, the annual cost of running the Arab media is said to be US $ 17 billion, while net advertising revenue in the Gulf countries was no more than US $ 3 billion, in 2004, revealing the hand of the state in making up the difference (Fandy, 2008, p.11). The Emir of Qatar spent US $ 137 million to cover the initial start-up costs for *Al Jazeera* and he continued to fund it until it reached an annual turnover of US $ 300 million (Ibid, p.47). MBC started in 1991 with US $ 300 million in capital and annual costs of US $ 60 million (Sakr, 2001, p.45). In 2003, the MBC Group launched *Al Arabiya* with US $ 300 million, and it remains very far from balancing costs and revenues. *Al Arabiya's* estimated annual outgoings were US $ 70 million in the mid-2000s, while its revenue from advertising was no more than US $ 10 million (Fandy, 2008, p. 54). If *Al Jazeera* and *Al Arabiya* operate at a loss, there must be non-commercial reasons that motivate Qatar and Saudi Arabia to spend such huge sums of money on unprofitable channels (Ibid, p.40).

Ironically, it is the state that has become the primary entrepreneur in private television, a sector about which it was initially sceptical. This has created "state capitalism" that puts the state in control of programme content (Guaaybess, 2008, p.211), e.g., Ahmad Bahgat, an Egyptian businessman and co-owner of private satellite television channel, Dream TV, had close ties with the Mubarak government, enabling him to launch Dream TV on 2nd

November, 2001. Bahgat had to offer a 10% stake in Dream TV to the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU). Although Bahgat's initial idea was to screen bold topics to attract larger audiences in order to draw more advertisers and to increase profits, his financial relations with the government forced him to avoid broadcasting controversial content (Sakr, 2006, pp.70, 72). Similarly, the Saudi private satellite channels follow the same pattern, where ruling elites and businessmen have established control of television content, production and distribution, with little regard for profit (Sakr, 2008, pp. 189-195). However, in Saudi Arabia, delimiting the state is more complicated, especially when it comes to private satellite television. Despite King Abdullah's promises of reform, he is just one player in a circle of powerful princes. These multiple power sources have created two opposing groups: the reformists and the conservatives. These contradictions undermine the state's coherence as it has begun to embody unprecedented contradictory powers. However, in both cases, power has remained concentrated in the hands of traditional power holders, mainly a number of princes (Al-Rasheed, 2008, pp.13, 17, 18).

Owen and Wilden have highlighted the significance of the way in which the economics of broadcast media produces audiences not programmes:

> *"The first and most serious mistake that an analyst of the television industry can make is to assume that advertising-supported television broadcasters are in business to broadcast programs. They are not. Broadcasters are in the business of producing audiences"* (quoted in Ferguson, 2004, p.156).

Owners of Arab satellite television channels want to have as many viewers as possible, but each channel has its own style and priorities, depending on the owners' agenda. When MBC

emerged on 18th September, 1991, it tried to attract viewers by transforming Arab television from the traditional school, confined to national boundaries, to the modern school, judged not only in terms of programme topics and technical excellence, but also for its contribution to a constructive debate on the issues facing Arab societies (Ayish, 2007, pp.474-491). LBC and Future TV exploited women to attract male audiences, which was described at that time as "like beaming Beirut nightlife into Gulf homes" (quoted in Sakr, 2007, p.94). *Al Jazeera* attracted viewers through controversial and uncensored political debates, which were not common in the region (Sakr, 2005, p.67). *Al Arabiya* tried to attract viewers' attention with non-political news, such as health, entertainment news and mainly through its business news and coverage of the stock market (Sakr, 2007, p.148). However, Yosri Fouda, an Egyptian anchor on *Al Jazeera* until 2009, now a presenter on *ON TV*, explained that such editorial policies are not "the result of structural economic and political independence, but of a grant from upstairs – a grant that could be claimed back at any moment for whatever reason" (quoted in Sakr, 2005, p.87).

MBC imported numerous ready-made American and European programmes, or produced Arabic version of TV formats, e.g., *Man Sayarbah Almalion*, which is taken from *Who wants to be a Millionaire*, and *Kalam Nawaim (Sweet Talk)*, which is taken from *The View* (Ibid, pp.113, 105). Jihad Fakhreddine, Gallup's Regional Research Director for the Middle East and North Africa, warned that there should be more opportunities available for local people and local production (Ibid, p.112). This lack of encouragement of creativity and creative endeavours has not only been due to concerns around financial risk, but also because such posts could threaten the political *status quo* (Ibid, p.134). Arab media entrepreneurs have thus promoted the mimicking of western styles.

This section has considered the economic models that see Arab private satellite channels as dependent on governmental capital and power. The next section will consider links between such dependence and the possibility that private media fulfil the political goals of governments rather than the social and economic needs of the people.

2.2.2 Arab identity and satellite television

The Arab media have always been at the centre of conflicts over Arab identities. Some claim these conflicts are framed as East vs. West, and others think they are driven by intra-regional conflicts, but in both cases, they are politically driven. Some researchers think Arab identities, as depicted in the Arab media and, mainly, on satellite channels, need to be critiqued to make them more inclusive, especially regarding the development of women's status.

After Arab countries gained their independence in the 1950s and 1960s, the Arab media were manipulated to legitimise the new local systems and to mobilise the public behind Arab nationalism. As a result, some critics believe that the Arab media were exploited for political ends, rather than to serve people's needs. In this context, *Sawt Al-Arab* (*Voice of the Arabs)*, a prominent Egyptian transnational Arabic-language radio service, emerged as a key tool used by Nasser to determine the content of Arab nationalism. Arabic is the common language of countries in the region and has facilitated the spread of ideas among the public. Nasser established *Sawt Al-Arab* on 4th July, 1953. Since illiteracy was common and people relied on audio information, radio was a perfect tool to reach audiences and influence them. Nasser was a popular anti-colonialist, and many Arabs enjoyed listening to his speeches. Nasser used the state-owned radio station to promote his policies at the local level and throughout the region. Fandy believes that *Sawt Al-Arab* was the blueprint for all pan-Arab

media and the beginning of its politicisation. Nasser used *Sawt Al-Arab* to attack Arab leaders who challenged Egypt's regional hegemonic ambitions, e.g., Saudi Arabia was one of the main targets of these attacks during the Yemeni Civil War, and King Hussein of Jordan was another target during a struggle between the King and pro-Nasser elements in his government (Fandy, 2008, pp.40-41).

In 1967, Israel defeated Nasser and the Arab armies. During these defeats, *Sawt Al-Arab* reported fake military victories. When the Arab people discovered the defeat, they shunned the radio station as it had lost its credibility. After 1967, with the idea taking hold that Arabs had to return to religion because Israel's victory over the Arabs was due to piety and religion in Israel, not to its military superiority, television was dominated by a mix of Arab nationalist and Islamist ideologies, the latter strengthened by the 1979 Khomeini revolution in Iran (Ibid, pp.42-43).

The pace of change in Arab broadcasting was accelerated by the outbreak of the 1991 Gulf War, and the emergence of private satellite channels. Even MBC's launch was politically motivated, in response to the way *CNN* covered the 1991 Gulf war. Apparently, MBC expressed a desire to have an Arabic version of *CNN* (Sakr, 2001, p.84). *Al Jazeera* television was founded by Qatari royal decree to legitimise the regime after the Emir of Qatar's 1995 coup against his father (Fandy, 2008, p.47). *Al Jazeera* became the most widely viewed news network in the Arab world due to its willingness to break taboos by criticising Arab governments. Several Arab governments view *Al Jazeera* with suspicion and have accused it of criticising Arab countries while not delving into sensitive issues in Qatar (Hamada, 2004, p.10). Saudi Arabia responded too, by launching *Al Arabiya* in February 2003. Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim said his goal was to position *Al Arabiya* as the equivalent

to *CNN*, while *Al Jazeera* was more like Fox News (Shapiro, 2005). He also declared in the *Washington Times* that the motivation behind setting up *Al Arabiya* was "to get rid of the Taliban mentality" (Sakr, 2006, p.74).

The different treatments of *Al Jazeera* and *Al Arabiya* reflect government control. Some analysts see *Al Jazeera's* editorial line as being in favour of the Islamist and Arab nationalist agenda, while *Al Arabiya* is more liberal, even though it has less freedom to cover controversial political issues (Hroub, 2009, pp.223, 224). Some have accused *Al Arabiya* of following American policy (and even Israeli policy) in the region, especially with regard to the invasion of Iraq (Al Dahmashee, 2010), constrained by the editorial policies of the Saudi princes who finance it (Miladi, 2006, p. 952), and some call *Al Jazeera* "Osama bin Laden TV" (quoted in Sakr, 2004, p.158). In spite of their claims to independence, it is the state not market forces that is the key player in these two news channels (Fandy, 2008, p.3).

Due to this lack of independence, Arab satellite channels have seldom tried to clarify the identities that will lead to development, or examine how Islamism and Arab nationalism can be liberated from the dominant ideologies of racist nationalism and sectarianism and be based on enlightenment and development (AlSaied, 2011). There has been no investigation into the correlation between people's frustration with western policies in the region, corrupt Arab dictatorial regimes, and the emergence of radical political Islamist discourse that does not want just to embrace an individual path to salvation of faith, but also to embrace a political and socio-cultural system (Hroub, 2009, pp.217, 235). These channels have rarely traced the impact of such political Islam on social development, modernity, and mainly, on the development of women's status in the Arab world.

This study seeks to discover whether private pan-Arab satellite television can contribute towards development issues, in particular to young, disadvantaged women's development, and can satisfactorily address their social concerns. The MBC's founder, Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim's words; "I want my networks to make a difference in the Arab world", suggest his channels have higher goals that could potentially contribute through news and entertainment to women's development.

2.3 <u>Communication for Development Theories</u>

Since this study focuses on improving disadvantaged women's status in society with an emphasis on doing so from the bottom- up, this section will shed some light on participatory communication for development and for women's empowerment. The ultimate goal of participatory communication is social change, and it is viewed as a potentially transformational means of rebalancing power structures. There are numerous approaches to communication for development: the dominant paradigm, social marketing, health education, entertainment education, modernisation, dependency, multiplicity, diffusion of innovation theory, and participation (Servaes, 2007, pp.487-493). However, the main concern is that development organisations in general and UN agencies in particular, have not achieved women's empowerment. White explains that theories of communication for development are central to empowerment. However, in the field of communication for development, most governments and major non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not using radio, television or other media effectively to educate the rural/village and urban poor or to provide support for their development. Why is there so little development in the area of development practice? (White, 2004, p.7)

Melkote points out that, although participatory communication focuses on collaboration, equitable knowledge-sharing between people and experts, taking into account local cultural contexts, the outcome in most cases has not been real empowerment for people but the attainment of some indicator of development as articulated in the modernisation paradigm. Melkote also added that most theories and approaches, including the participatory model, have essentially been 'old wine in new bottles'. Two areas and concepts in communication for development that seem suitable, in terms of achieving social change, are participatory action research (which is a deconstruction of the participatory development paradigm) and empowerment strategies (Melkote, 2006, pp.116-117).

Participatory Actions Research (PAR):

PAR is dedicated to reviving both the power of marginalised people and their popular knowledge. The knowledge that PAR attempts to generate is specific, local and an application of the bottom-up approach. Importantly, it is used to initiate collaborative social action in order to empower local knowledge and to wrest social power, which is inherent in knowledge, away from the privileged (Friesen, 1999, pp.281-308).

A study by Johnson, *Media and Social Change: The Modernizing Influences of Television in Rural India* (2001), concentrates on the role television plays in social change in rural India. The study analyses the influence of television on various social, economic and political perspectives that are revolutionizing village life in the country. The data for this research was collected in two villages in the mountains of Western Maharashtra by way of ethnographic fieldwork between 1995 and – 1996, and on a subsequent visit in 2000. The researcher used participant observation and in-depth interviews to explore television's role in the structure and dynamics of everyday life. The research process also showed structural changes taking

place, as well as changes at a psychological level. The former focused on variables such as marriage, religion and gender, whilst the latter centred on changes in attitudes, fears, values and opinions. Television has brought about changes in people's attitudes, such as a shift towards openly and freely denouncing prejudice. Another change has been the rise in materialism; people aspire to own products they see on television programmes. At a structural level, it is more difficult to see change, because it is not a simple process and involves several factors (Johnson, 2001, pp.147-167).

Empowerment:

Melkote (2006, p.117) states that it is unethical to use communications to help solve minor or immediate problems whilst ignoring the systemic barriers erected by societies that permit or perpetuate inequalities among their citizens. Sustainable change is not possible unless we deal with the crucial problem of a lack of economic and social power among individuals at the grassroots. Individuals are impoverished not because they lack knowledge or reason, but because have no access to appropriate or sustainable opportunities to improve their lives. If communication for development is to continue to play an effective role in social change processes, researchers and practitioners must address the fundamental problems of unequal power relations (Ibid, p.166).

In fact, participation in communication barely exists in experiments. There is a remarkable difference between theoretical analysis and the practice of development. Even though the dominant paradigm in communication is not recommended, it is frequently applied in practice. Meanwhile, the participatory paradigm in communication is extensively supported in theory, but rarely applied in practice (Sparks, 2007, p.59).

One of the obstacles that the participatory paradigm in communication faces, especially under authoritarian regimes, is its challenge to the existing social structure and confrontation with political power. This can be targeted through the "negotiated variant", communication that focuses on smaller scale problems and does not threaten those in power. Accordingly, it is possible to gain support from governments or international development organisations (Ibid, p.72). The development communicator should not challenge or threaten the powerful so that they receive financial support for the project and do not hamper it (Ibid, p.68-69).

2.4 <u>Women and Television Genres</u>

2.4.1 Women's consumption of entertainment channels

Most studies that scrutinise how women decode media messages are conducted in the West and focus on Western audiences (Khamis, 2009, p. 453). This dearth of research on women's media consumption in the Arab world risks baseless generalisations being made about the impact of television on women. Van Zoonen has drawn attention to such generalisations and how they imply that women are all the same, regardless of their class, education or age. When talking about women's media consumption, it is therefore important to specify the kind of women (van Zoonen, 1994, pp.119, 123) to whom we are referring. This study intends to shed light on a particular class and age group, who are routinely ignored in research on Arab media consumption in general and studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, in particular.

Whilst there is a tendency to try to educate village women through different genres of television programmes, for Nair & White (1993; p.170) these women actually want entertainment programmes just like urban women, and their main motivation for watching television is for entertainment, not to learn. Alterman (2002, p.146), in his analysis of Arab television, also describes television as predominately an entertainment medium. The pleasure

gained from television has been utilised in development communication in what is called 'entertainment-education' - the process of purposefully devising and distributing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes, and change overt behaviour (Singhal, 1999, p.122). Egyptian melodrama, for example, adopts many of these characteristics. Abu-Lughod (2002, p.300) describes it as a "technology for the production of new kinds of selves."

Soap operas have often been created for social and behavioural development, especially among women. Bill Ryerson, founder of Population Communications International (PCI) noted that entertainment programmes like soap operas can engage people and influence attitudinal and behavioural change because their emotional content makes them memorable. These changes can be behavioural, such as health tips, to lower the fertility rate, and HIV awareness to reduce incidences of infection, or may be attitudinal in nature, focusing on social issues, like women's rights and adult education (Weinreich, 2006).

Education through entertainment is criticised by participatory communication advocates for taking a top-down approach. Social mobilisation, on the other hand, integrates top-down and bottom-up approaches that include political will and public resources to create social change, bringing together government agencies, NGOs and the media to work towards a common goal. Satellite television can contribute to this in two ways: by working with civil society organisations and NGOs to generate public awareness, or, by acting as an independent agent for change (Adams, 2006, pp. 179, 180). Nonetheless, social mobilisation is unlikely to be easily achieved in the Arab world due to governments' control of the media and their reluctance to cooperate with NGOs (Kandil, 2009, pp.25, 28).

Abu-Lughod has highlighted the lack of research into media consumption amongst disadvantaged women in rural or village communities by investigating soap opera messages on Egyptian television, *Dramas of Nationhood*. Due to a lack of audience research amongst disadvantaged, peasant women, soap operas have been criticised for their unrealistic portrayal of rural women. They erroneously appear over-dressed, with heavy make-up, long nails, and speaking an incorrect dialect (Abu-Lughod, 2005, p.73). Abu-Lughod (Ibid, pp.85, 104) explained how television drama serials reveal the dominant development paradigm through showing how elites are responsible for modernising disadvantaged rural people, without explaining the obstacles that rural people face in gaining an education in the first place (Ibid, pp.84, 104). The dominant message of development in *Nuna al-sha'nuna*, a television drama serial directed by In'am Muhammad Ali and written by Salwa Bakr, is that the importance of education for national development is overshadowed by illiteracy caused by class and gender discrimination, without spelling out who is responsible for this (Ibid, p.89).

Khamis, in her ethnographic study of an Egyptian village, attempted to reveal the dominant paradigm in televised governmental literacy campaigns. The women in her study demonstrated different interpretations of these televised texts: dominant, oppositional and negotiated. Most of the dominant interpretations came from formally-educated women whilst oppositional interpretations were exhibited by women who had no formal education. Finally, negotiated interpretations were recorded among those who either had no formal education or who had left school early. The main reason for an oppositional interpretation is that women see how these televised messages have substituted for other 'forms' of education. These dominant paradigms make women more defensive, since they present women as victims of bad circumstances, and they lay the blame on people who exploit illiterate women (Khamis, 2007, pp.89-106).

A few studies have been undertaken that focus on television consumption among rural village women in Arab society. For example, Katab (2008) has published a paper on the '*Image of a Rural Woman in Arab Drama Serials as Presented on Egyptian Television and its Relationship with the Public's Perception of Her Social Reality.*' The study was based on a content analysis of nine drama serials, and a questionnaire was sent to a random sample of 400 participants from the Egyptian general public. The content analysis' results found that the main problems faced by rural women, as depicted in the drama serials, were social in nature, yet in the questionnaire 52.8% felt that the actual problems that rural women faced were economic, the primary problem being poverty. Of those questioned, 94% also said that rural women were presented as passive, with no role in society, which is an unrealistic image.

A study by Amer and Kamal: *The Opinion of Rural Women about Family Planning Campaigns on Television* (2002) explored the views of rural women who had been exposed to family planning campaigns on various television channels. The study involved interviewing 200 married women in one of the villages of the Giza province. The key findings were that rural women were not sufficiently familiar with the family planning programmes broadcast and the best way to convey health messages was through drama, rather than through other television programmes (Amer & Kamal, 2002, pp.255-309).

There has been other research about rural women and the media in non-Arab societies, where the context has been quite similar to the Arab one. For example, a study by Prathap (2004), *Relative Effectiveness of Agricultural Communication through Mass Media Including New Media: an Experimental Approach with Rural Women*, examined the impact of radio, television, print media and the internet on the cognitive behaviour of rural women. The study was conducted among 144 women in rural India in order to measure the extent to which these

women relied on the media for agricultural knowledge. One of the study's main findings was that television was used to access information about agricultural technology. Participants stressed the importance of using local language in the media.

It is difficult, in fact almost impossible, to determine the effects of media on their audience. Gerbner's cultivation theory explains that a viewer's behaviour will not be changed immediately by watching a programme or a film on television, but, rather, that exposure to several thousand images might eventually encourage a particular behavioural change over time. Gerbner argued that those who watched a great deal of television were more likely to see the world according to the social reality constructed by what they watched. This, however, does not take into account social and psychological factors amongst viewers. Gerbner's theory also places great emphasis on the primacy of the scripts, whereas other researchers highlight the significance of audience research, in the belief that viewers are heterogeneous and diverse in their interpretations of television programmes. Hall is of a similar view and underlines the importance of investigating how viewers interpret programmes before assuming a necessary effect:

> *"Before this message can have an effect (however defined), satisfy a need or be put to a use, it must first be appropriated as meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded. It is this set of decoded meanings which have an effect, influence, entertain, instruct or persuade"* (quoted in Livingstone, 1998, pp.16-19).

A major concern amongst some women is the ineffectiveness of women's programmes, whether they are drama or talk shows. They believe that development of women's status concerns the whole of society, not only women, and these women's programmes make them

feel further marginalised (Sakr, 2005, p.2). Some feminist critics argue that the programme or a talk show's presenter is important, but the presenter should not speak as a formal expert, rather as a peer (quoted in Cragin, 2010, p.157). Factors that might attract viewers are: the programme format, the presenter's personality and knowledge depending on how much freedom the presenter had on the show, and how thorough the programme is in providing the viewer with an overview of the problem, robust analysis and alternative solutions.

Media monitoring was one of the activities recommended to the Gulf media targeting women. Such monitoring could draw comparisons between the various interpretations of women in the media and could focus on scenes of physical and psychological violence against women and how this is treated in the media. All the outcomes could then be reported to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) (Ibid, p.6).

Private Arab satellite channels might also be accused of having purely commercial objectives and there is an assumption that they are not interested in national development or social change. This assumption, however, is premature. Development and social change are long-term processes and it is too soon to judge the role of the new satellite media (Hroub, 2006, p.92).

2.4.2 News and women

Having exposed these oppressive modes of authority and domination, this study believes that such oppression has to be disclosed and discussed at a much more official level in order to motivate public opinion and exert pressure on decision-makers to assist those in need. *Al Arabiya*, a satellite news channel, was selected in the case study for its programmes on development and social issues to be scrutinised, and to analyse to what extent a news channel

is concerned with the trials and tribulations of the disadvantaged, especially those of women. Since Arab private satellite television is considered a new media genre and few studies have been done on it, especially ones relating to its coverage of development and social issues, it is crucial to target both news and entertainment satellites channels (Hroub, 2006, p.101).

Disadvantaged women, who are oppressed and struggling under different kinds of domination, are not only looking to see their problems represented in drama on an entertainment channel, but they are also looking for solutions. Some might argue that the role of satellite media is to transmit information, not to create social change and development. This argument may apply in developed countries but not in developing countries where, development indicators are low and every tool must be employed to aid development (Ibid, p.92). Van Zoonen (1994, p.124) has lamented that "research about the public sphere of news has been seriously neglected by feminist researchers." Although women make up half of the world's population, the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) stated that the percentage of news coverage featuring women was only 17% in 1995 and 18 % in 2000 (Sakr, 2004, p.1).

One of the main challenges in news broadcasting in developing countries is that their content depends on the output of developed countries. Since the cost of producing original international news is so high, it is more likely that content will be taken from one of the big news agencies. These agencies are Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters, Agence France Press (AFP) and the Soviet agency (TASS), and they concerned with their respective national interests and news from developed countries. Their dominance over information flow has affected developing countries in many ways. News about developing countries is filtered through the preferences of news agencies, and is determined by the nature

of the relationship between these news agencies and the governments of developing countries. Since, the flow of information from developing countries to these agencies is limited, the result may be irrelevant news and biased portrayals of these countries. This lack of information from developing countries means people learn more about sports and film stars in developed countries than they do about worthwhile information on development in their own countries. This information might sometimes satisfy the elites of these developing countries, but not the common people. One writer from a developing country describes this dominance of information: "the transfer of modern media technology may, in fact, increase the dependency on foreign capital, and on foreign sources of information and culture, and consequently may exert control over the tastes and wishes of the inhabitants of developing countries" (quoted in Sparks, 2007, pp.101-103).

Commercialisation and privatisation have controlled media coverage in both the North and the South, affecting coverage of development issues around poverty, class inequality and corruption. Issues related to poverty do not make television news, and journalists covering such issues get little in return if compared to journalists covering political elites or rich celebrities. Most journalists from the South are trained by Western media organisations to cover news on the ruling elites, rather than on the ordinary people (Thussu, 2004, pp.54-56).

News in the Arab world has not been a public commodity, but rather an instrument for governments to use to exert and extend their influence. News has played a central role in politics and the ruling elite's needs since the emergence of satellite channels in the 1990s. Abdel Nabi, an Egyptian journalist, defines news as "a process through which the reader acquires real knowledge of the different events that took place in society during a certain time span." Abdel Nabi also thinks that news has a development role in society, but, in reality, the

Arab media are more preoccupied with the elites and disregard rural people. Arab professionals usually reside in urban areas where the elites live, and they neglect rural areas unless a high official is on a visit there. In Egypt, for example, even though 70% of inhabitants are from rural areas, only 5% of media coverage focuses on them (Mellor, 2005, p.81, 82, 92).

There are several reasons for the reduced amount of coverage of disadvantaged people on Arab private news satellite channels. One is "national pride", whereby programmes focus on exemplary citizens who have excelled in their careers. These citizens are national icons who make the nation feel proud. Disadvantaged people's representation in the media is avoided, not only because such people do not do the nation proud, but because their exposure in the media might flag up the authoritarian regime's violations and so distort this proud national image (Ibid, p.93). Another reason is that Arab news is influenced by Western news values in giving priority to newness and immediacy. After the launch of these satellite channels in the 1990s, following the Gulf War, satellite news channels were competing to broadcast breaking news. These channels surpassed state channels in live breaking news and also in the quality and quantity of news coverage. Live coverage is one of the main competitive factors that distinguish satellite channels from state channels (Ibid, pp.94-95).

Arab satellite media have adopted the Western media's techniques in political news coverage, such as *Crossfire* on *CNN*, which was reproduced in an Arabic version as *The Opposite Direction* on *Al Jazeera*, but they have been reluctant to adopt the Western media's reduction in hard news in favour of more soft news. Ordinary people now have more air time on American television, whereas the common people, mainly those who are marginalised and

women are not considered when compared to the dominant politicians on Arab satellite channels (Mellor, 2005, p.96).

Al Arabiya, however, is characterised by non-political news and programmes. By featuring business trends on the stock market and updated business news, it has attracted viewers from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. It also covers soft news, such as a morning show called *Sabah Al Arabiya*, which covers health, entertainment and sport (Sakr, 2007, p.148). It also presents documentaries and talk shows that highlight social and development issues (Shaheen, 2008, p.244).

There are some studies that show *Al Arabiya's* coverage of issues relating to Saudi society. The study by Al Dahmashee (2010), *Addressing issues of Saudi society in Al Ekbareya and Al Arabiya and the Opinions of College Students Towards Them*, 2010, focused on content analysis undertaken between October and November 2009. The study randomly selected 400 students during the academic year 2008/2009, from three Saudi universities: King Faisal University, King Saud University, and King Abdulaziz University. The research method used was a questionnaire. The results of the news content analysis were that 53.5% of airtime was devoted to Arab countries' news, 45.6% to Saudi Arabia, 25.5% to international news and 12.9% to non-Arab Muslim countries. The least amount of coverage was given to Saudi political issues, such as women's political participation at 2.2%, 1.9% was given to voting and elections, 0.6% to democracy, and 0.3% to freedom of opinion and expression. The results of the programmes' content analysis were that talk shows attracted 82.5% of viewers, especially if the presenter was popular. *Al Arabiya* hosts guests who specialise in politics, economics, and society. Political experts are hosted by 45.9% of talk shows, economic experts by 44.8%, and social experts by 32.5 per cent. The audience interactivity in these

programmes was low, at only 26.1%. The results of the field study were that 45.5% of participants were keen to follow up on local issues and 31.8% on other issues. A very high percentage of participants, at 85.1%, thought that *Al Arabiya* was concerned with social issues in Saudi Arabia.

Another study looked at the extent to which the Saudi youth depends on various media. Al Nemer's study (2007), *The Dependency of the Saudi Youth in Gaining Knowledge of Local, Arab and International Issues - A Comparative Study Between Traditional and New Media*, involved a research sample of 200 high school students from different regions in Saudi Arabia: Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca, and Asir. The researcher used a survey to conduct the research. The results were that 52% of the participants depend on satellite channels, 27 per cent on the internet, 5.5% on newspapers, 4.5% on MBC FM radio, and 4% on Saudi local channels. The most preferred news channels were *Al Arabiya* at 81%, followed by *Al Jazeera* at 74&, then *Al Ekhbariya* at 66% and, lastly, Saudi local channels at 11%.

To know more about the reasons behind satellite news channels' reluctance to cover women's issues requires further research. Research on Arab women on Arab news satellite channels is limited and there are no studies of disadvantaged women. This implies that further research is urgently needed to fill this gap. *Al Alrabiya's* tackling of non-political topics and the high percentage of Saudi viewers[9] were the main reasons for selecting the channel as a case study. Interviews with the elite at Queen Rania's Media Office and at the MBC Group were conducted to determine their views on *Al Arabiya's* development programmes. The study also conducted a textual analysis of a talk show on *Al Arabiya*, *Hewar AlArab (Arab Dialogue)* – that focuses on development issues to determine what proportion of air time is

---

[9] 40.5% of Saudi male viewers and 12.5% of Saudi female viewers above +35 years of age, 23.5% of Saudi male viewers and 9% of Saudi female viewers between 25-34 (Audience profile-MBC Group, 2010)

given to topics about poverty, illiteracy and violence against Arab women. The analysis will focus on episodes aired between 2006 and 2010.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 <u>Introduction</u>

"You will need to be aware of the choices of method and approach and of what the

consequences are of making particular choices in order to make the most of your

research topic and to produce good work" (Gray 2003, p.6).

Throughout this chapter, I will use methods best suited to answering my research questions

but first, it is important to distinguish between the terms method and methodology. 'Method

refers to those different techniques of research which any researcher employs in order to

construct data and interrogate its sources, while methodology describes the overall

epistemological approach adopted by the study' (Ibid, 2003, p.4). Since I aim to investigate

the codes of practice behind television programmes' coverage of issues relating to the

development of Arab women's status, I am using qualitative methods. Qualitative methods

focus on assigning meaning to my observations as a researcher and produce non-numerical

data that quantitative methods will not offer me (Green, 2008, p. 46). The main thing is to

not dichotomise quantitative and qualitative approaches; rather the choice of method should

be based on the goals of the research (Brannen, 1992, p. xiv). A qualitative approach is

designed to explore and develop the research questions, while a quantitative approach tests

hypotheses. In order for the research questions to be explored, the research method requires

the attributes of a qualitative approach, which are explanation, personal interpretation and

knowledge construction (Stake, 1995, p. 37). Accordingly, the study adopts a qualitative,

ethnographic methodology, which utilises 'between-method' triangulation consisting of in-

depth field observation, in-depth one-to-one interviews, and focus groups. The study also conducts elite interviews and textual analysis.

3.1.1 Triangulation

Triangulation can be defined as data obtained from a wide range of different sources, using a variety of methods. Triangulation's main purpose is to minimize the occurrence of errors or of drawing inappropriate conclusions, which may result from relying on only one method. In addition and most importantly, 'approaching research questions from different angles and bringing together a range of views has the potential to generate new and alternative explanations' (Arksey & Knight, 1999, pp.21, 22). 'Within method' triangulation means using a variety of techniques within one method and 'between-method' triangulation is where two or more distinct methods are employed to investigate the same fact, but from different angles (Ibid, 1999, p.23).

There are two groups involved in this study. The **first** is made up of young, disadvantaged Saudi Arabian women between 15 and 30 years of age. I lived among them in order to interview them and to conduct focus groups to discover their perceptions and opinions of the *MBC1* programmes that relate to poverty, illiteracy and violence. Here, I used a qualitative, ethnographic methodology, which utilised the 'between-method' triangulation consisting of in-depth field observation, in-depth one-to-one interviews, and focus groups. The **second** group is is made up of elites from Queen Rania's Media Office and from the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Group, with whom I conducted interviews. I interviewed Suzanne Afaneh, who managed the media section of Queen Rania's Media Initiative. The interview was coordinated by Ethar Khawasnah, the Chair of Queen Rania's Media Office. The interview's purpose was to examine the motivation behind and the, methods employed in

Queen Rania's Media Initiative on the development of women's status, and to find out how the initiative was implemented. In addition, the interview sought to determine whether there are other similar media initiatives on women's development in which pan-Arab television corporations are involved. The interview also examined their opinion of the MBC Group and whether they were cooperative during the Media Campaign. It also asked about their opinions, mainly of the *Al Arabiya* channel and how they view its development programmes. I interviewed Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim, the MBC Group's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and Abdul Rahman Al Rashed, Director of *Al Arabiya*. Additionally, I had a long conservation with Nakhle El Hage, Director of News at *Al Arabiya*, and met Ali al-Hadithi, Deputy Director of the MBC Group; Ahmad Hatoum, Senior Marketing Manager at *Al Arabiya*; and Nabeel Alkhatib, Executive Editor at *Al Arabiya*. I also met Ali Jaber, Dean of the Mohammed Bin Rashid School for Communications at the American University of Dubai, one of the judges on *Arabs Got Talent* at *MBC4*. Jaber was due to be assigned as MBC Group TV Director in September, 2011, succeeding Tim Riordan on the latter's retirement in October. The main purpose of these interviews was to know the extent to which they applied these media initiatives, and to understand their opinions of them. Moreover, the purpose was to explore opportunities for and barriers to presenting programmes on the development of women's status. My research methods also include a textual analysis of three programmes from *MBC1* and one programme from *Al Arabiya*, which will be explained in detail in Chapter 6. I used textual analysis by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method seeks to determine what proportion of air time was given to topics relating to poverty, illiteracy and violence against Arab women. It focused on three programmes on *MBC1* — *Kalam Nawaim, Tash Ma Tash,* a few episodes from a Saudi drama series called *Al Sakenat fee Golobena (The Female Inhabitants of our Hearts)* and one programme from *Al Arabiya*, which is focused on development — *Hewar Al Arab (Arab*

Dialogue). The analysis focuses on episodes broadcast between 2006 and 2010. The purpose of this analysis was to determine what proportion of air time was given to topics tackling poverty, illiteracy and violence amongst and against Arab women. The qualitative method seeks to use critical discourse and semiotic analyses.

3.2 <u>Fieldwork in Goz Al Jaafarh</u>

The study's qualitative, ethnographic research began with participant observation in a village called Goz Al Jaafarh that lasted for one month and was conducted in June, 2010. The key methods of ethnography are "participant observation and oral testimony: the first emphasising the legitimacy of a researcher's interpretation of observed cultural phenomena from their participation; the second emphasising a researcher's ability to allow people to 'speak for themselves'- to construct their own texts – via the recording and transcription of interview material" (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003, p.65).

I conducted focus groups and in-depth, one-to-one interviews, in the second stage of my fieldwork in February, 2011, for a period of one month. The ethnographic approach used in the first stage of my fieldwork in, 2010, helped me to develop a rapport and familiarity with the women, which allowed for a relaxed setting in the focus groups and interviews.

Lull believed in the significance of personal interaction in media studies through conducting ethnography and argued that "one of the most promising ways to study mass communication is to look at the details of interpersonal interaction" (quoted in Gillespie, 1995, p.58).

3.2.1 In-Depth Field Observation

One of the main reasons I used the ethnographic approach in my study was the absence of any studies on disadvantaged Saudi women. There is a widespread idea, worldwide, that disadvantaged Saudis do not exist, and everyone in Saudi Arabia is rich. In addition, there are one or two books in Arabic on Saudi women in the media, for example *Saudi Women in the Media* by (Akeel, 2010), but there is no study on Saudi women's media consumption and nothing about the underprivileged. Published studies on Saudi women's lives mostly deal with elites (Altorki 1986; Atrebi 1994; AlMunajjed 2006; Al-Baz, 2009). I commenced the study with exploratory fieldwork via in-depth field observation, before conducting focus groups and in-depth one-to-one interviews, in order to establish a rapport with participants. Before visiting the study's location and meeting participants, I used the distance axis style, where the researcher is rendered absent because it is more typical of research that the author is not declared. However, after staying in the village and spending time with participants, becoming involved in their day to day lives, I realised the importance of using the presence axis. The first person is used in the text to declare 'I was there', putting, the researcher at the centre, and speaking from a position of authority in order to explore my eye-witness experience, not to distance myself from participants and to give myself and the participants a voice. I agree with feminist critics who suggest that using the distance axis denies responsibility for the text and this non-reflexive mode produces groundless knowledge (Gray, 2003, p.177).

I kept detailed field notes to record important phrases, comments, and to keep track of important events and a log of significant observations. It was considered that this might prove to be an effective method of data collection as it could yield a significant amount of primary data about the village community, and women's roles within it (Khamis, 2009,

p.457). I also detailed the women's patterns of media usage and their television viewing habits.

When I first arrived in Goz Al Jaafarh and started to ask women questions about their lives, families and television viewing habits, I was given formal answers without detailed responses. Generally, older women were bolder and more open to answering than my target audience, younger girls between 15 and 30 years of age. I realised from looking at the girls that they wanted to talk and express themselves more, but they were either afraid or shy in front of the older women. Afterwards, I asked if I could be alone with the younger girls in another room, realising that the girls were much more comfortable and relaxed talking to me in a separate room, rather than being among the older women. They started to talk more frankly about their lives, families, dislikes, preferences, television viewing habits and favourite programmes. Whenever I asked them bold questions about whether, for example, they could confront their parents in order to study for their desired university degrees without their interference, all the girls drew their fingers across their necks, indicating that they would be killed. I imagined, at that time that I was among a nation of fearful women. Even though the girls were talkative when I was alone with them, they had mixed feelings when I asked them for their opinions on day-to-day life issues and on television programmes. Some were 'surprised', others were 'flattered', and some were 'puzzled' (Gillespie, 1995, p.68). I will never forget when I asked one of the girls, Sameera[10], for her opinion on television programmes and she started to look around the room pointing to herself saying: 'do you really mean me?' These girls' marginalisation by their families and society has damaged their self-esteem. The main advantage of my ethnography was that it enabled me to get to know and experience the harsh circumstances of the disadvantaged girls there. This made me

---

[10] The names used are pseudonyms for their protection

believe even more in my research's aims and the importance of integrating the viewpoints of the voiceless into media research and television programmers (Seiter, et al, 1989, p.4). I recognised Dervin's claims that:

> *"…feminist scholarship lies in its desire to give women a voice in a world that defines them as voiceless. It is transformative in that it is concerned with helping the silent speak and is involved in consciousness raising"* (quoted in van Zoonen, 1994, p.128).

With every day spent in the village, I built stronger rapports with the women and girls. Gaining their trust was not easy and I was extremely glad that I carried out exploratory fieldwork before conducting the focus groups and in-depth one-to-one interviews. The first obstacle faced in the first stage of my fieldwork was suspicion. They wondered whether I really was a researcher, rather than an employee from the Ministry of Social Affairs or a reporter. Furthermore, in the beginning, they were unsure that I was in fact from Saudi Arabia, but once this became known in the village, things changed. I discovered that village women will not talk openly with non-Saudis.

For Clark (Clark, 2006, p.418), the literature on qualitative research methods focuses on conditions under democratic rather than authoritarian regimes. Surveys reveal that the greatest challenges to conducting qualitative research in the Middle East relate to the authoritarian political conditions prevalent in most of the region's countries. In previous research, the political climate has affected researchers' interview techniques and has raised ethical dilemmas in the field (Ibid, 2006, p.419). This illustrates the importance of interviewers taking time to build trusting relationships with their interviewees in order to overcome their suspicions, which needs to be taken into account when researchers locate and

contact interviewees. Another difficulty is the degree to which those being surveyed are familiar with the meaning of the concept of the research as intended by the researcher. This is particularly difficult amongst marginalised groups, such as women and/or those with a low socioeconomic status who, due to lack of education and/or familiarity with survey methods, are likely to require assistance in understanding the survey instructions in order to ensure the validity of the research.

As already stated, there are specific ethical considerations when researching this target group. The most common discomfort that researchers have documented relates to interviewees requesting services or favours in return for participating in the interview, where a friendship had developed during the research process. The researcher struggles to balance his/her role as a friend to the interviewees and that of a professional researcher (Clark, 2006, pp.418-420). Accordingly, fieldwork becomes an exchange of knowledge, specifically with regard to concerns about human rights, intellectual freedom, family violence and corruption (Carapico 2006, p.430). To overcome this, the interviewer must stay focused on the research without isolating the subject through cold and impersonal behaviour, whilst also maintaining his/her professional boundaries (Green, 2008, p.57). These skills can be developed through practice, supervision and counselling. I will now detail the benefits accrued through my exploratory fieldwork via in-depth field observation ahead of conducting the focus groups and in-depth one-to-one interviews.

I tried my best throughout my stay in the village to balance my relationship with the women so that it was neither too formal and impersonal, nor so friendly that I would become involved in interviewees' personal lives. My main concern was to get sufficiently close to them so that I could understand what would make them trust me so that they would talk

openly with me. Before undertaking this fieldwork, I took into consideration that researchers have come to utilize more creative approaches to audience research. Gauntlett believes new and creative methods of audience research using focus groups and interviews are necessary, because studies into media effects seem to be designed in a manner that "trap[s] participants into giving just one or two pre-set responses, rather than allowing them to communicate their own experiences or engage in a meaningful way with researchers" (quoted in Gauntlett, 2002, pp.128-130).

Gauntlett states that a creative method he used when conducting a group interview discussion with children, was to encourage participants to make videos (Gauntlett, 2007, p.94). Another creative visual method uses photo-elicitation interviews. I planned to use the same creative visual method of photo-elicitation by providing the participants with cameras, asking them to take photographs and conducting discussions based on them. Having done the fieldwork and experienced first-hand the village's conservative culture and tradition, I realised that none of these creative approaches would work, or even be permitted in the village. Asking women to use a camera or video camera, and then conducting a discussion would not only be impossible, but would ruin all my efforts to build trust. I did not even use a tape recorder and relied on memory, later writing up notes, because I was afraid that using a tape recorder or even writing notes in front of them in the early stages of conducting my exploratory fieldwork could have generated doubt in their minds and undermined my efforts to gain their confidence. I decided to use the tape recorder in the second stage of my fieldwork.

However, I came to recognise the importance of language among the women of Goz Al Jaafarh, who lacked any formal education, especially because of the widespread oral traditions among women in the village. I realised that a creative approach needed to be more

embedded in language than in the visual. It is much easier for informally educated and conservative women to narrate events and tell stories about life histories, personal matters, and views about television programmes, than to try to represent these views using a camera or video; such forms of apparatus were almost taboo in the village. This demonstrates why a qualitative approach was much more relevant than a quantitative method for these women, who preferred to narrate stories, rather than give numbers and figures. I also realised that the best way to establish a rapport with the women in the village was to be an active listener and to engage myself in, and be responsive to women's conversations. Theories of language claim that language refers to facts and truth, emphasising the social and ideological functions of language above and beyond its use for communication (Gray, 2003, p.20). I endeavoured to take advantage of any clues embedded in language that would guide me to better understand the respondents, especially as there are no studies of village Saudi women. As noted above, most studies that deal with Saudi women focus on the privileged and the educated; disadvantaged Saudi women are not just anonymous, but, in the literature, it is as if they simply do not exist.

Snowball sampling was used to recruit the women. This approach necessitated identifying a member of the population who would lead the researcher to other members of the same population and so on (May, 1997, p.88). I admit that this approach helped me a great deal in my introductions to the village women, and without it I would not have been able to meet any of them. I resided with a lady called Ama[11] Asma, who is from Goz Al Jaafarh and who introduced me to other women between 15 and 30. She was the local coordinator in the second stage of my fieldwork. She called the girls to the focus groups for me and took me to their houses to do the one-to-one interviews. Ama Asma is 46 year old, underprivileged and

---

[11] The entire village calls Asma, Ama Asma out of respect. Ama means literally aunt (sister of the father)

not formally educated. She is a divorced mother with four daughters and two sons. She supports herself through working as an assistant in a dispensary. She is also dependent on social security and charitable donations since her husband divorced her and left their children without any financial support.

