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**THE ROLE OF QATARI WOMEN:
BETWEEN TRIBALISM & MODERNITY**

By

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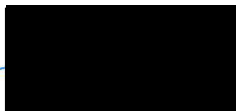
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and loving parents...

Abstract

Qatar is a country that is undergoing a rapid process of economic development and modernization; yet, its population has been struggling with traditional practices and tribal customs viewed as incompatible with its new regional and global role. The relationship between tribalism and modernity, and particularly the impact of this relationship on Qatari women, is examined in this thesis. To what extent does tribalism hinder the development of modern Qatari society? How is the traditional perception of women's roles in society being augmented in light of modernization? These questions are addressed in this thesis through a series of interviews conducted in two Qatari universities with Bedouin and Hadar students. The study reveals that despite gender and tribal differences in attitudes, important traditional perceptions of women's roles have been undermined in favor of modern views. Economic development, mass education, and the various initiatives taken by the Qatari state and women leaders are responsible for the greater social participation of Qatari women in society and for shifting traditional tribal worldviews.

Keywords: Qatar, Tribalism, Modernity, Women, Bedouin, Hadar.

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List of Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CMC	Central Municipal Council
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GOIG	Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting
NGO	Nongovernmental Organizations
QWSC	Qatar Women Sports Committee
QF	Qatar Foundation
QNV	Qatar National Vision
QU	Qatar University
SCFA	Supreme Council for Family Affairs
SSPS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Chapter One

Introduction

The balance between tradition and modernity has found particular expression in the State of Qatar. As Qatar catapulted itself into the upper-echelons of wealthy states, reaping the fruits of modernization, it has simultaneously succeeded in maintaining its tribal customs and traditions. To be sure, Qatar is a conservative tribal society, enmeshed in traditional patriarchal paradigms. It is a society where tribal affiliations represent the people's identity. A recent public opinion poll published in the Qatari *Al-Arab* newspaper indicated that 76% of Qatari people consider their society to be a tribal society, with 48% of them admitting to evaluating people based on their tribal origins (Nasser, 2009).

In this tiny country of just under two million, there exists a constant clash between tribalism and modernity when it comes to women's rights and liberties. On the one hand, modernity allows women to study and work in a mixed gender society, to have their own businesses, to vote, to stand for election, and to hold public office (Almalki, 2006); on the other hand, tribalism has hindered whatever gains have been made under this modernity boom by imposing public segregation. For example, while modernity allows women to hold leadership positions, tribal paradigms have made it so that all decisions are made by the relevant patriarchal (Almalki, 2010).

Tribal society in Qatar has three main characteristics: Firstly, it follows tribal conservative customs and traditions; secondly, it is purely patriarchal; and thirdly, it carries strict religious values (2010). These characteristics make reconciliation between modernity and

traditionalism a difficult feat. It is therefore not surprising that the dichotomy of modernity and tradition in Qatar has made the situation a challenging one for citizens who are trying to break free from the ties of tradition and embrace modernity. What makes the situation worse for women is that they have to deal with two simultaneous issues: one is the need to be liberated from tribal traditions that do not provide them with their full rights; the second issue is the urge to embrace modernity. Specifically in Qatar, women are struggling to come to terms with a changing dynamic that entails participating in building one's country while dealing with archaic tribal traditions (2010).

One interpretation might suggest that tribalism is an obstacle to modernity, which limits the role of women in Qatar. Another interpretation might propose that tribal tradition is in harmony with modernity – that it affects neither the development of Qatar, on a national level, nor the development of women, on an individual level. This thesis will examine and analyze the relationship between tribalism and modernity in Qatar and its impact on the role of Qatari women. As a subset, this thesis will also compare and contrast how women who come from different tribes or origins (namely the *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes) are participating in Qatar's development as a modern state.

Aim of the Study

Inarguably, this new era of modernity in Qatar has brought about a seismic shift with regards to the role of Qatari women in their society. However, many challenges and obstacles are facing these young and ambitious Qatari women, many of whom come from different tribal backgrounds and origins. The aim of this study is thus to shed light on the plight of Qatari women who are living in a society that is simultaneously tribal and modern. In addition, this study will focus on the empowerment of Qatari women vis-à-vis their emerging roles in society.

The overarching question to be addressed is whether tribalism condones or rejects progressive changes concerning women's active involvement in modern society.

