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## **Stereotypes of Saudi Women among Saudi College Students**

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Stereotypes of Saudi Women among Saudi College Students

A Thesis

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

By

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August 20, 2017

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### **Biography**

Ali Omair was born in Saudi Arabia. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Muhammad Bin Saud University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. In 2007, he received his Master degree in Personality and Social Psychology from Umm Al-Qura University, Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Then, he obtained a scholarship from the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia to study Psychology in the United State of America. With the completion of this thesis, he will receive his Master of Arts degree in Psychology from DePaul University, Chicago, in 2017.

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## Abstract

This study investigated the nature of stereotypes regarding Saudi women in contemporary Saudi Arabia. Despite the extremely high levels of inequality between men and women that The Global Gender Gap has documented in Saudi Arabia (American Association of University Women, 2014), little is known about the actual perception of women within Saudi society. Several factors in Saudi Arabia's history—including its pastoral herding economy, tendency toward frequent warfare, and polygamous family structure (Wagemakers et al., 2012)—link Saudi society with a tendency to encourage the formation of restrictive gender stereotypes that may be particularly harmful to women (Alesina et al., 2013; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research regarding gender stereotypes within Saudi Arabia and consequently there is limited data available about the specific stereotypes held by Saudi men and women about Saudi women. This study aimed to contribute new research to fill the gap in the literature regarding gender stereotypes about women within Saudi society. Using the social psychological framework provided by social role theory, social identity theory, and self-categorization theory, this study first attempted to identify some of the central stereotypes faced by Saudi women and then to elucidate ways in which gender impacts how men's stereotypes of women differ from Saudi women's self-stereotypes.

This study employed a cross-sectional, between-groups, quantitative design to test two hypotheses using a dataset that was collected from 841 Saudi undergraduate participants via survey questionnaire, the Saudi Women Stereotypes Scale (SWSS), in October 2014. The SWSS was a new scale, and

as such the study also served to test the reliability and validity of the scale itself. To test the existence of the proposed stereotypes, items on the SWSS were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation (Gorsuch, 1983) to determine the optimum number of variables (stereotype dimensions). Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was employed to test overall gender difference as well as similarities across stereotypes and differences across stereotypes. The study's first hypothesis was supported, as that there are stereotype categories associated with Saudi women: virtuous, submissive, isolated, less competent, and source of shame. The second hypothesis was partly supported, revealing a multivariate effect of gender on stereotype endorsement such that men and women differed in their overall endorsement of female stereotypes. Men showed stronger endorsement of the stereotype that Saudi women are less competent, submissive, while women reported stronger support for the stereotype that Saudi women are, virtuous, and isolated.

These findings provide some of the first evidence about the type and strength of stereotypes about Saudi women. It can be concluded that the type of stereotypes about Saudi women endorsed by participants in this study reflect the nature of social relations in Saudi society and appear to maintain a system that segregates women and gives men a higher status, yet also regards women as virtuous.

## Introduction

Throughout much of the world, the legal and social position of women has undergone intense change over the course of more than a century (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). Although full equality with men remains an unattained goal, women have made significant strides in the areas of education, the workplace, and politics. Family structures have changed at the same time, becoming less traditional and patriarchal (Endendijk et al., 2013; Kimmel, 2000). However, numerous questions remain in relation to the nature of gender roles, gender stereotypes, and their consequences for women and for society as a whole.

One particular shortcoming in the current state of the literature on gender roles and stereotypes is that the majority of research in this area has been conducted in Western nations. Correspondingly, there is a marked bias towards Western culture and the societal condition of the Western world in our understanding of gender stereotyping. Other cultures have different histories of gender relations as well as other unique material and cultural features that may have impacts on gender stereotypes and their consequences for women. For example, in societies such as those in much of the Middle East where women face varying levels of legal restrictions on their daily activities, the impact of gender stereotypes may be quite different than those societies in which inequalities are less severe and more informally enforced. The discourses surrounding women's rights in the Middle East are markedly distinct compared to those in the West. Background factors may play an important role in shaping the modern day legal and social status of women in the Middle East. In particular, the region's history, consisting of tribal societies characterized by "culture[s] of honor" (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996),

distinguishes it from the West, traditionally speaking. Because relatively little research has focused on women in the Middle East, there are a number of notable gaps in the literature with respect to gender stereotyping in the region.

Saudi Arabia provides one of the most extreme examples of the treatment of women in the Middle East from both a legal and cultural standpoint. The Global Gender Gap has marked the country as possessing extremely high levels of inequality between men and women (American Association of University Women, 2014). The extent of these disparities is well known throughout the world and has been a source of tension in relations between Saudi Arabia and other nations, particularly those in the West, which tends to regard the country's treatment of women as extreme and inequitable. For example, women in Saudi Arabia are not permitted to drive cars and are required to be accompanied by male relatives when traveling. Public spaces are almost universally segregated by gender and, when no segregated space exists, women are typically excluded entirely (Wagemakers, Kanie, & van Geel, 2012).

This state of affairs is largely accounted for by a confluence of cultural, religious, and political history. Contrary to the pattern of social change throughout most of the world, Saudi women's lives actually became more restricted and unequal between 1980 and 2001, due largely to the increasing influence of conservative religious authorities. More recently, Saudi society has become slightly more open to female participation, although the extent of the impact on women's lives remains to be seen.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the nature of gender stereotypes regarding women in contemporary Saudi Arabia. Using the

social psychological framework provided by social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2011; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000), social identity theory (Hogg, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), the goal was first to enumerate some of the central stereotypes faced by Saudi women and then to elucidate ways in which gender impacts the nature of these stereotypes—i.e., how men’s stereotypes of women differ from Saudi women’s self-stereotypes.

This review of the literature is organized into three broad sections. First, an overview of the present state of gender stereotypes throughout the world is provided. The unique Saudi situation with respect to women’s social and legal status, and its implications for gender stereotypes in Saudi society, is considered at length within the context of this broader account of gender stereotyping worldwide. Second, several major social psychological theories with important implications for the study of gender stereotypes are discussed, both generally and as applied in the Saudi context. Finally, building on the empirical and theoretical background provided in the first and second sections, several hypotheses are developed to guide the research presented in the current study.

### **Nature of Gender Stereotypes in Western and Saudi Society**

Gender is one of the most fundamental social categories to which individuals belong and one of the most influential in terms of defining how one is perceived by oneself and by others (Cross & Madson, 1997; Kimmel, 2000). These perceptions are often mediated by gender stereotyping, or the assumption that all women or men share certain psychological and behavioral characteristics as an inherent consequence of their genders (Heilman, 2012;

Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). Specific stereotypes or stereotypical beliefs can be characterized as existing on several dimensions. Stereotypes may be explicit when the holder of the stereotype is fully aware of his or her belief about the stereotyped group. They may also be implicit when the stereotype holder does not consciously apply a stereotype to a certain group but nevertheless tends to perceive members of the group according to stereotypes (Smeding, 2012). For example, an elementary school teacher who holds the explicit stereotype that girls have less mathematical ability than boys might consciously decide to place a lower priority on providing female students with one-on-one math instruction compared to their male counterparts. However, a teacher with a similar but implicit stereotype might call on female students to demonstrate math problems less frequently than male students, a behavior which is carried out without the conscious decision to treat students differently based on gender.

Stereotypes may also be characterized as descriptive or prescriptive, categories (Burgess & Borgida, 1999) that are conceptually related to the notion of descriptive and prescriptive norms (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991). Descriptive stereotypes refer to perceptions that members of the stereotyped group possess certain characteristics as a consequence of belonging to the group itself. In contrast, prescriptive stereotypes define the characteristics that members of the group *ought* to have from one's moral standpoint. These two types of stereotypes will be discussed in more detail later in this study.

## **Factors Affecting Stereotype Development**

Although gender stereotyping occurs throughout the world, the contents and prevalence of gender stereotypes vary widely between cultures (Sczesny, Bosak, Neff, & Schyns, 2004). A number of cross-cultural studies have empirically demonstrated the variability of gender stereotypes between countries (Díaz & Sellami, 2014; Lyness & Judiesch, 2014; Seguino, 2007; Wilde & Diekman, 2005). Many factors may affect the development of different stereotypes, including elements of cultural history and broader aspects of cultural orientation. At the most basic level, areas with traditional economies heavily based on intensive agriculture—which demand an extent of physical labor that excludes most women from participation—tend to have more negative and restrictive stereotypes of women. Conversely, in areas where women have been able to participate more fully in the traditional economy, there tends to be greater equality between men and women (Alesina, Giuliano, & Nunn, 2013). For example, many traditional Native American economies have traditionally emphasized resource gathering and agricultural techniques that did not so heavily favor male physical abilities. As a result, women have been less marginalized by gender stereotypes in these cultures than in their European and Asian counterparts (LaFromboise, Heyle, & Ozer, 1990). This trend may be reflective of the development of negative gender stereotypes as a means of justifying an unequal pattern of economic participation, which may serve, in turn, to perpetuate and deepen those inequalities within cultures over time.

Other economic factors contributing to gender stereotyping may include the tendency in heavily pastoral societies to equate women's legal

status to that of livestock—essentially as an asset needing to be defended from being stolen by rival groups. Thus, cultures with roots in nomadic herding societies, in contrast to settled agricultural ones, have a tendency to develop elements of a “culture of honor”—in which members of society compete for status through physical force—emphasizing male control over their female family members, particularly their sexual behavior (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). There is also a well-established relationship between the traditional prevalence of war (and corresponding mortality rate among young men) and the cultural practice of polygamy (White & Burton, 1988), which is often thought to contribute to the detriment of woman’s position in society.

More broadly, cultures can be characterized in terms of their orientation with respect to certain complexes of values (Hofstede, 1980; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). One cultural dimension that has garnered a great deal of attention from researchers is that of individualism-collectivism (Oishi, Schimmack, Diener, & Suh, 1998; Triandis, 1995). Broadly speaking, highly individualist societies place more emphasis on individual happiness and self-expression than group opinion, whereas collectivist societies value group harmony over individual desires. Women in more collectivistic societies may experience a greater degree of stereotyping due to the prevalence of a more basic cultural view that people should sacrifice personal desires for the good of the family and the community. This perspective reinforces traditional views of women’s abilities and duties as family caregivers, and, indeed, cross-cultural evidence finds that stereotypes about women tend to be more restrictive in more collectivistic nations (Gibbons et al., 2012; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). The value of egalitarianism has also been examined in this



regard by Lyness and Judiesch (2014), who have found that gender stereotypes, at least those related to work-life balance, appear to be weaker in highly egalitarian societies.

### **Gender Stereotypes in Saudi Arabia**

Notably, much of the research on gender stereotypes and their effects has been carried out in Western societies. These societies differ from Saudi society in a number of ways that may have implications for the contents of gender stereotypes and their impact on women's lives. First, there are a variety of differences in the present legal and social positions of women that may impact the ways in which Saudi women are viewed in comparison to Western women. These differences include limitations on women's participation in the workforce, politics, and other facets of public life (Al-Rasheed, 2010; Wagemakers et al., 2012). If, as studies conducted in the West have suggested, gender stereotypes change over time in response to legal changes in the status of women, then the present status of women in Saudi Arabia would be expected to have a deleterious impact on stereotyping against women in Saudi society. By limiting what women are allowed to do, Saudi society may create a climate in which gender stereotypes have a stronger influence over how women are treated.

Second, there are historical differences in the development of Western versus Saudi social, economic, legal, and political institutions that may have implications for the current state of gender stereotypes in these regions. Saudi culture is historically derived from groups characterized by a pastoral herding economy, frequent warfare, and a polygamous family structure (Wagemakers et al., 2012). Each of these factors has been theoretically and empirically

linked with a tendency to encourage the formation of restrictive gender stereotypes that may be particularly harmful to women (Alesina et al., 2013; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). More recent Saudi history has also been influenced by a number of religious and political forces in ways that have often tended to restrict the status of women, including pressure from religious authorities to increase the number of segregated spaces (Wagemakers et al., 2012), which has led to the present legal and social situations previously discussed.

Third, Saudi Arabia differs culturally from Western nations on a number of dimensions that may be relevant to gender stereotyping. Saudi culture can be characterized as relatively collectivist in contrast to the individualist orientation that prevails broadly in the West (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). In terms of Inglehart's (1990) influential schema for quantifying national cultural orientations, Saudi Arabia would be characterized as falling high on the traditionalism side of the traditionalism/rationalism spectrum and high on the survivalism side of the survivalism/self-expression spectrum (Inglehart, 2007). Western nations, by contrast, have tended to move decisively towards the opposite ends of both of these spectrums over time, largely as an apparent function of economic development (Inglehart, 1997). This trend is known as the post-materialist values shift, and loosening of gender norms and stereotypes is an integral element of this set of changes. However, trajectories of development in the direction of postmaterialism are also thought to differ between cultural zones defined by different complexes of historical and cultural influences. Economic development may not be associated with the same kinds of implications for societal views of women in what Inglehart and Baker (2000) defined as the

Muslim cultural zone as those witnessed historically in the Western complex of cultural zones.

Saudi Arabia represents an unusual case in terms of both the present status of women and the trajectory of their status over the course of the last half century. The general global trend has been for women to gain increasing parity with men across a spectrum of social institutions—the family, education, the workplace, and in public life. This change has especially occurred within Western cultural traditions where the majority of research on gender stereotypes has been conducted. These structural advances have arguably led directly to the diminishment of negative stereotypes about women. These changes have occurred most rapidly in nations with individualistic cultures and advanced postindustrial economies where changes in legal and social gender status have been the most comprehensive (Seguino, 2007). Saudi women, by contrast, have seen substantial attenuation of their rights and freedoms over most of the same period with limited advances in more recent years (Wagemakers et al., 2012). Consequently, it is likely that gender stereotypes faced by Saudi women have followed a unique trajectory across this time period.

