Driving Change, 140 Characters @ a Time: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis of the
Twitter Debates on the Saudi Ban on Women Driving

by

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to examine the ways in which Twitter users debate Saudi Arabia's ban on women driving, with a broader objective of explicating how gender roles and relations are negotiated in that discursive space. In Saudi Arabia, a social media site such as Twitter offers Saudi women an alternative public space when there is no comparable open-media space in which they can communicate and raise their concerns, including their right to drive. To capture part of the ongoing discussion about women driving, a corpus of Arabic tweets that discuss the ban was compiled during October, November and December 2015. Informed by a corpus-assisted discourse studies approach, which combines the discourse-historical approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001) and corpus linguistics (Baker, 2006; 2010), I analyze the views and arguments expressed by Twitter users in debating the Saudi ban on women driving.

The findings reveal that while some tweeters express their support for the ban, noting the social and moral threats posed by allowing women to drive and the symbolic function of women's roles as markers of commitment to the nation's traditional and religious identity, the majority of tweets reflect great frustration and a desire for change in women's situation. These tweets publicize the victimization of women and their disenfranchisement as a consequence of maintaining the ban. The tweets also display a degree of awareness about women's rights and resistance toward the contradictions that women face by being caught up in the tension between modernizing the country's policies and different aspects of public life and preserving traditional norms and patriarchal values. It is believed that this study contributes to the growing literature on studying gender in the multi-voiced, loosely structured discursive spaces of social media

as sites for discourse construction and dissemination. The study also fills a void in previous literature that failed to theorize the online debates on women driving in relation to gender and critical research, and in situating these efforts within a broader frame of women's struggle against patriarchy and the social tensions and dynamics of power in Saudi society.

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List of Abbreviations

CADS	Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies
CDS	Critical Discourse Studies
CL	Corpus Linguistics
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach

Chapter 1: Introduction

Because my mother couldn't change my present, I decided to change my daughter's future #WomenSpring #WomenRights #Saudi

@manal_alsharif, 17 June 2011

This study examines the discourse on Twitter regarding the Saudi Arabian ban on women driving in order to determine the different ways in which this issue has been discursively debated online, with particular attention to how gender roles and relations are negotiated. In this introductory chapter, I establish the significance of this study by providing a brief introduction to Saudi women's struggle in their demands to drive, discussing the disadvantaged situation of Saudi women in their male-dominated society, and highlighting the importance of Twitter in offering Saudi women and men an open-media space in which they can communicate, raise their concerns, and negotiate their roles and rights, including the right to drive. This discussion is followed by a statement of the research objectives and questions, as well as a brief discussion of the theoretical and methodological considerations, which will be expanded on in the next chapters. Finally, the chapter closes by providing an overview of the subsequent chapters in this dissertation.

Background of the Study

The world shook when Manal Alsharif, a Saudi women's rights activist, launched the "women2drive" campaign on Facebook and Twitter after posting a video of herself driving a car on the streets of Khobar, Saudi Arabia. Encouraging other Saudi women to take to the streets and drive, this unfamiliar scene shocked many Saudis, which was reflected in the strong, immediate reactions posted on social media. Alsharif's campaign

sparked a great deal of public debate, tension, and controversy between her supporters and her detractors (especially on Twitter), who classified her actions as religiously and traditionally unacceptable.

Women in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to drive. Although no official law prohibits women from driving in Saudi Arabia, driver's licenses are not issued to women (Baeshen, 2017; Doumato, 2010). The ban has long been widely accepted among people and regarded as a religious and cultural practice. It was officially addressed in 1991 when a group of women decided to drive their cars in protest against the ban. Their actions were publically condemned as sinful and said to promote negative social and moral transgressions, such as the ability to mix freely with men who are not relatives (AlMunajjed, 1997). Although the ban had not been addressed publically since the incident in 1991, the availability of social media and online campaigns has promoted the increased attention to issues of not only women driving but also other women's rights such as their capacity to work and travel.

Saudi women face several restrictions that represent important markers of the country's devotion to tradition and religion. Unlike other Muslim countries, the Saudi Arabian state adheres to and applies strict interpretations of Islam in order to form a religious community and unite the different tribes in the country (AlMunajjed, 1997; Doumato, 2010). The strict interpretations of Islam limits women's lives vis-à-vis laws and social norms that segregate them in schools, limit their movements in workplaces and public spaces, and force their dependency on male guardians whose approval must be 'won over' in making critical decisions about their lives (Al-Fassi, 2010; AlMunajjed, 1997). Such laws are not usually considered as discriminatory by many Saudis, but rather

viewed as “a balance between the rights and duties of men and women as prescribed by Islam and necessary to uphold honor and family values,” which are often attached to women’s behavior (Doumato, 2010, p. 425).

Although Saudi women are significantly oppressed, it is easy for those who are unfamiliar with the political and historical contexts in which Saudi culture has evolved to overlook the various social movements and resistance that Saudi women have spearheaded in the effort to improve their social status and livelihoods. The absence of Saudi women’s voices in the public realm, the continued lack of women’s organizations, and the significance of women’s behavior for their family’s reputation and honor prevent many women in the country from freely and openly expressing their dissatisfaction with the social boundaries imposed on them (Al-Fassi, 2010; AlMunajjed, 1997; Doumato, 2010). Hence, Saudi women are often depicted as second-class citizens without agency or power to change their situation.

However, recent annual national statistics (Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority, 2017) indicate that the new generation of Saudi women is not confined to their traditional roles, and they have begun to participate in higher education and employment in the public sphere. Demographic changes within the country, shifts in Saudi Arabia’s economic status, increases in female literacy rates and employment opportunities, and reform projects that tackle terrorism and religious fundamentalism have worked in conjunction not only to improve women’s current circumstances but also to raise a generation of women who are more educated than before and who are aware of their subordinate status and their rights (Al-Fassi, 2010; Doumato, 2010; Yamani, 2000). These attempts at creating professional and economic independence, however, have been

thwarted by many of the religious and cultural laws that limit women's mobility and participation in the labor force, such as the ban on women driving and policies of sex segregation (Al-Fassi, 2010; Al-Rasheed, 2013; Yamani, 2000). Saudi women who want to modernize their public roles in education and employment are perceived as challenging by those who wish to preserve the country's traditional and religious identity.

Saudi women and Twitter. Saudi women have long been silent, and to some extent silenced, about the social boundaries and contradictions that perpetuate their struggle and lack of independence. However, it seems that the new generation of Saudi women and men are increasingly expressing their frustrations (Al-Rasheed, 2013; Doumato, 2010; Yamani, 2000). Similar to many other social movements (Castells, 2015; Cover, 2015; Poynter, 2010; Salter, 2013), social media have amplified Saudi women's voices both locally and globally. Because of their limited access and control over traditional forms of media and institutional discourses as well as lack of political and civic participation, it has been suggested that Twitter has provided both Saudi women, and men, with a public discursive space in which they can negotiate and debate the gender divisions in their society (Almahmoud, 2015; Alotaibi, 2017; Sahly, 2016). Although this space is regulated by measures and cyber-criminal laws that sanction illegal activities, such as protesting against the state, insulting Islam, and inciting instability (Noman, Faris, & Kelly, 2015), Saudis still use Twitter to engage in the discourse on political and social issues and to voice their dissatisfaction with public services and laws in Saudi Arabia.

At the time of writing this dissertation, Twitter is considered the most popular social media website because it provides a powerful way for people worldwide to

communicate and exchange knowledge and information. According to Gillen and Merchant (2013), tweeting, or posting on Twitter, has become an important social practice “worthy of attention” (p. 47) because of its use in different social contexts, such as governmental and industrial disputes and revolutionary movements. One example is the Arab Spring uprising when citizens used Twitter as a political resource to organize and spread their protests (Murthy, 2013). Governments have also used Twitter to address public concerns, such as in the 2011 re-election campaign of US President Barack Obama (Davis, 2013) and the recent election of U.S. President Donald Trump. However, some states have banned Twitter because they fear that its usage would exacerbate public dissent, such as the recent blockage of Twitter by the Turkish government (Yeginsu, 2014). Twitter has also had an important and significant role in raising feminist voices and mobilizing feminist movements (Clark, 2016; Khamis, 2014; Newsom & Lengel, 2012; Rentschler, 2015).

In particular, Twitter has provided Saudi women with an online platform to communicate their opinions and overcome gender-restrictive laws that prevent women from participating in politics and communicating in public. According to Samin (2008), social media serve as “mechanism for empowerment” for Saudi women, which enables “the exercise of agency by women where previously (at least in modern history) no comparable domain has existed” (p. 207). Similarly, Sheyholislami (2011) asserts, “the Internet provides the social space for dissenting voices, particularly those of individuals and smaller groups...that might be different from the voices of the states, commercial enterprises, mainstream media, and political parties” (p. 37).

Research Objectives

To contribute to the growing amount of scholarly literature that explores the discursive, multi-voiced, and sometimes complex ways in which women steer critical feminist movements through social media, in this dissertation I examine the ways in which widespread discussions about the ban on women driving are informed, resisted, and negotiated by patriarchal gender roles and relations. Specifically, I analyze the linguistic practices in these discussions in order to deepen the understanding of “the complex part language plays, alongside other social practices and institutions, in reflecting, creating, and sustaining gender divisions in society” (Talbot, 2010, p. 16). Although gender roles and relations are discursively constructed, performed and entangled in ways that seem ineffable, for these discourses to spring forward and be effective, they need to be articulated and disseminated coherently:

[H]uman discourse is an ongoing project of meaning-making, and the extent to which an individual or a group or category of individuals actually contributes to meaning depends on their ability to get their contributions heard and attended to. (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013, p. 88)

Because of the proliferative use of Twitter around the world, its widespread use in Saudi Arabia, and its significance in providing diverse groups, especially women, with a public platform to raise their voices, it has been suggested that Twitter provides a suitable discursive space for Saudis to redefine gender boundaries and (re)negotiate and disseminate gender meanings in ways that do not seem possible through other means of public communication (Almahmoud, 2015; Alotaibi, 2017; Sahly, 2016).

Previous studies of Twitter have explored this microblogging platform and its users' ability to create affiliations and networked publics (Boyd, 2010; Zappavigna, 2012), and their utilization of this tool for social activism (e.g., Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Keller, 2012; Konnelly, 2015). This study is in alignment with these recent studies, but it places a greater focus on gender relations in the context of Saudi Arabia, a research area that is steadily evolving (Al-Rasheed, 2013), particularly in relation to the discourse surrounding the Saudi ban on women driving (Almahmoud, 2015; Alotaibi, 2017; Sahly, 2016). This study, however, takes a critical, feminist lens to investigate the issue and utilizes a critical discourse studies (CDS) approach to capture the dynamic interaction of gender, discourse, and social media.

Research Questions

Given the above background and research objective, the study seeks answers to the following research questions:

RQ1. How do Saudi Twitter users discursively debate the ban on women driving?

1a. What thematic contents are invoked, and what discursive strategies are used to support or oppose women driving in Saudi Arabia?

1b. How are these contents and discourse strategies realized in language?

RQ2. To what extent does Twitter provide Saudi users with a discursive space that enables them to create awareness regarding women's issues and to rearticulate or reshape gender roles in relation to the established gender norms and relations in Saudi Arabia?

Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

Because the subject of this dissertation intersects several theoretical fields, I draw on a variety of theoretical concepts and perspectives to guide the understanding, analysis, and interpretation of the data. These concepts and perspectives, which are discussed briefly in the following section, will be elaborated on in Chapters 3 and 4.

Gender and discourse. Gender serves as the main theoretical concept for understanding the subject of the study, and it is the notion through which other ideas and theoretical perspectives are linked and discussed. In defining gender, I refer to social constructionist and post-structuralist (Best, 1995; Butler, 1990) views that conceive gender as a social construct that is constantly produced, performed, and reproduced in formal and informal social institutions and in people's daily interactions (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Such views reject the essentialist perspective of gender as a set of stable attributes and behaviors that are acquired via early childhood socialization (Connell, 1985). This definition emphasizes the ideological nature of gender in reinforcing differences between men and women and fostering unjust and unequal hierarchies, power relations, and modes of domination and subordination (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

As a social construct, gender is discursive in significant ways. It is constructed mainly by the verbal and written discourses of social practices and institutions (Butler, 1990). Discourse, then, contributes to the construction and (re)production of gender roles and relations. People develop gender identities through the discourses that precede them, which specify ways of being a man or a woman. However, people are not passively

guided by these discourses; rather, they have the ability to discursively (or non-discursively) contest or alter the way they approach and perform their gender.

For such gendered discourses to find their way into the public sphere, they must be heard and read (Hermes, 2007). Although traditional forms of media are a powerful means of disseminating and perpetuating gender differences and promoting traditional gender roles, new media sites are spaces that allow users to transcend gender boundaries and afford them the necessary means to articulate freely their individual gender identities (Herring & Stoerger, 2014).

Gender and new media. Unlike earlier forms of online communication, the current social media provide ordinary people with the ability to create and disseminate public content in the privacy of their own homes (Murthy, 2012; Zappavigna, 2012). Social media have been regarded as a space for the public deliberation of the decentralization of power by offering the means for ordinary people to connect and challenge the legitimacy of the state and dominant institutions (Fuchs, 2013; Murthy, 2012). Women, whose participation in public discourses generally has been limited, have found a space where they can articulate alternative gendered meanings and identities and raise awareness regarding issues that are often absent or underrepresented in traditional media and political discourses, such as rape, sexual assault, and harassment (Clark, 2016; Rentschler, 2015; Salter, 2013). In the Middle East and many Islamic countries, where women lack the means of protesting in public, the use of social media seems to play an important and non-threatening role in the subtle resistance to gender divisions and patriarchy in their communities (Bayat, 2007). To analyze such ways of negotiating

gender roles and relations, this study draws on the interdisciplinary approach of critical discourse studies (CDS).

Critical discourse studies. CDS provides a context-sensitive approach to studying gender issues instead of isolating gender as a separate variable and making hasty generalizations (Wodak, 1997). This approach facilitates the integration of not just theories of language but also feminist theories, which provides the awareness and emphasis needed to understand the social aspects of gender, its embeddedness in formal and informal institutions, its reinforcement in people's everyday practices, and its manifestation in discourse.

The basic premise of CDS is that discourse is a type of social practice; that is, discourse is both constitutive of and constituted by social situations, institutions, and relationships. Hence, discourse constructs, reproduces, and maintains social structures and relationships, including gender roles (Fairclough, 1992a; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In operationalizing the concept of discourse, I use the discourse-historical approach (DHA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009) as the analytical approach in this study. DHA advocates for a multiplicity of methods and types of data, as well as the integration of the historical sources and background information in which texts are embedded. The analysis of discourse using DHA is conducted at two levels: the micro and the macro. Analysis at the micro level involves an examination of thematic contents, discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realization. In this study, these elements are investigated with the aid of corpus linguistic methods because of the large amount of data and the benefits of corpus linguistics in exposing patterns that may not be obvious with close manual analysis of a few texts (Baker, 2006; Partington, 2008). The analysis at this level is then

considered in relation to the processes of text production and consumption, the broad socio-political context, and the theoretical concepts on which the study is based.

Overview of the Chapters

The dissertation is organized into the following chapters. Following the discourse-historical approach, I start in Chapter 2 by providing an overview of the history of Saudi Arabia and explaining how history, politics, economics, and culture contribute to the construction of gender divisions in the country. This chapter also overviews the scholarly discussions of the history of the media, the Internet and social media in Saudi Arabia with particular regard to women's issues (Schanzer & Miller, 2012; Winder, 2014). The chapter also provides a discussion of the previous literature in this area and its limitations in examining Twitter debates about the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia.

In Chapter 3, the epistemological underpinnings of the study and how they inform the theorization of gender will then be discussed. In particular, I draw from feminist theoretical perspectives to conceptualize and understand the multilayered facets of gender and the interplay among gender, discourse, and power (e.g., Butler, 1990; Cameron, 2005; Lazar, 2007; Talbot, 2010; Tannen, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1991). Next, I refer to theories of social media, focusing on how Twitter operates as a sphere of public deliberation, a site for contesting ideas, and a space for negotiating gender identities (Armentor-Cota, 2011; Turkle, 1995; Wajcman, 2009).

In Chapter 4, I consider in more depth the theoretical and methodological framework of inquiry, i.e., critical discourse studies (CDS). First, I unfold the analytical objectives, the theoretical concepts of CDS, and their efficacy in this study (Fairclough 1992a; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). I then explain the DHA, including its theoretical

underpinnings and analytical categories (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009). DHA is considered useful in this study because it emphasizes the historical context, focuses on analyzing argumentation in discourse, and provides a useful means for operationalizing and analyzing the concept of discourse in this study. This description is followed by a discussion of the usefulness of combining DHA with corpus linguistics to perform the textual analysis (Baker, 2006, 2010; Freake, Gentil, & Sheyholislami, 2011). Chapter 5, which focusses on the methods of data collection and analysis, involves a discussion of the corpus-building process, and the different issues surrounding this process. Lastly, the chapter describes the data analysis procedure.

In Chapter 6, the findings of the textual analysis are presented in two sections: one section discusses the arguments put forward by supporters of women driving, and the second section focuses on arguments against women driving. However, it should be noted that although some tweets in the data did not fit either category, they were considered either ‘with’ or ‘against’ depending on whether they reflected a restrictive view of women’s mobility and freedom or not. The sections are organized according to the themes invoked by the users. Under each theme, the different discursive strategies employed in the debates are discussed along with how the themes and discursive strategies are realized linguistically.

Chapter 7 includes a summary and discussion of the findings in light of the historical, political, and socio-cultural context of Saudi Arabia and the reviewed theoretical perspectives. The chapter also includes a discussion on the implications of debating on Twitter an issue like the ban on women driving. Chapter 8 concludes the

thesis, summarizes the study, and discusses its limitations before providing suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Historical Context

In Chapter 1, the significance of Twitter in Saudi Arabia was discussed particularly in relation to the status of Saudi women. Because I utilize DHA, which emphasizes the importance of the historical context in analyzing discourse, I focus in this chapter on providing a historical overview of the situation of women in Saudi Arabia, focusing on the factors that have shaped and contributed to the current situation of women. This will then be followed by a discussion of the use of social media in Saudi Arabia, particularly in relation to online campaigns that support women driving. The chapter concludes with a review of previous studies that examined the use of Twitter to discuss the ban on women driving and identifies some shortcomings of previous research in addressing the way gender is negotiated online.

Women in Saudi Arabia

To understand the status of women in Saudi Arabia and the limits imposed on them, it is important to acknowledge that their disadvantaged and subordinate position in their society cannot be attributed to a single factor, but rather to several intersecting religious, political, and economic factors that have historically shaped gender divisions in the country. These factors are explored in the following section. I start by providing a brief discussion on the relation between Islam and women, because of the centrality of Islam in shaping women's situation. I then move onto a discussion of the connection between religion, politics, economic changes, and social factors that have contributed to the subordination and marginalization of Saudi women.

Women and Islam. Islam is often understood in some Western cultures as a unified religion that is discriminatory against women, and Muslim women are often

viewed as victims in need of liberation from this religion (Abu-Lughod, 2013). While this may be the case in some Muslim countries, it is essential to acknowledge that Islam is not identical in all places and its interpretation varies among different Muslim communities. Muslims in Malaysia, for example, are different from those of Muslims in North Africa, and their practices and views, including their views on gender roles and relations, vary depending on their interpretation of Islamic teachings. For example, while women can drive cars and are allowed to mix with men in many Muslim countries, they cannot in Saudi Arabia. When it comes to generalizations about Islam in popular and academic discourses, Mir-Hosseini (2006) argues that many fail to distinguish “between faith (and its values and principles) and organized religion (institutions, laws, and practices)” (p. 632), which results in people regarding Islam as a faith with abuses committed in its name (Mir-Hosseini, 2006). Further, Mir-Hosseini argues that misunderstandings of Islam and Islamic law often revolve around equating two distinct concepts: *sharia*, which is “the totality of God’s will as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad,” and *fiqh* which refers to “the science of jurisprudence,” a human process of understanding sharia from sacred sources (p. 632). That is, on the one hand is God’s will (*sharia*), and on the other hand is man’s interpretation of God’s will (*fiqh*). This distinction explains the divergence of Muslim schools of thought and diversity in applying Islamic law in Muslim countries. Mir-Hosseini warns that equating the two concepts neglects the fact that much of what many call Islamic law is actually human understanding of sharia and reflects ideological and political intents, which makes *fiqh* alterable depending on socio-political intentions. She argues that “*fiqh* texts, which are patriarchal in both spirit and form, are frequently

invoked as God's law, as a means to silence and frustrate Muslims' search for legal justice and equality, which are intrinsic to this-worldly justice" (p. 633).

Other scholars have argued that ascribing gender inequality to Islam is inadequate, as it dismisses other factors. For example, Abu-Lughod (2013) connects women's suffering in Muslim countries to a variety of social factors, including poverty and authoritarianism rather than simply to misinterpretations of Islam by clerics. Rather than simply blaming Islam for the oppression of women and gender inequality, Abu-Lughod urges for theorizations of gender and Islam that attend to local, social, historical, and political realities in different contexts to better understand the situation of Muslim women in their communities. Thus, to better understand the situation of Saudi women, a historical overview of the processes of state formation and the economic and social changes that the kingdom has undergone is needed.

Religion and politics. Saudi Arabia, located in the Arabian Peninsula, is recognized globally as the largest exporter of oil around the world with its production of gas and oil that is critical to the global economy. Saudi Arabia is also known for being home to the holy cities of Mecca and Madinah, the places where Islam was born and in which the Prophet Mohammed lived and revealed the Qur'an. Millions of Muslim people around the world travel to Saudi Arabia to perform *Hajj*, an Islamic pilgrimage that all Muslims are expected to do once in their lifetime, giving Saudi Arabia a special and leading role in the Islamic world.

The process of state formation, which started at the central region of the Arabian Peninsula, has gone through several phases, which ended in the establishment of the modern Saudi state, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in 1932 under the ruling of King

Abdul Aziz Al-Saud. The success in forming the state owes much to the alliance between Al Saud who found a source of power to unite the culturally and tribally different groups in the central region with the adoption of an Islamic religious movement, namely the *Wahhabi (Salafi)* movement, which is associated with religious reformer Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab (Niblock, 2004; Pompea, 2002). Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab was a religious scholar and preacher whose contribution has shaped the type of Islam adopted in Saudi Arabia. After traveling around the Arabian Peninsula to pursue religious education, Abd Al-Wahhab returned to the central region of the Kingdom with an aim of purifying Islam from all forms of innovations (*bida*) and polytheistic practices and follow a literal interpretation of sacred texts. Abd Al-Wahhab called for the return to the earlier practices of the *Salaf Al-Saleh*, the prophet's companions, and emphasized *tawhid* or the oneness of God. Thus, his followers often refer to themselves as *almuwahhidun* (Unitarians) or *Salafyoon* (successors of the Prophet's companions) (Pompea, 2002). This alliance succeeded in providing the ideological and political forces needed to form the state and has continued to their descendants.

With political support, the religious establishment gained control, until today, over the education system and legal system, helping to expand their vision and practices among rising Saudi generations. The religious establishment also enforce conformity in behavior, ensuring that people's external appearances and practices reflect "a visible expression of inward faith" (Pompea, 2002, p. 61). Further, preachers and clerics ensure that people dress modestly, that men attend public prayer, and that people do not play music in public. All such practices have helped to uphold the state as a Muslim community. As Pompea (2002) puts it, "by reviving the notion of a community of

believers, united by their submission to God, Wahhabism helped to forge a sense of common identity that was to supersede parochial loyalties” (p. 61).

The religious establishment’s power and control over society increased after their opposition to the country’s rapid urbanization, modernization, and openness to the West, which was considered threatening to the country’s commitment to applying religious laws. The nature of this opposition heightened in the late 1970s with the siege of Mecca by religiously motivated groups who were critical of the government’s policies and of the popular adoption of Islamic politics in the Arab world (Al-Rasheed, 2010; AlMunajjed, 1997). These events challenged the government’s ability to preserve and promote Islam, and provoked religious scholars to adopt the Islamic Awakening (*sahwa*) movement, which aim was to revive religious conservatism and reinforcing the Islamic identity of Saudis. From there, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed an increased institutionalization and enforcement of the religious establishment and its practices, which, with the help of oil revenues, were manifested and expanded in “literature, in individual behavior, in government policies, in official and unofficial relations with foreigner[s], in mosque sermons,” in “increased religious programming on television and radio,” and “in articles about religion in newspapers” (Pompea, 2002, p. 65).

The domination and support of the religious establishment has persisted over the years (especially during the 1990s) despite the emergence of different opposing social groups in the country. The establishment has sustained control over the legal system of Saudi Arabia, which is based on Islamic law, giving them the responsibility of interpreting this law from the Qur’an and *Sunnah*. The Minister of Justice, appointed by the king, is among the country's most senior religious scholars (or *ulema*) and is assisted

by the Supreme Judicial Council, a body of eleven members chosen from the leading *ulema* (Metz & Library of Congress, 2004). The religious establishment also prevails in other domains in the country, including in national education policies. The study of Islam, particularly the Wahhabi version of Islam, dominates the education system. For example, at the elementary and intermediate school levels in public schools, an average of eight to nine periods a week are devoted to religious subjects, compared to nine periods a week for Arabic language and twelve for other subjects at the elementary level and six for Arabic language and nineteen for other subjects at the intermediate level (Metz & Library of Congress, 2004).

In Saudi Arabia, women are regarded as key instruments for defining the state and helping “to structurally distinguish this pious nation from other ungodly polities” (Al Rasheed, 2013, p. 16–17). In this context, controlling women’s dress and behavior is constructed by many as a symbolic practice that helps to form the nation. It bears mentioning that women’s rights are not explicitly codified by law, but rather are typically defined, supported, and socially reproduced by the government and citizens in accordance to the Wahhabi teachings. With the establishment’s belief that mixing men and women will lead to corruption, adultery, and loss of morality, religious leaders strongly advocated for complete sex segregation. Accordingly, men and women became separated at school, work and in other public places such as restaurants, hospitals, shopping centers or banks (AlMunajjed, 1997, p. 33). Segregation is also maintained in private spheres, where women usually meet with other women in women-protected areas. It is interesting to note that segregation is not just a matter of religion (AlMunajjed, 1997). Although men and women are both religiously required to refrain from indulging

in illicit sexual relations, it is only women who are confined in special places and have their movements and behavior monitored. AlMunajjed (1997) argues that one reason is that, traditionally, women represent the honor of the family and are required to be protected in order to preserve that honor.

The religious establishment has also influenced and shaped women's education. In the past, women's education was met with great opposition from religious scholars and preachers. When the government first introduced public education to women in 1963, several people, particularly in Buraydah (a city in the central region), gathered around the schools in opposition to girls' education as they consider it a break of gender norms, which caused the King to send official forces to break up the demonstrations (Hamdan, 2005). King Faisal also managed to convince protestors of the importance of women's schooling in maintaining the Islamic values they shared. While men's education was under the Ministry of Education, women's schooling was under the Department of Religious Guidance until 2002, helping to comply with the religion and ensure that women's education prepares them to be good Muslim wives and mothers, or for jobs that suit their nature such as teachers and nurses (Hamdan, 2005). Women have enjoyed free education and women's literacy rates have dramatically increased. That said, women's fields of study were and are still limited to some extent, as women cannot participate in fields such as engineering, astronomy, geology, and, until recently, law. The quality of education for women has been impacted by sex segregation policies that have unequally distributed resources and access, while reserving the highest positions in the Ministry of Education and in universities for men (AlMunajjed, 1997; Hamdan, 2005).

The religious establishment has also enforced the guardianship law, which requires

women to have a related male guardian (e.g., father, husband, or brother) from whom she receives approval in order to work, study, travel or exit prison. While changes to this law have been proposed in 2017 (further discussed below), this law is still perpetuated in many institutions. Until 2001, women were not given national identity cards but were registered under their fathers' or husbands' family cards and were required to have a male guardian or family member verify their identity in different governmental institutions. In 2002, women were provided with their own national identification cards, and, in 2013, women were allowed to register births and deaths and obtain family cards for themselves which would enable them to perform certain tasks related to their children, such as enrolling them in school (Human Rights Watch, 2016). However, women still require male assistance in order to perform certain transactions or receive governmental services, including filing for lawsuits, leaving many women under the authority of their male guardians and dependent on their good will.

Restrictions are also imposed on women's movements and mobility. Saudi women are not issued driver licenses, thus, cannot drive cars, which affects their participation in different aspects of their social life. The ban on women driving was officially addressed in 1991 when a group of women gathered in Riyadh and drove their cars to protest the ban on driving. The incident led to their arrest and expulsion from their jobs (Al-Rasheed, 2013). While the ban on women driving is not a law, it has been repeatedly addressed by senior *ulema* as a leading cause to immorality and corruption. Their arguments mostly revolve around beliefs that driving will lead to the loss of women's modesty as well as increased mixing with men and increased time spent outside the house. Thus, from what has been discussed so far, it is apparent that strict religious interpretations and practices,

along with the political support and institutionalization of those practices, have contributed to the confinement of Saudi women and their limited participation in society.

Oil and modernization. While the Kingdom was considered politically and militarily dominant when it was first established as a state in 1932, it remained economically undeveloped and its inhabitants uneducated. It relied on “exportation of goods such as dates, wool, horses and camels ... [and] the annual tax paid by pilgrims to Meccah” (AlMunajjid, 1997, p. 5). However, the discovery of oil in 1938 has dramatically transformed the country politically, economically and socially (AlMunajjed, 1997; Niblock, 2006; Pompea, 2002). Oil revenues have resulted in the Kingdom’s tremendous wealth and in the massive urbanization of its cities, allowing the government to build the country’s infrastructure and provide public services in education, health, and transportation. The discovery of oil in the country, and the urbanization processes that followed, has also dramatically changed the social structure and marginalized women. Ross (2008) strongly argues that oil rather than Islam is to be blamed for women lagging behind in many Muslim countries. According to Ross, women have long participated with men in agriculture labor and family activities; however, such practices have almost disappeared with the discovery of oil. The wealth that oil brought to families went hand in hand with the importing of cheaper goods which replaced local products and resulted in “a decline in traded goods sector (agriculture and manufacturing) [and] an expansion in the non-traded sector (construction and retail)” which is often dominated by men (Ross, 2008, p. 109).

In Saudi Arabia, the oil industry remains a masculine domain, with little female participation (AlMunajjed, 1997; Al-Rasheed, 2013). Oil revenues have improved living

standards and provided Saudi men with job opportunities and with monthly wages that are enough to support their families, thus freeing women from the need to work and confirming men as “sole breadwinners and their wives as recipients of financial support from both the state and their male guardians” (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 23).

Some have also linked women’s exclusion from the labor market to the employment of foreign workers. As AlMunajjed (1997) explains, after the oil boom in the 1970s, “the growth of employment opportunities has surpassed the number of Saudi entrants into the labour market, thus causing a substantial increase in foreign labour” (p. 81). Women were not considered, however, due to several factors, such as: their high illiteracy rates; the lack of public transportation, training and childcare facilities; and, most importantly, the widespread traditional view that a woman’s role is as a mother or housewife (AlMunajjed, 1997). Consequently, the first generation of educated Saudi women during the 1970s and 1980s either did not work or accepted limited employment opportunities in fields that were considered appropriate for them such as in the field of education, which required female teachers because of sex segregation in schools. In later years, women worked in medicine, journalism, banking, and with the economic liberation in 1990s were able to run their own businesses, such as boutiques and hairdressing salons (AlMunajjed, 1997; Al-Rasheed, 2013). However, women’s work was, and still to some extent is, considered unnecessary since it is considered men’s responsibility to provide for their families and offer the needed financial support.

Backed by the intensified religious practices after the Islamic Awakening movement (*sahwa*), oil wealth has socially isolated women by providing the financial and technological means to institutionalize sex segregation in education and the workplace.

The institutionalization of special segregation between men and women “has contributed to defining Saudi women as a unified category encompassing their different origins and groups of belonging” and to promoting “a model of the Saudi woman as pious and virtuous, modest, educated, financially comfortable, and devoted to her family” (Le Renard, 2008, p. 613-614). Their isolation does not extend to relationships with other women, however. Rather, despite their inability to engage in male dominant spaces, and despite often being confined to the domestic sphere, female-protected public spaces allow women to engage with each other in different activities and within different fields, thus, strengthening women’s connections. As Le Renard (2008) explains

... the rise of paid work for women in the cities [in the region] has engendered the entry of women into pre-existing male public sphere and the gradual decline of the frontiers between a (female) private sphere and a (male) public sphere where women would have to prove themselves to be accepted. In Saudi Arabia, the barriers separating male and female spaces are solidifying while female spaces are becoming increasingly wide and diversified, ranging far beyond the private sphere. (p. 612)

Thus, Saudi women are publicly and privately confined in their spaces. However, this confinement did not prevent women from engaging in diverse activities that would improve their situation and not confine them to their domestic roles and spaces.

Reform. The twenty first century has brought change across the country. The low oil prices, the events of 9/11 in the U.S., and the terrorist attacks in the Kingdom in the early 2000s resulted in immense international and local pressure on the Kingdom to alter its internal politics and pay attention to the religious beliefs and practices being promoted

(Al-Rasheed, 2013; Le Renard, 2008; Niblock, 2006). In addition to increasing its national security efforts, the government embarked on national reform projects to protect the country against radicalization and promote religious tolerance and diversity (Niblock, 2006). For example, the government has invested in education, reviewing and revising materials to ensure the elimination of fundamentalist thinking. The government has also monitored the activities of preachers and religious scholars, while promoting moderate views of Islam.

After his death in 2015, King Abdullah's reform was extended by his brother and current King Salman ibn Abdul Aziz and his son deputy crown Prince Muhammad ibn Salman, who proposed new plans to boost the country's economy and reduce its reliance on oil production. This plan, called the vision 2030 project, as explained by the government, "depends on a social vibrancy that is antithetical to extreme religious values," giving a clear message that economic and social development cannot be achieved with religious extremism (Hamidaddin, 2016). To achieve this goal, Prince Muhammad has called for religious reform and for bringing an end to "the post 79 era", referring to the period of Islamic awakening (*sahwa*) (Ignatius, 2017). The Prince successfully passed regulations that limit the power of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, commonly known as the religious police, who have long been very dominant in enforcing religious Wahhabi practices and publically sanctioning social immorality.

Again, changes in the status of women have helped these efforts to gradually temper the role of the religious establishment in defining gender roles and relations. Since 2001, and within the context of reform, the government has launched several political and

economic initiatives to improve women's situation. For example, the government provided women with more employment opportunities, legal capacities, education options and more visibility in the public sphere. The government also made several appointments to grant women more political participation. In 2004, King Abdullah appointed the first woman as deputy minister in the Ministry of Education. In 2011, the King also appointed women to the *Majlis Alshura* (the country's Consultation Council) and announced that women can (for the first time) participate and vote in municipal elections.

Substantial changes were made to increase women's employment opportunities and labor market access. Starting in 2003, the government facilitated women's employment in the private sector, and allowed them to obtain business licenses and start their own businesses without obtaining permission from a guardian (although women have occasionally been required to provide their guardian's approval to do so). The government has also supported programs that "offer advantageous loans to men and women to start their own small businesses" and that "put private enterprises in contact with women seeking employment" (Le Renard, 2014, p. 42). While the Ministry of Labor has prohibited discriminating in wages between women and men who perform equivalent work, women are still required to work in women protected sections¹. Most recently, in 2017, as part of government initiatives to develop the economy, the government has granted women more control of their lives by allowing them to have access to education and healthcare services without the permission of their guardians (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

¹ It should be noted, however, that the law is not strictly enforced and many companies and banks include mixed spaces.

Despite these changes, women still face limitations with some sectors of the law and with mobility and travel; these limitations are seen by many as crucial in maintaining the conservative and Islamic image of the country. With the lack of organized efforts to improve women's situation in these areas and the limited access of women to public means of communication, women's issues have been kept marginal. However, with the introduction of social media and its successful use in social movements around the world, women have found the means through which to raise their voices and address their limits and disadvantages.

Social Media in Saudi Arabia

The discovery of oil and its revenues brought economic growth and development in Saudi Arabia. It also brought with it mass media and new communication technologies which transformed the Kingdom from a closed, isolated society to one with extensive global interaction (Al-Rasheed, 2010; Pompea, 2002; Schanzer & Miller, 2012). As mentioned earlier, this rapid change created social tensions between those who advocated for community modernization and those who wished to retain conservative religious identities within their communities. This tension was first evident with the introduction of radio and television broadcasts during the 1960s, which led to religious scholars and preachers expressing their disapproval of mass media communication and protesting against the launch of the first public radio and television broadcasts (Schanzer & Miller, 2012). Their opposition led to several restrictions and censorship practices that ensured the media conformed to religious social traditions and included Islamic programming. After the siege of Mecca in 1979 and the wave of conservatism that dominated the society, women were banned from appearing on TV and radio, and their images were

removed from newspapers and magazines.

While traditional media outlets in Saudi Arabia remain under government control and are censored for undesirable (anti-Islamic, anti-state) content, the Internet was officially made available to the public in 1999 (Schanzer & Miller, 2012). While the Internet was available in Saudi Arabia before 1999, its launching was delayed by people questioning its conformity to religious and conservative values (Alshahrani, 2016). Shortly after it was introduced to academic institutions, the Council of Ministers issued a decree in 1997, ordering King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) to make the Internet available to the public. KACST, in turn, established an Internet Service Unit (ISU) which managed and censored public access to the Internet. That said, although the government manages and censors online material that it considers inappropriate, the nature of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have made it difficult to monitor such material. Social media websites provide platforms that allow diverse and unclassifiable materials to circulate, thereby providing a space for many activists to reach the public and express their views (Schanzer & Miller, 2012). However, the content of social media is still monitored, mostly in relation to criminal activities (Noman, Faris, & Kelly, 2015).

Despite these restrictions, recent studies report a significant increase of Twitter use among Saudis (GlobalWebIndex, 2012; PeerReach, 2013). In 2012 and 2013, Saudi Arabia ranked highest worldwide in the number of active Twitter users, and was considered the fastest-growing Twitter market in the world. According to one study from 2015, there were 5.4 million Twitter users in Saudi Arabia, posting more than 210 million tweets per month (The Social Clinic, 2015). Further, Saudi Twitter users make up 40% of

all active Twitter users in the Arab region and produce 40% of all the tweets in the region (Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, 2015; The Social Clinic, 2015). When referring to the “Arab region,” I mean the “22 countries in Northern Africa, the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean” (United Nations Developed Programme, 2012, para, 1). The estimated total number of active Twitter users in these countries, as of March 2014, was 5,797,500; Saudi Arabia alone had more than 2.4 million active Twitter users (Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, 2015).

Twitter is used by several groups of people in Saudi society. The Social Clinic (2015) reported that 51% of Twitter users in Saudi Arabia are females and 49% are males, and that a high percentage of Twitter users are young (with 50% of all Saudi Twitter users between the ages of 18-34 and 23% between the ages of 34-55). While these numbers constitute the number of people with Twitter accounts, the numbers obscured by the fact that not all people need an account to access Twitter. In SA, 58% of the population has Internet access and 47% has smart mobile phones, which enables them to view Twitter posts without having to create an account (The Social Clinic, 2015). Tweets can also be copied and transferred through various methods including email, which potentializes its reachability and viability as a democratic medium to almost limitless capacities (Alhargan, 2012; Murthy, 2013).

Not only are citizens tweeting at significant rates, the Saudi Arabia government is no stranger to its function. King Salman, the present Saudi king, opened a Twitter account in 2015, making him the first king in the history of the country to use social media to address the public (Jones & Omran, 2015). Recognizing the importance of

Twitter and its proliferate use among Saudis, more than Saudi 93 government authorities have also adopted the use of Twitter, offering direct contact to the Saudi citizens and making efforts to foster transparency (Alasem, 2015). Twitter also hosts accounts for several Saudi media outlets, journalists, religious figures, preachers, and political and social critics, who have taken advantage of the equal access to Twitter (Noman, Faris, & Kelly, 2015). Women have taken advantage of this popular social media outlet to raise their concerns publically and bring attention to their disadvantaged situation, including the limits imposed on their movements which are hindered by the ban on driving.

‘Women Driving’ Online Campaigns

Heretofore, I have described Saudi women’s activities on social media websites as a means of protest. Since 1991, after the public protest against the ban on women driving and the arrest of 47 women who participated in that protest, the issue of women driving has not been publicly addressed in Saudi Arabia. Religious opinions about women driving remained publicly unquestioned until 2011, when Manal Al-Sharif, a women’s rights activist, drew attention to the issue by re-examining religious opinions and Saudi laws about women driving. She noted that there was no law that prevents women from driving with the exception that driver’s licenses are not issued to women. Al-Sharif launched the “Women2drive” campaign, recorded a video of herself driving a car, and urged all Saudi women to take the wheel and drive around the country starting on 17 June 2011. Shortly after posting the video, she was arrested and jailed for nine days not because she drove a car (as no law prevents women with a driver’s license from driving) but because she was charged with “disturbing public order and inciting public opinion by twice driving in a bid to press her cause” (MacFarquhar, 2011). This response was

striking in that officials had constantly reported that women driving was a social issue and a matter of cultural propriety (that has the potential to be approved when society is ready), rather than a matter of religion or politics.

In 2013, the “Oct26driving” campaign was launched. Instead of calling for a protest, in this campaign, women were urged to defy the ban by driving on the same day, October 26th. The campaign was popularized on Twitter by using the hashtag #Oct26driving (قيادة ٢٦ أكتوبر). At least 25 women participated in the campaign and posted videos of themselves driving on Twitter. In December 2014, Loujain Alhathloul, another Saudi women’s rights activist, drove her car from the United Arab Emirates to Saudi Arabia and posted her journey on Twitter. Alhathloul was later arrested at the border and imprisoned for one month (Batrway, 2014). Although these campaigns have not resulted in tangible change, they have attracted the attention of many Saudis and Western media outlets, and they have been the focus of an ongoing dialogue on social media. Even though the reactions to this campaign have been mixed, Saudi women have managed to attract the public’s attention and to raise awareness of their issues in a way that would not have been possible without social media.