Staying at Ama Asma's house helped me in several respects. Living in her household provided me with key information about the village's traditions and customs, through gatherings with guests, attending the wedding of Ama Asma's daughter, Haya, and helping with daily activities. The only thing that I wanted to do in the first stage of my fieldwork, but was unable to do, was to watch television with a group of girls in the village and to discuss the programme, film or soap opera episode that we would have watched. The main reason for not being able to do this was that each house-hold has only one television, which the children watch most of the time. I was hoping at least to have this opportunity at Ama Asma's house, but I could not, because the youngest son watched television the whole time, and even when the television was available, the room was extremely hot and humid as it did not have air conditioning, so we could not stay there. However, I tried to compensate for this through talking about television programmes with the girls of Goz Al Jaafarh. I also tried to learn more about the girls' television watching habits from Ama Asma's daughter, Haya, who is 22 years old. She was still living in the house at that time, so I was able to learn about the girls in the village through her, especially regarding their education, their grievances and their views on television programmes. Ama Asma was extremely kind to me and introduced me to several other families and girls in the village. I asked these girls questions regarding their lives and their television viewing habits. With time, I started to feel immersed in the village's life. In ethnography, induction begins with the researcher's 'immersion' in the field (Brannen, 1992, p.6). This is summarised by Gillespie's statement:

"One is involved in a struggle to make sense of the complexity of social interactions, and so, inevitably, processes of selection are involved. Learning how and what to observe is as much a part of writing fieldnotes as the act of writing itself" (Gillespie, 1995, p.63).

It was through Ama Asma, Haya and, later, Haya's elder sisters, Lila and Hanan, that I learned how women and girls in the village viewed me, e.g., I was told that women in the village liked that I was sociable and concerned about their problems and complaints. They were also happy that I am also a Saudi, which made me feel that I was one of them and not a stranger, although Ama Asma and her daughters also mentioned that most village people were suspicious of my true identity and whether I was really a reporter, or an employee from the Ministry of Social Affairs. Some thought I was there to improve their situations. The fact that I took pictures of some girls and women, with their permission, generated more rumours in the village about my true identity. I took these photos only to evidence my fieldwork in the village, which I explained to them, but my actions were still misinterpreted. I was even told that most of the village women were jealous that I did not stay at their houses instead of Ama Asma's. They thought I was paying her and that she allowed me to stay for the money. They even mentioned to her what they might gain from being interviewed or participating in focus groups, suggesting that they wanted money for it. I caused even more problems for Ama Asma in the second stage of my fieldwork, when the fathers of the participants threatened to stop her hosting me, saying that I should also stop conducting the focus groups because they were not happy with the topics raised in the discussion. I was not convinced, nor did I feel it was necessary to give fictitious names to my participants in the first stage of my fieldwork, because I wanted to give credit to the people who helped me and who had participated in my research. However, the threats and intimidation that I dealt with

alongside Ama Asma convinced me of the necessity to conceal the names of my participants so as to avoid any harm they might suffer from my revealing their names.

One of the main things I learned in this exploratory fieldwork was to avoid certain terms when describing disadvantaged women. For example, I avoided using 'illiterate' women, opting instead for 'informally educated'. I also avoided using the term 'subjects', and used 'participants'. After being with women in the village, and after spending time at Ama Asma's house, I learned that there are different kinds of literacy. In a world without literacy, where nobody reads and writes, people are respected for other abilities, such as their intelligence, manners, compassion, wisdom and other qualities (Davies et al, 1993, p.158). Even the reasons the girls gave me for dropping out of school, or for not going to school regularly, were realistic and rational. There are numerous reasons for a lack of education such as, poverty, lack of transportation, unfair treatment of girls at schools, and the high unemployment rate among graduates that discourage those who are studying. The girls impressed me with the way they decoded television programmes, and I consider them to be active rather than passive viewers. I also discovered in the second stage of my fieldwork that it is not necessarily the case that educated women will always support women's rights more than the uneducated ones. For example, the girls who dropped out of school supported controversial ideas in Saudi Arabia, such as women driving, more than the girls in college.

After the exploratory stage of my fieldwork, I changed my plan from using the continuity variant of the dominant paradigm of communication for development (Sparks, 2007, pp.50-51) as a theoretical tool for understanding the processes at work in the screening and reception of television programmes on disadvantaged women –to using participatory theory instead. The continuity variant of the dominant paradigm is between modernisation theory

and participatory theory, but it retains many of the former's values (Ibid, 51). I thought before visiting the village that women needed a higher level of development and education before they could benefit from the participatory approach. In fact, I discovered after meeting the women there that there are different kinds of literacy, and academic education is just one form of education. I also learned that taking a participatory approach is a way to further people's empowerment, because individuals actively contribute to the development process by contributing ideas, showing initiative, articulating their needs and problems and asserting their autonomy (Melkote, 1991, pp.237-239).

3.2.2 Focus Groups

Conducting an ethnographic study in Saudi Arabia, particularly in a village, as a woman, focusing on disadvantaged women is not an easy mission by any means. After all the obstacles that I encountered, I realised why few researchers, especially non-Saudis, can conduct research there. Although I am from Saudi Arabia and my hostess welcomed me into her home and introduced me to the women in the village, it was not easy to gain the trust of the participants and their families. I also faced several financial and logistic obstacles, including finding the place, abiding by the village culture and rules, securing transportation, having a male relative as a guardian during my field work, adjusting to the village's lack of basic services, and detaching myself from the participants after finishing the fieldwork.[12]

Throughout this chapter I have discussed how research methods should be able to explore the research questions and test the theories behind them. Since the ultimate aim of my research is the empowerment of disadvantaged women, based on participatory theory, focus groups are an appropriate method. Community development and participatory approaches have used

---

[12] I intend to write an article in a Journal about the dilemmas and obstacles I faced in my fieldwork in Saudi Arabia.

focus groups because some have argued that focus groups have the potential to empower people and provide authentic data (Barbour, 2007, pp.5, 10). It has also been said that focus groups with women may prove to be an excellent way to examine gendered features of their experiences and can transform 'personal troubles' into 'public issues' (Ibid, 2007, p.12). The method was selected as appropriate for eliciting the perceptions of women because of its resemblance to 'feminized' conversations. It was also chosen due to its suitability for marginalised or 'hard to reach' groups, because it encourages participants to talk about subjects that are not often raised (Ibid, 2007, p.21).

After conducting in-depth field observation during the first stage of my fieldwork, I carried out the focus groups during the second stage, which lasted for one month. My first trip helped me enormously in conducting my focus groups. Firstly, since I had already developed a rapport and become familiar with the women and girls in the village, they were relaxed during the focus groups. Secondly, by talking and sharing experiences with them on my first trip, I had some insights in order to be able to select video clips that generated productive discussions. The DVD I made was composed of clips, lasting 32 minutes in total that were taken from different *MBC1* programmes. There were three clips from three different episodes of *Al Sakenat fee Golobena*, one clip from an episode of *Tash Ma Tash*, and three clips from three different episodes of *Kalam Nawaim* each clip last from two to ten minutes. I carried out a discussion after each clip to keep the participants engaged and so that they did not become bored. Creating these video clips consumed a lot of time and effort. In order to choose the right clips that related to my research's focal points, namely, poverty, illiteracy and violence against women, meant I had to go through all the episodes between 2006 and 2010, and choose the most suitable clips. Selecting and editing the clips of these programmes took me 14 days, working at least 10 hours every day, but I felt that my efforts were not in

vain when I saw the discussion in the focus groups. More details about the clips are found in Chapter 7. In all, I held seven focus groups. Each was composed of ten women, with the exception of the first focus group, which was made up of 22 due to a misunderstanding made by my hostess, and the last focus group of only eight participants. The total turned out to be 80 participants, which was more than I was aiming for. The duration of each focus group was two hours, long enough for me to understand participants' television-watching habits.

The focus groups were selected using a snowball sampling technique. Ama Asma facilitated my access to the local community. The number of focus groups was more than expected. I aimed to form seven to ten focus groups composed of not more than six women, totalling 60 participants, but I ended up with 80 participants. The women's educational backgrounds were varied. Educational backgrounds ranged from those who had never been to school, to those who had completed elementary school, secondary school, high school, to those who were still in college.[13] The age group that was selected ranged from 15 to 30 years of age. The main reason for choosing this age group was because they should have a sufficiently developed moral reasoning, unlike that of a child. At this age, most of the girls were dropping out of school, and discussion through focus groups and interviews could explain the impact and reasons behind that. Unfortunately, none of the participants were employed; accordingly, employment was not a factor here. However, further analysis was conducted relating to the impact of education and age on their interpretation of the *MBC1* programmes and on their life styles in general. The focus groups were conducted at Ama Asma's house, but she told me that to keep the focus groups running smoothly, I should not take any pictures. She said that she had been questioned by people in the village about the pictures that I had taken on my first trip. I listened to her and I did not take any pictures.

---

[13] It is important to highlight here that primary education in Saudi Arabia is not compulsory.

When I arrived at Ama Asma's house on the first day of the focus groups, I provided her with a television with a DVD player in order to play the clips. Even though I discussed with Ama Asma that the participants of each focus group should not be more than four to six, I found 22 girls at her house. This number contradicted what I had read about conducting focus groups, which encouraged small groups. Researchers who have conducted focus groups with women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) made the same point. They said that due to the culture within that community it was common for women in larger groups to talk at the same time or to hold side conversations. Consequently, it was impossible to hear parts of the tape clearly and data was lost. Accordingly, in order to overcome these problems, it was suggested that four to five participants is optimal (Winslow et al, 2002, p.573). When I told Ama Asma that the group was too big and that I had not been expecting that number, she said she could ask some of them to leave but I did not let her do that. I was afraid participants would feel disrespected and would not come again, or that they would urge others not to participate later. Building good relationships, especially on the first day of the focus groups, is crucial. However, I did not experience what the researchers in the UAE had: a larger group talking at the same time or holding side conversations. The participants in my focus group were attentive and silent while the clips were played. One of the main reasons was that the clips I selected were extremely appealing to the participants and attracted their attention. Moreover, each clip was short; the longest being 10 minutes, and the rest five, four and two minutes in length.

There was also a power cut on the first day of the focus groups, which meant that I could not play the clips when I wanted to. Ama Asma told me that this was common in the village, and we would have to wait until the power returned. I took advantage of this time to converse with the participants, especially since the group was large and it would be useful to introduce

myself and explain my research and the exact purpose of these focus groups. I also asked them to write their names, ages, and the level of their education on a piece of paper. I was glad that all the participants fell within the age group that I had planned for in my research. After the power returned, I started the discussion. I used the same method: talking to the participants and asking them to write their personal details in my notebook in all the sessions. The first focus group was the largest but the number of participants in the others ranged from six to ten.

It was essential to explain my research, the goals of the focus groups and the content of the clips, to the participants. For a successful interview, there are some basic preconditions: namely, accessibility, cognition, and motivation. For the interview to be accessible, the researcher must ensure that the participant has enough knowledge to answer the questions asked. Cognition means that the person being interviewed must understand the questions. The researcher must also motivate the participants by making them feel valued and by explaining that their cooperation is fundamental to the research's success (May, 1997, p.116). One of the ways to motivate participants is to provide them with food and drink, which are considered an inherent part of Arab hospitability. Researchers conducting focus groups with rural women in the UAE explained that nothing was possible until the women ate an extensive breakfast, which was part of their normal morning routine (Winslow et al, 2002, p.574). I offered participants food and refreshments during the focus group at Ama Asma's house as a nonmonetary incentive. On the first day of the focus groups, I found that Ama Asma, with her daughter Haya, gave the participants food and served coffee and tea. I asked her kindly not to do that again because I did not want to saddle her with expenses.

When Ama Asma told me on my first trip that women were hesitant to participate in the focus groups, hinting that they wanted money for it, I was concerned that the women might not show up at the agreed time. I thought that since I was conducting focus groups among disadvantaged women, money would inevitably be an incentive. Money has several advantages, such as being immediately appreciated and useful, especially among those who are in need. When considering money as an incentive, it is better given as cash in an envelope at the conclusion of the focus group discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p.78). I gave each participant in the focus group 50 SR in an envelope at the end of each session. When I asked Ama Asma whether this motivated the participants, she asked them, and confirmed to me that it did. She told me that their primary motivation was curiosity, to know what was in the envelope. The only ones who were reluctant to take the envelope were the ones in a better financial situation, and of those there were very few.

When I carried out the focus groups, I had in mind all that I read on the matter as well as the recommendations that I had been given by my two supervisors. Questions in focus groups are categorised into opening questions, introductory, transition, key and ending questions. The opening questions make everybody talk, not with the intention of obtaining information but to get people feeling comfortable. Introductory questions get people to start thinking about their connection with the topic, such as asking participants to remember when they first came across this topic and to describe that experience. Transition questions move the conversation into the key questions that guide the study, by requiring participants to go into greater detail about their experiences. Key questions drive the study. There are usually between two and five key questions to be discussed, and that may take between 10 and 20 minutes. The ending questions conclude the discussion, let participants reflect on previous comments, and include the summary and final questions (Krueger & Casey, 2009, pp.38-40).

All these techniques helped me to ask my questions and guide the discussions based on the sequence of the clips.

Each focus group lasted two hours, and that enabled me to understand participants' television watching habits, which I was unable to achieve on my first trip. It is worth noting that not a single group refused to be tape recorded. Here, I shared the same experience as the researchers conducting focus groups with women in the UAE, who were surprised that participants had not objected to being tape recorded (Winslow et al, 2002, p.569). I also did not experience any interruptions in any of the sessions as to Ama Asma and Haya did not allowing any children into the room where we conducted the discussions. There was only one occasion when Ama Asma's little son and her grandchildren knocked on the door to get chocolates. I gave them the whole basket of chocolate and asked them not to come in again, and they did not.

The challenge of having different types of participants in focus groups is that this might not allow the discussion to be conducted as planned. The challenge is having all four types of participants present: the expert, the dominant talker, the shy participant and the rambler. Experts perceive themselves to have more experience, or better information about the topic than the others. The best way to handle experts is to emphasise that everyone is an expert and all participants have important insights that need to be shared. Dominant talkers sometimes consider themselves to be experts, but most of the time they are oblivious to how they are perceived by others. One way to handle dominant talkers is to seat them beside the interviewer or group leader in order to exercise control over them through the use of body language. Another tactic is to thank the participant and then ask the other participants' opinions, or to avoid eye contact with the talker and look at others in the group. Shy

participants are inclined to say hardly anything, because they might be thinking before speaking. Shy participants may have interesting perceptions, but it requires extra effort to encourage them to share them. There are various tactics to overcome this shyness, such as placing them directly across the table from the group leader to maximize eye contact, or by calling them by their names. Rambling participants use a lot of words and take forever to get to the point, if indeed they have a point. These individuals are keen to talk, but they are usually off-track. The best way to handle ramblers is to discontinue eye contact with them after about 20-30 seconds. As soon as the rambler stops, the group leader should be ready to run with the second question (Ibid, 2009, pp.100, 101). I tried to use all of these tactics when I was conducting the focus groups. There were participants who were talkative and more dominant than others and I tried not to make eye contact with them and thanked them so as to give others a chance. Some of them allowed others to speak, but some kept talking even while another participant was answering the question. By contrast, shy participants required more encouragement from me to talk. Once, I sat next to one of the participants and I teased her that I would not let her leave the room without hearing her voice.

It is here that the importance of triangulation in utilising these research techniques (in-depth field observation, in-depth one-to-one interviews, and focus groups) is reached. The weakness and failure of one technique will be the strength and success of another. I conducted in-depth one-to-one interviews with shy participants who were embarrassed to talk in the focus groups. Such different techniques also enabled me to make comparisons between the women's responses, both in a group and individually.

Borkan, in his study in the Middle East, described the importance of selecting a focus group approach for a number of reasons. For example, not only is the researcher able to collect rich

and diverse data, but this approach fits well with Bedouin patterns of socialization that are characterised by tribal structures, are generally divided by gender, and focus on meeting for leisure and discussion in homes, tents, or designated places (Borkan, 2000, p.209). The setting and the approach I chose enabled me to have varied and deep discussions that were related to my research topics.

I became aware, through my discussions, of the impact of religion on their views of the clips. Similarly, researchers conducting focus groups with women in the UAE recognised the importance of culture and religion to the focus groups. They even proposed that further research is needed on religion and its impact on women's health (Winslow et al, 2002, p.572). When I asked the participants whether it is common for a father in the village to call his daughters to greet his friend or boss, as Abu Saud did in one of the clips from *Al Sakenat fee Golobena*, all the participants were against the idea. They assured me this would never happen in the village and even if they were asked to, they would refuse to do it, because it is against Islamic doctrine.

One of the participants said that wearing the veil was not practised years ago in Jazan, but the school religious curriculum and the clerics have taught women that wearing the veil is compulsory. Women in Jazan used to greet their cousins in the normal way, but they have now been told by clerics that this is not allowed and is a taboo.

In addition to religion, it is important to shed light on how educational background and class have impacted on the participants' understanding of the themes discussed. Van Zoonen revealed that the mass media should be seen in 'contingency' with individuals' backgrounds not as 'isolated phenomena' which will help in interpreting participants' readings (van

Zoonen, 1994, p. 132). Through my discussions, I realised that it is not always the case that those in college are necessarily more likely to accept controversial opinions than those with less education. After I played a clip from *Tash Ma Tash* that discussed the importance of women's driving in fulfilling women's economic and educational needs, I observed that participants in college, and those who were slightly better off, were not supportive of the idea, while most of those who had less education and were of a lower socio-economic status agreed with the idea. Saeeda and Fareeda, who were both in college, said, "We don't see the need for driving and transportation is accessible to us." Seham, who is also in college, said, "I am against women driving, but if a referendum was held, I wouldn't support or be against." Samia on the other hand, who had just finished 2nd grade said, "I want to drive, when my brothers and father refuse to give me a lift, I wish at that time I was independent and could drive myself." Hadeel added "we all can't complete all our tasks because of our dependence on men to get about…70% of the girls in the village couldn't complete their education because of the lack of transport."

Class is another important factor. When I played one of the clips from *Kalam Nawaim,* most of the girls' reactions were summarised in one of the participant's comment, "The problem of *Kalam Nawaim* is that it focuses on the middle and upper classes, while I prefer programmes such as *Sabaya*, on the *Al Mehwar* Egyptian channel, because it shows all the classes". She later expressed her anger to me over the clip, because of the presenters' insensitivity to people in their situation.

I agree with van Zoonen completely when she says that the "group interview enables women to exchange experience, build on each other's ideas and enhances awareness of their situation" (Ibid, 1994, p.138). Even though I did not encounter some of the difficulties that

other researchers have had in conducting focus groups, such as participants' boredom or refusal to be tape recorded, I did face tremendous problems in dealing with some participants' male relatives. The threats that Ama Asma and I received were frightening. They varied, such as forbidding me and Ama Asma to conduct the focus groups, calling the police, and tarnishing my reputation in order to decrease my popularity among the participants. To my surprise, those who wanted to call the police on me were the fathers of the college participants, whom I had assumed to be the most educated and therefore the most enlightened. I did not expect that giving 'voice' to the 'voiceless' would lead to such harassment.

3.2.3 In-Depth One-to-One Interviews

After I finished the focus groups, I started with the in-depth one-to-one interviews. Ama Asma took me to the homes of the interviewees whom I had selected. The fact that I deliberately did the in-depth one-to-one interviews after conducting the focus groups was extremely useful. The focus groups helped me to become familiar with, and to build a rapport, with the participants, which facilitated the interviews. By overcoming the difficulties and doubts that I faced in the focus groups, and by revealing my father's identity, I was able to visit the participants' homes, as they felt surer about me. In addition, it enabled me to meet those I did not have the chance to interact with fully while conducting the focus groups. Most of those I interviewed were from the first focus group, because it was such a big group and I was not able to hear everybody talk. In addition, I interviewed those who were shy about speaking in public and also those who had family problems or personal issues and were embarrassed to talk about them in public.

I conducted in-depth one-to-one interviews for a number of reasons. First and foremost, interviews revealed the individual perspectives of these women and offered insights into their lives - a wealth of data that cannot be garnered by using quantitative measures. Secondly, the interviews provided me with very useful background information about development and change in the villages, which would be particularly interesting given that they were first-hand accounts. Finally, such interviews were likely to enrich the conversation, affording a more thorough understanding of the women's lives and their views on the selected programmes, offering insights that group discussions might not (Khamis, 2009, p.457).

I experienced this with my participants, who told me stories that I would never have heard without conducting the interviews. I heard a number of stories, e.g., physical abuse by a parent, whether against themselves or their mothers, the generation gap in mentality, the impact of parental divorce, and dealing with relatives' drug addictions.

I used a mixture of semi-structured and unstructured interviews for a number of reasons. In semi-structured interviews, questions are normally specified, but the interviewer is free to probe beyond the initial answers given. This interview format elicits a broader, more personal response from the subjects, while still providing a level of comparability between all the interviews. It combines the most useful features of the structured and unstructured interview: comparability across the sample and further clarification of the subject's responses. The unstructured interviews allow participants to discuss topics in a flexible way, exploring their own understanding of the question (May, 1997, pp.111-112).

The types of questions that I asked participants were a mixture of open and closed questions. Open questions are most useful in soliciting opinions and personal perspectives, and require

the interviewer to record as much as possible of the answer (often using a recording device). Closed questions restrict possible answers to a pre-determined set, so analysis is quicker and cheaper, and this allows for greater comparability of responses (Ibid, 1997, p.94-95). In using both techniques, a range of both qualitative and quantitative results are generated, benefiting from the advantages of both approaches. The various techniques that I used helped me to stimulate the interviewees to speak.

Before asking a question and turning on the tape recorder; it is important to consider thematising the interview. Thematising refers to the why, what and how of the interview. Why is to clarify the purpose of the study; what is to gain pre-knowledge of the theme to be examined and how is to become accustomed to diverse techniques of interviewing in order to determine which to employ to gain the required knowledge (Kvale, 2007, p.37). A high quality interview not only considers thematising, but also designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting. The more attention that is given to the pre-interview stages of thematising and designing, the easier the post-interview stages of transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting will be (Ibid, 2009, p. 50).

Even though MBC1 is the most widely watched by Saudis, being watched by 70 % (Arab Media Outlook 2009-2013, p.104) of Saudi families, it is important to know how the viewers perceive *MBC1* programmes and to know what their favourite programmes are on other channels.

There are certain techniques in beginning an interview. The interview is introduced with a briefing in which the interviewer defines the purpose of the interview, the reasons for using a tape recorder, and asks if the interviewee has any questions before starting the interview. A

good relationship should be established with attentive listening, by putting the interviewee at ease and being clear about the interview's purpose (Kvale, 2007, p.55).

My semi-structured and unstructured interviews were composed of three sections. The first section was about individual backgrounds, which enabled me to listen to the interviewee's personal stories. The importance of knowing these stories is to take into account how their lives impact on their television watching habits and preferences. The second section was about television watching routines and their preferred programmes that deal with poverty, illiteracy and violence on television and that they would like to see on *MBC1*. The third section was about the programmes on *MBC1*, especially those that I selected for textual analysis, which are *Kalam Nawaim*, *Tash Ma Tash*, and *Al Sakenat fee Golobena*. The interviews gave me an idea of the viewers' overall views about these programmes, while the focus groups concentrated on feedback on the clips.

Each interview lasted, on average, between 40 and 60 minutes. I interviewed 20 women and girls. Mason mentioned that "you sample until you reach theory-saturation point…when your data stop telling you anything new" (Mason, 2002, p.134). I asked each interviewee for permission to record the interviews, and not one participant objected. I should say here that as I got to know the participants better, I become more and more impressed with their natural intelligence. Their feedback and analysis were remarkable, and made me realise things of which I was not previously aware. Ama Asma helped me here, by explaining to the mothers the importance of me being with the participants in a separate room, alone, because of my research's requirements. I did not experience any noise or disturbance with the interviewees while recording, allowing me to generate valuable data from them.

The interviewees' perceptions of the programmes proved to me that the viewer's sentiments are more real than the producers', because they reflect their actual lives. If the producers, actors or actresses portray a scenario that does not reflect reality, this is revealed by the viewers' rejection of it, revealing that they know more (Hobson, 1989, p167).

3.3 Elite (Arab Officials and Media Professionals) Interviews

3.3.1 Methods Used to Gather Data from Elites

This chapter has discussed the methods used to explore research questions and theories. My study explores whether the old dominant ideology paradigm of communication for development is the one that the elites involved in Saudi television programming draw on when designing programmes to promote the development of women's statusin the Arab world. This has been done through in-depth one-to-one interviews with elites, by accumulating documents and archives about the elites and about subjects relating to the research, building trust with the elites through time, and contact via emails and telephone, and a pilot interview. In addition, completing the focus groups and interviews with disadvantaged women in Jazan beforehand, gave me credibility and confidence when interviewing the elites, because the experience gave me a more concrete vision of my research's purpose. It enabled me to see the whole research process to draw a holistic framework for my methodology.

3.3.2 Interviews with Queen Rania's Media Office in Amman

After I left Jazan, I travelled to the Jordanian capital, Amman, and met representatives from Queen Rania's Media Office. I was flattered by their generosity and hospitality, to the extent that my hotel booking was under the name of the Royal Court, which afforded me extra special treatment. All my transport in Amman was organized by Queen Rania's Media

Office and the chauffeurs were her officers. Ethar Khawasnah, the Chair of Queen Rania's Media Office, arranged everything for me, the bookings, transport and the interviews. I had contacted Ethar a year before I travelled to Jordan, and I obtained informal consent from him to visit and interview representatives from Queen Rania's Media Office. At his request, I also sent him the interview questions before I arrived in Jordan. He sent me a number of documents and video clips about the initiative via email. Being in phone contact with Khawasnah on a regular basis before going to Jordan, made him knowledgeable and excited about my research, which ensured that my visit to Queen Rania's Media Office was fruitful.

The interviews also ran smoothly due to the techniques I had read about before conducting them. I used both structured and semi-structured interviews. In a structured interview, each person selects a response to a standardised question, so any differences in response are taken to be real differences in experience or opinion, rather than as a result of the way a question is asked. In a semi-structured interview, questions may be standardised, but the interviewer can ask follow-up questions to elicit more information or clarification. The semi-structured approach gives an opportunity for participants to respond more freely, but still allows for comparability between interviews (May, 1997, pp.110-111).

Khawasnah arranged an interview with Suzanne Afaneh at Queen Rania's Media Office. I had contacted Suzanne a year before, so she knew about my research. Since this study seeks to expose and critique the power of dominant ideology when constructing initiatives for the general public, it is important for a researcher to expose the power of the embedded dominant ideology by making the interviewee trust the researcher so as to reveal concealed information about inequities (Kezar, 2003, p.398). The interview with Suzanne Afaneh lasted for two hours and I learned important things about the initiative that I would never have found out

without conducting the interview. The chairmanship of the Committee at that time before the transition of the initiative to Abu Dhabi was with Suzanne Afaneh. Afaneh was Director of the Official Bureau of *CNN* in Jordan. Afterwards, she was assigned to be Deputy General Manager of the Zain Company for Media Affairs and Communication.   Then she was appointed as Minister of Tourism in Jordan, and she is now the President of the Board of Directors of the Dead Sea Area and Ajloun for Development. Afaneh told me the *Arab Media Campaign for Women's Development* was expanded to the *Arab Media Network for Human Development* so as not to be confined to just women's affairs but to cover human development in general. She explained that the main reason for expanding the *Campaign* from women to human development was that by labelling topics concerned with women as women's issues', only women took an interest. However, if we call these topics human rights' issues, and state that the lack of women's economic participation will affect the Arab world's economy, we make the problems faced by women into a national issue, raising the profile of the human rights agenda in general. When she told me this, I remembered one of the participants in the village, who had said she would like to see the stories of *Al Sakenat fee Golobena* acted out on *Tash Ma Tash* so women's empowerment issues can be observed by all of the society, not only women, so solutions can be found. At that I realised the value of the focus groups and interviews that I had already conducted in the village, because they made me articulate everything together. I also noticed Queen Rania took over the Arab Women's Summit in 2002 from Egypt, and the President of the Arab Women's Summit at the time was Suzanne Mubarak. Egypt was the first Arab country to initiate the Arab Women's Summit, which was then transferred to Jordan and Queen Rania became its President. The main reason for Queen Rania's initiative was the lack of women's employment across the Arab world. According to the booklet produced by the Media Committee at the Second Arab Women's Summit (2002), the highest percentage of women's employment in an Arab country

is no more than 30%, while the rest of the Arab countries vary between 5 and 15%. 40% of the Arab population are unemployed due to illiteracy.

3.3.3 Interviews with Officials and Professionals of the MBC Group in Dubai

Next I traveled to Dubai to interview officials from the MBC Group. Luckily, my family lives in Dubai, so I did not have any additional hotel expenses. I interviewed Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim and Abdul Rahman Al Rashed. I also had a long conservation with Nakhle El Hage. Before I went on my second trip, I conducted a pilot interview with Erfan Arab, anchor on BBC Arabic in London. This pilot interview helped me a great deal with my interviews, where I was able to rephrase my questions and render them into an 'interview dialogue' (Kvale 2006, p.483). Erfan's experience as an anchor and television journalist showed me the technique of turning an interview into a conversation of interest to both the interviewer and interviewee. He recommended that I start immediately with my research questions because several introductory questions might distract the interviewee from the research's purpose. He told me to keep in mind that I would be interviewing elites and time is an important factor, so I had to save every minute for the core questions of my research. He also trained me in how to make eye contact and when to sharpen and soften my voice. The pilot interview took us six hours and it was worth every minute.

The pilot interview that I conducted put my reading into practice. In addition to academic readings, reading the interviewees' historical backgrounds and all their previous interviews helped me to carry the conversation. The best interviewers of elites are not those who write the best questions but, rather, 'excellent interviewers are excellent conversationalists that make interviews seem like a good talk among old friends' (Berry, 2002, p.679).

Once I arrived in Dubai, I called Abdul Rahman Al Rashed and asked him about a suitable time for him to be interviewed. I contacted him one year before the interview and kept in touch with him by emails and text messages. He already had an idea about my research and one day before the interview, I sent him the outline of my research questions via email to refresh his memory. Contacting him in advance helped me to break the ice before conducting the interview. Interviewing and making appointments with officials in the Middle East are not easy tasks, and you have to be prepared for the time to be changed at any moment. We decided to meet at 2 p.m., Abdul Rahman called at 10 a.m. on the interview day and asked me if we could make the interview at 12 noon as a trip had suddenly been added to his schedule and he had to travel. Fortunately, I was home when he called, and my father's house is one block from the Dubai Media City, where the MBC Group building is located.

The interview lasted an hour and was tape recorded with his permission. One of the main factors that made the interview so interesting to both of us was the events that were happening at that time, and that are still happening now in the Arab world. The revolutions that took place in a number of Arab countries were mostly due to poverty, unemployment and lack of freedom, which are subjects related to my research, and that turned the interview into a hugely relevant conversation.

I learned some useful tips about how to conduct interviews with a member of the elite, such as challenging the interviewee, focusing on questions that might have a higher payoff, being knowledgeable about the interviewee and the subject, and knowing when to probe and when not to (Berry, 2002, pp.680-682). I used these tips when I asked Al Rashed if talking about corruption, which is one of the causes of poverty, would be an obstacle to the production of development programmes.

Al Rashed was extremely gentle and helpful. After the interview, he called Ahmad Hatoum to provide me with any document or piece of information I might need. I asked him to introduce me to Nakhle El Hage especially since Suzanne Afaneh had encouraged me to meet him, since he was one of the most active participants in Queen Rania's initiative. My meeting with Nakhle El Hage exceeded my expectations. Even though the meeting was not planned, it lasted for 45 minutes and provided me with important information. Nakhle gave me his frank opinion about Queen Rania's and other initiatives.

Then I interviewed Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim. The fact that I did not contact his office before I arrived in Dubai, meant it took me twelve days to arrange the interview. Getting access to high ranking officials such as Sheikh Waleed, proved to me that women's higher education, especially in a city like London, is really appreciated and respected among Saudis and in most of the Arab world. I tried first to arrange this interview by contacting Sheikh Waleed's secretary, but my attempts failed. The secretary asked me to send him the questions and then he promised to call me back, but he did not. I was worried that time would fly by without me conducting the interview. Later I got the mobile number of Ali al-Hadithi and introduced myself to him, explaining to him that interviewing Sheikh Waleed was crucial to my study. He told me that he would call them, and two days later, Sheikh Waleed's office called me to give me an appointment. Sheikh Waleed does not like to be interviewed by the media, generally, and I was extremely privileged that I was able to interview him. The interview was delayed by an hour and I waited in the lobby until they let me in to Sheikh Waleed's office. The interview lasted for 40 minutes and it was recorded. Ali al-Hadithi was with us in the office while I conducted the interview. Both were hospitable and provided me with documents afterwards.

Although I was extremely excited before the interview, I wished that I had delayed it until after I had met the programme managers and producers from *MBC1*. That might have made the interview much more fruitful, for two reasons. Firstly, my questions would have been better filtered and this would have enabled my probing to be more productive. Secondly, I realised that interviewing media specialists and journalists is different from interviewing business men in media. Journalists and media specialists are more expressive and talkative, while business men are more secretive. I was worried that probing more than once with a high official might make the interview antagonistic. The main advantage of one-to-one interviews is that it offers insights as to the intended meaning, which is sometimes more important than the exact words (Stake 1995, p.66). Sheikh Waleed's opinion of Queen Rania's initiative was that the principles of this initiative are integrated into the MBC programmes in a broader way than in the initiative. The MBC Group's motivation to produce programmes on development and women's empowerment issues was already present and it was not inspired by the initiative.

I also met Ali Jaber at the American University of Dubai. Ali Jaber was one of the participants in Queen Rania's initiative, and I was advised by Suzanne Afaneh to meet him. Jaber shared a similar opinion to that of Nakhle El Hage, in so far as the initiative was a PR campaign rather than being about achieving actual change.

I was not trying, through conducting these interviews and meetings, to be a detective or to play the role of a journalist collecting data, but to generate research data by using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research "implies data generation processes involving activities that are intellectual, analytical, and interpretative" to yield constructive knowledge and appropriate findings (Mason, 2002, p.52).

3.4 <u>Textual Analysis</u>

3.4.1 Methods Used for Textual Analysis

The methods used here are quantitative and qualitative analysis. I used textual analysis by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method seeks to determine what proportion of air time is given to topics relating to poverty, illiteracy and violence against Arab women. It focused on three programmes on *MBC1* — *Kalam Nawaim, Tash Ma Tash,* a few episodes from a Saudi drama series called *Al Sakenat fee Golobena* and one programme from *Al Arabiya*, which is focused on development — *Hewar Al Arab*. The analysis focuses on episodes broadcast between 2006 and 2010. The episodes and sessions selected focused specifically on the development of women's status issues. The qualitative method seeks to use critical discourse and semiotic analyses. Critical discourse analysis involves a close examination of language and focuses on Fairclough's work around identities and relationships (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p.150). Since the study's target group is disadvantaged women in the Arab world, with a focus on Saudi Arabia, the identities discussed will be class, gender, and religion. Since there are three different genres in the study; talk shows, drama and situation comedy, the relationships examined are those between hosts, guests, experts and the fictional characters. A semiotic analysis, as viewed by de Saussure, is much broader than linguistics. De Saussure showed how language is made up of signs that communicate meaning. Charles Sanders Peirce explained that social life is pervaded by messages that contain signs, mostly visual and oral, gestures, dress codes, tones of voice and facial expressions, all of which have embedded connotations (Bignell, 2002, pp.5, 14).

3.4.2 Talk Shows

3.4.2.1 Soft Talk Show: Kalam Nawaim is a talk show for women, which is similar in format to the US show *The View*, on ABC. The programme discusses several issues pertinent to Arab women. The research examines how this private television channel presents issues relevant to poor, village young women and further, how this group of women perceive these messages. It will also trace how this 'soft' women's talk show presents and analyses the serious topics in this study.

3.4.2.2 Hard Talk Show: Hewar AlArab focuses on development issues. Episodes have titles such as 'Arab women... Governments interested in concrete buildings and neglect the rights of women'; 'Governments conceal the role of the citizen and are concerned with Foreign Affairs'; 'Water security in the Arab world', etc., and is presented by Taleb Kana'an. I chose this programme because it is aimed at development topics that are mainly presented to the elites in the Arab world. The analysis will determine what proportion of air time is given to topics about poverty, illiteracy and violence against Arab women, and whether the elites feel inspired to help the disadvantaged after viewing such episodes.

3.4.3 Situation Comedy

Tash Ma Tash – the title of the series can be roughly translated as *It's No Big Deal* – is a popular Saudi situation comedy, which began in 1992 and has been running for 17 seasons; it only runs in the month of Ramadan. It was aired on *Saudi Channel 1* for 13 seasons but in 2005 it was acquired by the MBC. The MBC Group bought *Tash Ma Tash* from *Saudi Channel 1* due to its popularity with Saudis and to provide the comedy series with more freedom to handle sensitive issues in Saudi society in return for advertising space during the programme, either in the standard advertisement breaks, or by using product placement in the

programme itself (Deejani, 2006). *Tash Ma Tash* is admired by most Saudis because it satirises the social, political and economic concerns of Saudis. The series is also admired by hundreds of Saudi women because they perceive it as doing justice to Saudi women's empowerment issues by presenting the difficulties they face due to customs and traditions that are prejudiced towards women. The episode *Soor AlHarem (The Wall of the Harem)* was one of the most popular episodes with Saudi women, although most of the feedback on this episode came from educated Saudi females living abroad (Saudi Forum website, 2009). None of these episodes were investigated from the point of view of disadvantaged, young village Saudi women and instead they focused on educated Saudi woman living in the city. I therefore used this episode in the focus groups.

3.4.4 Drama

Al Sakenat fee Golobena is a popular Saudi drama series, something like a soap opera, dealing with women's empowerment issues. In view of its focus and popularity in the village, I decided to undertake textual analysis of some episodes. Bill Ryerson, founder of Population Communication International (PCI), noted that entertainment programmes like soap operas are able to engage people and influence attitudinal and behavioural change because their emotional content makes them memorable (Weinreich, 2006).

3.4.5 Elements Enhancing Textual Analysis

The three *MBC1* programmes that I intended to analyse, *Kalam Nawaim, Tash Ma Tash* and *Al Sakenat fee Golobena*, were played in the focus groups. Conducting focus groups around these three programmes would give me extra depth when I textually analysed them. Fairclough explained that one of the approaches of discourse analysis is conversation analysis through ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodologists tend to focus on notions such as class and

power, interpretatively (Fairclough, 1992, p.17). The fact that I have used the ethnography approach, focus groups, and in-depth one-to-one interviews, will enable me to analyse the texts, not merely in line with existing theories, but in the light of the findings from an actual ethnographic study that will generate more theories. This coincides with Stuart Hall's words: "I am not interested in Theory, I am interested in going on theorizing" (quoted in Ang, 1989, p.110).

Since the study investigates voluntary media codes of practice in their coverage of issues around the development of Arab women's status, I will be analysing the texts in light of the recommendations of media initiatives such as Queen Rania's. In addition, since the target women's group in this study are the disadvantaged in the Arab world, focusing on Saudi Arabia, the textual analysis will be based on class, gender, and religion.

As the study critiques the dominant ideology and the textual analysis will be of television programmes, it is important to discuss the scripts' 'hidden power'. In television, there is an acute division between 'producers' and 'consumers', since the former does not know the mind-set of the latter, so interpretations are based on assumptions. The producers have the dominant power here, because it is they who determine what is to be presented on television (Fairclough, 1989, p.49).

Fairclough explains that social classes are derived from economic and political powers that are reflected in discourse (Fairclough, 1989, p.33). In this textual analysis, I will trace the impact of economic, political and also religious power in the scripts. Since the media conglomerate I selected for my case study is not totally free of government control and religious pressure, utilising these elements in the textual analysis is essential.

Chapter 4

ARAB MEDIA INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT ON ARAB SATELLITE TELEVISION

"Media mirrors reality. The typical image of women in the Arab media is the same as that embraced by Arab society...At the same time media cannot be passive, but must be an instrument of change since it is one of society's most important institutions. If reality is to be changed by using the media to reconfigure the typical image of women, then it should be done by drawing up strategies, making plans and implementing them" (Abu Zeid, 2005, p.10).

One of the main things that this study tries to investigate is the extent to which *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* have applied voluntary media codes of practice that were devised as part of a pan-Arab initiative in their coverage of Arab women's development issues. Accordingly, this chapter tries to shed light on media initiatives that discuss the role of Arab satellite television in women's development. One of the main initiatives that discusses the exact focal points of this study and the role of Arab satellite channels in addressing these issues, is Queen Rania's Media Initiative. This chapter will also explore other initiatives, such as Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Al Ketbi's Media Initiative and the *White Hands Campaign*. It will also discuss whether the dominant ideology has been applied, and will examine what kind of women's development is envisaged by these initiatives. Whether it is Women in Development (WID), where women are not integrated in the development process but, rather, are encouraged into the productive sectors of the existing economic system (Beneria & Sen, 1997, p.49); or Women and Development (WAD), which focuses on the relationship between women and developmental processes, but fails to analyse the relationships between patriarchy, different modes of production and women's subordination and oppression; or Gender and

Development (GAD), which questions the basis for assigning specific gender roles to different sexes, rejects the public/private dichotomy and focuses on challenging existing power structures in society between men and women (O'Brien et al, 2000, p.125).

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first will discuss development and Arab satellite television to show the need for media initiatives that tackle development, and women's development, in particular. The second section will explore Queen Rania's Media Initiative, drawing on the opinions of Suzanne Afaneh and Ethar Khawasnah whom I interviewed at Queen Rania's Media Office. The third section will highlight other media initiatives, and the final section will discuss the views of the MBC Group's officials on Queen Rania's and other media initiatives.

4.1 <u>Development and Arab Satellite Television</u>

Arab satellite channels have helped to underpin pan-Arab identity, but have undermined other broader developmental and social needs. It has been reported that the number of Arabs living in poverty stands at 65 million. One aspect of poverty is youth unemployment, which is a crucial challenge in the Arab world. Unemployment rates for Arab women are higher than for men and are amongst the highest globally, suggesting endemic discrimination against women, which has contributed to women's disempowerment *(Arab Human Development Report 2009)*. Globally, there are 771 million illiterate adults (aged 15 years and older); two-thirds of them are women from developing countries, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States (UNESCO 2006). Arab women suffer from physical violence, such as beatings, rape, and honour crimes. Those who are the most impoverished, uneducated and exposed to violence are Arab women in rural or village and desert areas. Women also lack basic nutrition, as well as basic shelter, clothing, and social support (Arab Human Development

Report, 2009). These are serious development issues that need to be addressed on Arab satellite channels. Television has a particular advantage over other means of information dissemination mainly due to the region's high levels of illiteracy. Since the emergence of the Arab satellite channels, a greater number of ordinary people have enjoyed access to a number of television programmes on them, broadcast in competition with local television channels in several Arab countries (Akeel, 2010, p.114). As these channels address liberal topics and seem to lack a bias towards either gender, the proportion of viewers of local channels has decreased, as the satellite channels offer entertainment and educational programmes presented in a professional manner and contain up-to-date events, which is not the case for channels under government censorship (Ibid, p.130). However, "it is unfortunate therefore that there is very limited development programming on satellite TV in the Arab world. Indeed Arab television at large is not a vibrant force for knowledge or culture" (Arab Human Development Report, 2009).