### **Gender Segregation and Mixing in Saudi Society**

Formal and informal segregation of men and women in public places has a long history in Saudi society. Contrary to trends seen throughout much of the rest of the world, this practice remains a matter of law and practice and has actually been expanded substantially in recent years. As Wagemakers and colleagues (2012) noted, it is perhaps inaccurate and misleading to conceptualize the state of affairs in Saudi society in terms of segregation.

Thinking about Saudi society in terms of prohibiting the mixing of genders in public assumes a Western viewpoint in which public spaces are shared by default. In Saudi society, public spaces are assumed by default to be single-gender spaces, with gender-mixed spaces considered an exception to the rule. Instead, gender mixing, or *ikhtilat* as it is known in Arabic, is a matter of intense debate. The question of precisely what circumstances constitute *ikhtilat*, and to what extent it is allowable or forbidden by religious custom, is one with only limited consensus (Wagemakers et al., 2012).

Current law and practice severely restricts the circumstances under which it is possible for men and women to inhabit the same public spaces concurrently. The ostensive rationale for these restrictions rests largely on preventing *khilwa*, or situations in which an unrelated man and woman find themselves alone together. The traditional method of achieving this goal was to restrict women almost completely to the home except when accompanied by a male relative. However, as a result of the extreme material wealth it has enjoyed since the discovery and exploitation of major oil resources in the early years of the present Saudi state, contemporary Saudi society is often able to solve this problem using a different approach. Now, oftentimes there exist parallel public spaces designated as male only and female only, allowing women to participate somewhat more fully in public life while maintaining strict gender segregation. For example, women-only workplaces and schools have proliferated as restrictions have tightened, allowing women to pursue educations and careers without encountering men. Public spaces from swimming pools to zoos have adopted designated times for women, allowing

for accommodation in a variety of arenas in the public sphere without risking the mixing of genders.

Wagemakers and colleagues (2012) reported that Saudi women are divided into multiple camps in terms of their support for gender segregation and its goals. One group favors continued or increased segregation either for religious reasons or because they perceive men as dangerous and untrustworthy with regard to the abuse of women in mixed-gender settings. A second group opposes the principle of gender segregation but sees it as a useful means for expanding women's roles in society. By expanding the number of institutions that afford women the option of participating in segregated settings parallel to those used by men, it is argued that women may eventually be able to use those institutions to begin to dismantle the system of gender stereotypes and restrictions altogether. Finally, the third and smallest group argues in favor of doing away with gender segregation practices outright.

### **Stereotyping in Saudi Arabia**

The experience of gender segregation is such a salient element of gender relations in Saudi Arabia that it has a substantial impact on how women are stereotyped and what effects these stereotypes have. Given the extent of the restrictions faced by Saudi women, it is not surprising that Saudi Arabia ranked at the bottom of a recent transnational poll regarding countries' positive views of women and their perceived support for gender equality and women's rights (Moaddel, 2006).

The discourse surrounding the practice of *khilwa* directly belies some of the gender stereotypes prevalent in Saudi Arabia. The notion that it is

essential to prevent situations in which unrelated men and women are alone together reveals a number of things about how women and men are perceived. The seeming implication of this prohibition is that there is an inevitable risk of sexual contact between any two unrelated men and women allowed to be alone together (Wagemakers et al., 2012). On the part of men, this implication implies a stereotype that men are unable to control their sexual impulses. For women, the implications are somewhat more complex. On one level, there is an implication of the arguably positively valenced traits of naïveté and of sexual purity. These qualities can, however, also be considered key features of benevolent sexism, implying that women are pure and unworldly beings who need to be protected by men in a patriarchal system of power (Glick & Fiske, 2001). More subtly, this view may reinforce women's social subordination to men and the perception of their weakness.

The implication inherent in the idea that *khilwa* must be prevented is that women are helpless to resist men in such situations. By implication, this stereotype appears to extend to female weakness and subordination to men in other facets of life, particularly the family. Finally, the stipulation that *khilwa* applies only to unrelated men and women establishes a power relationship between women and their male relatives. As Deif (2008) has argued, Saudi women are effectively relegated to the status of lifelong children with responsibility passed between fathers, brothers, and husbands. This system of treatment exposes women to a spectrum of human rights violations at the hands of these relatives (Deif, 2008).

A number of social theorists have noted the paradox inherent in the ways in which the Saudi government promotes gender-based reforms while

acting in the patriarchal role of “protecting” women from perceived male aggression by maintaining other restrictions (Al-Rasheed, 2010). The stereotype of Saudi women as exemplars of purity and guardians of traditional values can be argued to support the idea that women are held up as a marker between the pious Saudi state and other ungodly states (Al-Rasheed, 2013). By supporting this stereotype of women, women’s subordination to men is also reinforced since it is perceived that women’s purity needs to be protected by the patriarchal actors of either the state or the male family member. By the same token, women who defy the stereotype of being responsible for upholding morality are treated with shame and scorn. This practice, in turn, causes their achievements to be minimized, further reinforcing their subordination as women.

### **The Origin and Function of Gender Stereotypes**

In order to understand how the present state of affairs with respect to gender stereotypes and gender relations arose and continues to be maintained in Saudi Arabia and why it differs in certain respects compared to the Western world, it is useful to consider several theoretical perspectives on gender stereotypes. These perspectives are described as functional because they explain the persistence of stereotypes in order to achieve certain goals at the individual and group levels. Four theoretical perspectives may be particularly informative for gender stereotypes in Saudi Arabia and will be addressed in this section: social role theory, attribution theory, system justification/social dominance orientation theory, and theories of self and identity (social identity theory/self-categorization theory).

## **Social Roles and the Origin of Gender Stereotypes**

Researchers have found that social roles are intricately aligned with dominant stereotypes about gender (Eagly & Wood, 2011). Social role theory (SRT) was developed in order to explain this phenomenon. This section briefly explores SRT and considers two main domains in which gender stereotypes are commonly manifested: the family and the workplace. SRT is a social psychological perspective explicating the social bases of gender differences, drawing on a long tradition of role theory in the field of sociology (Eagly & Wood, 2011). Classical sociological theory (e.g., Cooley, 1956; Mead, 2009) defines roles in terms of socially defined complexes of normative beliefs, attitudes, and especially behaviors that are attached to particular positions. Roles are numerous and varied. Some are enduring and persistent across situations, such as the role of woman. At the other end of the spectrum, some roles arise only in certain situations and last only while that situation persists—such as the role of bank customer, which may arise only while waiting in line at the bank. Other roles fall in between these two extremes, such as those of student, mother, or swimmer. Each role is attached to a set of social expectations about how someone in that role should think and act.

People pattern their own behaviors and develop their expectations for others' behaviors largely on the basis of these roles. Interactions in a wide variety of circumstances can thus be seen as an unfolding of a social script derived from the roles of the individuals involved. Individuals are correspondingly conceptualized as actors in this paradigm. For example, interactions and behaviors in a restaurant can be seen in terms of individuals adopting waiter and patron roles, and behaving according to the script that



society has written for the interactions between waiters and patrons. The same two individuals would not respond to one another in the same way if they met under different circumstances while enacting other roles.

SRT focuses more specifically on gender roles and roles related to gender relations. Gender roles can be distinguished from roles based on one's situation (such as a customer role) or social position (such as an occupational role) because they are present throughout one's life and continue to exist in every social interaction. Gender is assigned at birth (or in many cases, with the use of modern prenatal technology, before birth) and it is the first role into which individuals are socialized (Eagly & Wood, 2011). Gender is almost universally salient—there are exceptionally few situations in which one is not aware of the gender of the person with whom one is interacting. Because of this fact, in any situation, each individual is, to some extent, enacting a gender role. Individuals either behave in accordance with gender role expectations or their deviance from these expectations is interpreted in the context of role violation by observers. Those observers likewise interpret behavior in terms of the perceived gender of the actor. This interpretation is true even for babies, who have no capacity for understanding gender roles, much less consciously enacting them. Research shows that people interpret the same infant behavior in masculine terms when the baby is thought to be a boy and in feminine terms when the baby is thought to be a girl (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

SRT conceives of gender roles as social constructs arising from people's observations of male and female role performances in various situations (Eagly et al., 2000). As a result, gender roles come to reflect gendered elements of society, such as the division of labor between men and

women and hierarchical gender relations. In turn, these gender role expectations serve to mold behavior as people act out their gendered scripts and see others' behavior through the lens of these gender roles. Thus, gender role perception creates a cycle of feedback between gendered behavior and behavioral expectancies, with each role-conforming observation reinforcing the expectancy that it will be fulfilled in future interactions. In sociological terms, gender roles become reified to the extent that people perceive them as innate rather than as a matter of social convention (Butler, 2011).

The extent to which there are genuinely innate differences between men and women that serve, to some extent, as a foundation for certain gender roles remains a point of some controversy (Hyde, 2005). However, it is evident that many perceived differences are socially constructed because it is possible to track changes in perceptions of gender roles between societies and across time (Kessler-Harris, 2003). The literature on dynamic stereotypes demonstrates that views of the supposedly innate attributes of men and women have shifted over time, apparently in response to changes in the economic, social, and legal status of women (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; Kessler-Harris, 2003). For example, over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, gender roles in many societies changed from portraying women as intellectually inferior to men to eclipsing men's performance at all levels of educational attainment (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). Women, particularly those in Western societies, have also come to be perceived as having more traditionally masculine attributes (Wilde & Diekmann, 2005). This process appears to closely track changes in elements of women's status, such as their integration into the workplace (Kessler-Harris, 2003).

In SRT terms, changes in what society allows women to do have caused changes in the behaviors of women. As people observe women engaging in these new behaviors, their expectancies for women's behaviors likewise adjust. These expectancies, aggregated across members of society, constitute the gender role. Hence, gender roles change to reflect changes in what women do. Women's behavior adjusts along with these expectancies as the new paradigm becomes more engrained. Stereotypes can be seen as a reflection of group-based gender role attributions. Gender role adherence tends to be attributed to internal characteristics shared by members of the gender group, and these attributed characteristics constitute gender stereotypes.

In the broadest sense, gender roles and stereotypes reflect each gender as a whole, i.e., they constitute male and female roles. However, there are numerous gendered roles that are subsidiary to these. For example, in addition to the social roles corresponding to women as a whole, there are social roles attached to female statuses, such as mother, daughter, sister, and so forth. Although each of these operates in reference to the female role more generally, they also contain their own stereotypical attributes and expectancies. For example, mothers might be expected to enjoy providing care for small children, whereas women who are not mothers might experience such expectation to a lesser degree. Nevertheless, the mother and nonmother roles are both gendered and both are informed by the broader gender stereotype. While a woman fulfilling the non-mother role might be expected to have less interest in small children than one acting in the role of a mother, she would probably be expected to have greater interest in small children than a man fulfilling a non-father role.

The effects of violating role expectations depend upon the particular stereotype and the domain in which it operates. Stereotypes and norms have the greatest impact on individual perception when they are highly specific and tailored to particular situations (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). Although stereotypes are often rooted in broader conceptions of gender, many stereotypes about women can be classified by domain—for example, stereotypes about women’s roles and abilities in the workplace, education, the family, and the political sphere. The bulk of research in this area has focused on women in Western societies, where significant changes in gender roles and relations have been underway for multiple generations.

**Gender roles and stereotypes in the family.** Gender stereotypes related to the family are likely among the most pervasive, owing to the longstanding nature of traditional gender division within the family and the biological basis for some aspects related to parenting roles, such as childbearing and nursing (Oakley, 2015). In many cases, family stereotypes may lead to stereotypes being formed in other domains. For example, believing that women have an obligation to perform family caregiving duties may underlie beliefs devaluing women’s work outside of the home.

Family stereotypes are heavily based on a division of domestic roles between men and women. Women’s roles traditionally center on caregiving and performing domestic tasks, such as food preparation and housekeeping. Men’s roles, on the other hand, are traditionally centered around doing work to maintain the family economically, performing heavier household maintenance tasks, and directing the labor of other family members (Eagly et al., 2000). This set of gender relations is often characterized as *patriarchal* in reference to

its tendency to create a hierarchical set of relationships that put men (or more specifically fathers) in a position of power over women (i.e., their wives and daughters; Kimmel, 2000). Stereotype adherence within families may be seen as self-reinforcing because people tend to select marital partners who are similar to themselves in terms of gender role traditionalism (Eastwick et al., 2006). Consequently, traditionalism is likely to become more deeply entrenched in more traditionalist families. By contrast, stereotypes are likely to become weaker in families with a lower degree of traditionalism.

While family stereotypes are most centrally focused on marital partner roles, they also extend to other family members. Principally, they affect children and their role expectations. Experimental research has demonstrated the patterns of stereotyping that parents direct towards their children (Endendijk et al., 2013): Fathers were found to hold stronger explicit gender stereotypes regarding their children's roles while mothers held stronger implicit gender stereotypes regarding their children. The same study found that the strength of children's implicit stereotypes was closely related to the strength of their parents' stereotypes. This intergenerational transmission effect was especially strong between mothers and daughters. Family structure also affected fathers' gender stereotypes. Fathers with sons but no daughters maintained stronger gender stereotypes than fathers who had at least one daughter. Thus, exposure to an opposite-gender child and their experiences may serve to reduce parents' gender stereotypical attitudes. Children's gender stereotypes are not only affected by the family system, but also by elements of society and culture more broadly. Cross-cultural research has found that adolescents in relatively individualistic cultures have weaker gender

stereotypes than those living in more collectivistic cultures (Gibbons, Stiles, & Shkodriani, 1991).

