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Debating Saudi Womanhood: A corpus-aided critical discourse analysis of the representation of Saudi women in the Twitter campaign against the 'Male Guardianship' system.

1. Introduction

In Saudi Arabia, the law stipulates that no political parties, civil society organisations or marches are allowed. However, the impact made by social media sites during the 2011 Arab Spring made women's rights activists realize that they too could benefit from the power of social media to bring about socio-political change. It offered a public platform on which to highlight and contest the unequal social status of women in Saudi society. As a consequence, numerous social media campaigns have been lunched by Saudi women (e.g. 'Women2Drive', 'Saudi Women Revolution', 'Baladi' [My Country][1]). Arguably the most high-profile of these has been the #EndMaleGuardianshipSystem Twitter campaign which, since its inception in 2016 has sparked widespread public debate about the Male Guardianship System (hereafter MGS), whereby Saudi women's freedoms and decision-making powers are subordinated to those of a male relative. This chapter presents a corpus-aided critical analysis of the linguistic strategies employed in that campaign.

Saudi Arabia applies the Hanbali School doctrine to the interpretation of Islamic texts (Commins 2006). One of its regulations

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[1] All translations are the author's own.

that has been enforced rigorously is the male 'guardianship' of women. According to the Hanbali School, this regulation applies in just two cases: within a marriage and when travelling (al-Zuhayli 1999). However, the male guardianship system was extended to other institutions (e.g. universities, hospitals and so forth) in the 1980s, with the result that Saudi women are treated as legal minors, positioned as second-rate citizens and subjected to unprecedented legal restrictions. Under this system, a Saudi woman must have a male guardian, chosen from one of her close relatives (for example, her father, husband, brother), to provide written consent for her to participate in a wide variety of activities. Example include enrolling in (higher) education, applying for official documents (e.g. passport, family ID, or personal ID), applying for a scholarship, being released from state institutions (e.g. prisons or rehabilitation centres), undergoing certain types of surgery (e.g. an abortion, a caesarean section or cosmetic surgery), accessing bank services (e.g. opening an account), working in the governmental and non-governmental sectors, and accessing the judicial system. The guardianship system is not enforced by the judiciary or royal decree, but instead through Saudi Arabia's powerful religious tier.

Two major events led to the establishment of this system: the Islamic Awakening movement from the 1960s onwards (Lacroix 2015) and the seizure of the holy mosque in Mecca in 1979 (Al-Fassi 2013). After this seizure in 1979, religious institutions began to wield power in the public sphere; subsequently, Saudi women were increasingly restricted in access to education, employment and freedom of movement, which resulted in a dramatic change in economic status for them (Al-Fassi 2013).

In 2016, female Saudi activists started an online campaign سعوديات_نطالب_اسقاط_الولاية#, or '#EndMaleGuardianshipSystem' in English, to eliminate the male guardianship system. In fact, the use of the word 'guardian' in the campaign's Arabic language hashtag is misleading. In Islam, the concept of a 'guardian' is specifically related to marriage i.e. a guardian plays an essential role in completing a woman's marriage. Although the word choice was inaccurate, it had been used previously in official documents, in reference to this system for controlling women's freedoms. Despite its misleading

terminology, the campaign has proven successful. The hashtag began trending daily and eventually led to a series of recent reforms in state regulation. This campaign was not the first to demand an end to this 'guardianship' system. The Saudi Ministry of Commerce in 2004 abolished a regulation requiring a male guardian for Saudi businesswomen after widespread criticism (Yamani 2008; Al-Fassi 2013). In addition, a July 2009 campaign *Treat Us Like Adult Citizens - Or We'll Leave the Country* was launched by a liberal Saudi women's rights activist, together with other Saudi female activists. The campaign, also calling for an end to the male guardianship system, received heavy criticism (Admon 2009). Furthermore, in 2011, the #SaudiWomenRevolution hashtag was used on Twitter by Saudi women campaigning for women's rights, including but not limited to, the end of the male guardianship system (Saudi Women's Rights Blog 2011).

The #EndMaleGuardianshipSystem campaign (hereafter #EMGC) generated an online petition that gathered 14,700 signatures from both Saudi men and women, along with their full names and ID numbers. The petition was sent to King Salman bin Abdulaziz on October 2016, and the hashtag continued trending daily until August 2019. Since then, new regulations have been enacted regarding the abolition of guardian consent across a variety of government offices. A royal order issued on August 2019 met an important demand of the campaign, and women above the age of 21 are now able to travel and have their passports issued without permission from a guardian.

2. Aim of the research

In a conservative society like Saudi Arabia, social movements which repudiate aspects Islamic cultural practice, are not only controversial but are considered by many to be against God's law. It is therefore unsurprising that #EMGC led to polarised and heated debate in Saudi society. The original and main platform for the campaign has been

Twitter (the focus of this chapter), although it extends to other public forums, notably YouTube and online newspapers. On one side of this debate are the female activists and more liberal clerics who support the campaign to end the male guardianship system (hereafter 'Anti-MGS'). On the other side of the debate are conservative clerics and their supporters (Saudi women among them) who oppose the campaign and wish to maintain the system (hereafter 'Pro-MGS'). #EMGC thus offers a window into the complex dynamics of power and gender in contemporary Saudi society, revealing the linguistic strategies whereby the status and role of Saudi women was debated, by women themselves, in this very visible and controversial public domain. This paper draws on corpus linguistic methods in order to investigate these strategies on Twitter and focuses on the *female* campaigners on each side of the debate. It asks the following questions: 1) who were the salient social actors in the discourse of #EMGC?; 2) how did the *female* campaigners represent Saudi women as social actors?; and 3) what were their most prominent actions?