Arab countries can no longer afford to close their eyes to developmental and social issues, or claim that everything is as perfect as it is presented on state television. Arab satellite channels do generate discussion about development and social change, but it is superficial (Hroub, 2006, pp.91, 94). The focus on Saudi-owned channels tends to be on foreign and regional, rather than local news. Nabil Al Khatib, Executive Editor at *Al Arabiya*, said:

> *"For 50 years, all Arabs have heard about is Israelis, Palestinians, Americans, Arab summits and so on, and nothing about real answers to the real questions of why he is poor, frustrated and unhappy with the level of health care and education for his kids"* (quoted in Sakr, 2007, p.56).

Faisal Al-Kasim, anchor on the *"The Opposite Direction"* on *Al Jazeera*, hosts a programme centred on core politics, but most episodes discuss Arab nationalism, liberation issues and imperialism, and only a few episodes touch on development or social change. He says that "it is time to start from the bottom up, to humanize the Arab media by tackling human and social problems" (Ibid, p.56). International and regional politics, including the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, are the focus of Arab satellite channels, which leaves only limited space for national matters, such as development indicators and policies on poverty and unemployment (Karam, 2007, p.82). Both news and entertainment satellite channels broadcast few development programmes. There is a dearth of such programmes that target young people on issues such as employment, education and social betterment (Ibid, p.81), as well as a lack of programmes targeting women on gender equity and empowerment, to address the fundamental problems of unequal power distribution (Melkote, 2006, p.117).

Whenever topics of development and social change are discussed, usually relating to women, arguments centre on Islamist and secularist views. Discussion of these matters on Arab satellite channels usually gives rise to loud, polarising debates between traditional Islamists and modern secularists. Satellite media are not acting as a catalyst for progress. Few programmes discuss the bridges that must be built between the two ideologies in order to achieve developmental and social change. Instead of having heated adversarial debates, overcoming differences is important particularly where complex issues, such as the Islamic interpretation of women's rights and equality, are concerned (Hroub, 2006, pp.89, 92, 93). Nabil Dajani, a Professor at the American University of Beirut, said:

> *"As far as bringing the secularist and Islamic perspectives together is concerned generally the interest of satellite channels is not in dialogue or public service, but*

agitation...the concept of social and national responsibility is still very narrow on

satellite channels" (Ibid, p.98).

It is unreasonable for Arab media to rely mostly on ready-made American and European programmes, or on Arabic versions of them, as this could discourage local productions and talents and engender greater dependency on Western media (Sakr, 2007, p.112). Some might argue that the role of satellite media is to transmit information, not to create social change and development. This argument may apply in developed countries, but not in developing countries, where development indicators are low and every tool must be employed to aid development (Hroub, 2006, p.92). Low development indicators in Arab countries, including poverty, illiteracy, youth unemployment, women's rights, social and health problems, mean Arab satellite channels must take these issues more seriously. The importance of broadcasting development programmes on satellite channels in particular, lies in that they operate a less restrictive and more open policy than state television, and so they attract larger audiences. Despite impediments and limitations, Arab satellite channels make commendable contributions to political discussions, but their role in broadcasting development and social change is superficial (Ibid, pp.117-118).

International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) have drafted proposals for the Middle East to develop a "global framework for a democratic media", but instead of cooperating with international organisations, NGOs and the media to promote development, governments and the ruling elites in the Middle East have tried to block such collaboration, while simultaneously continuing to pressure the media in their respective countries to be their mouthpieces (Ibid, pp.99, 169, 188).

The sections below detail Arab media initiatives that are focused on women's advancement for Arab satellite channels that might be viable alternatives to the international NGOs' proposals.

4.2 Queen Rania's Media Initiative

Since this study explores the extent to which *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* have undertaken media initiatives, or have applied voluntary media codes of practice in their coverage of issues around Arab women's development, it is crucial to discuss and examine existing initiatives. This section will do this and will determine whether they have applied the dominant ideology, also investigating what type of women's development and empowerment have promoted in the initiatives.

A number of media initiatives focus on Arab women's empowerment and quite a few have discussed the coverage by private Arab satellite channels of poverty, illiteracy and violence against disadvantaged women. However, the role of private Arab satellite television in this particular agenda has only been a priority since the launch of Queen Rania's Media Initiative in 2002. In 2002, Queen Rania took over as President of the Arab Women's Summit from Egypt's Suzanne Mubarak. Egypt was the first Arab country to host an Arab Women's Summit, and it was then transferred to Jordan and Queen Rania became its President from 2002 to 2004. The Arab Women's Summit is hosted by a different Arab country every two years. In her time as President, Queen Rania formed an executive committee dealing with media affairs for Arab women. Suzanne Afaneh was coordinator of the media initiative and it was the Queen's idea to launch a media project for Arab women. Afterwards the *Arab Media Campaign for Women's Development* was launched and was later expanded to become the *Arab Media Network for Human Development*, and should not only be confined to

women.   Several satellite channels participated in this campaign, including *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya*. Both aired the campaign over a one-year period, between three and six times a day, for a total of 90 minutes each month (Arab Media Network for Human Development, 2004).

Asked about how the media initiative had evolved, Suzanne Afaneh's comments reflected changes in global thinking about women's rights as human rights:

> *"If we restrict the topics related to women by calling them so-called women's issues, only women will take an interest. Meetings are often among women activists and discussions take place within these circles. If we want to break out of this framework, we must make women's rights a human rights issue. If we call the matter women's issues, we constrain it within a rigid mould. But if we call them human rights' issues and explain that non-participation of women in the workplace will affect the economies of the Arab world, we will have framed women's issues as matters of national importance. Therefore, it is called the Arab Media Network for Human Development". (Amman, 2011)* [14]

Critiquing the rights and laws that privileged male control over women, such as in family and civil laws, among international organisations and officials may improve the chances of women's equality and empowerment (Beneria & Sen, 1997, p.41).

Discussing the initiative's evolution, Afaneh seemed to switch between different approaches to women, gender and development. At one point she explained that there were two reasons

---

[14] A list of the interviewees, with their positions and the date and place of interview, is given in the Appendix

for the launch of this initiative: one for development purposes, the other so that women could have a presence on satellite television. She said:

> *"They say that the Arab world is working at half capacity because so few women are working. The highest percentage of women working in any Arab country is no more than 30%, while most Arab countries vary between 5 and 15%. If women were involved in the labour market, there would be economic growth".* (Amman, 2011)

Here, Afaneh explained women's advancement as it is defined in WID, grounded in the traditional modernisation theory that wrongly assumes women are not integrated in the development process. It accepts existing social structures and does not question the sources of women's subordination and oppression, or why women have not benefited from development strategies. WID encourages women's organisations to focus on production as a means for women to increase their input to the economic system. Yet, in relation specifically to media, Afaneh indicated recognition of the need for a GAD approach.

For example, she noted:

> *"The members of the media initiative explain these issues and argue that women-only programmes are inadequate for tackling these issues. For example, Lelnesaa fakat (For women only) on Al Jazeera, whose title is enough to ensure that only women will tune in. The subjects will be treated as women's issues and therefore any discussion will be restricted to women only. So how can we change reality?"* (Amman, 2011)

Afaneh and Queen Rania's team came to this conclusion because they believe that women-only programmes, such as *Lelnesaa fakat (For women only)*, form a kind of 'ghettoization' of women (quoted in Sakr, 2005, p.130). Accordingly, important discussions covered in women-only programmes will not be a public concern that reaches decision-makers. The team thinks that mixed-sex forums can transform women's basic needs, such as a steady source of income and education, as well as aid more strategic gender interests, such as challenging male control of women's labour and women's restricted access to valued social/economic resources and political power (Young, 1997, p.368).

She added:

> *"Instead of producing women-only programmes, women should be integrated into the mainstream because we do not want to watch programmes only for women. We would like to have women's issues addressed as public issues. If there are economic programmes working women will feature and if there are political programmes female politicians will be present. In this way, women can participate as effective members of society in all areas of life"*. (Amman, 2011)

Here, the concepts of mainstream programming or mixed-sex programmes does not focus on women *per se* but on how gender relations have caused such subordination (Wong, 2003, pp.308-318). However, even if women are aware of their subordinate positions, it does not mean they understand the structural causes of this unequal balance of power, explained in the GAD approach. It was not clear from Afaneh's comments whether she saw any link between the structural causes and the nature of the media initiatives in which she was involved. She explained that due to the restricted duration of the Arab Women's Summit in each Arab

country, limited to only two years, the initiative could not reach disadvantaged women, decision-makers and media officials in such a short space of time. The initiative targeted the elites who are actually the ones who can produce programmes for these disadvantaged women.

Implicit in this observation is the admission that the media initiative conducted no Participatory Actions Research (PAR). PAR is dedicated to reviving both the power of marginalised people and their popular knowledge. The knowledge that PAR attempts to generate is specific, local and applies a bottom-up approach. Importantly, it is used to initiate collaborative social action in order to empower local knowledge and wrest social power, which is inherent in knowledge, away from the privileged (Friesen, 1999, pp.281-308). Due to such a short life span, the initiative targeted decision-makers and media officials, rather than disadvantaged women, which is a clear application of the top-to-bottom approach.

Afaneh said:

> *"We should be focusing on something specific so that we can actually accomplish things... If the campaign continues, it will certainly discuss development issues. If you want to be effective, you cannot move too quickly and against the current, especially at the beginning."* (Amman, 2011)

As these summits and organisations are usually chaired by first ladies, no one dares to criticize them (Boerwinkel, 2011, p.22, 23). As suggested by the fact that Queen Rania launched her own initiative, it can be argued that first ladies are more interested in making their own mark than in exploring what works best in the chosen field of their initiative.

Discussing the practicalities, Afaneh highlighted the amount of money allocated to the initiative launched by Queen Rania, but also emphasised that there was no intention to launch any new type of programming. She said:

"The executive managers of the satellite channels were keen to set up programmes for women but the initiative's leaders refused to do so, explaining that this was not their aim. They clarified that they do not want them to change their programmes. They just want them to integrate women into existing programming. We do not want them to create a new audience." (Amman, 2011)

Adding:

"Our first objective is to gain air time from the executive managers, which is extremely expensive. The media campaign they initiated costs millions. The Arab Women's Summit is covering all the expenses. The second objective is to monitor the programmes on satellite channels and talk shows. They would like to get women out of their ghettos and for them to be integrated into political, social and economic programmes. But the Summit did not discuss any changes to movies and soap operas, because these are confined to a few Arab countries, such as Egypt and Syria, for export to the rest of the Middle East, and their analysis needs more time and planning." (Amman, 2011)

Based on my discussion with Afaneh, I learned that the media project was chaired by Afaneh and that Queen Rania was Chair of the Committee because she was then President of the Summit. The *Arab Women's Summit* funded all the costs, and the campaign's success came

down to these women's power to persuade the channels' decision-makers of the campaign's importance.

This kind of contribution to programming rarely happens, as officials in power fiercely resist interference. This is revealed in Afaneh's comment: "If you want to be effective, you cannot move too quickly and against the current, especially in the beginning" and when she said:

"You do not want to run into several battles at all levels... If you want people to be responsive to your opinions, you have to start with modest goals. If you attack officials and accuse them of being on the wrong path, and that their scripts and programmes do not meet the objectives of the United Nations, no one will respond".
(Amman, 2011)

Afaneh added:

"If the project were still in Jordan it could have been institutionalized and they could have attracted donors, but the campaign was launched to serve the Arab Women's Summit during this period. The idea of institutionalizing the project is still valid. The Arab Media Network for Human Development was a step taken towards institutionalization. They got approval for the project's institutionalization from most of the executive managers, but it was not taken to the executive level because the Summit moved to the UAE and there was no follow-up. One of the initiative's goals was to institutionalize the Arab Media Network as a regional NGO, but this did not materialise because the Summit was transferred to the UAE. Before the Summit moved to the UAE, they had been working, on a new media strategy for women involving discussions with media specialists but we do not know how far the media

strategy in the UAE got. We are the only ones who thought outside the box, but when the Summit was transferred to another country, the executives reverted to the same programme template for women." (Amman, 2011)

Afaneh said that one of the initiative's goals was to institutionalise the *Arab Media Network for Human Development* as a regional NGO. This is similar to the social mobilisation that integrates top-down and bottom-up approaches to include political will and public resources for social change, bringing together government agencies, NGOs and the media to work towards a common goal. Satellite television can contribute to this in two ways: either by working with civil society organisations and NGOs to generate public awareness, or by acting as an independent agent for change (Adams, 2006, pp.179, 180). Nonetheless, social mobilisation is unlikely to be easily achieved in the Arab world due to governmental control of the media and their reluctance to cooperate with NGOs (Kandil 2009, pp.25, 28). In addition, even if such NGOs were established, they would most likely be First Lady Organisations (FLANGOs), operating indirectly under governmental control, so it would be hard to make them accountable for mistakes, or to criticize them. It is also possible that they would select, rather than elect, their executive committee members (Boerwinkel, 2011,pp. 22, 23).

4.3 Other Media Initiatives

There are fifteen Arab countries who are members of the Arab Women's Organisation: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Syria, Oman, Palestine, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania and Yemen (Abu Zeid, 2005, p.65).

The Arab Women's Organisation and the General Union of Arab Journalists held a workshop on "women and media" 28 and 29 May, 2005. Its two main subjects covered were the media's role in tackling women's issues, and correcting the negative portrayals of women. The latter refers to problems facing women in the media. It has been mentioned that the media focuses on the elite and on 'role model' women, while ignoring women of other classes in Arab societies. It has been also noted that interest in women's status is largely fleeting and is directed by politicians and sometimes even by foreign influences (Ibid, p.55).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) took over the presidency of the Arab Women's Summit in its third session (2007-2009). *The Media Strategy for Arab Women* was launched under the auspices of Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Al Ketbi and discussed media issues in relation to Arab women. Sheikha Fatima is the third wife of the founder of the UAE, who was also its first President, and the late Emir (the ruler) of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. She is called the Mother of the Nation and is considered the most prominent of Zayid's wives. Her sons outnumber all other groups of siblings from the different mothers within the Al Nahyan family and they all hold the highest positions in the country. Sheikh Mohammed, the current Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi; Sheikh Abdullah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs; Sheikh Mansour, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs; Sheikh Hazza, the National Security Advisor and the Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Board; Sheikh Tahnoun, Executive Board Member and Chief of the Emiri Aviation Authority; and Sheikh Hamdan, the Ruler's Representative in the Western Region. Sheikha Fatima's sons are sometimes referred to as the Bani Fatima, which points to their power and privilege (Al Sheikh, 2011, p.10).

Even though Sheikha Fatima does not herself appear in public and does not allow her pictures to be published in any media, she is very active in supporting women's rights in the UAE. She is the Chairwoman of the General Women's Union (GWU) of the UAE and the Supreme Chairperson of the Family Development Foundation. She founded the GWU in 1975 to facilitate women's opportunities to realise their full potential through education and training. She has been an active advocate of women's equality and rights, encouraged the provision of free state education for girls, and promoted adult literacy in the UAE (Ibid, p.10).

Sheikha Fatima's media strategy was not the same as Queen Rania's initiative, nor even is it in any sense a continuation of it, but it was another strategy concerned with women in the media and the problems they face. Starting another media initiative from scratch laid waste to the efforts and money that had been spent by Queen Rania. Afaneh's information about Sheikha Fatima's media strategy is:

> *"Sheikha Fatima's initiative was about an Arab women's strategy for the Arab print and broadcast media. The initiative was nothing like Queen Rania's. Sheikha Fatima's initiative involved collaboration with media specialists to determine the obstacles that prevented topics such as women's education or violence against women, being tackled in the Arab media. They wrote to foundations and conducted workshops about what those channels and newspapers should do. Then they developed a strategy, but we do not know to whom it was distributed and we have not been notified of what steps were then taken."* (Amman, 2011)

According to the official documentation it produced, the vision behind Sheikha Fatima's media strategy was to establish media that empowered Arab women and would harness their

energies for sustainable development. The strategic objective was to build a positive image of a woman's role in the Arab world. The strategy proposed several projects, including research to document the amount of media coverage given to women's political, economic and social issues (Arab Women's Organisation, 2007, p.12). The strategy, therefore, focused on women in the media and not on female viewers.

According to the report *Media Strategy for Arab Women*, Sheikha Fatima's media strategy proposed several projects. One focused on women's participation in political and economic life, highlighting an urgent need to strengthen women's confidence in dealing with political and economic issues that are usually left to male analysts. Another, the 'Information Network for Arab Women', sought to provide a comprehensive structure of communication and reliable information to serve women by providing information that enhances women's skills and knowledge. The project focused on building partnerships for justice and equal opportunities, which includes partnerships between media organisations, public and private agencies, and, in particular, civil society organisations to promote the value of gender equality. Finally, a project on women's leadership sought to get the media to promote the concept of women's leadership (Ibid, pp.4-8).

Unlike Queen Rania's Media Initiative, which was media for women and mainly for those who were disadvantaged, Sheikha Fatima's media strategy was about women in the media who are considered privileged women, such as journalists and broadcasters. Queen Rania's Media Initiative was focused on satellite television, while Sheikha Fatima's media strategy was about media in general including both print media and terrestrial television.

As with Queen Rania's initiative, Sheikha Fatima's strategy applied the dominant ideology, because the projects were designed by decision-makers and individuals connected to the ruling elites, rather than being shaped by discussion with junior female journalists, who would have been most affected by unequal opportunities. As a result, neither initiative contributes towards any form of empowerment for the actual target groups, whether in terms of 'power-from-within', 'power to', 'power-with' or 'power over' (Wong, 2003, p.308).

There are other media campaigns that are not under the auspices of the *Arab Women's Summit*, such as the *White Hands Campaign*, launched by the Arab Producers Union for Television Production (APUTP) in 2008. The *Campaign* is funded by the APUTP, which operates under the auspices of the Arab League and the Council of Arab Ministers of Information, and is based in Cairo. The Union's most important annual activity is the Forum of Arab Producers, held annually in the Arab League headquarters in Cairo, where the the Arab world's most distinguished media specialists are honoured including ministers, directors of media organisations and writers (White Hands Campaign, 2008). The vision of the *White Hands Campaign* is to bring women's concerns into the spotlight, in order to develop women's social, intellectual and economic roles until women's rights are realised in all areas of life. The campaign also launched a television programme, *The Distinguished Woman*, which was broadcast on different Arab satellite channels. The programme is comprised of 40 episodes and each episode is 50-minutes long. The programme has experiences of distinguished Arab women in society. Khawasnah's view (interviewed at Queen Rania's Media Office on 2nd March, 2011) about the *White Hands Campaign*:

> *"The Al Ayadee Al Baydaa (White Hands) initiative was sponsored by the Arab Producers Union for TV - Production and is similar to the Ahl El Himma (Provoked*

People) initiative. Those who were running the White Hands initiative took many names of female professionals and leaders that were on their database and hosted them on the White Hands programme. Their programme hosted women from Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia and elsewhere, and was similar in format to the programme Ahl El Himma. We found ourselves reverting to the same old mould for women's programmes. So the number of viewers watching the White Hands programme is low and it is broadcast late at night, at 11pm or 1am. In Queen Rania's initiative, the executive managers were partners in the decision-making, which is different from taking a decision to the managers and asking them to implement it." (Amman, 2011)

The *White Hands Campaign* received the same criticism that the Arab Women's Organisation and the General Union of Arab Journalists mentioned in the workshop about "women and media": the media focuses on the elites and 'role model' women, while ignoring women of other classes in Arab societies. It has also been noted that interest in women's empowerment is largely fleeting and is controlled by politicians, a top-to-bottom approach, and is sometimes even subject to foreign influences, so these women's programmes have few viewers. The *White Hands Campaign* is considered a typical women-only programme that further marginalises women instead of presenting them as relevant to the whole of society.

There are many civil society institutes that are focused on partnerships between civil society and the media, particularly with regard to women's development and the media's portrayal of women, such as the Arab Non-Governmental Organisations Network and the Arab Network to Monitor and Change the Image of Women in the Media (Kandil, 2009, pp.25, 28).

However, these organisations and initiatives do not cooperate, so while they present good theoretical ideas individually, what is applied is largely ineffective in practice.

The following section will shed light on the opinion of the MBC Group's officials on Queen Rania's and other media initiatives.

4.4 MBC Group's Officials and Media Initiatives

Generally, Feedback from the MBC Group's officials on Queen Rania's and other media initiatives was not positive. Some think the initiatives were a good idea, but that they have failed to have any actual impact on the media, while others think that the media needs more than public relations (PR) initiatives launched by first ladies.

Sheik Waleed Al Ibrahim, the MBC Group's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), thinks that the programmes on the MBC Group's channels cover the initiatives' ideas in a much more comprehensive way. He said:

> *"The principles of this initiative are already embedded in our programmes in a much broader way than the initiative envisaged. For example, in Kalam Nawaim, Sabah AlKer ya Arab (Good Morning Arab), and Sabah Al Arabiya (Al Arabiya's morning). We are not producing these programmes because of the initiative."* (Dubai, 2011)

The Director of *Al Arabiya*, Al Rashed's response to institutionalising Queen Rania's Media Initiative as a regional NGO:

"NGO is a bad word in the Arab World. It has gone through a difficult phase in the last ten years. I have participated in NGOs and the problems are: 1) Governmental organisations are always cautious about NGOs. They think they are working in parallel to what they are doing, which is not true. 2) Governmental organisations think that NGOs receive money from abroad, which makes them less trusting of the NGO's aims. 3) They realise that the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions were supported by NGOs. NGOs will remain something forced upon governments. Institutions of civil society must and will exist and nobody can change them for now. They will be with us for a long time." (Dubai, 2011)

Governments and ruling elites in the Middle East have always tried to block NGOs' work and their collaboration with the media, claiming that the funding has come from foreign governments and this could be considered a form of cultural imperialism (Fowler, 1992, pp.9-10). As a result, partnerships between civil society institutes and the media in the Arab world are hard to establish. In some Arab countries, like Saudi Arabia, NGOs do not even exist. The Arab media initiatives for women's development are mostly under the auspices of first ladies whose power is derived from their husbands (Nelson, 1991, pp.310-334). As a result, these Arab media initiatives can never be institutionalised as NGOs, because they would be indirectly under the influence of those in power.

Nakhle El Hage, Director of News at *Al Arabiya* echoed the same views about Arab media initiatives under the auspices of the first ladies. He said:

"In the Arab world, there were good initiatives, such as Queen Rania's initiative, but unfortunately at one point we felt that the initiative was more about public relations

than achieving results; PR for the Queen, or for the Arab Women's Summit. The Arab Women's Summit is abusive and uses women, because it represents men's authority. These women are leading these Summits because they are the wives of powerful individuals, not because they are powerful in their own right. These initiatives have insufficient efficacy. Our problem in the Arab world, as shown by the United Nations' Human Development Report, is that Arabs spend only 0.5% [of the budget] on research, while in other countries this can be up as high as 8% or even more. We don't invest in research." (Dubai, 2011)

Jaber, the MBC Group's Director, shared the same El Hage's opinion about the initiatives. He said:

"These initiatives are promoted through media campaigns but then nothing is actually done on the ground. The Arab world needs institutions for television scripting more than PR media initiatives." (Dubai, 2011)

El Hage said:

"Queen Rania's Arab Media Campaign for Women's Development was broadcast on MBC and Al Arabiya and it was done well. It shows the role of women in a positive way. The difference between this initiative and other initiatives is that it discusses the participation of women in development on the same footing as men." (Dubai, 2011)

4.5 Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter showed that media initiatives conducted by first ladies, such as Queen Rania's media initiative and Sheikha Fatima's media strategy, represent a dominant top-down approach lacking participatory ethics because it does not involve lower class women and has no impact on women's empowerment. The Arab Women's Summit and these initiatives are more like FLANGOs, because they are controlled by first ladies. As a result, they are indirectly under governmental control, so it is hard to make them accountable for mistakes made, or to criticize them. Moreover, the fact that each first lady wants to prove herself by starting a new initiative to which she can put her name, instead of continuing and building upon any previous endeavours, suggests that the first ladies' primary intention is to promote themselves, rather than to contribute to women's advancement.

Although Queen Rania's Media Initiative came closest to this study's aims because it dealt with coverage of poverty, illiteracy and violence against disadvantaged women by private Arab satellite channels, it still needs more time and coordination with other initiatives to ensure that it moves to the next stage of delivering on its promises. The problem with Queen Rania's initiative, and others, is that they lack continuity because they fail to work cooperatively and build on each other's successes, and the initiatives do not run for a sufficient amount of time. Were they to do so, they would research in greater depth the issues surrounding the approaches of WID, WAD and GAD. It would also enable them to further research the ways in which the development of women's status is part of human development more generally, and to discuss this in relation to all classes of women, not only in relation to the more privileged and those already in the media.

Those who launch such initiatives must bear in mind that what the Arab world needs is research centres that can translate information into programming. These centres would combine audience research and television scriptwriting, like the work of the Norman Lear Center and Population Communications International (PCI) in the United States, to produce and write entertainment programmes like soap operas, for behavioural change based on scientific studies. In addition, establishing media monitoring institutions to discover how women are portrayed in different programmes is vital. These centres can coordinate with the media and with other institutions to share expertise to produce better outcomes.

Research centres can establish partnerships between the media and other bodies, such as civil society institutes and NGOs. The dilemma is that local and international NGOs are always perceived with suspicion and as institutions of cultural imperialism by governments in the Middle East, and in some Arab countries, like Saudi Arabia, NGOs do not even exist. As a result, partnerships between civil society institutions and the media in the Arab world are difficult to establish. The solution is for women and their supporters to work cooperatively, both within and against society, until their aims are achieved. Convincing the ruling elites to forge such partnerships can be corrected by the "negotiated variant" method of communication that focuses on smaller-scale problems and does not threaten those in power. If those in charge of such media initiatives do not convince the ruling elites that such partnerships will not challenge or threaten them, they will be no more than the elites' mouthpieces. Discussion of women's empowerment in these media initiatives will therefore remain superficial, ineffective and no real progress will be made.

Chapter 5

THE CHALLENGE OF ADDRESSING DEVELOPMENT ON SATELLITE TELEVISION:
VIEWS FROM THE TOP

In this chapter I explore the definition of development that is used by the officials and media professionals interviewed. I also explore whether the dominant top-down approach or the participatory bottom-up one, have been applied in the MBC Groups' development programmes. The fact that this study has incorporated ethnography, focus groups and one-to-one in-depth interviews with disadvantaged women in Jazan has meant that I have benefited from a deeper insight into the realities they face. While interviewing the elites, I was able to compare the media officials' approach with the actual needs of disadvantaged women, pushing for suggested solutions and making for a more nuanced discussion.

The chapter's first section discusses the interviewees' opinions on a definition of development and development programming on *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya*. The second relates the difficulties that such programmes are likely to face. The third section will highlight the two channels' treatment of political economy. The final section will discuss future opportunities in Arab media, especially in the wake of the changes brought about in the region by the Arab uprisings.

5.1 Attitudes to Development and Development Programmes

One of the main things that I tried to find out during my interviews with Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim, the MBC Group's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), was his views on the definition of development and how this is reflected in the content of the programmes on *Al Arabiya* and *MBC1*:

"The term development refers to everything that involves the development of the person as wider development in countries and societies follow on from individual development. We concentrate on human development, because it is the backbone of any development process. Man is the leader and manufacturer of development. Accordingly, we contribute to programmes that expand the perceptions of Arab viewers culturally, politically, scientifically and economically because they are considered development programmes. Al Arabiya and MBC1 support Arab women's development programmes." (Dubai, 2011)[15]

Here, Sheikh Waleed tried to emphasise the importance of human development, which is different from the historical meaning of the term 'economic development'. His definition is similar to that of Mahbub ul Haq, Professor of Microeconomics at the University of Karachi, who profoundly changed the way development policies were formulated by developing the concept of human development and the Human Development Report, while advisor to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 1989-1995 (Haq, 2011, p.1). He is also in tune with Muhammad Yunus's thinking, who defined development as a human rights issue, not as a question of simply increasing a country's GNP (Yunus, 2007, p.146).

However, Sheikh Waleed's definition of development differs from the actual development that has occurred in Saudi Arabia, according to Al Gethame, a Saudi academic and literary critic. He refers to development in Saudi Arabia as *"Tafra"*, which means "economic boom". "Boom" is the negative face of development, because 'building the place' has been achieved much more quickly than 'building the person' (Al Gethame, 2005, p.169-173).

---

[15] A list of interviewees, with their positions and the date and place of interview, is given in the Appendix

In Sheikh Waleed's view, *Al Arabiya* and *MBC1* have contributed to development in their programmes.

> *"Al Arabiya hosts debates, forums and constructive discussions covering economic affairs, information technology and socio-political programmes, like Hewar AlArab. It also expands the viewers' awareness of poverty, illiteracy and violence, through programmes like Sena'at AlMawt (Industry of Death), which sheds light on the sources of violence and terrorism and discloses how they are supported, financed, and what their ideologies and strategies are. The documentary-style programme Mahama Kasa (Special Assignment), deals with a different theme in each episod. The programme Daleel Al Afiya (Wellness Guide) contributes to raising levels of health awareness in the Arab world. Sabah Al Arabiya (The morning of Al Arabiya), which is a daily morning programme, highlights various aspects of daily life. As for MBC1, there are several development programmes that relate to Arab women, and the family in general such as Kalam Nawaim, MBC fee Osbo'o (MBC in the Week), Sabah Al Kheir Ya Arab (Good morning Arab) and many more."* (Dubai, 2011)

Sheikh Waleed also stated that the main reason some broadcasting programmes covered women's issues, like *Kalam Nawaim,* was to create awareness among women as to their various rights. He stressed that such awareness was for all women, regardless of class, status or education, saying that:

> *"Women's awareness is a problem in the Arab world because women do not understand their rights. Women have been raised in a certain way and learned their*

rights from their mothers, and their mothers learned from their grandmothers.
Women's education has been fiercely fought for in the past, but even if they have been
educated, they might know about their rights, but have no practical experience of
exercising them." (Dubai, 2011)

That Sheikh Waleed referred to all women regardless of class, educational background and age, suggests that he has fallen into the trap of making sweeping generalisations to which van Zoonen has drawn attention. She emphasised how it is important when analyzing women's media consumption, to specify what kind of women (van Zoonen, 1994, pp.119, 123). This was reflected in the responses of the focus group participants, especially girls between 15 and 20 years of age who think that *Kalam Nawaim* does not represent their needs, either in terms of age or class (See Chapter 7).

Al Rashed, Director of *Al Arabiya*, believes that the chief obstacle to development is what he called 'radical thinking'. He has gained a reputation as a tough critic of the Jihadist mind-set, which he refers to when he talks of 'radical thinking'. After he took up his post at *Al Arabiya* he wrote a newspaper article that provoked anger across the Arab world by saying: "not all Muslims are terrorists, but it is equally certain, and exceptionally painful, that most terrorists are Muslims" (Worth, 2008, p.2). According to Al Rashed, there will be no development or women's liberation as long as this mentality exists, and this is reflected in what they try to broadcast on *Al Arabiya*:

"Al Arabiya was one of the major agents in bringing about a shift from radical
thinking to reasonable and rational thinking in the Arab world. The radical thinking
of those who look to al-Qaeda to express themselves, and who consider violence a

result of political crises and is therefore an act of martyrdom, rather than murder, is how terrorism is presented on Al Jazeera. Without fighting this radical mentality, it will be difficult for us to convince others of our liberal views, especially about women. We need to have support within society. That will enable us to change many things related to women's issues, youth development, and poverty. We have been working on this for about five years now." (Dubai, 2011)

Al Rashed's view is that for the Arab world to develop it must be saved from itself, especially from this 'radical thinking', and must have more space for moderate and critical thinking. He believes television has an impact on people, as illustrated when he said: "People become radicals because extremism is celebrated on TV,…If you broadcast an extremist message at a mosque, it reaches 50 people. But do you know how many people can be sold a message on TV?" (quoted in Shapiro, 2005, p.3). On this point, he criticised *Al Jazeera*, because, in his view, the TV station promotes extremism. Some critics have called it "Osama bin Laden TV" (quoted in Sakr, 2004, p.158). Al Rashed explained that one of *Al Arabiya's* goals is to change the Arab world's thinking from being radical to being reasonable and rational, echoing the views of Al-Jabri, a contemporary Moroccan critic and Professor of Philosophy and Islamic Thought at the Mohammed V University in Rabat. Al-Jabri has pointed out that the rise of Islamist radical ideologies was due to the dominant thoughts inside the Arab mind. In his view, the lack of independent thinking by Islamists, and of any critical analysis of the past, has resulted in this failure to develop (Aksikas, 2009, p.93). To Al-Jabri, true development needs to be achieved through a critical analysis of Islamic texts. Such analysis would see Islam aligned with the present so that its positive teachings can be adopted to pursue development goals (Ibid, p.70). Similarly, when Al Rashed said that 'we need to have support within society', he meant that Arabs need to be liberated from obscure interpretations

of Islam and to be equipped to read Islamic texts in a rational way. Only then will they accept *Al Arabiya's* critical analysis of fundamentalist Islamists and not see it as an attack on Islam itself.

When I asked Afaneh, whether, in her experience *Al Arabiya* and *MBC1* were cooperative, she said that:

> *"One of the most cooperative channels was the MBC Group. Nakhle El Hage and Ali Al Hadithi from the MBC were always with us. Al Arabiya was much more cooperative over the media initiative and the media campaign than Al Jazeera. There is no comparison. This is because Al Jazeera has a political agenda which is more important to them than the agenda of development. On the other hand, the MBC and Al Arabiya have more scope for development programmes. Al Arabiya accepts all development topics for women while Al Jazeera only looks for more controversial issues."* (Amman, 2011)

One of the reasons *Al Jazeera* is more focused on politics and does not have the scope to cover development issues is due to the reasons for which it was launched. *Al Jazeera* was founded by a Qatari royal decree to legitimise the regime after the Emir of Qatar's coup against his father in 1995 (Fandy, 2008, p.47). It became the most widely viewed news network in the Arab world because of its willingness to break taboos by criticising Arab governments. Several Arab governments view *Al Jazeera* with suspicion and they have accused it of criticising Arab countries while not delving into sensitive issues in Qatar (Hamada, 2004, p.10).

5.2 Attitudes to Disadvantaged Female Audiences Among Executives at *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya*

One of the main lines of inquiry that I tried to pursue in my interviews is the focus of the MBC Group on targeting the elites and middle and upper middle class more than the disadvantaged in their programmes. When I mentioned this to Sheikh Waleed, I was told that there were studies conducted by the MBC Group that showed that focusing on the working class and their problems can cause frustration, and the lower classes would prefer to see their problems played out in the context of the upper classes. However, when I started to question the kinds of studies to which he referred, and when I told him that his findings were different from the experiences of the disadvantaged women in my ethnographic study, Sheikh Waleed stated that:

> *"The problem of exposing in detail the problems of the disadvantaged, is that we are then accused by the Saudi press of airing our dirty laundry in public. That's why we sometimes try to avoid their problems in drama and talk shows…There is no programme that causes us more of a headache than Tash Ma Tash, because of its criticism of society, officials, ministries and the education system in the Kingdom. These issues were presented in dramas and situation comedies because they are more influential than talk shows or any other genres."* (Dubai, 2011)

One of the shows that addresses sensitive issues in Saudi society is *Tash Ma Tash*. The MBC Group bought *Tash Ma Tash* because of its popularity with Saudis and to inject the comedy series with more freedom and professionalism so as to challenge the censorship and threats to pull the whole show that *Saudi Channel 1* had received because of its coverage of sensitive issues (MBC Club, 2005). The threats were even more serious for Nasser Al Qasabi, one of

the show's main stars, who was forced to emigrate from Riyadh to Dubai after he and his family received death threats from extremists (El Enezi, 2007, p.1). Sheikh Waleed himself was not immune from death threats and fatwas declared by Wahhabi clerics. This was revealed by Saudi Arabia's top judge, Sheikh Saleh Al-Luhaidan when he said: "It is lawful to kill... the apostles of depravation... if their evil cannot be easily removed through simple sanctions". It was suggested that one of these apostles was Sheikh Waleed (MENASSAT 2008). Even though private satellite channels were located outside Saudi Arabia to ensure greater freedom from censorship, they were not immune from political control and religious threats. It is even rumoured that King Abdullah himself personally intervened, asking the show's creators to treat subjects such as tribalism and religion with greater sensitivity (Sakr, 2009, p.140).

Sheikh Waleed continued:

> "*The problem is that enemies of development exist and they believe that any change will see their privileges taken away. They consider themselves guardians of society, and anyone who tries to develop or alter that will be at their expense. Therefore they fight us, especially in Saudi Arabia."* (Dubai, 2011)

Here, Sheikh Waleed is referring to Wahhabi scholars or *ahl al-sunna wa al-jama'a,* who exert strict control over men and women. Most Saudi private satellite channels are therefore located outside Saudi Arabia, either in neighbouring Arab countries or in Europe, which frees them from governmental or clerical control and enables them to be more courageous in dealing with sensitive topics and controversial debates. Many Saudi media professionals, male or female, prefer to work for these channels, and some Saudi specialists want to

participate as guests on their talk shows, to discuss the actual problems of, and the real issues in Saudi society. These subjects include women's status and the barriers that hinder their development (Akeel, 2010, p.114). However, even though these channels address sensitive topics and seem to lack any gender bias, unlike local channels, they are still constrained by political and religious considerations (Ibid, p.130).

I also explored with Al Rashed whether a lack of transparency and information impedes broadcast development indicators, such as poverty, illiteracy and violence. He said:

> *"There are two parts to this problem: Firstly there is a lack of transparency with officials keeping information close to their chests. They do not want the extent of poverty and unemployment in Saudi Arabia to be publicized as they would then be obliged to address the problems. This mainly refers to governments and official institutions. Secondly, and this is the biggest problem, they don't actually have the information. The market information does not exist."* (Dubai 2011)

Al Rashed's explanation highlights a lack of public domain information that is either the result of officials preventing the information from being shared, or of poor information management.

I then asked him how women could be integrated into mainstream issues. He argued that:

> *"You have different kinds of people: decision-makers, leaders, participants, opponents (who are completely against you), traditionalists, and those who are somewhere in the middle and do not know where to go. It is a huge undertaking to*

change a big size in the Arab society, especially as it is the most backward place in the world. You cannot do it by employing only one method. There are so many ways to do it. It is a long battle. The most important tool is awareness. There are various powers bases in society, but those who are religious or conservative are the most resistant to change." (Dubai, 2011)

Althusser argued that societies differ in the kinds and relationships of their Ideological State Apparatus (ISA); this is reflected in Al Rashed's response when he refers to Saudi Arabia as a 'backward place' or, in other words, as a pre-capitalist society. In Saudi Arabia's case, since the constitution is based on religion and, specifically, on Wahhabism[16] this means that religion controls all the ISAs, so society is, in effect, still run under a pre-capitalist system. The control of religious institutes over the educational system was, for instance, revealed in the responses of the formally-educated women in my focus groups, who were willing to defend conservative religious patriarchal views, such as keeping women invisible in society, not allowing women on the Shura Council (The Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia, also known as the Majlis al-Shura or Shura Council) and a ban on women driving (See Chapter 7).

Furthermore, when I asked at *Al Arabiya* whether the main cause of poverty in the Arab world was corruption, and whether this was an obstacle to the production of development programmes that address the issue of unemployment and poverty, he said:

"We have political and legal problems. Unlike London, here you have to have a licence from the country otherwise they will close your office. The licence is a political decision, not really a commercial one. Talking about this subject is political.

---

[16] Wahhabism was founded by Sheikh Muhmmad ibn Abd al-Wahhab

I, for example, could not do everything. If I want to broadcast such a programme in Saudi Arabia, for example, the laws will prevent me from doing so. On the subject of corruption, if accusations are made against officials, I cannot make it. I won't lie. Anyone who asks me about this, I will be very frank on this matter. I do not claim heroism here. This is also true in Egypt. This is also true in Tunisia. This is also true in Kuwait, in Syria and Lebanon. States and governments will close down our offices if we touch on these kinds of sensitive issues." (Dubai, 2011)

This demonstrates that he is categorically not allowed to discuss corruption or incompetence on *Al-Arabiya*.

Although he had earlier argued that good media should provide accurate information, Al Rashed acknowledged that this is difficult in a society with an absence of transparency and constant pressure from officials:

"You try; you could not do it all the way, or do nothing. It doesn't work like that. We try our luck by pushing the roof of freedom. It is a difficult process. This is, by the way a monthly, weekly, and daily-game. It is a cat and mouse game. We progress. They run after us. We move back two steps. We progress 3 steps, move back two steps and so forth. It is a continuous game. If you notice in the coverage of Al Arabiya, the power that is facing the channel is not always a political power, but also a social force. There are people who speak from religious perspectives, and here the religious pressure becomes worse than the government pressure and more dangerous to human life." (Dubai, 2011)

Here, Al Rashed explains how satellite television continually contends with political power and that religion can exert more pressure than politics, especially in an ultra-conservative country like Saudi Arabia.

One of the things that I questioned Al Rashed about was the lack of information about those on lower incomes. For example, whereas the channel has given a great deal of airtime to stock market news, which is relevant to the upper middle classes in the Gulf, it has not looked at poverty, unemployment and development indicators to educate viewers on developmental progress in the country. Al Rashed argued that:

> *"This cannot be done on an on-going basis but it can be done as periodic reports, not weekly or monthly reports, because there are no regular reports in the market about poverty, unemployment, etc. As a matter of fact, there are no institutions that constantly search out accurate figures. The UN reports are quarterly or annually and if you notice they are written in broad-spectrum and are not broken down to small information in order to be understood by the regular viewer. They are directed to those working in international or government organizations. 99% of those who watch television won't understand the indicators."* (Dubai, 2011)

Here, it becomes evident that responsibility lies not only with the media, but also with development organisations in general, and UN agencies in particular. White (2004, p.7) explains that theories of communication for development are central to empowerment. However, in the field of communication for development, most governments and major non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not using radio, television, or other media, effectively in order to educate rural/village populations and the urban poor, or to provide

support for their development. Why is there so little development in the area of development practice? Whilst there is a tendency to educate people through television programmes, according to Nair & White (1993; p. 170), information about development indicators available from UN or World Bank reports needs to be written more simply if it is to be understood by ordinary people.

Nakhle El Hage, Director of News at *Al Arabiya*, commented on the same matter:

> *"This is a great idea and we were in discussion at one stage with the UNDP about it. If they have a report, we focus on particular issues and broadcast them in Hewar Al Arab or Panorama and present them in a spectacular way. The idea did not last because development organisations are looking for diffusion and the media are looking for exclusiveness. I cannot broadcast an item on my channel that is printed in newspapers and spread everywhere. I care about something that distinguishes me as media, so I can get more audience. I still think it is a great idea to present development programmes in an attractive approach. The problem is that those who make these studies are rigid, and their target audiences are limited and already knowledgeable about the subject. We want such stories with images and motions to make it look media-like."* (Dubai, 2011)

El Hage's response proves that the blueprint for the Arab media is political especially when he says that he cannot broadcast development news because it is already 'spread everywhere'. The same thing happens in political news, which is 'spread everywhere' yet the media makes the same news exclusive with its unique editorial line and analysis. The Arab media have always been at the centre of conflicts; some claim these conflicts are framed as East versus

West, and others think they are driven by intra-regional conflicts, but in both cases, they are politically driven. As discussed in Chapter 2, ever since the 1950s and 1960s after Arab countries gained their independence, Arab media have been highly politicised.

 Jaber thinks the problem lies in a lack of institutions for television scriptwriting in the Arab world. He cited the example of the Norman Lear Center, based at the University of Southern California's (USC) Annenberg School for Communication. He said that the main function of such institutes is to combine accurate scientific information with entertainment programmes so information and entertainment cannot be integrated. Added to the lack of institutions and research centres in the Arab media, Al Rashed pointed out that there is also a shortage of skilled professionals and trained staff capable of producing development programmes that specialize in local issues. El Hage said that the Arab media are, in general, uncultured.