**Gender roles and stereotypes in the workplace.** Although women have always been participants in the workforce, they have only gradually and recently begun to attain equal status with men in this sphere in some Western societies (Kessler-Harris, 2003). The goal of equality remains unfulfilled in the U.S., as women continue to earn 79% of the wages paid to men in comparable positions (American Association of University Women, 2014). In addition to these institutional and legal hurdles, there is evidence that negative stereotyping regarding women's roles and abilities in the workplace remains prevalent.

This kind of stereotyping affects women's workplace success in several distinct ways (Heilman, 2012). Female workers tend to be evaluated differently than their male counterparts, even when their actual performance is equivalent (Block & Crawford, 2013). For example, there tends to be an especially wide gap in evaluations of managerial qualities such as problem solving and task delegation in favor of men. This is likely due to the fact that these qualities are stereotypically viewed as adhering to traditionally masculine gender roles. Although some stereotypes of positive employment qualities do tend to favor women, these qualities—such as being supportive of others and consulting with others before making decisions—tend to correspondingly reflect traditionally feminine gender roles (Block & Crawford, 2013). These findings impact a woman's career success in two ways. First, negative stereotypes regarding lower competence at managerial tasks place women at a disadvantage when it comes to hiring and promotion

(Block & Crawford, 2013). For example, a woman must exhibit stronger problem solving skills than a man in order for the typical manager to perceive her as being equally competent (Block & Crawford, 2013). Second, the positive traits that are stereotypically associated with women (e.g., being supportive) tend to be most valuable in lower status positions, meaning that managers tend to steer women into job tracks with less potential for advancement on the basis of these perceived traits (Block & Crawford, 2013). This process creates a self-reinforcing system wherein women have fewer opportunities to demonstrate counter-stereotypical qualities, further bolstering existing stereotypes (Heilman, 2001).

Furthermore, Block and Crawford (2013) addressed the question of whether workplace gender stereotypes reflected experiences with genuine differences in job performance or were generalized as a result of everyday gender stereotyping. Study participants accurately anticipated the actual job evaluations given by male upper managers: they tended to give more credit to male subordinates for stereotypically masculine management behaviors (e.g., problem solving, delegating) and more credit to women for stereotypically feminine management behaviors (e.g., supporting, consulting). The fact that individuals with no management experience were able to anticipate these evaluation results supports the idea that managerial gender stereotypes are largely derived from everyday stereotypes about men and women in general, rather than reflecting genuine gender differences in management styles.

One significant area of workplace gender stereotyping that tends to harm women's occupational success is perceptions of work-life (or work-family) balance. Although there is increasingly more public discourse about

the importance of flexibility with regard to balancing work with family and other obligations and interests, employers continue to punish workers whose outside obligations are perceived as conflicting with their job performance (Heilman, 2012). Some such employees are punished through receiving low performance evaluations and fewer prospects for promotion (Heilman, 2001, 2012). This perception disproportionately affects women because managers tend to rate their female employees as having more problems with work-life balance than their male counterparts, even when the employees themselves rate their work-life balance as equivalent (Hoobler, Hu, & Wilson, 2010).

Lyness and Judiesch (2014) examined workplace gender stereotypes surrounding work-life (or work-family) balance and how they affected employee evaluations. These investigators used data from a large sample of workplace managers across 36 countries to determine whether cross-cultural differences in gender inequality affected the nature and impact of these stereotypes. In highly gender-equal societies, there were no differences in work-life balance-related evaluations between male and female workers; however, as the overall climate of gender traditionalism increased, so too did women's disadvantage in terms of work-life balance-related performance ratings. Interestingly, research by Butler and Skattebo (2004) indicated that men are punished more severely by their employers when they do experience work-family conflict. This treatment occurs because being susceptible to family caregiving demands runs counter to general societal stereotypes for men and thus undermines their masculinity and perceived competency.

Another issue that may affect the different perceptions of work-life balance between men and women are laws regarding maternity and paternity



leave. Suk (2010) argued that legal regulations surrounding maternity leave in the U.S. further serve to unintentionally reinforce familial gender stereotypes. By requiring that employers provide lengthy periods of maternity leave, the laws may perpetuate the perception that a unique bond exists between mothers and children (compared to fathers and children) while underpinning stereotypes regarding the duty of mothers to prioritize personal childcare over work obligations.

**Social role theory in Saudi Arabia.** The SRT framework would lead to the expectation that gender stereotypes in Saudi society are likely to be substantially different from those in the Western world. SRT stipulates that perceived gender roles, and thus the stereotypes associated with them, are shaped by the kinds of roles that men and women are observed to occupy. Since Saudi women live in circumstances that are very different than those in other countries, it follows that they act out a different set of gender roles, with corresponding consequences in terms of the stereotypes applied to them.

Among the most salient characteristics of Saudi women's social positions is the degree to which they are separated from the potential to interact with others. They are especially restricted in their social interactions with men. Other factors additionally serve to restrict their interactions with other women. For example, prohibitions against traveling without a male relative make it difficult to have independent meetings with female friends (Wagemakers et al., 2012). These factors are likely to work together to greatly circumscribe Saudi women's networks of social connections outside of the immediate family. As a result, women are likely to be observed having relatively few close friendships and social ties of other types, which may

contribute to a perception of women as being isolated. Saudi men, on the other hand, do not face these kinds of restrictions and therefore are free to form and maintain larger networks of social relationships (Wagemakers et al., 2012). Thus, Saudi women are likely to be perceived and stereotyped as socially isolated in comparison to men. This state of affairs stands in contrast to gender stereotypes in the West and other cultural contexts, where women are generally stereotyped as more socially connected than men (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000).

Saudi women also face a large number of restrictions on their activity. These include prohibitions against driving automobiles, restrictions on travel, and limitations on where they can receive education and participate in the workforce (Wagemakers et al., 2012). Consequently, women have fewer chances to be seen successfully solving their own problems and accomplishing things for themselves. Instead, they are more often seen to be in need of assistance or allowing others, specifically men, to do things for them. The absence of women in the upper echelons of occupational and political hierarchies contributes to the perception of gender roles and stereotypes as well. The likely result of observing this situation, according to the SRT framework, is for a person to make attributions as to the essential characteristics of women as a group (Eagly et al., 2000). Women are likely to be seen as less capable of taking care of themselves because they are observed to require assistance from male relatives to complete activities necessary for their daily lives. Women are also likely to be perceived as less capable of achieving significant goals in comparison to men, as they are observed to

occupy lower status roles than their male counterparts. As a result, women are likely to be stereotyped as less competent in comparison to men.

A qualitative study of several Saudi women who held jobs as physicians demonstrated this tendency to view women as less competent than men (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004), even for women who have managed to advance significantly in terms of education and employment. The practicalities of gender segregation encourage female doctors to choose careers that specialize in the treatment of women (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004). More subtly, although official sanction encourages extensive education for women (at least in a single-gender context), stereotypes about women's roles and abilities are likely to hamper their ability to advance their careers, as male doctors may be perceived to be more competent or worthy of promotion (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004).

Women's morality, in particular their sexual morality, stands as a major focal point in Saudi culture. As discussed previously, one of the primary policies enforced against women is that of *khilwa*, which stipulates that unrelated men and women are not allowed to be alone together (Wagemakers et al., 2012). This policy dictates much of the strict limitations in place against Saudi women's freedom. Saudi women are strongly perceived as playing the role of safeguarding morality. This is not only a case of being perceived as having an obligation to remain moral themselves but also to prevent others (particularly men) from behaving immorally. Paradoxically, while being viewed as moral guardians, women may, at the same time and for the same reasons, be stereotyped as a source of potential shame for their families. Since women, in their capacity as the moral guardians of society, are responsible for

controlling men's sexual behavior when situations of gender mixing arise, notwithstanding men's greater social authority and physical strength, there is a degree of anxiety about the risk that women will be unable to do so. In common with other honor-based cultures, the perception of improper sexual behavior (regardless of who may have been responsible in any given case) brings a sense of dishonor and shame both to the woman personally and to her family (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). In particular, a woman's male relatives are thought to be shamed by her unauthorized sexual activity, including in cases of rape (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Thus, women may suffer from the stereotype that they are sources of risk and shame for their families, while simultaneously being stereotyped as moral guardians.

These stereotypes, along with other elements of women's structural position in Saudi society, may well work to promulgate an even more basic stereotype in which Saudi women are viewed as subservient to men. Saudi women are likely to be viewed as dependent upon their male relatives for social support and companionship, either directly as sources of support or as gatekeepers facilitating or preventing friendships with other women. The view that women possess a relative lack of competence in educational and occupational spheres also tends to reinforce the notion that women are naturally under the control of men. This view would tend to lead to the perception of women as people in need of direction and guidance from more competent men. Although being seen as responsible for guarding public morality against men places women in a relatively favorable position in a certain sense, it also casts women in the role of being reactive to men's action and as sources of anxiety over the potential for bringing shame upon their

families. The feminine role in this regard is to respond appropriately to men's actions, not to function actively in their own right. Again, this role serves only to place women in a position subservient to men. In a wide variety of facets, Saudi society is remarkably patriarchal in structure (Al-Rasheed, 2013), and therefore, SRT predicts that they will come to be seen as inferior or subservient in some innate fashion.

As a final matter, SRT is instructive in predicting how stereotypes change over time. In the Western world, women have taken on a variety of roles in increasing equality with men over the course of the last century. Changes have allowed women greater access to education, participation in the economy, and political rights (Kessler-Harris, 2003; Schofer & Meyer, 2005). As a consequence, given that women's rights have become more restricted in Saudi society in recent years, the SRT perspective would predict that gender roles for women would have become increasingly rigid and restrictive over the course of these changes. Saudi women today may be stereotyped as even more isolated, morally culpable, and subservient, and less competent in comparison to their mothers and grandmothers.

### **Stereotypes as Attributions**

Another functional perspective on stereotyping is the view that stereotypes guide attributions (Brandt & Reyna, 2011). From a psychological perspective, stereotyping can be characterized as a form of cognitive bias that allows people to more efficiently form impressions about individuals and to predict their behavior (Fiske, 2000; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). In essence, stereotyping serves as a mental shortcut that tends to provide a more accurate basis for making assumptions about people's behavior. This accuracy occurs

partly because some stereotypes have a degree of basis in reality (Jussim, Cain, Crawford, Harber, & Cohen, 2009) and partly because people often tend to conform to expectations, making stereotypes self-fulfilling (Chen & Bargh, 1997).

When individuals observe others' behavior, they will often automatically draw a conclusion about the reason why the observed individual behaved as such. This process of assigning a cause to a behavior is called attribution. Attributions have more heuristic value (i.e., they are more useful in predicting future behavior) when they can be used to infer something about the internal disposition of the individual in question, rather than to translate facts specific to the situation (Fiske, 2000). It is even more useful to be able to make an attribution not to an individual disposition, but to a group-based disposition. Making an individual attribution provides guidance for expectancies when encountering the same individual in the future, but making a group attribution provides guidance for expectancies when encountering any member of the same group in the future (Weiner, 2012). Thus, people are motivated to answer the question "why did she behave that way?" with the answer "because she is a woman" due to the heuristic value of making an inference about how women in general behave. Gender role perceptions arise, according to this view, as an aggregate of observations regarding how men and women behave differently as attributed to their gender status and as a basis for anticipating how other men and women will behave in future interactions.

From a functional perspective, internal attributions are valuable because they provide guidance in dealing with the same person in the future

(Fiske, 2000). External attributions are valuable because they provide guidance for dealing with similar situations. The attribution process takes into account information about the person and the situation, in addition to the immediate behavior. Stereotypes can be viewed, at least in some circumstances, as functioning as a particular type of internal attribution (Brandt & Reyna, 2011).

Rather than reflecting the internal qualities of the person as an individual, stereotypical attributions reflect the internal qualities the person is perceived to have as a member of the stereotyped group (Brandt & Reyna, 2011). For example, a girl's poor performance on a mathematics exam might be attributed to the stereotypical gender trait of being relatively bad at math. These stereotypical internal attributions may serve to reinforce existing systems of inequality. A girl in this scenario is less likely to receive additional help, because her poor performance has been attributed to her innate inability. A boy who performs poorly on the same exam might be more likely to be given more instruction because the performance is counter-stereotypical and thus more likely to be attributed to external and correctable factors such as a lack of correct education or a distracting test environment (Reyna, 2008). Stereotypical attributions have group-level implications, in addition to their immediate impact on the perception of individuals (Brandt & Reyna, 2011). Group status differences may be reinforced and justified by attributing negative attributes to the group. For example, a person who becomes aware of the gap in pay between men and women might attribute that fact by recourse to the stereotype that women are less able to perform in the workplace. Thus stereotypical attributions may have deleterious effects at multiple levels.

**Gender stereotypes and attributions in Saudi society.** Saudi social institutions may be constructed in ways that serve to encourage stereotypical attributions, and these attributions may in turn serve to reinforce the legitimacy of those institutions. Reyna (2008) examined the phenomenon of stereotypes extending to social structures in the context of the U.S. educational system, which can easily be extended to other contexts like national cultures or political systems. Reyna asserted that educators—individuals in positions of power—are “vulnerable to relying on the attributional content of stereotypes” when they make decisions related to their professional roles “due to status differences, pervasive cultural norms, and the cognitive and motivational limitations associated with their roles” (p. 440). Saudi politicians, educators, and work supervisors are in a similar position of influence and are likely to also apply dominant gender stereotypes to the women in their spheres. Contrary to the context of the U.S. educational system, however, in Saudi society the gender stereotypes regarding women have been institutionalized through different formal policies that constrain women’s actions and behaviors in particular ways.