3. Theoretical background

The study draws on a theory of social justice put forth by the feminist writer Nancy Fraser (1995), who, in distinguishing socioeconomic injustice from cultural injustice, noted that the former is rooted in the political-economic construction of a society, such as exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation, and the latter - including cultural domination, misrecognition and disrespect - is rooted in the social paradigms of representation, interpretation and communication. Of course, the two are intertwined and lead to overlapping demands, as shown in the descriptions of social movements in which demands for cultural change intermingle with demands for economic change. This intermingling is exemplified in the social campaign against male guardianship that has taken hold in Saudi Arabia. The campaign calls for both cultural and socioeconomic change, since from the former

flows the latter. Under the existing system, Saudi women are treated as second-class citizens and are thereby also economically marginalised. Cultural injustice generates cultural devaluation and the denial of legal rights, while socioeconomic injustice results in the inability to access, without a male guardian's permission, adequate economic benefits (such as full and equal access to employment in the public and private sectors, or rights to personal banking services and investment opportunities). According to Fraser, 'neither redistributive remedies alone nor recognition remedies alone will suffice. Bivalent collectivities need both' (1995: 78). The recognition remedy for cultural justice involves 'revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups', and the redistributive remedy requires transforming the political-economic structure of a society and abolishing the repressive system (Fraser 1995: 73). Thus, for Fraser (1995), it is necessary to consider the politics of cultural recognition and redistributive equality as mutually inclusive.

In the case of Saudi women, cultural recognition has been granted recently by one of the elites in the country, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. In interviews, he has openly acknowledged that Saudi women are currently being denied their full rights and has promised action to improve their status (CBS News 2018; TIME 2018; Bloomberg 2018). This recognition of women's rights is a barometer of a wider shift in Saudi public discourse, as manifested in #EMGC and explored below.

4. Methodological approach

In order to explore the role of language in shaping the public construal of women's rights in Saudi society, the study draws on a combined corpus-aided critical discourse approach. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 2003; 2015) offers a conceptual framework through which to explore the role of #EMGC within the Saudi social formation. #EMGC discourse construes patterns of participation, role-

relations, values and norms for Saudi women, and rests on implicit and complex ideologies which, in turn, intersect with a range of other religious, political and cultural discourses. The study also makes use of corpus linguistic tools to explore salient textual patterns in the online campaign (Tognini-Bonelli 2001). To facilitate comparison of the linguistic strategies used by the two sides of the campaign, two corpora were compiled from Twitter's #EMGC spanning a nine-month period, then analysed using the concordance software 'AntConc' (Anthony 2017). This quantitative approach to the data was combined with text analytical frameworks whose systemic functional theory of discourse is compatible with CDA's view of language as a social semiotic (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014), while offering a means of investigating patterns of linguistic choice in the representation of social actors and their actions (Van Leeuwen 2008).

In recent years critical discourse analysts have made increasing use of corpus linguistic tools (e.g.: Baker et al. 2008; Mautner 2005; Mulderrig 2008). Their integration with CDA's textually oriented and theoretically grounded approach produces 'a relatively systematic and readily replicable approach to CDA' and one which 'direct[s] the analyst's gaze in unexpected and often fruitful directions' (Mulderrig 2014: 449). Such an integrated approach also enables the critical analyst to handle large bodies of textual data in order to track the development of social movements (like #EMGC), as in the larger project from which this chapter stems.

4.1 Data collection
Participant observation on Twitter was used as a first step in the data collection process, in order to gain an overall picture of the campaign and identify the users associated with its salient hashtags[2]. This method also provided an understanding of the context of the problem and the affordances of social media platforms with respect to the

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[2] A number of hashtags exist, both in English and Arabic, relating to the guardianship system. However, the main hashtag which started the campaign was #424 سعوديات_نطلب_اسقاط_الولايه [#EndMaleGuardianshipSystem424]. This was selected for the analysis because it is the original, most widely followed and retweeted, and enduring.

social problem under investigation (Unger et al. 2016). Consideration was also given to the algorithms underpinning Twitter, whereby the popularity of content is measured, thereby ultimately making it more influential in the public circulation of knowledge (Gillespie 2014: 185).

Following this research into the 'backstage' of the campaign, it was thus possible to compile a list of female[3] Twitter account users on either side of the debate. This was then further filtered in order to obtain metadata on gender, nationality (only self-identified Saudi users were included in analysis), number of followers (only the most 'popular' users were included), and original tweets (only original content was included). This filtering process yielded two final lists (see Table 1 below), which were used to compile a reliable and representative corpus of Tweets spanning 01/06/2016 to 28/02/2017. On the basis of these lists two corpora were compiled for each side of the debate: an Anti-MGS corpus (women campaigning to abolish the guardianship system) and a Pro-MGS corpus (women arguing in

Twitter Corpora	First filtering		Second filtering			Total
	Gender	Stance	Nationality	No. of followers	Original tweets	No. of tweets
Anti-MGS	Female	Campaigns against the guardianship system	Saudi	2,000 or more	Yes	1500
Pro-MGS	Female	Supports the system	Saudi		Yes	1500

favour of the system).

Table 1: The two phases used to divide and filter the Twitter account list

4.2 Preparing and coding the Twitter corpus

According to Gries and Newman, corpus files 'always need to be cleaned up and standardised and they often need to be marked up and annotated' (2013: 263). The corpus was thus cleaned by removing

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[3] This chapter focuses only on female campaigners. The larger study from which it derives looks at both males and females.

irrelevant information (e.g. time, number of likes and retweets, non-standard spellings) and anonymised. The corpus was also tagged using the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI Consortium 2016) to demarcate tweets. Finally, the corpus was annotated by adding a coding system linked to the research questions. In short, the study sought to identify how *social actors* are represented in the campaign. Thus, a coding system was devised in order to identify the actors referred to in the data. Codes are short phrases/words that 'symbolically assign a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data' (Saldana 2013: 3). Two 'code books' were thus created in order to identify the social actors in each corpus (see Appendix). The next step integrates CDA text analytical tools in order to determine not just *which* actors were represented, but *how*.