Adding to that, Al Rashed stated:

> *"Attracting an audience depends on the style of programmes' presentation. If you broadcast a programme about poverty that preaches to people, you will not get the viewers."* (Dubai, 2011)

Alterman, in his analysis of Arab television, describes television predominantly as an entertainment medium (2002, p.146). The pleasure gained from television has been utilised in development communication in what is called 'entertainment-education' – the process of purposefully devising and distributing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes and change overt behaviour (Singhal, 1999, p.122).

5.3 The Political Economy of the MBC Group

Sheikh Waleed started MBC in 1991 to provide an Arab alternative to *CNN* by launching a satellite channel that sought to transform Arab television. One of the main methods that Sheikh Waleed uses to run his business is advertising. One reason for Saleh Kamel's withdrawal from a partnership with Sheikh Waleed in MBC in 1993 was that the latter wanted to run his business with a focus on advertising, while Saleh Kamel was keen on generating revenue through subscriptions (Sakr, 2001, pp.12, 78).

Sheikh Waleed's explained the positive correlation between viewers' loyalty, the advertiser's trust of the and how it can create a successful channel. He explained that:

> *"In the media industry there is no successful media without advertising and this is the rule. Advertising is the basis of profitability for television stations and without the financing of advertising, the content cannot be developed; therefore, there cannot be a successful private satellite television without advertising. In terms of the MBC Group's programmes in general, and those that fall under the term "development programmes" in particular, which achieved high ratings and consequently they win the confidence of the advertiser. The result is that such programmes are profitable. A successful formula in programming is one that wins the loyalty of the viewer and the trust of the advertiser. This is what all the channels in the MBC Group have achieved after a long journey that has extended over more than two decades".*
> (Dubai, 2011)

I asked Sheikh Waleed how a huge media conglomerate, like the MBC Group, covers its cost from advertising alone, especially since he had previously stated that there is no independent media without financial independence. He answered:

"If the advertisements are from the advertiser, and the proportion of advertising depends on the viewers, so, indirectly, the financier is the viewer. This rule, of the viewer being in control, applies to everything except the subject of the law. The subjects we present must abide by the law." (Dubai, 2011)

I then probed further and asked how, in instances where the advertising did not cover the cost, the financial gap can be covered. He answered:

"We do not look at profit for each programme individually but as part of a grid. For example, if a programme generates only a small amount of profit, then another programme that has lower costs and higher profits will compensate for it. Usually in large firms economies of scale are used and larger production leads to lower average production costs. Also, in economies of scale, they benefit from specialization and segmentation of audience through diverse channels like the MBC." (Dubai, 2011)

Sometimes it is hard to probe more than once or twice in interviews with elites, because there are questions that cannot be answered and the interviewer picks up on this from the interviewee's gestures and body language. When Sheikh Waleed said "MBC was not profitable when it started. It was very difficult before it became profitable. But the goal was not to win quick profits, rather to gain people's loyalty. The focus became more on

entertainment programmes to attract more viewers, and the network moved to Dubai in 2001 to reduce costs and to get closer to their audience (Sakr, 2007, p.169).

In my interview with Al Rashed he said *Al Arabiya* was losing money.

"Al Arabiya is losing money. Its income from advertisements is eight times more than Al Jazeera. Our income is the highest among news television stations in the Middle East. Even though we are still losing money, we will continue producing development programmes as we still want to attract more viewers. If you make programmes or report news that are of public interest and therefore get high ratings, eventually you will make money. We are a free-to-air station. We are not a cable television station like CNN. There is no revenue from subscribers. We make money from advertisements. If you have high ratings, you have lots of advertisements. If you have taken on more issues, you will have more viewers. In theory, high ratings make more money. Covering issues, talking about what matters to people, is supposed to attract more advertisers, but not always." (Dubai, 2011)

Ali Jaber said, at the Annual Arab Media Academics Forum (AMAF), that the cost of Arab satellite channels is US $6.5 billion, and the revenue is US $1 billion, thereby running at a loss of US $5.5 billion (Al Rakaf, 2011). The wealthy are paying to make up that shortfall. The size of their investment is bigger than any other type of media because the political elites think satellite television is the most influential.

Fandy explained that despite some private Arab satellite channels claims that they are independent, the state remains a major player in the establishment of private satellite

television; it is not solely subject to market forces. MBC started in 1991 with US $ 300 million in capital and annual costs of US $ 60 million. In 2003, the MBC Group launched *Al Arabiya* with US $ 300 million and it remains very far from balancing its costs and revenues. *Al Arabiya's* estimated annual outgoings are US $ 70 million, while its revenue from advertising is no more than US $ 10 million (Fandy, 2008, p.54).

However, if development programmes can attract more viewers and; therefore, more advertisers and eventually greater profit, why are such programmes not on local channels? Further, why are these private satellite channels located abroad, rather than in Saudi Arabia. Since the government does in fact massively subsidize these private television channels, how is it that courageous sensitive subjects and controversial debates are permitted on private channels, but rarely on local ones?

Control by Wahhabi clerics and their followers of media content can go far beyond mild pressure, and can, in fact, be life threatening in the cases of the fatwa against Sheikh Waleed and the death threats issued against Nasser Al Qasabi and his family.

During my meeting with Jaber, he said:

> *"The difference between Sheikh Al Waleed's management and that of state television is in what we call "institutional entrepreneurship. Institutional entrepreneurs handle things in different ways. They draw up their own regulations for the primary purposes to attract more viewers. Sheikh Al Waleed enjoys a larger amount of autonomy, but there are limits when it comes to political and religious sensitivity. His main role here is to abide by the rules, but not to the extent that he loses viewers and*

that is what makes an institutional entrepreneur. They handle things in different ways. They draw their own regulations." (London, 2011)

Gramsci's definition of hegemony can be applied to this strategy. Gramsci stated that hegemony presents a constant contradiction between the dominant ideology and the social experience of subordination, engendering ideological struggle (Abercrombie et al, 1980, p.15). To reduce this antagonism, most authoritarian regimes garner popular support and legitimacy by using a range of tools, such as the media, as the media can be the cultural means by which the dominant class gains the consent of the dominated class. This is accomplished by "the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups" (Strinati, 2004, p.148).

The fact that the media is largely controlled by just a few media moguls, who mostly have strong relationships with governments, increases market costs for their competitors, making it difficult for them to enter the market and to enlighten the public with their programmes. This can be seen as indirect censorship (Curran, 2002, pp.219, 229). As a result, the viewer will have no option other than to watch channels that are either directly or indirectly controlled by the state.

The section below further explores future opportunities in the Arab media, especially after the changes that have taken place in the region since the Arab uprisings.

5.4 The MBC Group: Arab Media after the Arab Uprisings

One of the main issues that I have tried to explore in my interviews with the MBC Group's officials, particularly because these interviews were conducted during a time of great turmoil

in the region, was their perceptions about the future of the Arab media. The fact that my interviews took place at a time of great historical significance in the Arab region, and the fact that these uprisings were caused by reasons quite similar to the topics of this study, namely issues driven by low development indicators, such as poverty, unemployment and inequality, meant the interviewees' were enthusiastic. Responses were varied. Some were extremely optimistic and others were more doubtful about the future.

Sheikh Waleed was quite optimistic about the future of the Arab media after the uprisings. He said:

> *"The map of the media in the Arab world will change. Media freedom will be greater and thus media responsibility will increase. State constraints will ease up and we welcome this. We have been calling for more freedom for many years. One of the reasons we started out in London was that no Arab country would permit us to launch there. Ten years on, and the laws were relaxed in Dubai at least, so they opened their doors to us. It took that long to return to the Arab world. It took us another 10 years to see the changes that we see now. I am very optimistic about the future of the Arab media. More action will be taken on youth and development programmes in particular."* (Dubai, 2011)

I asked Al Rashed about the prospect for development programmes since the Arab uprisings. I told him that the complaints of Arab citizens during the uprisings were not what we usually saw in Arab news, we were used to watching news about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Iraq or terrorism. However, the uprisings showed us concern abut poverty, unemployment and a lack of freedom; issues not usually discussed on these channels. His said:

"[There are]… many reasons [for this]. If you watch multinational television stations, such as CNN international rather than domestic versions of CNN, or if you take BBC World, rather than BBC1 or BBC2, if you take the Voice of America, if you take all these international television stations, they do not cover local news unless it is big news. It is possible, for example, that Al Arabiya is duplicated by CNN local or by local news in Saudi Arabia, the UAE or Egypt. Here, you can focus on local issues. The definition of news differs from category to category, for example, a person who has recently been imprisoned, and it is not known whether they have committed a crime or not. Another person is sentenced to two years in prison for stealing a chicken. We don't tackle these issues because they are local news. So now, for example, Libya is the biggest news in the world, so we give more dedication, more time and more money to cover the news in Libya. We have five groups working in Libya." (Dubai, 2011)

In this answer we see how Arab news have adopted the Western media's techniques in political news coverage of giving priority to newness and immediacy, but has been reluctant to adopt the Western media's reduced focus on hard news in favour of more soft news (Mellor, 2005, p. 96).

I asked El Hage why if MBC can challenge the mould of local media, they cannot do the same for development programmes. His answer was:

"Double standards and hypocrisy are obstacles in the Arab world that prevent the presentation of these stories, especially in Saudi society. There is a problem not only

with censorship, but with society itself. Society asks for transparency but cannot

tolerate the consequences. We need to be supported in society...Would local culture

allow me to film *rural Saudi women? I have to get a female presenter and*

camerawoman and this is a task in itself that the Pan Arab media will not bear."

(Dubai, 2011)

When El Hage said "would local culture allow me to film rural Saudi women?", I remembered my experience with the women of Goz Al Jaafrah, and how the women did not allow me to take pictures of them. I was even told that if I wanted the focus groups to run smoothly, I should not take any pictures. This suggested to me that there need to be changes on the ground and the media alone cannot achieve this.

I then asked him about his views on the future of Arab media and whether they can ever be fully transparent, especially when it comes to sensitive development issues. He responded:

"Any media in the hands of governments will not succeed. The problem is with

funding. We are not convinced in the Arab world that instead of having 500

unprofitable satellite stations it would be better to reduce them to 50 profitable

satellite stations. The total advertising budget for all channels is not more than US

$2 billion; so obviously there need to be subsidies from governments. There is a

Lebanese proverb that says: "Who eats from the Sultan's bread must use his sword."

In order for the media to be accountable they must be free from the government. We

should not have a Ministry of Information or National Media Council. There

shouldn't be licenses authorized by one or two people in order to open a media

centre. It shouldn't be the case that anyone who has money can open a television

station. Governments shouldn't censor the media; on the contrary, media specialists are supposed to inspect governments. I, as a media specialist, am supposed to examine institutions, companies, work practices and report everything in the media. We, at the MBC Group, were able to follow a certain line of investigation but within certain limits and if we ever pass these limits…good bye. We don't want to be killed."
(Dubai, 2011)

Afaneh referred to a strategy for how to tackle governments and decision-makers in achieving the programming of intrepid ideas and applying untraditional views. She said:

"You do not want to run into several battles all at once... If you want people to be responsive to your views, you have to start with small goals. If you attacked officials by accusing them of being on the wrong path, and that their policies and programmes were meeting the United Nation's objectives, no one would respond." (Amman, 2011)

Here, Afaneh and Al Rashed shared the same view about not challenging the existing social structure and confronting political power all at once. The method of communicating development should target such powers through the "negotiated variant" of communication focusing on smaller scale problems and it does not threaten those in power. In this way, it would be possible to gain support from governments or international development organisations (Sparks, 2007, p.72).

5.5 <u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter reveals that there are several challenges facing the Arab media and the private satellite channels in particular that are worth being discussed before focusing on the dominant top-down approach of the MBC Group in devising development programmes for women.

Dominant ideology exists in many places, which poses a real challenge to private satellite channels making progress in producing development programmes, especially for women. This was revealed when El Hage expressed the difficulty of filming rural Saudi women, requiring a female presenter and camerawoman due to ultra-conservative religious and cultural rules, making such filming difficult for Pan Arab media. I was faced with such a difficulty. Even though I am a Saudi woman, and I conducted an ethnographic study in the village, I was not even allowed to take pictures of the women. There are challenges facing the media officials and practitioners, who defy the viewpoints of these clerics and their followers in devising programmes that do not match their views. These can be as dangerous as death threats and the fatwas that legitimise killing them, like the fatwa against Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim and the death threats against Nasser Al Qasabi and his family.

The other dominant power that these private satellite channels face is that of "political capital". Since these channels cannot afford to rely on commercial revenues alone, they are controlled by the financial and political support of the state. This was revealed when Ali Jaber said that the cost of Arab satellite channels was US $6.5 billion, but its total revenue is only US $1 billion, they are therefore running at a loss of US $5.5 billion. This suggests that the main blueprint for these channels will be political, not developmental. Due to governmental control, the primary goal of these Arab satellite channels is to serve the interest

of politicians, not to try to seriously transform Arab media or even to identity the impacts of politics on social development, and mainly on women's development in the Arab world.

Added to these power challenges is a lack of development data and of skilled professionals in the Arab media in general. According to media officials from the MBC Group, such as Abdulrahman Al Rashed and Ali Jaber, there is a need for media research centres and institutions for television scripts, in order to gather data and to produce skilled professionals who can produce development programmes that combine fact with entertainment to make them accurate, comprehensible and enjoyable for the ordinary person.

Since media officials, such as Afaneh and Al Rashed, are in agreement that it is hard to challenge the existing social structure and to confront the political elite all at once, establishing media research centres and communication institutions, for example, might be considered a "negotiated variant", especially in regard to producing development programmes that need accurate information and skilled professionals to produce and market this information. The Arab uprisings, brought about mainly by the low development indicators such as poverty, unemployment and inequality that add to the turmoil in the region, will make production of development programmes that target ordinary citizens, generally, and disadvantaged women, particularly, a necessity and not a luxury.

Chapter 6

ANALYSIS OF TELEVISION PROGRAMMES DEALING WITH

DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

6.1 <u>Introduction</u>

"Looking at quantitative and qualitative methods together provides an opportunity to think how different methods and techniques can focus on different kinds of meaning. This is important to bear in mind while thinking about media texts" (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p.121).

This chapter attempts to use the most appropriate method of analysis for television programmes in order to know how, and the extent to which programmes on *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* use media initiatives in their coverage of Arab women's development issues: namely poverty, illiteracy and violence. The chapter discusses how I have used textual analysis by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method seeks to determine what proportion of air time is given to topics relating to poverty, illiteracy and violence against Arab women. It focuses on three programmes on *MBC1 — Kalam Nawaim, Tash Ma Tash,* a Saudi drama series called *Al Sakenat fee Golobena* and one programme from *Al Arabiya*, — *Hewar Al Arab (Arab Dialogue)*. The analysis focuses on episodes broadcast between 2006 and 2010. The episodes and sessions selected focused specifically on the development of women's status issues.

In this chapter, the qualitative method uses critical discourse and semiotic analyses. Critical discourse analysis involves a close examination of language and focuses on Norman

Fairclough's work around identities and relationships (Ibid, p.150). Since there are three different genres in the study; talk shows, drama and situation comedy, the relationships examined are those between hosts, guests, experts and the fictional characters. A semiotic analysis, as viewed by de Saussure, is much broader than linguistics; de Saussure showed how language is made up of signs that communicate meaning. Charles Peirce explained that social life is pervaded by messages that contain signs, mostly visual and oral, gestures, dress codes, tone of voice and facial expressions, all of which have embedded connotations (Bignell, 2002, pp.5, 14).

As this study critiques the dominant ideology through a textual analysis, there will be a discussion of the 'hidden power' of scripts (Fairclough, 1989, p.49). The episodes selected for analysis from the three *MBC1* programmes, *Kalam Nawaim, Tash Ma Tash* and *Al Sakenat fee Golobena*, were played during the focus groups. Conducting focus groups around these three programmes gives an extra depth to the textual analysis because it offers an insight into the consumer's mind-set, which is usually ignored by producers, who usually decide for themselves what is to be aired on television (Fairclough, 1989, p.49). An ethnographic approach, combined with focus groups, and in-depth one-to-one interviews has meant that the texts have been analysed not merely in line with existing theories, but in the light of findings from an actual ethnographic study, one which hopes to generate more theories.

6.2 <u>Talk Shows</u>

This chapter will cover two talk shows: *Kalam Nawaim* from *MBC1*, an entertainment channel, and *Hewar Al Arab* from *Al Arabiya*, which is a news channel. Both *Kalam Nawaim* and *Hewar Al Arab* are daytime talk shows. Since *Kalam Nawaim* is a talk show for

women on an entertainment channel – it invites ordinary people, experts and celebrities as guests, while *Hewar Al Arab* is a talk show on a news channel, which invites only experts.

6.2.1 Kalam Nawaim (Sweet Talk): is a weekly 60 minutes talk show[17] for women that began in 2002. The show is produced and broadcast from Beirut, Lebanon. It discusses various issues pertinent to Arab women. I collected a total of 41 episodes of *Kalam Nawaim* 2006-2010 from the MBC Group representing 2460 minutes of television. Poverty was discussed on nine separate segments, totalling 113 minutes in different episodes (4.6% of total), violence on 20 separate segments, totalling 200 minutes (8.13%) and education in five segments, totalling 30 minutes (1.21%). The single largest group watching the show in 2010, measured by age, were women 25-34 years old, accounting for 12% of the total (MBC Group Rating - KSA IPSOS, 2010). When *Kalam Nawaim* launched in 2002, it was the only talk show on *MBC1*, so it had no competitors. After the Arab revolutions in 2011-2012, the MBC Group loosened the reins of political and religious power over programming, thus shifting programmes' focus to serve the public's needs. *Al Thamina (8 O'clock)* was created after the Arab revolutions, airing on *MBC1* in 2012, and it was presented by television host Dawood Al Sheryan. *Al Thamina* is the first daily Saudi television talk show, addressing everyday political, social and economic topics and women's issues, such as unemployment, transport, the 'glass ceiling' for women in the workplace, etc., with a large degree of freedom and entailing bold discussions. Even though the show only launched in 2012, it quickly achieved high ratings and the use of *Al Thamina's* hashtag on Twitter and on its Facebook became widespread (MBC.net, 2012). Mazen Hayek, Director of PR & Commercial of the MBC Group, explained that it is difficult to draw comparisons between *Kalam Nawaim* and *Al Thamina* because one is comparing a daily and a weekly show, broadcast on different week

---

[17] This excludes the advertising commercials. The DVDs did not include the commercial breaks.

nights and time slots, not to mention the different style, treatment, and target audience of the shows[18]. Hayek described *Al Thamina* as a hard-hitting talk show, while *Kalam Nawaim* as the name suggests, is much less so and is focused on women (Ibid, 2013). The qualitative analysis is conducted on a small sample listed counted above.

There are four presenters on the show: Fawzia Salama, Rania Barghout, Farah Bseso and Heba Jamal. Mona Abu Suleiman left the show in 2008 and was replaced by Heba Jamal.

Fawzia Salama is an Egyptian media and social commentator. She is a regular writer in *Sayidaty*, a popular weekly – Arabic publication and, a monthly English women's magazine. Owned by the Saudi Research and Publishing Company (SRPC) and chaired by Prince Faisal bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, *Sayidaty* is published in both Dubai and Beirut and is distributed throughout the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and America. Salama also has a section in *Sayidaty* where she advises readers with social problems. She is the oldest presenter and the only one who is over weight on *Kalam Nawaim*. At 76 years old, she is the most experienced in counselling, with people referring to her as "Mama Fawzia". She studied in England and completed a BA degree in English Literature and an MA in Psychology (Awad, 2011, pp.69-70). Some at the channel say that Sheik Waleed Al Ibrahim looks up to her due to her age and experience (Anonymous source, 2013). Her relationship with the programme director, Samar Al Agroog, is strong, as she reportedly considers Fawzia to be the show's backbone. Fawzia looks after her appearance and has allegedly tried to rejuvenate her looks through using botox, fillers and liposuction (Anonymous source, 2013). However, she has never admitted to this publicly and always speaks out against plastic surgery on the show. In March 2013, Fawzia was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and has been undergoing chemo-

---

[18] The list can be found in the Appendix, Mazen Hayek (via phone call 2013).

therapy. Staff were shocked by this news, especially as she is the show's main presenter. Fawzia has been married twice. She is still married to her second husband and has one daughter by her first husband.

Rania Barghout is a Lebanese media specialist and is 44 years old. She studied media, specializing in radio and television. She started her career presenting entertainment shows and was one of the first female presenters to appear on satellite television channels in the 1990s. She became famous after presenting the show *Ma Yatloboho Al Moshahedon (What Viewers Ask For)* on MBC (Awad, 2011, pp.69-70). Some sources at the channel have said that after she became famous, she asked the channel to give her a percentage of the advertising profits or she would leave (Anonymous source, 2013). The channel did not agree and told her that the MBC creates stars, not the other way around. She left the MBC to work for an Abu Dhabi channel, later returning to *MBC1* to present *Kalam Nawaim*. Rania suffered from depression after her mother died of cancer and her father was murdered in Lebanon, which impacted on her work. Sources at the channel said that these tragedies, combined with her being less successful on the Abu Dhabi channel than she had been at MBC, led to her husband encouraging her to call MBC and go back to them. She called Sheik Waleed Al Ibrahim, asking to return to the channel, which she did as one of the presenters on *Kalam Nawaim* in 2002. Rania left the programme in 2011 to present her own show, *Hatha Ana (This is me)* on *MBC1*. In this show Rania travelled to several countries to meet stars of the Arab world to shed light on their personal lives. According to some sources at the MBC, the show was not a success and some critics said that Rania had not developed a strong style after all these years and her questions to the guests were quite shallow, which does not fit with someone of her experience. Rania then returned to *Kalam Nawaim* in 2012. She was divorced in 2011 and has two daughters.

Farah Bseso is a 43 year old Syrian actress, originally from Palestine. Before starting as a presenter on *Kalam Nawaim* in 2002, she presented on Orbit for three months before moving to the MBC. She has a diploma in acting from Syria (Awad, 2011, pp.69-70). Farah has had a difficult time. Her family had to flee Kuwait after the Iraq war in 1991 because being of Palestinian origin, they were seen as being loyal to Saddam Hussein. They moved to Jordan, where she missed out on education, finally settling in Syria, where she married an Egyptian (MEBJ, 2007, p.37). However, she does not reveal these past traumas on screen. Sources at the channel said that she has been criticized for a poor line of questioning on the show (Anonymous source, 2013). People see her as an actress rather than a presenter and they think that her outfits are quite revealing for a talk show aimed at Arab families. Farah is married and has two daughters.

Mona Abu Suleiman is 40 years old and was the first female Saudi presenter to appear on Arab satellite television, as a presenter on *Kalam Nawaem*. She was selected as a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador in Saudi Arabia and lectures at King Saud University (Awad 2011, pp.69-70). Abu Suleiman said in an interview that she is not interested in tackling issues that are not 'religiously or socially acceptable in the Arab world'. She said that her purpose on TV was to 'point out to people what is or what isn't socially acceptable, not just for me, because my opinion counts but it's also what society agrees upon' (MEBJ, 2007, p.38). Sources at the channel have said that her main drawbacks are her voice, which is described as annoying, and her presentation on the cases and topics is not clear (Anonymous source, 2013). She has since left *Kalam Nawaem* and now works as the Executive Director for Strategic Studies at Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal's Kingdom Holding Company. Abu Suleiman is divorced and has two daughters.

Heba Jamal was 21 years old when she joined *Kalam Nawaim* in 2007 after Mona Abu Suliman left the programme. Heba had not achieved her Bachelor degree when she joined the programme and then she got her degrees after joining the show. She has a BA in English Literature from King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and an MA in Media Marketing from England (Awad, 2011, pp.69-70). Heba's professional experience before joining the programme was in fashion design. She was the manager of her mother's tailoring company and had two fashion certificates from Italy and England. She was interviewed in 2006 in *Kalam Nawaim* as a guest discussing her experience as a young fashion designer. After Mona left the show the channel was looking for a young Saudi presenter in order to have more variety in the presenters' ages. Heba was chosen not only because of her age and nationality but also because when she was interviewed on *Kalam Nawaim* she was deemed photogenic and well-spoken. Sources at the channel have said that Saudis do not see her as looking typically Saudi, since she has quite fair skin and her features are not archetypally Arab (Anonymous source, 2013). They think she does not represent Saudi women, which might be because she is half Turkish. Heba was single when she joined the programme and in 2011 married to Nasser Al-Sarami, a media manager at the *Al Arabiya* satellite channel.

The episodes below have only the years without the days and months because this is how the DVDs were labelled when I collected them from the MBC Group. I carried out the transcription and translation myself.

Episode No. 174 (2006)

In this episode, the topic of poverty was covered in the viewers' letters, which comes at the end of the show. A letter was sent in from a 25 year old Tunisian woman who had graduated in fashion design and could not find a job. Her family's income is low and she suffers

physical and verbal abuse from her parents and brothers, who treat her as a 'loser'. She is unmarried and unemployed. The treatment of her letter and situation lasted four minutes.

Fawzia: I was touched by her problem, but unemployment is not an excuse to give up. We choose to work, but do not choose our families. We must live with them so life goes on. Since your degree is in fashion design I advise you to set up your own business.

Farah: You can sell your products to retailers.

Rania: You can sell your products to your neighbours.

Fawzia (carelessly): I suggest that she specializes in making clothes for overweight, short women like me.

Farah: Family is family; don't be upset by them. Your mother may adore you, but perhaps she is unable to show her feelings.

Rania: You could talk to your parents. You could say to them, 'I live in this house but I feel like I do not exist'.

Fawzia (sternly): You must take into account that everybody in your family is under pressure, not just you.

Mona: I advise anyone who is unemployed to start volunteering in organizations for orphans and disabled children, as they are in need of compassion. Or to take care of the elderly who have been abandoned by their own children. If a person does not give something to society through work, he/she can help morally until God blesses them with employment.

Fawzia (responding to Mona with surprise): The girl's financial situation is very bad and she needs money for transport and clothes

Mona: She can help the poor who live inside her building.

Some critics say that offering therapy in talk shows can be dangerous, owing to the hosts' lack of qualifications and experience. "They may take on the role of a caring parent, an understanding friend, a knowledgeable therapist. They may not have the credentials to give professional advice, but they do so freely" (Day, 1996, p.48). The presenters' advice, here in *Kalam Nawaim*, did not help the viewer. When they suggested to her that she could sew her own dresses for clients, or sell her products to shops or her neighbours, it showed how they lacked any understanding of the woman's situation, a prime feature of which was lack of income. Fawzia's suggestion to make dresses for those who are overweight like her was flippant, and showed a complete lack of sympathy for the woman's painful experiences. First, the woman is a fashion designer, not a tailor, and even if she were one, she would need equipment and tools in order to make clothes, which she would not be able to afford. Mona's answer seems extremely far removed from what the woman actually needs. She needs money, yet Mona's advice was that she should find a volunteer role, which is highly unrealistic. The irony is that Fawzia's objection to Mona's suggestion that the woman get a voluntary job was no less inappropriate than her own advice, that the woman makes dresses for overweight women. The woman complained in her letter of experiencing verbal and physical at her family's hands, yet the presenters tried to find justifications for the abuse.

In daytime women's talk shows in other settings, the hostsare usually expected to be warm and sympathetic towards participants. They offer opportunities for people to educate themselves by sharing their problems with the general public, as well as a chance to be on television (GUN, 2006, p.38, 39). However, having examined the comments and responses of the *Kalam Nawaim* presenters, it is evident that talk show hosts are not always warm and sympathetic.

Episode No. 182 (2006)

This was a segment that discussed women who had experienced violence at the hands of their husbands. It began with a field report about a centre called Hope City in the UAE. The head of the centre, Shahla (Sharla) Musabbah, is originally from the US, but married a man from the UAE. The segment lasted eight minutes and was in the middle of the show.

Farah introducing the centre: Sometimes, if we are not able to solve a problem we must at least mitigate its consequences. That's what Shahla Musabbah, an American lady married to a man from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) did. After spending twenty years of her life in the UAE, she recognized the problems facing women; in particular that the law does not offer them adequate protection. As a result, she established a safe haven for those women and she called it Hope City. She explained what this city does, how it helps women and how men have reacted to it. *Kalam Nawaim* has made a field report about this humanitarian centre. Let's watch it now.

Shahla: I currently run a successful shelter for women in crisis with a group of good friends and it is my pleasure to be here. My friend and I have lived here for many years. We used to do fund-raisers for a range of different causes, raising money for things such as kidney transplants or school fees for those who couldn't afford them. In 2001, my good friend Leena found a villa and we established Hope City.

Abused woman and a resident in the centre: I live in the UAE, but I am an Iranian Arab[19]. I experienced problems with my husband. Whenever I run away, he calls the police. They tell me I should return to him, because he is my husband. He beats me a lot. I always go to the police, but they return me to my husband. Going through the courts takes a long time.

---

[19] Iranian Arabs are the Arab and/or Arabic-speaking peoples of Iran. Most Iranian Arabs live in the coastal regions of southern Iran by the Persian Gulf.

[Then the guest says, with tears in her eyes] where will I go with my children? I finally got a divorce from the court with the help of Sharla and the centre.

After this report, Farah introduced the story of a woman called Samira from Jordan who was invited onto the show because she had been physically abused by her husband. For her protection the show hid her identity by concealing her face and changing her voice.

Farah: Allow me to welcome Ms. Samira. We know that you were physically abused by your husband. Would you give us a brief description of your life and your story? How many children do you have, and for how long have you been married? Why does your husband beat you, and what exactly does he do to you?

Samira: Firstly, I want to thank the programme, as they have given me the opportunity to speak out. I could not find any such programme to help in Jordan. I have been married for 11 years and I have four sons and one daughter. My husband works in the military. He has this military mentality of issuing commands and treating me as if I am not a human being. He verbally abuses me and my children and he beats me severely. My father used to tell me whenever I complained to him that we won't accept women getting divorced in the family. I tried on numerous occasions to talk to my husband and to try to fix things, but he continued to beat me on my head, eyes and fingers. He used to extinguish cigarettes on my body, and has even tried to shoot me. One day, I was doing the groceries and on my way home, he began to beat me and took off my head scarf.

Hala Al-Nasser (Editor in Chief of Rotana, a substitute in this episode for Mona Abu Suleiman): Some women are unable to challenge men's abuse and after a certain period of time the men get used to abusing them and it becomes difficult to change them. You have not resisted this abuse for 11 years. It will be difficult to change your husband now.

Rania: When he treated you cruelly, did you try to calm him down and tell him that you love him and would love to live with him in peace?

Samira: I tried, but without any change.

Farah: Did you try to get a job?

Samira: It is hard for me to work because I have small children, in fact, my brother is paying my expenses.

Fawzia (disdainfully): It was clear that this man had aggressive tendencies, so why did you have five children with him?

Samira: I tried to get closer to him and I had hoped that he would change one day.

Rania: I am sure that the agencies responsible for such cases in Jordan have heard your story and we hope that you receive assistance.

In this session, no link was made between the report and the discussion with the abused studio guest. The report discussed the centre that helps abused women to exercise their rights in the UAE, while the studio guest was an abused woman from Jordan. The hosts did not discuss the laws against women that are enforced by judges and the police, which were mentioned in the report. They did not question why the woman in the report had to go to such a centre for help while the authorities did not protect her. What if such a centre did not exist? Does that mean that women will never be able to get divorced and will be at the mercy of these biased laws and their violent husbands? This is exactly what the disadvantaged women in Goz Al Jaafarh told me in the focus groups (Chapter 7): that television programmes present unrealistic solutions and offer unsympathetic feedback to women in need.

The hosts offered neither emotional support nor solutions to the studio guests' predicaments. Their responses blamed the woman for being silent about her abuse all of these years and questioned whether she had been sufficiently persistent in trying to discuss these problems with her husband. Fawzia's question, "why did you have five children?" shows the host to be condescending and lacking in emotion and empathy.

Grindstaff (2002) explains that in talk shows it is not only *what* ordinary people talk about that is important, but *how* they talk about it. Ordinary people are expected not only to discuss personal matters, but to do so in a particular way. They are expected to deliver the "money shot" of the talk show through, showing sorrow, rage, and tears. A hallmark of the talk show genre is the equal importance given to the moment when the tears fall from a woman's eyes and her voice shakes in sadness and pain, as to the details given by the woman describing her husband's physical and verbal abuse. This offers 'authenticity,' but has also given talk shows their bad reputation for exploiting guests' hardships (Grindstaff, 2002, p.19). Elayne Rapping, a popular culture and social issues critic, says that talk shows "allow women to voice their opinions, to argue, and to express emotion. But women are not encouraged to actively work for change" (Day, 1996, p.51).

Episode No. 201 (2007)

Farah started the episode with the story of a Saudi woman being abused by her husband, who was complaining about her suffering on one of the satellite channels. Her husband called the show and divorced her live on air. Farah then said that she hoped something like that would not happen on their show. This segment lasted two minutes.

Fawzia: We like to let people get married on air, but not to get divorced. Our Arab and Islamic culture says that when there is a disagreement between husband and wife, there should be a relative from the wife's family and one relative from the husband's family present. Problems should not be broadcast on television.

Rania Mohamed (A Saudi radio host who was substituting for Mona): The wife could have presented her problems without mentioning names.

Fawzia: There was a bride from Jordan and, on her wedding day, the groom accidently poured juice down her wedding dress, and she said to him "You donkey". The groom then took the microphone and said to the guests that he would be divorcing his bride, whom he had married just five minutes before, because she had called him a "donkey", saying he did not think she would want to marry a "donkey" like him. The point of the story is that problems should be solved within the family and not in public.

Rania (responding angrily to the other presenters): Our programme is on air and is targeted at Arab women who should stand up for their rights and speak out. If someone tells me I am turning Arab women against their husbands, I say I am not, but that women must not tolerate their rights being compromised. If a woman lives in fear of society, of her husband, her father and her brother, her situation will never improve.

Farah (smiling to the camera): Arab women are afraid of even saying their name

None of the hosts' responses explain why husbands have the right to divorce their wives at anytime without any rights to protect women. Fawzia's response seems extremely biased in favour of the husband. She even contradicts herself and the main purpose of the show when she says that "problems should not be aired on television". It is as if she is saying that all guests who come onto *Kalam Nawaim* are not being respectful, because they are talking about their problems in public. Even though the presenters on *Kalam Nawaim* have

experienced divorce, Fawzia, for example, has never thought to draw on her own personal suffering on air to show solidarity with those women who have endured similar experiences. Usually in popular talk shows such as the *Oprah Winfreys Show*, we see the host, in this case Oprah, appealing to the audience by discussing her own sufferings and experience as they relate to the show's topic (Day, 1996, p.50). This sense of solidarity between host and participants, brought about by the former sharing their own experiences, is absent on *Kalam Nawaim*.

The same episode also talked about a case of incest in a segment lasting 14 minutes.

Rania: I was shocked when I read that there are 50 cases of pregnancies in Saudi Arabia due to incest and that these are only the officially registered ones. This figure conceals the thousands of incidents of sexual harassment and incest that go unreported. There is no doubt that there are similar cases in other Arab countries, and since our programme seeks to dispel fallacies and falsehood, the programme team investigated the prevalence of incest and has unearthed some touching testimonies. Watch this report.

A Saudi girl (hair and face completely veiled and her voice spoken by an actress): My father took me to live with one of his wives. One day at around 3 a.m., my half-brother came into my room while I was sleeping and started to take off my clothes and urinate on me. When I woke up, I escaped but he said that if I told anyone what happened, it would be me that would be blamed. I told my step-mother about the incident, but her son caught me. He took me to the yard and started beating me, pulling my hair and standing on my stomach. Then he locked me in the bathroom for three days without food or drink. When my father learned what had happened, he hit me and locked me in the basement. I went to a psychiatrist and suffered from schizophrenia, severe depression and was constantly crying, and I tried to commit suicide on three occasions. I am still receiving treatment for the injuries to my skull

caused by the beating, and I also have burns on my back. I stayed in the Women's Protective Centre for three months.

The girl's mother (hair and face completely veiled): My daughter is still undergoing physical and psychological treatment. She has been unable to study. I tried to give her hope, but unfortunately I was unable. It is difficult to play the role of mother and father. I need your help and guidance. I have not been able to offer my daughters the safety and stability they need.

The show invited two experts to discuss the matter: Suleiman Al Sonea, a legal advisor and founding member of the Society for the Protection of the Saudi Family, and Rania Mansour, a social development specialist from Lebanon.

Rania Barghout: We read about the 50 cases, but do you have official figures on incest? Are there a lot of unreported cases?

Suleiman: There is a problem with statistics in the Arab world. They are not in the public domain. I cannot tell you the real number. In general, the number of cases does not usually exceed 200 or 150 cases annually. The numbers are not high, but even one case of incest should be disclosed and addressed.

Farah: Are the victims mostly young adults or teenagers?

Suleiman: Most of the time; the victims are young children.

Fawzia: Having discussed this matter on the show, will that comfort the perpetrators that they are not the only ones who do this? Who is responsible, in your opinion, for sowing the seeds of evil?

Suleiman: In my opinion, the one who is responsible is the victim, because staying silent means the offender can continue abusing them.

Rania Mohammed (Saudi actress, a substitute in this episode for Mona Abu Suleiman)**:** What if the victim were a little girl, and the offender is the father or her brother?

Suleiman: The victim has to confess to her mother.

Rania Mohammed: This does not mean that we're saying that the victim is responsible for what is happening to her.

Suleiman: Even if she is a child, she must talk.

Rania Mohammed: There must be someone who is more responsible.

Farah (turning to Rania Mansour): What kind of cases do you have in your centre, and how do you treat them?

Rania Mansour: This is a big problem, and I disagree with Dr. Suleiman that the victim is responsible. In this case, we are making her a victim twice over. The victim is often a small child who has gotten used to the routine of sexual abuse. We also have cases of death threats and when the child confesses to her mother, the topic is undeclared for fear of scandal. This is a big problem, and it needs individual, social and psychological follow-up by a specialist.

Rania Barghout: How can I recognize a child victim and distinguish him/her from other children?

Suleiman: Some cases care easy to spot because of symptoms, such as children isolating themselves and being afraid of any movement by another person.

Farah (addressing Rania Mansour): What can you do in your centre?

Rania Mansour: One girl was abused by her father. She asked for help from her neighbour who advised that she go to the police and then to the courts. In this case the family tried to cover up the matter for fear of scandal, because they come from a conservative Lebanese village. The family accused the daughter of insanity and forced her to stay in a mental clinic. The girl ran away and ended up on the street, where she was exploited by pimps who often take advantage of girls in such circumstances. She was only 11 years old. She does not

know the meaning of a sexual relationship, but fell into prostitution. She eventually came to the centre and was treated. She is now married, has had a child and is pregnant with her second. But she is still undergoing psychological treatment and has now become more normal.

Rania Barghout (turning to Suleiman): If someone watching now is the victim of incest, what would you advise him/her?

Suleiman: I say to everyone watching this programme that she is not alone, and that we are with them.

Rania: What if the person is afraid to talk?

Suleiman: This is a strictly confidential. We do not look to defame individuals.

Rania Mansour (immediately): Centres are not able to deal with each and every case. That's why we encourage the victim to speak to her relatives and if she cannot reach out to her mother, she should seek help from an uncle, or other relative or close friend, else she will suffer in silence for many years to come.

Farah: Thank you for coming and we hope things improve.

The report touched on the very serious and sensitive crime of incest, but no link was made between the discussion in the studio and the report. Even though the girl in the report explained the pain and distress she suffered in her family and how she had asked her step-mother for help, neither the hosts nor the expert related their discussion to the girl's situation. This is yet another example of the hosts' inability to connect with the participant's suffering. By contrast, in her show, Oprah Winfreys not only puts relevant questions to participants, but also draws on her own experience of rape and sexual abuse in her family at the age of nine. She explains to a victim of incest in their childhood how her own experiences of incest and sexual abuse left her confused, humiliated and angry. In 1992, she narrated a powerful

documentary on the subject that was aired on the three major commercial networks and PBS (Timberg, 2002, p.135).

Fawzia's question to one of the experts not only shows her failure to connect with the participant's suffering in the report, but also her misunderstanding of the whole case. This is revealed in her statement, asking if "bringing up this matter will comfort perpetrators because it makes them feel that they are not the only ones who do this". This might be true if the participant were the offender, not the victim. In what way, can a victim confessing her suffering from incest justify such behaviour? Usually, talk shows hosts reveal some of their own personal experiences, bestowing intimacy on the show, which is what makes the genre so appealing. Talk shows locate the hosts within a framework that is conducive to their displaying warm and sympathetic behaviours towards participants (Verwey, 1990, p.239). Such characteristics are not in evidence among the hosts of *Kalam Nawaim*.

Episode No. 293 (2009)

This segment, about a child injured by a teacher, lasted 5 minutes.

Farah: There was an incident that took place in one of the Arab countries, where the teacher beat a girl with a broken leg, which led to paralysis. The school decided to punish the teacher only by deducting five days from the teacher's salary, as if the matter were a minor offense not a crime against an innocent child. Before we discuss this topic, the programme asked the views of the public on beating children at schools.

Participant 1: Any respectable school should not allow teachers to beat students. If there is a problem, the school must send a letter to the parents so they can decide what course of action is needed.

Participant 2: This is wrong. The problem is with the teacher.

Participant 3: The father must go to the principal and learn what the cause of the conflict was; whether it is his son's or the teacher's fault.

Participant 4: If the teacher dared to hit my son, I would hit him back.

Participant 5: If someone hit my children at school, I would simply take my children to another school.

Participant 6: I would check with the teacher and ask why they were beaten.

Participant 7: Beating should not be allowed. If parents do not beat their children, why does the school allow it?

Farah: I cannot forget, how when I was at school, the end of the iron ruler was used by the teacher to jab the hand of the students. But there are many kinds of schools. My four-year old daughter's school asked parents not to leave their children late at school. When we moved to a remote area, there were no buses provided by the school there. My husband contacted the school administrator and asked them why they did not provide buses yet asked parents not to leave their children at school after hours. The school principal called us and said buses would be available in our area. I respect such schools; they deserve any amount of money you pay them.

Rania: This school that you talk about used an iron ruler to hit students a long time ago, but education has changed now. The problem with the teacher who hit the student is that there are no laws on violence against children in schools. When there is a law prohibiting teachers from hitting students then teachers will stop.

Fawzia (confusedly questioning both Rania and Farah, raising her voice and gesticulating in a way that draws attention to her diamond earrings, as well as a large diamond and pearl ring on her right hand and smaller diamond ring on the left): What do we want from the teacher? The school has already deducted five days' salary. Do you want to destroy the teacher's future?

Rania and Farah (responding immediately):   But the student was paralysed.

Fawzia (surprised):   Really, paralysed?   If this is the case, that's different.   But some schools treat teachers badly, their salaries are low and the size of the student body prevents teachers from doing their jobs properly.

Rania: Does that mean teachers have to avenge themselves on students?

Fawzia: No, but we must improve conditions in the classroom, limit the number of students in classrooms, increase the number of better qualified teachers, and then we can introduce penalties for teachers' misdemeanours.

Heba: I remember when I was at school there was teacher who lowered grades, punished students and more importantly verbally abused students, which is worse than physical abuse because it causes psychological damage and leaves painful memories.