Different elements of the Saudi situation may mitigate in favor of both internal and external attributions. For example, women in Saudi Arabia are legally required to demonstrate deference to their male relatives (for example, by requiring their supervision to travel; Wagemakers et al., 2012). Consequently, Saudi women are constrained in these circumstances to behave in ways that conform to the gender stereotype that women are subservient to men (Al-Rasheed, 2013; Wagemakers et al., 2012). Because observers are aware of the legal framework mandating subservient behavior, they may tend



to attribute subservient behavior to this external source. However, because gender segregation is likely to lead to a significant lack of familiarity with women on the part of Saudi men, they may also be prone to making internal attributions. Perhaps more importantly, both Saudi men and women may be prone to making a stereotypical attribution at the group level, perceiving that women remain in a legally subservient position because they are innately subservient or are less capable as men and therefore are unable to contribute equally to society as a group.

While little research on stereotypical attributions has been conducted in Saudi Arabia, several U.S. studies in the realm of education exemplify this phenomenon and can be applied to the Saudi context. For example, Régner, Steele, Ambady, Thinus-Blanc, and Huguet (2015) found that girls and women at all levels of education in the U.S. tend to be stereotyped as academically inferior to men in mathematics and science disciplines, with negative consequences on academic and career success. A similar trend can be seen in Saudi society, where women in the medical field are perceived as less competent than their male colleagues due to attributions about women as being intellectually inferior in this area (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004). Educational and career-oriented stereotypes with respect to math and science are transmitted at a young age, often subtly, as a consequence of implicit stereotypes based on internal attributions made by parents and teachers (Gunderson, Ramirez, Levine, & Beilock, 2011). For example, teachers may steer female students toward studying language while steering male students into the study of math and science. Correspondingly, parents may tend to be

more satisfied with lower levels of achievement in math and science subjects from their daughters due to the same stereotypes (Gunderson et al., 2011).

A study of science faculty members at U.S. research universities sheds light on the impact of these stereotypes in higher education (Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012). Faculty members in the sciences were given descriptions of students applying for a position as a research assistant and were asked to assess candidates' academic competence, hireability, deservedness of faculty mentoring, and appropriate starting salary if hired. When evaluating otherwise identical applications presented as representing male or female students, the faculty members tended to rate male students as more competent, more hireable, more deserving of mentoring, and as worthy of a higher starting salary (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012), suggesting that they were making internal attributions regarding the perceived higher science-related abilities of men. Similar stereotypical attributions regarding the lower competence of women have been found in the science disciplines among Saudi medical professionals (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004). Moss-Racusin and colleagues (2012) also found evidence suggesting that the cause of lower hireability, mentoring, and salary ratings stemmed from participants' internal attributions that female students were less competent, which paralleled the trend reported by Saudi female physicians in Vidyasagar and Rea's (2004) study. Reyna's (2008) discussion of internal attributions extending to social structures is also confirmed by these studies.

### **Stereotypes as Hierarchy Maintenance**

At the societal level, the functions of stereotypes tend to be relatively more value laden. In particular, stereotyping can be viewed as a tool for

forming and maintaining hierarchical power relationships between groups (Sidanius, Pratto, Van Laar, & Levin, 2004; Verniers et al., 2015). In the case of gender, stereotypes serve almost exclusively to place men in positions of social dominance over women (Kimmel, 2000; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1994). Many stereotypes portray women as explicitly less capable than men with respect to certain socially-valued qualities, a view which can be characterized as hostile sexism (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). For example, women may be perceived as less intelligent and less competent in leadership roles. Other gender stereotypes, which can be characterized as examples of benevolent sexism, portray women in an ostensibly favorable light in comparison to men, yet these views often also serve to reinforce women's subordinate social positions (Glick & Fiske, 2001). For example, women may be perceived as better nurturers and caregivers than men. Although these are perceived as positive qualities, they are also associated with positions of relatively low status. Furthermore, these qualities are also perceived as conflicting with those needed for effectively controlling family, social, and political institutions (Conway & Vartanian, 2000).

The stereotype content model (SCM; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) offers a framework for understanding gender stereotypes based on the assumption that the nature of the structural relationship between different social groups (i.e., men and women) dictates the specific stereotypes that the groups develop about each other (Eckes, 2002). Current SCM research has found that women are often the subjects of paternalistic stereotypes that regard them as incompetent but warm, in comparison to men who are the subjects of envious stereotypes that regard them as highly competent yet not warm

(Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). These trends are also applicable to gender subgroups, where women who are regarded as traditional, such as stay-at-home mothers, are portrayed using characteristics associated with the paternalistic stereotypes of being warm yet incompetent, while nontraditional women, such as successful professionals, are represented using characteristics associated with envious stereotypes that regard them as not warm yet competent (Eckes, 2002). These attitudes can be associated with hostile sexism in relation to nontraditional women and benevolent sexism in relation to traditional women (Eckes, 2002). Based on the information provided thus far, it is likely that both hostile and benevolent sexism are at play in the Saudi context of gender stereotyping.

A great deal of research has gone into studying the related phenomenon of system justification (Jost & Hunyady, 2005), which refers to the tendency to seek ways of psychologically justifying to oneself the social structural status quo, regardless of whether it is just or unjust. Stereotypes can contribute to the so-called “just world” hypothesis, which proposes that people tend to engage in system justifying cognitions and ideologies because they are motivated to maintain a perception of the world as fundamentally just (Furnham, 2003). Perceiving the world as unfair on a fundamental level is thought to lead to anxiety due to the uncertainty that goes with being unable to anticipate that following social rules and behaving correctly is likely to lead to positive outcomes for oneself (Otto, Boos, Dalbert, Schöps, & Hoyer, 2006). In order to maintain a view of the world as just, it is therefore necessary to justify existing patterns of injustice. Stereotyping can address this source of cognitive dissonance by allowing one to perceive that disadvantaged groups

have worse outcomes because they are inherently less deserving (e.g., because they are lazy, immoral, or unintelligent), rather than because they suffer from social injustice (Jost & Sidanius, 2004).

Social dominance theory (SDT) explores the way that societies are organized as hierarchies based on different groupings. These hierarchies correlate to many prevailing stereotypes in specific societies, including those based on gender. In these group-based hierarchies, “members of dominant groups secure a disproportionate share of the good things in life (e.g., powerful roles, good housing... and members of subordinate groups receive a disproportionate share of the bad things in life” (Sidanius & Pratto, 2011, p. 418). SDT identifies three different main hierarchical systems, including an age system (where adults have more power than children), a gender or patriarchal system (where men traditionally have more power than women), and an arbitrary-set system in which other socially constructed categories like race, nationality, and religion are hierarchically arranged (Sidanius & Pratto, 2011). SDT identifies hierarchy-attenuating and hierarchy-enhancing ideologies and hierarchy-attenuating and hierarchy-enhancing social institutions that either discourage or encourage the creation and maintenance of group-based hierarchies. Moreover, Sidanius and Pratto have applied SDT to posit that unequal intergroup contexts trigger memories of past inequalities and conflict, thus provoking continued stereotypes and discrimination along the same lines. This suggests that, under SDT’s patriarchal system, historical gender conflict may inform present-day gender dissonance and contribute to the reinforcement of prevailing gender stereotypes.

**Gender hierarchies in Saudi society.** Saudi society can be regarded as both strongly and rigidly hierarchical, with women occupying a low-status position in comparison with men (Wagemakers et al., 2012). System justification theory provides one way of accounting for how gender stereotypes help to construct and reinforce this hierarchy. Men and women are both motivated to view their world as basically fair and just, and therefore are motivated to perceive justifications for gender inequality (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Gender stereotyping women as having innate qualities that make them prone to subservience is one way of addressing this need, while positive stereotyping of men may also be effective in this regard.

Men, being members of the higher-status gender group, are likely to demonstrate higher levels of social dominance (Sidanius, Levin, Liu, & Pratto, 2000). Consequently, it is probable that Saudi men are more likely than Saudi women to rely on gender stereotypes to reinforce their positive views of society. For women, the motivation to view the world as just is likely to conflict with the motivation for positive self-perception (Furnham, 2003). In Western samples, this conflict has been found to contribute to ambivalent perceptions of other women suffering from gender discrimination (Jost & Burgess, 2000). Women have a motivation to view their gender positively, but they also have a motivation to separate the self from the threat posed by gender inequality (for example by perceiving oneself to defy stereotypes that apply to other women). In the Saudi context, this may imply that women are less prone than men to use gender stereotypes to justify their social position, but they may maintain ambivalent gender attitudes, perceiving women negatively in some contexts but not in others.

## **Stereotypes and Self-Definition: Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theories**

It is important to emphasize the point that stereotypes are not only imposed from the outside, but that they also have important implications for how individuals perceive themselves. These self-definitions in turn go on to affect how members of different social groups—in particular members of high and low status groups—interact with one another. The related social psychological perspectives of social identity theory and self-categorization theory provide a valuable framework for conceptualizing these self-perception processes.

**Social identity theory.** Social identity theory (SIT; Hogg, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is an influential social psychological approach for understanding how group membership affects individual behavior and cognition. Fundamental to this perspective is the observation that the human mind automatically sorts people into groups or categories on the basis of their social roles and positions. Ingroup members are those who belong to the same group as oneself, whereas outgroup members belong to a different group. People's beliefs and expectations about the characteristics of typical members of these groups can be characterized as stereotypes. Individuals respond to others based on their perceived membership in these social identity groups, generalizing stereotypical perceptions from the group to the individual.

Individuals are motivated to promote their ingroup identities by seeking to perceive those identities in the most positive light possible. This practice allows individuals to thereby view themselves in a positive light. Broadly speaking, there are two strategies available for achieving this goal.

Individuals can either express positive qualities related to the ingroup, or they can engage in derogation of outgroups. Stereotyping thus not only serves functions related to simplifying person perception but also serves as a tool for enhancing one's relative self-image (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Outgroup stereotypes serve the function of increasing cohesion within the ingroup (Hogg, 1993). They also allow people to feel better about themselves by perceiving others as having negative attributes (Hogg & Hains, 1996). Classic studies in the area of SIT demonstrate that these effects arise even when people know that the ingroups and outgroups are arbitrary and have been assigned at random (Tajfel, 1970). The effects are correspondingly more pervasive when the groups involved are enduring, meaningful, and central to one's self-definition. Gender is perhaps among the most central and enduring source of social identity and so serves as an especially strong source of self and other perception.

Since each individual may hold a number of these social identities, the SIT perspective helps to explain which ones have greater or lesser impact in any given situation. The term *identity salience* is used to refer to the extent to which a given social identity is cognitively available (i.e., easily accessible by one's conscious mind). Identity salience is important in determining self-perception, other-perception, and behavior. In terms of the self, people draw most heavily on the most salient identities in deciding how to behave in a particular situation. In terms of others, it is again the most salient social identities that have the greatest impact on how Person A perceives Person B, how A interprets B's actions, and how A develops group-based attributions and expectancies (Hogg, 2006). Some social identities are highly salient in



certain circumstances but have very little salience in other circumstances. For example, a person's occupational social identity as an employee of a certain company may be highly salient in a business meeting but has very little salience when interacting with their family at home. In the first case, the individual is likely to structure their thinking and behavior based to a large extent on what is good for the employer and other employees, and will be likely to see other people involved in the same situation in terms of their ingroup or outgroup membership as defined by occupation. In the second case, the same individual is unlikely to be thinking about their occupation or employer at all when interacting with their family at home.

Certain social identities, however, can be conceptualized as chronically salient. These are identities that are important in affecting how one is seen by oneself and others across a wide range of situations. Gender is probably the quintessential example of a chronically salient social identity (Cameron & Lalonde, 2001). It is present from birth and is communicated by body and dress more or less constantly throughout one's life. The suggestion that one would fail to notice or would forget whether another person they were involved with in a social interaction was male or female is unlikely enough to be somewhat comical. As a consequence of its chronic salience, gender identity and stereotypes attached to gender have a highly pervasive impact on how people behave and how others treat them (Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002). According to the SIT view, then, each person is in all situations behaving at least to some extent in their capacity as a representative of their gender, cognizant of the stereotypes attached to that role and their social position relative to others as defined by their respective genders (Palomares, 2004).

However, the impact of even chronically salient social identities can be heightened or reduced depending on the situation. Some interactions are more gendered than others. For example, gender identities are likely to be more active for a man and a woman on a date than for a man and a woman working together in an occupational capacity. Cultural differences can help define what interactions are highly gendered and hence when gender identity is especially salient. In societies where women are restricted from engaging in certain practices or being involved in certain social situations, gender may become much more salient because of the novelty and transgressive aspect of seeing a woman in such a situation.

**SIT in Saudi Arabia.** The element of Saudi society that is likely to have the most significant implications for gender identity effects is the extreme extent of enforced gender segregation. In Saudi society, gender segregation is considered the default natural state of affairs and gender-mixed environments are unusual enough to be designated by their own term, *ikhtilat* (Wagemakers et al., 2012). One evident consequence of this aspect of social structure is that there is relatively little contact between men and women. This fact is important from the standpoint of SIT. There is a body of older research on the relationship between intergroup contact and conflict which demonstrates that, when members of different groups have few opportunities to interact, they engage in much more negative stereotyping and are more hostile towards the unfamiliar group (Hogg & Hains, 1996). In SIT terms, this effect stems from apprehension and lack of information about the outgroup, which tend to enhance outgroup derogation (Hogg, 2006). Thus, it appears likely that Saudi women may be prone to facing especially extreme

stereotyping by men because women constitute a low-contact outgroup for men.