4.3 Analysing the representation of social actors
Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic approach offers a taxonomic model for analysing how social practice is represented in language. It was developed out of the important insight that sociological agency is not always realised by linguistic agency. Thus, the traditional categories of grammatical description, like nouns and verbs, cannot reveal much about the ideational and evaluative significance of linguistic choices when representing actors and their actions. The following two phrases uttered by a government minster during the 2020 pandemic represent essentially the same event: 'The government urged the public to stay at home' and 'Boris urged us to stay at home'. However, in each case the representational choices frame that event in subtly different terms: the second choice is more personalised, perhaps in order to achieve compliance by down-playing institutional authority. To capture this kind of semantic nuance, Van Leeuwen's model posits socio-semantic categories[4] like 'personalisation vs functionalisation'. These enable the critical discourse analyst to identify the linguistic strategies which help produce and reinforce

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[4] Precisely because it has a socio-semantic basis, this model can be applied to languages other than English (Van Leeuwen, 2009).

power asymmetries, discrimination, inequality and injustice (Van Leeuwen, 2009).

Social actors who participate in social practices are represented as either included or excluded actors in order to suit the interests and purposes of the intended readers (van Leeuwen 2008). The excluded social actors are either *suppressed*, in which no references to these social actors are included in the text, or *backgrounded*, whereby these social actors are mentioned elsewhere in the text. A*ctivation* means that actors are used as active and dynamic forces within an action, whereas *passivation* means that they are portrayed as undergoing an activity or as being on the receiving end of an action (i.e. as beneficiaries). Social actors can be an individual, as in *individualisation,* or groups, as in *assimilation*. Assimilation has two typologies: *aggregation*, whereby actors are represented by quantifiers and treated as statistics, and *collectivisation*, whereby a group of actors is referred to using a noun denoting a group of individuals. *Association* is another way in representing groups of actors and occurs when two or more actors are grouped together due to common qualities (e.g. ethnic origin).

Social actors can be represented through the process of *categorisation*. Categorisation has three typologies: *functionalisation*, in which actors are referred to by an activity or function they perform (e.g. an occupation or role), *appraisement*, in which they are referred to in evaluative terms as good or bad, and *identification*, in which they are described in terms of what they are more or less permanently. Identification has three types: *classification* i.e. based on major categories generated by a society or an institution, *relational identification* i.e. according to their kinship, personal or work relations, and *physical identification*, i.e. according to their uniquely physical characteristics. In addition, social actors can be *impersonalized,* for example, by referring to their utterance (this representation is called *utterance autonomisation)*.

4.4 Analysing the representation of social action
Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) proposed a transitivity model that encompasses the process realised by the verb and the participants of that process. Processes in the transitivity model are divided into six

main types, namely, material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal and existential, reflecting the cognitive categories used when we construct events happening around us linguistically. *Material processes* cover activities and actions (i.e. doing and happening) requiring the involvement of an *actor* who does the action, the *goal* the process is directed at, and the *beneficiary* of the action. *Mental processes* are concerned with events in our consciousness (i.e. thinking and feeling).

Relational processes are seeking to identify and characterise (i.e. being and having) and have two moods: *attributive*, whereby the carrier (i.e. an entity) is ascribed to the attribute (i.e. some class) and *identifying*, whereby the identified is to be distinguished by the identifier (i.e. what serves as an identity). Both are classified into intensive, circumstantial and possessive. In *intensive attribution processes*, the attribute refers to the carrier through a class or a criterion for class membership (i.e. a quality constituting the class). An *intensive identifying process* recognises the identified and the identifier as either token or value. Participants functioning as tokens represent lower expressions and those that function as value represent higher content. In this process, token represents value.

Circumstantial attribution processes have two forms. First, circumstance can be considered to be an attribute: in which case, the attribute is a circumstantial element in a propositional phrase or an adverbial group. Second, circumstance can be a process; here, the attribute is realized by a nominal group and the circumstantial relation is expressed by the verbal group. In *circumstantial identifying processes,* they have two patterns. First, circumstance can be expressed through the participants; in this case, the process is recognised semantically through the relationship between two participants (i.e. the identified and the identifier), in which both participants express circumstantial elements of time, place, manner and so on. Second, circumstance can be a process; here, the circumstantial relation is realized through circumstantial verbs conveying the circumstance of manner, accompaniment, time, place, and so forth.

The last category of relational process is the *possessive process*, whereby 'one entity possesses another' (Halliday and Matthiessen

2014: 294). Possessive attribution occurs when the possessed represents the attribute. Within the possessive identifying process, the two entities together represent the notion of possession.

Behavioural processes have no clear characteristics. However, their identified characteristics are similar to those of material and mental processes representing physiological and psychological behaviour, respectively. *Verbal processes* deal with saying and have a *sayer,* who is the initiator of the process, a *receiver,* who is the addressee and the *verbiage*, that represents the content of what is said (i.e. the event as it happened). The last process is an *existential process,* representing the existence of something through the use of the word *there*, which has no functional role in the transitivity structure.

5. Data analysis: Salient social actors in the #EMGC

During the processes of coding, twenty-eight codes, each representing a social actor, were identified in the female Anti-MGS corpus, and thirty-four codes were identified for the female Pro-MGS corpus. To answer the first question, the Word List tool in AntConc used to identify the salient social actors in the #EMGC. Four social actors were the most frequently occurred besides Saudi women in both corpora: female Anti-MGS, male guardians, female Pro-MGS and the government.

The second and third questions investigate the representation of Saudi women as social actors in female Anti-MGS and Pro-MGS corpora and their most prominent actions, respectively; as such, these questions require a more in-depth analysis of the data. Therefore, making use of the concordance tool in AntConc constituted the next step. All concordance lines of Saudi women were downloaded in order to apply van Leeuwen's (2008) and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) frameworks.

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5.1 Exclusion and inclusion of Saudi women
In van Leeuwen's (2008) model, social practices are conducted by sets of social actors represented as either included or excluded in order to serve their purposes and readers' interests. The exclusion of social actors can be done through backgrounding or suppression. Reasons for exclusion could have been that followers and recipients were familiar with the social actors, rendering referring to them in detail unnecessary, or that Twitter limits the length of tweets to 140 characters. Table 2 reveals that 69% of Saudi women's occurrence in the female Anti-MGS corpus and 76% of their occurrences in the female Pro-MGS corpus are as included actors. The exclusion of Saudi women, however, is higher in the female Anti-MGS corpus (31%); they were excluded in acts relating to 'degradation', for example.