The unique and complex position of women in Saudi society and the potential that social media offer Saudi women in their struggle for their rights have attracted much attention over the past few years (e.g., Guta & Karolak, 2015; Madini & de Nooy, 2014; Tamimi, 2010; Tschirhart, 2014). Several studies have examined the online content about women driving. Recent social network analyses (Agarwal, Yuce & Wigand, 2015; Agarwal, Lim, & Wigand, 2015; Yuce, Agarwal, & Wigand, 2013, 2015) explored the *Women to Drive* movement in Saudi Arabia in order to understand online collective

action, which they defined as “all activity involving two or more individuals contributing to a collective effort on the basis of mutual interests and the possibility of benefits from coordinated action” (Yuce, Agarwal, & Wigand, 2013, p. 333). These studies focused on blogs written by females and Twitter posts generated in relation to the movement. They developed a computational model to understand the evolution of individual opinions into online collective sentiment. Although these studies made novel and valuable contributions to understanding online collective action, they seemed to reflect an abstract and decontextualized notion of language as a tool of communication.

Other studies reflected a contextualized view of the language used on Twitter. Almahmoud (2015), Alotaibi (2017), and Sahly (2016) used framing theory to examine the different ways in which Twitter users have linguistically constructed the women driving issue. Almahmoud (2015) collected and analyzed two sets of data, one of which was generated by female activists and the other by male clerics. She examined the different intertextual references used by each group to frame the women driving issue and found that female activists tended to place the driving campaign in an international context that intersected and resonated with wider political issues. In contrast, male clerics framed the issue as a conspiracy against the morals of the society, relating the emancipation of women to efforts to overthrow the Islamic religion. Alotaibi (2017) focused her analysis on opponents of women driving and found that they used a narrative of moral panic that threatened normative gender relations. Similar to Almahmoud (2015), her analysis revealed that women driving is considered a threat to the religious morality and traditional values. Sahly (2016) analyzed 1,300 Twitter posts on women driving using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count, a computer software that measures emotional

and cognitive expressions. In part of his study, Sahly (2016) examined the ways in which users framed the women driving issue based on the frequency of emotional, cognitive, and religious or moral linguistic variables. Sahly found that users frequently used cognitive language, which meant that “people tended to use the language of logic, causation, assessment, problem-solving, and thinking while discussing this issue” (p. 59).

Because of the lack of studies that intensively analyze how gender intersects with the socio-political contexts and power dynamic that drive religious and patriarchal divisions in Saudi Arabia, critical research is urgently needed to explore the construction of gender and its entanglement within issues of power within the Twitter debates on women driving. While Almahmoud (2015) and Alotaibi’s (2017) studies seem *concerned* about gender, they both lack the theorization of the concept of gender. Almahmoud’s (2015) study echoes linguistic research on gender differences in language use. Her research focuses more on how women and men use language differently than on how gender is constructed *through* language. In this research, I examine the latter by taking a feminist and critical approach to analyze the different discourses that are at play in the Twitter debates on women driving. My aim is to examine the arguments for and against women driving to determine the different ways that women (and men) are positioned in current power relations and gendered boundaries in Saudi Arabia. Unlike previous research, I intend to incorporate corpus linguistics in my analysis, which will enable me to analyze a large number of posts (rather than a few instances) and to identify salient linguistic patterns that may not be easily identified by only using qualitative method of interrogation (Baker, 2006, 2012). Before describing the details of the methodological framework of this study, in the following sections I discuss the theoretical perspectives I

draw on in this study to understand the multifaceted nature of gender and its interplay with discourse, as well as the significance of social media in providing spaces for feminist struggles to negotiate gender roles and relations.

Conclusion

In summary, the lives of women in Saudi Arabia are affected by a complex network of social, religious, and historical factors. Religious factions, with their strict interpretations of Islam, domination in society, and power in defining laws, have limited women's activities and monitored their behaviors as means to preserve the country's conservative and Islamic image. The discovery of oil has led to urbanization and modernization, but at the same time have further excluded women from the public sphere by institutionalizing policies such as sex segregation and ban on driving. While the recent political atmosphere has improved the situation of women, women are still faced with restrictions that limit their mobility and freedom. Women have long been silent about their disadvantaged situation and limits imposed on them; however, with the advent of social media, Saudi women have found a new space to raise their voices and negotiate their positions, as suggested by the extant literature on Twitter and women driving (Almahmoud, 2015, Alotaibi, 2017, and Sahly, 2016). However, previous research has typically failed to consider this issue in relation to feminist and critical theorization of gender, which would provide a better understanding of how the driving issue relates to gender divisions and power dynamics in the society. Gender is a very complex concept, with multiple facets and levels of embeddedness within several discourses. Hence, gender, its realization in discourse, and its relationship to social media is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Gender, Discourse, and Twitter

Having provided the historical, political, and social context of Saudi Arabian women in the previous chapter, I turn in this chapter to discuss theories of gender and how they inform discourses and relations in social media. I begin by introducing the concept of gender and examining how it is embedded and discursively constructed in online social relations. In this study, gender is conceptualized as a discursive construct because it implies that the notion of gender and ideas about gender are made and remade in language and other means of communication. However, for gender constructions to have a possible impact on the debates about gender-related issues, such as those on women driving in Saudi Arabia, they need to be rigorously interrogated and disseminated. Hence, I move onto discussing the theoretical perspectives that emphasize and evaluate the importance of new forms of media in providing women with a platform that enables their public articulation of their social realities and their problematization of the socio-political order, particularly in relation to women in Saudi Arabia.

The Discursive Construction of Gender

In this study, I draw my understanding of the concept of gender from social constructionist and post-structural theories that address the question of what gender is and how it is made meaningful in very complicated, messy and hard to structure ways. Social constructionism offers a particular epistemological view of gender. Social constructionism itself is an epistemology which highlights that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42).

Meaning and knowledge are not discovered through objective inquiry, but emerge through human interaction with the world, with objects in the world, and with human consciousness. It is through this interaction that humans ascribe meaning and attribute or associate qualities and characteristics to the world around them. Thus, things and constructs do not exist in isolation or separation from our human consciousness and experiences, but rather their meaning is socially developed and maintained through cultural practices and norms (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Crotty, 1998). This process applies to, and intersects with, all markers of social production, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, and so forth (Crenshaw, 1991). Post-structural theories have extended such understanding of meaning and knowledge, and highlighted the role of language and discourse in the process of meaning production, including our understanding of our gender roles and identities (Crotty, 1998; Foucault, 1978), and the active role of individuals in the production, maintenance, and subversion of gender norms (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Gender vs sex. Early feminist scholars distinguished between sex and gender, where sex refers to the biological categorization of humans as males and females based on their reproductive organs, and gender refers to the cultural and social norms and behaviors of femininity and masculinity (Cameron, 2005; Kimmel, 2013a; Talbot, 2010). Thus, gender is conceived as social prescriptions based on social and categorical differences rather than a set of biological attributes. The emphasis here is that different cultures and societies have different perceptions about what constitutes being a man, woman, or other gender. If gender was a matter of biology, then different people from different cultures would not have displayed diversity, change, and transformation in their

feminine and masculine behavior (Stryker, 2008; Stryker & Aizura, 2013). Further, the biological differences cannot also explain the different degrees of femininity among women and degrees of masculinity among men, as some women tend to show more ‘masculine’ tendencies and vice versa (Hearn, 2004; Korobov, 2011). This distinction between sex and gender is also political; it allowed early feminists to deconstruct and argue against the naturalization of gender and male privilege. Rather than seeing gender and male privilege as ‘natural’ or biological, scholars highlighted the social aspect of these practices as a way to alter or change them (Cameron, 1992; Kimmel, 2013b).

It should be noted, however, that some studies continue to attribute differences in behavior between men and women to biology. For example, several studies have attributed aggressive tendencies in males to higher levels of testosterone (Talbot, 2010). Despite accusations of inconclusiveness and exaggeration, such work continues to emphasize the role of biology in affecting our behavior, performances, and emotions (Strongman, 2003). On the other hand, scholars like Butler (1990, 2001) have problematized the concept of sex; understanding it as socially developed rather than purely biological, based on the fact that not all humans are born males or females, with some born as both or neither (intersexed). According to Talbot (2010), “the binary distinction between male and female is medically enforced. Exceptions are ‘corrected’, surgically and with hormone treatment. Since this is the case, it should be no surprise that physicians acknowledge that sex as well as gender is socially constructed” (p. 13).

Despite the difficulties of distinguishing sex from gender, I will maintain such a distinction for clarity. Without disregarding the possible effects of biology on our behavior, I will stress that our social interactions and how others see us play a more

important role in affecting our gender behavior. By maintaining the distinction between sex and gender, I also wish to avoid the consequences of simply mapping gender onto sex (Talbot, 2010). I agree with Jule's (2008) argument that "viewing sex and gender as the same thing often connects to the promotion of traditional, conservative family roles and to the justification for male privilege and power that align with these roles." (p. 7). The purely biological view, or biological deterministic view, dismisses the complexity of human experience and the complexity of how gender interacts with other aspects of our social life, which in turn diminishes the active role individuals play in constructing their gender (Butler, 1993; Jule, 2008). Understanding gender as a social construct that is embedded in different social practices, many scholars have investigated how people develop, understand and act out their gender rather than assume it is natural and born out of biological differences.

The social construction of gender. Previous research has attributed gender differences to early child socialization (Kimmel, 2013b; Risman & Davis, 2013), arguing that children are gender-socialized by engaging in socially acceptable gender behaviors that are prescribed to them in accordance with their sex category. For example, in Western cultures, males are encouraged to acquire socially acceptable masculine practices and characteristics (e.g., dominance, independence, work, etc.), while females are encouraged to engage in appropriate feminine behaviors (e.g., softness, delicacy, etc.) (Risman & Davis, 2013). Thus, individuals develop their gender identity or their sense of being female or male by experiencing and practicing the learned socially acceptable norms of being a man or a woman. From this psychosocial view, gender is

conceptualized as a set of stable attributes that are acquired by individuals at an early stage in their lives.

Gender socialization approaches have often been critiqued. Kimmel (2013b), for example, argues these approaches overemphasize differences between women and men, and fail to account for the differences among them. More specifically, he points out that gender socialization theories create two different spheres, one where men are taught how to be masculine and women to be feminine, as if the process was “a matter of sorting a herd of cattle into two appropriate pens for branding. Boys get herded into the masculine corral, girls the feminine” (Kimmel, 2013b, p. 116). To add to this critique, Sunderland (2004) argues socialization approaches have equated “gender with difference [which] meant that even with an understanding of gender as social and cultural, gender was often simply ‘mapped onto’ sex” (p. 16). We can see that the gender socialization view tends to neglect how the two genders are related and how each is defined in contrast to the other (e.g., where much of what it means to be a man is constructed in contrast to definitions of being a woman). This positioning brings tension to Connell’s (1987) argument that femininities are always/already defined, constructed (and subordinated) in relation to masculinities. The idea that gender differences are born out of different ways of socialization serves to “depoliticize gender, making gender a set of individual attributes and not an aspect of social structure” (Kimmel, 2013b, p. 117). To summarize, gender socialization approaches do not fully account for how gender differences relate to social structures that foster the marginalization or subordination of women and the domination of men.

Social constructionist and post-structural accounts of gender, on the other hand, have emphasized ideological aspects of gender, viewing it as a set of beliefs that explain and justify the division of people into men and women “based on a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination respectively” (Lazar, 2007, p. 146). Thus, as an ideological construct, gender involves power, where men usually have more value and privilege than women. If gender was just a matter of difference and not equality, then both genders can have equal opportunities in occupying authorial positions and leadership. Yet it is mostly men who occupy such positions (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013; Paap, 2008). It has been argued that the success of a gender ideology lies in its subtleness and ‘hegemonic’ nature; that is to say, it is not accepted through coercion but owes its success by appearing natural, normative, and commonsensical (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013).

What enforces the naturalness of gender meanings and understandings is their enactment and renewal in social institutions and practices, such as in education, media, government, and more local institutions such as the family or social practices such as baby showers and so on (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013; Kimmel, 2013b; Lazar, 2007). Kimmel (2013b) writes:

the social institutions of our world – workplace, family, school, politics - are also gendered institutions, sites where the dominant definitions are reinforced and reproduced and where “deviants” are disciplined. We become gendered selves in a gendered society... When we say that we live in a gendered society we imply that the organizations of our society have evolved in ways that reproduce both the

differences between women and men and the domination of men over women. (p. 16)

Thus, gender is not only one facet of the self, but also “a set of processes, deeply embedded in the institutions, and the institutional logics, of our society” (Kimmel, 2013b, p. 305). In this study, religious, cultural, and work-related institutions and practices are seen as reinforcing and perpetuating gender inequalities, while contributing to the subordination of women (see Chapter 2). Thus, gender is not merely an individual trait or a component of one’s identity, but a social construct and a way of organizing people’s lives.

While it seems that society imposes certain dominant definitions and ways of being a man or a woman, individuals are able to negotiate those meanings and find their own way of becoming a man or a woman within those dominant definitions. Just as the degree of femininity and masculinity varies among individuals, people often resist gender stereotypes that do not match their experiences (Kimmel, 2013b). According to Kimmel (2013b), “gender is not only something that is done to us, we create and re-create our own gendered identities within the contexts of our interactions with other and within the institutions we inhabit” (p. 138). Gender has a discursive nature (as we will explore below).

Gender and discourse. Post-structural perspectives on gender extend social constructionist understanding of gender and postulate that gender, “is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 140). In this view, gender is a ‘process’ that people ‘do’ or ‘perform’ rather than a ‘product’ that they ‘have’

(Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Butler (1990) further argues that gender is never completely accomplished or stable, but rather is a set of “stylized repetition of acts” (p. 179); that is, gender is constantly being done and re-done by individuals in their daily lives through actions (e.g., naming, clothing, hair styling), which reiterate and reaffirm our gender. Butler (1990) argues that the problem with these repeated acts of doing gender is that they create “an illusion of an interior and organizing core” (p. 336); thus, disguising the nature of gender as a social construct and reproducing and maintaining gender norms and behaviors. As Lorber and Farrell (1991) put it, gender is “a human production that depends on everyone constantly ‘doing gender’” (p. 276). In other words, gender is a performative act done by women and men according to social expectations, which are established in discourse (Butler, 1990).

Butler has drawn extensively on Foucault’s (1972) conceptualization of discourse as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49).

Discourses produce knowledge and meaning and construct ideas over time (Hall, 1997).

To be more precise, discourse is, as Hall (1997) explains:

a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way for representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular moment ... Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language... It is about language *and* practice. It attempts to overcome the traditional distinction between what one says (language) and what one does (practice)...It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to *regulate the conduct of others*. (emphasis added, p. 72)

Based on this definition, Butler argues that gendered meanings and codes are an effect of the discourse, social practices, and institutions which shape and regulate individuals' gender performances, and determine what is acceptable gender behavior and what is not. Gender and sexualities, therefore, become constituted as a discursive practice. That is, people's gender identities and relations are "constituted in and by discourse – a discourse which precedes them historically" (Speer, 2005, p. 62). According to Butler (1993), individuals are conscripted into gender norms from birth through established discourses that supplies them with gendered meanings. Butler argues that referring to a newborn as 'a girl' is in fact a process of 'girling'. Statements like 'it's a girl' are not merely descriptions of a state of affairs; they prescribe a whole host of historical and current ideas about what it means to be a girl, 'do girling', and be thought of as appropriating normative and culturally recognizable statuses, behaviors, and symbols of girls (Speer, 2005). The socio-historical constitution of gender works to reiterate its discursive (and non-discursive) flow and practice.

I do not want to suggest that people are passively shaped by these discourses; they are, indeed, active in their own construction and doing and redoing of gender (Butler, 1993; Talbot, 2010), and can negotiate the fluid and unstable identities, boundaries, and categories of gender within these discourses (Ehrlich & Meyerhoff, 2014; Talbot, 2010). Language and discourse mediates the varying constructs of gender that help us to understand society's effect on (or displacement of) our gender roles, not to mention the modes of resistance or acceptance we engage in to uphold or challenge particular gender norms (Butler, 1997; Talbot, 2010; Weatherall, 2002). However, variations in gender reiteration and subversion of gender norms are not located outside of the gender

discourses that define them, but rather as Butler (1990) explains, agency is “located within the possibilities of a variation on that repetition” of norms (p. 145). What Butler alludes to is that variations in gender reiterations are not totally separate from the gender discourses that constitute one’s gender identity but work within them. While Butler has not been totally clear on the sources of variation in gender performativity, Barvosa-Carter (2001) argues that variation originates from “a self whose performativity applies not to one axis of gender norms, but to a variety of different culturally derived axes each with its own sets of linguistic tools (meanings, values, and practices) and identifications” (p. 128). That is to say, we can choose to resist gender norms, but we are limited to using existing gender discourses to do so. It is through this overlap of different and sometimes contradictory discourses and identity positions that gender variations and subversive practices originate. As explained in the previous chapter, the situation of Saudi women is entangled in various and often contradictory discourses and power dynamics which have given rise to new generation of women whose identities, as indicated by Yamani (2000), reflect multiple positions “in search of a compromise between their personal expectations and the demands of family and society” (p. 134).

This complex theorization of gender as a discursive concept that is embedded within social practices has prompted many researchers to locate discourse as central to the construction and contestation of gendered and sexist meanings (Cameron, 2005; Ehrlich & Meyerhoff, 2014; Lazar, 2007; Talbot, 2010). It has also supported researchers in using discourse analysis approaches to study how gender is constructed and reproduced in discourse, rather than seeing it as a stable social attribute that is reflected in the different linguistic choices of men and women. Past language studies have

investigated and deconstructed gendered linguistic practices which help create, disseminate, perpetuate, and often contest common sense views about gender (Cameron, 2005; Lazar, 2007; Talbot, 2010). Adopting Butler's conceptualization of gender as 'performative', these authors examine the range of linguistic resources that individuals draw upon to perform or enact their gender identities, while also highlighting the fluidity and multiplicity of masculinity and femininity and the ways in which normative gender behaviors are reproduced or subverted (see Cameron, 2005 for examples). Working alongside these scholars, others have explored how gendered values and meanings are constructed in public and institutional discourses such as in education, media, and politics, in order to "shed light on the more complex and subtle mechanisms that might be reproducing inequality in contemporary public contexts." (Cameron, 2005, p. 496).

Other studies explore the ways in which media discourse perpetuates patriarchal and stereotypical values about femininity and masculinity, and how those media representations usually work to reify women's subordination (Carter, 2012). Feminist media studies in particular have interrogated the kinds of language and images that depict women and men in graphic, contestable, and disempowering ways, yet can also promote their empowerment and forward critical feminist social movements (e.g., Carter & Steiner, 2004; Williams, Mavin, Stead, & Elliott, 2016). While feminist media scholars, working in the early 1990s, initially perceived online platforms as offering neutral spaces for women and men to construct and perform their gender free from social constraints in the real physical world (Carter, 2012), a great number of recent works indicate that gender inequality, problematic representations, and forms of hatred that, often non-

apparent in traditional media outlets, are alive and burning in the online realm (Burris, Smith, & Strahm, 2000; Gerstenfeld, Grant, & Chiang, 2003).

This social constructionist and post-structural account of gender as a social and discursive construct as well as a process that involves constant negotiation and modification provides a fruitful means in this study to investigate how Twitter users, through their online debates, participate in discursively reproducing, maintaining, subverting established gender norms and negotiate different discourses and power relations that have given rise to those gender norms and divisions. In what follows, I discuss in depth how gender relations shape interactions within social media platforms.

Gender and New Media

With advances in technology and the emergence of new forms of online communication, online ethnographic² research has explored and promoted the study of gender, language, and interpersonal interactions on the Internet (Beneito-Montagut, 2011). The Internet is an environment that centers on discursive interactions, and is often understood as democratizing in that it “level[s] traditional distinctions of social status and creat[es] opportunities for less powerful individuals and groups to participate on a par with members of more powerful groups” (Herring, 2003, p. 202). It has been considered that online interactions or computer-mediated communication (CMC) have led to greater gender equality for women who are often socially disadvantaged and powerless.

Alongside arguments that depict the Internet as promoting gender equality, there are also several concerns. The early access to CMC, which was mainly through email,

² Online ethnography is a research approach to study online data based on the notions of community and identity in online environments. It is conducted by making ‘systematic observations’ of online discourses and through direct/indirect contact with users (Androutopoulos, 2006; Sheyholislami, 2012).

was restricted to certain institutions and computer scientists who were predominantly men, which led many to see the Internet as reinforcing male privilege (Carstensen, 2014). A large amount of Internet content was geared towards (mainly) male interests such as sports and automobiles (Herring, 2003). However, with the development of the World Wide Web in the 1990s, and the rise of home Internet service providers, various functionality of the Internet, and mainstream content, women began to flock to the Internet (Carstensen, 2014; Herring & Stoerger, 2013). Much of the earlier research on gender and CMC was very optimistic, viewing developments in information and communication technologies in the 1990s as offering opportunities to empower women to challenge and eventually overcome oppressive gender divisions and traditional gender roles (Armentor-Cota, 2011). One of the prominent researchers who advocated this notion was Turkle (1995), who studied the ways users in “multi-user dungeons” perform or play with their identities. Drawing on the concept of gender swapping, which is the idea that “one presents a gender that is different from his or her biological sex” (Roberts & Parks, 1999, p. 522), Turkle argues that users create virtual textual personas in which they play and experiment with their gender identities. Previous research also explored how the Internet facilitated “the creation of ‘disembodied’ identities whose gender is ‘disarticulated from biological sex,’ allowing for the unbridled creation of fluid identities that transgress the binary gender system” (van Doorn, van Zoonen & Wyatt, 2007, p. 145).

Some scholars, of course, criticized this work for being too ambitious in how it conveys its optimism that new technologies could actually change, on a macro scale, gender relations and relationships. Wajcman (2009), for example, feels that the problem

with early feminist research on technology is that it “regards new digital technologies as a rupture from more established ones and downplays any continuities between them.” (p. 148). She also accuses previous researchers of falling into the dystopian trap of ‘technological determinism’, or viewing technology as the driving mechanism of social change, rather than the people who are accessing it. Providing an alternative approach, Wajcman (2009) describes the relationship between gender and technology as one of “mutual shaping” in which “technological objects may shape and be shaped by the operation of gender interests or identities” (pp. 148–149). Although she does not deny that women have taken advantage of the online world to construct fluid gender identities, Wajcman (2009) urges researchers to consider the ways gender relations in the material world shape or constrain the ways gender is constructed online. This interactive view of gender and technology has helped to deconstruct the binary distinction and separation between online and offline environments that have characterized earlier research and have separated technology from its social context.

Understanding online/offline worlds as fluid, and as shaping one another, has helped to shed light on how online interactions are extended offline (such as in mobilizing collective movements offline) as well as on how offline interactions are extended online (Eckert & Steiner, 2016). The advancement of social networking sites significantly contributed to a shift from users retrieving and receiving information from websites to users generating content, facilitating communication, sharing information, collaborating, and building networks and communities (Carstensen, 2009). According to KhosraviNik and Zia (2014), such technologies have “broken the uni-directionality of the

flow of content of producer > mass media > consumer and, at least formally speaking, empowered ordinary receivers to participate as producers of texts” (p. 757).

Social media have been defined as “web-based services that are used to create public or semi-public profiles, build networks with other users, and view and traverse other users’ profiles and networks” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). Social media are known to increase social participation and open up possibilities for women to participate in public discourses (Eckert & Steiner, 2016). Cameron (2006) argues that, historically, the division of labor and distinction between public and private spheres has been crucial in the social organization of men and women; men have mostly dominated public spaces, while women have been “closely bound up with ideologies of female domesticity and sexual respectability” (p. 20). To add to this point, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013) find that many societies underscore women’s role in reproduction and childcare, which limits their public social, political and economic participation. Although many women, including Western women, now work outside of their homes, many of them occupy jobs that extend their domestic roles (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013; Kimmel, 2013b). Men’s activities, on the other hand, “involve greater social power, through the disposition of goods and services and the control of ritual. Males in most cultures have more access to positions of public power and influence than females” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013, p. 25). This division can be observed in many Arab societies as well, in which women’s domesticity is closely tied to religious beliefs, state formation projects, tribal traditions and customs (Joseph, 2000; Joseph & Slyomovics, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, this division is amplified with sex segregation laws that have granted men more public visibility. Nevertheless, it has been argued that social media have served as an

empowerment tool for women in the sense that it blurs distinctions between the private and public, and provides a stage for individuals to interact publicly with multiple audiences in the privacy of their home (Papacharissi, 2010). This phenomenon is particularly significant in Saudi Arabia, where women rarely participate in public discourses and are often segregated from men and thus may be able to utilize such platforms to negotiate divisions based on their biological sex and publicly voice their concerns.

While many scholars are cautious to attribute social change to technology, social media can be a catalyst for social movements, bolster organization, emphasize marginalized population's agency, battle exclusion, and bring to the forefront otherwise invisible structural problems from within the private sphere (Castells, 2015; Eckert & Steiner, 2016; Papacharissi, 2010). As mentioned earlier, Twitter has been an important tool for many feminist campaigns around the world (Cartensen, 2014), including Saudi Arabia (Winder, 2014). In the following section, I provide an overview of Twitter and its features and discuss its social theorization and research in relation to social and feminist movements.

Twitter and Social Movements

Twitter and its features. Twitter is a microblogging website that allows users to post 140 character-long messages known as “tweets”. On the platform, users post tweets in response to the question “What’s happening” (see Figure 1). Once submitted, the tweets appear on the user’s profile page, which is called the *timeline*, and can be publicly accessible by others. Microblogging websites such as Twitter have been defined as:

Internet-based websites in which: (1) users have a public profile in which they

broadcast short public messages or updates whether they are directed to specific user(s) or not, (2) messages become publicly aggregated together across users, and (3) users can decide whose messages they wish to receive, but not necessarily who can receive their messages. (Murthy, 2012, p. 1061)

Figure 1. Message box on Twitter

Twitter is a form of social media rather than a social networking site, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, that allow[s] users to “construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, [and] articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) are known for being ‘friend-based,’ for building offline social ties, for being “explicitly public and geared towards interactive multicasting,” and for facilitating “many-to-many broadcasting to as wide a network as the content is propagated by its users” (Murthy, 2013, p. 11). Social media sites (e.g., Twitter) are more public, allowing people to interact with strangers (including Presidents and celebrities) rather than being restricted to a proximal network of friends (Murthy, 2012; Zappavigna, 2012). Thus, unlike social networks, it can be difficult to predict the range of audiences and the distance that a tweet can travel. Posting on Twitter is not limited to using Twitter’s website; tweets can be shared in a variety of ways, including from news articles, blogs or other social networking sites.

Twitter has several features that enables people to connect and interact with each other. By using the @ symbol, users can directly converse with particular users by tagging the user's Twitter name (@twitteruser) in their tweets. Although this feature is similar to chat rooms in that people can be addressed directly, these conversations can be publicly available. Thus, they are not only limited to the interlocutors, but also to people who follow or view their profiles, unless users decide to make their profiles private and limit the view of their posting only to their followers. Reposting a Twitter message or "retweeting" someone's post is essential in order to be noticed and popularized by broader networks and audiences, especially if they are retweeted by the right user(s) (Murthy, 2013).

One of the most powerful features that enables Twitter to organize its content is the hashtag (#). Hashtags are "an emergent convention for labelling the topic of a micro post and a form of metadata incorporated into posts" (Zappavigna, 2012, p. 1). In other words, hashtags are used to locate a tweet in a broader conversation beyond the Twitter user's followers (Bruns & Moe, 2014). Hashtags function as a kind of indexing system that organizes Twitter's content around labeled tags, so that posts with similar tags can be grouped together, "searchable," and available to be found by other users (Zappavigna, 2012). Through hashtags, it is possible to search for people's comments on any topic or issue. Hashtags can appear in any part of the post; they consist of the symbol "#," followed by a word, phrase, clause, or sentence that indicates the topic or "aboutness" of the post (Zappavigna, 2013, p. 3). It should be noted, however, that although users are tweeting under one hashtag, this does not mean that they converse with each other, as in for example chat rooms. Instead, as Murthy indicates, the discourse around certain

hashtags is “not structured around direct communication between identified interactants. It is more of a stream, which is composed of polyphony of voices all chiming in” (p. 4) and contributing by commenting and discursively constructing a certain topic or event.

Regarding Twitter’s catalytic potential for social movements, Twitter with all its features played an invaluable role in mobilizing and publicizing social movements like the anti-government Arab Spring protests in the Middle East in 2011 and Occupy Wall Street, a series of movements in 2011 that started in New York City’s Wall Street in the same year. The latter began as several small movements in New York City’s Wall street to protest against financial inequalities in the United States (Murthy, 2013). Twitter, with its public, real-time, interactive, and multi-casting features, allows its users to disseminate information, mobilize activists and protestors, recruit audiences, and construct an emotional narration to sustain collective presence (Castells, 2015; Murthy, 2012).

Although these revolutions are often coined as ‘social media revolutions’, Murthy (2013) stresses that social media ‘enabled’ them but did not ‘cause’ them. The grotesque and perpetual levels of impoverishment, unemployment, and frequent demonstrations of police violence and brutality, rather, were the crucial factors in promulgating civil unrest in the region. It would also be problematic to assume, therefore, that the availability of Twitter to Saudi citizens ‘caused’ Saudi women to launch campaigns online (Fuchs, 2013). While Twitter enabled public discussions and negotiations of women issues (and provided the platform for women to campaign, address the public and problematize their issues), it was the socio-political contexts and struggles that brought about this movement in the first place. Educated, working, economically independent women who were

experiencing social restrictions, patriarchal divisions, censorships, and other forms of suppression by a hyper-masculine culture were pushed into sparking widespread dissent. As such, the analysis of the Twitter debates on women driving and the implications of these online debates is considered in relation to the socio-political context and the developing situation of Saudi women in order to avoid falling into techno-deterministic assumptions. The significance of how Twitter enabled these (and other) critical feminist movements is the focus of the next section.

Twitter, gender and the public sphere. Given their democratic and emancipatory potential, social media sites like Twitter have been frequently theorized in relation to the notion of ‘public sphere’ as proposed by rationalist thinker Habermas (1974). Generally speaking, Habermas’s (1974) idea of the public sphere refers to the discursive interaction between persons who assemble in communication spaces to discuss public concerns and create praxis for social movements, conformities, and resistances. Put simply, the public sphere facilitates debates and discussions of public affairs which enable individuals to participate within the political system.

However, Habermas’s idea of a free public sphere has been ruthlessly criticized for its unitary view of the public and masculinist epistemological framework (rationality, emotionless discourse, and objectivity leads to truth) that works to exclude many groups, most notably, women, gendered Others, and disadvantaged laborers (Fraser, 1992). This framework perpetuates the ways in which ways of knowing become popularized, dominated and reflected in the views of wealthy, privileged, educated, and usually white men. Excluded from the dominant public sphere, those excluded groups often “constitute alternative publics” or what Fraser (1992) refers to as “subaltern counterpublics” that

offer “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interest, and needs” (p. 123). Fraser gives an example of United States feminist movements in the late 20th century. The feminist “subaltern counterpublic” facilitated diverse discussions, writings, debates and terms (such as “sexism” or “sexual harassment”) that women used to describe their social reality. According to Fraser, “armed with such language,” women recast their “needs and identities, thereby reducing, although not eliminating, the extent of [their] disadvantage in official public spheres” (p. 123). Habermas’s ideal and free public sphere falls short of including different voices that do not reflect dominant views, resulting in a public sphere that is not totally free but involves leaders, scholars, politicians, or public figures who are elevated to an elite level because of their masculine status or conformity to the social structures in place that block more inclusive and “less oppressive” (Lather, 1991, p. 95) ways of knowing.

Although many discussions on Twitter do reflect collective and engaged discussions, it is also a place where oppositional, extremist, antagonistic, and counter-discourses are shared. Coulling and Johnston’s (2017) study of public responses to the Jian Ghomeshi verdict emphasizes how adversarial criminal justice systems fuel adversarial, blame-ridden, anti-feminist, and toxic perspectives on sexual assault cases in the public realm. Other research raises skepticism over whether Twitter actually represents a public sphere at all, let alone one with emancipatory potential. Fuchs (2013), for example, challenges Twitter’s capacity to be inclusive and to provide equal visibility to all users. He argues that Twitter is dominated by the middle-class, educated, and young members, and excludes many groups such as workers who are less technologically savvy

(as is the case with some farmers or agriculture workers), and elderly people. While Twitter provides individuals with an opportunity to publicly post messages using its diverse features, Fuchs (2013) argues that it is the posts by people who have power, fame, reputation, and wealth that garner the most attention. Highly visible users such as celebrities and politicians are often the ones who shape the degree of dissemination and spread of certain voices, which means that they can become important figures in spearheading or suppressing the visibility of feminist social justice causes and movements (Carstensen, 2014; Eckert & Steiner, 2016; Fuch, 2013).

Twitter and feminist movements. Utilizing Twitter, women around the world have raised awareness regarding issues such as violence and sexual harassment, which have been misrepresented in mainstream media or have been deemed by many as undiscussable private matters (Clark, 2016; Khamis, 2014; Rentschler, 2015). Many users have utilized the feature of the hashtag to draw attention to the issues that concern them. This practice has been recently referred to as “hashtag feminism”, or “feminist activism that unfolds through Twitter hashtags” (Clark, 2016, p. 788). Clark (2016), for example, examined the hashtag #whyIstayed which was used by women in response to the predominant victim-blaming views of a domestic violence incident. According to Clark, the hashtag “acted as an easily personalized storytelling prompt, which provided a particular narrative focus for survivors to frame their diverse experiences in a compelling manner in 140 characters or less” (p. 9). Through these narratives, women were able to redefine their positions and “circulate revised normative interpretations” of the victim-blaming and domestic violence that dominate mainstream media (Clark, 2016, p. 800).

Similarly, Rentschler (2015) studied the ways in which women shifted the hashtag #safetytipsforladies from providing advice on women's safety against violence and rape to highlighting the absurdity of focusing on victims rather than perpetrators. Such hashtags represent examples of how social media provide feminists with a platform to shed light on their concerns and issues, especially in regards to rape culture and the dominant discourses that sustain it (Clark, 2016). Further, using Twitter to enact feminist activities is not only confined to the online realm, but can also be translated into collective action offline. A recent example is *The Women's March*, a worldwide protest that took place on 21 January 2017 to advocate for women's rights after the inauguration of Donald Trump, whose statements have been considered by many as discriminatory and offensive towards women (The Canadian Press, 2017). Through its substantial promotion on Twitter and Facebook, the March included millions of people around the world who raised their feminist concerns and showed their solidarity.

In the Arab world, social media were effective in raising women's voices and encouraging them to take an active role during the Arab Spring protest. Despite the limited number of techno literates, the physical and sexual threats and intimidation, and their disadvantaged economic status, women in places like Egypt and Libya were active in the anti-government protests in their countries (Khamis, 2014; Newsom & Lengel, 2012; Radsch & Khamis, 2013). Many became citizen journalists and channels of communication on social media to other citizens and international media, challenging censorship of media in their countries and providing a counter interpretation of the protests (Khamis, 2014).

Arab women have also used social media as educational tools. In her interviews with Arab women activists, Khamis (2014) reported that women used social media for “educating women about their rights as citizens and empowering them with tools and resources to fight for them, as well as educating society about the dangers of these negative practices against women and why they should be stopped” (p. 571). These efforts challenged common views of Arab women as passive and oppressed, and they emphasized the role of social media in empowering women and aiding feminist discourses (Khamis, 2014).

Despite the potential of social media to empower women, many authors have questioned whether online efforts could result in social change offline. For example, despite wide recognition of women’s active role in the Arab Uprising, both traditional and social media noted that gender-based social change has been limited (Newson & Lengel, 2012). Newson and Lengel (2012) write:

Online, raised as calls for actions, Arab women’s voices resonate as powerful. However, agency in these online spaces is temporally situated in the sites and defined from and within the spaces themselves. This type of power is restricted to the gendered space created specifically for that type of power to operate. The agency inherent in social media may not translate offline. (p. 38)

Newson and Lengel point out that although social media provide women with the necessary space to express themselves and raise awareness of their issues, they do not guarantee power or systemic change. Nevertheless, Bayat (2007) argues that such feminist activities should not be overlooked or disregarded. Furthermore, Bayat points out that the everyday resistance practices of Middle Eastern women tend to go unnoticed

and ignored because they do not fit the Western model and understanding of what constitutes a social movement. According to Bayat (2007), “Movements are usually perceived in terms of collective activities of a large number of women organized under strong leaderships, with effective networks of solidarities, procedures of membership, mechanisms of framing, and communication and publicity” (p.160). The privilege to organizing and protesting, however, is not granted to many Middle Eastern women, whose struggle, is often “thwarted by the repressive measures of authoritarian/patriarchal states as well as the unsympathetic attitudes of many ordinary men” (Bayat, 2007, p. 160). Rather than focusing on collective actions, Bayat suggests that Muslim women under authoritarian and patriarchal states do not necessarily need to engage in deliberative and organized actions, but they can circumvent discrimination through their everyday acts of resistance that are subtle, but meaningful, such as educating themselves, seeking employment, and participating in sports.

This form of resistance, Bayat (2007) argues, “involves deploying the *power of presence*, the assertion of collective will in spite of all odds, by refusing to exit, circumventing the constraints, and discovering new spaces of freedom to make oneself heard, seen, and felt” (p. 161). A parallel view can be made about Saudi women, who have not confined themselves to their domestic duties, but have pursued education and employment, including in male-dominant positions such as lawyers, doctors, and company CEOs (Al-Mulhim, 2012). Bayat’s idea of the power of presence has important implications for the use of social media by Saudi women in particular, and Middle Eastern women in general. Online and against all restrictions, Saudi women have found a space to present themselves publicly and transcend the gender boundaries imposed on

them. Moreover, within Islamic states, “the mere public presence of women [is] an achievement,” as it allows them to disrupt and negotiate gender boundaries and patriarchal power (Bayat, 2007, p. 171). In Iran, for example, women acted subtly without taking extreme measures against authorities, which “allowed [them] to gain ground incrementally without seeming to constitute a threat” (p. 172).

Women’s resistance in the Middle East is not only operationalized pragmatically through employment and education, but also ideologically through struggles and negotiations (Bayat, 2007). Social movements are characterized by their ability to organize collectively. They are also sites for negotiations of ideology, identity, and persuasive aspects of communication. According to van de Donk, Loader, Nixon, and Rucht (2004), “social movements cannot be understood without considering their ideological beliefs, their need to create a collective identity, and their attempts to persuade and mobilize their followers to frame problems they deem relevant and to appeal to their wider environment” (p. 12). Social media, such as Twitter, seem to provide the needed discursive space in which social movements can bypass institutional discourses and mass media outlets in order to convey their messages, provide ways to define and interpret social problems, and construct and assert their collective identity.

As Bayat asserts in his discussion of Iranian women’s activism, “women’s incremental practices needed to be backed up by careful argumentation and discursive campaign. Women activists had to address the legal and theological contradictions that their actual encroachment had exposed” (p.172). That is, women need to engage in discursive efforts to deconstruct the rules and laws that limit their lives. Exploring ideological aspects of resistance, my research examines Twitter as a discursive space that

can enable Saudi women to embark on an ideological struggle against current social formations and gender boundaries. More particularly, I examine the kinds of discourses and arguments that Twitter users, whether women or men, draw on to justify (or challenge) women's right to drive, while pushing for equality in different ways.

To do so, I have chosen CDS for this study because it provides the needed multidisciplinary theorization required to link social practices that are related to gender with Twitter as a discursive space that can provide a site for ideological and power struggle between men and women. CDS not only allows analysis at the micro level (e.g., linguistic and visual elements) but also at the macro level, where it would be possible to interpret and explain the results at the micro level by examining how the textual features relate to and incorporate other discursive practices and against the socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts that shape the discursive construction of gender (Sheyholislami, 2011). This aspect is important for this study because assumptions about gender relations in the context of Saudi Arabia cannot or should not be made or understood without linking them to the historical, political, economic and cultural factors that have shaped gender relations (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Thus, the use of CDS in this study overcomes previous issues in analyzing gender online and provides many strategies and tools to engage in a more critical and contextualized analysis of how gender roles and relations get negotiated online (Lazar, 2007). In fact, its usefulness in analyzing gender in social media environments has been explored (e.g., Cook & Hasmath, 2014; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). For example, Rightler-McDaniels and Hendrickson (2014) analyzed one trending Twitter topic for race and gender constructions, combining critical discourse analysis and content analysis. With regards to how gender is

constructed, the results showed that women were identified by the Twitter users in demeaned and demoralized women and blamed them for men's and other women's behavior in monogamous relationships. Thus, offline patriarchal relationships were reinforced and reproduced on Twitter. Rightler-McDaniels and Hendrickson came to this conclusion by utilizing CDS, which enables the interpretation and explanation of the textual data analysis findings in relation to the social context and based on feminist theorization of gender. I explore how I use CDS in this study in the next chapter.

Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, gender is a complex construct that is made meaningful in very complicated ways. For the purpose of this study, gender is seen as a social and discursive construct. Following scholars such as Foucault and Butler, I conceptualize gender as a site for negotiation and struggle rather than just an imposed quality and product of early childhood socialization, and that the negotiations of gender are realized in great part through discourse. The Internet, particularly social media with their affordances (e.g., anonymity, interactivity, etc.), provide a discursive public space for individuals to negotiate, reproduce, contest and disseminate their gender identities. In the case of Saudi women, the Internet and social media has been argued to provide a site for women's subtle resistance to traditional and patriarchal gender norms (Bayat, 2007). An investigation of such ways of negotiating gender roles and relations online requires an interdisciplinary framework to investigate the intersection of gender, discourse, and social media. This approach, namely critical discourse studies, will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: CDS as the Theoretical and Methodological Framework

In the last chapter, I reviewed and discussed the theoretical perspectives and literature relevant to the study of the discursive negotiation of gender on social media. Having established the social and discursive constitution of gender, and the significance of social media as a discursive space for negotiating and disseminating gendered discourses, it becomes apparent that answering my research questions requires a discourse approach that is interdisciplinary, one which allows for the integration of several theoretical perspectives, to capture the interrelationship of gender, discourse, and Twitter. Furthermore, such an approach needs to be critical to examine how dynamics of power and ideology shape and surround discursive practices and the negotiation of gender roles and relations. Thus, critical discourse studies (CDS) is an appropriate methodological approach of inquiry for this dissertation. CDS, however, has been criticized for not being able to handle large amounts of data such as the dataset in this study; therefore, additionally employing corpus linguistics (CL) seems most appropriate and productive in approaching and analyzing such data.

In this chapter, I first discuss the theoretical and methodological underpinnings that shaped the origins of CDS, specifically in relation to the analysis of social media data. I then describe the modes of analysis I use to make sense of the data, which stem from discourse-historical approaches (DHA), the CDS approach I draw on in this. Next, I provide an overview of what CL is, how it is used in conjunction with CDS, and the benefits of combining the two methods.

Critical Discourse Studies: An Overview

Critical discourse studies (CDS)³ is a term used to refer to studies that take a problem-oriented approach to discourse analysis. Unlike descriptive linguistic approaches, CDS is interested in not only describing linguistic features in a text, but also explaining through multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives why and how texts were produced and what ideologies shape and mobilize them (Fairclough, 1992a; Wodak & Meyer, 2011). CDS analysts aim at “de-mystifying ideologies and power through the systematic and reproducible investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken or visual)” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 3). What Wodak and Meyer (2009) mean by this is that critical discourse analysts are generally concerned with how social issues such as oppression, inequality, and discrimination become discursively reproduced, maintained, or contested in discourse (or worldviews more broadly). CDS has focused mainly on public forms of communication and texts such as political speeches, news texts, and school books as primary influencers of discourse to expose the workings of ideological perspectives and power relations that may, at first glance, appear normal or neutral (Fairclough 1989, 1992a; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; van Dijk, 1993).

CDS has its origins in critical linguistics, especially in relation to the works of Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew (1979) and Hodge and Kress (1993), who explore the ways in which ideologies and political processes are manifested in language use. It is imperative to mention that critical linguistics has been criticized for its shortcomings in conceptualizing the relationship between language, power, and ideology (Fairclough,

³ Critical discourse studies is more commonly used now than the older term ‘critical discourse analysis’, which often is confused as being a single method of analysis (van Dijk, 2013).

1992a). Critical linguistics has been mainly criticized for its focus on straight and direct link between texts and social meanings but with giving less attention to the texts' processes of production and interpretation. It has also been criticized for its top-down view of power and discourse, neglecting how discourse can represent a site for social struggle and change (Fairclough, 1992a). CDS, thus, emerged as way to overcome such issues in order to “develop methods and theory that could better capture this interrelationship and specially to draw out and describe the practices and conventions in and behind texts that reveal political and ideological investment” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 4).

For this study, I draw on the discourse-historical approach (DHA), one of the main approaches of CDS. Before I discuss DHA in more depth, I briefly overview the theoretical underpinnings that broadly inform CDS (and, thus, DHA). To do this, I first review the notion of ‘discourse’ and its characteristics from a CDS standpoint. Once these conceptual origins are established, I examine what CDS practitioners mean by ‘critiquing discourse’, and how these tenets inform the methodology and methods that CDS employs when investigating a communicative event.

The notion of discourse. Providing a simple and explicit definition of discourse is highly problematic, since its notion is fuzzy and will take the form of different meanings across various disciplines. Nonetheless, CDS approaches seem to share the definition of discourse as “language use in speech and writing where discourse is a form of social practice rather than purely an individual activity or a reflex of situational variables, it represents things and positions people” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). This definition shares constructionist and post-structural assumptions that consider social

life as made up of practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999); that is, it is composed of “habitualised ways, tied to particular times and places, in which people apply resources (material or symbolic) to act together in the world” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 21). From a CDS lens, the primary interest is in how these practices are discursively formed, and therefore its focus is on speech, language, and writing. This process of discursive formation is not linear, but rather reciprocal: not only are practices formed *by* our discourses, but also, representations of social practices are generated *through* discourse. Thus, social practices, including social identities and relations, are formed by discourse and simultaneously, form discourse (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Discourse not only reflects social phenomena, but also contributes to shaping and modifying them (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

Such a conceptualization, according to Fairclough (1992a), highlights the discursive dimension of social life. It also emphasizes the constitutive nature of discourse and points to the dialectal relationship between discourse and other social dimensions (Fairclough 1992a; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In this sense, discourse can contribute to maintaining the social status quo, including relations and transformations of power and domination. Although, as previously mentioned, CDS scholars more or less agree on a general definition of discourse (above), various approaches do tend to use their own conceptualization of discourse; because I use DHA in this dissertation, I accordingly use their more linguistically-oriented definition of discourse:

a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action, related to a macro-topic, and linked to the argumentation

about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors, who have different points of view. (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 89)

DHA's definition of discourse is geared toward emphasizing multiple perspectives in discourse, which seems to be reflected in the data under study. The definition also appears to be compatible with the view of discourse on social media (explained below) as sites of struggle for multiple voices rather than as an instrument for upholding some kind of one-sided powerful perspective behind it. DHA contrasts 'discourse' with 'text', where text refers to "a specific and unique realization of a discourse" (Wodak, 2009, p. 40).

Texts within the DHA are often regarded as "sites of social struggle in that they manifest traces of differing ideological fights for dominance" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 89).

Discourse, thus, refers to the social process of making meaning – which is constrained and conditioned by the institutional and the socio-political contexts– and texts are the concrete linguistic objects that realize this process. Thus, it is not enough to examine the linguistic features of a discourse, but examine the contextual variables that condition and shape these features, including the different relations of power and struggle which highlights the critical stance of CDS.

Viewing discourse in this pluralistic way requires a dynamic view of the boundaries of discourse. According to Reisigl and Wodak (2009), "as an object of investigation, a discourse is not a closed unit, but a dynamic semiotic entity that is open to reinterpretation and continuation" (p. 89). This perspective highlights two important concepts of discourse: *intertextuality*, and *interdiscursivity*.

Intertextuality. Intertextuality is concerned with how "texts are linked to other texts in the past and in the present" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 90). Fairclough (1992b)

defines it as “the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth” (p. 85). It involves explicit and implicit references to other texts through, for example, quotations and rewording, or through irony and presupposition. The development of the concept of intertextuality, which was coined by Kristeva (1986), is based on Bakhtin’s (1986) ideas of the dialogic nature of language. He states that language use is “filled with others’ words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of ‘our-own-ness’” (p. 69). According to Kristeva (1986), intertextuality means “the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history” (p. 39). That is, texts are built out of previous texts in history and/or are a response to previous texts in the sense that a text can be said to “rework past texts, and in doing so helps to make history and contributes to wider processes of change” (Fairclough 1992b, p. 270).

Interdiscursivity. While intertextuality is more concerned with texts, interdiscursivity occurs at the discourse level. It refers to “both the mutual relationships of discourses and the connection, intersecting or overlapping, or different discourses ‘within’ a particular heterogeneous linguistic product” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 37). DHA pays much attention to history and interdiscursivity and “engages diachronically with the process of discourse formation and the cognitive relationships between existing diachronic and synchronic discourses and discourse topics in the explanation of discursive processes of production, distribution and interpretation” (KhosraviNik, 2015, p. 68). Within DHA, discourse is conceived as being primarily topic-related, which means interdiscursivity analysis involves examining the ways in which a discourse on a certain topic consists of topics (and subtopics) of other discourses. For example, a

discourse on climate change might frequently be discussed with reference to other discourses, such as health (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

Both concepts, intertextuality and interdiscursivity, are of particular importance to this study. In my analysis, I investigate what texts and discourses, past (e.g., Qura'an) or present (e.g., Western media, *ulema*'s opinions), tweeters refer to, link to, or invoke, which could reveal with what texts, ideologies, and values tweeters construct their themes and build their strategies on. Religion, for example, has been considered as one of the dominant factors to have shaped the status of Saudi women (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Thus, one would expect to find references to religion in the corpus. These references are particularly interesting to examine, as religious discourse in Saudi Arabia has historically been confined to the religious establishment and its scholars. Ordinary people were not allowed or encouraged to engage in practices of religious law and interpretation, and were often asked to refer to religious scholars, who are responsible for providing them with religious and social guidance. I investigate how this discourse is drawn upon and what function it serves in the debates.

Discourse and ideology. In characterizing discourse, CDS practitioners commonly enlist the concept of *ideology* and point out the ideological nature of discourse. While definitions vary, ideology is generally thought to represent “a coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 8). Within CDS, ideology is frequently associated with issues of power and control, and viewed as an important means to dominate social groups and maintain their exploitation and marginalization (Fairclough, 2003). Hence, CDS analysts tend to be most concerned with demystifying and exposing the dominant ideologies that sustain power relations and

reproduce, implicitly or explicitly, the unquestioned beliefs that make up our everyday lives. CDS also acknowledges that ideologies are not stable and can be contested; therefore, ideologies are not just properties of those in power, but can also be utilized by subordinated groups and those who seek emancipation (although its use often reflects the first sense) (Fairclough, 1992a; van Dijk, 1998). For this reason, van Dijk (1998) has opted for a broader definition of ideology as a “shared framework of social beliefs that organize and coordinate the social interpretations and practices of groups and their members, and in particular also power and other relations between groups” (p. 8). Ideologies, including those about gender, are acquired, learned, legitimized, transferred, and contested in social practices, especially through discourse. Thus, if one wants to know “what ideologies actually look like, how they work, and how they are created, changed and reproduced, we need to look closely at their *discursive manifestations*” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 6).

Discourse and power. CDS conceptualizes power amongst social groups and institutions as the “asymmetric relationship among social actors who assume different social positions or belong to different social groups” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88). The kind of power that CDS practitioners are interested in is not the one solely exercised through coercion or physical threat, but the one that is embedded in discourse and work to shape people’s ontologies, realities, and modes of existence (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Through privileged access to means of public communications and possession of social resources (e.g., wealth, status, or education), social groups and institutions “may influence the structures of text and talk in such a way that, as a result, the knowledge, attitudes, norms, values and ideologies of recipients are – more or less indirectly affected

in the interest of the dominant group” (van Dijk, 1996, p. 85). Language is not just a reflection of social structures and relations, but it is a means of social control and domination. For CDS scholars, power is not considered to be residing in language, but language is considered powerful because of its use by powerful people, who are often perceived as responsible for inequality (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). That is why much of the CDS research is focused on analyzing texts of powerful and publicized institutions, and deconstructing how such texts reflect people’s attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that to most of us seem natural and unsteered (Fairclough, 1995; Richerdson, 2007; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Rogers, 2011; van Dijk, 1993). Where there is power, there is resistance (Foucault, 1978), and so CDS analysts also look to uncover forms of social change and the ways in which power is delegitimized through discourse. Discourse, therefore, is not merely a playing field for power, ideology, and unjust social structures, but an intensifying and relational site of social struggle (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Critical in CDS. CDS approaches base their critical stance on social critical theories, particularly those of the Frankfurt School, which supports the orientation of social research toward critiquing and changing society, rather than simply trying to explain and understand it (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The aim from this perspective is to establish a scientific foundation and knowledge for critiquing and deconstructing aspects of social life, especially in relation to unquestionable relations of power and inequality, including gender. For CDS, being critical does not necessarily mean being negative, but instead illuminating the interconnection of things so as to make more explicit the relationships between discourse, power and ideology (Chilton, 2012; Fairclough, 2001).

Being critical within CDS also entails being political and applying the results of the critical discourse analysis to social problems to contribute to social change (Becker, 1967; Chilton, 2012). In other words, CDS is supposed to “bring a system of excessive inequalities of power into crisis by uncovering its workings and its effects through the analysis of potent cultural objects— texts—and thereby to help in achieving a more equitable social order” (Kress, 1996, p. 15). To do so requires researchers to engage their reflexive capacities and be transparent about their positions, values, and intentions for doing their projects. When Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. 87) describe CDS research as “gaining distance from the data ... embedding the data in the social context, [and] clarifying the political positioning of discourse participants and having a focus on continuous self-reflection”, they are not calling for researchers to be fully “objective” but to involve, acknowledge their reflections and worldviews in the data analysis.

DHA follows a conceptualization of critique that includes three related aspects: (1) *text or discourse-immanent critique*, which aims to discover potential contradictions and inconsistencies within a text, (2) *socio-diagnostic critique*, which involves the use of social theories to expose the persuasive or manipulative character of discursive practices, and (3) *prospective critique* which is targeted towards the improvement of communication, such as changing discriminatory language behaviors in institutions (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88). In its formulation of critique, DHA references Habermas’s (1974) model of deliberative democracy, which postulates “a free public sphere and strong civil society, in which all concerned with the specific social problem in question can participate” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 34), as well as the concept of the public sphere, which is drawn on in this study (see Chapter 2) in relation to feminist

perspectives (Fraser, 1992), to understand the social function and significance of the discursive practice under study.

In relation to gender, a critical perspective is useful and productive in the analysis of gender in discourse as such approaches do not view and understand gender in an individualistic, polarizing, and static way, like in previous approaches to gender and language. It rather contextualizes the study of gender and highlights its interconnection with other social aspects. A critical perspective also incorporates the analysis of the dynamics of power and ideology and how they shape social relations (including gender relations) and the central role of discourse in reproducing, maintaining, or challenging gender norms and relations. As Talbot (2010) explains,

A perennial problem for language and gender researchers is overcoming the sense of ordinariness and obviousness that so much everyday language has, and the accompanying danger of treating everyday experiences as though they somehow occur independently of society. With the model of discourse as social practice that is used in critical discourse analysis, we cannot just forget the social nature of all discourse. It helps counteract the tendency of the discourse in which we perform our gender identities [or negotiate it] to be naturalized. (p. 123)

Analyzing discourse. To bring more nuance and clarity to the concepts, paradigms, and approaches to CDS research designs I have just described, I now discuss the assumptions that shape the methodological practices scholars use to analyze discourse. Since the broader aim of CDS is to “capture the dynamic relationships between discourse and society” (Luke, 2002, p. 100), researchers cannot be concerned only with investigating linguistic units in texts but must also emphasize the links between these

linguistic features and the sociocultural structures from which these texts emerged. To do this, critical discourse analysts mainly conduct their analysis at two levels: *micro* and *macro*, and they draw on a variety of methods and theories from a variety of disciplines to capture the relationship between language and society (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

At the micro level, CDS analysts draw on several linguistic and non-linguistic models to conduct a textual analysis, depending on which linguistic categories and devices are focused on (e.g., lexical style, argumentation, grammatical structures). The micro analysis is not done in isolation from context, but is rather complemented with a macro analysis of the texts' contexts in order to be interpreted and explained (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Thus, the notion of context, which includes social, political, historical factors, as well as the institutional norms and aspects of the discourse practices, are given prominence within CDS approaches (Fairclough, 1992a; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Context is required to be explicated and understood by reference to social, political, and cultural theories (Luke, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). This means that CDS allows researchers to draw on other disciplinary fields in order to interpret and explain the implications of the discourse under examination; hence, CDS involves an interdisciplinary procedure for discourse analysis. This aspect is very important for this study, as it is necessary to capture the dynamism of gender relations in their context and relation to other social practices. Wodak (2002) best sums up this approach when she states that CDS

take[s] into account the insights that discourse is structured by dominance; that every discourse is historically produced and interpreted[,]. . . situated in time and space; and that dominance structures are legitimated by ideologies of powerful

groups...CDA makes it possible to analyse pressures from above and possibilities of resistance to unequal power relationships that appear as societal conventions.

(p. 3)

Having explained the usefulness of utilizing CDS as the theoretical and methodological framework for this study, I move to discuss how social media is investigated from a CDS perspective.

Critical Discourse Studies and Social Media

CDS research often revolves around the analysis of powerful and influential texts, as it is believed that the most intensive representations of power are located in political speeches, educational texts and resources, and printed sources by mass media networks (van Dijk, 1996). However, because of the increased use of social media and their integration and effects in many aspects of our daily lives, CDS practitioners have acknowledged their importance as sites for enacting social practice (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016; Mautner, 2005; Unger, 2012):

If you are the kind of linguist who is interested in how discourse reflects and constitutes social life, and then ignore one of the key sites at which social life is being played out in contemporary society, you risk “losing the plot”. (Mautner, 2005 p. 812)

Unger (2012) also urges critical discourse analysts to consider web-based data, especially from social media, as they can provide insights into how texts are interpreted and consumed by readers. Indeed, web-based data from social media can aid critical discourse analysts in their investigations of how people respond to, and negotiate, normative gender relations. Analysis of online data also uncovers the performances of gender that make up

how gender identities are embodied and enacted in spaces where gender boundaries are not specified or are looser than in real life (Armentor-Cota, 2011; Eckert & Steiner, 2016; Herring & Stoerger, 2013; Turkle, 1995). In this way, analysts have the opportunity to obtain evidence of the extent to which social structures affect people's beliefs and practices, instead of assuming "the existence of a significant relationship between discourse and people's view of reality" (Breeze, 2013, p. 508).

KhosraviNik and Unger (2016) argue that much of the CDS interest in social media stems from the kind of communication that emerged out from these outlets, which has changed the dynamics of power that is often attributed to mass media. Social media, according to KhosraviNik and Unger, "breaks away from the traditional linear flow of content from certain (privileged) producers to (ordinary, powerless) consumers" (p. 206). Thus, social media have changed dynamics of text distribution – and consumption – that have characterized traditional mass media and enforced their power in society. Much of CDS research has focused on analyzing power *behind* discourse, due to "the power already accumulated behind it" (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 289), which is often associated with elite groups who have privileged access to and control of means of public communication, such as television and newspapers. In the end, this narrow focus on the relations of powers serves to reinforce a top-down form of power that often misses how constructs of gender inform such relationships.

While the increased amount of CDS research loses sight of the contemporary multiplicities of power enactments, resistances, and socio-political contexts that emerge online, social media research, however, "ha[s] now helped to decentralize the mass-mediated process of pushing content onto audiences and offer some kind of participatory

role to the individual communicator” (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 211). In some ways, social media have empowered ordinary people and offered them a space to challenge, resist, or even reinforce power relations (Dehghan & Ali, 2015). According to KhosraviNik (2014), social media have made it possible to analyze power *in* discourse by viewing discourse as a site for power struggle in which people monitor and try to influence each other, rather than viewing discourse as just substantiating and perpetuating some sort of power behind it.

In addition to its role in decentralizing processes of text production and distribution, social media provide CDS analysts with a wealth of textual data, which may not be obtained through, for example, interviews or focus groups. Such data can be very valuable in contexts where access to perspectives and voices that are not represented in mainstream media may be difficult or impossible to obtain due to political or practical reasons (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). This certainly applies to ordinary Saudi people, especially Saudi women, whose access to public and official forms of communication is limited and censored, or whose opinions may not be easily obtainable through traditional methods of qualitative data collection due to cultural and political reasons.

While collecting data from online media has many benefits in the Information Age, the analysis of social media data can be quite cumbersome for CDS researchers, due mostly to the unstructured and informal nature of social media communication (Dehghan & Ali, 2015; KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). According to KhosraviNik and Zia (2014), CDS researchers have been mainly concerned with certain kinds of texts, such as newspaper articles and official documents, which are genre-specific and characterized by certain linguistic features and coherent argumentative

structures that would enable analysts to determine the kind of linguistic categories and variables to focus on. Social media data, however, is messy, informal and brief, especially on Twitter, which allows posting messages of only 140 characters, and thus, may not be the best source at providing space for coherent and structured ways of communication and argumentation. Many social media sites allow users with similar interests to gather and communicate with each other and share their views and opinions, which often result in communication being implicit and hinted at rather than explicitly stated, as they share similar backgrounds and knowledge (KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014). KhosraviNik and Unger (2016) respond to these concerns with validity by arguing that attention should be paid to the interactive context of social media data and the affordances of social media outlets in shaping the quality of textual and semiotic data. In accordance with CDS approaches, this level of context should also be considered within the wider sociopolitical context, where “qualities of the public sphere, degrees and dominance of marketization and the dynamic of political communication in a particular context should be critically considered” (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 214) (see Figure 2). For these reasons, my analysis of Tweets about women driving is considered in relation to the broad socio-political and historical context of the Saudi Arabian society (as discussed in Chapter 2), and the affordances of social media in that society and particularly in relation to the Saudi women’ online forms of resistance (as discussed in Chapter 3). These contextual aspects are not only used to situate the Twitter data in their context, but also to interpret and explain the micro textual features and structures used by Twitter users in their constructions of gender roles and relations.

Figure 2. A framework for CDS analysis of social media data, adapted from KhosraviNik and Unger (2016)

Having explained the theoretical concepts and principles of CDS and how they inform social media research, I discuss in the next section the specific CDS approach I utilize in the analysis of the Twitter data.

The Discourse-Historical Approach

The analytical framework of the study is based on the discourse-historical approach, a branch of CDS, that was developed by Ruth Wodak and her colleagues in Vienna when conducting several studies on national identity construction and discriminatory discourse (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 1999). Like other CDS approaches, DHA presupposes a dialectal relationship between discourse and social structures. To fulfill the aim of interrelating the discursive and the social, Reisigl and Wodak (2009) emphasize that research must be approached from various perspectives following the “principle of triangulation”, which implies taking a whole range of empirical observations, theories and methods as well as background information into account” (p. 89). Therefore, research that explores the construction of

gender on Twitter in Saudi Arabia should combine available historical and sociopolitical information, theoretical perspectives from various disciplines that explain how gender is discursively constructed in society, and particularly through discursive practices on social media. This principle of triangulation is based on DHA's division of context into four levels that are considered during the process of analysis:

- the immediate, language or text-internal co-text and co-discourse
- the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres, and discourses
- the extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames of a specific 'context of situation'
- the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts, which discursive practices are embedded in and related to (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 93).

This view of discourse highlights its interconnectedness with the social context and allows for the text to be analyzed in relation to other texts and other discourses, as well as other extra-linguistic social variables (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The discourse-historical approach differs from other CDS approaches in several aspects that I find particularly useful for this study. These aspects revolve around the focus of DHA on the historical context, its definition of discourse, its operationalization of discourse. Each of these are discussed further below.

The first aspect that is especially relevant to this study is DHA's emphasis on the historical context in which the discourse is situated. As Reisigl and Wodak (2001) explain, "the discourse-historical approach attempts to integrate much available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political

fields in which discursive events are embedded” (p. 35). The aim is not just to describe the historical situation or to provide background information for any discourse, but to utilize this historical and sociopolitical background as a way to contextualize language and aid in the interpretation of discourse. The historical orientation also provides a better understanding of how texts are recontextualized and linked together over time (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009). This aspect is particularly important in this study, as gender roles and relations in SA cannot be explained or understood without careful examination of the history of SA and how gender roles and relations have been formed. The construction of gender in SA, particularly with regard to women, has been affected by various political, religious, traditional, and economic factors. Thus, an investigation of how gender roles and relations are constructed in SA and how they are reproduced or reconstructed should include a detailed analysis of the socio-historical context, exploring how the historical understanding of gender in SA has come under debate as social media provide a forum for progressive discourse.

DHA’s focus on argumentation is another reason for selecting this approach. This focus is very helpful in the analysis of my dataset, a diverse and argument-oriented corpus of tweets. As argued by Reisigl (2014), the discourse-historical approach is “the only school of Critical Discourse Analysis that includes argumentation and multi-perspectivity as formal constitutive elements in the theoretical conception of ‘discourse’” (p. 69).

Thirdly, in operationalizing the concept of discourse, the discourse-historical approach provides a set of analytical stages and tools which are particularly useful in unpacking the corpus of this study. DHA is three-dimensional, consisting of three

elements of linguistic analysis: thematic *contents* or *topics* of a specific discourse, *discursive strategies*, and their *linguistic means* used to realize both topics and strategies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009) (see Figure 3). DHA analysis starts at the meaning, or semantic, level by investigating the topics or themes in a particular discourse. Wodak et al. (1999), for example, in their study of the discursive construction of national identity, identified thematic areas such as the construction of a common culture and political past, which contribute to the discursive construction of national identity.

DHA analysis then moves into an examination of the different discursive strategies employed around content areas. Reisigl and Wodak (2009) define strategy as “a more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal” (p. 94). Strategies, thus, represent important analytical tools to investigate what is done or what function is achieved with language. DHA proposes a set of discursive strategies at different levels. Wodak et al. (1999) have proposed a set of discursive macro-strategies in construction of national identities, such as strategies of justification which are used to justify a social status quo. Wodak et al. (1999) and Reisigl and Wodak (2001; 2009) also propose a set of micro-strategies or sub-strategies that serve the macro-strategies. Their analysis of micro-strategies revolves around examining which social actors are present, what characteristics or qualities are associated with them, what arguments are presented and how they are legitimized, from what perspectives these representations and arguments are expressed, and whether the arguments are mitigated or intensified. For each micro-strategy, a set of

linguistic features that realize these strategies is proposed. An explanation of these discursive strategies and their linguistic realizations are further discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 3. DHA's three elements of linguistic analysis, adapted from Reisigl and Wodak (2009).

In short, DHA is suitable for this study because of its emphasis on the historical context, its focus on argumentation in discourse, and its way of operationalizing and analyzing the concept of discourse. While the analysis of the categories proposed by DHA has typically been carried out without the use of computer software, I utilize corpus linguistics tools to aid in the analysis, due to the large size of the corpus and the usefulness of these tools in detecting patterns in the corpus. Corpora have been proven to be useful in identifying the various linguistic categories, or at least in providing a starting point for further analyses. For example, Baker et al. (2008) used corpus linguistics with DHA to identify the different discursive strategies used in the British press to refer to refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants. Similarly, Baker (2006, 2010) highlighted the different ways corpora can help in identifying discourses by considering the various corpus linguistics techniques (e.g., frequency, collocations, concordances, and

other features). Of even greater relevance to my study is the corpus linguistics approach of Baker and McEnery (2015), who used a Twitter-based corpus to identify the discourses surrounding people who receive government benefits in the UK and highlight how such discourse can dehumanize those individuals. Baker and McEnery (2015) concluded that the corpus tool techniques used to analyze long newspaper articles proved helpful in analyzing Twitter posts, which unlike other texts are very short (140 characters, or about 14 words).

Following the example set by these studies, I use corpus linguistics along with DHA to analyze my data at the micro textual level. A combination of these approaches has often been referred to as a *corpus-assisted discourse studies* (CADS) approach. An overview of this approach and its benefits will be discussed after introducing corpus linguistics and its techniques.

Corpus Linguistics

Corpus Linguistics (CL) has been defined as a branch of linguistics that aims at “studying language based on real life language use” with computer software (McEnery & Wilson, 1996, p. 1). The word *corpus* (plural *corpora*) refers to “a large and principled collection of natural texts” that is stored in a computer and used for linguistic research (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998, p. 4). These texts consist of “any stretch of naturally occurring language in use, written or spoken, which has been produced, independently of the analyst, for some real communicative purpose” (Stubbs, 2003, p. 305). Unlike a random collection of text, Leech (1992) and McEnery, Xiao & Tono (2006) have emphasized that a corpus is a collection of texts that are selected and ordered with a certain purpose in mind and “according to explicit linguistic criteria in order to be used as

a sample of the language” (McEnery, Xiao & Tono, 2006, p. 4). McEnery et al. (2006) provide a broader definition of a corpus as “a collection of (1) *machine-readable* (2) *authentic* texts (including transcripts of spoken data) which is (3) *sampled* to be (4) *representative* of a particular language or language variety” (p. 5).

It has been often debated whether CL represents a methodology or a theory. Taylor (2008) has analyzed the definitions of corpus linguistics in 20 journal articles and found that the term has been differently represented and understood, suggesting probable disagreement or different perceptions of what CL constitutes. Some authors have argued that, rather than an independent branch of linguistics, CL should strictly be viewed as a methodology, which includes “a whole system of methods and principles of how to apply corpora in language studies and teaching/learning” (McEnery et al., 2006, p. 7). In contrast, Leech (1992) has argued that “corpus linguistics is not just a newly emerging methodology for studying language, but a new research enterprise and in fact a new philosophical approach to the subject” (p. 106). Baker (2010) takes a middle-ground view and acknowledges both sides, but asserts that CL cannot be considered an independent field of linguistics such as syntax or phonetics. Likewise, Vessey (2016) maintains that CL is both

an approach to the study of language with theories that attempt to explain the function of language in society according to attested data and a methodology with a set of ever-expanding tools for linguistic analysis that contribute to and enhance this theory (p. 63).

Vessey argues that as an approach to language, CL builds its theorization of language based on the work of John Sinclair (1991), who suggests that “language is not created by

words used in isolation from one another, but rather from words used in combination” (Vessey, 2016, p. 64) thus highlighting the importance of context in the understanding of meaning, which can be studied using corpus linguistics tools through frequency and statistical significance of linguistic patterns. According to Vessey, “the goal of corpus linguistics ... is to develop a theory of meaning from corpus data” (p. 64).

Corpora can be available for download or online access such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and British National Corpus (BNC). Such corpora represent *general* corpora because they contain a variety of written and spoken texts from different genres and disciplines (McEnery et al., 2006; Baker, 2006). The COCA, for example, contains more than 520 million words from transcripts of spoken interviews and conversations, fictional writings, newspapers, magazines, and academic texts (Davis, 2008). In contrast, some corpora tend to be more *specialized*, focusing for example on a certain domain, genre, topic, or language variety (McEnery et al., 2006; Baker, 2006), such as the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) which includes only spoken language from an academic setting, and the CHILDES corpus which includes language used by children. Specialized corpora can be available online or can be built by researchers for their own research purposes, like the corpus in this study. Such corpora have also been referred to as ‘Do it yourself’ (DIY) corpora (McEnery et al., 2006). The corpus of this study falls under this category. The process of building and managing the corpus is further discussed below.

Techniques for analysis in corpus linguistics. To perform a corpus analysis, a corpus tool is needed to retrieve and explore the data. Such a tool “allows the texts to be rapidly searched, in order to find, list, sort, and count words, phrases, and grammatical

patterns” (Stubbs & Halbe, 2013, p. 2). Some corpus tools are freely available for download, such as the popular Wordsmith and AntConc. Others are web-based such as Sketch Engine (Kilgariff, Rychly, Smrz, & Tugwell, 2004), the tool used for this study, which offers users access to a variety of corpora in different languages and allows users to upload their own corpora. Despite differences in their availability and access, all these tools provide the following techniques or processes to carry out the corpus analysis. In what follows, I discuss what each process means and how it may be useful in conducting a discourse analysis:

Frequency and keywords. Frequency is often the first step of a corpus analysis. It refers to a count list of the most frequent words in a corpus (Baker, 2006). Most corpus tools allow researchers to generate a list with every word in a corpus along with their given frequencies. Frequency counts are usually used in some sort of comparative analysis, by comparing frequency lists of two corpora, or are used as a starting point or lead for further analyses. Frequency lists are very important in drawing researchers’ attention to interesting patterns that may not be obvious with a manual inspection of texts. A related technique to frequency is keywords, or “words that occur statistically more often” in one corpus when compared with another (general) corpus (Baker, 2006, p. 125). Keywords can direct researchers to investigate terms that are specific to a certain discourse or that may not be apparent in the frequency list. For example, a keywords analysis can be used to find cultural differences between two corpora or genre specific words or phrases (Baker, 2010).

While frequency and keyword lists can be helpful in identifying and examining the topic or focus of a corpus and its properties, their use is limited when it comes to

discovering the ways in which words are actually used in a corpus and in examining the kind of discursive patterns and strategies surrounding these words (Baker, 2006, 2010). A closer look at these words through other techniques such as collocations and concordances may reveal such information. Thus, frequency and keyword lists will be used in this study as a ‘point of entry’ to the corpus by indicating recurrent patterns that can be subject to a detailed collocational and concordance analyses.

Collocations. One way to look at how individual words are used in a corpus is through a collocation analysis. Collocation refers to “a lexical relation between two or more words which have the tendency to co-occur with a few words of each other in running text” (Stubbs, 2001, p. 24). For example, Stubbs found that the word *provide* frequently collocates with words that describe what people need, such as *assistance*, *information*, and *help*. Collocations provide a way to understand the meaning and behavior of a word, as Firth (1957; as cited in Baker, 2006) states “You shall know a lot about a word from the company it keeps” (p. 11). Such information can be identified with the analysis of corpora rather than a closed analysis of single texts. In terms of conducting a discourse analysis, collocations can be very helpful in identifying “subtle meanings and connotations that a word possesses” and which reflect an ideological position (Baker, 2010, p. 25). For example, Mautner (2007) has examined the collocates of the word *elderly* and noticed that it strongly collocated with negative descriptions such as *disabled*, *sick*, and *handicapped*, rather than representations that are focus on empowerment.

Collocations are calculated using different statistical measures that emphasize “relationships of frequency and exclusivity” (Baker, 2010, p. 24). A frequency-based

technique involves counting the number of times a word occurs with another within a specified contextual range of the examined word (e.g., 5 words to the left and 5 words to the right). Baker (2006; 2010), however, indicates that frequency is not the same as saliency. A word like ‘said’, for example, can frequently co-occur with a word like politician, but is likely to frequently co-occur with other words. Thus, researchers often rely on measures of exclusivity such as the mutual information (MI) score, which is “calculated by examining all the places where two potential collocates occur in a text or corpus” and then calculating the probability of these two words to occur with each other “based on the relative frequencies and overall size of the corpus” (Baker, 2006, p. 101). If they tend to be located close to each other and rarely apart, the two words will receive a high MI score. A score of 3 or more tends to be considered significant (Baker, 2006; McEnery et al., 2006). While useful in measuring collocations, MI tend to give high scores to low frequent or rare words in a corpus, whose co-occurrence may not be frequent enough to reveal patterns of collocation. Another method which tends to reveal more lexical collocations is the *Dice Coefficient*. Sketch Engine, the tool used for this study, uses a form of dice coefficient called *logDice* to calculate collocations, and has been argued to provide the best way of measuring collocations (Curran, 2004). Because of its potential and availability on Sketch Engine, this measure was used for this study when conducting a collocations analysis.

Collocates of a word tend to be presented by the corpus tool in a table and arranged, depending on measures used and the score they received. Collocations can also be presented in a collocational network in order to show how the collocates interact with a word and with each other. For example, Baker (2006) has generated a collocational

network of the word ‘elderly’ and found a set of associations that indicate permanent hospitalization and physical disability without the need of hospitalization. While such networks can be produced manually, it can also be done automatically using Graphcoll, a free tool for the analysis of collocational networks (Brezina, McEnery & Wattam, 2015). I use this tool along with the analysis of collocations on Sketch Engine to examine associations between words and discuss their role in constructing discourses.

Concordances. A concordance is basically “a list of all the occurrences of a particular search term in a corpus, presented within the context that they occur in” (Baker, 2006, p. 71). This context consists of a few words on the left and right of the word and can be expanded to its full context if needed. Concordances allow researchers to examine individual words within their context in more detail and explore the surrounding discourse, which in turn allow them to answer questions of not only how but why a certain word was used. For discourse analysts, concordances are often the most useful tool in uncovering discourses and exploring discursive strategies, as well as examining *semantic prosodies* or “items that do not belong to a semantic set, but which have in common a particular attitudinal meaning” (p. 251). For example, it has been observed that the word *cause* has a negative prosody because it frequently collocated with words that denote negative attitudes such as *trouble*, *damage*, and *concern* (Stubbs, 2001). Uncovering such information through concordances makes this type of analysis particularly useful in providing qualitative evidence of how words behave, before making claims based on frequency counts and collocations. The use of the concordance tool is especially useful when analyzing a corpus of tweets because it allows the view of the entire tweet in each line (depending on the specified context) rather than a limited

associated context as in corpora of other, longer texts. In this study, I rely extensively on the analysis of concordances to uncover the different discourses, positions, and discursive strategies employed by the Twitter users in their debates around the issue of women driving.

Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies

Tognini-Bonelli (2001) distinguishes between two discourse analytic approaches to corpus analysis: *corpus-based* research and *corpus-driven* research. She uses the former to refer to the use of corpora to “expand, test or exemplify theories and descriptions that were formulated before large corpora became available” which is unlike earlier research that have relied on researchers’ reflections on language use or native speaker intuition (p. 65). In contrast, corpus-driven research is more inductive, relying on corpus data to provide theoretical statements that reflect the data. It has been argued that such a distinction is overstated, as it is often impossible to naively approach a corpus (Baker, 2010; McEnery et al., 2006). Others have used the term *corpus-assisted discourse studies* (CADS) to refer to “the set of studies into the form and/or function of language as *communicative discourse* which incorporate the use of computerised corpora in their analysis” (Partington, Duguid & Taylor, 2013, p. 96). This term was proposed as a way to refer to a branch of studies that utilize quantitative methods from corpus linguistics in conducting a discourse analysis. According to Partington et al. (2013), the aim of such an approach is to uncover meaning that may not be readily obvious when just doing a close qualitative analysis of a small sample of study. Partington et al. (2013) argue that people use language semi-consciously and make semi-automatic choices of linguistic forms, and

patterns of these forms may not be “readily available to naked-eye perusal” (p. 11).

However, they suggest that

[b]y combining the so-called quantitative approach, that is, statistical overviews of large amounts of the discourse in question - more precisely, large numbers of tokens of the discourse type under study contained in a corpus - with the more qualitative approach typical of discourse analysis, that is, the close, detailed analysis of particular stretches of discourse - stretches whose particularly interesting nature may well have been identified by the initial overview - it may be possible to better understand the processes at play in the discourse type. It may be possible, in other words, to access such non obvious meanings. (p.11)

In a similar vein, Baker (2006, 2010) indicates that language is a system of choices and that language users’ choices, whether conscious or unconscious, are not arbitrary, but reflect a certain ideological position. Through corpus-assisted analysis of a large amount of data, it is possible reveal evidence for preference or “repetitions or patterns which may run counter to intuition and are suggestive of discourse traces” (Baker, 2010, p. 124).

While it has not been assigned to a certain discourse analysis approach, corpus-assisted approaches to discourse analysis or CADS has often been associated with critical discourse analysis, and viewed as a way to overcome some of the perceived weaknesses of CDS. The reason is that many discourse analysis methods, especially CDS, have been criticized for their focus on qualitative analysis of a few, selectively chosen texts. Stubbs (1997) argues that critical discourse analysts tend to focus their analysis on “isolated data fragments” (p. 10) or a few linguistic features with “no justification at all that they are representative” (p. 7). He suggests that critical discourse analysts should examine a wide

range of data across several texts before making any generalizations about language use. Similarly, Widdowson (1998, 2000) claims that CDS is usually tendentious (p. 18), relying in its interpretation on the analysts' subjective intuition and agendas. To overcome these limitations, both Stubbs (1997) and Widdowson (1998) suggest the use of CL alongside CDS to reach a "systematic analysis of the occurrence of a particular linguistic feature (grammatical or lexical) across a range of different texts" (Widdowson, 1998, p. 148). Hardt-Mautner (1995) and Baker (2008, 2006) further argue that CL could contribute to and benefit CDS in several ways, including allowing the researcher to analyze and describe a large amount of data "exhaustively rather than selectively" (Hardt-Mautner, 1995, p. 23), and drawing researchers' attention to phenomena that cannot be investigated by examining short individual texts. Baker (2006) adds that while much of the interpretation of CL results remains subjective and depends on the analyst's own ideological views, CL "at least helps to counter some of this bias, by providing quantitative evidence of patterns that may be more difficult to ignore" (p. 92).

Because of the benefits of combining CL with discourse analysis, several studies have employed a combination of these methods in, for example, the study of national identity (Freake, Gentil, & Sheyholislami, 2011), news reports (Jaworska, 2016), and in relation to this study, in the study of language, gender, and sexuality (Baker, 2013, 2014; King, 2013). According to Baker (2013, 2014), gender and language research has commonly involved a close or qualitative analysis of a small number of texts. Baker argues that the reason for this is the need for researchers to do a complex and detailed analysis of texts and contexts to reveal phenomena that are ambiguous and difficult to identify. For example, Mills (2012) argues that analysis of sexism requires close attention

to details because it is now much more covert and indirect, context-bound, and “manifests itself at the level of presupposition, and also through innuendo, irony, and humor” (p. 127). However, Baker (2014) highlights the ways in which corpora can be used with discourse analytical approaches to study language and gender. He argues that CL has been frequently utilized in the study of the linguistic differences between genders, thus working within the difference framework that dominated earlier gender and language research and assumed males and females to be homogenous groups that use language differently. On the other hand, Baker (2014) suggests that corpus analysis does not necessarily have to mean “reification of the gender differences paradigm” but can “offer more complex and varied perspectives about the relationship between language use and identity” (p. 4). Baker cites King’s (2013) study, in which he uses corpus linguistics to collect data from online chat room interactions from a website for gay men and analyzes the way users used language to perform a shared identity. Baker (2016) has also compiled a corpus from a question-answer forum from four countries (US, UK, India, and Philippines) and has utilized corpus linguistic tools to analyze the different gendered discourses invoked. Through comparing frequency lists and analyzing concordance lines, Baker identified gendered discourses that were similar across the four countries (e.g., ‘Mars vs. Venus’ discourse which perpetuates the idea that men and women are fundamentally different), as well as empowering discourses, which were less frequent across all countries, such as the women equity discourse. For this study, I follow this stream of studies by taking a CADS approach, combining tools from corpus linguistics and the discourse-historical approach of CDS to analyze my data. The analysis procedure is further described in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Given the theorization of gender provided in Chapter 3, it makes sense to utilize a critical discourse studies approach. CDS is an interdisciplinary approach that enables the integration of social and feminist theories to interpret and explain the discourse on Twitter surrounding the Saudi ban on women driving and how it intersects with the socio-political factors and power dynamics that have shaped and perpetuated patriarchal gender norms. CDS provides a useful and productive theorization of discourse as a social practice that does not only reflect social phenomena, but also contributes to shaping and modifying them, including gender roles and relations. CDS also provides the analytical tools that enable the operationalization and analysis of the concept of discourse. In this study, I refer to the DHA, one of the main approaches of CDS, because it emphasizes the importance of history in contextualizing and interpreting discourses, focuses on analyzing argumentation in discourse, and operationalizes the concept of discourse in a way that is deemed productive for analyzing the data in this study. DHA is used in this study with CL because of the large size of the data, as well as the benefits of integrating CL in the analysis of discourse. The way I combined these two approaches to perform the data analysis will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Method

Having explored what CDS is and identified the specific CDS approach I draw on in this study, I provide a description of the steps followed in the data collection and analysis. I first unfold the processes of data collection on Twitter, including sampling, cleaning, and organizing the data. Second, I proceed to discussing the procedures of data analysis that are based on the categories proposed by the discourse-historical approach and in conjunction with corpus linguistics techniques.