In addition to persistent gender segregation, Saudi society sends strong messages with regard to hierarchical gender relations. Gender norms and laws place women in a subservient and low status role in relation to men (Al-Rasheed, 2013; Wagemakers et al., 2012). This state of affairs is likely to be harmful to women in at least two ways, according to the SIT framework. First, the power distance between men and women, coupled with the chronically salient and essentialized nature of the gender distinction, could promote a heightened sense of difference between the two gender groups. That is, by promulgating a sense that men and women have very different roles and attributes, these factors intensify the perception that gender is an identity that is highly definitive for individual disposition and behavior (Crompton & Lyonette, 2005). Second, low status groups tend to be more strongly stereotyped than high status groups (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Latrofa, Vaes, Cadinu, & Carnaghi, 2010). Combined with the fact that stereotypes of Saudi women are more negative in character than those associated with Saudi men, the implication is that women are likely to suffer from stereotypes that are both more negative and more intense than their male counterparts. In relation to the segregation of women in Saudi society, it is likely that women are more negatively stereotyped as subordinate to men and potentially also as incompetent.

Altogether, the lack of interaction between men and women would then appear likely to be detrimental to how women are perceived and treated by men. Men, by contrast, are likely to be viewed ambivalently by women.

They are likely to be derogated to a certain extent as a result of outgroup processes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, perception of high status groups by lower status groups is also affected by internalization of hierarchical relations (Jost & Burgess, 2000). Thus, Saudi women are likely to have a number of positive perceptions of Saudi men coexisting with some negative outgroup perceptions. SIT, as classically defined, provides less guidance in the realm of self-perception when it comes to this type of intergroup comparison. However, self-categorization theory may be more useful in this regard, providing some expectations about identity dynamics among Saudi men and women. In particular, it may be useful in understanding how Saudi women view their own gender and the circumstances in which they may come to internalize negative societal stereotypes about women.

**Self-categorization theory.** Self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987) extends the SIT framework from interpersonal relations to self-perception. The self can be conceptualized as encompassing a number of overlapping identities. Some of these are personal or unique to the individual, while others are derived from social identity categories. Different identities may be more central to defining the self than others, depending on factors such as chronic availability, as well as on elements of the social environment and the social situation (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996).

The process by which elements of the identity are isolated, combined, and perceived in the context of the situation is known as construal. Self-construal refers to this process as applied to the self. One of the key cognitive processes involved in the SCT understanding of identity dynamics is that of personalization versus depersonalization (Hogg, 1993). When an individual is

depersonalized, they are perceived primarily in relation to their membership in a certain social identity category. Depersonalization of another individual leads to stereotyping and evaluation in reference to the prototypical or normatively ideal member of that category (Hogg, 1993). For example, field studies demonstrate that depersonalization in the context of sports due to an entrenched rivalry between two teams contributes to negative perceptions and stereotyping against outgroup members and to increased cohesion and liking of ingroup members, particularly those who are perceived to best exemplify the norms of the group (Hogg & Hains, 1996). For a more central and chronically salient element of the self, such as gender, depersonalization and stereotyping effects are likely to be even more important and pervasive.

This process applies equally to the self. The context can provide cues that lead to greater or lesser extents of self-depersonalization. Construing the self in a depersonalized fashion contributes to self-stereotyping or the perception of the self in terms of attributes associated with the active social category (Hogg & Hains, 1996). Depersonalization contributes to cohesion within the group in question, motivation to pursue group goals, and to derogation of relevant outgroups (Hogg & Hains, 1996). Self-stereotyping thus creates a situation in which individuals pattern their behavior on prescriptive group norms to a greater extent than on personal goals. Self-stereotyping also entails the ascription of normative group characteristics to the self. Particularly in the context of negative stereotyping about the group with which one identifies, self-stigma often occurs. This is defined as the “internalization of the negative stereotypes, attitudes, and perceptions held of individuals who are members of socially devalued group” (Quinn, Williams,

& Weisz, 2015, p. 104). Individuals who experience self-stigma believe that the negative stereotypes about their group are true about them specifically, and they thus anticipate being mistreated or devalued socially (Quinn et al., 2015). This type of self-stigma can have serious negative consequences on individuals' mental and physical health as well as their social status (Major & O'Brien, 2005).

Saudi women are likely to experience a remarkably high degree of self-stigma and self-stereotyping for a number of reasons. First, gender is a social category that is extremely low in what is known in SCT terms as permeability (Ellemers et al., 1997). Permeability refers to the perceived potential for changing one's group membership. Experimental studies show that people perceive members of low permeability groups as more homogeneous, i.e., that each individual member of the low-permeability group is more similar to the normative or prototypical member of the group (Schneider, 2005). Hence, low-permeability groups are more likely to be stereotyped than high-permeability groups because their members are perceived to be more similar to one another and to hew more closely to group norms. Gender is relatively impermeable in an absolute sense because it is exceptionally difficult to move from one gender group to another. Barriers to changing gender are very high in even the most supportive cultural contexts (Sanchez, Sanchez, & Danoff, 2009). The Saudi context makes these barriers higher still, as sex reassignment surgery is legal only for individuals with medically ambiguous genitalia (*Saudi Arabia*, 2012). Saudi women would thus have negligible opportunities to adopt a male gender identity, even for those who would be interested in making such a change.

Equally, gender is a highly impermeable social category in the sense of being difficult to de-emphasize as part of the self. Gender defines the parameters of everyday life to an unusual extent in Saudi Arabia due to policies segregating public places by gender and prohibiting women from traveling on their own or in female-only groups. These policies thus make it difficult to reduce salience for the self. In another context, it might be possible to mitigate some of the effects of self-stereotyping by focusing on elements of social identity other than gender, but the state of gender relations in Saudi Arabia makes this strategy for identity management very difficult to pursue.

Second, gender groups are not only highly segregated in Saudi Arabia, but they are also stratified dramatically in terms of status (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Women's status as a group is almost universally construed as lower than men's, regardless of the national or cultural context (Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir, & Stroebe, 2009). Women face a variety of institutional markers of lower status, such as lower pay and discrimination in educational and occupational settings. Traditional family ideology, while somewhat less negative in terms of direct stereotyping, places women in a subservient position within a patriarchal framework (Kimmel, 2000). As a result, female identity is associated with lower group status throughout the world. The position of Saudi women is even more stigmatized than that of women in other parts of the world in general. Saudi society is more explicit in its treatment of women as subservient to men—a tendency which is reinforced by the overall pattern of gender relations. Men's institutions tend to be prioritized over women's institutions and men hold positions of formal and informal authority over women in many aspects of life. Low status groups have been found to

engage in more self-stereotyping, particularly negative self-stereotyping, in comparison to members of high status groups (Ellemers et al., 1997; Latrofa et al., 2010). As a consequence, Saudi women would be particularly likely to engage in self-stereotyping, especially in a negative manner.

Finally, the chronic accessibility of gender stereotypes is likely to make Saudi women especially prone to self-stereotyping. Women's perceived gender roles in Saudi society are in a number of ways derived from a pervasive image of women as at the same time morally pure but in constant danger of corruption by men (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Consequently, women are paradoxically stereotyped both as being the natural moral guardians of society and as being sources of the constant risk of shame for their families (and particularly for the men in their families). Given these circumstances, it is likely that Saudi women internalize the stereotype of being moral guardians given that it is a role that they are constantly relegated to playing in Saudi society. Moreover, other stereotypes that align most closely with their actual lived experiences, including their social isolation and their subordinate position to men, are also more likely to be internalized by Saudi women, as hypothesized in this study.

#### **Distinguishing between descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes.**

As discussed previously, there are two distinct but overlapping types of stereotypes: descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptive stereotypes reference perceived characteristics ascribed to a person due to their membership in a certain group, whereas prescriptive stereotypes reference characteristics that an individual *should* have based on one's own moral compass. It is important to note that, although the content of prescriptive and descriptive stereotypes



clearly overlaps, the ways in “which the descriptive and prescriptive components of gender stereotypes theoretically lead to discrimination are different” (Burgess & Borgida, 1999, p. 666). For example, a descriptive stereotype might result in one believing that men have stronger leadership abilities than women as a result of the conception that women have a biologically based role as caregivers rather than leaders. Conversely, the stereotype that women *should* be subordinate to men, although potentially derived from some of the same kinds of beliefs about men and women, would be prescriptive—the stereotype suggests how women *ought to* behave rather than how they *tend to* behave.

The distinction between descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes is especially important because of its implications for how individuals who defy stereotypes about their groups are perceived (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Descriptive stereotypes are not morally weighted, and so individual violations of the stereotype can be accommodated without necessarily challenging the belief that the stereotype holds for members of the group in general. For example, an individual might vote for a particular female political leader while still holding the descriptive stereotype that women, in general, are poor leaders; this particular female leader merely acts as an exception to that rule. By contrast, someone holding the prescriptive stereotype that women ought to be subordinate to men would likely hold a hostile view towards an individual woman running for public office, possibly perceiving her deviance from the stereotype as something for which she should be punished. In exploring the proposed stereotypes regarding women in Saudi society, there is often an intersection between descriptive and prescriptive perceptions of women,

although the prescriptive stereotypes are likely to be more powerful given that they embody the moral values of dominant Saudi society as a whole. These different stereotype forms are explored in relation to the different hypotheses below.

### **Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study was to determine the gender stereotypes affecting Saudi women. The first step in this process was to identify the contents of those stereotypes. The second step was to map gender differences in the pattern of stereotyping against women. That is, it is important to understand not only how men view women, but it is perhaps even more instructive to understand self-stereotyping among Saudi women and how those stereotypes differ from the perceptions of men. Outgroup stereotypes regarding women are important to understand in terms of the struggles faced by women in a highly segregated and male-dominated society. Ingroup stereotypes, or the self-stereotypes women apply to themselves, are important in anticipating how women may participate in maintaining their social status or attempting to change it in the years to come. It is also important to determine whether the stereotypes are descriptive or prescriptive, as this will determine the potential consequences of said stereotypes.

With respect to the first goal, based on previously collected survey data regarding attitudes towards women's gender roles and stereotypes among college students in Saudi Arabia, five gender stereotypes regarding Saudi women's roles in different domains were proposed. These key gender stereotype domains were identified using factor analysis. The proposed domains included women being sources shameful, women being isolated,

women being less competent, women being moral guardians, and women being subordinate to men. These hypotheses were cast in the framework of SRT (Eagly et al., 2000), as described in the corresponding section above. By observing women acting out these roles, both men and women are likely to come to see these roles as facts that are essential to women's nature and to thus stereotype them accordingly. As such, these stereotypes can largely be considered *descriptive* since they are regarded as being typical for the entire group of Saudi women. Group comparisons between men and women were conducted to assess gender differences in the extent of stereotyping in each domain.

**Hypothesis 1:** There are five major stereotype categories associated with Saudi women.

**Hypothesis 1A: *Women are source of shame.*** Women are stereotyped as being sources of potential shame for their families. Women bear the burden of upholding traditional sexual morality when they find themselves in mixed-gender settings. Saudi culture, in common with other honor-based cultures worldwide, places a great deal of emphasis on avoiding the shame that is associated with a woman's violation of sexual morality and sees this shame as being transferred to the family as a whole (Al-Rasheed, 2013). This perception can be regarded as descriptive since it is viewed as being characteristic of the group as an entirety. This hypothesis is clearly tied to the social order, which has basically legalized such shaming of women via policies like *khilwa*. Consequently, it was hypothesized that it was likely that one important stereotype Saudi women face is that of serving as a constant risk of familial shame.

***Hypothesis 1B: Women are socially isolated.*** Women are stereotyped as living isolated lives with a scarcity of social connections outside of their families. The pervasive practice of gender segregation, coupled with legal prohibitions preventing women from traveling on their own, set up barriers to the formation of friendships and acquaintanceships with other women and, especially, with unrelated men, outside of the family. Living with this social reality, it is likely that Saudi women have come to be seen as isolated and cut off from the social world, which is a prescriptive stereotype and may be overgeneralized as a result of the Saudi social system.

***Hypothesis 1C: Women are less competent.*** Women are stereotyped as being less competent than men. This is a descriptive stereotype women have long faced throughout the world, especially in educational, political, and occupational settings (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). As such, this is a more essential, trait-based stereotype that is not directly tied to the social order. Saudi law and custom may well serve to intensify this view, however. Women are prevented from holding many jobs, from performing tasks like driving, and from participating in civil society on an equal footing with men.

***Hypothesis 1D: Women are moral guardians.*** Women are stereotyped as being guardians of morality. This stereotype is conceptually linked with the shame-related stereotype proposed above (Hypothesis 1A). Because women run the risk of bringing shame upon their families, there is a special emphasis on safeguarding one's own moral behavior in situations where there might be a risk of perceived impropriety with an unrelated man (Wagemakers et al., 2012). In addition to being stereotyped in this particular case, the perception may be generalized into a stereotype that women should act as the guardians

of morality of all types. This is a powerful prescriptive stereotype that dictates the specific role a woman is expected to play based on Saudi society's moral belief system.

***Hypothesis 1E: Women are submissive.*** Women are stereotyped as subservient. Because of the patriarchal nature of Saudi society and culture and because of laws and customs that keep women out of positions of power and authority, Saudi women tend to be seen as subordinate to men. Again, this stereotype is tied to the unique Saudi social system. As SRT predicts, observing women repeatedly performing these roles is likely to lead to the view that such roles are the natural state for women, thus leading to this primarily prescriptive stereotype.

**Hypothesis 2:** Two additional hypotheses were proposed, informed by the SIT/SCT theoretical framework. Specifically, it was anticipated that men and women would differ in the extent of their stereotyping of women on some of the points outlined above, but not on others.

***Hypothesis 2A:*** It was expected that there would be a multivariate effect of gender on stereotype endorsement such that men and women would differ in their overall endorsement of female stereotypes.