Fawzia (responding to Heba as if talking to her young daughter): Listen, Heba, there are girls who are badly behaved and have been brought up badly.

Rania (assertively): Violence is unacceptable, whether it is against children, wives or girls.

Both Farah's and Fawzia's answers here offer no support to the injured girl. Farah shows sympathy but her rather long anecdote about her daughter's school is irrelevant.   The disadvantaged girls of Goz Al Jaafarh felt that Farah's example of students' good treatment at her daughter's expensive private school was not relevant for those who cannot afford such schools (Chapter 7). Usually, on popular talk shows we see the host discussing her own suffering and experience, relating it to the show's topic so as to demonstrate solidarity with the participants (Day, 1996, p. 50), but this is not the case on *Kalam Nawaim*. At no point did she focus on her own traumatic experience as a Palestinian, who had been denied an education in Jordan, to show solidarity with the abused student.

Fawzia's comments are not only insensitive and irrelevant, but revealed that she was either not concentrating or not fully prepared. This is demonstrated by her being surprised that the student was paralysed. Vicki Abt, Professor of Sociology and American Studies at Penn State Ogontz, explained that talk show hosts play the roles of "knowing therapists, but they may not have the professional credentials to give advice". She also says that the "therapy provided by talk shows ignores the need for knowing a patient's history" (Day, 1996, p.48).

In addition, Fawzia's voice, appearance and body language signified arrogance and luxury, and it showed a complete lack of sympathy and understanding for the sad case of the poor abused student. In semiotics, which is the study of signs, there are denotations and connotations and there is an important distinction between the two. Denotation looks at the visual sign and connotation is what that represents (Gripsrud, 2006, p.17). Fawzia's clothes and jewellery connote arrogance, luxury, selfishness and a lack of sympathy for the victim. The disadvantaged women in my focus groups were extremely irritated by her responses; so much so that when they stepped out of the room they were all murmuring angrily about her comments (See Chapter 7).

When Fawzia addressed Heba, her tone of voice and facial expression connoted that she was using her age as a weapon, asserting herself as a mother figure among the younger presenters, to push her point and idea.

The same episode contained another segment that lasted for 15 minutes, about female students at the Royal Aviation Academy in Jordan. In it, Heba interviewed Yasmine Al Memana, a student from Saudi Arabia.

Heba: From Jordan, *Kalam Nawaim* visits the Royal Aviation Academy where the rank of captain is no longer exclusively for men, because women have proven they are worthy of this title. (Turning to Yasmine): What made you choose this major?

Yasmine: I have wanted to do this major since I was little, and my family encouraged me to go for it

Heba: How long have you been in the Academy?

Yasmine: I have been there for one year. I came here after I graduated from high school and then I registered with this Academy straight away, because it is the best in the Middle East.

Heba: Which stage are you at?

Yasmine: I can now fly an airplane, and I will graduate in five months.

Heba: Will you pursue this as a profession, or as a hobby?

Yasmine: Definitely as a profession.

Then Heba interviewed the Head of the Royal Aviation Academy.

Heba's introductory statement that the rank of captain is no longer exclusive to men suggests Saudi society is more permissive than it is. The segment did not explain why such majors are not allowed to be taught to women in Saudi Arabia, or what the future of Saudi girls who graduate from this Academy in Jordan is when they cannot be employed in their own country. Since Heba interviewed a Saudi woman who will graduate from the Academy, it is more logical to interview a Saudi official to understand the reasons behind prohibiting such majors and employment in this field for women in Saudi Arabia, rather than interviewing the Head of the Royal Aviation Academy in Jordon.

Episode No. 316 (2010)

This segment covered the story of Saeeda Zenani, a 16-year old illiterate Saudi girl who had been locked inside her home, where her father and step mother beat her severely, and tortured her by stabbing and burning her. Her step-mother had been doing this to Saeeda since she was six years old. This session interviewed Saeeda and Saud Al Shammari, a Saudi human rights activist and a specialist in Islamic studies, after which Rayan Abdulrhaman, a legal adviser and lawyer joined the show. This segment lasted 20 minutes and was at the beginning of the show. Saeeda and Rayan were interviewed via satellite and Saud was interviewed in the studio.

Farah: You were in the Women's Protective Centre, were you treated fairly there?

Saeeda: The treatment of women in the Centre in Jeddah is appalling. The supervisors beat and threaten the girls, which makes me even more afraid.

Saud: Saeeda's case is not the only one like this. This is a phenomenon that has spread throughout Saudi society due to the country's cultural and religious heritage. Our society is extremely patriarchal and religious. As a result, women have been marginalised and are viewed as obedient servants in the home. There are no harsh penalties for violence against women and women's protection is down to the family to provide.

Rania: How are you going to change these laws?

Saud: I speak as a human rights activist. I have received several phone calls from officials urging me not to come onto this show and speak about this subject. Officials asked me to call them privately and not to go on television. I tell them sorry I do not have one case, two or ten, but I have dozens of cases, and the only way to bring about change is through the media, to bring people together and thus force decision-makers to act.

Fawzia: You say that Saudi society is patriarchal, but the criminal in Saeeda's case is the step-mother.

Saud: We all share responsibility, the families and society. There are a lot of children who are tortured and killed by their step-mothers but no law has been adopted by the Saudi Government to deter those who have power over children, such as fathers and the family.

Heba: Saudi Arabia is a country of benevolence and there are many officials concerned that everybody does not suffer. Who is responsible in Saeeda's case?

Saud: Saudi culture is responsible. When a case like Saeeda's reaches the police, the guardian of the victim is asked to come, and after signing the pledge, the victim is returned to the family and nothing changes. Saeeda has been to the Women's Protective Centre, why does she not have an identity card and a social security number? The Ministry of Social Affairs has the largest budget in Saudi Arabia, larger than that of the Ministry of Defence, and it is responsible for providing housing, care and support. We have all of these rights in our system. The problem lies with uncaring officials and bureaucracy. Whenever we demand the rights of those who are in need, we are faced with reproach and denial.

Fawzia: What would you like to say to your father?

Saeeda: If you had treated me well, as you do my siblings, and cared about me, I wouldn't be here now. I didn't come onto television to defame you, but you have brought this upon yourself.

Fawzia: We want you to say a few words to King Abdullah.

Saeeda: I say to the King that I need help, because I am a Saudi citizen. I have a daughter who also needs protection. I spent my life on the street, and I don't want my daughter to suffer as I did.

In this segment, Fawzia's shallow questions left all the important issues, including the causes of Saeeda's hardship and suffering, such as the impact of polygamy on families, and the Saudi law that denies divorced mothers custody of their children after the age of 10. By

asking Saeeda what she would like to say to King Abdullah, Fawzia reduced these issues from wider social ones to the personal situation of a single individual. Hosts on women's talk shows tend to conceal the nature of problems endemic in society (Abt & Seesholtz, 1994, p.177). Talk shows here give abused people a voice, but only a limited voice, and only according to certain values.

Episode No. 318 (2010)

The segment here discussed women's rights in Islam and false interpretations of the Qur'an in verses relating to women. The show interviewed Suhaila Zain Al Abdeen, a specialist in Islamic history and a member of Saudi Arabia's National Human Rights Society, and Sheikh Abdullah Al Jefn, a specialist in Islamic studies. Al Abdeen was interviewed in the studio in Beirut, while Al Jefn was interviewed via satellite from Jeddah. The session lasted for 26 minutes, and was at the beginning of the show.

Farah (asking Suhaila with surprise): What is this new theory of yours about the different interpretations of a woman's status in Islam?

Suhaila (dressed in head scarf and abaya (black cloak)): Firstly, this is not a theory but rather a correction of the current Islamic discourse rooted in false interpretations of the Qur'anic verses and prophetic sayings concerning women as well as *fiqh* provisions that have been based on fabricated or weak prophetic sayings.

Farah: Can you explain a little more?

Suhaila: There is no verse in the Qur'an that says a wife should obey her husband. I did a study and went through all the prophetic sayings relating to a wife's obedience to her husband and her going out without his permission. These sayings proved to be weak and fabricated.

Fawzia (her hair uncovered and her sparkling blouse revealing her bare forearms):
One verse in the Qur'an says *"Men are women's providers because Allah has created some of them to excel above others and because they pay for their shelter."* This means that men are better than women, because they are paying for them.

Suhaila: This is a misconception, unfortunately. The meaning of "*Kawam*" is the servant who is responsible for serving his woman and children and not the commander, as some scholars have interpreted. Ibn Tabari, for example, interprets *"Al Kawama"* as sovereignty over a woman; that a man should discipline her through beating if she does not follow the principles of Islam. As if they are saying women disobey God and that they need discipline, while men are perfect, and never commit any sins and are always obedient to God.

Heba (asking Abdullah, apparently confused by Suhaila's comments): We want to know what you think about this interpretation. These are things that I am hearing about for the first time, although I have read about these matters.

Abdullah (directing himself mainly to Suhaila, and adopting a preaching mode in the use of his hands and voice, while the camera lingers on Suhaila's obviously resentful expression): Suhaila must learn that woman was created from man and this is clear in the verse: *"And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion."* It is women's destiny to be part of men and thus it is sin if a man does not respect a woman's rights. He is considered an oppressor because she is part of him. We all agree that a woman is from a different world to that of a man. This is according to the verse: *"The male shall have the equal of the portion of two females"*, which means that women receive half the amount of inheritance that men do, and their testimony in court is worth half that of a man. This is written in the verse: *"And call in to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two women from among those whom you choose to be witnesses"*. This is not to

undermine women's rights. Women are also not allowed to go for Jihad due to their feminine nature, because they need to be protected like a pearl from becoming masculine.

Suhaila (responding with a confident smile, despite Abdullah's shouted interruptions): What the Sheikh says proves that misconceptions are prevalent. This verse: *"The male shall have the equal of the portion of two females"* should not be generalised to all cases of inheritance. There are cases of women inheriting the same amount as men, and sometimes they inherit more, and there are also cases where they inherit, and the men do not. For example, if a son dies, the mother and father inherit the same and if the son dies leaving a daughter, the daughter will inherit more than her grandfather.

Suhaila: *"O you men! surely We have created you of male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other, surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty)"*. **(Raising her voice because of Abdullah's attempts to interrupt):** What you are saying is contrary to God's sense of justice. You want to generalise, favouring men over women in everything, even through your citation of the verse, *"then one man and two women from among those whom you choose to be witnesses"*.

Then Abdullah interrupted her again and didn't let her finish her sentence. Suhaila showed her frustration with these interruptions by sitting right back in her chair and wrapping her hands over each other.

Abdullah: I agree that society has oppressed women, but if we looked carefully at Sharia discourse, we find that women's dignity is higher than men's.

Farah (asking Suhaila): You did a research study that Aisha (One of the prophet's wives) in fact did not get married at the age of nine. This is important, because her marrying so young has been used by some older men to justify marrying little girls, because everyone wants to imitate the marriage of the Prophet.

Suhaila: Most of these narratives are based on weak and incorrect accounts of the Prophet's sayings. Is it logical that the Prophet married Aisha at nine when the Qur'an says: *"He put between you love and compassion"?* How can there be love and compassion between a little girl and an old man? A little girl's organs are not fully developed when she marries an old man, which results in miscarriage or death during childbirth. In addition, when a little girl gets married at this age and when there is such a large age gap between her and her husband, there might also be psychological effects that could lead to the wife's betrayal, or her murdering the husband or committing suicide.

Rania (asking Abdullah): What is your opinion about the marriage of little girls?

Abdullah (Suhaila listening to him with obvious resentment, revealed by her deep breathing, hands wrapped tightly together, and by the grinding of her teeth): I always recommend early marriages. No girl should be forced to marry. No marriage can be without her consent, whether she is a little girl or an adult. If this consent is forthcoming, there is no harm in getting married, even if the wife is a little girl and the husband is 100 years old.

Abdullah said 100 years very quickly and he ended the sentence with 'that's it' and by folding his hands to indicate there was to be no more discussion.

Suhaila (energetically): A little girl does not know the consequences of early marriage, so why should we take as valid the opinion of a child?

Abdullah (loudly, apparently confused): I'm not talking about a child, but about those who are aged 15, 16, 17, 18, etc.

Rania: Those who are 15 and 16 are still considered children.

Then, suddenly, Fawzia ended the discussion, telling Abdullah in a very gentle and polite voice, with a smile that the show is grateful for his participation. After he had left the screen, she turned to Suhaila angrily, firing questions at her in a loud voice, saying:

Fawzia: We said that *"Kawamat"* (Preference) of man is because of his role as a woman's protector, because he is paying for her and providing her with a house. Will a woman enjoy all of these benefits and then say to her husband "just go, I will not obey you"? (She waved her hands as she said, with great disdain, 'just go', illustrating that women who do that are disrespectful). There is something called ethics, which means when a man is doing a favour for a woman, in this case covering her expenses, a woman in return must treat him well. (As she said this she moved her hands, gripping all her fingers together with an admonishing and motherly voice, to emphasize the idea that women's obedience to their husbands is respectful).

Suhaila (eyebrows raised in surprise): This is not a man doing a woman a favour.

Fawzia shouted at her:

Fawzia (shouting): Yes, he is doing her a favour.

Suhaila (embarrassed and angry): This is his duty, because they are fulfilling complementary roles. The man obliges the woman to stay at home and raise the children.

Fawzia (cutting in, loudly): This is not a women's duty. Omar bin Al-Khattab (one of the most powerful and influential Muslim caliphs and a close companion of the Prophet Muhammad) said: "My wife cooks my food, raises up my children, but this is not her duty". If women want to make martyrs of themselves, then they are free to do so, but they must also treat their husbands with care. (She said that last sentence sarcastically and carelessly as if she were making fun of women who complain).

Suhaila (clearly frustrated): Obedience will never be taken to that extent. There are some fabricated prophetic sayings which state that the husband should not be challenged if he kills his wife because he owns her.

Fawzia (shouting and pointing her finger to Suhaila): This is extremism.

Suhaila: This is what scholars say.

Fawzia: This is custom but not religion. (Fawzia said this sentence as she folded her hands together, turning in profile to suggest the discussion was over)

Farah: In this society, both men and women exist. Love and obedience must be mutual between both of them.

The debate between Al Abdeen and Sheikh Al Jefn demonstrates the struggle between the dominant religious power and the people, mainly women, which ultimately has implications for Saudi Arabia's development. Al Abdeen believes that one of the most important topics that needs addressing is Islamic discourse, and that there should be a re-reading of this discourse because most of the interpretations of verses in the Qur'an that relate to women are derived from tradition and cultural heritage (Al Abdeen, 2011, p.3). Al Jefn's interpretation reflects the dominant Wahhabi power in Saudi Arabia, which emphasizes women's subordination to men. As a result of these interpretations, men practice various forms of violence against women in the name of Islam, and women are deprived of their social, financial and educational rights (Ibid, p.3).

Moreover, all the signs, including his tone of voice, gestures and commands signify a Saudi cleric's dominant power; someone who cannot bear the idea of a knowledgeable confident woman having the self-confidence to debate and argue with him. Both verbal and visual signs are used to generate messages connoting the dominant ideology of religious power.

Fawzia's hardline viewpoint reveals that her sympathies lie with the dominant religious power, especially when she said that men are doing women a favour by paying for the household and providing women with a roof over their heads. Here, Fawzia completely ignored women's unpaid domestic labour. She ignored how women's incomes are lower than

men's in large part because they are required to spend 40 to 50 hours a week doing unpaid domestic work. Consequently, women's total number of working hours is much higher than men's while their monetary incomes are much lower (Koopman, 1997, p.136).

The contradiction between Fawzia's appearance and her support for conservative religious views connotes hypocrisy and lack of sincerity. Fawzia's dress code does not meet the rigid requirements of strict versions of Islam, yet she was siding with an extremely rigid, Wahhabi interpretation of Qur'anic verses relating to women, against Al Abdeen's liberal interpretation, and she is a specialist in Islamic studies and appeared on TV in the apparel required of Saudi women in Saudi Arabia.

Some sources at the channel (Anonymous source, 2013) said that when Fawzia was asked why she was so aggressive with Al Abdeen, she answered that since the channel is owned by and watched by Saudis, the presenters should be careful what was said on the show, otherwise they would lose their jobs. This highlights that despite the paradigm shift in Arab private satellite television regarding state ownership, the Arab private market is still under state control.

Fawzia's response shows her trying not only to satisfy the dominant elite power, but also the dominant popular culture in Saudi Arabia. Hall (1981) argues that what we call popular culture involves a continuous and unequal struggle between forces of domination, points of resistance and everything in between. The question is not what to allow, or not to allow, in a talk show just because of the elite power or producer's influence, but as Hebdige (1979) said, typically members of the subordinate class agree with the views of the powers that be. This is how hegemony works; otherwise popular culture would not be so popular (Grindstaff, 2002,

p.33). This might explain the reason behind Saudi female presenters and guests wearing headscarves when they are on television, although they do not wear them in real life, in spite of the fact that it is not even encouraged – never mind required – by the MBC channel or the authorities. After investigating the reason behind this double standard, the response was that the majority of the Saudi public like to watch Saudi women with head-scarves and they find it more acceptable that they are worn.

6.2.2 Hewar Al Arab: is a talk show broadcast monthly on *Al Arabiya*. It was launched in 2007 under the auspices of the Arab Thought Foundation and is presented by Taleb Kanaan. The programme discusses several topics, covering cultural, intellectual, economic and social issues, among other areas, and is broadcast from Beirut. It combines live press reports from different Arab countries, audience participation through an electronic voting process, questions and answers, and the participation of a studio audience from different countries (Arab Thought Foundation, 2010).

One episode from 29th October, 2009, discussed Arab women's empowerment. Several other episodes discussed development issues, such as education and labour market requirements, the role of civil society, development vs. confrontation, and the needs of Arab youth, but these were not focused on women or on the disadvantaged, which are the key topics of this research. This section will therefore analyse this one episode from, October 2009, which was entitled '*The Status of Women in the Arab World*. The duration of this show's episodes is one hour.

The Arab Thought Foundation was founded by Prince Khalid Al Faisal in 2000. It began with a preparatory meeting in temporary headquarters in the city of Abha in Saudi Arabia,

before moving to its permanent headquarters in Beirut, the Arab cultural capital. Prince Khalid Al Faisal had called for an initiative, demonstrating solidarity between intellectuals and businessmen, to be adopted by an Arabic civil foundation, with the aim of contributing to an Arabic renaissance (Arab Thought Foundation, 2010).

Taleb Kanaan: has been a news anchor on *Al Arabiya's* TV news channel since March 2003, and is the presenter of its monthly talk show, *Hewar Al Arab*. He started his career at Lebanon's National Broadcasting Network (NBN) news channel as an editor, after which he occupied several other positions at that network. In 2002, he earned an MA in Political Science from the Lebanese University. He holds a PhD from the University of Wales.

Episode: The Status of Women in the Arab World (29th October, 2009)

Taleb (introducing the episode in a professional and concerned voice): The topic of Arab women's status is painful because it starts out as marginalization, a form of inequality, but it might end up with murder in the name of honour – a so-called honour crime. It is true that governments in the Arab world have worked to varying degrees to improve women's status, but it is also true that women's participation in public life has not been due to any kind of internal social mobility within the Arab societies, but rather is down to a desire to please the outside world. Why do women in Pakistan, Turkey, Bangladesh and Indonesia reach top positions but women in the Arab world only attain leadership positions in exceptional cases and where it is permitted through quotas? Are women ready to play such important roles and to be more independent, or are they passive and too accepting of the submission required of them? There are several reasons for the marginalization of women; it stems from customs and traditions, the personal status law, religious institutions and government inaction.

I am happy to be hosting: Ambassador Mervat Tallawy, former Minister of Social Affairs in Egypt; Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, member of the Jordanian Senate; Adeeb Neama, a development consultant in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Badria Al Beshr, a Saudi writer and Professor of Sociology; and Jaheda Wehbe, a Lebanese artist and actress. There are also many students who are participating in this episode and will be able to vote on questions.

The main question here is: What is needed, primarily, for Arab women to realise their rights and what are their responsibilities?

Mervat: The problem is summarized in the following points:

- Governments have focused on stone, not on people, especially in building culture and education. As a result, men continue to constrain women on the grounds of 'tradition' and they do not elect them.

- The ministries of social affairs and development, culture and education, have small budgets and are not prioritized by governments, even though they are the ones which develop and build human capacity.

- Arab states do not abide by the international laws they have signed and do not apply them at the national level. This is something which is inconsistent with constitutions and with much of national legislation.

- Women themselves surrender to their situation and do not defend their rights.

- The state has not confronted Salafi, ideologies which are against any kind of development.

Haifa:

- It is essential that legislation does not discriminate between individuals in society and there should be no discrimination on economic, social and political grounds. Political decisions should help women to take their rightful place in society.

- Implementation mechanisms are still patchy in the Arab world. Each institution believes it is protecting women's rights, and thus women's issues are lost among many institutions, be they formal or non-governmental organizations.

- The existing mentality needs to be changed. Men are looking at women in a certain way and women should look at themselves in terms of their capabilities, not just their sex.

- The media sometimes treats women as commodities.

Adeeb: I think there should be a renaissance project similar to the European Renaissance.

Taleb: Aren't we dreaming?

Adeeb: No we are not dreaming. This is what is needed. If one believes that a change in women's status will be accomplished without fundamental changes, one is mistaken. Discrimination against women is made up of an alliance between social heritage and neo-liberal globalization, which is patriarchal. This alliance is the cause of women's low status. To change the *status quo* there must be political reform and the eschewal of neo-liberal patriarchal economic policies.

Badria: The problem with women's liberation is cultural and political, so not religion itself, but there is a problem with religious institutions and their juridical interpretations. Women's strongest ally is the state. A state should not abandon its duties in the face of religious institutions. It is important to emphasize that basic freedoms and acquiring knowledge from scientific sources not from religious ideology, are what matter.

Jaheda: We must create a self-perpetuating culture that educates people. There must be new strategies for developing social and cultural traditions. We must also pay more attention to a growing religious fundamentalism and how this inhibits women's development.

The opening few minutes instantly send the message that there are several obstacles to Arab women's development and that each Arab country is different, yet the general challenges remain largely the same. When Tallawy said that the role of governments was to focus on stone, not on people, especially in terms of building culture and education, this corresponds with the views of social experts and academics such as Al Gethame who described development in Saudi Arabia as *"Tafra"*, meaning *'economic boom'*.

Adeeb Neama referred to the causes of Arab women's discrimination as rooted in the alliance between traditional Arab heritage and the patriarchal system applied by development organizations. Some feminist activists have suggested that what is actually taking place in international development organisations, and other economic and social institutions should not be called gender subordination, but male bias. This male bias is embedded in organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and has three typical forms: sexual division of labour, unpaid domestic work and household work (Elson, 1991, p.24). In the Arab world, there is an additional burden, which is tradition. Arab women perform domestic work that is praised by traditional Arab society. However, this work is not calculated economically, nor is it factored into the calculation of the gross national product. Working women therefore bear the responsibility for both domestic and professional work because there has been little change to Arab family structures or in the distribution of roles to assist women to enter the job market. The economic participation of Arab women is consequently the lowest in the world.

Badria's response summarized the dilemma in women's development in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi regime is not a theocratic regime but a hybrid structure, which is neither wholly secular nor wholly religious. As such, the religious class functions under the authority of the ruling class (Ibid, 2007, p.58). The fatwas issued by clerics demonstrate how desperate they are to control every aspect of the social sphere, especially where women are involved (Ibid, p.55).

Question directed to the audience

Taleb: Are Arab women treated justly?

Result of electronic voting:

Yes: 19%

No: 81%

Taleb (assertively): Does Arab culture reject women as equal partners to men?

Mervat: We must change men's mindsets in order to improve women's standing in society. No matter how much legislation is passed and how many quotas are allocated, women are not elected. Culture is left without a responsible bearer; it is left up to institutions and groups, whether from the West or the East, and is directed at young adults.

Taleb (probing assuredly): Is Arab culture patriarchal?

Mervat: Certainly, we have gone downhill. Most of Al Azhar's clerics have called for better human rights before the United Nations (UN). But where are these men now? Has this deterioration occurred because of global materialism, which sees women as commodities? Or is it because of a distorted view of development? Development can only be accomplished by both men and women. Arab societies have not focused on social development.

Here, even though Taleb asked closed questions that required 'yes' or 'no' answers, his assured tone of voice and gestures suggest he is asking leading questions that indicate he is

certain that Arab culture rejects women as equal partners and is patriarchal. However, his concerned voice does not suggest to the viewer that he is dictating or forcing a particular answer on the interviewee; in fact, it suggests he is sympathetic and concerned about Arab women's status.

There was a report from Lebanon asking people at random in the street about Arab women's status. The report lasted 2 minutes. The questions in the report are about women's status in general revealing diverse opinions among the public.

Taleb: We know that women make up half of society and, if 50% is not participating effectively, there can be no development. So, still we don't progress and we go backwards, why? (In the last sentence, Taleb raised his voice assuredly and with frustration).

Badria: Women in these countries are not independent persons, but are members of the family, and men are the intermediary between them and the state. The state does not deal with women directly, so they are treated as a minority. On top of that, women are used as playthings in the hands of the state whenever there are political and social problems.

Taleb (probing): How?

Badria: In other words, if the state wants to conduct a public campaign abroad, it focuses on women's rights. However, if such rights clash with traditional religious institutions, they are driven back. It's as if the state is sharing its duties towards women as citizens with other institutions, and is then bidding on them.

Taleb: Nice

Again, here, Taleb's forcefulness with the questions did not suggest that he was imposing his views, because the concern and frustration in his voice showed his support for women's rights, not a drive to get certain answers.

Badria's comments illustrate the struggle between the traditional and reformist powers in Saudi Arabia and that women are largely the victims in this struggle. Despite King Abdullah's promises of reform, he is just one player in a circle of powerful princes. These multiple power sources have created two opposing groups: the reformists and the conservatives. These contradictory forces undermine the state's coherence and embody an unprecedented antagonistic pluralism. However, overall, power has remained concentrated in the hands of traditional power holders, mainly a number of princes (Al Rasheed, 2008, pp.13, 17, 18).

Saudi modernity, according to Al Gethame, is a form of a socio-cultural schizophrenia and cannot be fully accomplished because it is not entirely indigenous (quoted in Kraidy, 2012, p.238). Al Gethame states that the main dilemma with Saudi modernity is that it is a struggle among the dominant religious powers, and ordinary people are excluded from the debate. As a result, the debate continues without any progress (Ibid, p.248).

There was a report from Jordan asking people in the street about Arab women's status. The report lasted 2 minutes.

Question to the audience

Taleb: What are the main barriers that constrain women?

Result of electronic voting:

Customs and traditions: 25%

Outdated traditions: 40%

Religious barriers: 35%

Taleb: You mentioned before that neo-liberalism is responsible for inequality, but the irony is that countries that have neo-liberalist economic policies uphold women's rights to a much greater extent than Arab countries. Can we compare women's rights in Western countries with women's rights in the Arab world? (Taleb raised his voice in the last sentence sympathetically, and moved his hands to indicate that there is no comparison between women's rights in the Arab world and those in Western countries).

Adeeb: Neoliberal economies discriminate against women. In the UN, production and reproduction, which are patriarchal terms, are discussed. This neo-liberalism is interpreted in our society but is rooted in fundamentalism and tradition. In our society, we suffer from discrimination against women as a result of both globalization and our backward heritage. European countries have been affected negatively by globalization, but they do not have traditions constraining them, because they have been liberated by modernity. We have not yet modernised.

Mervat: Women's rights in the West are much better than in Arab countries because states have enacted laws to protect women's rights and have not left them at the mercy of tradition or of Salafist interpretations of religion.

There was a report from Morocco asking people at random in the street about Arab women's status. The report lasted 2 minutes.

Taleb (hesitantly): Does the Arab intellectual prioritise women's issues?

Badria: You don't call someone an intellectual if he doesn't make women's issues a top priority. For example, Imam Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, after he returned from France, said that the concept of the harem is prison and cultural unemployment, so he is an honest and real intellectual. Habib Bourguiba, for example, is an intellectual leader, because he has promoted and supported women's rights. An intellectual can be a politician, cleric or scholar who can play an enlightened cultural role in his homeland.

Badria's response illustrates the notion of Gramsci who believed that intellectuals were not to be seen as confined to an elite class but to be grounded in everyday life.

Question to the audience

Taleb: Who is responsible for the suppression of women's rights in the Arab world?

Result of electronic voting:

Political systems: 15%

Social structures: 45%

Culture: 40%

Taleb (hesitantly to Mervat): You are a member of the Arab Women's Organization. Is your voice heard? Do you work freely, or is what is applied unjustly to women also applied to the Arab Women's Organization, which was founded primarily to uphold women's rights?

Mervat: What is missing is that the organization's policies and ideas need to be applied at the executive level of the state, otherwise they will be just words.

Taleb (to Adeeb): You are a consultant for the ESCWA, to advance women's rights. Is the voice of this organization heard in government and across Arab societies? How can the ESCWA influence sectarian and tribal Arab societies? (Taleb raised his voice in frustration

during the last part of the question and put both hands together when he mentioned sectarian and tribal Arab societies).

Adeeb: The ESCWA provides governments with policies and supports civil society. All of this is happening. The benefit of the Arab Women's Organization, for example, is that they get leading ladies more involved in women's issues, but does the organization solve the problem? No. Does it need another source that presents the issue more radically? Of course. But I cannot ask the UN, the ESCWA and the Arab Women's Organization to adopt the most radical approach, to change the entire structure of society. I think these organizations should play a stronger role, but change must come about as the result of integrated, participatory work. The United Nations and official institutions are not necessarily the best way. The most courageous acts should come from the women themselves, and the more enlightened corners of society; this will result in gallant movements that can be more effective than the UN, the Arab Women's Organization and official institutions.

Taleb: How can the media make a transformative contribution to women's rights and are the Arab media patriarchal? (Taleb raised his voice anxiously when he said patriarchal)

Badria: The media today are a profitable enterprise that abides by the global laws of profit-making. Media have become a shopping market for selling goods. They have abandoned their role as a tool for enlightenment and are now a vehicle for consumption and profit. They have therefore played a role in making people more ignorant, rather than enlightened.

Taleb probed: How?

Badria: They have become subject to what the audience wants.

Taleb probed: How?

Badria: For example, in religious societies there are religious programmes presented by unknown clerics providing inaccurate information about religion. Such clerics earn very high incomes from these programmes. There are also programmes about the interpretation of

dreams, which are pure trivia with profit as their chief aim. Also Arab media is patriarchal, as with all Arab institutions. Statistics show that 80% of the time, women are portrayed in the Arab media as beautiful, sexy women, or as housewives interested in superficial things. This is a 100% patriarchal view.

Badria's interpretation of women's portrayal on television matches the views of the focus group participants, who complained about the weakness of women's characters in dramas and soap operas, especially those from the Arab Gulf (See Chapter 7). This is partly due to patriarchal dominance but there is also a lack of audience research in Arab media. This dearth of research on women's media consumption in the Arab world risks baseless generalizations being made about the impact of television on women.

Taleb: To what extent is the educational system in the Arab world responsible for promoting injustice against women? (Taleb sounded sympathetic when he referred to injustice against women)

Badria: Educational institutions play a role in teaching women and men about the concept of equality and about others. Most of the educational philosophies in our countries are ideological, promulgating customs and traditions that in fact reflect the state's philosophy. If we want to create new concepts based on the principles of equality, we have to liberate not only the schools, but the home and outside the home, from these traditional ideologies in order to create a new public philosophy. Without this public philosophy, there cannot be change.

From the descriptions of *Kalam Nawaim* and *Hewar Al Arab*, we can deduce that discussing poverty, illiteracy and violence against women requires a commitment to expose other critically important subjects, such as social justice, a fair distribution of wealth, corruption, a

critique of Arab traditions, and erroneous Qur'anic interpretations, especially of verses relating to women. All of this requires genuinely knowledgeable presenters on a hard-hitting talk show like *Hewar Al Arab*, something not achieved on a soft talk show like *Kalam Nawaim*. The professionalism, solidarity, sympathy and concern of the presenter, Taleb Kanaan, for women's status in *Hewar Al Arab*, evident in what he said as well as in his tone of voice and body language, were all completely absent among the *Kalam Nawaim* presenters.

6.3 <u>Drama: *Al Sakenat fee Golobena*</u>

Al Sakenat fee Golobena is a 40 episodes Saudi drama series that ran from 2009 to 2010, and focused on women's empowerment. Each episode presented different instances of injustice against women that prevented their full societal participation. The series is produced by Al-Sadaf for Audio and Visual Production, and its Executive Director is Hassan Assiri, an actor and producer. The series' cast members are actors and actresses from Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf countries. The episodes and clips analysed here are those used in the focus groups for this study (See Chapter 7). These episodes are mainly chosen for their focus on issues of poverty, education and violence. These episodes are: *Zafaf Jotha (Wedding of a Corpse)*, *Al Kheyar Al Saab (The Difficult Choice)* and *Burj Al Athraa (The Virgo Sign)*.

6.3.1 *Zafaf Jotha (Wedding of a Corpse)***:

The edited clip lasted 10 minutes. I selected only the scenes most relevant to this study. It showed a poor family: Abu Saud, the father, Umm Saud, the mother, and four daughters, Zainab, Samia, Reem and Nouf. Only one daughter, Samia, wants to complete her education, while the others have had to drop out of secondary school as they couldn't afford to go. The father works as driver in a company and has a good relationship with Abu Turki, the

company's owner, who later proposed to his daughter Zainab. Although the episode did not say in which part of Saudi Arabia the story took place, from the dialect we understand that it is set in Riyadh-Saudi Arabia, the capital.

One day, Abu Turki calls Abu Saud into his office and started asking him questions:

Abu Turki (eagerly): I want to ask you how your family is, and whether your children are studying?

Abu Saud: I have one daughter who is studying and the rest are just at home.

Abu Turki: Have they graduated from university?

Abu Saud (desperately): What university, Sir? They haven't completed secondary school.

Abu Turki: Why didn't you let them continue with their education?

Abu Saud (helplessly): Schools are expensive, Sir. Private schools are even more expensive and as you can see, I struggle to feed and clothe them. Now you are telling me to educate them.

Abu Turki: I want to visit you in your home and introduce me to them.

Abu Saud (surprised): You want to come to my home?!

Abu Turki: I want to visit you after the Esha prayer.

Abu Saud (embarrassed): You are more than welcome, but I am sorry that my home is not appropriate for your status.

Abu Turki: We are all equal.

Abu Saud: Yes, you are right.

Later Abu Turki comes to Abu Saud's home.

Abu Saud (warmly): Welcome, and please come inside.

Abu Turki asks the driver to take the gifts inside.

Abu Saud: Welcome, please have a seat. There is no need to bring all these gifts.

Abu Turki: These gifts are not for you. They are for the girls. Go, quickly, and call them for me. Go, go. [He says this last sentence waving his hand arrogantly and with a commanding tone of voice].

Abu Saud says hesitantly: The girls?

Abu Tuki (demandingly): Yes, go and call them for me.

Abu Saud (obediently): O.k., I will.

Abu Saud goes to his daughters' room.

Abu Saud: Come girls, and say hi to your uncle Abu Turki.

Samia: Who is our uncle, Abu Turki?

Abu Saud: He is my boss at work, and he is like your uncle.

Zainab: Oh, father, how can we say hi to him in these shabby clothes?

Abu Saud: Why would you go out in these clothes? You must appear decently, wearing your abaya (black cloak) and head scarves.

Zainab: O.k., father.

Then the girls introduce themselves to Abu Turki, but he just stares at Zainab, the eldest daughter. After the girls have taken their gifts, they return to their room.

Zainab: It seems as if Abu Turki knows our sizes.

Reem (happily): God bless him.

Zainab (suspiciously): I just wonder why he is doing all of this for us?

Nouf: His intentions are definitely pious.

Zainab (uncertainly): I hope so.

Nouf: Don't forget that he is sterile and rich, so he doesn't have anybody to spend his money on.

Reem: The main thing is that he brought us these gifts. See how nice my dress is.

Zainab (gladly):   You look so pretty.   [Then there is a close-up shot of Zainab and background music is played as she appears deep in thought, with a trace of concern on her face].

Even though Abu Turki said to Abu Saud that they were both equal when he asked him to visit him, during his visit he did not treat him as an equal. The way he asked Abu Saud to call his daughters was extremely disrespectful, arrogant, insensitive, and this annoyed all the focus group participants. In addition, the fact that Abu Saud was extremely obedient, weak and quickly ran to call his daughters is unrealistic and does not adhere to Islamic rules and Saudi tradition, which the participants related with great irritation (See Chapter 7). Abu-Lughod has explained how emotions are exaggerated in drama series and acting is overwrought, to make the point that women are more emotional than men, and that the upper classes are less emotional than the lower, in order to clarify the moral message (Abu-Lughod, 2005, p.117).

A semiotic analysis of television involves examining camera shots, lighting, sound and music. Television images and sounds are often iconic, and although they may seem to show nothing more than what the camera and sound equipment have recorded, these images and sounds carry connotations that convey much more meaning to the viewer than simply a vision of an object, place or person (Bignell, 2002, p.158). Even though the whole scene is a simple house visit, the soundtrack, the way Abu Turki looks at Zainab and the close-up shot of her accompanied by background music as she appears deep in thought and slightly troubled, connote that this is not an innocent visit. The gap between rich and poor was starkly obvious, with the contrast between Abu Saud's impoverished house and his daughters' ragged outfits, and Abu Turki's expensive gifts and his arrogant insensitive treatment of Abu Saud when he

commands him to call his daughters. Zainab's expression of satisfaction with her sisters' delight with their gifts shows her caring and sensitive attributes, highlighting her role as the episode's heroine. Despite the girls' happiness with the gifts, the type of music played, coupled with Zainab's troubled looks suggests that something unwelcome will happen.

Abu Saud goes to the hospital to visit Abu Turki.

Abu Saud (exciting): Salam.

Abu Turki (tiredly): Come in and relax.

Abu Saud: How are you now?

Abu Turki (happily): Thank God, I am much better. How are you and the girls?

Abu Saud: They are very well and send their regards to you.

Abu Turki: Thank you, I would like to discuss with you an important matter.

Abu Saud: Important matter? I am at your command.

Abu Turki: As you see, I am getting older and I am very ill.

Abu Saud: You will recover soon. Don't worry.

Abu Turki: Most of my time is spent in hospital, because I have kidney failure and I need to go for dialysis three times a week.

Abu Saud (sympathetically): Oh, God!

Abu Turki: I need someone to take care of me and my wife is old now and she can barely look after herself. As you know, I am rich and I can afford one or two servants.

Abu Saud (supportively): Yes, you can. May God double your wealth.

Abu Turki: But I prefer to get married.

Abu Saud (encouragingly): That's good.

Abu Turki (confidently): That's why I would like to propose to your daughter, Zainab and I will buy her a villa.

Abu Saud responds (sadly, and with surprise): Zainab? [Sad flute music is played with a close-up of Abu Saud].

Zainab is discussing the matter with her sister.

Samia: I don't advise you to sell yourself like a sheep. You life is the most valuable thing.

Zainab: I am so confused Samia.

Samia: Don't be confused. The matter doesn't even need thinking about.

Zainab (hopelessly): Have you forgetten our circumstances?

Samia: No, I haven't.

Zainab: Dad is getting older and he is tired of the poverty we are living in. (She refers to poverty assertively and with pain).

Samia: God won't forget us.

Zainab (excitedly): Do you know he promised Dad he would buy him an apartment in one of his buildings and he is going to buy me a villa. So we are going to become rich.

Samia: No matter how much he gives us, I don't advise you to sell yourself.

Zainab: I must sacrifice myself for my father and my mother. My father can't afford to look after her, and I would also like to see you all happy and at ease.

Samia: You don't need to sacrifice yourself. It is not your fault.

Zainab: Oh, God, what will I do? (Sad flute music is played again, with a close-up of Zainab).

Abu Saud returns to Abu Turki in hospital and is extremely sad.

Abu Saud (reluctantly and slowly): I am glad to tell you that the girl has agreed.

Abu Turki (happily): Thank you, does she have any conditions?

Abu Saud (hesitantly): Nothing more than what you have offered.

Abu Turki (excitedly): Tomorrow, you will receive Zainab's dowry, which is SR 150,000 and I will call my lawyer to complete the purchase of the apartment and the villa. **Abu Saud (sadly):** Thank you.

Abu Turki: I have one request.

Abu Saud: Anything.

Abu Turki: To keep this marriage, a secret as I don't want any of the staff to know.

Abu Saud nods his head and mournful music starts to play.

Zainab's life of poverty and lack of education are such that even if she had completed her education and had a job, she could never afford what Abu Turki has offered her. Lila Abu-Lughod has referred to the same thing in her study. She says there is a strong emphasis in drama series on the importance of education, but there is no mention of the prospect of unemployment (Abu-Lughod, 2005, p.71). She has also written that usually in drama series there is an emphasis on the importance of education for national development, and poverty features too, but the causes of poverty and class and gender discrimination have been obscured, without spelling out who is responsible for them (Ibid, p.89). In this episode, friction between completing education and failing to find work was not touched on, but there was immediate surrender to the temptations of Abu Turki's offers.

The dialogue between Zainab and her sister, Samia, who is the only one in the family pursuing her education, reveals how formal education creates a sense of pride and a feeling of independence in women. Cornes (1994, p.118) highlights how women gain from literacy by learning to communicate confidently with other adults, to be assertive and to make decisions. Samia disagreed with Zainab's self-denial and self-sacrifice, which is associated with a caring role, to cultivate a 'culture of respectable familialism' (Skeggs, 1997, p.63). Literate

women are encouraged to come to their own conclusions about good and bad caring practices. However, it might have been more convincing if the episode had shown some proof of Samia's point that her success in education would bring her some financial independence compared with Zainab's sacrifice.

The episode did not show either the challenge faced by Zainab to defy her hard circumstances or the comparison between Zainab's choice of self-sacrifice and self-denial and Samia's choice of independence. It just narrated the typical self-sacrifice and self-denial of Arab women who marry for financial reasons, rather than marrying for love and equality, comfort and happiness. Marrying for financial security only emphasizes women's passivity and their inability to deal with problems in positive ways. This episode failed to look at the root causes of why women find themselves in these difficult circumstances (Al Salem, 1997, pp.168, 169, 194, 195). In fact, soap operas have often been created for social and behavioural development, especially among women. This opportunity for influence is missed in this episode and in *Al Sakenat fee Golobena* in general. Story lines are weak, lack didactic and exciting roles, have no clear plots, climaxes or resolutions. As a result, they bore the audience, regardless of how applicable the topics and circumstances are. Most focus groups participants reported such boredom (See Chapter 7).

Usually in television programmes, such as soap operas or drama series, camera shots change more rapidly than in cinema, moments of silence are rare, and the soundtrack is important for reaching the viewer as it enables them to engage emotionally with the scenes and characters (Bignell, 2002, p.160). However, in this episode and in *Al Sakenat fee Golobena* in general, the camera shots are slow to change, moments of silence are frequent and the soundtrack is

sluggish, so some viewers in the focus groups felt bored and unexcited, irrespective of the relevance of the topics and circumstances (See Chapter 7).