Data Collection and Management

The data for this research consist of a specialized corpus of Arabic Twitter posts or tweets about the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia. The corpus consists of 5,876 tweets posted in the months of October, November, and December 2015, with a total of 102,586 words. The tweets were collected using a tool that was custom designed by a programmer to capture tweets from Twitter. Such a technique is often called “web scraping,” which is defined as “the process by which data is automatically collected from the websites using custom software” (Page et al., 2014, p. 161). The specifications of the tool were discussed with the programmer, and these mainly included capturing tweets retrieved from a search inquiry on Twitter’s website during a specified time period, as well as transforming the captured tweets into plain text format that will be recognized and processed by a corpus tool. This tool was ready after months of testing and bug fixing. In what follows, I will discuss the processes of sampling, organizing, and analyzing the data.

Sampling. In choosing an appropriate sample to capture from Twitter so that the research questions can be answered, I focused on the following two selection criteria that

are relevant to social-streaming data from websites: *time* and *search term*. Data from Twitter represent a form of *social-streaming* data, a kind of data that is “episodic” in nature, as it appears on users’ streams over time (Zappavigna, 2012). According to Page et al. (2014),

most [social media] services incorporate some form of ‘streaming’ capability whereby a user can broadcast a chronologically organized ‘feed’ of information (e.g., status updates, blog posts and vlogs) that can be delivered to other users in near real-time, depending on how other parties choose to consume their social media feeds. (p. 160)

Posts on Twitter, whether on a user’s home page or grouped around a hashtag, appear chronologically, depending on when they were posted. Commonly, contextual factors, such as crises, natural disasters, or holidays, affect the quantity and quality of talk generated on social media. That is, “people will often post about events as they happen and about topics that are on their mind at a particular time, often in reaction to shared situations” (Page et al., 2014, p. 161). Discussions on certain topics may decrease after the related events are over. Thus, choosing an appropriate time and duration to take a snapshot of the data for analysis is a crucial factor when sampling social-streaming data. To gain better insights into how people debate on the women driving issue, I chose to collect tweets posted during the months of October, November, and December 2015. The reason is that October marks the anniversary of the October driving campaign that started in 2011, and it is the month during which many activists become very engaged online in posting messages and videos to reiterate their demands to drive. Such activities have generated several discussions and responses on Twitter about women driving, and they

have continued in the months that followed, albeit at a slower rate. In addition to the continuation of discussions on the driving issue, the collection of the data over three months served the purpose of including a wider variety of responses and diversity of positions on women driving, in general, and not just in relation to the driving campaign.

In addition to specifying an appropriate time period to capture the tweets, all topic-related tweets on women driving during this period had to be retrieved and collected using the custom-made tool. Public tweets on certain topics can be retrieved on Twitter's homepage by using either a *hashtag* or *keyword* search. While the feature of the hashtag seems to be appropriate in retrieving all the tweets on women driving, Burns et al. (2013) have drawn attention to several drawbacks of creating a Twitter dataset with the use of hashtags. They state that hashtags are intentionally included by users who wish to participate in conversations or discussions on a specific topic, which means that hashtag datasets only contain posts whose users were aware of a certain hashtag or felt motivated to include in their posts. Furthermore, hashtags may be picked up by spammers, resulting in the generation of a large number of spam messages or automated posts, which means that hashtag datasets may likely include irrelevant posts (Burns et al., 2013).

Keywords, on the other hand, refer to words or phrases about a certain topic that may appear in a post. Unlike hashtags, keyword datasets from Twitter “contain fragments of [a] wider conversation” and can thus provide more diverse insights into how different people think, rather than what a small number of users are talking about, that is, the users who included hashtags in their posts (Bruns et al., 2013, p. 75). Thus, instead of using hashtags, I decided to use the Arabic keywords قيادة المرأة (*women driving*), combined. On

Twitter's advanced search page, I inserted the keywords to retrieve all the topic-related tweets, and restricted the results to those tweets generated during the specified time period (October–December 2015). I then used the custom-made tool to capture all the resulting tweets and transfer them into a plain text file. The tool only captured tweets in their textual format. Any visual materials, including images and videos, were not captured, as this study will focus only on the analysis of written texts. Upon inspection of the results, the tweets appeared diverse and contained different positions with regard to the driving issue, with no spam. The tweets also appeared to be related to the discussed women's issues in Saudi Arabia, although the keywords used to retrieve them were fairly general.⁴ Any unrelated tweets were filtered out during the close textual analysis.

Retweets, although not very frequent in the corpus, were preserved as they are considered important in revealing what kind of themes or discourses are dominant in the debates.

While the tweets captured for this study were produced almost two years ago, the issue on women driving still persists. Women still cannot acquire driver licenses and are not allowed to drive. Moreover, no campaigns have been launched by activists since the last campaign in 2014. The discussions continue on Twitter and other social media outlets. Likewise, no major incidents or events have occurred to affect decisions on women driving, or have triggered alternative ways of discussing the issue. Thus, the data of this study may be relatively old in the fast-changing digital world, but they can be considered a reflection and a snapshot of the ongoing discussion on women driving and the ongoing struggle of Saudi women to achieve equality.

⁴ This could be due to the fact that Saudi Arabia is the only country in the Arab region where women cannot drive.

Translating into English. While the corpus of tweets was analyzed in its Arabic form, the words in the frequency and keyword lists and the examples included in the paper were translated into English. In an effort to increase the validity of the research, a professional translator who is familiar with Saudi dialects was recruited to verify the translated texts. However, note that equivalences to certain words that are culturally or religiously bound may not be available in English, and, thus, the meaning of these words may have been lost in the translation. This issue was resolved by keeping the original Arabic form “to preserve the essence of the meaning of the culture-bound word” and then explaining its intended meaning or using a comparable English word (Mares, 2012, p. 73).

Finding the right corpus tool. Several tools are available to process and analyze corpora with the use of similar techniques, but these tools do not all work properly with Arabic. Alfaifi and Atwell (2015) have compared and evaluated corpus tools that support the Arabic language. They have found that two tools, Khawas (Al-Thubaity & Al-Mazrui, 2014) and Sketch Engine (Kilgariff et al., 2013), work well with Arabic corpora; these tools allow users to upload their Arabic corpora, display Arabic text in the correct direction (right to left), and display diacritics correctly. Sketch Engine was preferred over Khawas for several reasons. First, Sketch Engine provides users with reference corpora in different languages and currently offers access to seven Arabic corpora, which can be used to perform keyword analysis. In this study, I used the arTenTen corpus, a contemporary Arabic corpus that contains about 5 billion words from a variety of domains and genres (Arts, Belinkov, Habash, Kilgariff, & Suchomel, 2014). The variety of Arabic in the arTenTen corpus is mostly Modern Standard Arabic, which is what most

tweeters used, but it also includes a percentage of Saudi varieties. The availability of such corpora saves time and effort in creating a reference corpus from scratch. Second, Sketch Engine recognizes the hashtag symbol without the need to change its settings, and it treats the words that come after it as one term; that is, it shows hashtag phrases or clauses as single terms in the frequency list rather than treating each word in the hashtagged phrase or clause as a single item. For example, it treats the hashtag #women_driving as one item rather than treating “women” and “driving” as two separate items. This feature is crucial because it prevents the dataset from being skewed. Hashtags tend to be used frequently by Twitter users, and treating the words within them individually forces these words to the top of the frequency list. That is why Sketch Engine is the most suitable tool to process and analyze the data. After the corpus was compiled and the corpus tool was selected, the corpus had to be organized for processing and analysis. This procedure will be discussed in the section below.

Managing Arabic variation on Twitter. Other than finding a very small number of instances of irregular spellings, misspellings, and emoticons (which were filtered out during the close analysis because of their infrequent occurrence), instances of spelling variations in Arabic were also found. This variation can be attributed to the different kinds of Arabic used on Twitter; some users prefer the use of Dialectal Arabic (DA), whereas others use Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) when writing their posts. MSA is the variety of Arabic that is learned in school and is used in formal written and spoken situations, whereas DA is the kind of Arabic that is used in day-to-day communication (Al-Sabbagh & Girju, 2012; Bassiouney, 2009). DA refers to

a large number of Arabic dialects that speakers in the Arabic-speaking world

acquire as their native language. Despite sharing a considerable number of semantic, syntactic, morphological and lexical features with one another and with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) variety, Arabic dialects do substantially differ in almost all language subsystems (i.e., semantics, syntax, morphology and phonetics... etc.). (Al-Sabbagh & Girju, 2012, p. 2882)

In Saudi Arabia, other than MSA, several dialects are spoken in different regions of the country, and these vary in their phonological, morphological, spelling, and lexical structures (Prochazka, 1988). While phonological differences are not a major concern here, other forms of variations should be addressed because of their potential to affect the frequency counts in the corpus. In the compiled corpus, several spelling variations were found. According to Al-Sabbagh and Girju (2012), spelling variation in DA is mainly “due to [the] lack of standard conventional writing” and the “phonetic and phonological differences between MSA and DA” (p. 2884). In writing, these differences are addressed by language users by either retaining the MSA spelling, for example, to demonstrate their level of education, or by simply writing the way they speak (Al-Sabbagh & Girju, 2012). For example, the word امرأة , *woman*, was spelled differently throughout the corpus, such as امراه , امرأة , امرأه , and more. While امرأة appeared first in the frequency list, its spelling variants appeared in other parts of the frequency list. Thus, according to Harvey (2014), “analysts reading frequency and keyword lists cannot take such quantitative information at face value” and that “unless the analyst is prepared, somewhat laboriously, to scour the list manually, such variation will, of course, be overlooked and an inaccurate frequency reading [will be] obtained” (p. 78). To overcome issues on spelling variation, Harvey (2014) suggests manually examining frequency and keyword lists for spelling variation

“as a way of deriving more reliable frequency information” and “ensur[ing] a further degree of quantitative validity” (p. 78). Therefore, I manually inspected the frequency list for spelling variations and used the “find-and-replace” function in my word processor to facilitate the process of correcting the spelling of several words (King, 2009). If differences in spelling were found between words, the MSA spelling was used. For example, all the various spellings of المرأة , *women*, in the frequency list were located and replaced with the MSA spelling.

While problems on spelling variation can be solved to a certain degree, accounting for the variation in morphology and dialectal lexical choices posed a more difficult challenge to overcome. For example, the DA word تسوقون , *you drive*, was also spelled as تسوقو , with the suffix و to mark the plural form instead of ون , which corresponds to the dialect in Saudi Arabia’s western region. Some users also chose the word تقودون , which represents the MSA term for the two previous words. This variation not only affects the frequency and keyword lists but also word collocations, as different words with the same meaning may be used with a certain term, but their infrequent association with that term may prevent them from scoring high in the collocations list.

One way to overcome morphological variation is through *lemmatization*, which involves restoring words with different morphological structures into their basic form or *lemma*. Sinclair (1991) defines lemmatization as “the process of gathering word-forms and arranging them into lemmas or lemmata” (p. 173). For example, the different form variations of the word *give* (e.g., *gives*, *giving*, *gave*) will be lemmatized into the lemma *give*, and their occurrences will be regarded as an occurrence of that lemma (Sinclair, 1991).

Lemmatization can be done manually by alphabetically arranging the frequency list and manually locating different forms of a word, or by automatically using computational tools, such as MADAMIRA, a lemmatizer for MSA and the Egyptian dialect. While such a process may be beneficial in overcoming morphological variation in a corpus, several corpus linguists have drawn attention to its drawbacks and empirically proved the differences in meaning and pattern of usage between different forms (Sinclair, 1991; Sinclair & Renouf, 1988; Stubbs, 1993, 1996; Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Sinclair (1991) writes against the commonsensical belief that the meanings from words can always/already be consistently interpreted; instead, these meanings vary greatly between word forms. Sinclair and Renouf (1988), for example, have conducted a corpus analysis of the words *certain* and *certainly*, and they have concluded that despite the simple morphological variation of these two forms, they have distinct meanings and behavioral patterns. Tognini-Bonelli (2001) support this finding when he analyzed the words *face* and *faced* and questioned whether they should be regarded as forms of one lemma. In attempts to automatically lemmatize a sample of the compiled corpus in the study, I found that words with completely distinct meanings were grouped under one lemma. For example, the words *الدولة*, *the country*, and *الدولي*, *international*, were assigned the lemma *دول*, and reducing them to their lemmas obscured the different senses of their meaning.

More importantly, lemmatizing words would also obfuscate the differences in their patterns, especially with respect to their collocates. According to Stubbs (1996), different forms of a lemma may have different collocational patterns. For example, Stubbs argues that while the words *educate* and *education* may be assigned to the same lemma, their collocates are markedly different, with *education* collocating with words

that refer to institutions (e.g., university), and *educate* with near synonyms (e.g., enlighten, inform). Similarly, Sinclair (1991) has argued that the words *eye* and *eyes* can “hardly [have] any common environment” and that “they do not normally have the capacity to replace each other” (p. 16). Furthermore, Tognini-Bonelli (2001) points out that not only do word forms have different patterns, but these differences may also result in different semantic profiles for each word, with some words having positive or negative connotations, depending on their collocational patterns.

Lastly, Flowerdew (2012) argues that “even in cases where the meaning does remain constant across different word forms, lemmatization would of course conceal in a frequency list which forms of a particular lemma are used or are the most common in the corpus” (p. 12). This observation was evident in the compiled corpus around many words. For example, the word حق, *right*, had 161 occurrences in the corpus, whereas its morphological variants يحق, *entitled*, and حقّي, *my right*, occurred less than 10 times in the entire corpus. For all of these reasons, lemmatizing the corpus to overcome morphological variation was deemed counterproductive. Instead, the analysis of collocations was done by using the collocations technique in the corpus software and by conducting a manual inspection of concordances to identify collocational patterns that may not be retrieved by the corpus tool.

Ethical considerations. Twitter’s privacy policy indicates to its users that Twitter data are public. Twitter’s privacy policy includes the following statement:

Twitter broadly and instantly disseminates your public information to a wide range of users, customers, and services, including search engines, developers, and publishers that integrate Twitter content into their services, and organizations ...

When you share information or content like photos, videos, and links via the Services, you should think carefully about what you are making public... Our default is almost always to make the information you provide through the Services public for as long as you do not delete it, but we generally give you settings or features, like protected Tweets, to make the information more private if you want. (Twitter, 2016)

Thus, Twitter informs its users of the public nature of their posts and the possible dissemination of their data. It also provides users with options to protect their posts from being displayed publically. As such, the data collected in this study are considered publicly available information and do not require formal ethics approval from a Research Ethics Board. However, because Twitter users are not always aware of the consequences of sending a particular tweet (Baker & McEnery, 2015; Herring, 1996), I did not include the usernames of the tweeters. Note, however, that tweets, if not deleted by the user, can be retrieved by searching for them on Twitter, which could eventually lead to the identification of the user's handle. Thus, I avoided including tweets that may possibly be harmful to the users, as Twitter activities in Saudi Arabia are regulated and subject to certain laws.

Corpus-assisted Discourse Analysis Procedures

The corpus of tweets was analyzed by following the three categories of DHA: *content*, *discursive strategies*, and the *linguistic realizations* of the content and discursive strategies. The way these categories were investigated with the aid of corpus linguistics will be further explained below.

Contents. Similar to the process done by Wodak et al. (1999), the textual analysis conducted in this study is largely thematic; it focused on examining and comparing the posts and views of Twitter users on one topic, the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia, and how this issue intersects with broader themes and dominant views on gender. This approach enables the identification of “the most important aspects and the main strategies and forms of linguistic realization, as well as the overall strategic profile or pattern” of debate around this topic (Wodak et al., 1999, p. 74). However, unlike the process performed by Wodak and colleagues, the thematic content was not specified prior to the analysis; instead, it was allowed to emerge from the data through the use of corpus tools.

As commonly mentioned by corpus linguists, a corpus-based analysis can be performed in several ways. Different analysts use different techniques, depending on the research questions and the kind of corpus they are studying. I found Baker and McEnery’s (2015) approach to be particularly useful for the purpose of this study and in unpacking the corpus and identifying the different themes and strategies drawn upon in the corpus. I first used Sketch Engine, the chosen corpus software in this study, to obtain a frequency and keyword lists and to retrieve the most frequent and salient words in the corpus. The first 100 lexical words in both lists were then categorized based on their topic or semantic category. This limit was set because of the decrease in the frequency count of words. When the meaning or usage of a word was unclear, its concordances were generated and skimmed through to determine its semantic category. Grammatical words were excluded, as they were deemed less helpful in identifying discourses (Baker, 2006; Baker & McEnery, 2015). As Baker and McEnery correctly observed, such a process is subjective and may be imprecise because of the overlap between some categories. That is

why a second coder was recruited to categorize the words in both lists in an effort to avoid imprecision and reduce subjectivity. The categories created by the second coder and I were then compared and discussed for a more reliable categorization.

The above step represents the first stage of the analysis. While it is helpful in organizing the data and finding patterns in the corpus, a more detailed analysis of the words in the defined topic categories is required to “get an impression of the ways that they contribute towards discourses” (Baker & McEnery, 2015, p. 250). Thus, a closer examination of the concordances and collocates of the categorized words from the frequency and keyword lists was needed to explore how the words were used in the corpus, what themes they reflect, and what discursive strategies are drawn upon around the thematic content, including the way gender is constructed and negotiated. Like, Baker and McEnery (2015), it was thought that the 140 characters limit on Twitter posts impose certain limits on the analysis in terms of eliciting themes and discursive strategies. However, the analysis of the words in the frequency and keyword lists provided helpful ways into uncovering the themes and strategies. The concordance analysis was considered sufficient enough to uncover themes and strategies without the need to downsample or downsize the data, as often practiced by analysts (Baker, 2010; Baker et al., 2008). Researchers of, for example, newspaper article or political speech corpora commonly downsize their data to focus on a smaller set of data, such as a particular article or set of texts, and examine how words are used within their full context (Baker, 2010; Baker et al., 2008). However, such a way of downsizing was unnecessary in this study because of the kind of corpus involved, which consists of tweets. With the use of the corpus tool (Sketch Engine), viewing an entire tweet in a single concordance line and

examining how words were used in them, without the need to expand their full context, was possible; in examining the corpora of newspaper articles, the full context of an article needs to be expanded.

Discursive strategies. In the concordance analysis of the different discursive strategies used in the corpus, I draw on the categories proposed by the DHA, as well as the *socio-semantic approach* of van Leeuwen (2008). Note that not all these categories were relevant, with some appearing to be more significant and frequent than the others are. Furthermore, the two processes of identifying themes and using discursive strategies are not separated but intertwined because some discursive strategies were used to identify themes.

Table 1 shows the different discursive strategies proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001) in their analysis. Each of these strategies reflect questions on how persons and things are referred to (*referential strategies*), the qualities and characteristics attached to them (*predication strategies*), the arguments that are put forward (*argumentation strategies*), the perspective from which the names, attributes, and arguments are presented (*perspectivization strategies*), and the degree of linguistic intensification or mitigation involved (*intensification/mitigation strategies*). These strategies have been defined as follows:

- *Referential strategies* are discursive strategies “by which one constructs and represents social actors” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 45), for example, by building in-groups and out-groups and possibly creating positive self-representation and negative other-representation.

- *Predicational strategies* are “the very basic process[es] and result[s] of linguistically assigning qualities to persons, animals, objects, actions, and social phenomena” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 54). Predication is achieved through attributes, predicates, collocations, comparisons, similes, metaphors, and other rhetorical methods (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).
- *Argumentation strategies* are utilized to justify a certain point of view or certain representations or attributes. Arguments can be justified by means of *topoi* (sg *topos*), which are defined as “formal or content-related warrants or ‘conclusion rules’ which connect the argument(s) with the conclusion, the claim” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 110). In other words, it is the underlying scheme of an argument. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) provide a list of *topoi*, such as the *topos of humanitarianism* and *topos of comparison*. *Topoi* will be referred and explained in the findings chapter (Chapter 6).
- *Perspectivization strategies* reflect speakers’ involvement in discourse and the positioning of their viewpoints.
- *Mitigation/intensification strategies* reflect the degrees of explicitness and certainty that affect “the epistemic status of a proposition” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 81).

While perspectivization and mitigation/intensification strategies are represented as separate categories, KhosraviNik (2010) argues that they are manifested at all levels, affecting and influencing referential, predicational, and argumentation strategies.

According to KhosraviNik (2010), “[a]ll linguistic products are *perspectivized* as they are essentially *choices* and can extend from choosing (or not) a certain word to a macro-topic” (p. 58). Similarly, mitigation and intensification can be used at all levels to “topicalize or de-topicalize” a certain position or point of view (p. 57). Thus, the main

Table 1. *A selection of discursive strategies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 94)*

Strategy	Objective	Devices
referential	discursive construction of social actors, objects/phenomena/events and processes/actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • membership categorization devices, deictics, anthroponyms, etc. • tropes, such as metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches • verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions, etc.
predication	discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events/processes, and actions (more or less positively or negatively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stereotypical, evaluative attribution of negative or positive traits (e.g., in the form of adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctive clauses, etc.) • explicit predicates or predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns • collocations • explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors, and other rhetorical figures (including metonymies, hyperboles, litotes, and euphemisms) • allusions, evocations, presuppositions/implicatures, etc.
argumentation	justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • topoi (formal or more content-related) • fallacies
perspectivization, framing, or discourse representation	positioning speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deictics • direct, indirect, or free indirect speech • quotation marks, discourse markers/particles • metaphors • animating prosody, etc.
intensification, mitigation	modifying (intensifying or mitigating) the illocutionary force and thus the epistemic, or deontic, status of utterances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diminutives or argumentatives • (modal) particles, tag questions, subjunctive, hesitations, vague expressions, etc. • indirect speech acts (e.g., question instead of assertion) • verbs of saying, feeling, thinking, etc.

focus will be in analyzing the first three strategies with reference to “*how* they were incorporated in a text; that is, “what linguistic mechanisms are employed in *perspectivizing* [their] presence” (KhosraviNik, 2010, p. 64). To uncover such mechanisms in my corpus, I referred to the categories proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001). I also referred to the categories from van Leeuwen’s approach, particularly discursive strategies for representing social actors and the construction of legitimation.

Social actors. In analyzing how social actors are represented, I also draw on van Leeuwen’s (2008) framework as it provides a broader and practical framework for identifying social actors through various linguistic mechanisms. The framework focuses on the identification of socio-semantic categories and linking them to their linguistic and rhetorical realizations. van Leeuwen provides a range of categories in his classification of social actors and discusses the ideological effects of these categories. Within this framework, social actors are viewed as being included or excluded in a text. When included, social actors can be activated or passivated, named and categorized, functionalized in terms of their activities, or referred to generically or specifically. They can be excluded by suppression, in which no reference to social actors is made, or by backgrounding, in which social actors are not mentioned in relation to a certain action, but elsewhere in the text.

Legitimation. I likewise used van Leeuwen’s approach in the analysis of argumentation. In addition to the argumentation strategies proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001, 2009), I referred to van Leeuwen’s framework in the discursive construction of legitimation to examine how certain arguments and views were justified. According to van Leeuwen, legitimation as an argumentation strategy provides “reasons

that either the whole of a social practice or some part of it must take place, or must take place in the way that it does” (p. 20). Legitimation has often been associated with power and described as a mechanism through which power is justified, as well as contested and challenged, or delegitimized (van Dijk, 1998). According to Al-Tahmazi (2015), legitimation as a discursive argumentation process can be *action oriented*, “achieved by recontextualizing social actions to present them as il/legitimate and un/justified,” and/or *actor oriented*, “achieved by characterizing social actors as il/legitimate claimants of power” (166). As will be shown in the corpus, both action and actor-oriented legitimation can be used simultaneously to amplify and reinforce their effect (Al-Tahmazi, 2015). While actor-oriented (de)legitimation can be explored through the referential and predication strategies proposed above, action-oriented legitimation can be analyzed with reference to the four categories proposed by van Leeuwen (2008), two of which were most relevant to this study:

- *Authorization*: legitimation by reference to some kind of authority, such as an institution, the law, a person, or customs and traditions
- *Moral evaluation*: legitimation by reference to values and morals

The analysis was not linear, but it involved moving back and forth between these levels of analyses, as well as the socio-historical context, to obtain a better understanding of how and why certain themes and discursive strategies were invoked.

Linguistic means of realization. In the investigation of what linguistics means are involved in the linguistic realization of contents and discursive strategies, I refer to Reisigl and Wodak (2009) and van Leeuwen (2008) and the linguistic means of realization proposed in their models. Because I am using CL to conduct the analysis, I

focus primarily on lexical items, including single words (e.g., nouns, adjectives, etc.) and collocates. I also focus on syntactic structures, particularly those involved in the representation of social actors (e.g., the use of passive voice to obscure agents of an action). A discussion of the linguistic means utilized by tweeters in their discussions will be further elaborated on in the findings chapter.

Conclusion

In summary, the data of this study consist of a corpus of Twitter posts that discuss and debate the Saudi ban on women driving. The processes of corpus building and management were met with several challenges, including managing spelling variation and finding a suitable corpus tool to process the data. I have addressed these issues in this chapter and discussed ways to overcome them. The corpus was analyzed based on the three categories proposed by the DHA (i.e., content, discursive strategies and their linguistic realizations), and with the aid of corpus linguistics techniques. The findings of this analysis procedure will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Findings

In the last chapter, I outlined the methods of data collection and analysis. In this chapter, I present and discuss the data analysis findings. The first section focuses on the thematic categorization of the frequency and keyword lists. The remainder of the chapter is divided into two sections: one devoted to discussing pro-driving discourses and the other for anti-driving discourses and how gender roles and relations are negotiated. For each section, a discussion will be presented on the different thematic contents invoked in each data set and the various discursive strategies, patterns of argumentation and linguistic realizations employed by the tweeters. Overall, the findings of the textual analysis reveal a wide spectrum of opinions and arguments, and levels of confrontation and challenge against established modes of femininity and masculinity.

Thematic Categorization of the Frequency and Keyword Lists

The data collected consisted of tweets ($n = 5876$) posted on the issue of women driving in Saudi Arabia. The first step to unpacking the corpus was to generate a list of the most frequent and salient words in the corpus. The 100 most frequent words and keywords in the driving corpus, including hashtags, were explored and categorized according to their topic or theme (see Table 2). Some words in the keyword list were not included in Table 2 due to their very low frequency in the corpus (less than 20). Such categorization can be indicative of what kind of themes may be present. For example, the words الدين *religion* and الشيخ *Sheikh* clearly reference religion. However, there was a great deal of variance in terms of how these words were used in the corpus, how their meanings unfolded, and how they reflected key discourses.

For the words in Table 2, it appeared that sometimes the same word, or the same discourse, was employed in different discourse positions. Religion, for example, was found to be a dominant factors in shaping Saudi women's situation in the country, and is considered one of the main sources for legitimating the ban on women driving (see Chapter 2). Thus it might not be surprising to see themes of religion circulate in ways that conform to, maintain, and reinforce the status quo. While it is clear from Table 2 that religion was invoked in the corpus around several words, a closer examination of these words reveals that religion was often cited to *support* women's driving, and delegitimize religious views that are explicitly patriarchal. These narratives and counter-narratives reflect the idea that "counter-discourses can pick up arguments from dominant discourse and subvert their meaning" (Jäger & Maier, 2016, p. 50), which also corresponds to Butler's (1990) argument that gender meanings and norms are often negotiated within the dominant discourses that give rise to them.

For every word, it was necessary to obtain its collocates and concordances in order to identify how they were used and what views they reflected and how. In other words, I asked, by what discursive strategies and linguistic means were they able to construct their discourse position? In response to this question, I found that the majority of users were mainly divided between those who support women's driving and those who are against it, and that each side referred to thematic contents and utilized several discursive strategies to argue for or against allowing women to drive.

Table 2. *Semantic categorization of the frequency and keyword lists*

Semantic category	Words	Translation
Women driving	قيادة, القيادة, قيادتها, بقيادة, تسوق- تقود, تسوق, يسوقون, بالقيادة, أسوق سيارتها, للسيارة, السيارة- سيارة, سيارات قيادة المرأة للسيارة# قيادة المرأة#, قيادة المرأة السعودية للسيارة# لن نسمح بقيادة المرأة للسيارة أحلام قيادة المرأة السعودية للسيارة خطر# بن نحيث يوافق قيادة المرأة للسيارة# #جرائم منع القيادة#, أسوق بنفسي	Driving, the driving, her driving, to drive, she drives, we drive, they drive, in the driving, I drive her car, the car, cars #women_driving_cars #women_driving #saudi_women_driving #we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive #Ahlam_saudiwomen_driving_is_dangerous #bin_Nahit_approves_women_driving #I_drive_myself, #driving_ban_crimes
Driving campaign	#مسيره أكتوبر للقيادة#, مسيرة أكتوبر للقيادة, #, #قيادة26أكتوبر قيادة_26أكتوبر @ToDrive0	#October_driving_march, #October26driving
Religion	الله, والله, الشيخ, حرام, الدين, تحريم, حسيبي, اللهم, يجوز, داعش, خلوة	God, and God, Sheikh, forbidden, religion, prohibition, O God, suffice, permitted, Daesh, to be alone with
Rights	حق, حقوق, حقوقها, حرية	Right, rights, her rights, liberty
Society/ country	السعودية, المجتمع, السعودية#, الدولة, السعودي, بالسعودية, البلد, الحكومة, السعودية, الوطن, الشعب, @KingSalman, ,	Saudi Arabia, the society, #saudiArabia, the state, Saudi, in Saudi Arabia, the country, the government, Saudi, our homeland, the people, @KingSalman
Drivers	سائق - سواق, السائق- السواق, أجنبي, السائقين, السواقين#, سائق يختطف طالبه ويغتصبها, المرأة- امرأة, للمرأة, الرجال, الرجل, نساء, رجل, رجال, وحدة, ملكة	Driver, the driver, foreign, drivers, the drivers, #driver_kidnaps_and_rapes_a(female)student .
Gender terms		women, for women, men, man, women, someone, queen.
Other	ضد, العالم, منع, يقول, قضية, موضوع, يعني, قرار, اليوم, يوم, السماح, سبب, وقت, الموضوع, الوقت, أمر, مشكلة, الأمر, ضرورة, أفضل, المشكلة, البعض, أكبر, يقولون, ترى, حكم, المنع, يمنع, أصبحت#, السماح بالسينما في السعودية	against, the world, prevention, say, issue, subject, means, decision, today, some day, permitting, reason, time, the subject, the time, issue, problem, the matter, necessity, better, the problem, some people, bigger, they say, by the way, rule, the ban, ban, became, #permitting_cinema_in_SaudiArabia.

These dichotomous tensions informed the two parts upon which the analysis is divided:

one section that focuses on anti-driving views and another that discusses pro-driving

views. More specifically, I will critically examine how each side argues for and/or

legitimizes their opinions, and how they discuss gender roles and relations. It should be

noted, however, that there are some posts that did not quite reflect the opposing sides. For example,

- مع العلم أنا مع قيادة المرأة للسيارة وبشده ولاكن ب قوانين driving **but with regulations (rules)**
- سايق يختطف طالبه ويغتصبها أنا مع قيادة المرأة للسيارة وهذا للضرورة مع إيجاد قوانين لحمايتها، أما (#a driver_kidnaps_and_rapes_a female student. I am with women driving because it is necessary as long as it will be associated **with laws that protect them.** However, surrendering her to a driver to be alone with, this is cuckoldry)
- قيادة المرأة للسيارة تهيئة الظروف المناسبة من مراكز خدمة السيارات والخدمات على الطريق وبعدها (Women driving. **Creating the right conditions with car service centers and services on the road,** then they will drive. I am with their driving but not now)

However, at a closer look, such posts seem to be reflecting a more constricting view of women driving by requiring the establishment of laws and regulations that ensure the protection of women. According to van Dijk (1998), such propositions often reflect instances of denial of discrimination which speakers and writers often use to project a positive self-image by appearing for example tolerant, progressive but a negative or restrictive attitude towards another social group. A detailed discussion of such tweets will be provided in the anti-driving section.

In addition, the majority of tweets in the corpus reflected views that support women driving rather than oppose it. This finding was supported by results from coding the corpus according to their level of support (i.e., with, against or neutral) towards allowing women to drive. The results of the coding indicate that 68% of tweets show support towards allowing women to drive while 22% of the tweets reflect views that are against granting women such right, and 11% of the tweets not clearly siding with either

camp (e.g., هل تؤيد قيادة المرأة للسيارة ؟ *Do you support women driving?*, or إستفتاء في *Questionnaire on #women_driving please participate*).
المرجو المشاركة #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة

Consequently, the discussion of pro-driving discourses is lengthier than that of the anti-driving side. However, building on the context provided in the previous chapter, I start in the following section with discussing anti-driving discourses and examine the kinds of arguments and strategies this camp draws to better understand the sources of opposition that have led women, and men, to speak up and demand the right to drive.

Anti-driving Themes and Arguments

In this section, I examine the arguments of anti-driving tweeters. Unlike supporters of women driving, anti-driving tweeters seem to reflect a more ‘conservative’ or ‘traditional’ perspective on society and gender roles. Most of their arguments revolve around concerns that women driving will doom and chisel away at the stability and morality of the society, demonstrating the symbolic attachment of women’s behaviors to the society’s commitment to religion and conservatism. Opponents prefer to reinforce the division of labor between women and men whereby men are depicted as responsible for caring and protecting women who are always/already vulnerable and powerless. In what follows, I discuss the various themes and tensions that circulated, and discuss the different discursive strategies that were adopted in order to preserve the ban on women driving.

Threat and national security. The arguments of anti-driving tweeters tended to revolve around (mis)representations of women driving as a foreign threat to the country’s stability and morality. The argumentative strength of this view can be traced back in the history of Saudi Arabia and especially in relation to the processes of modernization and

urbanization that followed since the discovery of oil. This fast expansion and urbanization of the country was often met with resistance by religious conservatives in the country, who claim that the adoption of foreign technologies, Western values, or ways of life can lead to ‘Westernization’, which would fundamentally provoke the loss of Islamic values and commitments that distinctively characterize the Saudi nation from others (Arebi, 1992). For example, several religious scholars have protested against the introduction of radio and television during the 1960s by claiming that they could bring Western ways of thinking. In their eyes, television is a platform that should be devoted to broadcasting and discussion of religious matters (Schanzer & Miller, 2012). Resistance to such changes was even greater when it came to women’s issues. Throughout the history of Saudi Arabia — and in many other Arab countries — women “were singled out as deserving greater control because they alone could ensure the piety of the nation and its protection from the increasing Westernisation.” (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 110). Women are culturally considered responsible for maintaining the values of the Saudi nation, and so their behavior and appearance is often associated with the religious character of the country. Some think, therefore, that changing the situation of women and their roles entails the loss of what characterizes and define the Saudi society in relation to other world. That is why women’s issues such as women’s education, work, and mobility are usually discussed in relation to Western ideologies that are considered threatening to the religious, conservative, and gendered norms upon which the nation is built to implement, serve, and protect (Al-Rasheed, 2013; AlMunajjed, 1997; Le Renard, 2014).

In the corpus, such conservative and traditional views were frequently reflected by anti-driving tweeters who seem to consider the demands for women driving as a

foreign idea and a threat to the values of the Islamic nation and security of the country; thus, they draw on tactics of fear to legitimize the ban on women driving (Reyes, 2011). This legitimating strategy was achieved through the *topos of threat and danger*, which states that “if a political action or decision bears specific dangerous, threatening consequences, one should not perform or do it” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 77). This topos was generally used in the corpus in response to calls to protest the driving ban in October 2015, and resonated most strongly around words that referred to Saudi Arabia as a nation, such as the words الوطن *motherland*, البلد *the country*, المجتمع *the society*, as well as words that refer to the government such as الدولة *the state* and الحكومة *the government*. As shown in Table 3, many tweeters constructed women driving as a threat to the stability of the country during its war in the south⁵; namely by indicating that the country is ‘at war’ (في حالة حرب), ‘fighting a war’ (تخوض حربا), ‘going through crises’ (تمر بأزمات) and that such demands are considered a ‘breach of security’ (خرق امني) and pose a threat to the ‘country’s security and stability’ (أمن واستقرار الدولة).

⁵ At the time of these tweets were posted, Saudi Arabia was at war against a religious group called *Houthis* at its southern border with Yemen.

Table 3. *Examples of legitimizing the ban on women driving through fear of threat on stability*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
The country, may God protect it, is going through a military, political and economic crises and the liberals' biggest concern is women driving #we will not allow women to drive	، الدولة حرسها الله تمر بأزمات سياسية وعسكرية واقتصادية وأصبح أكبر هم الليبراليين قيادة المرأة للسيارة . #لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
The state is at war and you have nothing but filling up pink or yellow gas #Saudi_women_driving	الدولة في حالة حرب و أنتم فاضيين تعبون بنزين وردي وليموني #قيادة_المرأة_السعودية_للسيارة
#October_driving_march; during this time, the state is in need of everyone's cooperation. I do not think that women driving is more important than the country's security and stability	#مسيره_أكتوبر_للقيادة في مثل هذا الوقت الدولة بأشد الحاجة لتعاون الجميع لا أعتقد أن قيادة المرأة للسيارة أهم من حفظ أمن و استقرار البلاد
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive The country is fighting a war in the south, preparing for an emergency in the north, chasing Daesh (ISIS) here and there and the liberals' concern is women driving!	#لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة/الدولة تخوض حرباً في الجنوب وتتهارب لأي طارئ في الشمال وطارداً داعش هنا وهناك وبنو ليبرال همهم قيادة المرأة !
You (women) are responsible for the country's security during this time of crisis , we reject #women_driving and consider #October_driving_march a security breach that is why #we_will not allow women to drive	أنتن مسؤولات عن أمن الوطن وقت الأزمة برفض #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة واعتبار #مسيرة_أكتوبر للقيادة خرق أمني لذلك #لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
I think we are re-tweeting in the account @Against_Driving. #by order not force you women driving groups, the country's security is more important	الظاهر بنعيد التغريد في حساب @Against_Driving #نظام_وليس_ارغام_بمجموعات قيادة المرأة للسيارة امن الوطن أهم
#women_driving demands and campaigns during this time is wrong. The country is going through a crisis , and we do not need chaos. We disagree on some issues but we agree on patriotism	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة المطالبات والحملات في هذا التوقيت خطأ فالوطن يمر في أزمات لاحتاج لفوضى نختلف في بعض الأمور ولكن نتفق جميعاً بحب الوطن
#women_driving #Saudi_army is defending our homeland to secure all of us with God's protection and the leadership #liberals #sedition	قيادة المرأة للسيارة #الجيش السعودي يدافع عن الوطن ليأمن الكل بحفظ الله ثم القيادة #الليبراليون #فتنة
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive The country is going through war crises and some people's main concern is women driving ,, (fishing in troubled water)	#لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة/الوطن يمر بأزمات الحروب والبعض همّه الأكبر قيادة المرأة ،،، (اصطياد في الماء العكر)
#women_driving; when children see their father struggling, they feel too shy to ask him for a thing and you are just concerned with women driving. There are priorities, the nation's sons are on the southern border	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة الأبناء إذا شوف أبوهم في ضيق يستحي يطلب شيء و أنتم تدور ورا قيادة في شيء اسمه أولويات أبناء الوطن على الحد الجنوبي
#October_driving_march; the country is at war and dealing with sedition and problems and your only concern is women driving? You truly do not have any sense of patriotism.	#مسيره_أكتوبر_للقيادة/البلد في حرب وفي فتن وفي مشاكل وانتوا بس همكم قيادة المرأة للسيارة؟ فعلاً ما عندكم أي إحساس وطني
There is nothing worse than the #liberal_community; the country is at war and racing against time to quell the risks surrounding it and they are busy with movie theaters and #women_driving and their nonsense	ما أقبح #الجالية الليبرالية/البلد يخوض حرباً ويسابق الزمن لقمع المخاطر المحيطة بالوطن وهم مشغولين بالسينما و #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة وبنفاهاتهم

Some Twitter users indicated that women driving demands and campaigns are an outside and foreign threat to national security, patriotism, and hegemonic notions of what constitutes citizenship, and that their strategies and goals for resistance, albeit carefully planned, are questionable (e.g., *يمارس للضغط على الدولة لتحقيق أهداف خارجية باسم حقوق المواطنة to pressure the state and achieve foreign objectives in the name of female citizens' rights*, and *الهشتاقات الفترة التي راحت تستهدف الوطن الغالي ومحاولة إثارة الفتنة the past hashtags target the beloved country and try to foment sedition*) (see Table 4). By drawing on techniques of fear and labeling the demands as a foreign threat, also known as a process of “demonization of the enemy” (Reyes, 2011, p. 790) or *negative ideologisation* (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 52), the ideological affiliations of supporters of women driving were understood as being anti-Islamic and therefore destructive to the entire nation of Saudi Arabia. Linguistically, the process reverberated through words such as *الليبراليين liberals*, *الليبرالية the liberal community*, *التغريبين westernizers*, *اذناب الخارج foreign tails*, and *أعداء الوطن the country's enemies*. While the meaning of the words *westernizers* and *foreign tails* may be clear in denoting affiliation to a foreign (western) country or ideology, the negative connotation of the word ‘liberal’ may not be as clear to non-Saudis. In other words, in the context of SA, ‘liberal’ is usually synonymous with ‘anti-Islamic’. Liberalism or ‘the liberal trend’ (التيار الليبرالي) is often understood as “a reformist ideology derived from the practice of Western liberalism”, although usually with no reference to its original foundation (Dekmejian, 2003, p. 401). It is “an all-inclusive label that encompasses individuals and groups advocating reforms within the existing monarchical order” (Dekmejian, 2003, p. 401), such as modernization and human rights, including women’s rights. However, liberals are usually projected by their

Islamist opponents as ‘secularists’ whose goal is to marginalize and eventually eradicate Islam (Dekmejian, 2003). Thus, supporters of women driving were referred to in the corpus as ‘liberals’ in order to delegitimize their demands regarding women’s rights as being against Islamic values and morals (the sources of gender divisions in the society). Proponents of women driving were also referred to *anonymously* using generalized exophoric references such as هم *they*, أنتم *you*, and indefinite pronouns such as البعض *some people*. Supporters were also anonymized by referring to them collectively as an organized entity for example as تحزبات *partisanships* and الحملات *the campaigns*, and nominally as a مشروع *project*. Such representation and labelling, according to van Leeuwen (2008), are considered strategic in the sense that they “endow social actors with a kind of impersonal authority, a sense of unseen, yet powerfully felt coercive force” (p. 40). Thus, by anonymizing supporters of women driving and representing them as a collective organized group, their threat is amplified.