Saudi women a *Social actors*	*Included*		*Excluded* *(Backgrounded)*		*Excluded* *(Suppressed)*	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Anti-MGS corpus n=1012	698	**69**	152	**15**	162	**16**
Pro-MGS corpus n=222	169	**76**	49	**22**	4	**2**

Table 2. Saudi women as social actors in the female Anti-MGS and Pro-MGS corpora

The included Saudi women are most involved in material and relational processes (Figure 1).
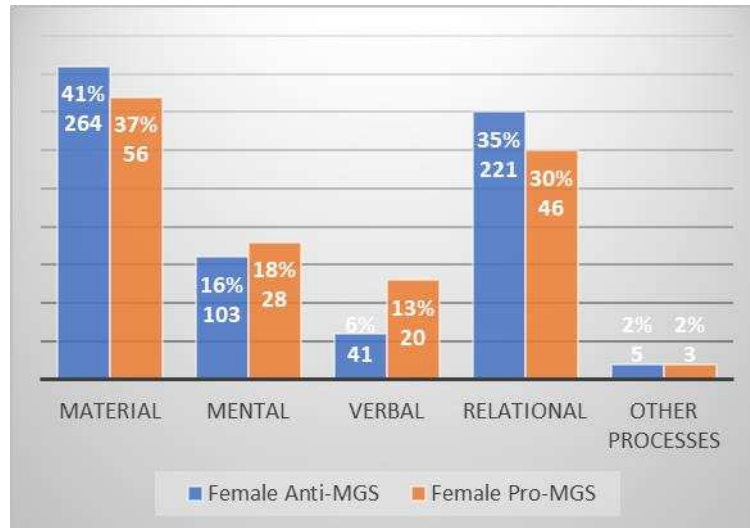
Figure 1. Social actions taken by Saudi women in both corpora.

5.2 Representation of Saudi women: Material processes
Of all the types of social action, Saudi women are most frequently engaged in material processes (41% of the total) in the female Anti-MGS corpus (Figure 1). In these processes, social actors can be assigned three roles: being activated, passivated or beneficialised. The focus will be on the patterns in Saudi women's representations in these processes. Saudi women are activated in 115 instances, passivated in 132 instances and beneficialised in fourteen instances. Saudi women in an active role (in total, 115 instances) are individualised 57% of the time (sixty-five instances). Of these instances, there are twenty-nine in which Saudi women are classified in terms of gender (for example, 'young woman' and 'woman') and eighteen times in which they are classified in terms of nationality (i.e. provenance). They are also appraised four times as 'ambitious girls' and 'powerless and marginalised women', and they are identified by their relationships with others four times, such as 'sisters', 'mothers' and 'married'. In ten instances, they are referred to by the pronoun 'she'. Saudi women in the active role are also represented collectively 35% of the time (forty instances). These instances include seventeen

in which Saudi women are classified as 'Saudis' [+feminine] and ten in which they are classified as 'women'. They are also identified as 'daughters' and appraised as 'those who are deficient in mind and religion' a total of three times. They are referred to by the pronoun 'they' in ten instances (Figure 2). Saudi women are also aggregated (7%: nine times) and impersonalised (1%: once) through utterance autonomisation 'her scream'. The material processes from which Saudi women were said to be excluded without a male guardian's permission were 'travelling', 'working', 'studying', 'building a life' and 'participating in society'. As a result, female Anti-MGS were 'rebelling' against the system that gives male guardians power and control. Female Anti-MGS blamed the system for the 'escape' of Saudi women and their emigration to other countries.

Figure 2. The two prominent active representations of Saudi women in material processes in the female Anti-MGS corpus.

Saudi women in the passive role (in total, 132 instances) are individualised 60% of the time (seventy-nine instances). Within these instances, they are classified individually as a 'woman' or 'young woman' fifty-five times and as 'Saudis' [+feminine] thirteen times. They are also appraised as 'sane' four times, relationally identified as a 'daughter', 'wife' or 'victim' five times and functionalised twice, as 'queens' and as 'abused'. Saudi women are also represented collectively 30% of the time (forty instances). In this group of

instances, they are classified as 'women' or 'young women' eleven times, as 'Saudis' [+feminine] seven times and relationally identified as 'widows' or 'divorcees' three times. In nineteen instances, they are represented by the pronoun 'they' (Figure 3). They are also aggregated 10% of the time (thirteen times), for example, as 'one half of society', 'millions of Saudi women' and 'many women'. In forty-two instances, female Anti-MGS described Saudi women as being 'oppressed', 'enslaved', 'controlled' and 'guarded' by their male guardians. Consequently, female Anti-MGS demanded that Saudi women should be 'protected' by the law nine times and that they should be 'given their rights' ten times. Saudi women in beneficiary roles (in total, fourteen instances) are individualised 64% of the time (nine occurrences). They are refered to by the pronoun 'her' three times, classified as a 'woman' three times and as 'Saudi' [+feminine] twice and they are appraised as 'sane' once. Saudi women are represented collectively (29%: four times) and aggregated (7%: once). Female Anti-MGS railed against the male guardianship system by explaining what is happening to Saudi women because of it. Thus, Saudi women are apparently given passive roles more often than active roles.