6.3.2 *Al Kheyar Al Saab (The Difficult Choice)*:

The clip lasted five minutes. I did the same as before, looking only at the scenes most relevant to the research. It is about Basma, who lives in a village in Saudi Arabia. One day, she decides to visit her brother, who is studying in Riyadh, the capital. Basma is an extremely ambitious and intelligent girl who wants to complete her education, and when she visits her brother she plans to stay and go to college, against her father's wishes. She agrees with her brother, Mohammad, that she will continue her studies, without telling their father. When one of the neighbours, a friend of Mohammad from the village, comes to visit him, he realises that Basma is studying in one of the colleges. Upon his return to the village he tells their father. Even though the episode does not say the exact location of the village in Saudi Arabia, from the dialect of the cast members it is likely to be set in the Eastern Province. Basma's father then asks both of them to return as soon as possible to the village. He insults Mohammad and slaps Basma's face, locks her in her room and then forces her to marry her cousin, who has Down's syndrome.

While Basma's father is beating her, Mohammed says: Father, please listen to me.

Father (angrily and threateningly): Shut up. It is all your fault and if you were not sick, I would have tortured you. I don't have a single word to say to you or your sister. If Saeed hadn't told me about this, I would never have known. (The father continues beating Basma). You and your brother shame me. What will I say to everybody?

Mohammed (apologetically): Father, I am not in the wrong. It is Basma's right to continue her education. I was planning to let you know when we returned.

Father (sarcastically and angrily): Thank you for reminding me. This is not your fault. It is your mother's fault, who spoiled you so much and didn't give me the opportunity to raise you properly. If I had been in charge of bringing you up, you wouldn't ignore me. Look what's happened, as a result. People are gossiping about us.

Basma (beseechingly): Father.

Father (angrily): Shut up. I don't want to hear your voice, or see your face.

Then Basma goes to her room and her brother leaves. The mother starts to talk with the father.

The participants in the focus group agreed that this is what fathers do if daughters do not obey them. Male relatives such as fathers, husbands, brothers and uncles, have full guardianship and authority over women. The Saudi constitution is based on Islam, but there are several misinterpretations of verses from the Qur'an because they are driven by tradition and cultural heritage. One of these interpretations is that women are somehow incomplete, hence the requirement that they need to be accompanied by a male relative, who acts as a guardian. This lack of a woman's legal rights makes her vulnerable to violence. The requirement for a woman to have a guardian's approval in order to be educated has deprived women of the right to education in numerous cases (Al Abdeen, 2008, p.9).

Mother (sympathetically and weakly): Calm down, please.

The father threatens her and says: If I find out that you knew about this matter of her studying, I will divorce you immediately.

Then the mother starts crying and goes into Basma's room.

The participants agreed that Basma's mother is weak and passive, and others criticized as unrealistic the way in which women are portrayed in these Arab Gulf and Saudi dramas, and that the acting is poor. Accordingly, some participants prefer watching Egyptian drama series, because they are more realistic and the acting is more natural. They do not want to see weak and passive women. They want to see real personalities, with strengths and weaknesses who can overcome difficulties (See Chapter 7). Egyptian melodrama, for example, adopts many of these characteristics. Abu-Lughod (2002, p.300) describes it as a "technology for the production of new kinds of selves."

Mother (blaming her daughter): Why have you done this?

Basma (sadly and desperately): You know it is what I have dreamed of my entire life; to continue my education at university. Why does father want to prevent me from fulfilling my dream? What does he want?

Mother (compassionately): Oh, my daughter, you know your father and you know his way very well. When you asked him previously to continue your education and he refused, you should have listened to him. So tell me, do you like what has happened? What will we tell people? Your father is always so proud, and won't tolerate anybody gossiping about him.

Basma (desperately): Gossip, gossip, gossip. For how long are we going to keep listening to people's gossip?

Mother (surprised with a higher voice): How can we not care about gossip? You forgot where we are living. We are living with and among people.

Basma (desperately): Mother, we always adhere to customs and traditions that are not approved by religion or Sharia law. Until when are we going to hold onto traditions that only take us backwards?

Mother: Please, daughter, listen to your father, and when he begins any conversation with you, say 'I am at your service, father'. He is your father, and he knows what is good for you.

Basma (miserably): Why can I not dare to say anything other than 'I am at your service father?' My existence doesn't matter. No matter what I say, nobody is going to listen.

Then she starts crying again.

A patriarchal society is in fact, a traditional one, which manifests itself more strongly in rural and tribal communities in Arab societies. Its attributes are that the relationship between father and child is like that of ruler and the ruled. There is exaggerated 'hyper' masculinity, coupled with a downgrading of femininity, and the father has absolute control of the family and oppresses women and children. In this kind of society, communication is a means of control and suppression, rather than dialogue and understanding, because the primary goal is not enlightenment, analysis and criticism, but domination and submission. In such societies, some women become passive, enslaved and accepting of the sense of their inferiority. If women are continually submitting to the patriarchal family system, they are effectively reinforcing the patriarchy (Al Haidaree, 2003, pp.325, 326).

Such a patriarchal society is also reflected in Arab dramas. Married women usually follow the path laid down by their husbands and their role is to implement it without question. Most married women in Arab dramas do what they are told otherwise they will be divorced or be punished by their husband marrying another woman (Al-Salem, 1997, p.170). This is shown when Basma's father threatens the mother with divorce in the event that she knew about her daughter's education.

6.3.3 Burj Al Athraa (The Virgo Sign):

The edited clip lasted four minutes. It is about Nouf, who is an educated girl and a talented writer. Her father and brothers want her to marry her cousin, who is also her sister's husband. When Nouf refuses the proposal, they beat her savagely. Nouf tries to embarrass her family by writing her story in a newspaper and when they read her article they become even angrier. After she gives up trying to avoid this marriage, she decides to embarrass her family by running away on her wedding day. Even though the episode did not say in which part of Saudi Arabia the whole story took place, from the dialect we understand that it was set in the capital, Riyadh.

Nouf is in pain from the beating and is lying on her sister's lap, with her cousin trying to soothe her bruises.

Nouf (painfully): I don't want to marry him. I don't.

Cousin (fearfully): Be quiet, before they kill you.

Nouf (painfully): They still want to kill me

Nouf's sister (compassionately): Be quiet, Nouf. Let me put these packs on you to stop the pain.

Nouf (sadly): You are caring for me, yet you know they are going to make me marry your husband.

Nouf's sister: Just calm down. Let me see your wound.

Nouf: It seems that you have agreed for me to marry your husband.

Nouf's sister (desperately): If I say 'no' a thousand times, what use will it be? You are saying 'no', and I am saying 'no', and what men want is what is going to happen.

Some participants in the focus group thought that such a severe beating was exaggerated and unrealistic. The over-exaggerated beating, misery and the depiction of women as entirely

passive and depressed, gave the viewers the impression that the acting was unnatural and unrealistic.

Then the groom, on the wedding day, goes into the garden of Nouf's house and talks to the father.

Salman: Salam, uncle.

Father (discouragingly): Salam.

Salman: How are you, uncle?

Father: I am fine.

Salman: Where have you been? I have been looking for you all day.

Father (firmly): I have been busy. Listen my son, Salman, your wedding day has to be cancelled.

Salman (surprisingly): What?

Father: You heard correctly.

Salman (shockingly and surprisingly): Why uncle? What made you change your mind? I hope I haven't done something wrong. What I am going to do with the guests that I invited?

Father (firmly): Tell them that we have postponed the wedding for personal reasons.

Salman (beseechingly): Please, uncle, tell me. What has happened?

The father starts shouting at him: This marriage is not going to happen.

Salman (insistently): But it is my right to know why not. Why didn't you tell me at the outset, before I invited people and before this scandal? Please let me know what has happened?

Father (discouragingly): Nouf, Salman.

Salman (worried): What's wrong with Nouf? I shall go to her and she will tell me.

Father (shouted): Salman!

Salman: Yes, uncle.

Father: Nouf is not here.

Salman: How come she's not here?

Father: Nouf has run away and we can't find any trace of her.

Salman (shamefully): Run away…What a scandal!

In drama there is something called 'disruption', which is a disturbance that acts as a threat – in this case to the patriarchal, dominant ideology. The rebellious women who challenge men's power are both loved and hated, their actions both praised and condemned. Even scenes portraying women as victims can stimulate an awareness of how men's power is responsible for the victimisation. Excess does not necessarily lead to negative interpretation; it allows for an alternative understanding (Fiske, 1999, pp.181-193).

6.4 <u>Satirical Situation Comedy:</u> *Tash Ma Tash*

Tash Ma Tash is a popular Saudi situation comedy, which began in 1992 and has been running for 17 seasons. It only runs during the month of Ramadan. It was aired on *Saudi Channel 1* for 13 seasons, but in 2005 it was acquired by MBC. *Tash Ma Tash* is admired by most Saudis because it satirises the social, political and economic concerns of Saudis. The series is also admired by hundreds of Saudi women because they think it does justice to Saudi women's issues by presenting the difficulties they face because of prejudicial customs and traditions. The episode *Soor Al Harem (The Wall of the Harem)* was the only episode that discussed Saudi women's matters directly, such as women's driving and a woman's right to sell women's intimate items, such as lingerie and underwear. The remaining episodes discussed critical issues in Saudi society, but did not focus on specific women's development

issues. *Soor Al Harem* was one of the most popular episodes with Saudi women and it was in episode 14, broadcast in 2006.

6.4.1 Soor Al Harem (The Wall of the Harem):

The clip that will be analysed here is the one used in the focus groups for this study (See Chapter 7). The clip lasted 4 minutes and basically parodied the unelected Shura (Consultative) Council in Saudi Arabia, calling it the Town Council. The clip discussed events as if they had taken place long ago. The clip starts with a meeting in the Town Council, where the most important matters are raised. The Council is composed of a majority of conservative members and a minority of liberals. Humod represents the conservatives, while Nasser represents the liberals.

President of the Council: I ask that every member raises the issues that they believe to be important at the end of the meeting. The Council will choose the most important issue through a vote. Now, let's begin with member Humod Al Chmmetah.

Humod: I'd say the most important issue facing this town is the issue of schools for boys and girls.

One member: I understand that you want to discuss the issue of education in the town.

Humod: We don't care about education. The focus here is separation of boys' schools from girls'.

President of the Council: But, Sir, there is already a solution to this. There already exists a separation between boys and girls in school.

Humod: I mean separate schools for boys and girls and at the greatest distance apart possible; I suggest that we put the girls' schools in the south of the town and the schools for boys in the north of the town.

One member: And what is the wisdom in this?

Humod: There is certainly wisdom in this. We don't want boys to see our daughters. What shame!

President of the Council: Do you think this is an issue that is sufficiently important to devote a session to it and to discuss it in the Council?

Humod: Yes, Mr. President. This is an important issue and it affects all the parents in this town. Boys' schools must be further away from the girls' [schools]. This is a big problem. This problem is like "Hosgola" in my throat.

One member: What's the meaning of "Hosgola"?

President of the Council: "Hosgola" means stone.

The most recognisable feature of satire is ridicule; the target subject being illustrated as ridiculous. Through satire, powers can be judged and attacked, in an entertaining fashion. Laughter is something satire may elicit from its audience, but what is important is what comes after the laughing has stopped. Humour creates a space for critique and an opportunity to tackle serious issues of power and politics head-on (Gray et al, 2009, pp.11, 12). When the conservative member, Humod, said that he didn't care about education and the focus here was separation of boys' schools from girls', the focus groups participants perceived him as shallow and silly (See Chapter 7). Satire's main purpose is to scrutinize and to encourage audience members to do likewise (Ibid, p.11).

In situation comedy, a semiotic analysis is relevant because it reveals the meaning behind the whole show. Clothes and body language are loaded with meaning about each character. In addition, excessive behaviour that breaks with convention is a critique of the norm and ridicules it (Bignell, 2002, p.s167), e.g., Humod's clothes (he wears a thobe, ghutra and besht

in the style of a Saudi cleric)[20] and the way he carries himself, suggest a conservative testy character, but his extremely conservative behaviour and the fact that he wears make-up in the form of darkening the eye brows and beard, means he is being ridiculed to make viewers laugh.

Nasser: I would like to say that the issue Humod Al Chmmetah refers to is a marginal one (soundtrack and close-up shot of Humod).   I propose allowing women to be more mobile by giving them the opportunity to ride animals and to integrate them into the labour market (soundtack and close-up shot of Humod). We should at least restrict the selling of women's necessities to women only.

Humod: What are these deviant ideas, you 'ugly face'? Every day we hear from you new ideas. You have asked before that women should be allowed to ride animals and now you want them to work in shopping centres selling clothes. What are these ideas? You don't know that those are our 'harem', and they are very precious to us. Those are our honour.

President of the Council: Let's start the voting.

Most members voted for Humod's proposal (soundtrack and close-up shot of Nasser).

Forms of political discourse in satire are the verbal attacks and aggression cloaked in humour. This is played out in the dispute between Nasser and Humod. This ability to attack power with sarcasm makes satire a powerful form of political communication (Gray et al, 2009, p.12).   Satire's unique ability is that it can speak the truth about power and critique the arrogance and hypocrisies of those in power (Ibid, p.6). Satire becomes a means to "shake us out of our sense of apathy or indifference", a means through which citizens can become more

---

[20] Thobe: Traditional male clothing which is a loose, long-sleeved, and ankle-length garment.
Ghutra: A cotton or silk square scarf, worn folded across the head
Besht: A large, black or creamy cloak, worn loose or flowing or wrapped around the body.

critically aware, with deft and dazzling ease (Ibid, p.15). Discussion and debate around women's driving arose in the focus groups after they watched this scene. Some participants supported the idea and others were cautious about it, but all participants supported women's integration into the labour market (See Chapter 7).

In situation comedy, sounds and close-up shots of characters' exaggerated facial expressions are loaded with meaning (Bignell, 2002, p.166). Humod's facial expression, when Nasser was speaking, was one of irritation, but the close-up shot of his exaggerated facial expressions and the music being played as he looks at Nasser, suggest he is ridiculous cueing audience laughter. On the other hand, at the end, when most of the members voted in favour of Humod's proposal, although Nasser did not utter a single word, the close-up shot of his facial expression combined with the music being played, conveyed a feeling of frustration and the dominance of conservative powers.

6.5 <u>Conclusion</u>

Using textual analysis by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in this chapter has thrown up a number of findings. This chapter shows how a semiotic analysis was as important as, and, in some cases, generated more insights than critical discourse analysis. Visual and oral signs, such as gestures, body language, dress codes, tones of voice and facial expressions, can generate connotations and meanings every bit as important as language.

Analysis of *Kalam Nawaim,* including the show's hosts, experts and guests, concluded that the show's style is not suited to serious topics, such as poverty, illiteracy and violence against women. Neither the discourse nor the semiotic analyses of the presenters' contributions revealed solidarity or sympathy between participants. For example, the presenters do not

have the credentials to give professional advice to vulnerable women, there was a lack of empathy between the hosts and participants, a failure to build constructive dialogue between participants and experts and to decide whose comments are worthwhile and what solutions are practicable, etc. In addition, in some of the shows, the hosts were not fully prepared for the topics and, as a result, their comments were haphazard and irrelevant. On several occasions, the presenters tried to avoid any kind of critical analysis, favouring instead a shallow discussion that seemed to be intended to please the dominant political and religious elites. This, for example, was revealed when Fawzia is talking politely with the Wahhabi cleric, Abdullah Al Jefn, and siding with him totally, while she angrily fires questions at Suhaila Zain Al Abdeen. This sense of hypocrisy is also revealed in the semiotic analysis; for instance, Fawzia's appearance does not suggest she is the type of woman who believes in an ultra conservative Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, which further reveals the presenter's double standards. In another example, Fawzia sides with a teacher, who physically abused a student, making excuses for her. While she was defending the teacher, she was gesticulating with her hands and showing off her diamond rings and earrings, which represented a disconnection from, and a lack of sympathy for, the victim. Moreover, discussing poverty, illiteracy and violence against women requires a commitment to exposing other critically important subjects such as social justice, a fair distribution of wealth, corruption, critique of Arab traditions, and erroneous Qu'ranic interpretations especially of verses relating to women. All of this requires genuinely knowledgeable presenters on a hard-hitting talk show, something *Kalam Nawaim* is not.

On the other hand, even though, between 2007 and 2010, *Hewar Al Arab* had only one episode that discussed women's issues in the Arab world, this one episode is worth more than all the relevant episodes of *Kalam Nawaim* put together. The presenter asked bold questions

and the experts' answers were deep and insightful. The professionalism, solidarity, sympathy and concern of Taleb Kanaan for women's status, evident in his discourse ands his tone of voice and body language, were attributes missing in all the *Kalam Nawaim* presenters. The discussion covered several important topics, such as patriarchal systems in development organizations, the impact of traditions and extremists, such as the Salafis/Wahhabis on women's development and the lack of laws protecting women's rights agianst misguided religious interpretations and cultural traditions. Furthermore, this episode discussed how the patriarchal Arab media portrays women as sexy, beautiful and manipulative or as weak, passive housewives. It emphasizes the need for an educational system that strengthens women's active role in society, and the importance of launching social campaigns that enlighten people about women's rights. However, the fact that *Hewar Al Arab* is a programme on a pan-Arab news channel means that the number of episodes covering development issues relating to women will not always be sufficient, since news channels usually have other priorities.

In drama, especially the Arab Gulf dramas, such as *Al Sakenat fee Golobena*, the evidence here shows a clear need for more audience research, especially amongst disadvantaged women, so as to present scenes and characters to which viewers can relate. Arab Gulf drama also needs professional writers who can write stories with better plots and characters to generate better elements of didacticism and excitement. The plot diagram of the episodes

was mostly flat, without a clear trajectory of action, climax, slowing down and resolution. The camera shots are thus slow. The moments of silence are frequent, and the soundtrack is sluggish, which, in conjunction with the poor plot, results in a bored audience, regardless of the relevance of the topics and circumstances. Added to this, the exaggerated emotions and wooden acting lacks spontaneity and naturalness leaving viewers bored and they lose interest.

Arab Gulf drama on women's development issues falls short in the same way that *Kalam Nawaim* does, as it covers important matters, such as poverty and the importance of education, but in a superficial manner. For example, the importance of education is covered without mentioning the high incidence of unemployment among graduates and the low level of salaries, both of which discourage women from completing their education. This also incentivizes women to pursue an easier route to financial security, for instance, by marrying a rich man, regardless of the unhappy consequences and lack of spousal compatibility. The issue of poverty is covered, but without discussing its causes in an oil-rich country, e.g., corruption, the unequal and unfair distribution of wealth. Besides this, women in Arab Gulf dramas are always portrayed as weak and passive, unable to overcome any difficulties, and subordinate to tribal culture and traditions. These results in a superficial discussion of development issues in general and women's problems in particular, which may reinforce the prevailing notion of women's weakness and dependency on men, instead of competently dealing with their problems.

In situation comedy, semiotic analysis is significant, as it sheds lights on the meanings behind the show. There are several examples in *Tash Ma Tash* where the discourse alone, without the semiotic signs, such as dress code, make-up, facial expressions, exaggerated behaviour, and the soundtrack, does not adequately convey its meaning, and this misleads the audience as to what or to whom the sarcasm and ridicule are aimed, e.g., even though Humod was angry with Nasser and verbally attacked him with abrasive language, his exaggerated facial expressions and the accompanying music suggest his conservative character is an object of ridicule rather, than fear, cueing viewers to laugh. Even though *Tash Ma Tash* is a popular satirical situation comedy, admired by most Saudis because it satirises their social, political and economic concerns, one episode on women's development issues is insufficient. Airing more episodes about women's development that focus on poverty, illiteracy and violence so as to highlight gender and class inequalities and how the Qur'an is misinterpreted, especially verses relating to women, could potentially impact on society and decision-makers, given how popular this comedy is. Satire's power lies in its ability to scrutinize critical issues and encourage viewers to effortlessly do likewise.

Chapter 7

THE WOMEN OF GOZ AL JAAFARH AND THEIR REACTIONS TO SATELLITE TELEVISION'S TREATMENT OF: POVERTY, ILLITERACY AND VIOLENCE

"The choice of empirical methods of investigation is only one part of a double venture: it is in the dialectic between the empirical and the theoretical, between experience and explanation, that forms of knowledge, that is interpretations, are constructed" (quoted in Ang, 1994, p.105).

In this study, I have used an empirical method, which is a qualitative ethnography that began with participant observation in a village, Goz Al Jaafarh. Throughout the field observations, focus groups and interviews, I explored these women's differing interpretations of the programmes about poverty, illiteracy and violence on *MBC1*. In doing so, I allowed the research participants to freely narrate their personal experiences of these topics.

Here, I will present data from the interviews first, before the focus groups, even though the data were not collected in that order. The interviews shed light on both the women's social context and their television consumption and they help to introduce the women of Goz Al Jaafarh to the reader before exploring their reactions that emerged from the focus groups after they had viewed the MBC programmes.

7.1 In-Depth One-to-One Interviews

The disadvantaged women I met in Goz Al Jaafarh differ from one another in terms of age and economic, educational and social background. However, I was also keen to highlight the

similarities amongst them since they share the same ethnic backgrounds and village life. I share Ann Gray's argument here:

"...hold on to a category which enables not just differences to be revealed but also those profound and persistent commonalities which would seem to exist between women and which can form the basis of social critique. As I hope the following analysis will show, gender rarely reveals itself in pure form, but does intersect with other determinations, even within the most apparently traditional forms of household unit" (Gray, 1992, p.31).

This section also focuses on how these differences and similarities influenced women's television consumption including their opinions of the television programmes.

7.1.1 Women's Social Context

One of the main things I learned from my fieldwork was to avoid terms such as 'illiterate' when describing the women, as there are different levels and forms of literacy. I therefore chose to adopt the term 'informally educated' instead, and applied this term both to those who have not been to school at all and to those who left school at an early age (from the 2nd-6th grade) and still did not read or write proficiently. In contrast, the term 'formally educated' is applied to those who had completed high school and above. I used the terms "dropped out of school" or "did not complete their education" to refer to those who know how to read and write but were not able to complete high school, mainly those who stopped going to school at the 4th or 6th grade. Where grades are mentioned next to respondents' names below, this indicates the level at which the respondent left school. It is important to highlight here that primary education in Saudi Arabia is not compulsory.

Since most women, whether formally or informally educated, are not part of the cash labour market, domestic responsibilities are held by all participants and these duties take different forms. They include cleaning the house, cooking and taking care of siblings. Some of the girls dropped out of school owing to excessive house-work responsibilities, because they could not manage both their school-work and their house-work. Other poor families, who cannot afford to educate their children, hold the view that boys' education is more important than girls', since boys are going to be the breadwinners while girls are going to be the home-makers. The women of Goz Al Jaafarh hold unpaid reproductive roles, which include child care responsibilities and domestic tasks. 'Reproduction of labour' includes child-care and domestic work that the society considers natural female home work (Moser, 1993, p. 29).

Girls drop out of school in the village for a number of reasons. For example, many are brought up to prepare for marriage rather than employment, a factor that explains the high unemployment rate amongst numerous women graduates in the village. Furthermore issues such as a lack of transport, inadequate teaching standards and facilities at school, and outdated curricula discourage girls from continuing their studies. For these reasons, village girls want to get married and have children for both economic and social reasons that will give them more power and prestige (Ibid, p.45). Girls see that their mothers act as managers, administering all the practical, everyday affairs of the family and controlling the household budget, which is considered the female domain. They see that this is where their power lies so this is what they are aiming for. They recognise that a woman's role as a domestic manager gives her a special sense of pride and authority. As one participants remarked: "Decision-making is in the hands of my father, but the budget is under the control of my mother. When my father gets his monthly salary, he gives it to my mother." Even though money is conferred by the husband, how that money is spent on the household's day-to-day

management, is in the hands of the women. Dwyer and Bruce (1988) argued that men are rarely aware of their wives' coping strategies and that this depiction of the household as embodying both conflict and cooperation, gives a sense of togetherness in this gender conflict (quoted in Moser, 1993, p. 25). Men here are the leaders of the household while women are the managers. As long as women mobilize around issues relating only to these restricted responsibilities and do not challenge the *status quo*, they become powerful and can avoid conflict (Ibid, p.36).

In light of the above discussion, it is crucial not to overestimate the degree of additional power and independence which a woman could enjoy by obtaining formal education and/or employment. It is also essential not to underestimate the degree of power and control a woman can exercise – in the household, without being formally educated or employed. In fact, they are both important, but it is worth referring here to Elson's argument that the empowerment of women should focus not only on economic factors but also on various social factors and relationships that constrain women (Elson, 1991, p.195).

Most participants live in nuclear families, except those who are recently married and still dependent on their family for financial support or those coming from polygamous houses where there is no space for them. For example, Aya is 26 years old, has a high school degree, is unemployed and recently married. Her husband cannot afford a place of their own, so they are living in her husband's family's house. Hasnaa, educated to 4th grade, is also recently married, 24 years old and has a new born baby. She lives with her in-laws, but when her husband travels she stays with her own family.

"The biggest thing that I am suffering from is not having a private house, for financial reasons. The main conflict between my husband and me is over finances. Once I got extremely angry and I asked him to let me stay at my parents' house until he finds me our own house. But my mother advised me to stay with my husband wherever he is." (Hasnaa, 24, educated to 4th grade)

Another participant left her father's house and decided to live at her sister's house. There were too many children in her father's house and they were experiencing financial difficulties, especially after her father married his fourth wife.

"I had a very enjoyable childhood, until my father got married a second time and especially after he married the fourth time. His fourth wife is a young Yemeni woman. He loves her a lot and she has caused this split in the family. My father stopped caring about his family after he married her. This is what has most affected me in my life, and I wish I could live with my mother but there is no room for me in the house, especially with my brothers and their children there, and with a difficult financial situation." (Tamara, 18, 6th grade)

Domestic violence against women occurs for several reasons. Al Abdeen said that customs and traditions controlled those who set the laws, despite their being in conflict with Islamic law. She also added that eradicating violence against women could not be achieved as long as women were deprived of legal agency, with male guardianship rules imposed upon them (Al Abdeen 2008, p.8). Al Abdeen also emphasised that the power given to the male relative guardian gave him a sense of ownership over women.[21] Some of the participants experience

---

[21] Suhaila Zain Al Abdeen, "Extraction of male relative guardian .. Mechanism to combat incest"

abuse because of their father's addiction to drugs and qat, a plant which is chewed for its stimulating properties and which is popular in the southern region of Saudi Arabia. Others experience abuse because of family interference from relatives, especially mothers- in-law, who encourage their sons to mistreat their wives or encourage them to take more than one wife. Others suffer at the hands of their parents. For example, Shadia was physically abused by her father, as were, her siblings and mother, while he was under the influence of qat.

> *"My mother lived for 14 years under my father's oppression and his addiction to qat. He physically abused my mother, my siblings and me while under the influence of qat. My mother tried to defend her rights by going to court and to the police but she was not successful. My father never paid us anything. He also never responded to the police or the court's call. The judges and the police are biased and stood beside my father. They told us that since we were living with our mother, we couldn't obtain social security. My siblings and I were deprived even of our right to social security and it was given to our father. We all depend on my mother's social security, which is SR 700."* (Shadia, 18, 2nd grade)

Rahma complained how her father physically abused her mother and verbally abused her.

> *"My grandmother always created problems for my mother and tried to separate her from my father by using black magic. My father got married again to a Yemeni woman, but after a lot of problems with her, he divorced his second wife and returned to my mother. But still my grandmother interferes in my parents' lives and wants my father to marry again. The other cause of conflict is financial and my father's*

---

http://www.musanadah.com/index.php?action=show_t&id=49

addiction to qat. When my father receives his social security, he gives half of it to my mother to spend on the house and the children and the rest he spends on qat. He never thinks to pay his debts. My mother always advises my father to stay away from qat but he never listens and if he doesn't have his qat, he gets extremely angry, bad tempered and starts physically and verbally abusing us." (Rahma, 15, 6th grade)

Maha is abused by both her mother and father. She visits her father's family whom her mother dislikes, which irritates her mother, and as a result her mother encourages her father to beat her for no reason. Maha left school because of depression and the heavy domestic workload at home. She could not manage both her studies and the domestic duties given to her by her mother. When Maha got engaged she became extremely attached to her fiancé and felt he was filling her emotional emptiness, and giving her much-needed security and compassion.

"I am attached to him to the extent that I feel he is my soul mate. I know that his salary is low and he does not have any income other than his salary, but I do not care. I consider him and his family to be my family. My mother-in-law and my father-in-law are more compassionate towards me than my own parents. My mother-in-law gives me more gifts than my mother." (Maha, 21, 9th grade)

Feminists agree that the family is the core site of women's oppression and that state policy towards women within the family is ambiguous because the family is seen as a private domain in which the state can only meddle under certain circumstances. The concept that family affairs, especially in traditional societies, are a private matter, means husbands and fathers are free to treat their wives and daughters as they wish behind closed doors. Women

may be tolerant of domestic violence and sexual abuse because of their financial dependency on men. Since domestic violence occurs in the private realm of the home, it is largely invisible. Even when domestic violence is made public, judges, the courts and the police are reluctant to interfere because such matters are considered private family issues. In addition, the social and economic disadvantages of being a single woman pressures women to stay married regardless of the violence they experience and their unfair treatment (quoted in Moser, 1993, p.44).

7.1.2 Women's Television Consumption

The percentage of Saudi families who own televisions reached 94.19% in 2007, hence the perceived potential of utilising television as a means of raising awareness (Kingdom of Saud Arabia, Ministry of Economy & Planning, Central Department of Statistics and Information 2007, pp.46). The results of the detailed 2004 Census of Population and Housing in the Jazan region showed that 87.6% of Saudi households have televisions and 32.1% have satellite (Ministry of Economy & Planning, Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2004, pp. 26). In Sabya Province, where the village of Goz Al Jaafarh is located, 21,076 families own television and 7,213 families have satellite (Ibid, p.110).

During my fieldwork, I saw that televisions with satellite reception were in every household I visited regardless of how poor the families were, proving the importance of television as a source of entertainment and information in everyday village life. As Silverstone argued:

> "Television is a domestic medium. It is watched at home. Ignored at home.
> Discussed at home. Watched in private and with members of family or friends. But it
> is part of our domestic culture in other ways too, providing in its programming and

its schedules models and structures of domestic life, or at least of certain versions of

domestic life" (Silverstone, 1994, p.24).

The absence of all forms of entertainment such as going to coffee shops, social clubs, or going to the beach, coupled with the fact that girls are not even allowed to go out to shop unless they are accompanied by a *mahram* (male relative guardian), and are therefore limited to socialising only with families and close friends, explains their inflated reliance on, television and mainly satellite television, as their chief source of entertainment.

I came across a few households where certain satellite channels were censored for religious reasons, so that only news channels, sport channels, religious channels and cartoons could be watched. Channels deemed to pose a moral threat to the family are considered *haram* or taboo. Even though, when growing up, those participants were obliged to accept that only these channels were allowed, they told me that they remain convinced that this is the right thing to do and they have not thought to get more channels.

The participants either watch television on their own, if they have their own separate television set, or watch it with their family. Those who prefer watching television with their family usually share the same opinions, and they discuss the programme or the drama serials after watching them. Those who prefer watching television on their own usually prefer to be on their own anyway and do not get along with other family members. Press (1995, p.61) argues that some family members may use television to inform patterns of interaction with other family members. For others, watching television is considered more as an individual leisure activity and an opportunity to take a break from the rest of the family, which may lead to greater individualism. Where families only have one television and family members are

obliged to choose only one channel, those who have the right to choose are the eldest and where women and men are concerned, men always get to choose.

> *"We have only one television and my father rarely allows me to watch my favourite programmes because he watches television the whole time. He likes to watch television while he is chewing qat. That's why I prefer watching television at night after my father has gone to sleep."* (Rahma, 15, 6th grade)

Moreover, girls and women lacking formal education have a tendency towards self-sacrifice in every aspect of life, including watching television.

> *"In the case of a conflict over what television programme to watch, I give the choice to the other person. Since I haven't completed my education, I don't feel I have the right to anything at home, including watching television. My favourite time to watch television is at 1a.m. after everybody has gone to sleep and I have finished cleaning the house."* (Lateefa, 30, 3rd grade)

Cornes points out that the basic needs for women's literacy are self-empowerment and self-esteem (Cornes, 1994, p.118). An absence of literacy, on top of how women are brought up and socialised in the village, discourages women from engaging in open confrontation and disputes.

One of the main purposes of my one-to-one interviews was to know how participants perceived television programmes and their opinions on the *MBC1* programmes that related to

poverty, illiteracy and violence. The focus was on the programmes that were played in the focus groups, which were also those that were selected for textual analysis.

Kalam Nawaim is a talk show for women and is popular among the girls in the village, but they still had some criticisms. Most girls thought that the show did not focus on girls of their own class and age. The show is unpopular among girls between 15 and 22 years of age and they thought that the show was more suitable for women who are 25 years old or older and for those who are middle class or well-off.

> *"I don't like Kalam Nawaim because it doesn't represent my needs in anything, neither in age nor in class. Kalam Nawaim presents problems for older women not of my own age and most of the episodes focus on issues relating to the upper and middle classes and rarely highlight anything to do with the poor. It also concentrates on entertainment and celebritie, such as interviewing actresses and singers who have no place on a talk show for social issues."* (Rahma, 15, 6th grade)

Nadine agreed with Rahma.

> *"I would like to see more episodes discussing girls my age and who share my social circumstances. I like the talk show Wahed Men AlNas (One of the People) on the Dream channel, and I like the show 99 that is presented on Saudi Channel 1 because, they represent the problems of our class. I also like Seerat Hob (Love Life) presented by Fawzia Al Deree on Al-Rai Kuwaiti channel because it represents problems of girls of my own age. I wish Kalam Nawaim presented problems more closely related to disadvantaged classes, like Wahed Men AlNas and 99 and presented more the*

problems concerning young female adults and adolescents, like Seerat Hob. I also like Sabaya (Young Female Adults) on Al Mehwar Channel because it presents girls' problems of all ages and classes." (Nadine, 22, 6th grade)

Fadwa has another comment on the programme.

"I don't like Kalam Nawaim because of the presenters. I never feel moved when they talk because their style does not stir me. I like Dr. Fawzia Al Deree, the presenter of Seerat Hob on Al-Rai Kuwaiti Channel, because of her interaction with the girls and her acquaintance with the subjects. She also covers current issues not old ones like the ones on Kalam Nawaim. I also like her sincerity and seriousness more than the presenters of Kalam Nawaim." (Fadwa, 19, 12th grade)

Some feminist critics argue that talk shows reflect a woman's situation by creating "a sense of community" between the guests and the audience, in which the presenter does not speak as a formal expert but as a peer (Cragin, 2010, p.157). In this instance, the participant did not see the presenter either as a formal expert or peer, but rather as an individual that was not related to her and, accordingly, she lost interest in the show.

Maha thinks that *Kalam Nawaim* should present more episodes about sexual education. In her view, one of the causes of physical and verbal abuse against women is a lack of sexual understanding between couples. She recently got engaged and would like to have such knowledge before she gets married.

"When my fiancé tried to kiss me for the first time, I didn't allow him, I thought only foreigners are allowed to kiss, not Saudis…when my fiancé tells me nice things, I get embarrassed and don't respond…I can't ask my mother about these things that's why I want to watch programmes about sexual education. There was one episode on Kalam Nawaim about the wedding night, but I missed it. One episode is not enough... I want to be educated on this subject."(Maha, 21, 9th grade)

Some feminists argue that talk shows should move from a preoccupation with gender issues to more pressing matters of race, class and sexuality (Cragin, 2010, p.166). This theory is supported by Goz Al Jaafarh girls, who felt that *Kalam Nawaim* failed to reflect any of their concerns, whether related to class or age. These comments correspond with Andrea Press's argument that working class women's resistance to models of hegemonic domination in television programmes is not only a result of gender-specific concerns, similar to those of middle class women, but also of class specific issues (Press, 1991, p.97). Women, in general, like soap operas and talk shows because "these shows enact discourse about relevant issues by people with whom they identify". Hobson (1991) argued that women like talk shows because they enjoy listening to other people's problems, which they can then relate to and empathise with (quoted in Wood, 2005, p.116, 117). However, the girls of Goz Al Jaafarh could barely find subjects or solutions to their problems in *Kalam Nawaim* with which they could identify or empathise.

Most participants think that *Al Sakenat fee Golobena* is the drama serial that has best depicted the problems of village and disadvantaged women. They mostly agree that the stories in the episodes could be true, but think the acting is poor. Participants like *Tash Ma Tash* because it is comedy and it tackles critical issues in Saudi society. Even those who do not like the show

and think it is silly agree that presenting disadvantaged women's issues in such a popular show will make society more aware of their problems so decision-makers can address them.

> *"I prefer Al Sakenat fee Golobena to Tash Ma Tash because it better reflects reality and village life. But I would like to see the stories in Sakenat fee Golobena acted out in Tash Ma Tash because it is a much more famous show and everybody watches it, so it will have a wider impact in society. I want women's suffering to be watched by everybody not only by women. I want solutions to this misery and change. The village needs basic necessities, such as water and food. Presenting our case in a show as well-known as Tash Ma Tash could make people more aware of our situation."* (Maram, 24, 6th grade)

One of the interviewees explained her opinion of *Al Sakenat fee Golobena*,

> *"I don't like Al Sakenat fee Golobena, not because of the stories but because of the artificial acting and overstated characters. I don't like to watch weak and passive women but would rather see a more real personality, with strengths and weaknesses. I want to see how a woman can overcome difficulty; that's why I prefer watching Egyptian drama serials to Saudi or GCC drama, because they are more realistic and their acting is more natural."*(Fadwa, 19, 12th grade)

Rahma gave her views on the image of village women in the Saudi and GCC dramas in general: "I do not feel the role of village women in GCC and Saudi dramas is realistic

because of the clothes, make up, and hair styles. I don't feel that they reflect our reality here". Another participant shared the same view about the image and acting that are supposed to portray village women.

"For the roles of village women to be persuasive, the actresses have to live in the villages in order to understand the role and to act convincingly. Most of these actresses do not have any experience of village life so their acting is artificial and unconvincing. The representations and performances are artificial." (Najeeba, 22, 3rd grade)

Participants' responses correspond with Press's argument that working-class women are more critical than middle-class women about how realistic television is, through their judgment of characters and stories (Press, 1994, p.99). Participants' responses in my study resemble those of the participants that Abu-Lughod discussed in *Drama of Nationhood*. They criticised the inaccuracies of village women's dress and dialects and also found flaws with how much make-up they wore and how long their nails were (Abu-Lughod, 2005, p.73). Even in situation comedy, audiences seek to identify with characters. Identification with media characters increases viewers' enjoyment and may increase the intensity of emotional reactions (Lin, 2008, p.6).

Additional feedback from participants on *MBC 1* programmes, including *Al Sakenat fee Golobena, Tash Ma Tash* and *Kalam Nawaim,* is covered in the focus groups section below.

7.2 <u>Focus Groups</u>

7.2.1 Al Sakenat fee Golobena

Through my discussions with participants, I noted different interpretations by participants, depending on whether they were formally educated or, only had an informal education. Most of the time, the informally-educated participants shared the same opinion as those who did not complete their education, but the latter had the courage to speak up and express their opinions more than the former. The participants' educational, social and economic backgrounds, as well as their age, seemed to be implicated in their interpretations.

7.2.1.1 Zafaf Jotha[22]

The main subject of *Zafaf Jotha* was poverty. Since the participants are disadvantaged women, the episode appealed to most of them, although their understanding of it varied according to their age, education, and social and economic status. Even though most participants are disadvantaged, some were poorer than others, and this was reflected in their interpretations.

The most obvious example of these women's struggle with poverty was illustrated in this interpretation by some of the participants:

---

[22] For details of the clip, see Chapter 6

"With all these financial temptations, I agree with Zainab and I am going to do the same as her. A 150,000 SR dowry, villa and apartment, are temptations that I cannot resist regardless of the marriage being a secret or not." (Iman, 30, 3rd grade)

Another participant added that education is not an option in her situation because, among other obstacles, it is expensive. So it is easier to accept the marriage proposal. She said:

"When Abu Saud explained that he couldn't afford for his children to go to school, this is very true to life. Most families in the village have children who couldn't continue with their education because of money and a lack of transport. Both are huge problems in the village. 70% of the girls in the village couldn't complete their education because of a lack of transport." (Hadeel, 30, 12th grade)

Skeggs (2002) points out that disadvantaged women aim to improve their economic status and overcome poverty through marriage. The media allegedly perpetuate the image of disadvantaged women as vulgar, ignorant or passive, which compounds their feelings of inferiority. This makes working-class women aspire to the respected and sophisticated position of middle- class women.

The fact that most participants share the same circumstances as Zainab's family helped them to empathise, which was reflected in their comments.

"My circumstances were extremely bad. I was hoping to continue my education but I couldn't, because of my father's death and I have been through the same difficult experiences as Zainab." (Amany, 22, 6th grade)

"With the materials given to Zainab, she will be greatly comforted. I suffered a lot in my life and I would accept such a marriage proposal immediately and would be extremely happy. I would agree even if he was sterile, sick and old." (Hadeel, 30, 12th grade)

Bausinger draws our attention to the importance of audience research in revealing how the mass media is integrated into everyday life (quoted in Livingstone, 1998, p.19). When interpreting a programme, viewers use not only the programme, but also their past experience to inform their judgment. Robert and Bachen (1981, p.21) also write that:

"...different responses may derive from variations in how similar messages are interpreted by different people or by similar people under differing conditions" (quoted in Ibid, p.21).

The participants' comment about the role of girls in helping their families could be considered an extension of the girls' traditional caring role. Hartley (1994, p.36) describes this as "the traditional female role of carer, communicator and selfless helper of others."

Others disagreed with Zainab's decision to marry a rich man in order to lift herself out of poverty. These views were mostly held by those with formal education and those who are financially better off. Even though most of the formally-educated participants did not have paid jobs and were financially dependent on their families, their education afforded them higher self-esteem. Cornes (1994, p. 118) points out that most women's desire for literacy is

rooted in a need for higher self-esteem and greater self-confidence. Jameela's comment highlighted the link between education and independence.

> *"I will never sacrifice my happiness for money. Happiness is more important than money. I would rather depend on myself and work, even if my income didn't bring me the same fortune as marrying someone like Abu Turki."* (Jameela, 16, 10th grade)

Her argument was supported by another participant who had stayed longer in the education system than others:

> *"The fact that Abu Turki asked to keep this marriage secret is humiliating and disrespectful. I would never accept such a proposal even if he asked for it to be kept secret only from his family and employees. Besides, he is old, sick and sterile."* (Fareeda, 18, 12th grade)

Here we see that a women's pride in her class is shaped by formal education. Cornes (Ibid, p.118) highlights how women gain from literacy by learning to communicate confidently with other adults, to be assertive and to make decisions. These participants resist the female tendency to the self-denial and self-sacrifice that is associated with a caring role, to cultivate a 'culture of respectable familialism' (Skeggs, 1997, p.63). Literate women are encouraged to develop their own evaluation of good and bad caring practices. These respondents refuse what Walkerdine (1984) has named female selflessness and passivity, which are typically produced as a result of the struggle to overcome 'bad' qualities:

"Selflessness, even though it brings pain and suffering, brings its own rewards (knowledge of good deeds and righteousness). If the heroines are displayed as passive victims of circumstances, all bad and difficult actions and emotions are held by others ... selflessness becomes a virtue and doing anything for oneself is by implication bad and selfish" (quoted in Skeggs, 1997, p.65).

All the participants completely rejected the scene where Abu Turki visits Abu Saud and asks him to call his daughters so he can meet them. They explained that the scene was not realistic because, in their view, it does not adhere to Islamic and traditional rules.