In terms of predication strategies, the actions and intentions of pro-driving groups were sharply questioned and negatively characterized as being non-patriotic; namely by highlighting the occupation of the government with war and trivializing the concerns of women driving proponents. Attributes such as وأصبح أكبر هم الليبراليين قيادة المرأة *the liberals’ biggest concern is women driving*, and the وبنو ليبرال همهم قيادة المرأة ! *children of liberals’ concern is women driving!*, وانتوا بس همكم قيادة المرأة للسيارة؟ فعلاً ما عندكم *you only concern is women driving? You truly do not have any sense of patriotism* showcased how the demands of the social movement were predicated as destructive and threatening to the country’s stability and security. Other examples included سيقودون البلد والمجتمع لفتنة *they will* تريدون دمار البلد *you want to destruct the country*,

drive the country and society to sedition, فهم يكيّدون له ويحاولون إفساده against it and try to destroy it.

Table 4. *Examples of legitimizing the ban on women driving through fear of a foreign threat*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
Both clips discuss partisanships ((against the state)) such as the women driving campaigns and using the west and signing to pressure [the state]	لمقطعين يتحدّثون عن تحزبات ((ضد الدولة)) يعني امثال حملات قيادة المرأة للسيارة واستخدام الغرب والتوقيع للضغط
The #Saudi_women_driving project is exercised to pressure the state and achieve foreign objectives in the name of female citizens' rights and the country and female citizens are the victims of this project	مشروع #قيادة المرأة السعودية للسيارة يمارس للضغط على الدولة لتحقيق أهداف خارجية باسم حقوق المواطنة و #الوطن و #المواطنة ضحية هذا المشروع
#women_driving violates the country's law? The issue exploits and incites the people against the state? The driving issue is exploited only during indecent times , just like the thinking of those who demand it	#قيادة المرأة للسيارة تخالف انظمة دوله؟ تستغل و تحرض الشعب على الدولة؟ موضوع القيادة ما يستغل الا بأوقات فئره مثل فكر طالبينها
#October_driving_march #women_driving #women_driving_gate_to_westernization, those are liberal, pro-Daesh (ISIS) and ignorant women. They are also rejectionists, westernized, and spoilers of the religion and the state	#مسيره أكتوبر للقيادة #قيادة المرأة للسيارة #قيادة المرأة بوابة التغريب هؤلاء ليبرالية ودواعش ونساء جهله وروافض تغريبين مفسدين لدين و الدولة
Foreigners' lackeys began to discuss the issue of #women_driving, trying to preoccupy the country and citizens with trivial issues .. they fail and will continue to fail	بدأت بعض اثناب الخارج تتحرك بموضوع #قيادة المرأة للسيارة محاولين اشغال الوطن والمواطن بقضايا تافهه .. فشلوا وسوف يستمر فشلهم
#October_driving_march; as usual, the country's enemies (the liberals and advocates of women driving) are only active and moving during times of crises that are rocking the country	#مسيره أكتوبر للقيادة كعادتهم أعداء الوطن (الليبراليين ودعاة قيادة المرأة للسيارة) لا ينشطون ويتحركون الا في وقت الأزمات التي تعصف بالوطن
Recent hashtags have targeted our beloved country and tried to foment sedition .. beware #women_driving	الهاشتاقات الفترة اللي راحت تستهدف الوطن الغالي ومحاولة اثارة الفتنة .. الحذر ثم الحذر #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
King Salman said: the women driving file has been closed.. #women_driving No consolation for those who want to destroy our homeland	، قالها سلمان الحزم : ملف قيادة المرأة للسيارة تم إغلاقه .. #قيادة المرأة للسيارة لا عزاء لمن يريد دمار الوطن
If treason is not about implementing the plans of the country's enemies , then what is treason? #women_driving	إذا لم تكن الخيانة بتنفيذ خطط الأعداء ضد الوطن ، أين الخيانة أجل ؟ #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
Those who crowed during this time, why did post this malignant hashtag at that time?. You want to destruct the country . God destruct your intentions, the devil's grandsons.	ايها الناعقون لماذا بهذا الوقت جاء الهاشتاق الخبيث انكم تريدون دمار البلد دمر الله نياتكم الخبيثة يا احفاد ابليس #قيادة المرأة للسيارة

#women driving	
To Whom It May Concern: the westernized and secular-minded people will drive the country and society to sedition . We hope that scholars and preachers will not tolerate it #women driving	لمن يهمه الأمر: التغريبين أصحاب الفكر العلماني سيقودون البلد والمجتمع لفتنة.. نتمنى من العلماء والدعاة عدم السكوت. #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
The #women driving issue has been confined to the last Muslim society (the Saudi society) that is why they are plotting against it and trying to destroy it	انحصرت قضية #قيادة المرأة للسيارة على آخر مجتمع مسلم (المجتمع السعودي) لذا فهم يكيدون له ويحاولون إفساده

The ‘threat-argumentative’ scheme was further achieved in association with the *topos of law* to represent supporters of women driving as outlaws (see Table 5). Here, the demands of women driving are predicated as ‘violating the country’s laws’ (مخالفة لقوانين), ‘objecting to the state’s laws’ (تعترض على قرارات الدولة), ‘illegal’ (مخالف); thus, supporters ‘should be held accountable’ (يجب ان تحاسب).

Table 5. *Examples of delegitimizing women driving through the use of topos of threat in combination with the topos of law*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; we will not allow her to drive or commit any illegal act.. By what right do you allow yourselves to transgress the bounds of the system and violate the country’s laws? How dare you?	#لن نسمح بقيادة المرأة للسيارة سواء قيادة سيارة أو أي فعل مخالف، بأي حق تسمحون لأنفسكم بتجاوز النظام ومخالفة قوانين الدولة؟ إيش هالجرأه؟
Dear liberals do not object to the state’s laws or else I’ll stick your glasses on your nose. #women driving	عزيزي الليبرالي لا تعترض على قرارات الدولة لا احط نظارتك بخشمتك #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
TopSaudiNews I hope the state will repress those people, and, thus, they will be an example for others and forget about women driving. It violates the country’s laws , they should be held accountable.	TopSaudiNews اتمنى من الدولة قمع هالاشكال حتى يكونون عبره لغيرهم وينسون شيء اسمه قيادة المرأة للسيارة، وهذه مخالفة لنظام الدولة يجب أن تحاسب 1
Her driving is disobedience to her guardian, and it violates the laws and regulations of the state ; it also incites sedition #a citizen_driving_her_car_in_Riyadh_streets #women driving	قيادتها هي خروج عن ولي الأمر، ومخالفة لقوانين وأوامر الدولة، وفيها أشغال للفتنة #مواطنة تقود سيارتها في شوارع الرياض #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
#we_demand_that Loujain Alhathloul be whipped for demanding #women driving, going out immodestly, failing to abide by the country’s laws and rebelling against its values and morals. ! #October 26 campaign	#نطالب بجلد لجين الهذلول لمطالبتها #قيادة المرأة للسيارة وخروجها سافرة، وعدم التزامها بنظام البلد وتمردا على قيمه وأخلاقه. #حملة ٢٦ أكتوبر

The topos of threat and danger of demands for women driving was also evident in corpus around the word اللهم *O Allah* (God), which represents a form of ‘dua’ (دعاء), calling upon God or supplication, to express fear and ask for revenge and protection from the threat of these demands, which were described as threatening the morality of the society: a call for ‘corruption’ (فساد) and ‘sedition’ (فتنة) that targets ‘the honor of Muslims’ (اعراض المسلمين)⁶ (see Table 6). Contrary to pro-driving tweeters’ calls for God to give them justice (allow them to drive and obtain their rights), anti-driving tweeters’ calls reflect a level of fear and desire for suppression and punishment to women driving demands, viewing justice in relation to the preservation of the patriarchal organization which is important to the stability of the society as a whole.

Again, the amplification of this threat is achieved by several referential strategies, including anonymizing the social actors using generalized exophoric references such as هم *them*, and impersonalizing them by using a word such as a ‘door that expands corruption and disgrace’ (كل باب يوسع للفساد والخزي). Through anonymizing and impersonalizing, the identity and role of social actors is backgrounded, which “can lend impersonal authority or force to an action or quality of a social actor” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 47); thus, what is achieved here is an emphasis on the negative actions and effects of the pro-driving demands.

⁶ The use of honor here refers to the sexual use of women’s bodies and in many Arab families. It is connected to the honor of the family, in the sense that the honor of the family is dependent on faithfulness of women in maintaining their modesty (Almunajjed, 1997).

Table 6. *Examples of the topos of threat and danger through dua or supplication*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
#women_driving; O' God in your ability dissolve what is between them and what they desire in the honor of Muslims, and cleanse our country from those who seek corruption and turned to what you forbid	#قيادة_المرأة للسيارة اللهم حل بينهم وبين مايشتهون في أعراض المسلمين بقدرتك وطهر بلادنا من سعي للفساد والتقات عن مانهيت عنه
#women_driving; O' God close any door that expands corruption and disgrace in Muslims' honor and result in your anger.	#قيادة_المرأة للسيارة اللهم أغلق عن المسلمين كل باب يوسع للفساد والخزي في أعراض المسلمين ويوجب غضبك عليهم
Women driving can cause more harm than good , and harassment will aggravated more and more. O' God protect all Muslim women	قيادة المرأة للسيارة ضررها أكثر من نفعها وسيزيد التحرش أكثر وأكثر اللهم استر بنات المسلمين أجمعين يارب
Fear God in your women, as all of you are responsible for his flock. O'God stand against their plans of sedition #women_driving	اتقوا الله في نساءكم فكلكم مسؤول عن رعيته. . . . اللهم رد كيد من أراد الفتنة في نحره #قيادة_المرأة للسيارة
#women_driving; O' God in your ability dissolve what is between them and what they want to do to the honor of Muslims. It will cause many situations involving the honor of Muslims at all times and places. Ask the ignorant	#قيادة_المرأة للسيارة اللهم حل بينهم وبين مايشتهون في أعراض المسلمين كم يتسبب من مواقف في أعراض المسلمين في جميع الأوقات والأماكن أسألو الغر 1
#women_driving will open a door that God only knows what it is. O' God, paralyze those who seek corruption , dissolve what is between them and what they want to do to the honor of Muslims. They also want to spread corruption in the country	#قيادة_المرأة للسيارة سيفتح باب لايعلمه إلا الله اللهم من سعى للفساد شل أركانه وحل بينه وبين مايشتهى في أعراض المسلمين ونشر الفساد في بلادنا

Table 7 below summarizes the different discursive strategies that were utilized within the discourse of threat and national security to construct the demands of women driving as a threat. As the findings illustrate, efforts to allow women to drive and women driving campaigns are perceived as destructive and foreign to the nation's religious and conservative identity.

Table 7. *Summary of the discursive strategies utilized to delegitimize the demands of women driving as a threat*

Discursive strategy	Means of realization	Text in Arabic	Text in English
Referential strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative ideologisation - Indetermination: anonymization - Collectivisation - Impersonalisation 	negative ideologonyms generalized exophoric reference indefinite pronouns collectives inhuman reference	الجالية الليبرالية , التغريبيين اذئاب الخارج هم ,أنتم البعض تحزبات حملات باب	the liberal community westernizers foreign tails they, you some people partisanships campaigns door
Predicational strategies	Predicates	تريدون دمار البلد سيقودون البلد والمجتمع لفتنة	want to destruct the country, will drive the country and society to sedition
	Topos of threat and danger: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to the country's stability - of foreign threat 	الدولة في حالة حرب للضغط على الدولة لتحقيق أهداف خارجية باسم حقوق المواطنة	The country is at war to pressure the state and achieve foreign objectives in the name of female citizens' rights
	Topos of law	مخالفة لقوانين البلد	Against the country's law

Gender differentiation. Comparisons that drew distinctions between men and women and how each understands their traditional roles were mobilized to support the ban on women driving. This strategy, as argued by Baxter (2003), reflects a kind of discourse that forwards “a conventionalised set of ways of differentiating individuals’

identities in the world primarily according to their sex or gender.” (p. 92). Such a way of knowing produces definitions of what comprises acceptable and non-acceptable ways of behaving as a man or women in any given culture or society. As discussed before, gender-related practices in Saudi Arabia are very much institutionalized and embedded within the cultural and social norms. With laws such as the guardianship law, sex segregation, and ban on women driving, different roles are assigned to men and women. Men are considered the breadwinners who have the authority and responsibility to provide for, and protect their families, which in most cases consists of women. Women, on the other hand, are considered vulnerable and weak and thus require to be segregated and under the protection of a male guardian. With restriction on women’s mobility, women are also encouraged to practice their domestic roles as mothers and care givers.

Such views were reflected in the corpus by anti-driving tweeters who justify the ban on women driving by considering driving as a man’s responsibility. This was mostly apparent around the words الرجال, الرجل, and رجال which all mean ‘men’. As Table 8 shows, men are represented as being responsible to ‘protect women’ (حماية المرأة) and ‘manage their house and family needs’ (قيام الرجل بشؤون منزله وعائلته). Men who support women driving are predicated as men who ‘cannot assume their responsibilities as men towards their women’ (لايستطيعون تحمل مسؤولياتهم كرجال تجاه نساءهم), ‘abandoned their responsibilities’ (وتخلى الرجال عن مسؤولياتهم), and ‘men who ... balked’ (تقاعسوا).

Table 8. Examples of the gender differentiation theme

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
Most men who teach women how to drive are those who cannot assume their responsibilities as men towards their women	أغلب الرجال الذين يلعمون قيادة المرأة للسيارة هم ممن لا يستطيعون تحمل مسؤولياتهم كرجال تجاه نساءهم
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; in a country like Kuwait, drivers were indispensable after allowing women to drive, and men abandoned their responsibilities	#لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة في دولة مثل الكويت لم يتم الاستغناء عن السائقين بعد قيادة المرأة للسيارة و تخلى الرجال عن مسؤولياتهم
#women_driving; drivers are not mahrams [unmarriageable kin], staying alone with a foreign man is religiously unlawful. The solution is not the drivers but in men's managing their house and family matters	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة السائق ليس محرماً الخلوة مع الرجل الأجنبي لاتجوز شرعاً الحل ليس في السائق بل هو قيام الرجل بشؤون منزله وعائلته
Islam prevents mixing and ordered men to protect women / the result is our universities are free from harassment, rape or fear/ #women_driving	الإسلام منع الإختلاط وأمر الرجل حماية المرأة/ النتيجة جامعاتنا بدون تحرش اغتصاب وخوف/ #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
#women_driving; my sisters, ask men to give you your rights. Meeting your needs and driving you , with honor, is a right. Do not help him to steal what is left of this right.	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة أخواتي النساء طالين بحقوقكن من الرجل فتأمين طلباتكن وتوصيلكن وأنتن مكرمات معززات حق فلاتساعدوه في سلب ماتبقى من هذا الحق
#women_driving; few women need to drive! but many women have men who can meet their needs but they failed and hired drivers.	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة قليل من النساء يحتاجون للقيادة ! الكثر منهم لديهم رجال باستطاعتهم تلبية متطلباتهم ولاكنهم تقاعسوا واستأجروا السواقين

Similar views were also evident around the word *against* collocating with the word أنا *I am* (forming the phrase أنا ضد *I am against*), in which women are represented as dependable on men who they can ‘depend on’ (يعولها), ‘do the job for them’ (يقومون بهالمهمه), and ‘serve them’ (يخدمك), and as such, ‘do not need the help of anyone’ (ومو محتاجين) and are not in ‘misery’ (الشقى):

- لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة تكلمنا كثير بهالموضوع أنا صحيح أنثى لكن ضد قيادة المرأة للسيارة ويحفظ لنا من يقومون بهالمهمه عنا
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; we talked about this several times. I am a female but against women driving, **may God protect those who do that job for us**
- أنا ضد قيادة المرأة للسيارة، بما أن مامي وخواتي عندهم سواق ومو محتاجين لاحد، يعني جد يابنت شتئين
تزامين بهالشوراع يكفي الزحمة اللي احنا فيها

I am against women driving, since my mom and sisters have a driver and do not need the help of anyone. Seriously girls why do you want to scramble on the street, we have enough traffic congestion

- #لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة اجمل شيء بحياتي وجود شخص يخدمك مثل سواق او ابوك او اخوك .. أنا ضد قيادة المرأة تماما

#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; the best thing in my life is having someone who serves you like a driver or your father or brother. I am completely against women driving)

- #لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة للامانه أنا ضد قيادة المرأة وضد السائق المنزلي إذا توفر من يعولها
Honestly, I am against women driving and against having a driver at home, if a woman has someone she can depend on
- #لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة أنا بنت لكني ضد قيادة السيارة الله يديم علينا ستره والله يخلي لنا آبائنا وإخواننا ليه ندور الشقى لنفسنا

I am a girl but against driving. May God keep His protection and our fathers and brothers. Why do we look for misery

In addition to being dependent on men, women are also represented as vulnerable and needing protection. Interestingly, this ‘women protection’ discourse was mostly apparent around the word حرية *freedom*, which was found to be frequently collocating with the words الوصول *reach*, يريدون *they want*, بل *but*, and إليها *to them* (see Table 9). The high score of these words in the collocate list is due to the repeated occurrence of the sentence: لا يريدون حرية المرأة بل حرية الوصول إليها. *They do not want women's freedom, but freedom to reach them* [women]. The intentions of women driving supporters is questioned and represented as threatening to women's protection, indicating that their real intentions are not in freeing women but in wanting to have an easy access to women, given the gender segregation laws and norms. Grammatically, women in this sentence are positioned as the goal or object of the process of ‘reaching’. Their role as social actors is

inactivated and passivized, in the sense that they are “treated as objects in the representation” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 33). By assigning them as objects that can be ‘reached’, women here are stripped away from their agency and represented as powerless and vulnerable. Thus, banning them from driving is a way to protect them rather than oppress them.

Table 9. *Top collocates of the word حرية freedom.*

Word in Arabic	Word in English	Cooccurrence count	Candidate count	T-score	MI	logDice
الوصول	reach	7	11	2.644	10.901	12.079
يريدون	they want	5	14	2.234	10.067	11.515
بل	but	7	67	2.637	8.294	11.039
اليها	to them	3	5	1.731	10.816	11.030

Some tweeters invoked other themes of protection that did not seem to be completely against women driving, but called for the requirement of certain conditions that guarantee women’s protection. This was achieved discursively through *disclaimers*, using the but-clause (e.g., I am not racist, but..., I am not sexist, but...) (van Dijk, 1998). Such disclaimers were mostly found around the word ضد *against*, collocating with أنا لست *I am not*, and the preposition مع *with* collocating with أنا *I am* (see Table 10). In these posts, while the clauses starting with ‘I am not against’ (أنا لست ضد) and ‘I am with’ (أنا مع) tweeters seemingly accept women driving, the but-clause points to the unsafe environment that will surround women (e.g., ينفتح باب شر كبير *opens the gates of hell*) and demands establishing or approving protective conditions in order for women to drive safely (e.g., للسيارة تهيئة الظروف المناسبة *creating the right conditions*, إيجاد قوانين لحمايتها *finding laws that protect them*, وقيود صارمة *with restrictions and strict rules*).

Table 10. *Examples of delegitimizing the need for driving through disclaimers*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
This is called a breach of security and a challenge to authority. I am not against #women_driving and maybe closer to allow it, but with restrictions and strict rules	#مسيرة_أكتوبر_للقيادة هذا يسمى إخلال بالأمن وتحدي للسلطة أنا لست ضد #قيادة_المرأة للسيارة وقد أكون أقرب للسماح لها ولكن بقبود وشروط صارمة
We are not against women driving and the day will come for her to drive when she is secured with rules, awareness and all means of protection.	@ToDrive0 لسنا ضد قيادة المرأة للسيارة وسياتي يوم تقود السيارة متى ما امن لها النظام والتوعية وكل وسائل الحماية
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive I am not against women driving, but an issue like this cannot be resolved overnight. There are so many things that should be taken into consideration such as women police and its appurtenances	#لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة للسيارة أنا مو ضد قيادة المرأة، لكن موضوع مثل هذا مايجي بيوم وليله، لازم تحسب حساب امور كثيرة مثل شرطه نسائيه وتوابعها
I am with women driving but under conditions from the state.. participate with us #women_driving	!؟ أنا مع سواقة المرأة تحت شروط من الدولة، شاركونا .. #قيادة_المرأة للسيارة
I am with women driving, but it may open the gates of hell: accidents, kidnapping, and harassment. Let us remain on our current situation so we do not regret it #women_driving	أنا مع قيادة المرأة ولكن بينفتح باب شر كبير الحوادث والخطف والتحرش والمضايقات أحسن خلونا على وضعنا الحالي حتى لانندم #قيادة_المرأة للسيارة
By the way, I am with women driving but with regulations (rules)	مع العلم أنا مع قيادة المرأة للسيارة وبشده ولاكن ب قوانين
#a_driver_kidnaps_and_rapes_a_female_student. I am with women driving because it is necessary as long as it will be associated with laws that protect them. However, surrendering her to a driver to be alone with, this is cuckoldry.	سابق يختطف طالبيه ويعتصبها أنا مع قيادة المرأة للسيارة وهذا للضرورة مع إيجاد قوانين لحمايتها، أما تسليمها للسائق والاختلاء بها فهذه ديانة
Women driving. Creating the right conditions with car service centers and services on the road, then they will drive. I am with their driving but not now.	قيادة المرأة للسيارة تهيئة الظروف المناسبة من مراكز خدمة السيارات والخدمات على الطريق وبعدها ستقود لامحالة أنا مع قيادتها ولكن ليس الآن..!
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; I am with women driving, but the animalistic scenes initiated by some young men, such as seeing 8 cars surrounding a taxi, what if a girl is driving by herself, how she will react #barbarians	لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة للسيارة أنا مع قيادة المرأة بس المناظر الحيوانيه من بعض الشباب ٨ سيارات محوطه تاكسي كيف لو بنت لوحدها بتتصرف باقي#همج
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; I am with women driving. Drivers' salaries are 1800 and cars.. But my only problem is with the infrastructure, it is not suitable at all.	#لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة للسيارة أنا مع قيادة المرأة للسيارة راتب السواق ١٨٠٠ وسيارة ... فقط المشكلة عندي بالبنية التحتية غير مناسبه تماماً
We are with #women_driving when proper roads and good traffic movement are available, which should be commensurate with the size of our wealth, the community's awareness and ethics, as well as deterrent laws.	نحن مع #قيادة_المرأة للسيارة عندما تتوفر الطرق والحركة المرورية اللائقة بحجم ثروتنا والوعي والأخلاق المجتمعية الرافعية والقوانين الرادعة

Such use of disclaimers is a form of denial of negative attitudes, for example, racism or

sexism, and it is usually reflective of the contradictory ideological positions of an

individual or a group towards a certain social group or group member. van Dijk (1998)

puts this clearly when he states “[p]eople may adhere both to more or less humanitarian and democratic principles, but at the same time not apply them to certain social relations: for example, those of gender, age or ethnicity.” (p. 93). This discourse is reflected in the arguments in Table 10, where women driving is not being opposed, but the creation of conditions specific for women still perpetuate the ‘women protection’ discourse and the view of women as vulnerable and powerless.

Having discussed the anti-driving camp’s views and understood the arguments that have brought together opponents of women driving, I move now to examining pro-driving discourses and discuss their views.

Pro-driving Themes and Arguments

I use the term *pro-driving* because the themes and arguments invoked strongly express explicit or implicit support of women’s right to drive. The pro-driving perspective can be said to reflect modern, progressive, and critical feminist discourses on gender that challenge normative gender practices, and call for the improvement of women’s conditions (Atanga, 2010). Pro-driving tweeters draw on several discourse topics not just to support women driving, but also to challenge the legitimacy of anti-driving religious perspectives and sentiments, and to promote women’s broader human rights in general. The themes and discourses drawn upon not totally distinct as they sometimes overlap, intersect, and resonate intertextual elements. For example, the discourse on women’s rights is articulated in association with the discourse on religion; that is, calling for women’s rights is justified through intertextual references to religious texts and clerics. In what follows, I will identify and discuss the pro-driving thematic contents in the corpus and look at the different discursive strategies used to legitimize

women's driving and promote change, and/or delegitimize anti-driving religious discourses.

Religion. One of the most commonly cited themes in the corpus was the discourse of religion, which is expected given that religion is considered one of the dominant discourses that legitimizes the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia. While driving in itself is not considered a religiously prohibited practice, the ban is mainly supported by religious clerics who view it in relation to women's modesty and gender mixing; that is, it works against gender segregation practices that require the separation of men and women in public in order to protect women and maintain their modesty. Their arguments echo those of the previous Grand Mufti, Abdulaziz Ibn Baz, who released the following religious opinion, or *fatwa*, when asked about women driving:

There has been a lot of discussion in Al-Jazirah Magazine regarding female driving of cars. Evils and temptations of this measure are well known to everyone including those who call for it. For example, this entails unlawful Khulwah (being alone with a member of the opposite sex), unveiling the face, careless and free intermixing (of men and women), and committing adultery which is the main reason for the prohibition of these practices. (Religious opinion on women's driving, 2016, para. 1)

Thus, women driving is prohibited because of the alleged evil that it leads to. Such arguments have been addressed in the corpus around the words حرام, *Sheikh* (109), *forbidden* (103), الدين *religion* (89), and تحريم *forbid* (45). While the English words *forbidden* and *forbid* may not necessarily be related to religion, their meanings in Arabic differ. In Arabic, the word *forbidden* can be translated to ممنوع, which means *banned* in

general, or it can be translated to حرام, or *haram*, which means that it is religiously forbidden. Hence what is forbidden in general and what is forbidden religiously is expressed differently in Arabic by using different words. An analysis of the collocations and concordances of these words revealed that their occurrences were mostly used to counter anti-driving religious discourse. With the exception of a few tweets, it appeared that most tweeters used several micro-level discursive strategies around these words to denounce and delegitimize the religious establishment and their arguments for banning women driving. Each of these strategies will be further discussed below.

Referential and predication strategies. Referential strategies are discursive strategies “by which one constructs and represents social actors”, whereas predication strategies are “the very basic process[es] and result[s] of linguistically assigning qualities to persons, animals, objects, actions, and social phenomena” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 45). Because referential and predication strategies are closely related and cannot be “neatly separated” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 450), I have decided to discuss both in this section. When examining the concordances of the identified religion-related words in the corpus, it appeared that tweeters have used several referential and predication strategies to negatively represent religious clerics and their endorsers by criticizing their opinions and describing them as discriminatory against women. Most of the referential strategies were found around the word الدين *religion*. When looking at the concordances and collocates of الدين *religion*, it appears that religious clerics were referred to generically by using the plural رجال الدين *religious men*, or using a singular noun with a definite article, such as رجل الدين *the religious man* translated into *clerics* (see Figure 4). Such use of genericization positions clerics as part of a homogenous group that thinks

and acts the same. Clerics were also represented as criminals by referring to them as تجار (merchants of religion), and in less empathetic cases, as كلاب (dogs) (see Figure 5). In combination with these referential strategies, several predicational strategies were used to negatively represent religious clerics as oppressive and incompetent. These predicational strategies are realized in the adjectives المتشددين *radical*, سلطة *pedantic*, and they were also described as having سلطة *philosophic*, and they were also described as having oppressive ‘*authority*’ and power and dominion over women.

#فائدة المرأة للسيارة 9 . . #فائدة المرأة للسيارة أخذ منحني آخر سائر مجرد تحدي بين رجال الدين وبين التبرالية من بمشي رأيه ! والخصية المرأة السعودية 9 . . إلى رجل وقها معنا
#فلتون تجريم الطائفة و الكراهية و السماح بـ #فائدة المرأة للسيارة و #فلتون التحرش هو إزاحة سلطة رجال الدين من سلطتهم 26 . . @aljamal فائدة المرأة للسيارة 26 . . هم نفسه يستخدمون هاتفتية
للحين نتكلم عن قيادة المرأة للسيارة @Patriciaa_4 17 . . الاثنا حنحيا رجال الدين المتشددين الذين يحرمون عليهم مايجتولونه لأنفسهم .. لا يوجد عدالة إجتماعية للأسف ..
#الهيبة تستخدم الصور الخاطئة هاتفتية دسم لأصحاب العقول الفارغة والحقيقة ع رجال الدين وأصحاب عقولة (قيادة المرأة للسيارة) اكثنا شرهم يارب 5 . . تشغل قضية قيادة المرأة
#فائدة المرأة للسيارة 26 أكتوبر 25 . . السياسي رماها على المجتمع والمجتمع رماها على رجال الدين لا يفرقون بين البذرة والدين 6 . . كلما أتذكر أننا لا زلنا نبيع ضرورية مثل #فائدة المرأة للسيارة
إنا شعب إنشلاء لله بوجوب مرور أي تحديث إجتماعي بغض النظر ، ماذا إن كان رجال الدين لا يفرقون بين البذرة والدين 6 . . كلما أتذكر أننا لا زلنا نبيع ضرورية مثل #فائدة المرأة للسيارة
https://twitter.com/dr_naseer/status/652236394769817600 #فائدة المرأة للسيارة #السعودية #فائدة المرأة للسيارة
https://twitter.com/dr_naseer/status/652236394769817600 #فائدة المرأة للسيارة #السعودية #فائدة المرأة للسيارة
قادم KingSalman 8 . . هذا القطع هو عار على #العلم و #العلماء و #الإسلام و رجال الدين والشيوخ والسعوديين و#السعودية #فائدة المرأة للسيارة 5 . . #الاسكان مشكلة فكر و #فائدة المرأة للسيارة
مثل هذا اليوم قبل ربع قرن حطم 47 امرأة شريعة ونقض بين قبود المجتمع وإعلان رجال الدين وقن سيارتهن بكل شجاعة #فائدة المرأة للسيارة 5 . . #الاسكان مشكلة فكر و #فائدة المرأة للسيارة
ونحن الوجدانيين التي ماسحتها يقابلتها أدرة للفساد #فائدة المرأة للسيارة 18 . . رجال الدين "المتخلف" إذا نكثته في #فائدة المرأة للسيارة فالله الأمر متركوك لولا الأمر "حفظهم
يجوبون الشوارع يومياً 4 . . Imusad @S.Alturigee القوة لدى العرب تتمحور حول رجل الدين والذي تمكنه من استغلاله بكاء رجل السبيله ونحن نحل الدين في قيادة المرأة للسيارة
الجنسين 13.9٪ مواطنات، أقل من 4.0٪ #فائدة المرأة للسيارة 23 . . #فائدة المرأة للسيارة رجال الدين عارضن القرني #فائدة المرأة للسيارة لا تعارضن الدين http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/05/30/151163.html

#women_driving took a different direction and became just a challenge between	the clerics	and liberals; who is going to overcome the other! and the victim is the Saudi woman
allowing #women_driving and #harassment law is removing	the clerics'	authority
females are the victims of	the prejudiced clerics	who prevent them from doing what they permit themselves to do
hashtag for the empty minds who hate	the clerics	and call for (women driving). May God protect us from them
the politician blamed it on the	clerics	and the clerics were creative in developing provisions without evidence from the Sharia law.
We are people who were inflicted with passing every social update through a filtration system of fatwas . What if	the clerics	cannot tell the difference between nomadism and religion?
This clip is a disgrace to #education #ulema #Islam and	the clerics,	sheikhs and Saudis #saudiarabia #women_driving
This clip is a disgrace to #education #ulema #Islam and	the clerics,	sheikhs and Saudis #saudiarabia #women_driving
On that day a quarter of a century ago, 47 honorable women, whom we are proud of, destroyed the restrictions set by	the clerics	and bravely drove their cars.
When you argue with a pedantic	cleric	about #women_driving, he would say: it is up to the rulers
Power in the Arab world evolves around the	the clerics	which allows them to smartly exploit politicians. what does religion have to do with women's driving?
The	cleric	Ayd Algarni #women_driving does not oppose religion

Figure 4. Concordances of the word الدين religion co-occurring with رجال men and رجل

man.

#قيادة المرأة للسيارة ، و قبوله خلوتها مع السائق !! #تأمل #ظاهرة ينتقدونها ف المجتمع 23 ، ، أحد تجار الدين يقول أن قيادة المرأة للسيارة تؤدي إلى (إرتجاج مخها) .. ليت البيروني حيا بيتنا
لسألكه : هل صحيح أن قيادة المرأة للسيارة تعثر قلبها كما توصل له فيلسوف من فلاسفة تجار الدين ؟ 23 ، ، M_albugaily@ على كل حال، قيادة المرأة للسيارة تقلل من اعداد الوافدين..
المجاورة كيف تحترم نساتها 15 ، ، قرار #قيادة المرأة للسيارة بيد الدولة وليس تجار الدين بمجرد أن توافق على ذلك ستقود المرأة وسوف تكون خطوة رائعة في رفع اقتصاد البلاد 15

One of the	merchants of religion	says that driving may cause “brain concussion” to women ... I wish AlBaironi was alive
I asked him: is it real that women’s driving can harm her heart as indicated by one of the philosophic	merchants of religion	?
The decision of #women_driving is in the hands of the state, not the	merchants of religion	... once it approves it, it will be a great step to boost the country’s economy.

Figure 5. Concordances of the word الدين religion co-occurring with تجار dealers.

These general references and representations of religious clerics can be related to what Reisigl and Wodak (2001) have referred to as “particularizing synecdoche” in which

statements about persons are made in a levelling, generalising, essentialising, and eternalising manner, in which groups of social actors are presupposed to be homogenous and are selectively ascribed a specific, allegedly shared, either negative or positive feature, trait, mentality and so on. (p. 63)

Thus, such generalized references to religious clerics and the foregrounding of their negative actions are used to “achieve a wider effect by putting everyone from a social group into the same basket” (Atanga, 2010, p. 123), and targeting and delegitimizing the religious establishment as a whole and problematize the kind of masculinity they perpetuate, which depends mostly on women’s modesty and segregation.

Another referential strategy that was used around the word religion involves an implicit reference to the religious establishment through the collocate باسم, which is translated into the prepositional phrase *in the name of*. As shown in Figure 6, the prepositional phrase seems to be used by tweeters as a way to implicitly refer to religious clerics—or possibly those who support them—who were linguistically suppressed in

these tweets through a process of passivation. This refers to the deleting of the agent of the action as in the first line of Figure 6, or through nominalization, by changing processes and adjectives into nominals and excluding the social actors (van Leeuwen, 2008). The prepositional phrase was also used to modify the generic pronouns *you* and *those*, to describe the actions of the social actors to whom the pronouns referred. Similarly, the noun phrase *الدين الوهابي* *the Wahhabi religion* was used as implicit referential strategy “by means of reference to a place,” thus particularizing negative representations to the Wahhabist interpretation of religion, or not referencing religion in general.

#قيادة المرأة للسيارة 24 ، ، ستتذكر الاجيال ما قمتن به لنيل حقوق المرأة المغتصبة باسم الدين والتقاليد . #قيادة26 أكتوبر #قيادة المرأة للسيارة 24 pic.twitter.com/V53RjhWL0r
دليل لا من القرآن ولا السنة يمنع المرأة من السوافة التي اعرفه انو فرض اراده باسم الدين #قيادة المرأة للسيارة 4 . . #محمد بن سلمان ينقد المنتخب محمد بن سلمان انتقد بنات السيكل والتلفاز والبولوتوث بحجة محاربة التعريب 17 ، ، alitawati@ استاذي الفاضل باسم الدين وانتكاس للطرة منعت الام من قضاء حوائجها وانتكست الطفولة #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
ففي ذلك يتساوى الازهابي مع من حزم قيادة المرأة للسيارة فكلاهما اذى عباد الله باسم الدين 25 . . عندما تقرا أن الرجل في السعودية تخلي عن الغيرة، فانتحر الحياء عند النساء
FOUBPLHTKU 11 ، ، #قيادة المرأة للسيارة زي قضية تعليم المرأة قبل كم سنة المتخلفين باسم الدين حرموها وينعاند التاريخ والجهل مانقول الا مشكلة الجهل بذا المجتمع 10 ، ، ما باقي
https://twitter.com/GazalSea/status/658066062890680321 الوهابي والقطيع يسبح بحمده؟
#قيادة المرأة السعودية للسيارة 20 . . عليكم لعنات الله يا من ظلمتونا وقرتونا باسم الدين سنقتص منكم يوم القيامة #قيادة المرأة للسيارة 20 . . بعض فتاوى حاكمات المذهب الأرثوذكسي

Generations will remember what you (females) did to acquire women's rights that were usurped	in the name of religion	and traditions
I don't know of any proof, whether from the Qura'an or the Prophet's traditions, prohibiting women from driving. But I do know that it is an imposition of will	in the name of religion	
Dear Sir,	in the name of religion,	and as an act of relapse of natural disposition, mothers were prevented from fulfilling their needs and childhood was violated #women driving cars
Don't blame religion, but those who misunderstood it and misapplied it. In this context, terrorists and those who (religiously) prohibited women from driving are equal because both have hurt people	in the name of religion	
#women_driving_cars is like the issue of women's education a few years ago. Those retarded individuals have deprived women	in the name of religion	From her rights ; history and ignorance are repeating themselves. I can only say that ignorant people are the problem in this society.
Alfozan accuses everyone; he warns that women would go to see their boyfriends if allowed to drive. Offensive accusations	in the name of the Wahhabi religion	and the herd is praising?
God's curse on you, who oppressed us and buried us	in the name of religion.	We will take revenge on you on the Judgment Day #women driving cars

Figure 6. Concordances of *الدين* in the name of religion.

The suppression of, and generic references to, social actors here can be considered strategic for two reasons. First, by using the phrases *in the name of religion* to describe the actions of religious clerics, it seems that tweeters are trying to refrain from ascribing religion to characterize those who interpret it, and this allows them to attribute negative

representations to the people who interpret religion rather than criticize it, which is considered divine and sacred and not counter-productive to their beliefs; thus should not be mobilized against them. Second, by suppressing the agent of the action, the actions and their recipients are highlighted. What is emphasized and criticized are the ‘impositions’ (فرض), ‘accusations’ (اتهامات), and ‘hurting people’ (اذى عباد الله) in the name of religion, and ‘misunderstanding’ (اساء فهم) and ‘misapplying’ (تطبيق) religion. Women, as the recipients of the actions, are also foregrounded as the oppressed, who are ‘prevented from fulfilling their needs’ (منعت من قضاء حوائجها), ‘deprived’ (حرموها), ‘oppressed’ (ظلمتونا), ‘buried’ (قبرونا), and whose rights are ‘usurped’ (مغتصبه) in the name of religion. Thus, what is highlighted are the oppressive and abusive actions done in the name of religion. In that way, pro-driving users are condemning people who interpret religion in ways that suppress women’s rights, but in turn invoking religion to advocate their cause and gain support.