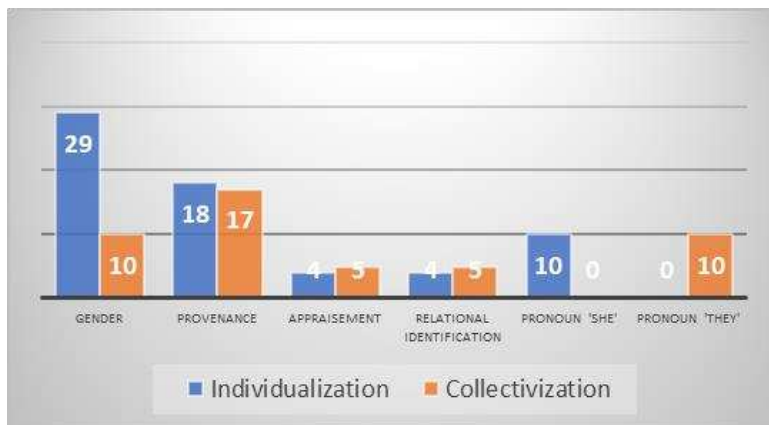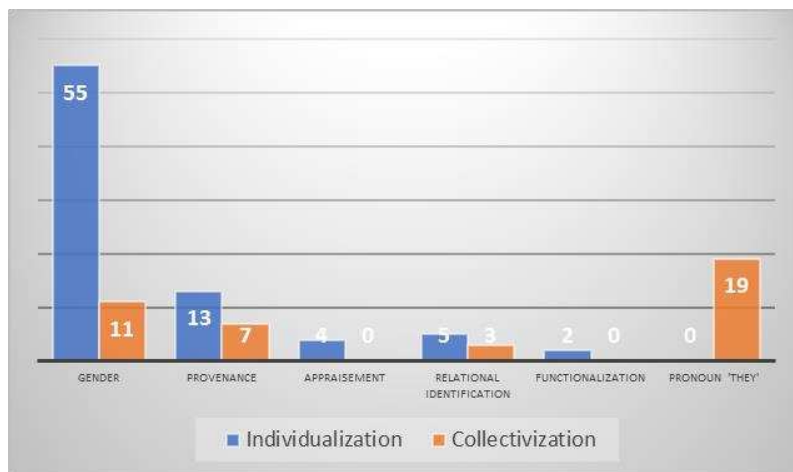*Figure 3. The two prominent passive representations of Saudi women in material processes in the female Pro-MGS corpus*

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As in the female Anti-MGS corpus, Saudi women are frequently involved in material processes (37% of the total) in the female Pro-MGS corpus (Figure 1). Saudi women are activated in 33 instances, passivated in 24 instances and beneficialised in eight instances. Saudi women in the active role (in total, 33 instances) are individualised 36% of the time (twelve instances). Within these instances, they are classified as a 'young woman', a 'woman' or as 'Saudi' [+feminine] five times, appraised as being a 'pearl' five times (i.e. precious) and relationally identified twice as a 'daughter' and 'sister'. They are also described collectively 48% of the time (sixteen times). They are described as 'women' and 'Saudi women' six times and 'daughters of the Kingdom' four times. Saudi women are also represented by the pronoun 'they' six times (Figure 4). They are aggregated (13%: four instances) as, for example, 'millions/thousands of Saudi women' and represented associatively (3%: once) as 'daughter', 'sister' and 'wife'. Saudi women were said to 'work' without their male guardian, to 'succeed' in their life without being obstructed by the system. Female Pro-MGS explained in their corpus that Saudi women cannot travel alone, justifying this with the Prophet's saying, 'A woman also may not travel with anyone except with a *Mahram* (relative)'[5] (Al-Asqalani 2003: 259).

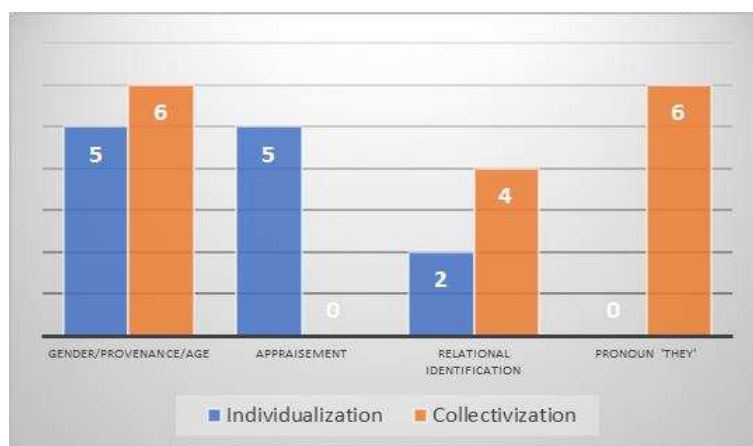[5] In Islam, *mahram* refers to a male whom a female Muslim cannot marry.

Figure 4. The two prominent active representations of Saudi women in material processes in the female Pro-MGS corpus.

Saudi women in the passive role (in total, 24 instances) are individualised 50% of the time (twelve instances) as 'Saudi woman' and 'young woman' four times, 'daughter of men' five times, and three times by the pronoun 'she'. They are represented collectively 50% of the time (a total of twelve times) as 'Muslim women' and 'Saudi women' six times, 'daughters of men' five times, and 'veiled women' once (Figure 5). Saudi women in beneficiary roles (in total, eight instances) are individualised 38% of the time (three times): twice through the pronoun 'her' and once as a 'woman'. Saudi women are represented collectively (62%: five times) as 'Saudi women' twice and their 'daughters' or 'mothers' three times. Saudi women in the female Pro-MGS point of view need the 'protection' of their male guardians in order to avoid being 'killed' or 'abused'. Female Pro-MGS indicated that Saudi women were being used in a conspiracy that aimed to 'separate Saudi women from their families'.
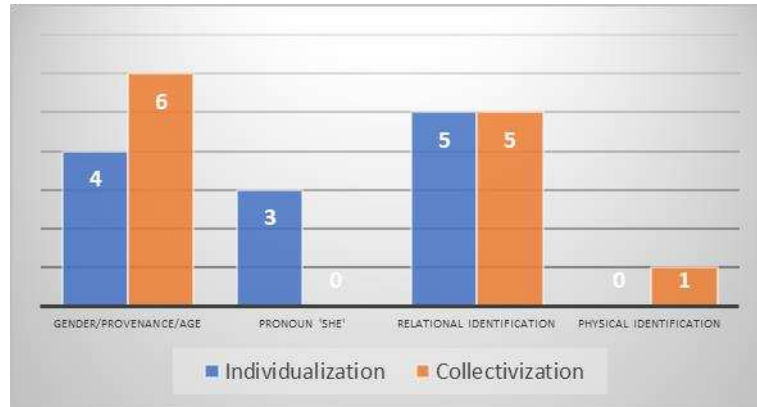
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Figure 5. The two prominent passive representations of Saudi women in material processes in the female Pro-MGS corpus