"The scene of Abu Saud's daughters greeting Abu Turki after Abu Turki has asked to see them, simply couldn't happen in our village. Even if the father here needs his job, he would never allow his daughters to be exposed to a strange man. The girls weren't fully covered as they were not veiled. Wearing a headscarf and abaya aren't decent enough. The girls could have thanked Abu Turki for his gifts and generosity behind the door, but to greet him directly would be impossible." (Hadeel, 30, 12th grade)

Here, the participant's response corresponds with Press's argument that working-class women are more critical of television's realism than middle-class women. Her study showed how working-class women are more concerned with how realistic characters and storylines are (Press, 1994, p.99).

7.2.1.2 Al-Kheyar Al Saab [23]

In the second clip, *Al-Kheyar Al Saab,* some participants sympathized with the way Basma was deprived of an education by her father, as they had suffered similarly. Most women in Goz Al Jaafarh are negatively impacted by a dominant male culture in which social and material conditions are extremely difficult for them.

The most striking example of how a man controls a woman's future is illustrated by one participants:

> *"This can easily happen if a girl studies without her father's permission, especially if he has already forbidden her from attending school. The beating she suffered was inevitable and in fact, it is likely that a girl would get more than a slap. Basma's father's character is very familiar."* (Maha, 21, 9th grade)

Sameera agreed with Maha, saying that "there are cases like this where fathers prohibit their daughters from continuing their education." Hana added that "any father in the village, who discovered that his daughter had done something behind his back, would react as Basma's father did and worse."

All the participants agreed with Basma when she said that customs and traditions are the cause of underdevelopment and backwardness. They also think such traditions are used by men to silence women and that education is the best way to fight such oppression. One participant put it this way:

---

[23] For details of the clip, see Chapter 6

"Education has a role to play in improving the sophistication of women. If women are educated, they can challenge the thinking behind customs and traditions and pay them less attention. I will try to change these traditions by focusing on my education and talking to my family." (Khadeeja, 30, 12th grade) [24]

This reveals how literacy for women is a means of self-empowerment and self-improvement. The respondents' perception is that education is a major source of power, and a site of struggle and resistance. Literacy offers the promise of independence and allows younger women to dream of a life without fear and violence. It also requires a change to the traditional system and adapting to new roles to resist men's control (Zubair, 2001, pp. 199-201).

Another participant added:

"The first step is to challenge these traditions is through our mothers by encouraging them to get educated. Then mothers can support each others. The educated ones must cooperate with the uneducated ones for the sake of change. This persistence is crucial for any change. My brothers changed with persistence over time. My brother's behaviour towards my younger sister is more moderate than his treatment of me. A change to traditions depends on girls' determination and mothers' support".
(Hadeel, 30, 12th grade)

Hadeel's emphasis on mutual support between mothers, as well as on mothers' support for their daughters, is inspiring. Voices such as hers are rarely heard, especially on television,

---

[2424] Khadeeja was not able to go college because her grade average was low at high school. Now she is studying humanitarian science through-distance education at Sabya University

and can develop or inspire change in the situation of disadvantaged village women. Without these women's voices it is difficult to see how a Saudi woman's movement that cuts across class can emerge. According to van Zoonen, giving more voice to the voiceless is one way to do this and can spark the beginning of a genuine woman's movement (van Zoonen, 1994, p.128).

Another participant suggested a different way of changing traditions. She said:

> *"We are forced to do many things in the name of tradition. We are forced to stay at home and we are banned from driving, and we are not even allowed to share cars with other girls to get to school. The best way to convince fathers to change such customs is to tempt them with money. You need to convince them that if girls are educated, they will help to improve the family's financial circumstances."* (Fareeda, 18, 12th grade)

It is sometimes said that women try to resist patriarchal power and male domination through "weapons" of slyness and stratagem. Bourdieu realised that these "weapons" are used to "manoeuvre" through manipulation, but concluded that "the weapons of the weak are weak weapons" (quoted in Adkins & Skegg, 2006, p.52). In the face of gender and class domination, disadvantaged women may resist and in some cases are powerful enough to effect change.

All the participants opposed Basma's mother passive weak personality when she was trying to convince her to obey her father.

"Basma's mother is weak and passive and should have done more to help her daughter. The roles of women in the Gulf and Saudi dramas are unrealistic. Women with strong personalities are portrayed as dominant and evil and kind women are portrayed as weak and passive. This is not the case in real life". (Sameera, 22, senior college)

Another participant added:

"Basma's mother is weak and should have done more. After the fight between Basma and her father, the mother should have talked with the father privately and negotiated with him. Afterwards, the mother, daughter and the son should have united together against the father. If all three of them had challenged him, he would have finally agreed. But the mother was extremely weak and passive". (Hadeel, 30, 12th grade)

Abu-Lughod experienced the same responses from her participants and their disappointment with the representation of village women as being passive and ignorant. The participants also objected to the artificial dialogue and flawed depiction of characters (Abu-Lughod, 1995, pp.73-75).

The above quotation illustrates how audience members are constructive, knowledgeable and can bring dialogue to life through using their own personal experiences of real life situations to relate to a woman's character (Li vingstone, 1998, p.173). Corner (1995, p.175) proposes a three-step approach to decoding:

"First, comprehension refers to the process of decoding the denotative level of textual meaning. Second, the connotative level of textual meaning is decoded through processes of implication and association. Lastly, the viewer's response to these decoded meanings depends on his or her own contextual and personal circumstances."

There is a distinction between the reader's comprehension and interpretation of the storyline. Comprehension concentrates on correct and incorrect information, which is of more interest to psychologists because it depends on structures of knowledge. Interpretation concentrates on the reader's contribution and should not be judged as correct or incorrect, but rather should be perceived as a product of the reader's experience, which generates critical and interesting analysis (Ibid, p.176). Fiske argues that the pleasure of television viewing is often oppositional, because it is driven by a resistance to dominant ideology (quoted in Seiter et al, 1989, p.4). In this scene, the participants reject the dominant idea that village women are passive and weak, and doubt the realism of the whole scene. This is a clear example of how audience members can redefine and reconstruct a storyline, according to their own experiences and perceptions of reality.

Most participants think that fathers in general do not usually prevent their daughters from getting an education in the way illustrated in Basma's story in *Al Kheyar Al Saab*. When I asked the participants specifically about fathers prohibiting their daughters from studying certain degrees, such as medicine, due to co-education in colleges, or because of mixed workplaces in particular professions, I got very different answers.

"Fathers don't prevent their daughters from getting an education but they may stop them from studying certain degrees, such as medicine and nursing, because they would have to mix with men. If I studied for a degree my father had forbidden without telling him, his reaction would be the same as that of Basma's father." (Bedoor, 22, 12th grade)

Here, we learn about what happens in the real world, based on women's everyday experiences and social knowledge. Livingstone (1998, p. 24) points out that we should always "recognise both the structuring role of the text and the constructive role of the viewer in negotiating meaning." According to Gillespie (1995, p. 28), viewers are "engaged in constructing a viable culture through negotiations around the diverse resources available to them both in 'real life' and on screen." The participant's response also reveals "the creation of meaning through the interaction of texts and readers is a struggle, a site of negotiation between two semi-powerful resources" (Livingstone 1998, p.26). The response also exposes the importance of examining the various interpretations. As Livingstone (Ibid, p.152) stated:

"...we need to investigate not only the nature of viewers' interpretations, but also the extent to which these interpretations diverge from each other. Further, we must assume neither complete consensus nor complete divergence in interpretations, but instead investigate the areas of consensus and divergence."

Even though all the participants didn't approve of the passive and weak personality of Basma's mother, I asked them whether they thought education would strengthen women's personality. By enabling them to challenge men's power, the women might learn more about relations between men and women. The informally-educated participants or those who had

dropped out of school thought that education was not necessary for creating a strong personality.

"Education is not always the tool to face men's dominance but women's personality is the basis. You see illiterate women controlling their men. On the other hand, women who have been at school are under men's control". (Nadine, 22, 6th grade)

Through this statement, the participant tried to explain the value of other forms of literacy, which can form part of a women's personality, as explained by Hartley (1994, p.32):

"A lack of literacy skills ... need not be represented as though people are suffering from some... handicap... Communities develop networks of exchange and interdependence in which literacy is just one skill amongst many being bartered .... In this situation, the acquisition of literacy skills is not a first order priority at the individual level, so long as it is available at the community level."

One the other hand, formally-educated participants believe that education is an important source of empowerment.

"Education has a role to play in developing a women's personality. Educated women care less about customs and traditions. Educated girls will have more influence in the household in the future." (Areej, 18, 12th grade)

This participant's response coincides with Corne's argument about literacy improving self-esteem and, thereby women's empowerment and independence (Cornes 1994, p.118).

7.2.1.3 Burj Al Athraa[25]

On watching the third clip, most participants did not approve of the violence perpetrated against Nouf by her brothers and father. Some participants were totally against the idea of accepting forced marriage, even under physical duress as experienced by Nouf, but others thought that girls have no choice but to submit.

"Many girls are forced to marry in this brutal way and the only option for girls is to surrender. Most girls who are forced to marry get divorced, because they end up miserable." (Nabeela, 27, 4th grade)

Women's surrender to men's power is more apparent in village communities where social and material conditions are extremely difficult. However, participants' resistance to male dominance is shown in their support of Nouf running away from her family. In drama there is what is called 'disruption' which is a disturbance that acts as a threat – in this case to patriarchal dominant ideology. The rebellious women who challenge men's power are both loved and hated, their actions both praised and condemned. Even scenes portraying women as victims can stimulate an awareness of how men's power is responsible for the victimisation. Excess does not necessarily lead to negative interpretation; it allows for alternative understanding (Fiske, 1999, pp.181-193). This is revealed in Nouf's escape and the participants' comments on this incident:

"If I had been through the same experience, I would have escaped to the National Society for Human Rights because they deal with cases like this and are more trust-worthy than any governmental departments." (Ameera, 19, 12th grade)

---

[25] For details of the clip, see Chapter 6

Similarly, another supported Nouf's escape, but she had more doubts than the former participant about how safe she would be, remaining in the country:

> *"If I planned to escape, I would leave the country to make sure that my family would not make me go back. If I were abroad, even if my family planned to bring me back, I could sue them. I would not feel safe unless I was abroad, in a country that respects human rights."* (Manal, 15, 7th grade)

Some female adolescents, who face the same problem as Nouf in *Burj Al Athraa*, have no idea what to do. This is shown in three of the participants' comments. They are 15, 16 and 17 years old:

> *"If we could find someone to help us escape, we could do it, but the problem is that we couldn't escape without that help. If we couldn't find it, we would surrender to our families' requests."* (Reema, 15, 8th grade; Noha, 17, 12th grade, and Muneera, 15, 9th grade)

Al Abdeen has said that forcing female adolescents to marry damages them physically and psychologically. It also increases the rate of illiteracy and leads to a high divorce rate. She argues that forced marriages can also result in psychological and sexual misdemeanours among young wives, because once they reach maturity, their older husbands cannot fulfil them sexually and emotionally. This may lead to the husband being murdered, to suicide or adultery. Since such marriages damage society, Islam does not recognise them, on the principle of *"La darar wa la edrar" (No harm or damage)*.[26]

---

[26] Suhaila Zain Al Abdeen, "Human Rights: Such marriages increase the divorce rate "

One of the participant's own experiences caused her to react very emotionally when she saw the excessive physical abuse suffered by Nouf at the hands of her father and brother. She started to weep, because she remembered her father physically abusing her, her mother and siblings. She said:

"The problem is with the law. The law is unfair to women. Women are oppressed in everything. My siblings and I were deprived even of our right to obtain social security when it was given to our father. We all now depend on my mother's social security, which is SR 700. The judges and the police are biased and stood beside my father. They tell us that since we live with our mother, we can't have his social security. They are not taking into consideration how severely he physically and verbally abuses all the family members." (Shadia, 18, 2nd grade)

Feuer argues that 'hyperbolic excess' is one of the characteristics of melodrama, which exaggerates the dominance of the main text and undermines the dominant ideology. An excessive exaggeration of women's victimization can provoke awareness of male power and patriarchal dominance. Excess here does not actually lead to rebellious interpretations, but it allows the viewer to see behind the dominant ideology (quoted in Fiske, 1999, pp.192-193).

On the other hand, other participants thought that the violent scene in *Burj Al Athraa* was unrealistic and overly exaggerated.

"I have heard about many girls who have been forced to marry, but I have never heard about them being beaten so severely. The beating was exaggerated in the

episode. It was also unrealistic that Nouf was forced to marry her brother-in-law,
given that this is not allowed in Islam unless the sister is deceased or divorced. The
story might be true generally, but the exaggeration and over-dramatisation leaves you
feeling it is unrealistic." (Ghada, 24, sophomore)

Several participants who think that Egyptian drama is more realistic and the acting is more natural. Egyptian melodrama is distinguished by its emotional drama. Feuer argued that the distraught acting style in American soap operas is necessary to convey emotion. Brooks explained that the 'exaggerated emotions' of early nineteenth-century melodramatic acting were 'expressionistic' to elucidate the 'moral message'. Egyptian acting is as melodramatic as those mentioned by Feuer and Brooks's indication of emotion and morality. Some critics of Egyptian drama relate it to 'misery' and to being 'tied up with tears'. Ang remarks that melodrama is depicted with a 'tragic structure of feeling' giving the impression that performers are 'victims of forces that lie beyond their control' (quoted in Abu-Lughod, 1995, p.117).

7.2.2 Tash Ma Tash

The episode *Soor Al Hareem* discussed several issues relating to women, including women's driving. Participants, who suffer from a lack of transport and are poor, had different interpretations than others not in the same situation. Formally-educated participants had different interpretations than those who had only been informally-educated and those who dropped out of school. This is revealed in participants' statements:

"If you ask all the women in the village; they would like to drive. When brothers or
fathers refuse to give them a ride, this leaves the women feeling humiliated and

helpless, which is why we want to drive. None of us can achieve our ambition because of our dependence on men to get around. We want to carry out the basic necessities in life, like moving around, by ourselves." (Hadeel, 30 years, 12th grade)

Other participants also supported this argument and added:

"Women's driving is more than just about getting around; it is a path to women's independence. That's why I want to drive. I don't want to depend on anyone to give me a ride and I want to drive to save myself from the humiliation I feel each time I have to ask for a lift. They are preventing us from driving, but at the same time they do not provide us with alternative public transport. This is unfair." (Fareeda, 18, 12th grade)

Even though women's driving is not prohibited in Islam, women are prevented from driving in Saudi Arabia due to the problems that allegedly might result from driving (Al-Rasheed, 2007, p.28).

All the girls agreed with the member of the Town Council named Nasser, on his views to integrate women into the economic process by ensuring that the trade in women's necessities is limited to women only. They all agreed that this would also spare them a great deal of embarrassment by not having to buy such necessities from men, and would also provide numerous job opportunities for women.

"I am embarrassed to buy women's necessities from a man I do not know and even when the item is expensive or the size is incorrect, I am shy to bargain over the price

or ask for another size, so I buy the item and leave quickly. Preventing women from

selling such items is unfair." (Fareeda, 18, 12th grade)

Since the majority of the participants were in favour of women's driving, this made those who were against the idea reluctant to openly express their real views in the focus group discussions because they did not want to be viewed as closed-minded or unsympathetic to women's circumstances. They got around their embarrassment by suggesting some steps that needed to be taken before allowing women to drive, or by attempting to be neutral. One participants, who was against women driving, was a relative of the village mayor. She said:

"I am against women driving, but if a referendum was held, I would neither support

nor oppose it." (Seham, 30, 12th grade)

"I don't see the need to drive because transport is available to my sisters and me. But

I hope if women are allowed to drive then this process is a gradual one and that

women are only allowed to drive when they really need to." (Ameera, 24, sophomore)

Educational background and class have impacted on the participants' understanding of the themes discussed. Van Zoonen (1994, p. 132) showed how interpretations of mass media should be seen as contingent upon individuals' backgrounds. The formally-educated women were resistant to the idea of women driving because they do not need to drive; they have transport available to them.

A unilateral patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'an has dominated the school religious curriculum. The women's reaction, in favour of development without challenging existing

structures, is somewhat reminiscent of the Women in Development (WID) approach, discussed in Chapter 2. The WID movement accepted existing social structures and did not question the sources of women's subordination and oppression. It did not question why women had not benefited from development strategies and instead focused exclusively on the productive aspects of women's work, as a result ignoring or minimising the reproductive side of women's lives (Beneria & Sen, 1997, p.49). Formally-educated women are influenced by the dominant/political order that is imprinted on the education system; hence they may believe they are in favour of development, even though they wish to preserve the *status quo*. They also seek to defend the power that they have as a result of their connections with religious scholars, who are considered members of the ruling class in Saudi Arabia.

I asked the participants whether the conservative member of the Town Council, Humod, should be focusing on educational development, instead of on locating girls' schools and boys' schools on opposite sides of town to protect the girls. One participant gave the following opinion:

> *"They always focus on silly things and leave aside the important issues. We all support a segregated society and such a discussion is not important. What should be discussed is the quality of education, especially in villages, including the curriculum and the aggressive teachers who beat students and don't even teach well. They should discuss the bad services in schools. There is no air conditioning, no cafeteria, and there are no computer labs. There are only a few classes and they are very crowded."* (Nadine, 22, 6th grade)

This participant may live in a village but her comment corresponds with criticisms made by some prominent Muslim thinkers and leaders. The Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, for example, declared that one of the reasons for the decline of Muslims is their focus on trivialities and superficial issues. He complained that Muslims are pre-occupied with Islamic testimonials, such as Islamic dress, and neglect important issues surrounding development. As a result, Muslims have become dependant on other nations even for the most basic things (Mohamad 2000, p.22). Most Islamists always focus on gender segregation, but rarely discuss social issues such as poverty, unemployment and the role of women in the country's development (Aksikas, 2009, p.108).

I asked the participants if they thought that Council laws would be much fairer if there were women on the Council. The participants who are the most disadvantaged, who have experienced the most injustice and who have dropped out of school supported this idea and thought that hiring female candidates would strengthen women's rights and balance laws relating to women.

> *"I wish that women had the same voice as men. The extremist hardliners in the Council are the majority and more influential than the liberals who are supportive of women's rights. That's why someone like Nasser is frustrated, because his voice is not heard."* (Hadeel, 30, 12th grade)

There are those extremists who want to deny women's access to the Shura Council and women's participation in decision-making and in elections. They claim that such rights for

women are being brought over by the West as a result of the foreign colonisation of the Arab and Muslim world.[27]

Participants who had not experienced hardships, and those who were formally-educated, veered towards the latter view. They were unsure about women working in the Council.

> *"I prefer decision-makers to be men because women are emotional. Women who are selected to be decision-makers must be qualified and go through several qualification exams before acquiring such positions in order to make sure that their decisions can be relied upon."* (Nesreen, 30, diploma from teaching institute after the 9th grade)

The Saudi constitution is based on a specific school of Islam. Women's education and careers are perceived as of secondary importance, a view promulgated by clerics. For example, Sheikh bin Baz of Saudi Arabia demands that women stay at home and limit themselves to undertaking housework.

> *"He who wants to know the countless evils that mixing has wrought need only look at the plagues that have afflicted the nations that have made such choices … He will find concern on a personal and collective level over the escape of women from the home and the disintegration of the family"* (quoted in Haddad, 1998, p.9).

---

[27] Suhaila Zain Al Abdeen, "To those who deny women in the Shura!!"
http://dr-suhaila-z-hammad.blogspot.com/2011/11/1-3.html

7.2.3 Kalam Nawaim

7.2.3 .1 Episode No. 293 (2009)

The first clip discusses a particular act of violence at Saudi Arabian school. The teacher brutally beat a female student, causing paralysis in one of her legs. The school decided to punish the teacher by deducting five days of her salary. All the participants agreed that corporal punishment should be prohibited in schools and the teacher's punishment was inadequate; she should have been dismissed. All the girls had experienced physical and verbal abuse from teachers, which was one of the main reasons they left school. They all agreed with the three presenters, Farah, Rania and Heba that physical violence should not be allowed at school, and they agreed with Heba that verbal abuse can be more painful than physical violence.

"The punishment given to the teacher, a deduction of five days' worth of salary is inadequate because her actions paralysed the student. My cousin had a similar experience where her teacher beat her so severely that she lost her voice and was unable to speak. My cousin couldn't speak for years and the teacher was only transferred to another school. The penalty is unfair." (Samia, 22, senior college)

Another participant narrated her own experience of being verbally abused by teachers, using a word like 'shoes,' which is so impolite in Arabic that any spoken reference to shoes, even as an item of clothing, has to be followed by an apology:

"Verbal abuse from teachers can be very disrespectful, using terms such as, you shoes, and the word, stupid, is used to describe students whether they are studious or not. If the student complains to the Principal, nothing happens. Afterwards, the

teacher takes revenge on the student by failing her. Sometimes teachers threaten

students by saying: You will never pass your subjects." (Maha, 21, 9th grade)

Participants also discussed the different facilities in schools and the quality of the teaching across the regions in Saudi Arabia and between cities and villages. Most of the participants who had lived in other regions and in cities recognised the differences.

"There is a big difference between studying in Jazan and studying in Jeddah. The facilities and teaching are much better there. On the contrary, here, students are beaten for any minor reason such as being a little late and laughing with other students. I will not go back to school until I return to Jeddah." (Nadine, 22, 6th grade)

Even though the wealth and the oil revenues of Saudi Arabia have helped to build a large number of schools and colleges, such wealth has not been distributed equally across all regions and villages (Findlay, 1994, p.90). There is a tremendous difference between the facilities in Riyadh the capital, for example and Jazan. In addition, there is a huge difference between services in cities and villages. Disadvantaged women struggle for recognition, more than anything else. Other participants think that the education system in the village enforces a culture of violence, immorality, and fails to reward students since most of those who graduate remain unemployed.

"One of the main reasons girls leave school is the teaching style and teachers' physical abuse. Physical abuse must be forbidden, as is the case in the Gulf countries. When a student misbehaves, her parents must be called; corporal punishment will only encourage violent behaviour among girls as they seek to defend

themselves. There must be laws that prohibit physical abuse, but the problem is not with a lack of laws but with the implementation." (Hadeel, 30, 12th grade)

Other participants added that:

"Relationships and connections play a big role in schools. Students who have relatives at the same school, such as a mother or a sister, are untouchable both physically and verbally. But for most students without these connections, they wouldn't even dare defend themselves." (Fareeda, 19, 12th grade)

One participants explained the corrupt education system and its impact on the few loyal teachers and on the students.

"When a student complains to the education department in Sabya province, the complaint file never gets transferred to the education department in Jazan. When one of our teachers helped us to relay our complaint about one of the teachers to the education department in Sabya, this teacher encountered some difficulties afterwards. The teacher was singled out by the principal and other teachers, because she had sided with the students. In the end, the complaint never reached Jazan and the teacher who had helped the students was punished with an increased workload and salary deductions for minor mistakes." (Ameera, 24, sophomore)

Usually, girls are enticed by the promise of literacy and with how education can change and improve their lives (Horsman 1994, p.169). For these girls, however, there is only a small chance that this dream can be realised given their circumstances. Guthrie explained that

frustrations occur when a person's literacy level is more advanced than their educational setting, distancing her/him from others (quoted in Cornes, 1994, p.107). Participants' interpretations are not only influenced by their personal experiences, but also by their perception that literacy can fulfil their needs. This idea that literacy is the answer to their problem is not realistic given their experiences of the education system.

None of the participants supported the television presenter, Fawzia's, argument that the physical abuse perpetrated by the teacher was justified. Fawzia said that some teachers are treated badly in schools, are given bad salaries, and that large classes overwhelm teachers.

> *"It is unfair to beat the student and to paralyse her. If the teacher is unsatisfied with the salary or the management, she can take that up with the relevant officials, not take it out on a student. The students are her responsibility."* (Bushra, 20, freshman)

Even though participants appreciate Farah's sympathy for the student, and that she was against corporal punishment in schools, they did not agree with the example that she gave. Farah compared schools that allow students to be beaten with her daughter's private school where students and their families are treated politely and considerately.

> *"Farah in her argument and solution, concentrated on upper and middle class schools but didn't offer a resolution for schools for lower classes and in village areas – they can't afford expensive private expensive schools like her daughter's. Most of the episodes of Kalam Nawaim concentrate on the rich and the middle classes, rather than the poor."* (Safaa, 17, 12th grade)

These underprivileged women could not relate to the presenters, who clearly represented the middle classes. The problem is that middle-class women are unable to identify with the sufferings of disadvantaged women. Feminism has to take into account economic, social, and cultural factors. Feminism has to be transformed from individual responses to injustice, to providing frameworks that can accommodate everybody's experience of injustice. It has to be sensitive to serious differences and inequalities that exist between women in different classes (Skeggs, 2002, pp.157-158).

The comments of those disadvantaged women correspond with the findings of a study by Nahr, *Image of Women in the Arab Media- An analytical study to address the image of women on MBC*, 2008, who conducted a content analysis of MBC programmes, one of which was *Kalam Nawaim*. The results of the analysis revealed that the show focuses mostly on the middle-class, (64.5% of the time), much less on the rich (13.9%), and even less on the poor (11.8%). The show is mostly about urban women (75.2% of the time) while only 3.2% of the show's time is about village women. It also spends 69.8% of the time focusing on college women and women with less education only feature 5.3% of the time (Nahr 2008, p. 53, 54). In the in-depth one-to-one interviews, the participants explained to me in greater detail the kind of topics they like to watch on a talk show, which are not featured on *Kalam Nawaim*. Here is where the importance of triangulation comes in; one research technique (in-depth one-to-one interviews or focus groups) is strengthened by the other.

7.2.3.2 Episode No. 201 (2007)

The second clip played from *Kalam Nawaim* discussed the issue of incest. Participants who had already heard such stories narrated what they know about it.

"I heard about a girl in the village who was raped by her brother and she was afraid to speak to her parents. When she got pregnant, her brother escaped. When her father realized she was pregnant, she told him what her brother had done. Her father didn't believe her and killed her. The father went to prison." (Hala, 24, 4th grade)

Discussing sexual matters in front of adolescents is unacceptable in a conservative traditional society like Saudi Arabia, especially in village communities. One of the participants complained that such topics should not be raised among girls between the ages of 15 and 17. I explained to her that most of the victims of incest are girls in that age group, because they are afraid to speak up and cannot defend themselves. She became convinced once she heard the views of 16 year old Sawsan and 15 year old Amal.

"We wouldn't know what to do if we had had the same experience and we would be very scared. Most girls our age wouldn't speak up because they would be afraid too. Mothers offer some advice to their daughters, but never explain how to act under such circumstances. Neither school nor television helps us to understand this issue." (Sawsan, 16, 10th grade, and Amal, 15, 9th grade)

Another participant highlighted the difficulties that girls face if they have experienced incest.

"Most girls are afraid to confess to their parents if they have experienced incest. Sometimes even the mother is helpless if the father is dominant and threatening. It is hard for the girls to go to the police, the National Society for Human Rights or the Protection Centre because all of these services are located in the city of Jazan. There

is nothing in the village, and girls can't get to Jazan because they don't have access

to transport." (Hadeel, 30, 12th grade)

Al Abdeen explained that the power given to the male relative guardian gave him more than

he deserves so that he considered the woman to be his property, including her money, body

and life.[28]

7.2.3.3 Episode No. 182 (2006)

The third clip discussed a centre called Madenat Al-Amal (Hope City). After an introduction

to Sharla's centre, a report was presented about an abused woman who was severely beaten

by her husband. The husband refused to divorce her, even though he married for a second

time. The abused woman said that she went to the police several times, as well as to the

courts, but they were extremely slow to progress her case and, in the end, it was the centre

that helped her obtain her right to a divorce.

All the participants said they would like to have the same centre in their village to teach

women about their rights and to speed up the process when divorce is sought and in cases

involving violence against women.

> *"One of my friends, as well as her children, is suffering at the hands of her violent*
>
> *husband. She tried to get a divorce, but couldn't. A centre like that one is vital –*
>
> *most women put up with men's oppression for the sake of the children. Women need*
>
> *to be enlightened."* (Khadeeja, 30, 12th grade)

---

[28] Suhaila Zain Al Abdeen, "Extraction of male relative guardian .. Mechanism to combat incest"
http://www.musanadah.com/index.php?action=show_t&id=49

Similarly, another participant supported this argument by saying:

> *"Women need such a centre to educate them about their rights. The law and courts are slow in giving women their rights, especially in matters of divorce and cases of violence and a centre like that would speed up the process. Also, it is difficult to get to court, or the Protection Care Centre or the National Society of Human Rights because they are all located in the city of Jazan and transport is an issue. A centre in the village like Hope City would help a lot."* (Hadeel, 30, 12th grade)

Another participant highlighted the importance of television programmes.

> *"There is a shortage of television programmes that educate women about their rights, and offer solutions. Women need hotline numbers in cases of violence."* (Faten, 18, 12th grade)

Lila Abu-Lughod had the same experience with village women in her fieldwork. She realised that women accepted television scripts when they "increase awareness", whether about the importance of education, rights or values. Furthermore, viewers are looking not only for advice but also for assistance (Abu-Lughod, 2005, pp.71, 97).

7.3 <u>Conclusion</u>

In this chapter, I have attempted to situate the women of Goz Al Jaafarh, as an active television audience, within a broad socio-cultural context, which highlights both the similarities and differences amongst these women. I argue that through understanding a woman's social context, we can understand their television consumption in relation to the dominant ideology in the televised message.

The discussion in this chapter highlights a numbers of findings. It shows that gender rarely reveals itself in pure form, but rather that it intersects with other determinations such as class, age and social backgrounds (Gray, 1992, p.31). The participants' educational, social and economic backgrounds, as well as their age, seemed to inform their interpretations – those who had spent longer in formal education were more sympathetic to some dominant conservative views, such as those against the visibility of women and women's agency in society.

The television programmes showed unrealistic solutions, unsympathetic feedback, or no solution at all to village women problems. The women themselves had practical solutions, such as solidarity amongst mothers and daughters, which were not portrayed in the clips. The women were more in tune with the fundamental structural changes needed to improve their lives than were the programme makers were and, as such, rejected the idea of village women as passive and weak – as was implied in some of the clips.

One of the television programmes' unrealistic solutions was the idea of literacy as a means of empowerment. The girls, however, are faced with the reality that literacy does not reward since they are witnesses to high unemployment rates amongst college graduates and bad treatment of the faculty, thereby clashing with the ideal educational system in their minds. They are also faced with the fact that they may have to be already empowered before they can gain access to the empowerment of literacy.

In addition, girls between the ages of 15-25 thought that talk shows like *Kalam Nawaim* did not represent either their age or class based needs because, most of the issues presented were more pertinent to women aged 25 years or older. They therefore highlighted the need for

more programmes for female adolescents. Some girls added that there were programmes and shows on other satellite channels that they would like to see on *MBC1* such as *Wahed Men AlNas (One of the People),* on the *Dream Channel*, which presented problems relating to disadvantaged classes. *Seerat Hob (Love Life)*, on the *Al-Rai Kuwaiti Channel*, and *Sabaya (Young Female Adults)*, on the *Al Mehwar Channel*, also presented the problems of girls from all ages and classes.

The participants also thought that presenters played a big role in the success of talk shows, and that *Kalam Nawaim's* presenters did not have the deep analytical skills needed to present the women's problems and could not feel their sincerity and seriousness; accordingly, they could not identify with the show and lost interest.

The women of the village thought that their issues of poverty, illiteracy and violence would be more recognised in mixed shows and dramas, rather than in 'women only' shows. They thought that 'women only' programmes were only watched by women and accordingly there would not be any change or awareness, whilst, on the other hand, when issues were presented in popular mixed shows more solutions were provided as well as more awareness in society about the problems that affected the women. Other participants thought that the acting in the Gulf and Saudi dramas were artificial and that, even if they had good messages, they will not have an impact on society. Participants thought that the image of village women in the Saudi and GCC dramas in general were unrealistic due to the clothes, makeup and hair styles used. Some participants suggested that, in order to act more convincingly, actresses should live and explore the villages that they were supposed to be representing.

Most participants pointed out the unjust patriarchal system that is revealed in the biased laws against women practiced by judges and the police in Saudi Arabia. It is also presented in prohibiting women from driving, without providing them with alternative public transportations. One of the problems in Saudi society is that families give absolute power to the brothers over their sisters, therefore, some of these men think that they can do anything in regards to women, such as adultery or sexual harassment.

All participants agree that there is a shortage of television programmes that educate disadvantaged women about their rights and offer solutions to the women, especially in the cases of divorce, crime or violence. They also agreed that the media alone will not solve their problems without actual centers opening to support women, as well as civil society institutions that work in collaboration with the media.

Chapter 8
CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate whether or not *MBC 1* and *Al Arabiya* have successfully applied media initiatives in their programming to improve the prospects of disadvantaged women, mainly in terms of poverty, illiteracy and violence. Evidence in the previous chapters has shown that in order to answer this question, these media initiatives need to be analysed in the context, of other factors, namely the power dynamics and resourcing issues that decision-makers of these satellite channels are up against. The preceding chapters have analysed programmes relating to advancing gender equality on *MBC 1* and *Al Arabiya* and also how disadvantaged Saudi village women perceive television programmes that cover developmental issues. Due to a lack of existing research, I used a variety of methods to answer my research questions. By using more than one research tool, I was able to minimize the occurrence of errors, which can result from relying on only one research method. I began my study by conducting ethnographic research in the form of participant-observation, in a village called Goz Al Jaafarh. Then I conducted focus groups, interviews with disadvantaged Saudi women in the village, interviews with key players and decision-makers, and, finally, a textual analysis. I started by conducting my ethnographic fieldwork, in order to use a participatory, bottom-up approach in my study. This meant that when I interviewed the elites I was in a better position to explore and question any top-down thinking, be it in terms of how programmes were devised to improve women's status on *MBC 1* and *Al Arabiya*, or on what basis media initiatives were put together to address women's empowerment or on any other top-down endeavour to address gender inequality. This chapter will provide a summary of the findings from the different chapters of this study and will answer the research question about whether or not *MBC 1* and *Al Arabiya* have applied successful media initiatives to improve women's status, mainly in terms of poverty, illiteracy and violence, and how

disadvantaged Saudi village women perceive television programmes that cover developmental issues.

8.1 Problems of the Initiatives and the Importance of Research Centres

As has been discussed in Chapter 4, media initiatives such as that of Queen Rania and Sheikha Fatima are lacking several things. These initiatives represent a dominant top-down approach that lacks participatory ethics because it does not involve lower class women and has no impact on women's empowerment. The fact that each first lady wants to prove herself by starting a new initiative that she can put her name on, instead of continuing and building upon any previous endeavours, suggests that the first ladies' primary intention is to promote themselves rather than to contribute to women's advancement. Accordingly, the problem with Queen Rania's Media Initiative, and others, is that they lack continuity because they fail to work cooperatively and build on each other's successes, and the initiatives do not run for a sufficient amount of time.

Those who launch such initiatives must bear in mind that what the Arab media needs are research centres that can translate information into programming. These centres would combine audience research and television scriptwriting, like the work of the Norman Lear Center and Population Communications International (PCI) in the United States, to produce and write entertainment programmes, like soap operas, for behavioural change, based on scientific studies. In addition, establishing media monitoring institutions to establish how women are portrayed in different programmes is vital. These centres can coordinate with media and other institutions to share expertise to produce better outcomes.

Officials from the MBC Group confirm there is a need to establish media research centres and institutions for television scriptwriting. These would gather and organise information and turn out skilled professionals, who, in turn, could produce developmental programmes combining accurate scientific information and technical reports written by international development organisations, in the form of entertainment shows, to make them comprehensible to, and enjoyable for, the average viewers. The Arab uprisings were caused by reasons quite similar to the topics of this study; namely, issues driven by low development indicators, such as poverty, unemployment and inequality, which means the production of developmental programmes targeting ordinary citizens and disadvantaged women in particular, is much needed. This is because programmes focused on development are one way to progress the development agenda and show the people that their voices are being heard.

These demands of the people and the change in the political arena in the Arab world might give more of a basis for producing developmental programmes on news channels, such as *Al Arabiya*, that have more scope for incorporating the development agenda. Afaneh explained that there is no comparison between *Al Arabiya's* cooperation with those in Queen Rania's Media Initiative and Al Jazeera's political agenda, which is more important to them than development. However, although *Hewar Al Arab,* a hard-hitting talk show on *Al Arabiya*, only aired one episode between 2007 and 2010 that covered developmental issues relating to women, this one episode is worth more than all the development related episodes of *Kalam Nawaim,* a soft talk show, put together.

8.2 Disconnection between Programme Makers and Viewers

Sheikh Waleed's declaration, "I want my networks to make a difference in the Arab world", suggests his channels have goals that could potentially contribute, through news and entertainment, towards development. However, after discussing the possibility of programmes that would help advance women in society with Sheikh Waleed, it became evident that, even though he may be interested in such programmes, he has fallen into the same trap of making sweeping generalisations to which van Zoonen has drawn attention, where women are lumped together as a homogenous unit, regardless of class, education and age (van Zoonen, 1994, pp.119, 123). For example, he thinks highly of *Kalam Nawaim*, due to its high ratings over the past few years, but this rating is not broken down by class; so it is not known who most benefits from viewing it. This was reflected in the responses of the participants in the focus group, especially the girls between the ages of 15 and 20, who thought that *Kalam Nawaim* does not represent their needs either in terms of age or class.

In terms of numbers, there are few programmes that cover poverty, illiteracy and violence against disadvantaged women. On *Kalam Nawaim*, between 2006 and 2010, discussion of poverty accounted for only (4.6%) of the total time for all the episodes combined, violence accounted for (8.13%) and education for only (1.21%). The episode *Soor Al Harem (The Wall of the Harem)* was the only episode of *Tash Ma Tash* that discussed Saudi women's matters directly and it was episode 14, broadcast as far back as 2006. *Al Sakenat fee Golobena* ran from 2009-2010, and focuses on issues around women's empowerment. There was only one episode that discussed poverty and one education, all the episodes tackled the subject of violence, whether physical emotional or psychological.

The analysis of *Kalam Nawaim,* as discussed in Chapter 6, including the show's hosts, experts and guests, concluded that the show's style is not suited to serious topics, such as poverty, illiteracy and violence against women. Neither the discourse nor the semiotic analyses of the presenters revealed any expression of solidarity with, or sympathy for, the participants. For example, the presenters do not have the credentials to give professional advice to vulnerable women; there was a lack of empathy between the hosts and the participants, a failure to build constructive dialogue between participants and experts and decide whose comments were worthwhile and what solutions were practicable, and the list goes on. In addition, in some of the show's sessions, the hosts were not fully prepared for the topics and, as a result, their comments were haphazard and irrelevant.

Discussing poverty, illiteracy and violence against women requires a commitment to exposing other critically important subjects, such as social justice, a fair distribution of wealth, corruption, a critique of Arab traditions, and erroneous Qur'anic interpretations, especially of verses relating to women. This was illustrated in one of the episodes of *Kalam Nawaim* (See Chapter 6), when one of the presenters sided completely with a hard line Wahhabi cleric against Al Abdeen. Even though Al Abeen's "liberal Islam" approach, which seeks to challenge the patriarchal and tribal interpretation of verses in the Qur'an related to women, is considered more conservative than other Islamic feminist scholars, she is still harshly critiqued by Wahhabi clerics and her approach was not even welcomed on a women's show. Such controversial debates require genuinely knowledgeable presenters on a hard-hitting talk show, like *Al Thamina (8 O'clock)*, which is something *Kalam Nawaim* has failed to achieve. *Al Thamina* has been on air since the start of the Arab revolutions and was launched on *MBC1* in 2012 to address everyday political, social and economic problems, including underprivileged women's concerns. It enjoys a large degree of freedom and covers

ground-breaking discussions (MBC.net, 2012). The difference in coverage between hard-hitting talk and soft shows was shown in the coverage of developmental issues relating to women on *Hewar Al Arab* and *Kalam Nawaim.* The presenter on *Hewar Al Arab* asked bold, pertinent questions and the experts' answers were thoughtful and insightful. The professionalism, solidarity, sympathy and concern of the presenter, Taleb Kanaan, for women's status, evident in what he said as well as in his tone of voice and body language, were all completely absent in the presenters on *Kalam Nawaim.* It could have had a tremendous impact on the decision-makers who watch this channel had there been more episodes on poverty, illiteracy and violence.

In the focus groups as discussed in Chapter 7, the disadvantaged women had similar opinions about the presenters on *Kalam Nawaim* and thought they did not have the deep analytical skills needed to talk about women's problems, and they did not consider them sincere or serious about the issues involved. As a result, they did not identify with the show and were not interested in watching it. They also thought that presenters on other satellite channels who discuss social problems relating to the underprivileged, do so with greater sincerity and empathy. In addition, girls between the ages of 15 and 25 thought that talk shows like *Kalam Nawaim* did not appeal either to their age group or their class, because most of the issues discussed were more relevant to women aged 25 years or older. They therefore highlighted a need for more programmes targeted at female adolescents. Some girls added that there were programmes on other satellite channels that they would like to see on *MBC1*, such as *Wahed Men AlNas* on the *Dream Channel*, which tackled problems relating to the disadvantaged. Fawzia Al Deree, who hosts *Seerat Hob* on the *Al-Rai Kuwaiti Channel*, was complemented by the village girls due to her empathy with the audience and knowledge about the subjects,

as was *Sabaya*, on the *Al Mehwar Channel*, which was also deemed to expertly discuss problems relevant to girls of all ages and classes.

According to the women in the focus groups, television programmes, be they talk shows or dramas, showed unrealistic outcomes in situations, were unsympathetic in their feedback, or offered no solutions at all to the problems of village women. The women themselves suggested practical solutions, such as demonstrating solidarity between mothers and daughters, which were not played out in the clips. These women were more in tune with the fundamental structural changes required to improve their lives than the programme makers and, as such, rejected the idea of village women being passive and weak, which is how some of the clips portrayed them.

In dramas, especially Arab Gulf dramas like *Al Sakenat fee Golobena*, there is a clear need for more audience research, especially amongst disadvantaged women, in order to devise scenes and characters to which viewers can relate. Arab Gulf drama also needs professional writers who can write stories with much better plots and more robust characters to generate greater didacticism and excitement. In general, the episodes' plots were flat and without a clear trajectory of action, climax, period of calm and then resolution. The camera shots are slow and drawn out, drawn-out silences are common and the soundtrack sluggish, which, in conjunction with the weak plot, leaves audiences extremely bored, regardless of the relevance of the topics and scenarios. Moreover, exaggerated emotions and wooden acting that lacks spontaneity and naturalness may also leave viewers unmoved, resulting in their losing interest.

The focus group participants thought that the acting in the Gulf and Saudi dramas was artificial and that, even if they had embedded good messages in their plots, it would not have an impact on society. Participants thought that the portrayal of village women in Saudi dramas, in particular, and Arab Gulf dramas in general, was unrealistic on account of the clothes, makeup and hair styles. Some participants suggested that, in order to act more convincingly, actresses should live in and explore the villages that they were supposed to be representing, a kind of immersion. However, most women in the village thought that poverty, illiteracy and violence would receive greater recognition in mainstream shows and dramas, rather than in women's shows. Even though the participants liked watching *Al Sakenat fee Golobena,* some preferred the stories of *Al Sakenat fee Golobena* to be acted out in *Tash Ma Tash*. They thought that women's programmes were only watched by women and accordingly there would be no change or increase in levels of awareness, whilst on the other hand when issues were presented in popular mainstream shows, better outcomes were crafted and a broader range of problems that affect these women covered. Here, the views of the disadvantaged women match those of Suzanne Afaneh, who made the same point that "Instead of producing women-only programmes, women should be integrated into the mainstream, because we do not want to watch programmes only for women. We would like to have women's empowerment issues addressed as public issues".