Other than the references found around the word الدين *religion*, there were few occurrences of the words داعشي and دواعش in the keyword list, which mean *a member of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria* (ISIS). ISIS is “a transnational ultraconservative Islamist group that ostensibly fights alongside Syria’s disparate rebel groups” for the aim of restoring the Islamic Caliphate (Abouzeid, 2014, para. 1). The term داعش *Daesh*⁷(ISIS), since it was first used in 2013 alongside the emergence of ISIS, has been used by the group’s opponents and carries connotations of rejection and contempt to the group and its actions. In the corpus, it seems to have been used as a way to criticize the religiously conservative thinking of those who support the ban on women driving, by

⁷ *Daesh* is the acronym for the Arabic phrase al-Dawla al-Eslamiya fe al-Eraq wa al-Sham (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

comparing it to the extremist thinking of ISIS. They are predicated as ‘extremist’ (متشدد) and threatening by ‘inciting trouble and hate’ (إشعال الفتن والكراهية):

- للقيادة_أكتوبر_مسيره_داعشي يعني متشدد فهو لها الاهانة ومنع للسيارة المرأة قيادة يرفض شخص اي
Anyone who rejects women driving and prevented her is an extremist which means he belongs to ISIS #October_driving_march.
- الصميم في داعشي فهو للسيارة المرأة قيادة يعارض شخص اي
Anyone who opposes women driving is an ISIS man to the core
- وإخراج إنتاج من للسيارة_المرأة_قيادة# بالرياض_الموسيقى_تعليم_أوقفوا# مبتعثه_تتزوج_ترضى_هل#
 !!والكراهية الفتن إشعال شغلتهم الداخل دواعش
#Do_you_accept_marrying_an_exchange_(female)student
#stop_teaching_music_in_riyadh #women_driving produced and directed by ISIS
men in the inside. Their job is to incite trouble and hate.

Through such statements, it appears that tweeters are trying to push for women’s rights to drive and gain support by borrowing the brush strokes of Western neoconservatism to demonize religious conservatives and equate them with extremism (Cherkaoui, 2017). In turn, representing opponents of women driving as an ‘other’ who is ideologically deviant and radical. So far, the delegitimation of the religious establishment has been actor-oriented, focusing on representing religious clerics as illegitimate. The next section will focus on action-oriented delegitimation, which highlights the practices of religious clerics as inconsistent and contradictory.

Legitimation strategies. In addition to negatively representing religious people and their supporters, tweeters used several discursive strategies to legitimize their arguments within the religious context. These strategies were mostly found around the

words حرام *forbidden* and الشيخ *the Sheikh*. An analysis of their collocations and concordances revealed the use of the following legitimization strategies:

1) *Authorization*

Authorization refers to “legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law, and/or persons in who institutional authority of some kind is vested” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 105). Authorization can be personal, by an expert, a person in an institution, or a role model. It can also be impersonal, by the authority of the law or a sacred book, such as the Qura’an. In Saudi Arabia, the Qura’an and the Sayings of Prophet Mohammed are considered the two main sources from which SA derives its law and regulates social life. As explained in Chapter 2, these texts are interpreted by scholars who have studied the Islamic religion or are known for their piety, and their interpretation and understanding is called *fiqh*, meaning ‘understanding’ (Mir-Hosseini, 2006). Based on *fiqh*, laws are derived and applied. Thus, the opinions of these religious scholars are considered very powerful in determining what is religiously permitted (or not) and thus lawful (or not), including women’s driving.

In the corpus, there were several references to different religious scholars. These references were mostly found around the word الشيخ *the Sheihk*, which is used to refer to a religious cleric. Table 11 shows the most frequent collocates to the word Shaik. As shown in Table 11, The most frequent collocates of the word Shaik were المنيع *reporter*, تفضلي *please*, يحب *kiss*, راس *head*, يقول *say*, and تفشلني *embarrass me*. After examining their concordances, I found that they refer to a post that was retweeted several times and which included a YouTube link to an interview made by an unnamed reporter with a religious scholar.

ما باقي إلا أن المذيع يحب رأس الشيخ ويقول تكفى لا تفشلني وقل قيادة المرأة للسيارة حرام

<http://youtu.be/t44MLuZl>

The reporter had nothing but to kiss the Shaik's head (beg him) and tell him please to don't embarrass me and say that women driving is forbidden.

Although an analysis of non-textual elements is not included in this research, an examination of the contents of this video was necessary due to its high circulation and repetition in the data.

Table 11. *Top 20 collocates of the word الشيخ the Sheikh.*

Word in Arabic	Word in English	Co-occurrence count		Candidate count	MI	logDice
المذيع	reporter	24	34	4.893	9.674	12.425
تكفى	please	17	19	4.119	10.016	12.087
يحب	kiss	17	20	4.119	9.942	12.076
رأس	head	17	20	4.119	9.942	12.076
ويقول	and say	17	25	4.118	9.620	12.021
تفشلني	embarrass me	14	14	3.738	10.177	11.865
وقل	and say	12	15	3.460	9.855	11.631
صالح	Saleh	12	25	3.458	9.118	11.519
إلا	except	16	72	3.984	8.007	11.500
الددو	Allado	8	22	2.822	8.717	10.967
الفوزان	Alfozan	7	20	2.639	8.662	10.796
محمد	Mohammed	7	25	2.638	8.340	10.741
وليد	Waleed	6	6	2.447	10.177	10.739
الالباني	Alalbani	6	7	2.447	9.954	10.727
بن	son	8	47	2.814	7.622	10.715
المغامسي	Almugamsi	6	9	2.446	9.592	10.702
شمس	Shams	6	10	2.446	9.440	10.690
رد	response	6	20	2.442	8.440	10.574
الرشودي	Alrshodi	5	5	2.234	10.177	10.489
الحيدان	Alluhaidan	5	9	2.233	9.329	10.439

The link is connected to the video of an interview that was circulated at the time of collecting the data in which a reporter is trying to convince a religious scholar to say that women's driving is religiously forbidden. The scholar, however, insisted that women's driving is religiously permitted and provided religious evidence for that. Some users

retweeted the post without commenting on it, which could be indicative of interest in the message and a kind of public agreement to a statement (Boyd, Golder & Lotan, 2010; Metaxas, Mustafaraj, Wong, Zeng, O'Keefe, & Finn, 2015)⁸. Other users, however, commented on the video and indicated their support of the cleric by stating that he has 'confounded' (يُحجّر, يفحّمه) and 'butchered' (يُشرّشحه) the reporter who was trying to make him say that women driving is religiously prohibited; thus legitimating their arguments for women driving by intertextually citing a *Sheikh* as an 'expert' authoritative voice. Such discursive strategy demonstrates that, while some tweeters have been very engaged in deconstructing and arguing against religious scholars and clerics' opinions, others as in this example have drawn on a religious scholar to legitimize women driving; thus, mobilizing and drawing on religious opinions and interpretations that agree with their arguments in order to cultivate support.

The collocates in Table 11 also included the names of well-known religious scholars, such as الفوزان *Alfozan*, الألباني *Alalbani*, المغامسي *Almugamsi*, الرشودي *Alrshodi*, اللحيدان *Alluhaidan*, and شمس *Shams*. Most of these people are members of the Council of Senior Scholars, an Islamic agency in Saudi Arabia that is responsible for issuing religious *fatwas*. On the one hand, these scholars were cited for their religious opinions that support women driving by means of issuing legal and sanctified (يؤيد) 'permits' (يجيز). On the other hand, these scholars were also delegitimized; one of these scholars in particular was the target of criticism by several tweeters for stating that driving will allow women to visit their 'boyfriends' (عشيقها) anytime, which reflects a common fear of the

⁸ It should be indicated, however, that some users tend to include disclaimers in their profiles indicating that a retweet is not an endorsement or public agreement (Metaxas et al., 2015)

[illegible]

Religion revivalists think that women driving will make it easy for her to meet with	her boyfriend	in private; however, they do not declare the long hours they spend on King Fahad's bridge
#sheikh Saleh Alfozan's poisonous fatawa: women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	anytime
Video Sheikh Saleh Alfozan: women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	anytime.
If women's driving will make her dress indecently in all her finery and make it easy for her to meet with	her boyfriend	I don't think the ban would prevent that!!
#video Sheikh #saleh_alfozan women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	anytime
Saleh Alfozan: women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	anytime
Sheikh Saleh Alfozan: women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	anytime
Sheikh Saleh Alfozan: women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	anytime
Sheikh Saleh Alfozan: women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	anytime
Sheikh Saleh Alfozan: women driving is not permitted because she may go to	her boyfriend	anytime. Don't you fear God in generalizing debauchery to all women
Sheikh Saleh Alfozan: women driving is not permitted because she may go to	her boyfriend	anytime.
Saleh Alfozan: women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	anytime #women_driving
women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend;	a misguided way of thinking and an insult to women
women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	at any moment .. so, what is protecting women from deviance is driving? ...
They don't allow #women_driving because it may make it easy for her to meet with	her boyfriend	where is your positive thinking that you claim? What about men? They may drive to meet their girlfriends!

Figure 7. Concordances of the word عشيقتها her boyfriend.

[illegible]

#women_driving; the Sheikh who said that woman can go to meet with	her boyfriend;	from what family is he? #religious_dealers
Before we think that she will go to meet with	her boyfriend	why don't we think that she is going to drive her children to school or hospital, go to work to benefit her country #women_driving
Women have ruled countries including their institutions, and in Saudi Arabia they prevent #women driving fearing that she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive
Of course, this idiot and fictitious expert who previously provided a fatwa preventing #women_driving because she can go to meet with	her boyfriend	...
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; listen to this nonsense, Alfozan women driving is not permitted because she may go to meet with	her boyfriend	Anytime...
She drives her car and returns home drunk, she drove to see	her boyfriend	#i thought you were smoking #women_driving
I don't know if I should laugh or cry; he hasn't reached puberty but can drive and his mother cannot because she may go to see	her boyfriend	#great_contradictions #women_driving
Don't' give her freedom because she may go to see	her boyfriend	I don't know if I should cry or laugh, where is your good breeding and trust in your family?
Is there anything that can prevent her from going to see	her boyfriend	whenever she wants #women_driving?! I'm surprised! If she wants to get into trouble, driving or banning it won't stop her
A fool may respond saying: this does not apply to Saudi women because they have immature brains and might go to see	their boyfriends	and return home drunk at the end of the night! #women_driving
Tell them that women in Saudi Arabia are banned from driving, fearing a woman may go out to see	her boyfriend	#women_driving; backward thinking; may God suffices, He is the best Guardian

Figure 8. Concordances of the word لعشيقها to her boyfriend

Instead of directly delegitimizing these statements, other tweeters chose to counter the statement with rhetorical questions, such as ‘so what is protecting women from deviance is driving?’ (يعني الي يمنع النساء من الانحراف هو قيادة) ‘Why don't we think that she is going drive her children to the hospital or go to work?’ (لماذا لا نفكر بأنها ستوصل أبنائها) and ‘where is your good breeding and trust in your family?’ (للمدرسة او المستشفى ستذهب لعملها). According to Martin and White (2005), such ways of responding to an intertextual reference can be considered *dialogically contractive*, meaning that text producers refer to other sources in order to “challenge, fend off, or restrict the scope” of that source (p. 102). Such strategies of questioning and countering the source can be said to be “aligning rather than disaligning in that they construe the writer as sharing this axiological paradigm [particular beliefs or expectations] with the reader. The writer is presented as just as surprised by this ‘exceptional’ case as it is

assumed the reader will be” (p. 121). Thus, the use of interrogatives here was both a delegitimation and supporting strategy to deconstruct the scholar’s logic and kind of representation of women he is presenting, which is based on the .

2) *Moral evaluation*

Moral evaluation is another legitimation strategy that is “based on values, rather than imposed by some kind of authority without further justification” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 109). It is related to what is perceived as good or bad. Like authorization, pro-driving tweeters drew on strategies of moral *evaluation* to call into question the (ir)rationalist foundations of religious scholars who wish to prolong the ban on women from driving. This was mostly evident around the word حرام (religiously) *forbidden*. Here, the moral values of religious people were brought into question by revealing their contradictions and inconsistencies. These interrogations—short-winded as they are in a Tweet format—exposed their statements not as adhering to any kind of logical structure, but rather succumbing to polemics. This is especially ironic given that masculine argumentation tactics tend to present themselves as logical in relation to views held by women and gendered Others, who tend to always/already be deemed as overly emotional and inferior to men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Coulling & Johnston, 2017; Johnston & Kilty, 2015; Kimmel, 2013a)

Indeed, there were other recurrent patterns in the data that served to delegitimize religious perspectives on women driving. Some compared what they say about women’s driving to their reaction of allowing women to be ‘alone’ (خلوة) or in seclusion with a male driver. Many religious believers and scholars in Saudi Arabia consider seclusion or mixing with nonrelatives of the other gender to be sinful, as it could lead to temptation

and possibly adultery (AlMunajjed, 1997). Thus, to allow seclusion with a driver (who may be ‘immoral’ and ‘licentious’ فاسق، فاجر) and forbid women from driving to protect them from seclusion and temptation seems contradictory. To highlight this fallacy, tweeters have utilized what van Dijk (1998, 2000) refers to as *disclaimers*, or discursive strategies that are part of an overall strategy of positive self-representation and negative other-representation, and which highlight “the contrast between the propositions connected by the typical but-clause” (van Dijk, 2000, p. 95). Examples of disclaimers include sentences like “I have nothing against ... but ...” or “I am not racist, but ...” (van Dijk, 1998). Disclaimers, according to van Dijk (1998), appear when dominant ideologies are challenged or contested and are utilized by dominated groups as “typical expressions of the contradictions, if not the moral dilemmas, between official or dominant ideologies and actual practices, talk and text” (p. 167).

Table 12 shows the utilization of disclaimers by including the religious perspective in the first clause and then contrasting it with statements that contradict it. In fact, some users described such opinions as ‘poisonous’ through the hashtag #فتاوى-الشيوخ-المسمومة *#Sheikh's_poisonous_fatwas* and explicitly emphasized their contradiction by including the hashtag #تناقضات-فاخره *#great_contradictions*. By doing so, tweeters appear to be questioning the judgment of religious scholars who claim to be concerned about women’s protection.

Table 12. *Examples of delegitimizing religious discourses through disclaimers*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
Driving a car by a woman giving a ride to her daughter or doing some errands is forbidden, but bringing an immoral licentious Buddhist driver from abroad to stay in private with her and her daughter is permitted #we will not allow women to drive	قيادة المرأة للسيارة بتوصيل ابنتها او مشاويرها حرام لكن جلب سائق اجنبي يودي فاسق فاجر بختلي بها وبابنتها يجوز #لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
#women_driving #we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; women driving is forbidden, but throwing the keys and spitting on her face is permitted!	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة #لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة قيادة المرأة حرام ، أما رمي المفاتيح والتفل على وجهها حلال!
#A fine_on_mixing_(female) candidates_with_voters; women are not permitted to mix with voters but are permitted to stay alone with a driver #women_driving	#غرامة_لإختلاط_المرشحات_بالتأخبين حرام تختلط بالتأخبين ويجوز تختلي بالسواق #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
This radio station applies the politics of the Saudi religious police. Women driving is forbidden but mixing with a Filipino driver is permitted	هالاذاعة تطبق سياسة مطاوعة السعودية قيادة المرأة للسيارة حرام وإختلاطها مع الفلبيني حلال #ufm_تلغي_الأغاني
#women_driving; an official says on women driving: banned because it is not permitted by Islamic law. The Mufti says: forbidden because it is legally banned	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة المسؤول: ممنوعة لأنها حرام شرعا. المفتي: حرام لأنها ممنوعة نظاما. المرأة: #مسيرة_أكتوبر_للقيادة
#Sheikhs'_poisonous_fatwas: women driving is forbidden to avoid committing sinful acts, but the man has three drivers working for him and does not care, and his followers are suffering!!	#فتاوى_الشيوخ_المسمومة قيادة المرأة للسيارة حرام سدا للذرائع و هو عنده سواقين ثلاثة و لا أفكر و ما أكلها إلا قطيعهم الغليان!!
#women_driving is forbidden because it may lead to unlawful mixing.. but to ride alone with a foreign driver is okay #Sheikhs'_poisonous_fatwaas	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة حرام لأنها تُقصي إلى الإختلاط المحرم .. أما ركبها في "خلوة" مع سائق اجنبي فذلك لا بأس به #فتاوى_الشيوخ_المسمومة
#women_driving women driving in the land of the infidels is permitted but driving in an Islamic, safe and secured land is forbidden	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة قيادة المرأة في بلاد الكفر حلال، أما قيادتها في بلاد الإسلام والأمن والأمان حرام
Driven alone by a driver is permitted but staying alone with a monkey is forbidden	الخلوة مع السائق حلال الخلوة مع القير حرام #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة #تناقضات_فاخرة
So a woman riding with a foreign driver or taxi driver is okay? But to allow her to drive is a disgrace? Religiously, the first is not permitted by Islamic law. Rationally, what is the problem if she was allowed to drive? #women_driving	يعني تركب مع سواق اجنبي او تكسي عادي ؟ بس تسوق عيب ؟ دينيا الاولى حرام .. عقليا وش المشكلة إذا ساقنت ؟ #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
Shock_the_Kingdom_of_Saudi_Arabia_with_information #women_driving: woman+ car = forbidden, woman + car + a Bengali driver = permitted, very rational!	اصدم_الملكة_السعودية_بمعلومه #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة امرأة + سيارة = حرام امرأة + سيارة + بنغالي = حلال منطقي جدا!
#great_contradictions #women_driving forbidden, but driven alone with a driver is permitted!!	#تناقضات_فاخرة #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة حرام خلوها مع السائق حلال ...!!

Another way to delegitimize the opinions of religious scholars is through

‘analogies’ (van Leeuwen, 2008) by comparing their opinions about women driving to other opinions that recently shifted, thus showing their inconstancy (see Table 13).

Throughout the history of SA, several *fatwas*, or religious opinions, were issued to forbid women’s education and the introduction of radio, television, and mobile phones with cameras in the past. These eventually became religiously permitted, and even promoted

and/or used by those who had tried to ban them. By highlighting these facts, the legitimacy of religious scholars and their opinions are scrutinized for their instability while going through changes ‘with time’ (مع الوقت).

Table 13. *Examples of delegitimizing religious discourses through analogies*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
Education was forbidden, radio was forbidden, TV was forbidden, mobiles with cameras were forbidden, women driving is now forbidden but will be permitted #women_driving	الدراسة النظامية كانت حرام و الراديو كان حرام و tv كان حرام و جوال الكاميرا كان حرام و القيادة الآن حرام و ستصبح حلال #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; women's education, television, satellites, mobiles, Bluetooth, you know all of these were forbidden. (women's driving) will be permitted by the time.	#لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_للسيارة تعليم المرأة التلفزيون الدش جوال باندا البلوتوث ^^ تدروا أن كل ذول كانوا حرام (قيادة المرأة) مع الوقت حلال
Satellite TV was forbidden and after several years became permitted. I hope women's driving will be like that #sheikhs' poisonous fatwas	الدش حرام في البداية ثم بعد كم سنة حرام ياليت قيادة المرأة للسيارة تصبح كذلك #فتاوى_الشيوخ_المسمومة
We were saying Women driving is against the Islamic law then we talked about the 'society's rejection', and then now we are saying 'what if she has a flat tire' :)	كانت قيادة المرأة للسيارة "حرام" ثم انتقلنا لمرحلة "رفض المجتمع" ثم انتقلنا لمرحلة "الوبنشرت" (:

Table 14 provides a summary of the discursive strategies employed by pro-driving tweeters when articulating the religious discourse. Collectively, these strategies are engaged to delegitimize the religious establishment and illuminate its oppression and abuse of women.

Table 14. *Summary of the discursive strategies to delegitimize religious perspectives.*

Discursive strategy		Means of realization	Text in Arabic	Text in English
	Genericization (van Leeuwen, 2008)	Plural Singular with the definite article	رجال الدين رجل الدين	Religious men The religious man
	Social problematization (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008)	Criminonym	تجار الدين رعاة الفساد داعشي , دواعش	Religious dealers Corruptors Member of ISIS
	Impersonalization (van Leeuwen, 2008)	Inhuman traits Objectivation / spatialization	كلاب الدين الدين الوهابي	Religious dogs The Wahhabi religion
	Exclusion (van Leeuwen, 2008)	Passivation Nominalization Generic pronouns	حقوق المرأة المغتصبة باسم الدين انو فرض اراده باسم الدين المتخلفين باسم الدين عليكم لعنات الله يامن ظلمتونا وقبرتونا باسم	Women's rights that were usurped in the name of religion An imposition in the name of religion The backward in the name of religion God's curse on you who oppressed us and buried us in the name of religion
		Adjectives	المتشددين المتحذلق فيلسوف جهال	Radical Pedantic Philosophic Ignorant
		Predicates	حرموها وينعاد التاريخ والجهل مانقول الا مشكلة الجهال بذا المجتمع	deprived them (women), and the history and ignorance are repeated. I can only say that ignorant people are a problem in this society
	Authorization			
	Legitimizing women's driving by citing expert authority	Verbal process clauses with the expert as subject	هذا ما قاله الشيخ شمس الدين حول قيادة المرأة للسيارة	This is what Shaik Shams Aldin said about women driving

	Delegitimizing religious perspective that bans women from driving	Negative interrogative	لماذا لا نفكر بأنها ستوصل أبنائها للمدرسة او المستشفى ستذهب لعملها	Why don't we think that she is going to take her children to the hospital or go to work?
	Moral evaluation			
	Contradiction: Disclaimers	But-clause	قيادة المرأة للسيارة حرام لأنها تُقصي إلى الإختلاط المحرم .. أما ركبوها في "خلوة" مع سائق أجنبي فذلك لا بأس به #فتاوى_الشيخ_المسمومَة	#women_driving is forbidden because it could lead to the forbidden mixing.. but being in "seclusion" with a foreign drivers is okay #shaiks_poisonous_fatwaas
	Inconsistency: Analogies	Similarity conjunction	الدراسة النظامية كانت حرام و الراديو كان حرام و tv كان حرام و جوال الكاميرا كان حرام و القيادة الآن حرام و ستصبح حلال #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة	Education was forbidden, radio was forbidden, tv was forbidden, mobiles with cameras were forbidden, women driving is now forbidden but will become permitted #women_driving

Women's rights. While the aim of the previous discourse on religion was to mainly delegitimize the religious establishment and their religious perspectives on women's driving, this theme seems to be more progressive for its focus on creating ways to legitimize women's driving as a human right. These tweets invoke a discourse that constructs women as humans who have rights in the face of dominant discourses that define women in relation to their modesty and domesticity (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Rather than attack their oppressors head-on, these Tweeters formulate a space outside of the more direct conversational attacks that fuelled much of the tensions, hatred, and frustrations that circulated between opposing members of the public. Lexical cues of this discourse include the words *right* (161), *rights* (65), *her rights* (50), and *freedom* (42). Often, these words were used to construct driving as a right that

women should have. The words حق *right* and حقوقها *her rights* seem to collocate with each other to describe driving as حق من حقوقها *one of her rights*. Using Graphcoll⁹, a collocational network was created to examine the collocates of these words (see Figure 9). The collocational network shows that both words also collocated with the words ايسط *simple* and كإنسان *as a human*, to describe driving as *one of her basic rights* ايسط حقوقها and *one of her rights as a human* حق من حقوقها كإنسان. The word *right* also collocated with the words طبيعي *natural* and مشروع *legitimate* to describe driving as valid need. For some tweeters, driving is considered as a حرية شخصية *personal freedom*, especially for women who do not have anyone to depend on. By constructing driving as natural, legitimate, a personal choice, a human right and a right for women, pro-driving tweeters support their argument through a moral justification, based on moral values (van Leeuwen, 2008). In this case, it is achieved through the *topos of humanitarianism* (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). This topos is based on the condition that “if a political action or decision does or does not conform with human rights or humanitarian convictions and values, one should or should not perform or make it” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 78).

⁹ Graphcoll is a computer tool that can be used to identify and generate collocational networks (i.e., several words that are frequently associated in the corpus) and can be useful in revealing patterns and meanings that can be unnoticed (Brezina et al., 2015).

Figure 9. Collocational network of حق right.

The entitlement to, or need for women to gain access to, this human right (driving) appears to be legitimized through several discourses, including discourses of religion and victimization. As discussed before, the discourse of religion was drawn upon intertextually through hyperlinks to videos of clerics justifying women's driving as a right, which were thought to legitimize their argument by citing an authoritative voice. One tweeter also cited the Prophet's female companions (الصحابيات), who are considered ideal Muslim women, and their use of animals for transportation (لم تمنع الصحابييات من ركوب البهائم وهي وسيلة المواصلات آنذاك *The Prophet's female companions were not prevented from riding animals as a means of transportation at that time*); thus, legitimizing her/his argument through analogy. Religion was also invoked by several tweeters in an attempt to disassociate it from the right to drive. This was done through the use of negation,

which is described by Fairclough (1992a) as “carry[ing] special types of presuppositions which also work intertextually, incorporating other texts only in order to contest or reject them” (pp. 121-122). Since religion is usually cited as the defining legislation and legitimation for women’s broader struggles, including but not limited to the driving issue, several pro-driving tweeters sought, as shown in Table 15 below, to assert that religion does not “prevent” women from driving and that banning women from driving is a ‘distortion’ (تشويه) of religion and, in fact, has ‘nothing to do’ (لا علاقة له) with religion. Citing religion and indicating that it does not oppose women driving can also be considered a form of authority, in the sense that if religion does not forbid it then it is allowed.

Table 15. *Examples of legitimation driving as a women’s right through religious discourse*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
Women driving is not against religion. It is okay to drive and do my errands	سواقة المرأة ماهي حرام وشي عادي أسوق أنا واقضي حاجياتي
A misrepresentation of the Islamic faith, as if religion prohibits women’s freedom of mobility	تشويه للدين الإسلامي كأن الدين حرم المرأة حرية حق التنقل
It is a right that religion does not prevent her from exercising, but there are public opinions on a secular law that is negotiable	وهو حق لم يمنعها منه الدين بل مزاج شعبي على قانون وضعي قابل للمناقشة
The right of mobility and freedom to drive should be enforced. It is a distortion to the country and citizens and attaching it to religion is a distortion of religion	حق حرية التنقل و قيادة السيارة أمر لا بد من انهاءه فهو تشويه للوطن و المواطنين و الصاقله بالدين تشويه للدين
It is the law of the jungle which has nothing to do with religion	انه مجرد شريعة الغاب لا علاقة له بالدين
What provokes me the most is associating the right to drive for women with religion	أكثر ما يستفزني ربط حق قيادة المرأة للسيارة بالدين
It is her right as other women around the world, and there is nothing in the Qura’an or Sunnah prohibiting Saudi women from driving	حق لها مثل نساء العالمين ولم يرد دليل في القرآن أو السنة يحرم على المرأة السعودية القيادة
A legitimate right, and religion does not deny it	حق مشروع لها والدين لا يمانع
One of her rights that has been highjacked by fatwas, (religious opinions) which have nothing to do with Islam	من حقوقها تم سرقتها بفتاوى لا تعود للإسلام بأي صلة

The right to drive was also legitimized by highlighting women's suffering and need for protecting themselves. Traces of such discourse are found in the concordances of the words *right* حق and *her rights* حقوقها. Women are represented as victims of 'harassment' (التحرش) and 'rape' (الاغتصاب) as well as 'suffering' (معاناة) from the restrictions on their movement (see Table 16).

Table 16. *Examples of legitimating driving as a women's right through women's victimization*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
Shades, chairs, waiting in malls when stores are closed. More protective to women. Hot, cold, dust and harassment #women driving	مظلات وكراسي وانتظار بالأسواق أثناء غلق المحلات، أستر للنساء. حر وبرد وهبوب وتحرش #قيادة_المرأة للسيارة
Most of the rape stories are because of drivers. A girl goes out and returns home losing her honor , why #women driving	أغلب قصص الاغتصاب من السواقين يعني بنت تروح مشوار ترجع فاقده شرفها ليش #قيادة_المرأة للسيارة
The long wait on sidewalks, streets and malls causes problems for women and it is better to give her the right to drive	طول الانتظار على الأرصفة والطرق وفي الأسواق يجلب للمرأة المشاكل والأفضل إعطائها حق القيادة
It is a natural thing and a right for female citizens, why the delay? We want to drive our cars safely	امر طبيعي ومن حق المواطنة فلما التأخير بأقرارها ؟ نريد أن نقود سياراتنا بأمان
For me, Allah suffices, and He is the best Guardian against those who denied us the freedom of movement because we did not want to rely on someone. God only knows how much we are suffering	حسبي الله ونعم الوكيل على من حرمننا حق التنقل بدون حاجة لآحد نعاني معاناة الله أعلم بها
The right to drive is the most needed right in this country because it is the greatest suffering we the women are experiencing	حق قيادة المرأة للسيارة هو أهم حق نحتاجه بهالبلد لأنه هو أكبر معاناة نعانيها نحن النساء
It is her right, regardless of the timing; and it was demanded before this state of disarray; it is required by those women who badly need it, and God knows the tragedies	حق لها بغض النظر عن التوقيت وقد طوّل به قبل البلبلة وهو مطلب للمحتاجات ويعلم الله الماسي
An obvious right for every woman and she will drive her car without drivers, salaries and other problems .	حق واضح لكل امرأة وستقود سيارتها بعيدا عن السائق والراتب والمشاكل

Such views were also highlighted around the word *necessity* ضرورة to explain why for some tweeters driving is not just considered as a right but also a necessity. The concordances and collocates of the word *necessity* ضرورة reveal that driving has been mostly described as an 'pressing necessity' (ضرورة ملحة) and 'a solution for many mobility issues in the city for women' (حل لكثير من الإشكاليات التي تواجه المرأة عند حاجتها للتنقل) (see Figure 10). It has also been represented as a 'human need' (ضرورة انسانية), 'social

(ليست ترف) ‘not a luxury’, and (ضرورة اجتماعية) ‘necessity’.

ToDrive0@ شيء آخر وهل الفوزان نبي مرسل؟ أو حتى كبار العلماء ليسوا أنبياء مرسلون #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة **ضرورة** ملحة وليست فقط حق 17 ، ، احسن بالغيرة من اخي للتي تعيش في الكويت وتقود سيارتها وهي ملتزمة دينيا ومنقبه هم الليبراليين قيادة المرأة للسيارة . #نن نسمح بقيادة المرأة للسيارة 10 ، ، @lubnaAli18 إذا كان **ضرورة** ملحة مثل #قيادة_المرأة_السعودية للسيارة لا زالت تناقش ، فأي مشاكل بطالة وفقر تحلمي أن ت المرأة مقودة لا قائد للسيارة خاصة 29 . بعد ارتفاع أسعار المحروقات .. صار .. #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة **ضرورة** ملحة .. ويجب على المجتمع أن يتفاعل أكثر ليعاد هذا الحق . 29 . . التلق مع الشيخ عيسى الغيث أن يتم جسد علما ملحة العقل في مجتمعنا فيدعون الغيرة ويشجعون محارمهم بخلاوة سائق ويكرمون المرأة بحرماتها **ضرورة** ملحة 17 . . لي أسويين وأنا ملجلج شغل مهم عشان اللي بيوديني مو فاضي لو أسوق كان مداني خلصت اموري لذكرك او تنفع الاف لسواق للتنقل 6 . . بخطيء من يقن أن #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة حق عادل فقط ، بل هي **ضرورة** ملحة كما للرجل تماما فكلنا معا يعيشان نفس ملايبات الحياة 6 . . #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة 26 أكتوبر قيادة الرجل إله يطع إله أي مكان بيقوم . 21 . . نؤكد للصحيحين للمرة المنة أن #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة **ضرورة** ملحة للمرأة كما هي للرجل تماما يعني لا يجي مدرع صحوي ويقول ترف ورفاهية 21 . . منع #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة الاحصائيات سرية!! لماذا? @live_eastern 12 pic.twitter.com/mbtpnDSiQo قيادة المرأة للسيارة احيانا **ضرورة** ملحة وأحيانا كماليات حسب الحاجة 12 ، ، معلوماتكم مهم تعلم أن أكثر من 50% من السعوديات لا يملك سيارتها في خط طويل لو صار لها حادث لو... الخ #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة 11 ، ، #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة **ضرورة** ملحة وحل لكثير من المشكلات التي تواجه المرأة عند حاجتها للتنقل داخل المدينة وتصبح القيادة واقع غيري بكل راحه #تتألمضات غيرة 7 ، ، @Hala_Aldosari . برابي الشخصي قيادة المرأة السعودية للسيارة أصبح **ضرورة** ملحة داخل المجتمع السعودي، للتخفيف من معاناتها اليومية . 7 ، ، #قيادة_المرأة_السعودية للسيارة للسيارة في السعودية @AbdullahMMugrin @IbrahimBeayez http://fb.me/JvUvyywL3 قيادة المرأة للسيارة **ضرورة** ملحة يجب النظر في هذا الأمر عاجل جدا ومنحها الحق في حرية القيادة 3 ، ، قبل سنة ونصف من الآن ماكنت

Women_driving is a pressing	necessity,	not only a right
If it is a pressing	necessity	as women_driving, it is still debated
Women_driving is a pressing	necessity	.. and the community should act more effectively to regain this right
A pressing	necessity	I have postponed an accumulation of 2-weeks work because the driver is too busy
Women_driving is not only a fair right but a pressing	necessity	
We would like to emphasize to the revivalists that women_driving is a pressing	necessity	for women, as it is for men. So don't say it is a luxury and entertainment
Women_driving can be sometimes a pressing	necessity	and sometimes a luxury, it depends
Women_driving is a pressing	necessity	and it will provide a solution for many mobility issues in the city for women
I think Saudi women_driving is a pressing	necessity	within the Saudi society; it will alleviate the daily suffering of women
Women_driving is a pressing	necessity,	this issue should be looked into urgently; women should be given the right to drive

Figure 10. Concordances of ضرورة necessity

The women's rights discourse not only referred to women's right to drive, but also included tweets that discuss women's rights in general in SA. It seems that the driving issue was intertextually utilized as an opportunity to discuss other issues and raise awareness regarding the status of women's rights in SA. This was done by directly referencing driving as an example of women's rights or by utilizing the hashtag feature on Twitter; that is, by including the hashtag #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة #women_driving to participate in the discussion about women's driving. Women's rights discussions were evident in the discourse surrounding the word *rights* and its collocation with المرأة *women* to create the phrase *women's rights* (see Figure 11). Women's rights are

described in the concordances of the word *حقوق* *rights* co-occurring with *المرأة* *women* as being ‘fought’ (محرابة), ‘denied’ (مصادرة), ‘violated’ (انتهاك), and ‘usurped’ (هضم, هضم), while the social actors of these actions are mostly suppressed by passivization and nominalization. In some tweets, fundamentalists, religion, the dictatorial regime, Saudi society, males, and ‘some mentalities’ were blamed for violating women’s rights. In addition, the collocates of the word *حقوق* *rights* also included the words *الارامل* *widows* and *المطلقات* *divorced women*, to reference their rights, and the words *أولى* and *أهم* which mean *more important* to bring attention to other rights that are considered more important, such as women’s rights in child custody and healthcare. These statements mark the widespread attempts of Tweeters to use discussions on women’s driving as a platform to raise awareness of other issues faced by women in SA.

المرأة. اعتبرهم خلايا داعشيه نانهم. لذلك فيهم نجاهد بالكلمه التي تعريهم	حقوق	المتزمتين يقودون إنتهاك
المرأة الحقيقية ليست قيادة للسيارة، هنا مثال على بعض الحقوق المسلوب	حقوق	
المرأة المطلقة يؤثر في تربية اجيال من الشباب الضائع اليانس المحبط الذي سيتأثر	حقوق	هضم
المرأة المغتصبة بأسم الدين والتقاليد . #قيادة26أكتوبر	حقوق	ستتذكر الاجيال ما قمتم به لنيل
المرأة بحجةالدفاع عنها،بينما يقف ضد #قانون_التحرش وضد #قيادة المرأة للسيارة #مجتمع مقلوب	حقوق	#قيادة_ المرأة_ للسيارة،المجتمع السعودي يهضم
المرأة عن كل شي ! حتى قيادة السيارة !! تخس يا صاحب الهاشتاق #لن نسمح بقيادة المرأة للسيارة	حقوق	، نظامنا نظام ديكتاتوري يمنع
المرأة مازالت مستمرة وتتمدد...!! ما دامت محرومة من أبسطها وهي القيادة ! #قيادة المرأة للسيارة	حقوق	محرابة
المرأة مازالت مستمرة وتتمدد...!! ما دامت محرومة من أبسطها وهي القيادة #أسوق بنفسي #قيادة المرأة للسيارة	حقوق	محرابة @saadalsurahi
المرأة مازالت مستمرة وتتمدد...!! ما دامت محرومة من أبسطها وهي القيادة ! #قيادة المرأة للسيارة	حقوق	محرابة
المرأة نوع من أنواع العنف (قيادة المرأة للسيارة أنموذجا) !	حقوق	مصادرة
المرأة وهو حق الاختيار بسبب أن حقوقه محفوظة #نعم_يرضينا #قيادة المرأة للسيارة	حقوق	رضي على نفسه أن يمحي أقل حق من
النساء التي لم يجرمها الله! قال ايه قال عشيق	حقوق	نفس العقليات تتحكم الآن ظلما في
النساء من رواتب ووظائف ومواصلات ويجبرها على الولي وإن كان مدمن	حقوق	نحن البلد الوحيد المستقر والله الحمد ولكنه يضطهد
للمرأة بسيطه تقابل بالرفض الشديد مثل قيادة المرأة للسيارة عندنا	حقوق	صحيح والاصعب والامر أن حتى محاولة ادخال

The fundamentalists lead the violation of women's	rights	consider them Daesh sleeping cells. That is how we fight them with the words that expose them #women_driving
Real women's	rights	are not just driving cars, these are just examples of their usurped rights
Deprivation of	rights	of divorced women impacts the upbringing of a generation of lost young people who are desperate and depressed and who will be affected
Generations will remember what you did to obtain women's usurped	rights	in the name of religion and tradition
#women_driving; the Saudi society deprives women of their	rights	under the pretext that it protects them, while the society stands against #harassment_law and against #women_driving #it is an inverted society
Our regime is dictatorial that deprives women of their	rights	on everything! Even women's driving!! f*** you who created the hashtag #we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive
Fighting women's	rights	is still ongoing and spreading ...!! As long as she is deprived of the very basic one which is driving #women_driving
@saadalsuraihi Fighting women's	rights	is still ongoing and spreading ...!! As long as she is deprived of the very basic one which is driving #I_drive_myself #women_driving
# fighting women's	rights	is still ongoing and spreading ...!! As long as she is deprived of the very basic one which is driving #women_driving
The denial of women's	rights	is a kind of violence (women driving is an example)
Yes, he accepted to take away one of the basic women's	Rights,	which is the right to choose because his rights are preserved #yes_we_accept #women_driving
#Saudi_women_driving; the same mentalities are still unjustly controlling women's	Rights,	that God has not prevented!
#women_driving; we are the only stable country, thank God, but we are oppressing the women's	rights	in terms of income, employment, transportation, and forces her to have a guardian even if he is an addict
That is right and what is more difficult is trying to implement basic women's	Rights,	you will then be faced with strong rejection like women driving here

Figure 11. Concordances of حقوق rights co-occurring with المرأة and النساء women.

In this section then, it appears that tweeters are not directly pulling apart the logic of men, but moving their arguments in a less conversational way and into a more humanitarian space by placing women driving within a broader struggle for women's rights and framing women driving as a way of protecting women against the horrors that men indicate will occur when women drive (e.g., sinful adultery). Table 17 below summarizes the discursive strategies through which women driving as a human right has been argued for, and legitimized in the corpus around the specified words.

Table 17. *Summary of the legitimation and argumentation strategies to legitimize driving as a women's right*

Legitimation/ argumentation strategy		Means of realization	Text in Arabic	Text in English
	Citing religious expert authority	hyperlinks to videos of clerics justifying women's driving as a right	https://youtu.be/t44MLuZ1zi8 حق المرأة في قيادة السيارة. ##قيادة المرأة للسيارة الشيخ ولد الددو	https://youtu.be/t44MLuZ1zi8 women's right to drive .. #women_driving Shaik Wald Laddo
	Impersonal authority: reference to religion as not forbidding women driving	negation	وهو حق لم يمنعها منه الدين	It is a right that religion does not prohibit
	Topos of humanitarianism	Adjectives	حق شرعي حق طبيعي حق بسيط	Legitimate right Natural right Basic right
	victimization	Adjectives	محاربة مصادرة انتهاك هضم	fought denied violated usurped

Women victimization. The discourse of women as victims was most strongly apparent in the corpus around the words that refer to hired drivers (السائق ,سائق - سواق)¹⁰, and the words حسبي (suffice me) and اللهم (O' God). This discourse positions women as victims of suffering from a lack of mobility. As seen in Table 18, there were several references to hired 'drivers'. These were mentioned in the corpus primarily to highlight the reasons why, for many women, this practice should be viewed as a problematic solution. One such reference, for example, made mention of (or critiqued) religious moral sentiments that label drivers as 'foreign' and 'strangers' (أجنبي), and so because they are from another country and not family-related to women, they

¹⁰ The occurrence of different words to refer to hired drivers is due to lexical variation, where some users preferred to use the Modern Standard Arabic form (السائق) while others used the colloquial form (السواق).

cannot be alone with women. Other references were in relation to their inexperience, abusive behavior, and their expenses, which all burden women and potentially threatens their safety and lives (*topos of burdening* and *topos of threat*). In the examples in Table 9 below, drivers are characterized as ‘reckless’ (متهور), ‘criminal’ (مجرم) and predicated as ‘harassing’ (يُتحرش) children, ‘committing illegal acts’ (ارتكابهم ممارسات غير شرعية), ‘only care about making money’ (لاهم له إلا جني المال). Women here are represented as victims of their drivers in ways that emphasize their powerlessness in relation to men, and depict them as ‘under the mercy’ (تحت رحمة) of their drivers who ‘threaten women’s lives’ (الكثيرات يهدد حياة) and ‘expose women to danger’ (يعرضهن للخطر). There were also several references to female teachers having accidents on their daily commute to work by including the hashtag #حوادث_المعلمات_#(female)teachers_accidents, as well as references to women, girls, and children as ‘die in dozens in car accidents’ (يموتون بحوادث السيارة بالجملة) by reckless and inexperienced drivers. In addition to being a threat to their lives, drivers were characterized as a ‘financial loss’ (خساره اقتصاديه), who take half of women’s salaries (واعطائه نصف الراتب); thus, drivers represent both a social and financial burden to women.