5.3 Representation of Saudi women: Relational processes
Of the different types of social action, relational processes occur second most frequently in both the female Anti-MGS and Pro-MGS corpora. In terms of identifying and characterising Saudi women. In the female Anti-MGS corpus, Saudi women are identified and characterised in relational processes (35% of the total) (Figure 1). The patterns of Saudi women's representations in these processes will be examined according to the categories of the relational processes. In intensive attributive processes, Saudi women are classified as 'minors' fifteen times, 'strugglers' three times and as 'abused' five times. However, they are also referred to as 'citizens' of Saudi Arabia who are 'brave, partners, educated, freewomen, independent and aware of their rights'. Female Anti-MGS clarified that Saudi women are neither 'queens' nor 'backward'. In intensive identifying processes, Saudi women are identified as 'second-class citizens', 'belonging to men', and when compared to women worldwide, 'the only women who are considered minors' and 'the only women who still demand for their human and legal rights'. It was argued that Saudi women should have their rights, because they are 'fully-fledged citizens' and 'one half of society'.

In possessive attributive processes, female Anti-MGS compared contemporary Saudi women with their grandmothers, who did not have male guardians. In these processes, Saudi women in five occurrences are required to 'have male guardians' and in three times 'needed them in order to live their life'. On thirteen occasions, Saudi women are said to 'have no rights' to enjoy without their male guardian, and thus, they 'need a new regulation' to protect them. Female Anti-MGS suggested that talented Saudi scientists 'are lucky', because they 'had nice, kind and open-minded male guardians'. However, many are said to 'have the courage and power' to participate in contesting the system. In possessive identifying processes, Saudi women are identified as 'being owned by their male guardian' (five times); they 'possess nothing' for themselves.

In circumstantial attributive processes, Saudi women are characterised as 'depending on their male guardian and his mood, desire and conscience'. In circumstantial identifying processes, Saudi women are metaphorically treated as 'crazy' and 'minors'. Female Anti-MGS criticised the system, which categorised Saudi women as minors who required a chaperone and protector. They are also represented metaphorically as 'belongings' and 'concubines'.

Saudi women are identified and characterised in relational processes in about 30% of all types of social action in the female Pro-MGS corpus (Figure 1). They are given attributes such as 'being queens, stable, honourable, aware of the conspiracy, proud of their male guardian and good at handling their lives'. They are represented as not being 'slaves, weak, naïve, oppressed' and not being treated as 'commodities'. In intensive identifying processes, they are identified as 'the most respected women in the world', because of their decency and respect towards their families, being both 'hero makers' and 'mothers of men'. They are also considered to be misrepresented by the identifier 'this hashtag' (i.e. #EndMaleGuardianshipSystem) and by female Anti-MGS. Female Pro-MGS suggested that what really represented Saudi women is 'the counter-campaign' and 'its hashtags'.

In the possessive attributive processes, female Pro-MGS identified Saudi women as having 'the lowest rates of harassment and rape in the world'. They also possess 'their rights and great families'. In circumstantial attributive processes, the United States is used as a

carrier, such as in the phrase, 'the US busied themselves with Saudi women'. Female Pro-MGS supported their tweets using a collection of screenshots of news headlines and articles showing support from the US towards Saudi women over time. Female Pro-MGS displayed statistics suggesting that Saudi women experienced the lowest rates of various crimes, unlike women in the US, whose problems the US should confront.

6. Discussion

The findings revealed that different roles were assigned to Saudi women by female Anti-MGS and Pro-MGS. In the female Anti-MGS corpus, Saudi women were frequently passivated and beneficialised through assignments to weak roles. Female Anti-MGS tend to use this representation for Saudi women in order to convey the helplessness and powerlessness of women due to the system. Interestingly, the aggregate representation was used most; van Leeuwen (2008: 37) explained that 'aggregation is often used to regulate practice'. Hence, the heavy use of aggregation for Saudi women on the part of the female Anti-MGS aimed to regulate the practices of being controlled and abused. Female Pro-MGS, on the other hand, frequently positioned Saudi women in the active role, whereas the passivated role actor was the least (24 instances) used in their corpus. Active representation served their aim of maintaining the system by indicating that Saudi women were capable of participation and involvement in various material processes.

Female Anti-MGS referred to Saudi women as being of 'deficient in mind and religion'. This appraisement is borrowed from Islamic discourse and is based on one saying of the Prophet Mohammed. Hence, women being of 'deficient in mind' comes from belief that the testimony of two women equals that of one man. Women are seen to be 'deficient in religion' because they are not required to perform religious duties, such as fasting and praying,

during menstruation. The majority of scholars have promoted this saying; however, new voices have attempted to prove its inauthenticity. One of these voices is that of Saudi national Suhaila Hammad, who is a member of Saudi Arabia's National Society for Human Rights. Defending women's rights from an Islamic perspective, she argued that the narrator of this saying was untrustworthy (Hammad 2013). Her research has shown that the idea that women are of 'deficient in mind and religion' is not well supported in Islamic literature (Hammad 2013). The idea that the testimony of two female witnesses is equivalent to that of one male is mentioned in only one verse in the Quran, in relation to debt; there are other verses that refer to a woman's testimony being equal to a man's (Fatima and Lakhvi 2015). Using this evidence to justify the mental inadequacy of women seems inaccurate and aimed at embracing masculine power. Moreover, describing women's abstinence from Islamic duties during menstruation as a deficiency in religion is faulty for two reasons. First, women cannot choose to prevent this natural process in order to perform their religious duties. Second, women do not choose to rest during menstruation, rather they are commanded to do so in the verse 222:2 (Quran n.d.). If resting during menstruation is part of the religion, then it cannot be a deficiency to do so. However, the idea that women are deficient has been widely accepted and generalised.