8.3 Obstacles to the Production of Women's Empowerment Programmes

The main obstacle facing development in general, and the production of developmental programmes addressing women's status, particularly in a country like Saudi Arabia, is the fact that religious institutes control all the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), including educational institutions, radio, television, press and family structure. This makes Saudi society pre-capitalist and not progressive. The influence of this unilateral form of Islam in

Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism, reflected throughout most of Saudi society, including among disadvantaged women, has turned some women against themselves by renouncing their rights in the name of religious belief. According to Sen, the dilemma in some societies is that gender inequality is perceived as natural and is accepted by women themselves. Abu-Lughod critiqued the *Arab Human Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World*, saying that the Arab intellectuals and activists, who were involved in writing this report, think that the cause of illiteracy and backwardness is a lack of education, but in fact it is more likely that poor quality public education for girls is to blame. This was revealed in Chapter 7, where formally-educated women in the focus groups were more willing to defend some conservative religious patriarchal views, such as keeping women invisible in society, not allowing women on the Shura Council and a ban on women driving.

The challenges facing media officials and practitioners are that this religious control can extend to death threats and fatwas that legitimise murder. A fatwa was issued against Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim, and death threats have been made against Nasser Al Qasabi and his family, as was discussed in Chapter 5. Due to this clerical control, these satellite channels owned by Saudi businessmen or members of the Royal Family are located outside of Saudi Arabia, either in neighbouring Arab countries or in Europe. However, even at this distance, media officials and practitioners are not safe from fatwas and death threats. What is more, Saudi Arabia is losing skilled professionals because they prefer to work for channels based abroad that have better working environments and are free from religious dominance.

The main obstacle is when Qur'anic interpretations, especially the ones related to women and professions, such as the media, are affected by political events. For example, women's position in society and the media both changed tremendously after the Juhaiman siege and the

Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. Because both the Al-Otaibi assault and Iran's Khomeini Revolution criticized and embarrassed Saudi Arabia – the country that includes the two holiest mosques, at Mecca and Medina – as not correctly representing Islam, the foundational Wahhabism of the Kingdom was aggressively reinforced. As a result, all plays, fashion shows, international events and cinemas were banned in Saudi Arabia. Female broadcasters were prevented from reading the news, all female singers and other women vanished completely from television screens, women without their ID cards could not even walk around in public, even with their husbands, and sometimes even ID cards were not enough for the "religious police." After the shock of September 11, 2001, when 15 of the 19 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom was under pressure to reform, and this included its media.

Due to the fact that several issues in Saudi Arabia are used for a political agenda, especially where women's empowerment is concerned, Saudis are divided into reformists and conservatives. Despite King Abdullah's promises of reform, he is just one player in a circle of powerful princes. These multiple sources of powers have created two opposing groups: the reformists and the conservatives. There is no set of rules that protects the development of women's status and most progressions have more or less come in the form of a concession by one of the powerful players in this circle. Due to this tug-of-war between two opposing powers, the role of the media will always be limited, especially in terms of devising women's empowerment programmes, evidenced by Saudi satellite channels being located outside Saudi Arabia to be free of clerical control. Accordingly, it will be difficult for *MBC 1* and *Al Arabiya* to critically discuss sensitive topics like poverty, illiteracy and violence against women if death threats and fatwas like that against Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim remain unchallenged owing to a serious lack of governmental or constitutional control over clerics.

These contradictory powers in Saudi Arabia were represented by sophisticated high-tech Saudi owned satellite television like MBC Group and a pre-capitalist traditional society controlled by a unilateral religious institute illustrates Al Gethame's description of development in Saudi Arabia as *"Tafra, "economic boom,"* which suggests building the place was achieved much faster than building the person. Modernity has thus only arrived in a physical sense, while, according to Al Gethame, backwardness of the mind remained. Sen also highlights the importance of social freedom and factors such as, gender equality, for development. Even though a rich country like Saudi Arabia is dominated by a capitalist system, what is crucial is that its society is essentially still pre-capitalist because traditions are forced upon citizens by religious leaders who unilaterally reject modernity.

8.4 The Response to the Main Research Questions

To what extent have *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* applied pan-Arab media initiatives in their programming on the development of Arab women's status? How and why have they been implemented? How do disadvantaged Saudi village women perceive television programmes that cover developmental issues?

MBC1 and *Al Arabiya* have not adequately addressed issues surrounding women's status in programming on poverty, illiteracy and violence. Numbers-wise, there are pitifully few programmes covering poverty, illiteracy and violence against disadvantaged women. There is also a dearth of programmes targeting young women between the ages of 15 and 25, and young disadvantaged women in particular. My analysis shows that disadvantaged women preferred mainstream programmes, such as *Tash Ma Tash* more than women's programmes like *Kalam Nawaim*. They think that the issues of poverty, illiteracy and violence would reach a far wider audience in mainstream shows and dramas, than in shows targeted at

women. However, one-off episodes covering women's empowerment issues in *Tash Ma Tash* will not suffice. Discussing poverty, illiteracy and violence against women are better covered by hard-hitting talk shows like, *Hewar Al Arab*, than by a soft talk show, such as *Kalam Nawaim*. Such topics require a commitment to expose other critically important subjects such as social justice, a fair distribution of wealth, corruption, a critique of Arab traditions, and erroneous Qur'anic interpretations, especially of verses relating to women, something that will not be on a 'soft' talk show. Arab Gulf drama that covers women's empowerment issues falls short in the same way that *Kalam Nawaim* does, since while it covers important matters, such as poverty and the value of education, it only does so in a superficial manner.

Media initiatives tackling women's status could not be applied on *MBC1* and *Al Arabiya* because they themselves need to be modified and developed. These initiatives lack participatory ethics because they do not involve lower class women and have no impact on women's empowerment. They also lack continuity, because they fail to work cooperatively and build on each other's successes, and the initiatives do not run for a sufficient amount of time. Those who launch such initiatives must bear in mind that what the Arab media needs are research centres that can translate information into programming.

APPENDIX
List of Interviews

Focus groups and one to one interviews with disadvantaged women in Jazan-Saudi Arabia, February 2011

Sheikh Waleed Al Ibrahim, the MBC Group's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Dubai, 22nd March, 2011

Abdulrahman Al Rashed, Director of *Al Arabiya*, Dubai, 13th March, 2011

Nakhle El Hage, Director of News at *Al Arabiya*, Dubai, 13th March, 2011

Ali Jaber, the MBC Group's TV Director, Dubai, 23rd March, 2011, London, 29th October 2011

Suzanne Afaneh, former Minister of Tourism in Jordan and former Head of Queen Rania's Media Initiative for Women's Development and now President of the Board of Directors of the Dead Sea Area and Ajloun for Development, Amman, 2nd March, 2011

Ethar Khawasnah, the Chairman of Queen Rania's Media Office, Amman, 2nd March, 2011

Mazen Hayek, Director of PR & Commercial of the MBC Group, via phone call, 2nd March, 2013

Anonymous source, interviews in person in London and by phone call to Dubai, 2013 (precised date withheld to protect anonymity)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abed al-Jabri, Mohammad, 2011. *The Formation of Arab Reason: Text, Tradition and the Construction of Modernity in the Arab World*. I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, London.

Abercrombie, N., Stephen, H., & Turner, B., 1980. *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*. George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd.

Abercrombie, Nicholas, 1997. *Television and Society*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Abt, V., & Seesholtz, M. (1994). The shameless world of Phil, Sally and Oprah: Television talk shows and the deconstructing of society. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, p. 170-190.

Abu-Lughod, Lila, 2002. Egyptian Melodrama – Technology of the Modern Subject? In Gindburg, F., Abu-Lughod, L., & Larkin, B. *Media Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California, p. 115-134.

Abu-Lughod, Lila, 2005. *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*. University of Chicago Press: London.

Abu-Lughod, Lila, 2009. Dialects of Women's Empowerment: The International Circuitry of the Arab Human Development Report 2005. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 41, p. 83-103.

Abu Zeid, Ola, 2005. Women and the Media. Arab Women Organisation and the General Union of Arab Journalists.

علا أبو زيد، 2005. الإعلام والمرأة. منظمة المرأة العربية والاتحاد العام للصحفيين العرب.

Adams, David, 2006. Media and Development in the Middle East. *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*, 23 (170), p. 170-186.

Adkins, L., & Skeggs, B., 2006. *Feminism after Bourdieu*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

AHDR, 2003. Arab Human Development Report. Building a Knowledge Society in the Arab Countries [Online]
Available at:
http://www.un.org/Pubs/whatsnew/e03ahd.htm

AHDR, 2005. Arab Human Development Report. Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World [Online]
Available at:
http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/regionalreports/arabstates/RBAS_ahdr2005_EN.pdf

AHDR, 2009. Arab Human Development Report. Human development indicators in the Arab countries [Online]
Available at: http://www.arab-hdr.org/publications/contents/2009/annex1-e.pdf

Ahmed, Leila, 1992. *Women and Gender in Islam*. Brevis Press, Bethany, Connecticut.

Akeel, Maha, 2010. *Saudi Women in the Media*. Arab Scientific Publishers, Inc., Beirut.

Aksikas, Jaafar, 2009. *Arab Maternities: Islamism, Nationalism, and Liberalism in the Post-Colonial Arab World*. Die Deutsche Bibliothek, New York.

Al-Baz, R. 2009. *Disfigured: A Saudi Woman's Story of Triumph over Violence*, Arris Books, Northampton, MA.

Al Dahmashee , Falah, 2010. Addressing issues of Saudi society in Al Ekbareya and Al Arabiya and the opinions of college students towards them, *PhD (Cairo University: Mass Communication Department)*

Al Deejani, Nahid (2006). Tash Ma Tash Turns to Cash Ma Cash. [On-line]. *Asharq Al-Awsat*. Available at:

ناهد، ديجاني (2006). "طاش ما طاش" يتحول إلى "كاش ما كاش". الشرق الأوسط
http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?issueno=9896&article=387337

Al Gethame, Abdullah, 2005. *The story of modernity in Saudi Arabia*. The Arab Cultural Centre.

عبدالله الغذامي، 2005. حكاية الحداثة في المملكة العربية السعودية. المركز الثقافي العربي.

Al Haidaree, Ibrahim (2003). *Patriarchal system and the problem of gender among Arabs*. Al Sagee Association.

إبراهيم الحيدري، 2003. النظام الأبوي وإشكالية الجنس عند العرب. دار الساقي.

AlMunajjed, M., 2006. *Saudi Women Speak: 24 Remarkable Women Tell their Success Stories*. St. Martin's Press, New York.

Al Nemer, Ameera, 2007. The dependency of the Saudi youth in gaining knowledge of local, Arab and international issues- a comparative study between traditional and new media, *PhD (Cairo University: Mass Communication Department)*

أميرة النمر، 2007. اعتماد المراهقين السعوديين على وسائل الإعلام في المعرفة بالقضايا المحلية والعربية والدولية – دراسة مقارنة بين الوسائل التقليدية والحديثة. رسالة دكتوراة (جامعة القاهرة: كلية الإعلام)

Al Rakaf, Abdullah 2001. US $ 6 billion the losses of Arab satellite channels. [On-line]. Shams. Available at:

عبدالله الركف (2011). 6 مليارات دولار خسائر الفضائيات العربية
http://www.shms.com.sa/html/story.php?id=146348

Al Rasheed, Madawi, 2007. *Contesting the Saudi State*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Al Rasheed, Madawi, 2008. An Assessment of Saudi Political, Religious and Media Expansion. In M. Al-Rasheed. *Kingdom without Borders*. Hurst Publishers Ltd, London, p 1-38.

Al Saied, Najat, 2011. Can Arabs reproduce their identities? [On-line] *Alarabiya.net*. Available at: http://english.alarabiya.net/views/2011/09/14/166812.html

Al Saied, Najat, 2012. The Islamist Tsunami and Arab Society [On-line] *Gatestone Institute*.

Available at: http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3153/islamist-tsunami-arab-society

Al Shareef, Sami, 2004. *Arab Satellite Channels: A Critical View*. Cairo: Arab Renaissance
Association.

سامي الشريف، 2004. القنوات الفضائية العربية: رؤية نقدية. القاهرة: دار النهضة العربية

Al Sheikh, Issam, 2011. Civil Defence honours Mother of the Nation. *999 Contents-Society
and Security*, Issue (484), p. 1-30.

Al Salem, Zaglola, 1997. *The image of Arab women in the televised drama*. Dar Aram for
Studies, Publishing and Distribution

زغلولة السالم، 1997. صورة المرأة العربية في الدراما المتلفزة. دار آرام للدراسات والنشر والتوزيع.

Alterman, J., 2002. The Effects of Satellite Television on Arab Domestic Politics.
Transnational Broadcasting Studies, (9). [Online]
Available at: http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall02/Alterman.html

Altorki, S. 1986. *Women in Saudi Arabia: Ideology and Behaviour Among the Elite*,
Columbia University Press, New York.

Amer, Magda and Kamal, Hala, 2002. The Opinion of Rural Women about the Family
Planning Campaigns on Television. *Egyptian Journal of Mass Communication
Research*, (16), pp. 255-309.

ماجدة عامر وهالة كمال، 2002. رأي المرأة الريفية حول الحملات تنظيم الأسرة على التلفزيون. المجلة
المصرية لبحوث الإعلام، العدد (16)، ص. 255-309

Ammannet, 2004. Arab Media Network for Human Development. [Online]
Available at: http://www.powershow.com/view/1514ef-
OGFkM/Arab_Media_Network_for_Human_Development_flash_ppt_presentation
[Accessed 10 November 2009]

Ang, I., 1989. On the politics of empirical audience studies. In E. Seiter, H. Borchers, G.
Kreutzner, & E.M. Warth. *Remote Control*. Routledge: London, p. 110

Arab Media Outlook, 2009-2013. *Dubai Press Club*.

نظرة الإعلام العربي، 2009-2013. نادي دبي للصحافة.

Arab Women's Organisation, 2010. *Gender and the dimensions of women's empowerment in
the Arab World*.

منظمة المرأة العربية، 2010. النوع الاجتماعي وأبعاد تمكين المرأة في الوطن العربي.

Arab Women's Organisation, 2007. The Media Strategy for Arab Women 2009-2015

منظمة المرأة العربية، 2007. مشروع الإستراتيجية الإعلامية للمرأة العربية 2009-2015

Arksey, H. & Knight P., 1999. *Interviewing for Social Scientists*. Sage Publications, Ltd.

Atrebi, S., 1994. *Women & Words in Saudi Arabia*. Columbia University Press.

Awad, Shirin, 2011. The dependency of the Arab audience on talk shows on Arab satellite

channels in the formation of knowledge about women's issues, *a PhD thesis (Cairo University: Mass Communication Department)*

شيرين عوض، 2011. اعتماد الجمهور العربي على البرامج الحوارية في القنوات الفضائية العربية في تشكيل معارفه نحو قضايا المرأة، رسالة دكتوراة: جامعة القاهرة، كلية الإعلام.

Ayish, Muhammad, 1997. Arab Television Goes Commercial: A Case Study of the Middle East Broadcasting Center. *International Communication Gazette*, 59 (6), pp. 474-491

Barbour, R., 2007. *Doing Focus Groups*. Sage Publications, Ltd.

Beneria, L., & G. Sen, 1997. Accumulation, Reproduction and Women's Role in Economic Development: Boserup Revisited. In N. Visvanathan, L. Duggan, L. Nisonoff & N. Wiegersma (Eds.) *The Women, Gender & Development Reader*. The University Press Ltd: Bangladesh, p. 48-51

Bignell, J., 2002. *Media Semiotics*. Manchester University Press.

Berry, J., 2002. Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 35(04), pp. 679-682.

Bladd, Joanne, 2010. *Female jobless rate in Saudi Arabia*. [On-line]. Available at: http://www.arabianbusiness.com/female-jobless-rate-at-24-in-saudi-arabia-study-339584.html

Boerwinkel, Felia, 2011. The First Lady Phenomenon in Jordan: Assessing the Effect of Queen Rania's NGOs on Jordanian Civil Society. *Knowledge Programme Civil Society in West Asis, Working Paper 18*. Hivos people unlimited-University of Amsterdam, p. 1-31

Borkan, J., 2000. Universal health care: The views of Negev Bedouin Arabs on Health Services. *Health Policy and Planning*, 15(02), pp. 201-220.

Boyd, D., 1999. *Broadcasting in the Arab World: A Survey of the Electronic Media in the Middle East*. Iowa State University Press.

Brannen, J., 1992. *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research*. Ashgate: Aldershot.

Carapico, S., 2006. No Easy Answers: The Ethics of Field Research in the Arab World. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 39(03), p. 430-450.

Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2009. The Annual Statistical Book, Riyadh, *Kingdom of Saud Arabia, Ministry of Economy and Planning*.

مصلحة الإحصاءات العامة والمعلومات، 2009. الكتاب الإحصائي السنوي، الرياض، المملكة العربية السعودية، وزارة الاقتصاد والتخطيط

Clark, J., 2006. Field Research Methods in the Middle East. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 39 (03), pp. 418-420

Cliteur, Paul, 2011. Female Critics of Islamism: Liberal or Secular Islam? *Feminist Theology*, 19 (154), pp. 154-158

Cornes, Shirley, 1994. Gender-Engendered Literacy Weeds. In M. Hamilton, D. Barton, & R. Ivanic. *World of Literacy*. Multilingual Matters Ltd, p. 105-120.

Coury, R. M., 2005. The demonisation of pan-Arab nationalism. *Race & Class*, 46 (4), pp. 1-18

Cragin, Becca, 2010. Beyond the Feminine: Intersectionality and Hybridity in Talk Shows. *Studies in Communication*, 33, pp. 154-168.

Curran, James, 2002. *Media and Power*. Routledge, New York.

Davies, P., Fitzpatrick, S., Grenko, V. & Ivanic, R., 1993. Literacy, Strength and Identity. In M. Hamilton, D. Barton & R. Ivanic. *Worlds of Literacy*. Great Britain by WBC Print: Bridgend, UK., p. 157-166.

Day, Nancy, 1996. *Sensational TV*. Enslow publishers, Inc: NJ.

Dissanayake, W., 1981. Development and communication: Four approaches. *Media Asia*, (06), pp. 417-430.

Doyle, Gillian, 2002. *Understanding Media Economics*. SAGE Publications Ltd, London.

El Enezi, Meshaal, 2007. *Nasser Al Qasabi announces his immigration to Dubai because of harassment to him and his family*. Al Riyadh
مشعل العنزي ، 2007. القصبي يعلن أن هجرته لدبي بسبب المضايقات التي تعرض لها مع أسرته.
[Online]
Available at:
http://www.alriyadh.com/2007/04/23/article244086.html

El-Khazen, Jihad, 2011. Not among the qualities of Arab men? [On-line] *Alarabiya.net*. Available at: http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2011/08/08/161320.html

Elson, Diane, 1991. Male bias in the development process: an overview. In D. Elson. *Male Bias in the Development Process*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 1-27.

Entman, Robert, 2010. Framing Media Power. In P. D'angelo, J. A. Kuypers. *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. Routledge, New York, p. 331-355.

Esteva, Gustavo, 2010. Development. In W. Sachs (Ed.) *The Development Dictionary*. Zed Books Ltd.

Fairclough, N., 1989. *Language and Power*. Longman Inc., New York.

Fairclough, N., 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishing Ltd., New York.

Fandy, Mamoun, 2008. *(Un) Civil War of Words: Media and Politics in the Arab World*. Praeger Security International, Westport, CT.

Ferguson, Douglas, 2004. The Broadcast Television Networks. In A. Alexander, J. Owers, R. Carveth, C. A. Hollifiield & A. N. Greco. *Media Economics: Theory and Practice*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, pp. 149-171.

Findlay, Allan, 1994. *The Arab World*. Routledge: New York.

Fiske, John, 1999. *Television Culture*. Routledge: New York.

Fowler, Alan, 1992. Institutional Development & NGOs in Africa: Policy Perspectives for European Development Agencies, Great Britain: INTRAC

Friesen, E., 1999. Exploring the Links between Structuration Theory and Participatory Action Research. In T. Jacobson & J.Servaes (Eds.) *Theoretical Approaches to Participatory Communication.* Hampton Press: Creskill, pp. 281-308.

Gauntlett, D., 2002. *Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Gauntlett, D., 2007. *Creative Explorations*. London: Routledge.

Gillespie, M., 1995. *Television, Ethnicity and Culture*. London: Routledge.

Golding, P. and Murdock, G. 1991. Culture, communications and political economy. In J. Curran & M. Gurevitch (Eds.) *Mass Media and Society*. London: Edward Arnold, pp. 117-122

Gray, Ann, 1992. *Video play time*. Routledge: New York.

Gray, A., 2003. *Research Practice for Cultural Studies*. Sage Publications, Ltd, London.

Gray, J., Jones, J., and Thompson, E. 2009. *Satire TV*. New York University Press, New York.

Green, J., 2008. *Principles of Social Research*. Open University Press: New York.

Grindstaff, Laura, 2002. *The Money Shot*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Guaaybess, Tourya, 2008. Orientalism and the Economics of Arab Broadcasting. In K. Hafez. *Arab Media: Power and Weakness*. The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, London, pp. 186-198.

Gun, Cugan, 2006. An Analysis on the Daytime Women Talk Shows in Turky, *a Master's thesis (Middle East Technical University: Media and Cultural Studies Graduate Program)*

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, 1998. Islam and Gender: Dilemmas in the Changing Arab

World. In Y.Y. Haddad & J.L. Esposito. *Islam, Gender and Social Change*. Oxford University Press: New York, p. 9-15.

Hamdan, Amani, 2005. Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and achievements. *International Education Journal*, 6 (1), pp. 42-64

Hamada, Basyouni, 2004. Satellite Broadcasting Regulations and Cultural Exception: An Arab Islamic View of Communication. *Egyptian Journal of Mass Communication Research*, (22), pp. 1-24.

Haq, Khadija, 2011. *Mahbub ul Haq: The Pioneer of Human Development Approach of Economic Growth*. Speeches and lectures on Mahbub ul Haq
[Online]
Available at:
http://www.mhhdc.org/reports/khadija-haq/6-LUMS%20speech%20on%20Mahbub%20ul%20Haq%202011.pdf

Hardin, M. & Whiteside, E., 2010. Framing Through a Feminist Lens: A Tool in Support of an Active Research Agenda . In P. D'Angelo & J. A. Kuypers. *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. Routledge: New York, pp. 312-330.

Hartley, Tricia, 1994. Generations of Literacy Among Women in a Bilingual Community. In M. Hamilton, D. Barton, & R. Ivanic. *World of Literacy*. Multilingual Matters Ltd, United Kingdom, pp. 29-40.

Hesmondhalgh, David, 2006. Discourse analysis and content analysis. In M. Gillespie & J. Toynbee. *Analysing Media Texts*. Open University Press, pp. 120-156.

Hobson, D., 1989. Soap operas work. In E. Seiter, H. Borchers, G. Kreutzner, and E.M. Warth. *Remote Control*. London: Routledge, p.150-167.

Horsman, Jenny, 1994. The Problem of Illiteracy and the Promise of Literacy. In M. Hamilton, D. Barton, R. Ivanic. *World of Literacy*. Multilingual Matters Ltd, United Kingdom, pp. 29-51.

Hroub, K., 2006. Satellite Media and Social Change in the Arab World. *Arab Media in the Information Age*. The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, pp. 90-240.

Hroub, K., 2009. Caught in the Crossfire: Faith and Media between Western Policies and Radical Islam in the Middle East. In H. Geybels, S. Mels & M. Walgrave. *Faith and Media*. P.I.E. Peter Lang: Brussels, pp. 215-254.

Human Resource Development, 2012. Spending on Education.
تنمية الموارد البشرية، 2012. الإنفاق على التربية والتعليم
.

Johnson, Kirk, 2001. Media and social change: the modernizing influence of television in rural India. *Media Culture Society*, 23 (147), pp. 147-169

Kandil, Amani, 2009. Why is the partnership between the media and civil society? Arab Network for NGOs.

أماني قنديل، 2009. لماذا الشراكة بين وسائل الإعلام والمجتمع المدني؟ الشبكة العربية للمنظمات غير الحكومية.

Karam, Imad, 2007. Satellite Television: A Breathing Space for Arab Youth. In N. Sakr (Ed.) *Arab Media and Political Renewal*.   I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd: London, pp. 80-95.

Katab, Heba, 2008. Image of rural woman in Arab drama serials as presented on the Egyptian television and its relationship, *a Master's thesis (Cairo University: Mass Communication Department)*

هبة خطاب، 2008. صورة المرأة الريفية في المسلسلات العربية التي يقدمها التلفزيون المصري وعلاقتها بإدارة الجمهور للواقع الاجتماعي لها، رسالة ماجستير: جامعة القاهرة، كلية الإعلام.

Kezar, A., 2003. Transformational Elite Interviews: Principles and Problems. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9 (03), pp. 398-412.

Khiabany, G. & Sreberny, A., 2007. The Women's Press in Contemporary Iran: Engendering the Public Sphere. In N. Sakr (Ed.) *Women and Media in the Middle East*. I.B,Tauris & Co Ltd: London, pp. 15-38.

Khamis, Sahar, 2007. Multiple Literacies, Multiple Identities: Egyptian Rural Women's Readings of Televised Literacy Campaigns. In N. Sakr (Ed.) *Women and Media in the Middle East*.   I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd: London, pp. 89-106.

Khamis, Sahar, 2009. Multiple Meanings, Identities, and Resistance: Egyptian Rural Women's Readings of Televised Family Planning Campaigns. *International Journal of Communication*, (3), pp. 443-490

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Central Department of Statistics and Information*, 2004. Detailed Results: Population & Housing Census*, pp. 26, 110.

المملكة العربية السعودية، وزارة الاقتصاد والتخطيط، مصلحة الإحصاءات العامة والمعلومات، 2007. النتائج التفصيلية: السكان والإسكان العام.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2007. *Demographic Survey*.

المملكة العربية السعودية، وزارة الاقتصاد والتخطيط، مصلحة الإحصاءات العامة والمعلومات، 2007. المسح الديموغرافي.

Koopman, Jeanne, 1997. The Hidden Roots of the African Food Problem: Looking within the Rural Household. In N. Visvanathan, L. Duggan, L. Nisonoff & N. Wiegersma, (Eds.) *The Women, Gender & Development Reader*. Bangladesh: The University Press Ltd, pp. 132-141.

Krueger, R. & Casey, M., 2009. *Focus Groups*. Sage Publications, Inc: Thousand Oaks, California.

Kvale, S., 2006. *Dominance Through Interviews and Dialogues*. Sage Publications, Ltd, London.

Kvale, S., 2007. *Doing Interviews*. Sage Publications, Ltd: London

Lawrence, R., 2010. Researching Political News Framing: Established Ground and New Horizons. In P. D'Angelo, &, J. A. Kuypers. *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. Routledge: New York, pp. 265-285.

Lin, Shu-Fang, 2008. Does everybody Love Raymond? Audience Identification with Favourite Sitcom Characters. *Conference Papers-International Communication Association, Annual Meeting,* pp.1-23.

Livingstone, Sonia, 1998. *Making Sense of Television*. Routledge: London.

Lull, James, 2000. *Media, Communication, Culture*. Polity Press: Cambridge.

Mason, J., 2002. *Qualitative Researching*. SAGE Publications Ltd: London.

May, T., 1997. *Social Research*. Open University Press: London.

MBC Group, 2010. MBC Group Profile. *Audience Profile of Al Arabiya - KSA IPSOS*

MBC Group, 2010. MBC Group Profile. *Audience Profile of Kalam Nawiem- KSA IPSOS*

MBC Group, 2012. MBC Group Profile. *Audience Profile of Al Thamina - KSA IPSOS*

MBC.net, 2012. From Saturday, April 28 .. *Goodbye to "Al-Thaniya with Dawood" .. And wait for "Al Thamina" on MBC1* and *MBC FM*.
من السبت 28 أبريل.. وداعا لـ"الثانية مع داوود".. وانتظروا "الثامنة" على *MBC1* و *MBC FM*
[Online]
Available at: http://www.mbc.net/mbc/ar/programs/thanya-ma-dawood.html

Media Committee-Arab Women's Summit (2002). *Let's Talk about Women*.
قمة المرأة العربية الثانية (2000). فلنتحدث عن المرأة.

Melkote, S., 1991. *Communication for development in the third world-theory and practice*. Sage: New Delhi, pp. 237-239.

Melkote, S. & Kandath, K., 2001. Barking up the wrong tree? An inward look at the discipline and practice of development communication. In S. Melkote & S. Rao eds. *Critical issues in communication: Looking inward for answers*, Sage: New Delhi, pp. 100-195.

Melkote, Srinivas, 2006. Everett M. Rogers and his Contribution to the Field of Communication and Social Change in Developing Countries. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 1 (1), pp. 117-166.

Mellor, Noha, 2005. *The Making of Arab News*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc: Lanham, MD, USA.

Mernissi, Fatima, 1991. *The Veil and the Male Elite*. Addison-Wesley, Canada.

Mikecz, Robert, 2012. Interviewing Elites: Addressing Methodological Issues. *Qualitative Inquiry*, (18), pp. 474-491

MEBJ, 2007. The Power of Soft Talk. *Middle East Broadcasters Journal*, p. 37-50.

MENASSAT, 2008. *Saudi fatwa row spoils Ramadan TV season*. [Online]
Available at: http://www.menassat.com/?q=en/news-articles/4619-saudi-fatwa-row-spoils-ramadan-tv-season
[Accessed 6 November 2010].

Metcalfe, B., Sultan, N., & Weir, D., 2011. The Role of Women in a Post-Oil Arab Gulf Future. In N. Sultan, D. Weir & Z. Shalhoub. *The New Post-Oil Arab Gulf: Managing People and Wealth*. Saqi Books, pp. 145-174.

Miladi, Noureddine, 2006. Satellite TV News and the Arab Diaspora in Britain: Comparing Al-Jazeera, the BBC and CNN. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32 (6), pp. 947-960.

Ministry of Economy and Planning, Central Department of Statistics and Information, Kingdom of Saud Arabia 2007. *Demographic Survey*.
وزارة الاقتصاد والتخطيط، مصلحة الإحصاءات العامة والمعلومات، المملكة العربية السعودية، 2007. المسح الديموغرافي.

Mohamad, Mahathir, 2001. Islam & the Muslim Ummah. Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn Bhd, Malaysia.

Moser, Caroline O.N., 1993. *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice & Training*. Routledge: London.

Nafi, B. M., 2009. *The Arabs and Modern Turkey: A Century of Changing Perceptions*. *Insight Turkey*, 11 (1), p. 68-82.

Nahr, Naji, 2008. Image of women in the Arab media- Analytical study to address the image of women on MBC, *a Master's thesis (Arab Open Academy in Denmark: Council of Arts and Education)*
ناجي النهر (2008). صورة المرأة العربية في وسائل الإعلام العربية دراسة تحليلية لتناول صورة المرأة في قناة الـ *MBC1* نموذجا. راسالة ماجستير: الأكاديمية العربية المفتوحة في الدنمارك.

Nair, K. S. & White, R.A., 1993. *Perspectives on Development Communication*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

National Society for Human Rights, 2006. *Report of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia*.
الجمعية الوطنية لحقوق الإنسان، 2006. التقرير الأول عن أحوال حقوق الإنسان.

National Society for Human Rights, 2006. *Report of the Achievements of the National Society for Human Rights 2004-2006*.
الجمعية الوطنية لحقوق الإنسان، 2006. تقرير إنجازات الجمعية الوطنية لحقوق الإنسان 2004-2006

Nawar, Ibrahim, 2007. Arab media lagging behind. *Media Development*, (2), p. 24, p. 21-26.

O'Brien, Robert, Anne Marie Goetz, Jan Aart Scholte & Marc Williams, 2000. *Contesting Global Governance: Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Prathap, Puthira D., 2004. Relative Effectiveness of Farm Communication through Mass Media Including New Media: An Experimental Approach with Rural Women, *PhD, (India: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University), Academy of Scientific Research, Dissertation Abstracts*

Press, Andrea, 1995. *Women Watching Television*. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Rahnema, Majid, 2010. Participation. In W. Sachs (Ed.) *The Development Dictionary*. Zed Books Ltd: London.

Rist, Gilbert, 2008. *The History of Development*. 3rd edition. London & New York Zed Books.

Rogers, E., 1976. Communication and development: the passing of the dominant Paradigm. In E. Rogers (Ed.) *Communication and Development Critical Perspective*. Sage: London.

Ryssdal, Kai, 2008. *A talk with Middle East media mogul*. Marketplace The Middle East @ Work
Available at:
http://www.marketplace.org/topics/world/middle-east-work/talk-middle-east-media-mogul

Sabry, Tarik, 2007. In Search of the Arab Present Cultural Tense. In N. Sakr (Ed.) *Arab Media and Political Renewal*. I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, London, p. 154-168.

Saeed, M., 2006. New Trends and Forces in the Arab Media Arena. *Arab Media in the Information Age*. The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, p. 27-58.

Saleh, Hashim, 2007. *The historical obstruction: Why did the Enlightenment project fail in the Arab world?* Al Sagee Association.
هاشم صالح، 2007. الانسداد التاريخي: لماذا فشل مشروع التنوير في العالم العربي؟ دار الساقي.

Sakr, Naomi, 2001. *Satellite Realms: Transnational Television Globalization and the Middle East*. London: I B Tauris.

Sakr, Naomi, 2002. Arab Satellite Channels Between State and Private Ownership: Current and Future Implications. *TBS: Covering The Region, The Cambridge Papers*, 9 (9) pp. 5, 6

Sakr, Naomi, 2004. Al Jazeera Satellite Channel: Global Newscasting in Arabic. In C. Paterson & A. Sreberny. *International News: In the Twenty-First Century*. John Libbey Publishing, UK, p. 147-186.

Sakr, Naomi, 2004. Maverick or Model? Al Jazeera's Impact on Arab Satellite Televsion.
      In J. Chalaby. *Transnational Television Worldwide*. I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd: London,
      pp.66-95

Sakr, Naomi, 2004. Women in the GCC Media Industry. In A. Alsharekh (Ed.) *Challenging
      Limitations: The Redefinition of Role for Women in the GCC*. London: Saffron
      Books, pp.1-6.

Sakr, Naomi, 2005. Women, Development and Al Jazeera: A Balance Sheet. In M. Zayani.
      The Al Jazeera Phenomenon. Pluto Press: London, pp. 127-149.

Sakr, Naomi, 2007. *Arab Television Today*. London: I B Tauris.

Sakr, Naomi, 2008. Gaps in the Market: Insights from Scholarly Work on Arab Media
      Economics. In K. Hafez (Ed.) *Arab Media: Power and Weakness*. The Continuum
      International Publishing Group Inc: New York, pp. 185-198.

Sakr, Naomi, 2008. Women and Media in Saudi Arabia: Rhetoric, Reductionism and
      Realities. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 35: 3, pp. 385-404.

Sakr, Naomi, 2012. Placing Political Economy in Relation to Cultural Studies: Reflections
      on the Case of Cinema in Saudi Arabia. In T. Sabry. *Arab Cultural Studies*.
      I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd: London, pp. 214-226

Saudi Forum website, [On-line]. Internet: http://www.afif.ws/sahat/sitemap/t-21267.html
      [Accessed 6 November 2009].

Saudi Women's Rights Forums, 2011. Studies on the prevalence of violence against women
      in Saudi Arabia.
            مدونة حقوق المرأة السعودية 2011. دراسات حول انتشار العنف ضد المرأة في السعودية.
      [On-line] Available at:
      http://saudiwomenrights.wordpress.com/2011/11/27/%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%
      D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-
      %D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B1-
      %D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%81-%D8%B6%D8%AF-
      %D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-
      %D8%A7%D9%84/

Scheyvens, R. and Storey, D., 2003. *Development Fieldwork*. Sage: London.

Seiter, E., Borchers, H., Kreutzner, G., & Warth, E.M, 1989. *Remote Control*. Routledge:
      London.

Sen, Amartya, 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Sen, Amartya, 2007. Gender Inequality and Theories of Justice. In M. Nussbaum & J.
      Glover, (Eds.) *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*.
      Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 259-273.

Servaes, Jan, 2007. Harnessing the US System Into a Common Approach on

Communication for Development. *International Communication Gazette*, 69 (6), p. 480-497.

Shaheen, Heba, 2008. *Arab Satellite Television*. The Egyptian Lebanese Association, Egypt.

Shanahan, J., & Morgan, M., 1999. *Television and its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research*. Cambridge University Press, England.

Shteiwi, M., 2006. Contribution of Arab Media to Creating Social Change and Developing Civil Society in the Arab World. *Arab Media in the Information Age*. The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, pp. 121-130.

Singhal, A. & Obregon, R., 1999. Social Uses of Commercial Soap Opera: a conversation with Miguel Sabido. *Journal of Development Communication*, 10 (1), pp. 122-140.

Silverstone, Roger, 1994. *Television and Everyday Life*. Routledge: London.

Shapiro, Samantha, 2005. *The War inside the Arab Newsroom*. New York Times [Online] Available at:
http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/02/magazine/02ARAB.html

Skeggs, Beverley, 2002. *Formations of Class and Gender*. Sage Publications: London.

Sparks, Colin, 2007. *Globalization, Development and the Mass Media*. Sage Publications: London.

Stake, R. E., 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Sage Publications: London.

Statistics Issues of the Society, 2009. *National Society for Human Rights, Sixth Annual Report-Saudi Arabia*.

Strinati, Dominic, 2004. *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. Routledge: New York.

The Annual Statistical Book, 2008. *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Central Department of Statistics and Informatio*.
الكتاب الإحصائي السنوي (2008). المملكة العربية السعودية، وزارة الاقتصاد والتخطيط، مصلحة الإحصاءات العامة والمعلومات.

The World Bank, 2009. Status of Progress of Women in the Middle East and North Africa. [Online]
Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Saudi_Arabia
[Accessed 3 September 2010].

Thompson, John, 1990. *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, Cambridge.

Thussu, Daya, 2004. Media Plenty and the Poverty of News. In C. Paterson & A. Sreberny. *International News: In the Twenty-First Century*. John Libbey Publishing, UK, p. 47-59.

Timberg, Bernard, 2002. *Television Talk*. The University of Texas Press: TX-USA.

Tunstall, J. & Palmer, M., 1991. *Media Moguls*. Routledge: London.

UNESCO, 2006. *Education for All-Literacy for life.* [Online]
Available at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001416/141639e.pdf

Van Zoonen, L., 1994. *Feminist Media Studies*. SAGE Publications Ltd, London.

Verwey, N. E. (1990). *Radio call-ins and covert politics: A verbal unit and role analysis approach*. Brookfield, Vt., USA: Avebury Publication.

Visvanathan, Nalini, 1997. Survey of Theoretical Debates. In N. Visvanathan, L. Duggan, L. Nisonoff & N. Wiegersma, (Eds.) *The Women, Gender & Development Reader*. The University Press Ltd: London, pp. 17-32.

White Hands Campaign, 2009. [Online]
Available at: http://www.whitehandsc.com/en/

White, Robert A. , 2004. Is Empowerment the Answer? *International Communication Gazette*, 66 (1), pp. 1-60.

Young, Kate, 1997. Gender and Deveopment. In N. Visvanathan, L. Duggan, L. Nisonoff and N. Wiegersma eds. *The Women, Gender & Development Reader*. The University Press Ltd: London, p. 51-54.

Young, Kate, 1997. Planning from a Gender Perspective: Making a World of Difference. In N. Visvanathan, L. Duggan, L. Nisonoff & N. Wiegersma (Eds.) *The Women, Gender & Development Reader*. The University Press Ltd: London, p. 366-374.

Yousry, Jehan, 2004. The image of Arabs in the Arab satellite channels: A prospective study on a sample of the Arab academic elite. *Egyptian Journal of Mass Communication Research*.

جيهان يسري، 2004. صورة العرب في القنوات الفضائية العربية دراسة استطلاعية على عينة من النخبة الأكاديمية العربية. المجلة المصرية لبحوث الإعلام، العدد (22)، ص. 162، 174، 175

Yunus, Muhammad, 2007. *Banker to the Poor*. Public Affairs: New York.

Weinreich, Nedra, 2006. *Tune in Tomorrow: Soap Operas for Social Marketing*. Spare Change
Available at:
http://blog.social-marketing.com/2006/06/tune-in-tomorrow-soap-operas-for.html

Winslow, W., Honein, G. and Elzubeir, M., 2002. Seeking Emirati Women's Voices: The Use of Focus Groups with an Arab Population. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12 (4), pp. 570-580.

Wimmer, R.D., and Dominic J. R. 2003. *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. Thomson-Wadsworth, Boston, MA-USA.

Wong, Kwok-Fu, 2003. Empowerment as panacea for poverty – old wine in new bottles? Reflections on the World Bank's conception of power. *Progress Development Studies*, 3 (307), pp. 300-379.

Wood, Helen, 2005. Texting the Subject: Women, Television, and Modern Self-Reflexivity. *The Communication Review*, 8, pp. 115-172.

Worth, Robert, 2008. *Drawing a New Map for Journalism in the Mideast*. New York Times [Online]
Available at:
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/05/world/middleeast/05rashed.html

Zain Al Abdeen, Suhaila, 2008. *Women's rights in international treaties in Saudi Arabia*. White paper submitted by Suhaila Zain Al Abdeen. Family Safety Program.
سهيلة زين العابدين، 2008. حقوق المرأة في المعاهدات الدولية وفي المملكة العربية السعودية. ورقة عمل مقدمة من سهيلة زين العابدين. برنامج الأمان الأسري.

Zain Al Abdeen, Suhaila, 2011. *Women and Islamic discourse*. White paper submitted by Suhaila Zain Al Abdeen. International Union for Muslim Scholars.
سهيلة زين العابدين، 2011. المرأة والخطاب الإسلامي. ورقة عمل مقدمة من سهيلة زين العابدين. الاتحاد العالمي لعلماء المسلمين.

Zain Al Abdeen, Suhaila, 2011. *Unemployment, poverty and the challenges of the reform System*. Al Madina.
سهيلة زين العابدين، 2011. البطالة والفقر وتحديات منظومة الإصلاح. المدينة.
[On-line] Available at: http://www.al-madina.com/node/293353

Zain Al Abdeen, Suhaila, 2011. *Extraction of male relative guardian ... Saudi Mechanism to combat incest*.
سهيلة زين العابدين، 2011. نزع الولاية...آلية سعودية لمواجهة زنا المحارم.
[On-line]. Available at:
http://www.musanadah.com/index.php?action=show_t&id=49

Zain Al Abdeen, Suhaila, 2011. *Why Saudi women in the Shura Council? And how?*
سهيلة زين العابدين، 2011. لماذا المرأة السعودية في مجلس الشورى ؟ وكيف؟
[On-line]. Available at:
http://dr-suhaila-z-hammad.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/2-3.html

Zain Al Abdeen, Suhaila, 2011. *To those who deny women in the Shura*
سهيلة زين العابدين، 2011. إلى من ينكرون بيعة وشورى النهاء!!
[On-line]. Available at:
http://dr-suhaila-z-hammad.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/1-3.html

Zain Al Abdeen, Suhaila, 2013. *Underage marriage and the marriage of Sayeda Aisha.* Al Madina
سهيلة زين العابدين، 2013. زواج القاصرات وسن زواج السيدة عائشة رضي الله عنها. المدينة.
[On-line]. Available at:
http://www.al-madina.com/node/434690

Zubair, Shirin, 2001. Literacies, Gender and Power in Rural Pakistan. In B.V. Street.

Literacy and Development. Routledge, New York.