The discourse of women’s always/already status as victims also surfaced around the words حسبي (suffice me) and اللهم (O’ God), which both represent a call for God or supplication. The phrases حسبي الله *God suffice me* and اللهم ونعم الوكيل *God suffices me, for He is the best disposer of affairs* occurred frequently with the word حسبي suffice me (see Figures 12). The phrases have several uses, such as to show trust in God and his protection, or as a way to supplicate or call for punishment against opponents of women driving and highlight the myriad ways women suffer when they are banned from driving, suppressed in general, and infantilized. Again here, women are represented as victims,

who have been ‘prevented’ (منعتنا) from driving, are ‘dominated’ (تسلط), ‘fought against’ (حارب) and their lives have been made difficult (صعبت حياتنا). What is especially interesting is their actions have not been specified or ‘anonymized’ (van Leeuwen, 2008), which is realized by the indefinite pronouns كل *everyone* and من *anyone*.

Table 18. *Examples of legitimating women driving by negatively representing drivers*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
Yesterday my wife’s car was turned over. Part of the reason: the driver does not know how to react properly . The main reason: she is banned from driving herself #women driving	، أمس تعرضت زوجتي لحادث انقلاب. سبب فرعي: سائق لا يحسن التصرف. سبب رئيسي: منعها من القيادة بنفسها #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة
Driver harasses the son of his employer and shows him pornographic videos #we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive #women_driving	سائق يتحرش بأحد أبناء كفيله ويعرض عليه مقاطع إباحية #لن_نسمح_بقيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة
Waiting for a driver under the sun and giving him half of the salary #pain_men_never_felt #women_driving	إنتظار سائق تحت أشعة الشمس واعطائه نصف الراتب #الم_ماجربوه_العيال #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة
If children are driven by their mothers instead of a driver who does not care about their lives , and a father who is busy, we wouldn’t have lost our girls in dozens, you so-called men. #women_driving	لو امهاتهن يوصلنهن بدل سائق لايهمه ارواحهن والاب مشغول لما فقدنا بناتنا بالجملة يااشباه الرجال #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة
#women_driving: it is time to get rid of drivers because it has been proven that they committed illegal acts , moreover, female workers and students cannot find a driver .. etc.	#قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة: لقد حان الاوان للتخلص من السائق لما ثبت من ارتكابهم ممارسات غير شرعية ، وعجز العاملات والدارسات عن تأمين سائق .. الخ
#women_driving; the fact that the society has yet to absorb is that having a driver at home is a financial loss and a social problem ..	#قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة الحقيقة التي لم يستوعبها المجتمع تواجد سائق في المنزل هو خساره اقتصاديه ومشاكل إجتماعيه ،،،،
Allowing #women_driving is better than leaving her under the mercy of a reckless driver who only cares about making money #((female) teachers_accidents	س السماح ب #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة أفضل من تركها تحت رحمة سائق متهور لاهم له إلا جني المال #حوادث_المعلمات_ الى_متى #حوادث_المعلمات
#women_driving; going out with an idiot driver who does not know left from right is a nightmare that threatens the lives of many women in our society and endangers them and their children , who is responsible	#قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة الطلعة مع سائق غبي مايعرف يمينه من يساره كابوس يهدد حياةالكثيرات في مجتمعناويعرضهن وأولادهن للخطر المحققمن المسئول
#women_driving; girls, children, and women die in dozens in car accidents with reckless drivers ,, gangs and mafia drivers are the reason	#قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة البنات والأطفال والنساء يموتون بحوادث السيارة بالجملة مع سائق واحد متهور ،، العصابات ومافيا السائقين هم المتسببين
Objectors of #women_driving suffer from mental imbalance! How do they oppose women driving but allow their families to ride with strange drivers who may be criminals? #great_contradictions	معارض #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة يعاني من خلل في دماغه! كيف يرفض قيادة المرأة ويترك عائلته تتركب مع سائق أجنبي قد يكون مجرم.؟ #تتناقضات_فاخرة

Such an indeterminate reference to the agent of the action can be considered strategic in that it places emphasis on women's suffering and the effects of banning them from driving, such as the high salaries of drivers. The use of indefinite pronouns further indicates inclusiveness because it distributes the responsibility and blame on the unjust social structures, institutions, and established gender norms rather than just a specific group or institution.

MunaAbuSulayman@ مصادرة حقوق المرأة نوع من أنواع العنف (قيادة المرأة للسيارة نموذجاً) ! 27 . . **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل على كل منحرمننا القيادة، الي مايبى ترى ماهو مجبور **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** 27 . **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** 17 . . **#طرد_النساء_لتركيب_زحل_على_الاقل_ممن_منع_#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** 17 . . **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل على كل من تعيب في منع **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** وخلصني أنا وامطاني تركب مع سواين **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** 11 . . **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** أمن يوجب المضطر إذا دعاه . . وعندما اضطر دائماً أردت: **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل 11 . . **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** لا أخشى المجتمع عندما أقود أختي حكومة وطني الحبيب الأصل في حفظ المرأةهم يخرسون مفهوم أن لا يوقفون أو نظام يستطيع تشريع **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** 6 . . **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل ع كل شخص حارب **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** امنع زوجك وخواتك بس لا تتدخل في منع جميع قيادة المرأة للسيارة 5 . . **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** ادفع فسط سيارة واقفة لا تتحرك بانتظار سائق! حدثوني عن الظلم! **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل 5 [pic.twitter.com/SHIT7gkFjp](https://twitter.com/SHIT7gkFjp/pic.twitter.com/SHIT7gkFjp) . . سموني أسيرة السواق الله يصبرني على هالغباء **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** السائقين ، عرضوها لتحرش الشباب في اليموزين ، ويقولون تكريمها ، عجب !! 5 . . **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل جملة كفيفة يرفع ملف القضية من الأرض للسماء 5 . . **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** اهمهم بمن مندهش كيف تصدر فتاوى في المملكة بمنع قيادة المرأة للسيارة دون دليل شرعي من الكتاب والسنة 4 . . **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل فيك، الله ينتقم منك بالي منعنا من القيادة وصعبت علينا حياتنا ومن كل من عارض والخارج وانتو حكم قيادة المرأة كان الله بعون حكمانا وشعبنا من امثالكم 3 . . **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل ع من وضع الهالشق الناس بيض وانتو بايش 3 . . [oct26driving@](https://twitter.com/oct26driving) **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** 30 . . باقي اسبوع علاخبارات والسواق طلع (الليلة)من البيت (حصل عمل ثاني) وش اسوي؟؟؟ **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل على من تسلط علينا **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** 30 . . يارب تحت المطر وصوت الاذان أنك <https://twitter.com/drrdob> راتبه ١٦٠٠ . . والبنايين ديله هذا غير مخالقات ساهر ، **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل 29 . . عندما تطرح قضية **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** يتحول كل الإخونج والخوارج إلى جامية وتعود لجهة عملها ٤ مرات يومياً . . يتبع 28 . . يعني مشاوير السواق بتصير ب ٣٠٠٠ ريال بالشهر بدل ٢٠٠٠ ريال **حسبي** الله ونعم الوكيل الله عجل بقرار **#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة** 681485063842828288 twitter.com/essamz/status/681485063842828288

God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs against everyone who prevented us from driving. If you do not want, it is not compulsory #women_driving
God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs against everyone who banned #women_driving and left me and my children to ride with drivers
Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him, when I am in distress I always repeat: God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs
God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs against everyone fought #women driving . You may prevent your wife and sisters but do not prevent everyone.
I pay monthly instalments for a car that does not move and needs a driver! Talk to me about injustice! God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs
God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs, is a compelling phrase that can transform this file from land to heaven (God)
God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs. May God take revenge from those objectors who prevented us from driving and made our lives difficult
God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs against those who created this hashtag; you are occupying your minds with issues of your own world
I am one week away from my exams and the driver left the house (tonight), he (found another job) what can I do? God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs against everyone who dominated us #women_driving
His salary is 1600 and gas is twice as much, plus traffic tickets #women_driving God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs
It means the trips made by the driver cost 3000 riyals, instead of 2000. God	suffices me	for He is the best disposer of affairs. May God expedite the decision of #women_driving

Figure 12. Concordances of **حسبي الله ونعم الوكيل** God suffice me for He is the best disposer

of affairs

Women equity. So far, the right to drive has mostly been legitimized by delegitimizing the religious perceptive on women driving and by representing women as victims and a disadvantaged group whose rights have been denied and violated. While such strategies can garner public and governmental support, they also serve to disempower women by denying them of their agency and enforcing the idea that women need the protection of men. That said, the concordance analysis of the word *حق* *right* and *حقوقها* *her right* demonstrates that there were a few instances that seemed to reflect a more powerful articulation of women's rights. The *women's equality* theme in particular invokes women's agency as well as their ability to make their own decisions and refuse subordination by men (see Table 19).

Baker (2016) argues that these strategies reflect a kind of discourse that “views women's equality movements and developments in societies that are designed to empower or give choices to women as a desirable state of affairs” (p. 146). By utilizing this discourse and employing the strategy of *activation*, it became clearer how women were positioned in the sentences as the subjects or doers of the action (van Leeuwen, 2008) (e.g., *women will retrieve, women don't need the blessings of religious clerics, they have the right to choose*). Under these forms of action, women were represented as decision makers who have the right to make their own decisions (e.g., *ولها الخيار تقود بنفسها او* *women have the right to choose to drive themselves or hire a driver*, *حق لا بد نحصل* *women have the right to choose to drive themselves or hire a driver*, *ا right that we must have whether the motive was desire or need*), and who refuse to be subordinate to men (e.g., *نرفض العيش فيه كالجواري* *we refuse to live as maids*, *ومعاملة النساء بأنهم اطفال وجواري تابعه ل الذكور* *end... the treatment of women as kids or maids who are dependent on men*, *ليعيش بكرامته وليس لعبادة سرواله وشهواته* *live with dignity and*

not worship their sexual desires).

Table 19. *Examples of legitimating driving as a women's right through women's equity discourse*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
#women_driving is a right that we must have whether the motive was a desire or a need, a right is a right	#قيادة المرأة للسيارة حق لا بد نحصل عليه سواء كان الدافع رغبة أو حاجة الحق يبقى حق
#we_will_not_allow_women_to_drive; honestly, this is a strange law ... women have the right to drive their cars ... to do her work ... and develop and build her nation	#لن نسمح بقيادة المرأة للسيارة قانون غريب بصراحة .. من حق المرأة قيادة السيارة .. لأداء وظائفها .. والرقى لبناء وطنها
#women_driving is a self-evident right, so women don't need the blessings of unenlightened clericsto stop young men from chasing them in taxis or be alone with a foreign driver	#قيادة المرأة السعودية للسيارة حق يديهى فلا حاجة لنساننا بتكريم مشايخ الظلام لهن بمطاردة الشباب في التاكسي أو إختلائهن مع سائق أجنبي
Rich or poor, #women_driving is one of their rights and women have the right to choose to drive themselves or hire a driver . We need a decision that may end the suffering and controversy	غنية أو فقيرة حق #قيادة المرأة للسيارة من حقوقها ولها الخيار تقود بنفسها أو توظف سائق. صدور قرار ينهي المعاناة والجدال
Welcome, our insistence on having a legitimate and natural right will endlessly continue . #Saudi_women_driving is inevitably coming	مرحباً بك من جديد اصرارنا على حق مشروع وطبيعي مستمر الى مالى نهاية #قيادة المرأة السعودية للسيارة قادمه لا محال 12
Regardless of the imaginary damages, women driving is a legitimate, rational and vital right, even if they want to drive and have a driver, it is their right .	بغض النظر عن الأضرار المتوهمة قيادة المرأة للسيارة حق شرعي وعقلي وحياتي حتى لو قادتها وعندها سائق فالأمر حق لها
Women's driving is a natural obvious right and does not need any arguing #women_driving	قيادة المرأة حق طبيعي واضح لا يحتاج إلى جدال #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
Regardless of all the necessities and justifications, we simply say: women driving is a natural right for women . #women_driving	، بغض النظر عن كل الضرورات والمبررات وببساطة نقول: قيادة السيارة حق طبيعي للمرأة. #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
Some people underestimate the issue of women's driving and view it as trivial, but it is a legitimate human right. Why those human beings are denied this right just because they were born with female genitals?	قيادة المرأة للسيارة أمر يستخف به البعض ويراه تافه لكنه حق مشروع للإنسان بأي حق يتم منعه عن جنس بشري لأنه خلق بأعضاء تناسلية أنثوية؟!؟
#Saudi_women_driving is a right that the state is obligated to approve to serve its female citizens. Enough discrimination and prejudice, and mistreatment of women as kids or maids who are dependent on men	#قيادة المرأة السعودية للسيارة حق ملزومه الدولة تنفذه لخدمة مواطناتها، كفاية عنصرية وتحيز ومعاملة النساء بأنهم اطفال وجواري تابعه ل الذكور.
The right to drive is one of women's rights that was stolen by fatwas which are completely irrelevant to Islam. We are at a time when we must refuse to live as maids .	حق المرأة بالقيادة ليست الا حق من حقوقها تم سرقتهما بفتاوى لا تعود للاسلام باي صلة نحن في زمن نرفض العيش فيه كالجواري
Everyone in my country should be aware that God created another gender to live with dignity and not to worship their sexual desires ; it is one of her rights #women_driving	يجب أن يعي العموم أن في بلادنا هناك جنس آخر خلقه الله ليعيش بكرامته وليس لعبادة سر واله وشهوته واحد حقوقها #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
It is about time for women to retrieve their stolen rights and live in dignity and justice; and all forms of violation must be stopped #women_driving	حان الوقت للمرأة أن تأخذ حقوقها المسلوبة وتعيش بكرامة وعدل والقضاء على الانتهاكات بكل صورها #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
It is embarrassing that we are demanding this basic right for the third year, and we will continue even if all means were exhausted #women_driving	الأمر المخجل حق بسيط للسنة الثالثة نطالب به وسنستمر حتى لو استنفذت جميع الطرق #قيادة المرأة للسيارة

The construction of women's agency has also been reflected in the use of intensification strategies; that is, by intensifying and overtly articulating a proposition (Reisigl & Wodak, 2011). This was mostly evident in the use of modal verbs (e.g., *حق لا بد نحصل عليه* *a right that we must have*, *وسنستمر* *we will continue*), and through categorical present tense to make assertive statements (e.g., *من حق المرأة قيادة السيارة* *women have the right to drive*, *قيادة* *قيادة* *قيادة* *women's driving is a natural obvious right*, *نرفض العيش فيه كالجواري* *we refuse to live as maids*). Some tweeters have taken direct aim at men, challenging and dismissing their opinions:

- مطلب وحق للمرأة وليس للرجال حق في الاعتراض #تخلف #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
it is a demand and a right and men don't have the right to object #retardation #women_driving
- أنا ما أنتظر رأي رجل أن يقتنع أن ذا شيء حقي أو لا ولا يعني رأيي أو موافقته هو حق وراح ينزع
#مسيرة_أكتوبر_للقيادة #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
I am not waiting for any man to be convinced if this is my right or not, and his opinion or approval does not matter. It is a right and will be wrung out of them
- المرأة عند تأييدها لقيادة السيارة لا تنتظر منك أخي التقليدي مناقشتها لتقنعها بفكرك الرائع، بل هي تكتب لتتكلم عن
حقوقها #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
when a woman advocates for driving, she does not wait for you my traditional brother to convince her with your great thinking. She writes to talk about her rights #women_driving

Promoting women's agency was also evident around the word *المجتمع* *the society*, in which the Saudi society has been described as patriarchal and discriminatory against women:

- #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة من حقنا أن نقود لكن هذا المجتمع لا يتغوط سوى ذكور !!
We have the right to drive, but this society only ejects males.

- المجتمع الذكوري سيقاوم إلى آخر نفس وبعدها سيقبل ويرضى وسيلم .. صراع طفولي ! #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
#قيادة26أكتوبر

the patriarchal society will resist until the last breath and then will accept and approve .. childish conflict !

- نص المجتمع يعاني من صعوبة التنقل لكي يرضى النص الآخر لا توجد مساواة بك يا بلد

half of the society is suffering from difficulty in movement to please the other half.

There is no equality in this country

- المجتمعات تقوم على الشراكة بين الجنسين فكيف تريدوننا نتطور ونتقدم اقتصاديا ونصف المجتمع نعطل؟

Societies are built by partnership between the sexes, so how do you want us to develop and improve economically and socially and half of the society is disabled

- نصف المجتمع يمارس عليه هذا التمييز العنصري

half of the society is discriminated against

According to Holmes (2009), gender is a performance and a relation between women and men, and for it to be changed, masculinity, not just femininity, needs to be questioned and challenged. This was evident in the corpus around the word الرجال men, where Saudi men were negatively represented as dominant towards, and dismissive of women. Men were characterized as shown in Table 20 as ‘so-called men’ (أشباه الرجال) and predicated as ‘imposing their authority’ (يفرض سيطرته) and ‘humiliating’ (ذل) women because they are insecure and ultimately afraid of ‘women’s independence’ (خائف أن يكون) – (للمرأة استقلاليتها) – an accomplishment they see as threatening to ‘their authority and greatness’ (يفقد تسلطه وعظمته).

Table 20. *Examples of negative representation of men*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
Most Saudi men want a woman who constantly depend on them, and on whom they take pity, but not intimidated by!	يريد اغلب الرجال السعوديين امرأة تظل دايماً بحاجتهم ويشفقون عليها لا تلك التي يخافون منها ! #بلغ_عن_من_تكشف_وجهها_#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
Include also the so-called men who do not feel their manhood unless they impose their authority over women #women_driving	أضف إلى ذلك أنصاف الرجال الذين لا يستشعروا رجولتهم إلا بفرض سيطرتهم على المرأة #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
#expel_women_to_Saturn; their departure for Saturn is better than living in a land where their basic rights, in #women_driving, are banned, and better than living among men who think that women are only for bed.	#طرد_النساء_لكوكب_زحل_ذهابهم_لِزحل_أزين_من_أرض_حتى_أبسط_حقوقهم_في_#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة_ممنوعة_وبين_بعض_الرجال_الذين_يظنون_أنها_للغراش_فقط
I am a conservative woman but I really want to drive. I am in misery from the humiliation that men impose on us. They say it is to protect women, I swear, it is not, it is humiliation #women_driving	أنا بنت محافظه ولكني بكل ما في أبي أسوق والله اموت من الذل اللي فرضوه الرجال علينا يقولون حفظ للمرأة لا والله ذل #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة 1
#women_driving any man who objects this issue is afraid that women may have their independence, so he will lose his authority and his greatness	#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة من يعارض الموضوع من الرجال هو خائف أن يكون للمرأة استقلاليتها فيفقد تسلطه وعظمته
I think a cuckold is one who allows his family to go with a strange man and does not know what happens. I do not know how those so called men think #bin_naheet approves women driving	أعتقد أن الديوث هو الذي يسمح لأهله بروجون مع رجل غريب ولا يعرف وش يصير. أنا مدري من وين يفكر أشباه الرجال #بن_نحيب_يوافق_قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة
Men are still fighting with cruelty and ferocity against women driving	وما زال الرجال يحاربون قيادة المرأة بوحشية وضراوة

Table 21 summarizes the different discursive strategies utilized within the women equity discourse to empower women and highlight their agency.

Globalization and modernization. Another way to justify the support for women's driving was by invoking discourses of globalization. Like Atanga (2010), I define globalization not just in terms of economy but also in relation to socio-cultural practices and "the mix of foreign cultures and practices ... contrary to 'localisation' which [is viewed] as the conservation and preservation of local cultures and practices" (p. 186). Traces of this discourse are evident around the word *العالم the world*.

Table 21. *Summary of the discursive strategies to legitimize women driving through the women equity discourse*

Discursive strategy		Means of realization	Text in Arabic	Text in English
Referential strategies				
Activation		women are positioned in the sentences as the subjects or doers of the action	ولها الخيار تقود بنفسها او توظف سائق	women have the right to choose to drive themselves or hire a driver
		adjectives	أشباه الرجال	So-called men
	Society	Adjectives	المجتمع الذكوري	Patriarchal society
		Attributes	لا توجد مساواة بك يابلد نصف المجتمع يمارس عليه هذا التمييز العنصري	There is no equality half of the society is discriminated against
	Men	Predicates	يريد اغلب الرجال السعوديين إمرأة تظل دايماً بحاجتهم ويشفقون عليها بفرض سيطرتهم على المرأة	Men want a woman who constantly depend on them and whom they take pity impose their authority over women
		modal verbs	حق لا بد نحصل عليه وسنستمر	a right that we must have we will continue
		categorical present tense	من حق المرأة قيادة السيارة قيادة المرأة حق طبيعي واضح	women have the right to drive women's driving is a natural obvious right

Table 22 shows the 10 most frequent collocates of the word *العالم* *the world*. The first two collates were used to reference ‘countries’ (دول العالم) and ‘women around the world’ (نساء العالم). In these tweets, the *topos of comparison* was employed by comparing the situation of women in Saudi Arabia to their position in the rest of the world. It was mostly used as a way to empower women by stating that women around the world can ‘*fly civilian and military airplanes and spaceships*’ (تقود طائرات مدنية وحربية وسفن فضائية) ‘*were sent on*

spaceships’ (يشاركن في كافة المجالات حتى المتعلقة بالفضاء), and ‘*participate in all public domains even those related to space*’ (تم ابتعاثين بمركبات فضائية). Moreover, these phrases invoke values pertaining to modernization, which was also evident around the collocates القمر *the moon* and وصل *reached*. These collocates were used to highlight the modernization of other countries by stating that ‘the world reached the moon’ (العالم وصلوا القمر), ‘people in the world are going to live on the moon’ (العالم بتعيش بالقمر), ‘women in the outside world have reached the moon’ (المرأة في العالم الخارجي صعدت الى القمر), and finding ‘water on Mars’ (الماء بالمريخ). By discussing women’s driving in relation to these various achievements, tweeters tried to justify lifting the ban on women driving by constructing it as a form of modernization, and a feat that ought to be much easier to achieve than, say, reaching the moon, stars, and other entities in our galaxy.

At the same time, comparisons made between Saudi women and women in the rest of the world revealed the intense ways in which Saudi women are subordinated: ‘*women around the world are free but our women are prisoners*’ (نساء العالم حراير ونساونا); ‘*for our males, women around the world are honorable and our girls are prostitutes*’ (في نظر ذكورنا كل نساء العالم شريفات إلا بناتنا عاهرات).

Table 22. *The 10 most frequent collocates of the word العالم the world.*

Collocates in Arabic	Collocates in English	Co-occurrence count	Candidate count	T-score	MI	logDice
دول	countries	11	19	3.312	9.649	11.678
نساء	women	8	61	2.813	7.506	10.752
بقية	the rest	4	6	1.998	9.852	10.400
الوحيد	the only	4	20	1.993	8.115	10.206
القمر	the moon	3	5	1.730	9.700	10.000
الوحيدة	the only	3	8	1.729	9.022	9.956
الإسلامي	Islamic	3	9	1.728	8.852	9.941
وصل	reached	3	10	1.728	8.700	9.927
كل	all	13	357	3.534	5.658	9.893
كله	all	3	18	1.725	7.852	9.817

In doing so, tweeters point out the dichotomy of how women from other countries are framed and how Saudi women are constantly viewed in relation to adultery and sin. The disadvantaged situation of Saudi women was also highlighted around the collocates الوحيدة and الوحيد , meaning *the only*, which were used to construct Saudi Arabia as the only country in the world that oppresses women:

- اللي يتوفون فيه المعلمات بالجملة – *the only country in which dozens of female teachers die*
- الذي لا تقود فيه المرأة – *the only country in which women cannot drive*
- الذي يمنع إنسان من أبسط حق مشروع له بحجة غبية ساذجة – *the only country that prevents a human from [accessing] their basic legitimate right for a stupid naïve reason*
- التي تمنع وبلا فخر..#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة؟ – *the only country that prevents, with no pride, #women_driving*

An interesting collocate of the word العالم *the world* was الاسلامي *Islamic*, which was used to refer to the Islamic world in comparison to SA. This specific reference to the Islamic world, rather than the world in general, can be considered strategic in the sense that it seems to avoid accusations of being influenced by western thought or ‘westernization’. Throughout Saudi Arabia’s history, western values and thoughts have been constantly rejected, condemned, and considered incompatible with the country’s conservative Islamic values. Thus, to compare Saudi women to women in the Islamic world seems more appealing or appropriate to attract support.

Women as agents of development. This theme, according to Atanga (2010), reflects “a dominant discourse in the developing world ... [which] focuse[s] on women in the development process” (p. 185). Representing women as agents of development was

mostly apparent around the word المجتمع *the society*, which was found to be frequently collocating with the word نصف *half of* to metaphorically refer to women as ‘half of the society’ (نصف المجتمع). As mentioned in Chapter 2, Saudi women’s role in social development has been promoted and advocated by the government, especially during King Abdullah’s reign, as part of the reform discourse after the events of 9/11 and terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter 2) (Al-Rasheed, 2013; Le renard, 2014). The reform discourse supported women’s professional and educational opportunities, access to public places, as well as women’s participation in state institutions. In the corpus, it seems that this discourse was invoked to justify the need for women to drive and to highlight how a lack of women’s mobilization hinders the movement’s development (see Figure 13). Women as ‘half of the society’ (نصف المجتمع) is predicated in the corpus as ‘disabled’ (معطل), ‘paralyzed’ (شلل), being on ‘wheelchairs’ (كراسي متحركة) and placed under ‘curfew’ (حضر تجول). This restriction of women’s movement raises and circulates questions around the developmental goals of the reform discourse by questioning the driving ban’s ‘compatibl[ity] with the humanitarization programs of the kingdom’s cities’ (كيف يتفق مع برامج أنسة المدن في المملكة) and its effect to ‘develop and improve economically and socially’ (نتقدم ونتطور اقتصاديا واجتماعيا). Employing the *topos of burdening*, which states that “if a person, an institution or a ‘country’ is burdened by specific problems, one should act in order to diminish these burdens.” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 78), women here are represented as burdened though a lack of mobilization that prevents them from becoming active agents in their society. The end result is the ‘destruction’ (تدمير) and ‘failure’ (فشل) of society.

#قيادة المرأة للسيارة دام الدولة تمنع قيادة النساء ليه مانتكثك بنفع رواتهم؟؟ 28 . . #قيادة المرأة للسيارة نص المجتمع يعني من صعوبة التنقل لكي يرضى النص الآخر لا توجد مساواة بك يابك 28 . . #قيادة المرأة للسيارة خلونا سيارتها . . ما هذا الهراء والتناقض #تتلفظت فخره #قيادة المرأة للسيارة 11 . . يقولون بأن المرأة نصف المجتمع ، وقص الوقت يجيبون هالتصنيف بين الجنان لإدعائهم بمعرفتهم لمصلحتها أكثر منها!! #قيادة المرأة للسيارة الواسطة، الفرعات ضد الكفاءات، سميت شائعة حسنة، ٧- قيادة المرأة للسيارة، ممكن نواعد واحد ٨- تعطيل نصف المجتمع . . إختلاط @malathuwait 23 . . الإناث أكثر من الذكور في التعليم، والصحة والرعاية الاجتماعية بالسعودية ممنوعين من القيادة ليه ماتوفر لهم الدولة قطارات داخلية في المدن ومطرو وباصات نفس لندن ! 1 . . تعطيل نصف المجتمع باعتبار واهية ومبررات سخيفة مايزمر المجتمع ع المدى الطويل أن كنتم تقفون #سائق يختطف طلبه ويعتصمها لكن الشيء الأخلاقي واضح #قيادة المرأة للسيارة فالخوف لا تنقش إيجابياتها وسلبياتها . 1 . . تعطيل نصف المجتمع باعتبار واهية ومبررات سخيفة مايزمر المجتمع ع المدى الطويل أن كنتم تقفون #سائق يختطف طلبه ويعتصمها ترى كل السالفة اننا نبي نخلص امورنا بدون مانفع مايا ونفسيا 8 . . #قيادة المرأة للسيارة ترى شال نصف المجتمع تعينا 8 . . ههم، حسيني إن الحكومة السعودية كانت عارفة الموضوع قبل لا تصير الدراسة، #قيادة المرأة للسيارة 2 ، . اعتقد أن منع قيادة المرأة للسيارة هو فرض تسلط موهوب من السلطة لصقور لتشد ليمارس المنع على نصف المجتمع الضعيف .. #مسيرة أكثر للقيادة 2 ، . أريد قيادة المرأة للسيارة و أرضي الانتهازية في تنظيم الحملة في جيبها ب البوك أعازك بكثير من الأمور إلا أني عند #قيادة المرأة للسيارة هنا أصمت إختاراً لثفاك عن نصف المجتمع . 22 ، . #قيادة المرأة للسيارة بعضهم يقلن ملكم ولنا احنا ما نبغى نسوق يقول لها لا تسوقي لكن لا تتحدثي المساومة الاكتساب التنقل #قيادة المرأة للسيارة 26 أكتوبر 2 ، . قضية الشرق الأوسط في السعودية لدى نصف المجتمع هي قيادة المرأة للسيارة "ألمة ضحكك من جيلها الأم". " #مسيرة أكتوبر للقيادة 2 ، . قيادة المرأة للسيارة القيادة يابك أنك تأخذهم وتفكك منهم @Alwaleed_Talal 7 أكتوبر 2019 pic.twitter.com/RK5n6NU1vh 7 . . #مسيرة أكتوبر للقيادة 7 ، . M_albugaily@ اجيل من السعوديين تربت على أن التعيز ضد المرأة جزء من الدين وهذا أحد أسباب الفشل الاجتماعي اليوم! نصف الشعب معطل #قيادة المرأة للسيارة 18 ، . #ساحكي للاخفاذ ياتي عاصرت قوى تقول أن #قيادة المرأة للسيارة تؤثر @saudi1100d100 ترى زياد يطلب بـ #قيادة المرأة للسيارة 15 . . بلد"الأمن والأمان"كفرض حظر تجول على نصف الشعب وتمنع #قيادة المرأة للسيارة ويلا قوانين مكتوبة #هروب قنات دار الضيافة #للبرية 15 . . 3 . . المجتمعات تقوم على الشراكة بين الجنسين فكيف ترفضون أن تتطور وتتقدم اقتصادياً واجتماعياً ونصف المجتمع الآخر معطل ؟، #قيادة المرأة للسيارة 3 . . عند داعش النساء تسوق عادي جدا ولو جينا لشرع الله ما اعتقد تعيش في القرون الوسطى 5 ، . مع #قيادة المرأة للسيارة كيف يتفق مع برامج أسنة المدن في المملكة ونصف المجتمع يمارس ضده هذا التعيز العنصري #مسيرة أكتوبر للقيادة 5 ، . هل #قيادة المرأة للسيارة متفقين على #داعش

Half of the society	the society	is suffering from a difficulty in movement to satisfy the other half .. there is no equality in you, my country
The interviewers talked about #women_driving and how banning it disables half of	the society	and they are tricking us by saying we are queens
They say that women are half of	the society	at the same time they are imprisoning this half between walls, claiming they know what is good for her more than she does
Women driving, she can meet someone, disabling half of the	the society	... mixing
Disabling half of the	the society	with flimsy excuses and silly justifications is what destroys the society in the long run, if you understand #driver kidnaps and rapes a(female)student
Disabling half of the	the society	with flimsy excuses and silly justifications is what destroys the society in the long run, if you understand #driver kidnaps and rapes a(female)student
#women_driving, paralyzing half of the	the society	exhausted us
I think banning women from driving is a crafty authoritarianism assigned to the hawkish conservatives to practice this ban on the powerless half of	the society	..
when it comes to #women_driving, I keep my mouth shut, respecting woman defense of half of	the society	..
The most important issue nowadays in Saudi Arabia, for half of the	the society,	is women driving "Our ignorance is mocked at by other nations".
Look at the disabled half of	the society	we are like people moving on wheel chairs, humiliated to go to work because of the ban on #women_driving
Societies are built by partnership between the sexes, so how do you want us to develop and improve economically and socially an half of	the society	is disabled?
Banning #women_driving, how is it compatible with the humanization programs of the Kingdom's cities while half of	the society	is discriminated against?
Generations of Saudis have been raised on the concept that discrimination against women is part of religion; this is one of the reasons for failure in the society today! Half of	the people	are disabled #women_driving
The country of 'safety and security' imposes curfew on half of the	the people	and bans #women_driving without any written laws

Figure 13. Concordances of the words المجتمع the society and الشعب the people co-

occurring with نصف half of

The phrase 'women are half of the society' (المرأة نصف المجتمع) is frequently attributed to Ibn al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah (1999), an Islamic scholar who wrote that "Women are one half of society which gives birth to the other half" (المرأة هي نصف المجتمع)

وهي التي تلد و تربى النصف الآخر (Al-Jawziyyah (p. 16). While this reference recognizes women's role in society, it does, to some extent, reify discourses of 'gender difference' through the idea that society is divided into two halves: one for women and one for men. These categorical and essentialist distinctions and division between females and males perpetuate patriarchal practices within the world, especially in the context of SA where gender segregation is institutionalized and strictly monitored. In fact, as Le Renard (2008) argues, segregation does not only represent a special division between men and women in SA, but also forms the building block of an ideological categorization in which women are treated as a distinct social category and for whom certain places and activities are created. What is notable is that men are never referred to as 'half of the society' when describing their roles. It is always women who are aggregated and quantified as 'halves' (van Leeuwen, 2008) and to be considered half seems to entail incompleteness or partiality, which cannot be completed without the other half. Others have argued that men are usually unmarked in language; that is, they represent the norm, while women are often marked in language and even style. For example, in English, suffixes are added to some words in order to make them feminine, as in actress and waitress (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006). Similarly, Arabic uses 'androcentric' and male-associated words, for example, in the precedence of masculine forms or lexemes over feminine ones, as well as the lack of female counterparts to some male nouns (Saidiqi, 2003). Although Arabic is structurally able to present both genders equally, such androcentrism attributes power asymmetry between men and women in the Arab world, as well as the use of Arabic in male-associated rather than female-associated contexts (Sadiqi, 2003). Thus, while referring to women as 'half of the society' can be thought of as positive, it can also be said to

contribute to the treatment of women as a separate social category that needs special treatment. Yet in a society where women are publically invisible, such references help us to recognize women's roles in society and emphasize their presence and importance.

Many tweeters mentioned the burdens they encounter when faced with a lack of mobilization and freedom of movement. To use their words, they constructed opponents to women driving to the society' as 'backwardness' (التخلف) and 'ignorance' (الجهل); thus, classifying anti-driving groups as rather uneducated or unsophisticated:

- المجتمع الذي مازال يعتبر المرأة رعب وإشكال علينا أن ندرك جهله ..!
*the society who still fears women and think they are problematic, we should realize its **ignorance***
- حرموها وينعاد التاريخ والجهل مانقول الا مشكلة الجهال بذا المجتمع
*they denied her from her rights, history and **ignorance** are repeating themselves, we can only say that **ignorant** people are a problem in this society*
- قيادة_ المرأة_ للسيارة حاجة ماسة لكثير من الموظفات ومن أبسط حقوقها كمواطنة ومنعها دلالة تخلف المجتمع وتجهيله من قبل قوى الرفض ومناقض للمصلحة
*it is a necessity for female employees, and one of their basic rights as citizens; denying them this right is an indication of the society's **backwardness** and its **suffering from intellectual stagnation** at the hands of the forces of rejection, which is contrary to [public] interest*
- مشوار الاثنين كيلو ب80 ريال تروح في جيب وافد ثقافة المجتمع وتخلفه صنعت منه تاجر مشاوير قد الدنيا
*a 2km trip fee is 80 Riyals, which goes into the pocket of an expatriate. The society's culture and **backwardness** has made this expatriate a great merchant*
- قيادة المرأة للسيارة أمر بديهي لكن التخلف في المجتمع وانقياد القطيع لمشاخ الغفلة المتحجرين هو السبب وزوجتك والا كيف لا تتق بأمك وأختك
*women driving is self-evident but the **backwardness** of the society and the herd's abidance by what fanatic and unenlightened sheikhs say is the reason, and how could you not trust your mother, sister and wife.*

State support. Among the most frequent words in the corpus were words that refer to the state or government as authoritative social actors within the state discourse. They include the words *الدولة* *the state*, *الحكومة* *the government* and the twitter handle of the current king @kingsalman. Most of the references to the government were in relation to being financially responsible for compensating women for banning them to drive. These tweets mobilize the *topos of finances* to indicate the financial burdening of the ban on women driving and of drivers' expenses. The reference to the government also relates to the *topos of responsibility*, which states that "because a state or group of persons is responsible for the emergence of specific problems, it or they should act in order to find solutions of these problems" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 78); thus, assigning the responsibility of solving the driving issue to the state (see Table 23).

Table 23. *Examples of legitimating women driving through topos of finances and topos of responsibility*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
#women_driving; if the state won't allow us to drive then it should pay the drivers' salaries	قيادة المرأة للسيارة إذا الدولة ماراح تسمح لنا بالقيادة الله لايهينهم يتكفلون براتب السواقين
The state should impose tax on all the opponents and use it to provide drivers and cars for all women! Stripping off a right should be compensated by another! #women_driving	المفروض الدولة تفرض ضريبه على المعارضين وتدعم النقص اللي فيه لتوفير سواق وسيارة لكل امرأة! سلب الحق يقابله اعطاء اخر! #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
#women_driving; as long as the state prevents women from driving, why does not it pay their salaries???	قيادة المرأة للسيارة دام الدولة تمنع قيادة النساء ليه ماتتكفل بدفع رواتبهم???
Provide an alternative in exchange for the ban. The state should pay for the drivers and their expenses and salaries, or is it benefiting from it as a controlled tax #women_driving	وفروا البديل بالغوريين مقابل المنع الدولة تتكفل بالسائق ومصاريفه وراتبه والا مستقيدين من ظهرها ضريبه مقننه #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
#women_driving is a must as long as there are no public transit, and the state must either allow it or provide compensations for the citizens because of this disadvantage	#قيادة المرأة للسيارة واجب في ظل عدم وجود مواصلات عامة و يجب على الدولة ام السماح او تقديم تعويضات للمواطن بسبب هذا الضرر
As long as our girls are prevented from driving why do not the state provide trains in the city and subways and buses like in London	#أحلام قيادة المرأة السعودية للسيارة خطر دام بناتنا ممنوعين من القيادة ليه ماتوفر لهم الدولة قطارات داخلية في المدن ومترو وباصات نفس لندن
We demand financial compensations from the Saudi government for all the financial losses inflicted on us from the ban #women_driving	نطالب الحكومة السعودية بتعويضات مالية عن الخسائر المالية التي لحقتنا من المنع #قيادة المرأة للسيارة
I am demanding the Saudi government to pay 6 million in compensations for all what I paid on transit and harassment by an inadequate driver	أطالب الحكومة السعودية بحفضها الله ب 6 مليون تعويض عن منافقته ع المواصلات والتحرشات من السائق الخايس وشكرا

Reference to the government was employed by some tweeters to indicate the authoritative position of the government in making decisions regardless of whether some social groups agree with it or not; thus, reinforcing the government's authority and refraining from framing the demands for women driving as acts of anarchism, but one that work with the state to implement these rights. Here, the *topos of authority* delegitimized or minimized the authoritative role of other social groups, specifically the role of the clerics, shifting the authority beyond the members who resist it and calling for the government, as an objective entity, to bring justice:

- قرار #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة بيد الدولة وليس تجار الدين بمجرد أن توافق على ذلك ستقود المرأة وسوف تكون خطوة رائعة في رفع اقتصاد البلد *The decision of #women_driving belongs to the state and not the religion merchants; once it is approved, women will drive and it will be a great step in boosting the country's economy.*
- قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة بالسعودية قرار مجتمعي فهو مخطأ. هو قرار حكومي بامتنياز. لو ارادت الدولة إنفاذه *Whoever thinks that #women_driving in Saudi Arabia is a community decision is wrong. It is definitely a governmental decision. If the state wants to implement it, then the clerics will bliss it.*
- قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة قرار سياسي بحث لا علاقة للتيارات به أبدا. نعلم أن كل التيارات تخرس إذا قررت *#women_driving is a pure political decision and does not have to do with any orientations. we know that all these orientations will be silenced if the state makes the decision.*

Historically, SA governments have been able to overlook opposition, especially religious opposition, to resolve oppression issues such as women's education, employment, and participation in political institutions. King Faisal, for example, introduced women's education despite intense opposition from religious conservatives.

Many Saudis regarded King Abdullah as a “champion of women’s emancipation” (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 28). He was the first king to appoint women in the Shoura Council (Consultative Council), allow women to vote and participate in municipal elections, and provided thousands of women with scholarships to study abroad. That is why, for many Saudi women, the state signifies an important asset for support and “an arbiter that can resolve gender inequality in their favour” (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 29). Such views are reflected in the corpus (see Table 24), where many tweeters mentioned or included the twitter handle of the king @KingSalman to directly address him, refer to him as their ‘father’ (والدنا) and themselves as ‘daughters’ (بناتك), and ask him to ‘make a fair decision’ (اتخاذ اجراء عادل) and ‘do justice’ (انصفنا) in order to protect and save women.