Saudi women have been represented in various ways; one of which is as *queens*. Alhussein (2018) provided a thorough explanation of the use of such expressions and those who benefit from them. Symbolic language was first used by religious figures in their sermons and publications to justify the proposed limited role of women and to maintain the patriarchal system in Saudi Arabia. In order to normalise domesticity and motivate women to endorse as well as to encourage the community to embrace male dominance, preachers have portrayed women as queens who do not have to earn a living and who are supposed to be served and financially supported by their male relatives. However, female Anti-MGS failed to see how Saudi women could be 'queens' while being controlled under this system.

Female Pro-MGS tended to use the preachers' strategy to justify the male guardianship system by referring to a Saudi woman as a

'queen' or 'pearl'. Thus, in doing so, they were implying that women should be protected by their male guardians. However, the preachers had a different meaning for pearl in their sermons, one that was similar to what they meant by 'queen', in that a 'pearl' (i.e. woman) was too precious to be allowed to leave her house and work. This resemblance in persuasive methodology between discourses indicated that female Pro-MGS were influenced heavily by conservative Islamic discourse.

The results have revealed sexist language in the female Pro-MGS corpus. In particular, female Pro-MGS referred to Saudi women as 'daughters of men'. Unlike calling a man a 'woman' or 'woman's son', in Arabic, calling a woman a 'man' or a 'daughter/sister of men' is not an insult. In fact, it is deemed to be a compliment, as a strong woman is seen to have male qualities, such as bravery (Joubin 2013). However, it also means that 'her strength comes from her relationship to men and not from her own person' (Joubin 2013: 198). In the Arabic language, the masculine is viewed 'as the measurement from which the feminine gender is derived' (Aleasa 1996: 5). Consequently, masculine form implies power, status and authority, whereas 'feminine form is belittling at best, if not outright derogatory' (Farwaneh 2005: 56). Female Pro-MGS seemed to unconsciously represent Saudi women as a marginalised group through their use of sexist language. Moreover, they represented Saudi women in terms of their religion by, for example, using terms like 'Muslim' and 'veiled women,' and, unlike female Anti-MGS, represented them as unable to exist in society without the help of men.

The analysis of the relational processes has brought out how women in Saudi Arabia can be seen in these opposing ways simultaneously. In the female Anti-MGS corpus, Saudi women were identified as freewomen and independent among other identifications. However, in reality, Saudi women have faced strict boundaries in compliance with the male guardianship system and are being undermined (Al-Fassi 2013). Female Anti-MGS also tended to use various persuasive strategies, as identified in the relational processes. For example, they used logical evidence to argue that Saudi women were fully-fledged Saudi citizens who should be treated and recognised as such and given full privileges. To support this argument,

Saudi women were represented as having all the qualities necessary to be classified as independent citizens, such as being brave, educated, aware of their rights and so on. Their argument was also supported by comparing the state of Saudi women to their grandmothers who did not have male guardians.

Female Pro-MGS, on the other hand, had different views concerning Saudi women and their rights. To these women, Saudi women are queens and have full rights awarded by Islam; however, this is only the case for women whose guardians fulfil their duties and responsibilities. There was a tendency to highlight the lives of the majority and to marginalise the lives of abused women, who were in the minority. In addition, female Pro-MGS used sexist language to subjugate Saudi women, in that they were characterised as 'mothers of men' and 'hero makers' rather than heroines. Again, there were similarities in the discourse of the female Pro-MGS and the conservative Islamic discourse, which demonstrates how the patriarchal power influenced their portrayal Saudi women.

7. Conclusion

The study reveals interesting findings about the representation of Saudi women in both female Anti-MGS and Pro-MGS corpora retrieved from the online discourse concerning the #EMGC. The salient social actors were the same for both corpora; besides Saudi women, female Anti-MGS, female Pro-MGS, male guardians and the government were featured. In addition, the social actions undertaken by Saudi women in both corpora were similar i.e. both had predominantly material (i.e. dynamic) and relational (i.e. identification and characteristic) processes. However, the representations of their identities were different. Interestingly, the use of sexist language and the acceptance of the roles assigned to Saudi women were dominant in the female Pro-MGS corpus. On the other hand, in their corpus, female Anti-MGS recognised the degrading role assigned to Saudi

women and were campaigning against the system causing such treatment.

This campaign called for signing an online petition to be sent to the king. Although Pro-MGS claimed that the officials would not listen to the Anti-MGS in order to discourage them, the king's office issued an announcement to amend the regulations relating to the male guardian requirement in April 2017. However, female Anti-MGS have campaigned afterwards to abolish the system completely; in August 2019, a second royal decree was issued loosened the guardianship requirements still further. Hence, social media can help publicise a social issue and those seeking solidarity. This effect is not limited to the virtual world but can also be reflected in the real world. Thus, this paper shows not only the efforts of Saudi women activists to highlight the situation of women within the male guardianship system and promote their demands but also their engagement in a formal demand to those in authority. To what extent it will ultimately lead to *both* cultural and redistributive justice remains to be seen.