***Hypothesis 2B: Gender differences in stereotype endorsement.*** It was expected that Saudi men stereotype Saudi women as more shameful (see Hypothesis 1A) and less competent (see Hypothesis 1C) than women self-stereotype. Women are motivated to downplay negative stereotypes overall. They also have access to information about their own experiences and those of other women that men do not and that serve to minimize negative views of their own levels of shamefulness and competence.

***Hypothesis 2C: Gender similarities in stereotype endorsement.*** It was expected that men and women stereotype women equally as socially isolated (see Hypothesis 1B), obligated to be moral (see Hypothesis 1D), and as subservient (see Hypothesis 1E). These stereotypes are more likely to be based on accurate behavioral observations of women's position in society and, hence, are less likely to be resisted by women.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

This research study employed a cross-sectional, between-groups, quantitative design to investigate the differences in endorsement of stereotypes about Saudi women between Saudi men and women. Data on endorsement of stereotypes were collected via survey questionnaire, the Saudi Women Stereotypes Scale (SWSS) in October 2014. The SWSS was a new scale whose validity and reliability were tested as part of this study.

### **Participants and Procedures**

Participants for this study were drawn from an existing dataset on gender beliefs in Saudi Arabia. A convenience sample was drawn from a population of approximately 841 undergraduate students from various colleges at a large university located in Saudi Arabia (49.9% men and 50.1% women). The age range of study participants was between 18 and 27 years ( $M = 20.98$ ,  $SD = 1.78$  years). Participants' class ranks included 26.8% freshmen, 21.9% sophomores, 27.7% juniors, and 20.1% seniors. Thus, the participant selection criteria included an approximately equal number of men and women between the ages of 18 and 27 who were approximately equally distributed at different levels of university completion. Convenience sampling was selected since

such nonprobability sampling methods provide the pragmatic research benefits of sample accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Although a convenience sample usually limits the generalizability of findings to the wider population, stereotypes are generally shared amongst a population such that the views of student participants in different age groups are likely to be relatively representative.

An a priori power analysis was conducted to determine an appropriate sample size using the G\*Power 3.1.2 software, which covers a wide range of study designs and reflects the research design parameters put forward by Cohen (1988). For a between-groups analysis of the stereotype beliefs of men and women, the recommended sample size was a minimum of 176 participants (88 men and 88 women) to provide a power of .95 and a medium effect size of  $d = .5$ . Approximately 820 participants were included given the researcher's access to a large student population in order to make the study more robust.

The data collection sessions were held in university classrooms and lasted thirty minutes. The nature of the study was first described to participants and then they were invited to sign an informed consent form if they wished to take part in the study. Participation in the study was completely voluntary such that students could freely decline to take part in the study without any penalty. Participants who signed the informed consent were then provided with a survey questionnaire to measure their endorsement of stereotypes about Saudi women. Completion of the questionnaire took between 15 to 20 minutes. After all of the participants in a classroom completed the questionnaire, they were permitted to raise and discuss any follow-up questions or issues about the nature and purpose of the study.

## Measures

The materials for this study included a demographic questionnaire and a questionnaire to measure each participant's endorsement of stereotypes about Saudi women: The Saudi Women Stereotypes Scale (SWSS). Demographic data used in this study included participants' gender, age, marital status, and university rank.

The Saudi Women Stereotype Scale (SWSS) was a new scale developed by the researcher for the purpose of this study that consisted of 22 items and was designed to tap into the face validity of five stereotype domains: competence, shame, morality, isolation, and submissiveness. Participants were asked to respond to each item indicating their level of agreement with the statement on a 7-point scale where 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 7 = *Strongly Agree*. The full list of items on the original SWSS is attached as Appendix A. The changes made to the scale based on the results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) are discussed in the following section.

The *competence* subscale reflects the idea that women are stereotyped as being less competent than men and generally have lower ability. The 5-item subscale includes statements such as *I think Saudi women have lower abilities than men* and *In general, Saudi women do not use logical thinking*. Two of the items were reverse worded and coded, such as *Saudi women are very resourceful*.

The *shame* subscale tapped into the perception that women are stereotyped as being sources of potential shame for their families, a perception which is tied to the Saudi social system. The 3-item scale includes the



statements *In Saudi society, a woman is always considered a man's shame* and one reverse worded and coded item, *Saudi women are the pride of Saudi men*.

The *morality* subscale is defined by its emphasis on the belief that women are stereotyped as being guardians of morality, which is once again a function of the Saudi social order. The 6-item subscale includes items such as *Maintaining morality is the most important thing to a Saudi woman*.

The *isolation* subscale reflects the perception that women are stereotyped as living isolated lives with a scarcity of social connections outside of their families as a result of the constraints of the Saudi social system. The 4-item scale has items like *Social habits and traditions make Saudi women isolated* and *I think that Saudi culture restricts women in very limiting ways*.

The final subscale, the *submissiveness* subscale, emphasizes the belief that women are stereotyped as being generally subordinate and lower in status, especially with regard to their relationship to men. This perception is more universal and is not specifically tied to Saudi societal standards. The 4 items on the scale include statements such as *In Saudi society, a woman should always be a man's subordinate* and *I believe that most women need someone to control their behaviors*.

The SWSS was translated from English into Arabic to reflect the first language of the Saudi participants. Moreover, an independent person with bilingual skills in English and Arabic and no knowledge about the nature of the study performed a back-translation of the Arabic version of the scale to ensure that the SWSS is accurate and clearly understood. A small sample of

participants ( $N = 10$ ) engaged in a pilot study of the questionnaire to ensure that the materials were clear and easily comprehended.

### **Data Analysis**

Data was prepared for analysis by first examining each case for a range of potential participant response biases (Peer & Gamliel, 2011), such as an acquiescence bias or extreme responding wherein a participant has completed all the survey items with the same response. No such response biases were discovered in the data.

From the raw data, a mean (average) score was computed for each subscale, and each subscale was examined for skewness or kurtosis to ensure that they met the assumption of normality, which is required to perform inferential statistics (Fink, 2009). This examination entailed dividing the skewness and kurtosis statistics for each variable by their standard errors to ensure that all values met the acceptable critical value ( $Z = 3.29, p < .001$ ). Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha reliability test was run to assess the internal consistency of each subscale for the study sample (Thurber & Kishi, 2014).

Several analytical techniques were employed to determine whether the proposed hypotheses exist, and if so, the number of stereotypes that Saudi men and women identify. First, items on the SWSS were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation (Gorsuch, 1983), to determine the optimum number of variables (stereotype dimensions). EFA was employed to determine if the five stereotype dimensions were distinct from each other wherein items were included in a factor if it had a factor score above .5 and only loading on one dominant dimension. If an item loaded across more than one dimension, it was deleted if its factor score was below .5. Items that

loaded greater than .5 on more than one factor were assigned to the factor that shared its highest correlation. If this was not possible to determine, it was dropped. To confirm that both men and women perceived the stereotypes similarly, separate EFA were conducted for men and women participants to compare factor structures. Inconsistencies were resolved in a way that ensured that final stereotype scales reflect what is common between the male and female factor results. The final stereotype factors were then analyzed with Pearson's  $r$  correlation and scale reliability analysis (Chronbach's alpha) to test their interrelationship between each other.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was employed to test hypotheses 2A, 2B, and 2C with gender as the independent variable and stereotype endorsement as the dependent variables. Prior to analysis, the assumptions for conducting MANOVA were tested to ensure multivariate normality and homogeneity of covariance matrices. Then MANOVA results were employed to test Hypothesis 2A on the overall differences in stereotype endorsement between Saudi men and women. Moreover, MANOVA with follow-up independent t-tests was used to test the hypothesis that men endorse stereotypes of women as more shameful and less competent compared to women's self-stereotypes (Hypothesis 2B). Similarly, the hypothesis that men and women equally endorse the stereotypes that women are isolated, obligated to be moral, and submissive (Hypothesis 2C) was tested with MANOVA and a comparison of mean scores on these dimensions between men and women was performed via an independent samples t-test.

## Results

**Hypothesis 1** predicted that there are five major stereotype domains associated with Saudi women in Saudi Society: Saudi women are less competent; sources of shame; moral; isolated; and submissive. To test this, the 22-item Saudi Women Stereotypes Scale (SWSS) was analyzed by using Principal Components Factor Analysis (PCFA) with varimax rotation. First, I ran a separate PCFA analysis to find out if the data have the same factor structure in the two different gender groups (males, and females). Scree plot was used to determine the number of factors that should be retained. After using the PCFA to validate the questionnaire and determine the underlying factor structure for both genders, Cronbach's alpha was computed for items under each factor to determine the reliability of the constructs. Table 1 presents the factor loadings of the 22 items for male participants. According to Field (2013), items with an absolute value of the factor loading greater than 0.5 were retained. There were no cross-loadings.

The following two items did not load onto any factors with 0.5 or above: "Maintaining morality is the most important thing to the Saudi woman", and "In the Saudi society, woman should always be a man's subordinate." The results of Cronbach's alpha analysis for males are presented in Table 2. As all alpha values are greater than 0.5, I concluded that the reliability of the constructs for males is acceptable.

Table 1

*Rotated Component Matrix (Male)*

Item	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Saudi women are the best wives.	0.73				

Saudi women are the best women in the world.	0.72	
Saudi women are the best mothers.	0.70	
Saudi women are patient.	0.68	
Saudi women are willing to make sacrifices for their family.	0.61	
Saudi women are the pride of Saudi men.	0.51	
Maintaining morality is the most important thing to Saudi woman.*	0.31	
Social habits and traditions make Saudi women isolated.	0.84	
I think that culture of the Saudi society restricts women in very limiting ways.	0.77	
Saudi women cannot freely express themselves in the society	0.72	
Saudi women are helpless because men hold the social power.	0.62	
When women have too much freedom, it spoils their manners.	0.68	
Imposing strict control on women is for their protection.	0.67	
A Woman's fault affects all her family.	0.65	
I believe that most women need someone to control their behaviors.	0.64	
In Saudi society, woman should always be a man's subordinate.*		
I think Saudi women have lower ability than men.	0.77	
In general, I think that Saudi women are less intelligent than men in most situations.	0.65	
Generally, I think Saudi women don't work as hard as men.	0.61	
In general, Saudi women do not use logical thinking.	0.56	
In Saudi society, a woman is always considered a man's shame.	0.69	
In Saudi society, "girls are worries from their birth to their death".	0.64	

Note: \* indicates items that did not load onto any factors with 0.50 or above

Table 2

*Results of Cronbach's alpha analysis (male)*

Factor	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Saudi women are virtuous	6	0.745

Saudi women are isolated	4	0.766
Saudi women are submissive	4	0.628
Saudi women are less competent	4	0.622
Saudi women are sources of shame	2	0.568

Table 3 presents the factor loadings of the 22 items for female participants. According to Field (2013), items with an absolute value of the factor loading greater than 0.5 were retained. A cross-loading was observed for one item “In general, women do not use logical thinking” with a factor loading of 0.42 for Factor 3 and 0.47 for Factor 4. It was eventually assigned to Factor 4 due to the larger factor loading. The preliminary factors and the associated items for female participants are presented in Table 3. Note that the factor loading of “Maintaining morality is the most important thing to Saudi woman” in Factor 5 was negative. Based on the suggestion of Field (2013), this item was reverse scored before computing Cronbach’s alpha.

The preliminary results of Cronbach’s alpha analysis for females are presented in Table 4. The alpha values for the first 4 factors were greater than 0.5. However, the Cronbach’s alpha = 0.404, is below the cut-off value 0.5; Thus, “Maintaining morality is the most important thing to Saudi woman” was removed from Factor 5 and the Cronbach’s alpha analysis was conducted again. The results are presented in Table 5. As all alpha values are greater than 0.5, we concluded that the reliability of the constructs for females is acceptable.

Table 3

*Rotated Component Matrix (Female)*

Item	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Saudi women are the best mothers.	0.81				
Saudi women are the best wives.	0.79				
Saudi women are the best women in the world.	0.73				
Saudi women are willing to make sacrifices for their family.	0.63				
Saudi women are patient.	0.60				
Saudi women are the pride of Saudi men.	0.50				
Social habits and traditions make Saudi women isolated.		0.79			
Saudi women cannot freely express themselves in Saudi society		0.72			
I think that culture of the Saudi society restricts women in very limiting ways.		0.62			
Saudi women are helpless because men hold the social power.		0.62			
Imposing strict control on women is for their protection.			0.69		
When women have too much freedom, it spoils their manners.			0.67		
I believe that most women need someone to control their behaviors.			0.60		
A Woman's fault affects all her family.			0.59		
In Saudi society, woman should always be a man's subordinate.			0.51		
In general, I think that Saudi women are less intelligent than men in most situations.*					
Generally, I think Saudi women don't work as hard as men.				0.72	
I think Saudi women have lower ability than men.				0.66	
In general, Saudi women do not use logical thinking.				0.42	
In Saudi society, a woman is always considered a man's shame.					0.60
In Saudi society, "girls are worries from their birth to their death".					0.60
Maintaining morality is the most important thing to Saudi woman.					-
					0.58

Note: \* indicates items that did not load onto any factors with 0.50 or above.