Table 24. *Examples of mentions of the @KingSalman*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
@KingSalman, peace be upon you, our father. We are still waiting for you to make a fair decision that pleases God regarding our right to #women_driving, we hope it becomes one of the reforms	@KingSalman السلام عليكم والدنا. مازلنا ننتظر منكم اتخاذ اجراء عادل يرضي الله في حقنا في #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة أتمنى انها تكون من الاصلاحات
we love our country and protect its glory with our souls! If we support #women_driving, then we want the benefit of this country and the benefit of its other half that will develop it and raise its flag	نحب بلدنا ونحمي شموخه بارواحنا ! إذا ابدينا #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة لا نريد الا مصلحته ومصلحة نصفه الآخر الذي سيبنيه ويرفع من رايته @KingSalman
We are grateful to King Faisal for approving women education! We wish that #women_driving will be a precedent for King Salman @KingSalman	ندعول الملك فيصل لإقراره تعليم الفتاة! نتمنى أن تكون #قيادة_المرأة_ السعودية للسيارة سبيل للملك سلمان@KingSalman
Please look at it from the eye of a sympathetic father on the money and honor of his daughters @KingSalman. We are very tired #women_driving	ارجوك انظر لها بعين الوالد المشفق على اموال واعراض بناته @KingSalman والله تعينا #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة
@KingSalman, we the female citizens appeal to you to lift the ban on women driving. We are trustworthy, and there is no justification for the ban, and we are not a terrible country in order to consider ourselves different from others?	@KingSalman نحن المواطنات نناشدك برفع حظر قيادة المرأة للسيارة. نحن أهل للثقة، ولا مبرر للحظر ولسنا بلد سيء لندعي اننا غير عن بقية الشعوب؟
@KingSalman @oct26driving, this is one of our important rights and there are no logical justifications to ban women from driving in Saudi Arabia, do us justice	@KingSalman @oct26driving هذا حق مهم من حقوقنا ولا توجد أي مبررات منطقية لعدم قيادة المرأة للسيارة في السعودية ، انصفنا

Finally, to cultivate the government's support, many women showcased the social and economic benefits that would come by allowing women to drive, which invoked the *topos of usefulness/advantage* with respect to the country's economy. The topos of advantage or usefulness states that "if an action under a specific relevant point of view will be useful, then one should perform it" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 75). This topos highlights the positive economic effects of women driving (see Table 25). Women driving was described as 'great step in lifting the country's economy' (خطوة رائعة في رفع) namely because its approval will 'deport half a million foreign drivers which will save millions for the state's treasury' (وترحل نصف مليون سائق أجنبي مما سيوفر مليارات على خزينة) (الدولة).

Table 25. *Examples of legitimating women driving through the topos of advantage or usefulness*

Translation into English	Examples in Arabic
With the announcement of the budget deficit, the state should take this chance to allow driving because the economy will no longer tolerate this , and this silliness will end #women_driving #budget	لمفروض مع إعلان العجز تستغل الدولة الفرصة وتسمح بالقيادة من باب أن الإقتصاد ماضار يسمح وتنتهي المسخره هذي #قيادة_المرأة_ للسيارة #الميزانية
Women driving will reduce the number of accidents and deport half a million foreign drivers, which will save billions for the state's treasury #women_driving	قيادة المرأة للسيارة ستخفف نسبة الحوادث وترحل نصف مليون سائق أجنبي مما سيوفر مليارات على خزينة الدولة #مسيره_أكتوبر_ للقيادة
Women driving will make the streets prettier, and citizens will be happy, and the state's income will increase , our country will be civilized	لن_نسمح_ بقيادة_ المرأة_ للسيارة ب قيادة المرأة ستزداد الشوارع # جمالاً سيعم السرور في وجيه المواطنين سيزداد دخل الدولة ستتقدم دولتنا حضارياً
Women driving means a better life 'o men of understanding', and it will enhance the state's economy and safety for our women instead of riding with a male foreigner	في قيادة المرأة للسيارة حياة أخرى يا أولي الألباب، وتوفير لاقتصاد الدولة وحماية لحرمانتنا بدلاً من الركوب مع رجل أجنبي.
The decision of #women_driving belongs to the state and not the religion merchants, once the state approves, women will drive and it will be a great step in boosting the country's economy .	قرار #قيادة_ المرأة_ للسيارة بيد الدولة وليس تجار الدين بمجرد أن توافق على ذلك ستقود المرأة وسوف تكون خطوة رائعة في رفع اقتصاد البلد

Conclusion

Overall, the findings reveal a diversity of positions from which each group, anti-driving and pro-driving, argue. As demonstrated in this chapter, the discussion on women driving extends beyond taking a position with or against allowing women to drive, into a struggle against norms of masculinity and power relations between different social groups and actors. While some tweeters perceived women driving to be a threat to the country's conservative and religious identity and traditional gender norms, the findings reflect a desire by the majority of tweeters to allow women to drive, improve the situation of Saudi women in general, grant them more independence, and minimize the power of the religious establishment, which has historically been responsible for defining laws such as the ban on women driving. These findings will be further summarized and discussed in the next chapter and will be interpreted and explained in relation to socio-political context and theoretical perspectives drawn upon in this study.

Chapter 7: Discussion

Having outlined the findings of the micro-textual analysis, highlighting the different themes and discursive strategies utilized in Twitter debates around the issue of women driving in Saudi Arabia, in this chapter, I critically engage with the findings of this research and explicate their meanings by emphasizing their relation to the relevant scholarly work and to the socio-political contexts of Saudi Arabia. In this chapter, I first summarize the findings and discuss how they answer my research questions and demonstrate how they deepen the understanding of gender practices and relations in online realms and communities.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Foremost, this study sought to examine the discourses circulating on Twitter, one of the most influential social media sites, about the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia, and how the public framed their positions within this growing and highly confrontational social movement. At a broader level, this examination shed light on the ways in which gender divisions and power relations are negotiated through this new media tool, in a space that allows people to transcend social barriers when they are faced with a limited access to public forums of communication. To that end, the findings of this study responded to the following questions:

RQ1. How do Saudi Twitter users discursively debate the ban on women driving?

1a. What thematic contents are invoked, and what discursive strategies are used to support or oppose women driving in Saudi Arabia?

1b. How are these contents and discourse strategies realized in language?

RQ2. To what extent does Twitter provide Saudi users with a discursive space that

enables them to create awareness regarding women's issues and to rearticulate or reshape gender roles in relation to the established gender norms and relations in Saudi Arabia?

These questions will be addressed in the followed sections. While I acknowledge that the first research question includes two sub-questions, I combined their answers in the following section in order to avoid repetition and provide a concise discussion of their answers.

Question 1

The online Twitter debates around women driving revealed a wide spectrum of opposing and divergent opinions, ranging from those that reflect traditional, conservative views, morals, and values to those that are more liberal and progressive. Tweeters' attitudes towards dominant discourses and conservative religious beliefs seemed to vary between adaptive and compliant to challenging and confrontational, offering different models and social constructions of femininities and masculinities. The multiplicity of views and attitudes, however, is to some extent predictable against the backdrop of the historic, economic and social changes that Saudi Arabia has undergone in the past few years, which, for some people, constitute a threat to the country's traditional and religious identity (Yamani, 2000). The status of women in light of these issues has become entangled in the conflict over identity, given the symbolic significance of women in defining the nation's identity and political and domestic relation to men. The many and varying views found online showcase the role Twitter plays in providing the public with a safe(r) space to engage in political activism. Twitter also offers anonymity options that are needed for those who wish to express their opinions and give statements that in other

public spaces could lead to more threatening and uncomfortable reactions (Herring, 2003; Eckert & Steiner, 2016; Papacharissi, 2010). Both sides of the debate, which were difficult at times to situate in a dichotomous form, drew on several themes and discursive strategies in their arguments.

In short, the language used in these debates is highly political and ideological, reflecting a concerns over the way the society is structured and organized. In other words, the issue for many tweeters is not just a matter of yes or no to women driving, but it is broader, which involves renegotiating dominant ideologies and power dynamics that have historically shaped the situation of Saudi women. Anti-driving tweeters directed their attention to delegitimizing the pro-driving camp by representing women driving demands as a threat to the traditional and religious structure of Saudi Arabia, as well as a violation of the established gender system. By connecting the breaking down of traditional gender roles to the breaking down of society as whole, these Twitter users reinforce the symbolic attachment of women's role into the social order. The argumentative structure of pro-driving tweeters, on the other hand, revolves around problematizing women's issues, including control over their mobility, in order to justify the need for women to drive. Their arguments also represent efforts to challenge and renegotiate the position of the religious establishment and their perspectives, as well as gender roles, while simultaneously maintaining allegiance and seeking support from (in most cases) the established political system. The findings from both sides are further discussed below in relation to the socio-political context and theories considered in this study. As in the previous chapter, I organize the discussion of the findings according to the themes invoked by each side and discuss their uses of discourse strategies within each theme.

Anti-driving camp

Us vs them. The arguments of anti-driving tweeters discursively (and rhetorically) delegitimize the opinions of people who want to give women the right to drive. These tweeters produced notions of women driving as a threat to the religious and moral traditions of the Saudi social and political systems; this is consistent with the findings noted in Almahmoud (2015) and Alotaibi (2017). According to Nader (1989), women's positions in Arab and Middle Eastern countries is partly defined in relation to the position of women in other cultures, particularly Western cultures, who serve as the "other" as much as in the West, Arab women represent the "other" and the "less-developed". In the context of Saudi Arabia, Arebi (1994) argues that

While for the West the Saudi woman is seen to be held captive by or in the name of Islam, for Saudi internal discourses she is seen as a prey to be swallowed by the West. The cultural concern about women as the "gate" of Westernization has led to cultural discourses on gender that derive their power from the imperative of resistance to Western encroachment rather than from Islamic principles themselves. (p. 281)

Beyond the work of Almahmoud (2015) and Alotaibi (2017), the Twitter arguments found in the corpus against women driving reflected the kind of cultural discourses that resist the domination of Western ideas on gender relations. Rather than only incorporating religious justification into their discussions, anti-driving tweeters relied on discourses of Westernization and disloyalty to the nation's religion and traditions, utilizing the *topos of threat and danger* (e.g., *خرق امني* *breach of security*, أمن *أمن* *a threat to the country's security and stability*) and the *topos of law* (e.g.,

مخالفة لقوانين البلد *violating the country's laws*, مخالف *illegal*) as warrants for their arguments. This type of legitimization is also constructed through the use of ideologically and politically loaded referential and predication strategies that represented an Us vs. Them categorization and created an enemy, an out-group, or an Other that is classified as ideologically deviant (Western, anti-Islamic and unpatriotic). This was realized linguistically through collective and ideologically loaded adjectives and nouns such as الليبراليين *liberals* and اذناب الخارج *foreign tails*, and through predicates, such as تريدون دمار *want to destruct the country* and يخططون له ويحاولون إفساده *plotting against it and try to destroy it*, that negatively describe the demands for driving as antipatriotic and destructive to the society.

Several vague referential strategies that provide an imprecise reference to the constructed Other amplify the threat of the Other (e.g., هم *them*, الفساد والخزي *a door that expands corruption and disgrace*). Just as these ideological constructions serve to stabilize the unjust power structures that perpetuate the confrontational divide between men and women and masculinities and femininities, they also reflect another purpose insofar as they seek to build a positive self, an in-group or a We-group that is concerned with the protection and maintenance of the country's religion and traditions –practices and values in which women embody an important (and often subordinate) position. Thus, for the anti-driving camp, arguing for the ban is a way to preserve the nation's identity and Islamic traditions and a way to preserve its ideological relevance vis-à-vis Othering their opponents as well as bringing together their allies (who also include women, *if* they perform the roles assigned to them). No matter what discursive strategies they implement or what themes they draw on, the anti-driving movement is linked by its patriarchal

opposition and its reification of women as symbolic markers of the nation's conservatism and religiosity, confirming feminist views of the importance of gender in organizing people's lives and its entanglement with other facets of identity (Eckert & McGonnell-Ginet, 2013; Kimmel, 2013b). It is interesting to note that this discursive strategy (Us vs Them), which van Dijk (1998) calls "ideological square" (i.e., self-positive representation versus other-negative representation) was first underlined to show how racist ideologies against immigrants and other minority populations in Western societies are constructed, yet in this context it is used against Western cultures.

Reinforcing normative gender relations. In addition to constructing women as symbols of nation and religiosity, the anti-driving camp also addressed the prohibition of women driving as a way to preserve the traditional and cultural dimensions of society, including normative gender roles. This was achieved through predication strategies that represent men as responsible to 'protect women' (حماية المرأة) and to 'manage their house and family needs' (قيام الرجل بشؤون منزله وعائلته). For anti-driving tweeters, driving is a man's responsibility; allowing women to drive is considered antithetical to the widespread social and institutional support for women's protection (by men), domestication, and segregation. These tweeters' arguments are drawn from dominant discourses that construct women as vulnerable and in need of male protection (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Joseph, 2000; Joseph & Slyomovics, 2011; Kimmel, 2013a). By doing so, anti-driving tweeters reinforce the dominant position of men as authoritative figures and family guardians of women whose value is dependent on men seeing them as valuable. Such a problematic perspective necessitates that women cannot protect what is

not theirs (their value) and therefore must rely on the protection of men, which to say the least, reflects a more traditional and normative view of gender roles.

Invoking this theme can also be regarded, as Cameron (2006) argues, as reflective of traditional divisions of labor and the distinction between public and private space that represents important means to organize men and women's activities, where men have more access and influence in public spaces and positions, and women are constrained by ideologies of female domesticity, modesty, and sexual confinement. Thus, for anti-driving tweeters, allowing women to drive represents a threat to this social organization (men in public, women in private), which in Saudi Arabia is maintained by policies such as sex segregation and the ban on women driving.

Pro-driving camp

Challenging the religious establishment. Given the centrality of Islam in shaping the lives of women in Saudi Arabia, as well as its resonance with the society at large, it was expected that the influence of religion in the arguments made by the pro-driving camp would be clear and dominant; and indeed, this was the case. This finding echoed the work by Sahly (2016) and Almahmoud (2015), who found frequent references to religion and the religious establishment in their data. Some tweeters tried to establish a unanimous position by intertextually referencing authoritative religious sources that approve of, or support, women driving (thus legitimizing their argument by appealing to the authority of religion). Others, however, resisted the religious perspective by raising questions about the legitimacy of the religious establishment as an authoritative, omnipotent institution. The major tension in this discourse was that they often critiqued religious institutions without questioning the place of religion in governing social, public

life. This was overtly reflected in the use of various referential, predication, and delegitimizing strategies aimed at negatively representing religious scholars and the contradictions and inconsistencies in their religious views, but under the sweeping generalization that they could all be categorized as an ideologically distinct and extremist group. In doing so, tweeters mobilized their arguments as a form of resistance (rather than simple critique) against the very power and ideological assumptions and forms of social control that controls women's lives and sometimes, as was seen again in this case, how they think. For example, by exposing the shifts and inconsistencies in their religious interpretations and by accusing them of practicing domination 'in the name of religion' (باسم الدين), pro-driving tweeters echoed the efforts of Islamist feminist voices to "expose the inequalities embedded in current interpretations of sharia—*fiqh*—as constructions by male jurists rather than manifestations of the divine will" (Mir-Hosseini, 2006, p. 644). According to Mir-Hosseini, such exposure has epistemological consequences insofar as it reinforces the argument that religious interpretations are, in part, reflective of "views and perceptions of some Muslims and are social practices and norms that are neither sacred nor immutable but human and changing" (p. 644).

Likewise, exposure to different religious interpretations of sacred texts holds political consequences insofar as it allows Muslims to free themselves from old religious beliefs (2006), which consequently leads them to find new ones more compatible with their needs. Pro-driving tweeters' posts, however, did not reflect a desire for secular or anti-Islamic forms of authority, but rather argued for women driving as a right within an Islamic framework. At first glance, this may suggest, as Yamani (2000) argued, that the majority of Saudis still "perceive Islam as the stable unchallenged base of their identity

and the guideline for everyday life” (p. 134). It must be stressed, of course, that all social movements are prone to becoming entangled by the problems they contest, and this reality should not be interpreted as a failure, but rather the need for researchers and activists alike to deeply reflect on how they are a part of the very systems they are called to critique, challenge, overthrow, or usurp (Gavrielides, 2008; Johnston & Johnston, 2017; Shotwell, 2016). In light of this reflection, what these positions also reflect is the public’s efforts to come together and publicly engage with and challenge the scholarly and powerful discourses of religious clerics, which sometimes hinder feminist liberation (Almahmoud, 2015; Sahly, 2016). Pro-driving tweeters subjected the religious establishment’s anti-feminist opinions to scrutiny and counter-arguments while still adhering to Islam as the ideological basis for regulation and guidance of gender roles, which is not always/already counter-productive to their beliefs.

When contrasting these pro-driving arguments with those put forward by anti-driving tweeters, it becomes apparent that the discourse on women driving is rather a site for ideological and power struggle between those who ascribe to conservative views and those who are progressive, reflecting one of CDS’s main assumption that “texts are often sites for struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 10). Hence, through the analysis of the linguistic choices made by tweeters, it becomes evident that both sides have utilized this issue as a way to assert their power and promote their ideologies in this public space (Twitter).

Victimizing women. The victimization of women was another theme that emerged in the arguments of pro-driving tweeters. Here, women’s suffering and the negative

consequences of the ban on women driving were highlighted in ways that moved beyond antagonism and towards a more humanitarian space that is less controversial and confrontational. The theme was mostly evident around the word *driver*, through which tweeters shared both their frustrations and experiences with hired drivers who harassed and abused them, and with the economic drawbacks of hiring drivers instead of simply permitting women to drive. This was achieved through several linguistic means that offered a negative representation of hired drivers (e.g., *منهور* *reckless*, *مجرم* *criminal*, *يتحرش* *harassing*). These circumstances and consequences surrounding the ban all seem to oppose public (patriarchal) beliefs that the ban on women driving serves to protect women's modesty and ensure their safety.

Some users also took advantage of women driving as a trending topic on Twitter by intertextually referring to other types of women's rights, such as the rights of divorced women (*المطلقات*) and widows (*الارامل*). In doing so, they called attention to the disadvantaged position of women in general, and drew links to the broader struggle of women and feminist activists who are victimized by masculine oppression and patriarchy. In the corpus, tweeters described the responsibility for women's victimization differently, but generally, the religious establishment, the society, and men were all represented as social actors who were blamed for contributing to the marginalization and oppression of Saudi women. The range of this responsabilization points to a heightened level of awareness about the social forces that influence women's lives.

The absence of clear harassment laws and the reluctance of many Saudi women to report instances of harassment due to social concerns over shame and reputation prevent many women from officially filing reports (Sexual harassment, 2016). Twitter, however,

and its provision of anonymity provides the requisites for cultural concealment that enable both women and men to discuss such issues and surpass some social barriers, such as sex segregation, that otherwise could prevent them from doing so. What is more important in the context of Saudi Arabia is that the publicizing of women's victimization and the broadcasting of their experiences work against the dominant discourse of confining women's issues to the private sphere, which is somehow paradoxical given the fact that women and their roles represent a publicly symbolic element in defining the nation and its commitment to religion and tradition (Arebi, 1994). Concerns about their dress, work, education, and mobility have occupied public discourse for many years, due to their significance in displaying the state's devotion to religion and tradition (Al-Rasheed, 2013; AlMunajjed, 1997). Yet, issues of harassment, oppression and abuse have rarely found their way into traditional forms of media and have often been treated as part of the private domain and a family matter, due to their association with issues of shame and honor (AlMunajjed, 1997).

While such representations can perpetuate perspectives that women are fragile, vulnerable and passive (Connell, 1987; Korobov, 2011), by problematizing and publicizing what is normally concealed, pro-driving tweeters bring attention to the disadvantaged situation of women. And, in echoing the words of the second-wave feminists who called for the politicization of the personal, they also subject women's issues to public negotiation in ways that point fingers at the collective agents and social structures of their oppression, rather than individuals, in an effort to raise awareness of their situation and bring about change (Talbot, 2010). In other words, pro-driving tweeters found, in the words of Fraser (1990), a public 'discursive arena' to stir up and

trouble issues that are taken for granted and kept in private. Therefore, while constructing women as victims may not necessarily be empowering (Maglione, 2016), this dissertation demonstrates that such constructs are important in the sense that they disturb and trouble dominant discourses that limit women's mobility for the sake of their protection. Such constructs also display a level of awareness regarding the current situation of Saudi women while exposing women's concealed reality and desire for independence.

Promoting women's independence. Other themes evoked in pro-driving arguments revolved around emphasizing women's role in the social progression and economic development of Saudi Arabia, which a number of tweeters argued was hindered by the ban on women driving. Such arguments can be considered strategic and maybe socially acceptable insofar as they parallel the government's movements aimed at increasing women's employment and promotion of women's professional roles as part of its reform discourse (Le Renard, 2014). Pro-driving arguments also expose the dichotomy and contradiction between, on the one hand, the kind of professional femininity promoted in Saudi Arabia and the new roles that women are supposed to be playing as 'half of the society' (نصف المجتمع) and, on the other hand, the restrictions imposed on their mobility, which suggests a desire to support women's independence and participation in public life.

While the means of representing women thus far appear to conform to social norms in that they reflect the popular need to protect women while encouraging their participation in developing the country's economy, some tweeters displayed a level of agency in their posts, challenging gender divisions and the patriarchal norms of the society, and ultimately demanding equality (Butler, 1990). Instead of justifying the need for women to drive in relation to their protection and safety, tweeters invoked themes of

independence and a woman's right to make her own choices. They employed a range of discursive strategies to reinforce the representation of women as decision makers and independent individuals, which were realized linguistically through predicates such as *ولها الخيار تقود بنفسها او توظف سائق* *have the right to choose to drive themselves or hire a driver*, and *نرفض العيش فيه كالجواري* *refuse to live as maids*. They also displayed a strong rejection of patriarchy and male control by negatively representing their authority as a form of domination rather than protection (e.g., *نل فرض سيطرته* *imposing their authority*, *ذل humiliating*).

Tweeters also offered empowering feminine constructions that displayed and promoted women's roles in non-normative ways. By employing the *topos of comparison*, tweeters referenced the achievements of women in other countries, especially Muslim countries, such as their ability to pilot planes and fight in wars (e.g., *تقود طائرات مدنية وحربية* *fly civilian and military airplanes and spaceships*). Here they displayed their support for broadening women's roles and, at the same time, expressed their dissatisfaction with normative gender roles, the kind of conservatism adopted in Saudi Arabia, and the effect that both of these worldviews and practices have on the circumstances and issues that Saudi women face.

Reinforcing the state's authority. Lastly, pro-driving tweeters utilized the medium of Twitter to directly reach out to the Saudi king and to emphasize the government's role in advancing women's issues. This suggests that for pro-driving tweeters, the solution lies with the state. It also reflects a tendency to be compliant to the political system rather than displaying a rebellious attitude, which is a sanctioned practice. As discussed in Chapter 2, the government has been very active in promoting

women's employment, education and political participation as part of its reform discourse (Al-Rasheed 2013; Le Renard, 2008; Niblock, 2006); thus, for many, the state serves as an arbiter and mediator between the religious establishment, society, and women's demands for reducing gender inequality (Al-Rasheed, 2013). In addition, by employing the *topos of authority* and referencing the state as the authoritative voice in the country and as key to shaping and advancing women's issues (e.g., قرار #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة بيد الدولة *The decision of #women_driving belongs to the state*), tweeters appear to reinforce the central authority of the government while minimizing the role and curbing the opinions of other social groups, especially the religious establishment. Instead of problematizing the state as in, for example, the anti-government protests in the Middle East, pro-driving tweeters are leaning towards working with the state and putting the blame on other social actors (e.g., men, religious establishment), who are considered as placed under the authority and control of the state.

Such efforts in connecting with the state can be compared to the efforts of Western feminists, who in their endeavour to gender equality approach governments and government agencies in order to exert pressure and pass laws for equal treatment and protection of women's rights. According to Lorber (2005), "state policies and civil laws in any country reflect the dominant group's history, ideology, and political interests" (p. 148); that is why for feminists it is important that these discourses reflect ideologies of equality.

Reinforcing the state authority has also the function of promoting the discourse of pro-driving tweeters through the dominant discourse of the state. As explained in Chapter 3, CDS does not regard language as powerful on its own, but "it gains power by the use

powerful people make of it” (Wodak, 2002, p. 10). Thus, for the discourse of pro-driving tweeters to gain attention and possibly have an effect, it should be privileged and advocated by powerful social actors (i.e., state) in order to counter prevalent patriarchal discourses which have limited women’s mobility and prevented them from gaining their rights.

Question 2

In relation to the second question, this study advances the view that Twitter provides, to some extent, a space wherein different ideas can be exchanged and multiple voices can be heard. The analysis of the different arguments and positions advanced by Tweeters on the issue of women driving demonstrates that such online dialogue is indicative of a new sphere situated within the society while blurring the lines between the private and controlled public spheres. On the one hand, Twitter, as demonstrated in the findings, provides a space for patriarchal, hegemonic voices to be disseminated, replicating findings from previous research (e.g., Coulling & Johnston, 2017). While not overtly aggressive or hateful, such voices seem to reproduce an anti-feminist discourse that champions a male-dominant social system and justifies the maintenance of this system by tying it to religion and conservatism, which are important markers of the national identity.

On the other hand, Twitter seems to also provide a space for resisting voices to be circulated. As indicated in the findings, most tweets in the corpus reflect support for women driving as well as concerns over gender inequalities and the need for social change. This can be explained against the backdrop of the absence of negotiations over Saudi women’s issues and the omission of their (and many other women’s) voices in

traditional media and institutional discourse. Sex segregation laws and issues related to shame and reputation also prevent women's voices from being heard. It is unsurprising in a globalized world that this predicament leads activists or others dissatisfied with their current situation to adopt the affordances of new media technologies to transcend social barriers, raise their voices, and disseminate their views (Herring, 2003; Eckert & Steiner, 2016). As such, the debates on Twitter certainly reflect the contributions of those who seek change in terms of women's roles and the role of the religious establishment.

While I have argued in Chapter 3 that such online activism on Twitter can be viewed in relation to the concept of *subaltern counterpublics* (Fraser, 1992), I am not implying that the pro-driving camp as a counterpublic represents a unified group or a force external to, or in direct opposition to, the dominant public discourse on women (Keller, 2012). As the findings indicate, tweeters have assumed different positions in their arguments for women driving and have represented women with various degrees of agency within the current socio-political power structures, reflecting Warner's (2002) argument that a counterpublic is constituted within the dominant public sphere and "maintain[s] at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of [its] subordinate status" (p. 86). It also reasserts Butler's (1990) view that subversive gender practices are often negotiated within and through the discourses that defines them, as well as Foucault's (1978) post-structural conceptualization of resistance, which he indicated is not separate from power relations but rather inscribed in and manifested by them, adding that resistance is plural and multidirectional within systems of power. In his words,

there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of

them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. (Foucault, 1978, pp. 95-96)

While Twitter enables attempts to perpetuate the status quo, it simultaneously facilitates several forms of public resistance, regardless of their degree of agency or confrontation, and the use of several discursive strategies to address gender inequalities and renegotiate the roles of Saudi women. Overall, however, these resisting voices seem to be drawing on normative discourses (e.g., women's victimisation, protection, economic usefulness, etc.), which may not necessarily represent alternative means to reshaping or rearticulating gendered meanings. This can be considered strategic in the sense that gender roles and relations are very much tied to politics and religion and a different way of understanding them outside of these normative discourses (e.g., referencing Western feminism or liberal ideologies) may not be socially acceptable, may be viciously attacked, or may have negative consequences in relation to cyber-criminal laws (e.g., insulting religion or the state). Nonetheless, these voices can be considered effective in the sense that they deploy what Bayat (2007) calls the *power of presence*. That is, such voices that lack the means and ability to organize offline have found a space to be heard, to subject women's rights to public negotiation, and to (re)negotiate dominant ideologies and power dynamics, representing a kind of a 'non-movement' as Bayat calls it (i.e., a collective action with no specific actors) that has been made possible and amplified with social media use.

The question remains, however, as to whether these resisting voices have implications in the offline world towards changing women's lives. While it can be argued

that these activities are limited and confined to cyberspace, especially in a context where online activities are monitored and censored, collective forms of protesting and organization in the real world are not allowed, Castells (2015) argues that viewing social movements this way promotes a ‘self-defeating perspective’ and ‘capitalist logic’ that evaluates the success of a social movement in terms of concrete outcomes rather than look at it as a slow process of change. Similarly, Harris (2008) argues that online activism should not be understood as outcome-oriented; rather, it should be based on the creation and presentation of public identities and the public negotiation of what is kept private. Clark (2016) argues the same thing in showing how the importance of online activism is evident in the dissemination of re-articulations of normative interpretations and contestations of social meanings, which become “enduring frames of reference for interpreting and responding to current and future social phenomena” (p. 14). Indeed, the findings in this dissertation reflect not only efforts to redefine women’s roles and problematize their situation, but also their engagement in, and commitment to (re)negotiating power relations and forms of authority that have long shaped the lives of Saudi women. These linguistic efforts, as Talbot (2010) argues, may not change the situation of women overnight. However, language and discourse change (here, the linguistic promotion of the right of women to driver) has a strong potential in raising people’s awareness and influence their attitudes, which are prerequisites for behavioral and social change.

This form of online activism can also be considered political in the sense that, in this case, it subjects the practice of religious interpretation to public negotiation, which, according to Salvatore and Eickelman (2004), contributes to the fragmentation and

decentralization of religious authority that controls and defines what women can and cannot do. Religious scholars in Saudi Arabia have long been given the responsibility for interpreting religious texts and informing and institutionalizing public conduct as a specialized and credible scholarly practice. With their specialized knowledge, some view them as representing the sole authority in providing religious opinions, which are disseminated in social institutions and broadcast through traditional media outlets that people turn to whenever they need validation for new social practices (AlMunajjed, 1997; Al-Rasheed, 2013; Pompea, 2002). However, Salvatore and Eickelman (2004) and Eickelman and Anderson (2003) argued that this relationship between individuals and the religious establishment, whereby religious institutions orchestrate the public based on what is considered permissible, is now mediated to some extent by discourses evoked via new media technologies. More specifically, they offer users a platform to discuss religious views that would likely be suppressed in other media; hence, such technologies make the practice of interpreting texts a collective enterprise rather than a duty of the religious establishment alone.

The combination of new media and new contributors of religious and political debates fosters an awareness on the part of all actors of the diverse ways in which Islam and Islamic values can be created and feeds into a new sense of a public space that is discursive, performative, and participative, and not confined to formal institutions recognized by state authorities. (Eickelman & Anderson 2003, p. 2)

However appealing, we have to be cautious about the democratizing power of social media and the extent to which its effects generate social change. Online users are still

governed by offline regulations and Twitter users in particular still represent a small percentage of the total population. Nonetheless, one cannot confine the reachability of tweets to Twitter's platform. Twitter still allows public posts to be viewed without requiring users to register (Murthy, 2012; Zappavigna, 2012). It also allows tweets to be transmitted and shared through other social media sites, thus making the number of receivers of its content unpredictable and far-reaching beyond its platform (Murthy, 2012).

The importance of these online efforts sheds light on their relation to the increased daily usage of social media sites such as Twitter in Saudi Arabia as well as the large population of young adults in the country, who, unlike previous generations, are more educated and influenced by processes of globalization and therefore are more open to different forms of knowledge and meaning (Yamani, 2000). According to Willemse and Bergh (2016), the increasing number of youth in many Muslim countries and the growth in use of communication technologies has "caused political culture to be more individualistic and less attracted to holistic ideologies" (p. 302). Unlike their parents, Saudi youth are now able to bypass longstanding modes of authority and subject restrictions in their everyday lives to public debate (Willemse & Bergh, 2016).

Online activism is also crucial when coupled with Saudi women's increased awareness of their rights and offline efforts to assert themselves through education and employment (Bayat, 2007). Despite all the limits on their mobility, many women have sought higher education and made an effort to empower themselves and become economically independent (AlMunajjed, 1997; Le Renard, 2014). By mentioning this, I

refrain from considering Twitter as a revolutionary tool, positioning it instead as part of a larger network of efforts to mobilize public opinion and change women's circumstances.

However, as the analysis of this study revealed, Twitter enabled users to publicly challenge inequality by providing a discursive space in which to produce alternative interpretations of their identities and circumstances in ways unprecedented before social media. Given that the usage of Twitter in Saudi Arabia continues to be on the rise one cannot deny the significance of the medium; it must serve a significant role in that society's discourse practices. If we believe that given a voice in such community can have an impact on people's attitudes towards socio-cultural issues including gender matters, one may conclude that discourse practices on Twitter would not be without consequences. If nothing else, it could raise further awareness about the ban on women driving and the debates surrounding the issue. After all, awareness is a prerequisite for social change (Talbot, 210). While substantial social change has yet to be felt by Saudi women, the discursive online and offline efforts to challenge the power structures that have shaped women's lives, as well as the integration and problematization of the private and public spheres, can be considered significant steps towards change. As Arebi (1994) explained in her study of Saudi women's literary writing, such steps reflect endeavors to "not only politicize women's lives but redefine women and transform their status from that of a 'symbol' to that of a 'real' human being" (p. 269).

Conclusion

This chapter summarized and discussed the findings of the textual analysis in order to answer the research questions. The chapter was organized according to the key themes that emerged in the Twitter debates around the Saudi ban on women driving,

including a discussion of the various discursive strategies and linguistic means utilized by tweeters in their arguments. The findings were critically discussed in relation to the socio-political context and with reference to the theoretical perspectives drawn upon in this study, revealing how the women driving issue is entangled in various discourses, especially those related to the nation's conservative and religious identity, as well as power dynamics in society. In the next chapter, a summary of the dissertation will be provided, along with the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

In this chapter, I will first provide a summary of the dissertation, its aim, theory, method, and findings. I then discuss the limitations of the study and address my role as a researcher in relation to this research. Finally, I provide suggestions for future research.

Summary

This dissertation sought to examine the ways in which Twitter users debate the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia, with a broader objective of explicating how gender roles and relations are negotiated in that context. As explained in this work, the status of women has been directly or indirectly shaped by many factors, particularly religious, political, and social factors. Saudi women are ensnared by tensions concerning the modernization of the country's policies and ways of governing public life versus those who wish to preserve the traditional norms and patriarchal values of the Saudi Arabian society. Advances in women's education and employment serve as important signs that processes of social development and change are occurring. At the same time, control over women's lives, including whether to allow them to drive, constitutes a symbolic reflection of the commitment to the traditional national identity of the Saudi kingdom. While women have long been silent about the restrictions imposed on them, their dissatisfaction with these restrictions and desire for change have publically materialized through online campaigns aimed at raising social awareness about the nature and afflictions of Saudi women's lives.

Against this background, I have adopted a feminist, critical discourse studies approach to examine the Twitter discourse surrounding the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia, due to Twitter's widespread use among Saudis. A corpus of tweets that

discuss the ban on women driving was compiled and analyzed. Following the discourse-historical approach of CDS, the object of the study was first situated in the historical and socio-political context of the target society, with particular focus on the different factors that have influenced and shaped women's lives in Saudi Arabia. This was followed by an examination of the data at the discourse level, discussing the affordances of Twitter and its use in Saudi Arabia, specifically in relation to publicizing women's campaigns and demands. At the textual level, a corpus-assisted discourse studies approach was used to explore the thematic contents, discursive strategies and linguistic realizations found in the corpus. The findings from the textual level were then interpreted and explained in relation to the socio-political context and theoretical perspectives drawn upon in this study.

The investigation of the data on Twitter reflects a wide spectrum of ideological positions and degrees of conservatism regarding both women's and men's roles, as well as the issue of women's public mobility. While some users expressed their support for the ban and pointed to the social and moral threats of allowing women to drive, the majority of the posts reflected discursive arguments against the ban while publicizing the victimization of women and their disenfranchisement as a consequence of maintaining the ban. Pro-driving efforts also displayed a degree of awareness about women's rights and the contradictions that women face as a symbolic category caught up in the tension between modernizing Saudi Arabia's policies and different aspects of public life and preserving existing traditional norms and patriarchal values. Pro-driving tweeters also demonstrated various degrees of resistance towards the institutional and social factors and actors who have influence in regulating gender relations and affecting women's circumstances. Their positions reflected their desires not just to allow women to drive but

also to renegotiate discourses of power that have long impacted women's roles and defined women as symbolic representations of the nation's piety.

While speculations about the success of this kind of activism have often been made, I have argued here that contextualizing online discursive practices within socio-political contexts can lead to important observations about the ways in which the Saudi society is transforming. The demographic structure of the country, which is predominantly composed of youths, as well as women's efforts offline to become better educated and employable, only adds to the significance of such efforts online, especially in the absence of other modes of communication to broadcast the voices of ordinary citizens.

Overall, it is believed that this study contributes to the growing literature on studying the multi-voiced, unstructured discursive spaces of social media and lays the groundwork for deeper theoretical understanding of how gender is negotiated on social media. More importantly, the study expands previous literature that have examined Saudi women's feminist efforts online (Almahmoud, 2015; Sahly, 2016) and demonstrates how these efforts are situated within a broader frame of women's struggle against patriarchy and current social tensions and dynamics of power in the Saudi society. By using corpus tools to analyze the data, the study also makes a methodological contribution in applying a corpus-assisted critical discourse approach to analyzing social media data, finding ways to manage Arabic social media corpora and providing solutions to clean, structure and unpack Arabic corpora.

Limitations and Self-reflexivity

In the interest of transparency, I must address my subjectivity in relation to this research study. Even though I made every effort to be systematic and rely on multiple theories and approaches in my analysis and interpretation, it cannot be said that my analysis is wholly complete, objective, and neutral. As Herring (1996) argued, it is naïve to claim objectivity in critical research simply because “researchers as well as researched subjects are socially situated actors with their own personal and political agenda” (p. 162). Similarly, Reisigl and Wodak (2001) indicated that analysts “are not disembodied hermitic individuals, but interested members of specific societies and social groups with specific points of view” (p. 35). In this study, I subscribe to these views and refrain from claiming that the findings can be generalized or that my interpretations are complete. I must also acknowledge my position as a member of the targeted society in the study.

My identity as a Saudi woman who was born and raised in Saudi Arabia, has experienced and felt the weight of some of the limitations imposed on Saudi women, has witnessed women’s growing dissatisfaction of their situation and its effects in raising awareness on women’s rights, have all affected my choice of the research area and possibly had an effect on my analysis and interpretation of the data. Added to this is my education and interest in critical discourse studies and gender research as well as my experience of other cultures which most likely influenced the way I interpreted the data and understood meanings. I have personally participated in discussions about the driving issue, and accordingly have my own opinion about it. In fact, I share many of the pro-driving tweeters’ views and subject positions and I hope in this research that I have provided some understanding and some illuminating examples of how Saudi women, and

men, discursively negotiate women's right in this complicated patriarchal society. However, I do not believe that this invalidates my analysis.

In fact, many feminist scholars have encouraged researchers to declare and acknowledge their own personal biases when conducting research. For instance, Cameron (1992), in her research on a London youth club, clearly stated that she was an activist who intended to eliminate racist language and use research to empower dominated groups. Coming from the same community as the researched group gave me the advantage of understanding cultural meanings and references, which in turn helped me to identify discourses more effectively than an outsider would have been able to. Moreover, being from the same community in the target society may be considered valuable in avoiding making stereotypical claims about the community under study and in eliminating many of the issues associated with researchers studying communities in developing nations (Lazar, 2007).

In relation to data collection and analysis, I have limited my analysis to examining Twitter posts; in other words, I did not supplement the analysis with any demographic information from the tweeters, which were not possible to capture with the custom-made tool I used to collect the data, nor with interviews or feedback from Twitter users which were beyond the scope of this study and were difficult to obtain due to living outside of Saudi Arabia during the duration of the study. Such information would have shed more light on the users' positions and the motives behind their arguments, which I may have read differently from what is intended by them.

I also limited my data collection to a span of three months, which may not have been sufficient enough to comprehensively reflect the discussions and debates around the

issue. Capturing historical data on Twitter was not possible through the custom-made tool I used in this study or any freely available tool online. It was, however, possible through Gnip.com, a company that archives Twitter data, but with very significant cost.

Suggestions for Future Research

Considering these limitations, future research could expand the scope of study by engaging in ethnographically informed interviews with Twitter users to better understand their arguments, motives, and ideological positions. Future research could also increase the sample size and timeframe for data collection; for instance, the timeframe could be extended back to 2011 to provide a historical overview on how the debate over women driving has evolved. Researchers could also conduct a multimodal analysis to reveal the different ways in which women use images and videos to support or challenge the ban on women driving. Given the changing political and social atmosphere in the country, future research could utilize the findings of this study to explore discrepancies and similarities in the ways Saudis utilize social media to negotiate gender divisions and the social position of women, and men.

Future studies could also explore how other issues are brought up and negotiated online. For example, Saudi women have recently become more active in fighting to end the guardianship law, which requires all Saudi women to have a male guardian's permission to work, study, and travel. Indeed, this issue seems to be even more significant than the driving ban because it is not just a matter of women's freedom of movement, but also of women's liberation from patriarchy and male domination. Male guardianship is not only rooted in religion, but is also related to tradition and tribalism, a fact which deserves further scrutiny. It would also be interesting to examine how this

issue is discussed as compared to the driving issue, which presents a direct challenge and threat to men's authority.

Final Thoughts

As this study has documented, far from being online chatter, online efforts to lift the ban on women driving reflect great frustration and a desire for changes to the current situation facing Saudi women. They also reveal the patriarchal values embedded within the society and how they are supported by the overbearing and dominant discourse of the religious establishment. Some Saudis still feel threatened by change, especially when no clear, alternative ways to renegotiate their identities and the status of women as symbolic markers of commitment to traditional and religious customs have been offered.

Nonetheless, with the growing number of active users and the proliferation of the website among Saudi youth, Twitter has become a kind of “mobilizing force” for them to put pressure on, and subvert established forms of authority (Winder, 2014). Whether its use will eventually lead to lasting change is unknown; but for now, Twitter seems to be a “socially liberating force above all and a political tool secondarily” (p. 7).

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