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Appendix

Codes used in both corpora			
Code	**Stand for**	**Definition**	**Examples from the corpora**
SW	Saudi Woman	Reference to a Saudi woman as a citizen, sister, mother, wife and so forth.	Anti-MGS: 'The traditions control women and their fate' Pro-MGS: 'Their tweets [campaigners] disrespect Saudi women'
WP	Women Proponent	Reference to the women who are campaigning against the system (i.e. Anti-MGS)	Anti-MGS: 'Males abandoned us' Pro-MGS: 'There is disagreement among the campaigners'

WO	Women Opponents	Reference to the women campaigning against #EndMaleGuardianshipSystem and with maintaining the system (i.e. Pro-MGS)	Anti-MGS: 'She is enjoying her life and wants to stop us' Pro-MGS: 'We don't see cases like this in our life'
WN	Woman	Reference to women in general, including Arabic, Western, Muslim woman (i.e. all women other than Saudi)	Anti-MGS: 'Arab women have succeeded in all fields' Pro-MGS: 'We don't want to be like Western women'
MG	Male-Guardian	Indicates the Saudi woman's guardian who is a close male relative	Anti-MGS: 'In our society, woman is controlled by a male' Pro-MGS: 'They insult our fathers'
SM	Saudi men	Reference to Saudi men in general	Anti-MGS: 'A Saudi male disrespects your brain' Pro-MGS: 'An electronic army participates in the hashtag to distort Saudi man'
MO	Male Opponents	Indicate the men campaigning against #EndMaleGuardianshipSystem	Anti-MGS: 'The majority of male opponents benefit from this condition where women are under their control' Pro-MGS: 'Male opponents don't participate in this hashtag [#EndMaleGuardianshipSystem]'
MP	Male Proponents	Reference to the men who are campaigning against the system and support WP	Anti-MGS: 'Every male participator in the hashtag is under attack' Pro-MGS: 'The male activists of women's rights have to defend American women'
MN	Men	Reference to men in general, including Arabic, Western, Muslim men (i.e. all men other than Saudi)	Anti-MGS: 'There is no difference between Iranian male and Saudi male' Pro-MGS: 'Half of American men prefer to have baby boys'
PP	Saudi People	Codes Saudi society and people	Anti-MGS: 'A new ideology invades Saudi society' Pro-MGS: 'Saudi women built Saudi society'
GV	Government	Reference to the official representatives	Anti-MGS: 'the society follows the government' Pro-MGS: 'We respect the government'
GU	Gulf people	Reference to Gulf society	Anti-MGS: 'Women in neighbouring Gulf countries have run strong positions' Pro-MGS: 'The trouble reaches Gulf societies'
GO	God	Reference to Allah	Anti-MGS: 'Allah sees and hears us' Pro-MGS: 'Allah, protect our guardians'

PR	Prophet	Reference to the Prophet Muhammad	Anti-MGS: 'The prophet commanded you to be kind and considerate to us' Pro-MGS: 'Prophet said: no marriage without *wali*'
FA	Family	Reference to a family	Anti-MGS: 'Girls are married to escape from her abusive family' Pro-MGS: 'They want to separate us from our family'
AD	Addressees	Reference to the readers	Anti-MGS: 'If you wonder why we are demanding, let me tell you' Pro-MGS: 'You only see them in the hashtag'
IS	ISIS	Reference to terrorists and to actors who have radical Islamic fundamentalist views	Anti-MGS: 'ISIS are famous with their hater towards women' Pro-MGS: 'ISIS recruited young men and those recruited young girls'
NO	Nomination	Reference to the social actor's name. (i.e. proper noun)	Anti-MGS: Muhammad bin Salman supports women's rights' Pro-MGS: 'Turki wrote an article explaining how instigators call for violent actions while the country is busy'
AN	Anonymous	Reference to unidentified actors, e.g. no one, someone.	Anti-MGS: 'No one feels your pain' Pro-MGS: 'These are foreign accounts but no one listens'
MS	Muslim Scholars	Reference to Muslim scholars, preachers and Mufti	Anti-MGS: 'The Mufti clarified that guardianship is only in marriage' Pro-MGS: 'Their attempts aim to degrade Muslim scholars'
TR	Tribes	Reference to the tribes in Saudi Arabia	Anti-MGS: 'The backwardness of the tribes ruins our souls' Pro-MGS: 'The nature of tribal society is free and their women are loyal'
RP	Religious Police	Reference to the Islamic religious police (i.e. the official force enforcing Sharia law)	Anti-MGS: 'When the religious police were stopped, they said the society was not ready but eventually our society accepted it' Pro-MGS: 'Liberals first demanded to stop the religious police and now they demand to end the guardianship system'
JE	Jews	Reference to the Jew	Anti-MGS: 'This slavery system is borrowed from the Jew' Pro-MGS: 'They defend a Jewish'
EA	Excluded Actor	Reference to the actors who are unknown to the readers and tended to be excluded.	Anti-MGS: 'Your tweets are negatively represented after being photoshoped [by whom]' Pro-MGS: 'Proponents ask [whom?] for support'
Codes only for the female Anti-MGS corpus			

Code	Stand for	Definition	Examples from the female Anti-MGS corpus
GE	Generation	Reference to the generation(s)	'This generation is great and differs from other generations'
PO	Police	Reference to the police force	'For the abused women, call the police'
UNI	University	Reference to the university(ies)	'Universities require a male-guardian's consent to change major ☹'
OT	Others	Reference to others not related to the campaign (e.g. slaves, and an insane person)	'The slaves had been freed'
Codes only for the female Pro-MGS corpus			
Code	Stand for	Definition	Examples from the female Pro-MGS corpus
RE	Rejecters	Reference to rejectors	'Rejectors from Iraq strongly support the campaign'
AT	Atheist	Reference to the atheist.	'You can find atheists participating in this hashtag [#EndMaleGuardianshipSystem]'
HO	Homosexuals	Reference to the homosexuals	'The hashtag is trending because of homosexuals who are tweeting every day'
FN	Foreign	Reference to any foreigners or foreign representatives (e.g. foreign media and institutions)	'Foreigners try to threaten our security'
LL	Liberal(s)	Reference to liberals	'A trained network of liberals attacks our religion'
IR	Iran	Reference to Iranian government and people	'As long as Iran and their people support the campaign, we should stand against them'
OO	Others	Reference to strangers, the world, and the West	'The wars and poverty do not concern the West'
HR	Human Rights	Indicate the Human Rights organizations	'The Human Rights organization who is against the Saudi war on Yemen participated in the hashtag'
CH	Christian	Reference to the Christian actors	'Arab Christians aim to damage Saudi women'
ZI	Zionist	Reference to a Zionist actor	'they are following the Zionist by this campaign'