Table 4

*Preliminary results of Cronbach's alpha analysis (female)*

Factor	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
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Saudi women are virtuous	6	0.776
Saudi women are isolated	4	0.697
Saudi women are submissive	5	0.636
Saudi women are less competent	3	0.568
Saudi women are sources of shame	3	0.404

Table 5

*Final results of Cronbach's alpha analysis (female)*

Factor	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Saudi women are virtuous	6	0.776
Saudi women are isolated	4	0.697
Saudi women are submissive	5	0.636
Saudi women are less competent	3	0.568
Saudi women are sources of shame	2	0.584

### **Comparisons between male and female results**

It was predicted that there would be four negative domains and one positive domain associated with Saudi women in Saudi Society. The results show the same expectations for both males and females in term of negative domains, but the expected positive domain (Saudi women are moral) did not get enough support. For the items in the scale (SWSS) that expected to be associated with moral concept in Saudi society, all of them emerged as one factor except one item that had the word "moral" in it "Maintaining morality is the most important thing to the Saudi woman". Because the only item that directly and specifically had the word "moral" did not load onto any factors



with 0.5 or above, I concluded that the results indicated that all the others positive items that loaded together under one factor are suitable to refer to another positive domain (instead of moral) that I called “Saudi women are virtuous” for both genders. The factors “Saudi women are virtuous”, “Saudi women are isolated”, and “Saudi women are sources shame” consist of the same items for both genders. However, the item “In Saudi society, woman should always be a man’s subordinate” was not included in any factors for males, but was included in the third factor “Saudi women are submissive” for females. The item “In general, I think that Saudi women are less intelligent than men in most situations” was not included in any factors for females, but was included in the fourth factor “Saudi women are less competent” for males. Because of the communality values of these items were above 0.5 which refer that each item shared some variance with other items, and based on the conceptual and theoretical frame, and in the light of these preliminary observations, I concluded to keep both items in the final scale as they were important items. Also, I noted that the Cronbach’s alpha would improve if the item “Saudi women are the pride of Saudi men” was deleted from the virtuous domain. In addition, the item did not load with 0.50 or above when I ran the overall Principal Components Factor Analysis (PCFA) for all cases. Therefore, I removed “Saudi women are the pride of Saudi men” from the final version of SWSS.

Thus, the final version of the SWSS domains and the associated items for each domain is attached as Appendix B.

Based on the results of the factor analysis in Hypothesis 1 that showed overall support for the expectation of Saudi women stereotypes, and the

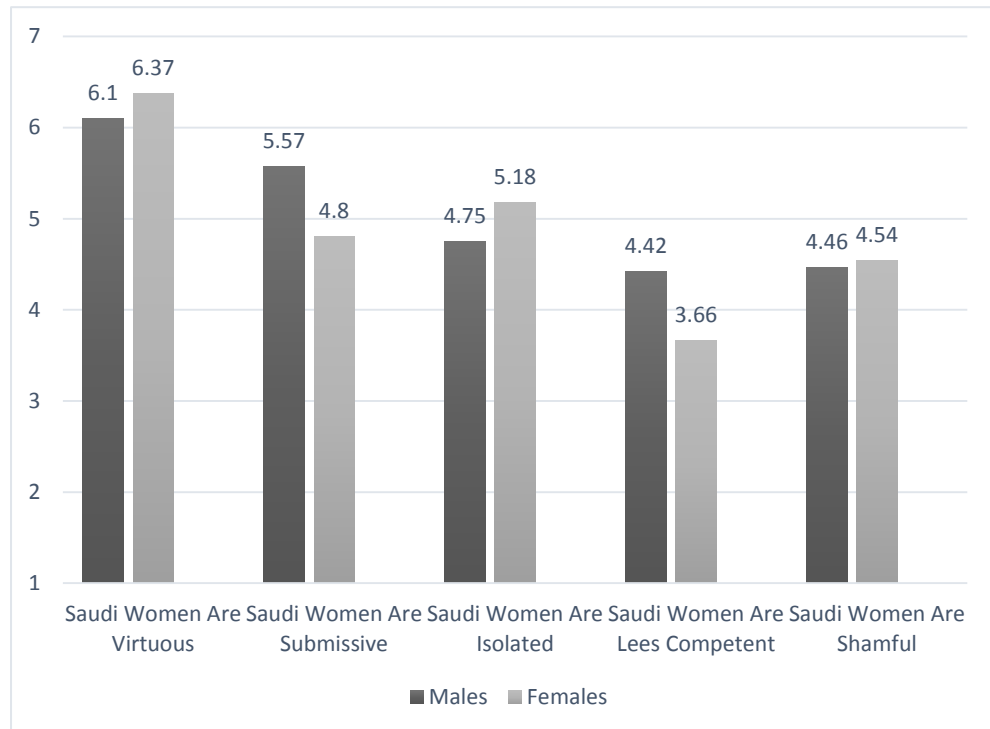
overall subscale reliabilities were within acceptable limits, an average score on each subscale of the SWSS was computed.

**In Hypothesis 2A**, I predicted there would be an effect of gender on stereotype endorsement (there are differences between men and women in their overall endorsement of Saudi women stereotypes). I ran Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), and the result indicated that there was a significant multivariate effect in overall endorsements of Saudi women stereotypes between males and females,  $F(5, 835) = 39.89, p < .001$ . Figure 1 shows the bar chart of mean score on each variable as a function of participant gender. In particular, males had statistically significantly stronger overall endorsements of Saudi women stereotypes than females ( $M = 5.06, SD = 0.73$  for males;  $M = 4.91, SD = 0.77$  for females).

**In Hypothesis 2B**, I predicted that the Saudi males sample would stereotype Saudi women as more shameful, and less competent than how Saudi women self-stereotype. I ran the univariate analysis of between-subjects effects, and the results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores of Domain 4 (Saudi women are less competent) between males and females,  $F(1, 839) = 74.13, p < .001$ . In particular, males had statistically significantly stronger endorsements of stereotypes that women are less competent ( $M = 4.42, SD = 1.23$  for males;  $M = 3.66, SD = 1.33$  for females). There was no statistically significant difference in mean scores of Domain 5 (Saudi women are sources shame) between males and females,  $F = 0.40, p = .53$ . Thus, I concluded that males and females were similar in their endorsements of the stereotype that women regarded as sources of shame. There was no support for the predication that men would show comparatively

stronger endorsement of the stereotype that Saudi women are sources of shame than would women. However, males and females were different in their endorsements of the stereotype that women are less competent. Therefore, there was partial support for hypothesis 2B.

**In Hypothesis 2C**, it was predicted that men and women stereotype Saudi women equally as socially isolated, virtuous (previously “moral”), and as submissive. To test this, I used the univariate analysis of between-subjects effects. Contrary to hypothesis 2C, the results revealed significant differences between males and females that Saudi women are more virtuous, isolated and submissive. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences in mean scores of Domain 1 (Saudi women are virtuous) between males and females  $F(1, 839) = 21.12, p < .001$ ; Domain 2 (Saudi women are isolated),  $F(1, 839) = 22.34, p < .001$ ; and Domain 3 (Saudi women are submissive)  $F(1, 839) = 94.30, p < .001$ . In particular, females had statistically significantly stronger endorsements of the stereotype that Saudi women are virtuous ( $M = 6.10, SD = 0.90$  for males;  $M = 6.37, SD = 0.83$  for females) and isolated ( $M = 4.75, SD = 1.35$  for males;  $M = 5.18, SD = 1.27$  for females) than males. However, males had statistically significantly stronger endorsements of the stereotype that Saudi women are submissive ( $M = 5.57, SD = 1.01$  for males;  $M = 4.80, SD = 1.29$  for females) than females. Thus, I concluded that males and females were different in their endorsements of the stereotypes that Saudi women are isolated, virtuous, and submissive. Therefore, there was no support for hypothesis 2C.



*Figure 1.* Mean score on each SWSS subscale as a function of gender.

### Discussion

The goal of this study was to investigate the gender stereotypes influencing Saudi women by recognizing the content of those stereotypes and the gender differences in the pattern of stereotyping against women. Several factors in Saudi Arabia's history—including its pastoral herding economy, tendency toward frequent warfare, and polygamous family structure (Wagemakers et al., 2012)—link Saudi society with a tendency to encourage the formation of restrictive gender stereotypes that may be particularly harmful to women (Alesina et al., 2013; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research regarding gender stereotypes within Saudi Arabia and consequently there is limited data available about the specific stereotypes held by Saudi men and women about Saudi women. By attempting to explore the stereotypes that are associated with Saudi women in

Saudi society, I hypothesized that the participants would stereotype the Saudi women as sources of shame, isolated, less competent, virtuous, and submissive. Along with these predictions, I hypothesized that men and women differ in their overall endorsement of female stereotypes. I predicted that men would show stronger endorsement of the stereotype that Saudi women are sources of shame, and less competent, while men and women would stereotype women equally as socially isolated, virtuous, and submissive. To test that, the study used a cross-sectional, between-groups, quantitative design.

The results of this study provide partial support for the hypothesis (H1A to H1E) that regarding the apriori stereotype categories associated with Saudi women. The results did not support the prediction that called Saudi women are moral guardians (H1D). However, this was because the only item in the scale (SWSS) that refers directly to the morality “Maintaining morality is the most important thing to the Saudi woman” did not load onto any factors with 0.5 or above. Therefore, the others positive items that loaded together under one factor has been called with new name “Saudi women are virtuous”. Thus, the common stereotype domains of Saudi women among men and women were: virtuous, isolated, submissive, sources of shame, and less competent. These results are the first evidence of the stereotypes that are used to characterize Saudi women in Saudi society.

Alongside the confirmation of the factor structures relating to Saudi women amongst participants in this study, the discoveries likewise demonstrated some essential contrasts amongst men and women in their relative support for certain stereotypes consistent with Hypothesis 2A. Whereas men showed stronger endorsement of the stereotype that Saudi

women have less ability (consistent partly with Hypothesis 2B) and are submissive, women reported stronger support for the stereotype that women are virtuous and isolated (not consistent with Hypothesis 2C).

The findings provided evidence that Saudi men and women both endorse the stereotype that Saudi women are sources of shame. Both genders scored just above the midpoint (four). Saudi culture, in common with other honor-based cultures worldwide, places a great deal of emphasis on avoiding the shame that is associated with a woman's violation of sexual morality wherein the shame associated with any transgression is transferred to the family as a whole (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Therefore, the stereotype in such a social formation is that a Saudi woman is the guardian of honor and reputation in a societal culture that is based on the logic of shame and honor. In a society that holds women up as ethical, the outcomes of dishonorable conduct are huge. This is consistent with the ramifications of *khilwa* where women are a potential wellspring of disgrace in Saudi society.

In regard to Saudi women being socially isolated, both genders (Saudi men and women) endorsed the stereotype that Saudi women are isolated. Both sexes scored above the scale midpoint; however, women were significantly more likely to endorse the isolation of Saudi women. This finding is consistent with the pervasive practice of gender segregation in Saudi society and exclusion of women from public life (Hamdan, 2005; Le Renard, 2008), and thus constitutes a descriptive stereotype. This isolation may help the retention of the stereotypical image of a Saudi woman being virtuous and good, adhering to the social customs and values. It is possible that Saudi women are more likely to make an external (situational) attribution for their

situation (Isolation) in order to protect their self-esteem. In Social role theory (SRT), perceived gender roles and their subsequent stereotypes develop from observations of men's and women's functional roles. All of these restrictions mean that women and girls simply cannot form and pursue even the most basic relationships required for a healthy life. In Saudi society, women are heavily surveilled and their access to public life extremely proscribed. They are all but barred from *any* interaction with men not closely related to them. Even fathers- or brothers-in-law, could be restricted or even barred company. For many Saudi women, friendships with women are subject to extreme control by men who can easily bar such friendships. Saudi women have historically not been allowed to drive, travel unaccompanied even to the store, get an education, or have a job (Wagemakers et al., 2012).

A potential result of *khilwa* is that Saudi women may encounter a high level of social separation, which was conceptually defined as the perception that women are stereotyped as living detached lives with a shortage of social associations outside their families. In fact, preclusions against going out without a male relative make it difficult for Saudi women to have autonomous gatherings with female companions (Wagemakers et al.,2012). However, men do not experience such confinements in Saudi society. They are allowed to frame and keep up bigger systems of social connections. In this light, it is not astonishing then that participants supported the stereotypes that Saudi women are segregated, as social disconnection shields them from the potential of disgrace.

Concerning that Saudi women have less competence, the results demonstrate support of the differences between genders in endorsement that

Saudi women are seen as less competent. Men scored above the midpoint and women were below. This finding was foreseen as attributions in regards to the lower skill of women have been found in the science disciplines among Saudi women medical doctors working in Saudi Arabia (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004). It is, for the most part, found that women are seen as less capable than men, especially in traditional male domains of leadership (E.g., Block & Crawford, 2013). Because the social power in Saudi society is held by men, it is possible, is that the competence stereotype directly reflects the social order in Saudi Arabia (Eagly and Wood, 2011). Although some research has indicated that most youthful Saudis are less conservative gender ideology with regards to their perspectives of women (e.g., Elamin and Omair, 2010), it might that Saudi young men do not have enough evidence to believe that Saudi women are capable and competent since Saudi men have the most opportunities to get jobs and leadership positions, where Saudi women are seen in limited jobs. On the other hand, the recognition by participants (women) of the stereotypical image that women are not less qualified than men, may be due to the opportunities that given by the Saudi government to Saudi women recently in different directions. Also, may be due to Saudi media discourse regarding Saudi women, which is beginning to witness some positive change.

Since the so-called Arab Spring, and coinciding with social media – Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram— Saudi women get access to self-expression of skills. Many Saudi women have been hosted on local Saudi television to reveal their abilities and achievements in many scientific and leadership fields. Also, they were featured on many official occasions together with men. Women were empowered to hold political positions that were only



reserved for men such as being members in the Consultative Assembly and the Municipal Councils of Saudi Arabia. In addition, Saudi girls are enrolled in foreign scholarship programs to study outside Saudi Arabia in North America, Europe, and East Asia, along with Saudi men. Perhaps this educational movement and media discourse had a positive impact among the young women in forming a good image of the efficiency and capabilities of the Saudi women in achievement once they get the opportunities that are made available to young men. Not only are men responsible for the formation of a positive image or the modification of the negative stereotypical image of the capability of Saudi women; this responsibility includes women themselves. Perhaps this is a result of social data regarding the self-image of Saudi women in terms of self-confidence and self-esteem at least with regard to the issue of abilities and skills.

Although the findings of this study did not supported the prediction that Saudi women would be stereotyped as moral gardenias, the stronger stereotype supported by both men and women was that Saudi women are virtuous (Saudi women are moral guardians, previously). Both genders scored well above the midpoint; and women were significantly higher than men. The endorsement made by participants of both genders about the stereotypical image of the Saudi woman being virtuous has roots related to the value and importance of women in Arab culture. In general, a Saudi woman maintains a cohesive family and a good society because she is patient, dedicated, and devoted to her house and husband. It seems that this picture has been instilled in Saudi women's minds and was transferred to the young generation that heard the stories of the loyalty, patience, and sacrifice of their mothers or

grandmothers during the time of poverty in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the knowledge related to the image of Islamic women plays a role in supporting that image of women. For example, it is said in Islamic culture— “Paradise is under the feet of mothers,” and “The best thing in the world is a good wife.” These positive religious concepts may be mentioned in a society that describes itself as Islamic and filled with religious values and concepts. It is possible that the participants acknowledge this positive image of Saudi women as virtuous because non-acknowledgment of this is contrary to a very ancient and cultural heritage and to religious teachings. Not endorsing such religious teachings will signal a recognition of the deviation from the general image of the ideal Islamic society in which a woman is the guardian and example of virtue. This maybe supports the role of legitimizing ideologies, where stereotypes are used to legitimize the social order Reyna (2008). Consistent with this perspective, a woman is the guardian of moral values; she has to maintain the good reputation of her family and stay at home with her children and husband, or be in the service of her father and brothers. It is possible this stereotypical image of women’s home-stay or isolation that women see themselves in Saudi society is based on a functional role in the society (Eagly and Wood, 2011) which contributes to social stability and describe what women should be like in Saudi society.

Also, the findings of this study supported the prediction that Saudi women would be stereotyped as submissive. All Participants (men and women) scored above the midpoint of the scale; however, men were significantly more likely than women to indorse that Saudi women are submissive. Conceptually, the submissive subscale underscores the conviction

that women are seen as being, for the most part, subordinate and lower in status – another clear stereotype, particularly with respect to their relationship to men. In the cultural heritage in Saudi society, the semi-total dependence of a Saudi woman on the presence of a man in her daily life and the man's authorization to make the crucial decisions regarding a woman's life is apparent. This heritage obliges women in Arab societies to hide under the shadow of men. In times of adversity, an Arab proverb says, "A man's shadow is better than a wall's shadow." In this sense, it is not surprising that a woman herself turns into a shadow of, or subordinate to, a man. The findings presented here are consistent with the claim that women's training and education ensure that they are inferior to men, even when they take positions of leadership (Hamdan, 2005). Moreover, research by Sidani (2005) showed that the Middle Eastern region ranked lowest in terms of gender empowerment and for women's participation in senior positions in the workplace. As claimed by Mtango, (2004), customary and religious practices in Saudi Arabia endorsed the views that women are subservient to men both legitimately and socially. In consistent with the stereotype content model (Eckes, 2002; Glick & Fiske, 2001), this finding may suggest that although Saudi women are seen as low in competence, however; Saudi women are seen as warm (virtuous), but low in power.

The endorsement of stereotypes relating to Saudi women that reflected maintenance of the social order in Saudi society is consistent with the assumptions of social role theory (SRT). Social roles are explained in terms of socially defined complexes of normative beliefs, attitudes, and especially behaviors that are attached to particular positions and are closely aligned with

dominant stereotypes about gender (Eagly and Wood, 2011). Social role theory (SRT) expects that the division of work amongst men and women will be transferred into gender attitudes and behaviors (Eagly et al., 2000). In social orders like Saudi Arabia, gender relations and roles are often characterized as patriarchal where the division of labor is relatively strong (Al-Rasheed, 2013); men take the role of protector and provider and women take the role of caretaker and subordinate to men.

These discoveries are predictable with the social identity theory (SIT) a proposition that in order to maintain a positive social identity, higher status groups (males) show in-group bias on traits related with status, whereas lower status groups exhibit ingroup favoritism on attributes which are unrelated to status (e.g., Blanz, Mummendey, Mielke, and Klink, 1998; Mullen, Brown and Smoth, 1992). In this study, one could decipher that Saudi men endorsed the stereotypes that Saudi women have less capacity and thus should play the second fiddle in everything since this is the wellspring of their higher in-group bias. Saudi society is understood as rigidly hierarchical (Wagemakers et al., 2012) where women must occupy lower status positions in comparison with men in all contexts. Meaning that a woman with more experience, knowledge, and skill, would still be expected to defer to a man with less of all three, even on the subjects at which she was clearly better informed and more capable.

When members of groups do not interact, they are more likely to employ negative stereotyping and be more antagonistic (Hogg & Hains, 1996). In Social Identity Theory (SIT) terms, this grows from wariness and ignorance of the outgroup, which tend to enhance derogation (Hogg, 2006). This likely

intensifies the stereotyping Saudi women experience from men, because they are both low-contact and an outgroup.

It seems that this stereotypical image of the Saudi women being submissive and subordinate to men finds approval from men for two reasons. The first reason is that the acknowledgment of this stereotypical image reinforces men's sense of self-worth or high social status and leadership through men's jurisdiction over women in the Saudi society. Women must return to men concerning many issues. Second, by contrast, men's recognition of this stereotypical image of Saudi women (being submissive) to men adds to the daily burdens of men in the Saudi culture that women do not share. For example, men bring the house supplies and take children to their schools and return them, as women are not allowed to drive cars in Saudi Arabia. A man (either a husband, a father, or a son) is responsible for driving the car and taking his female relatives wherever they want to go, such as visiting friends or shopping. This dependency obliges men to schedule their daily agenda in a way to comply with the obligations of women (either a wife, a mother, a sister, or a daughter) and their needs. This dual role of a Saudi man may have instilled in the mentality of young men the stereotypical image of Saudi women being dependent on men and subordinate to them.

Interestingly, it is likely that Saudi women showed comparatively stronger endorsement of the stereotype that Saudi women are virtuous and isolated since these characteristics are unrelated to their ingroup status, but are nonetheless a socially creative way to maintain a positive social identity (Mullen et al.,1992).

Even though the advance of women's equality requires significant shifts in traditional Saudi attitudes about women and segregation, the study's discoveries suggest that Saudi women may utilize imaginative approaches to propel their rights. Consistent with the SIT supposition that individuals are inspired to keep up a positive character, women evaluated themselves higher on stereotypes that were inconsequential to the status differential, rating themselves higher on the virtuous and isolated stereotypes. The suggestion here is that women may discover handy and imaginative approaches to conquer the impacts of their lower status. Indeed, Le Renard (2008) contended that Saudi women are progressively building up their own select spaces and authoritative reaches in education and work to augment their edge of self-governance and add to the institutionalization of a women's identity. Amusingly, it creates the impression that women are using segregation to advance their own independent aims and identity.

Although conceptually and empirically distinct, the stereotypes that Saudi women are virtuous and isolated mirror a comparative social root in Saudi society. Doubtlessly, the Saudi routine of counteracting "khilwa", or the circumstances in which a man and a woman who have no legitimate relation or kinship find themselves in isolation together underlies the aforementioned stereotypes (Wagemakers et al., 2012).

The discoveries of this study suggest that stereotypes about Saudi women are solid social powers that keep up a framework that isolates women and gives men a higher status, yet additionally sees women as paragons of virtue. Saudi women were stereotyped as isolated and subordinate, and a potential source of shame, while in the meantime seen as virtuous. To a large

degree, these dispositions mirror the act of counteracting *khilwa*, and are supported by solid and conventional religious, political, and lawful frameworks. As Hamdan (2005) noted, it is hard to state regardless of whether Saudi society can break from these solid conventions and grasp advancement in the modern time. Although there is majority support for the rights of women in Saudi society (Rheault, 2007), the discoveries of this study recommend that stereotypes of women that reflect and bolster the customary social structure are as yet solid and suggest that there would be little eagerness to change it.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Despite the significant findings of this study, it is critical to recognize a few constraints to their generalizability. Although the sample of participants was quite large, it was a relatively homogeneous group of young students not prone to speak to the perspectives of the more extensive Saudi populace. For sure, past research has demonstrated that more youthful Saudis are more liberal with regards to their perspectives of women (e.g., Elamin and Omair, 2010). A further impediment of the examination was the survey intended to gauge stereotypes about Saudi women. Whereas the virtuous, isolated, submissive, and competence scales demonstrated reasonable reliabilities, the shameful scale had a low reliability with only a 2-items measure. Although these 2 items had good face validity, interpretations about the strength of the shameful scale should be treated with caution. Finally, the discoveries of the study are constrained by their ability to indicate cause-effect connections. It is unrealistic to say how the stereotypes in regards to Saudi women found in this examination may convert into genuine conduct toward Saudi women.

Future research may address these restrictions by including a sample of participants that is more illustrative of the Saudi populace, utilizing stereotype scales with stronger validity and internal consistency, and measuring real practices toward Saudi women as an outcome of stereotype substance. Future research may likewise give a more profound examination concerning the forerunners of stereotypes about women. These are solid social powers that support the status differential and isolation amongst men and women in Saudi society (Hamdan, 2005) and may underlie the stereotypes about Saudi women investigated in this study. Research may examine the reasonable plausibility that components like system justification (Jost and Hunyady, 2005) and social dominance strategies (Sidanius and Pratto, 2001) are identified with the stereotypes about Saudi women. A further potential for future research is exploring the techniques women utilize to beat stereotypes that keep up their unequal status. As explored in the discoveries of this study, women seem to utilize inventive techniques to keep a positive character without anyone else's input, endorsing stereotypes on components random to the gender status differential. Research examining this probability would add to learning about how the self-sufficient personality and the plan of Saudi women is progressed in spite of clear obstructions to their social advance.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study provide some of the first evidence about the type and strength of stereotypes about Saudi women. Both genders (Saudi men and women) significantly endorsed the stereotypes that Saudi women are virtuous, submissive, isolated, and source of shame. Both sexes scored above the scale midpoint in all of these stereotypes; however, women were



significantly more likely to endorse that Saudi women are virtuous, and isolated, while men reported stronger support for the stereotype that Saudi women are submissive, and less competent. In term of the stereotype that Saudi women are regarded as sources of shame, men and women scored above the midpoint of the scale (suggesting endorsement). However, there were no significant differences between genders in endorsement that Saudi women are seen as sources of shame.

Altogether, it can be concluded that the type of stereotypes about Saudi women endorsed by participants in this study reflect the nature of social relations in Saudi society and appear to maintain a system that segregates women and gives men a higher status, yet also regards women as virtuous. Indeed, these stereotypes reflect the practice of preventing *khilwa* and are supported by strong religious, political, and legal systems and traditions. Nevertheless, the findings also imply that women employ creative strategies to maintain a positive gender identity wherein it may be concluded that Saudi women appear to be advancing their autonomous aims and objectives by working with or around the strong social traditions of gender segregation in Saudi society.

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## **Appendix A**

The Original Saudi Women Stereotypes Scale (SWSS) Before Factor Analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	
Generally, I think Saudi women don't work as hard as men.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
I think Saudi women have lower abilities than men.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
In general, Saudi women do not use logical thinking.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
In general, I think that Saudi women are less intelligent than Saudi men in most situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
In Saudi society, a woman is always considered a man's shame.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
In Saudi society "girls are worries from their life to their death".	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Saudi women are the pride of Saudi men.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
When women have too much freedom, it spoils their manners.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
I believe, that most women need someone to control their behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Imposing strict control on women is for their protection.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
A Woman's fault affects all her family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Maintaining morality is the most important thing to a Saudi woman.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Saudi women cannot freely express themselves in Saudi society.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Social habits and traditions make Saudi women isolated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
I think that culture of Saudi society restricts women in very limiting ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The Saudi woman is the best woman in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Saudi women are patient.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Saudi women are willing to make sacrifices for their family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saudi women are the best mothers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saudi women are the best wives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In Saudi Society, woman should always be a man's subordinate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Saudi women are helpless because men hold the social power.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## **Appendix B**

The Final Version of the SWSS Domains and the Associated Items for each  
Domain after Factor Analysis

Domains	Items
Saudi Women are Virtuous	Saudi women are the best wives.
	Saudi women are the best mothers.
	Saudi women are patient.
	The Saudi woman is the best woman in the world.
	Saudi women are willing to make sacrifices for their families.
Saudi Women are Isolated	Social habits and traditions make Saudi women isolated.
	Saudi women cannot freely express themselves in Saudi society.
	I think that culture of Saudi society restricts women in very limiting ways.
	Saudi women are helpless because men hold the social power.
Saudi Women are Submissive	Imposing strict control on women is for their protection.
	When women have too much freedom, it spoils their manners.
	I believe that most women need someone to control their behaviors.
	A Woman's fault affects all her family.
	In Saudi Society, woman should always be a man's subordinate.
Saudi Women are Less Competent	I think Saudi women have lower abilities than men.
	Generally, I think Saudi women don't work as hard as men.
	In general, I think that Saudi women are less intelligent than Saudi men in most situations.
	In general, Saudi women do not use logical thinking.
Saudi Women are Sources of Shame	In Saudi society "girls are worries from their life to their death".
	In Saudi society, a woman is always considered a man's shame.