There are certain tribal customs and traditions that have evolved over time. While employment in the fields of education and health has become acceptable for many Qatari women, other women who come from strict tribal communities are prohibited entirely from working (2010). To this day, most of the Bedouin tribes will not accept the notion of an independent working woman, especially one who works in a mixed-gender workplace. Additionally, tribal men in Qatar, mainly those who come from Bedouin tribes, will prefer a housewife who will not be exposed to other men. Some men will even add clauses in their marriage contracts prohibiting their wives-to-be from working in order to ensure non-exposure to strangers. However, studies have found that *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes act differently concerning this issue; *Bedouin* tribes are comparatively more closed communities than their *Hadar* counterparts, especially when it comes to empowering women.

The aim of this research is to measure and compare how women in Qatar, who come from different tribes, are balancing the dual burden between tribal traditions and customs while contributing to the development of a modern Qatar. This thesis will specifically tackle Qatari women's economic, educational and social contributions while faced with tribal and cultural limitations.

Research Statement and Questions

Modernity is a new concept that has been introduced to the tribal conservative society of Qatar. The modern concept of a liberal civil society, inasmuch as liberty and gender equality are guaranteed, is struggling to fit into the tribal social framework and there is reason to believe that

this reconciliation will not be neatly circumscribed. The struggle arises since Qatari society views any changes to the bulwark of traditional paradigms as a direct threat, leaving no room for cordial co-evolution (2010). To be sure, the relationship between tribalism and modernity in Qatar is a broad and general topic, ranging the gamut from socioeconomic to political tangents. This topic will therefore be narrowed to specifically examine the role Qatari women and their struggle between tribalism and modernity within their societies.

In order to capably examine this topic, a research question will be posed to parsimoniously establish the parameters of this thesis, as well as to provide a means for setting out some answers to it: Is tribalism a hindrance to modernity in Qatar, and what effect does it have on the role of Qatari women?

Answering the primary research question will help in measuring the effect of tribalism on modernity as it relates to the role of women in Qatar. Additionally, this study will identify the Qatari woman's stand from her tribal traditions and modern values. However, in order to answer the research question in a coherent approach, the study will address a number of sub-questions as indicators, which will help us to answer the main question. The sub-questions are the following:

- f What is the difference between a tribal society and a modern society?
- f Do *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes act differently or similarly towards accepting women's liberation and modernity?
- f Are women empowered in Qatar? If yes, by whom? Their tribes or their government?
- f What is the traditional accepted career for women in Qatar? Why?
- f Is there an acceptance of a mixed gender society (e.g., in classrooms or the workplace)?
- f Does tribalism hinder women's advancement in Qatar?

f How can women's political participation in the municipal elections be measured and evaluated?

Definitions

In order to understand the research question and its implications, it is essential to provide some basic definitions. Additional concepts and terms discussed later in this thesis will also be addressed for the sake of establishing their parameters.

Tribalism

What is a tribe and what is meant by tribalism in this paper? On the one hand, “a tribe may be used loosely of a localized group, in which kinship is the dominant idiom of organisation, and whose members consider themselves culturally distinct (in terms of customs, dialect or language, and origins); tribes are usually politically unified...” (Tapper, 1983). In this operational definition, it is evident that tribal beliefs and values have a great influence on the society and the state. On the other hand, “[t]he term tribalism refers to the process of belonging to a tribe as an identity community through a blood connection via patrilineal descent.”¹

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was a Mediterranean scholar of Yemeni roots who conducted a study on the nature of tribalism in the Arab world and the notion of *nasab* (origin). He compared and differentiated between *Bedouin* and sedentary people (IbnKhaldun, 2005). The main key aspect of the Khaldunian theory is the concept of *nasab* (origin) and *asabiyah* (solidarity). *Nasab* can be defined as “the cohesion of groups that share not only genealogy, but also solidarities (*asabiyat*)” (Jaber & Dawod, 2003). However, *nasab* can also be looked at as a linkage of masculine ancestral chains that goes back to the one “founding individual (male)” (2003).

¹ **Encyclopedia of Nationalism: Leaders, Movements, and Concepts**. Oxford: Elsevier Science & Technology, 2000. s.v. "[TRIBALISM](http://www.credoreference.com/entry/estnational/tribalism)," <http://www.credoreference.com/entry/estnational/tribalism> (accessed April 04, 2011).

A tribe can therefore be seen as a “collective sociopolitical identity” (Gingrich, 2004). Tribesmen usually share a common territory, origin, pride, solidarity, and a common political and social formation. Ibn Khaldun evokes that tribal affiliation is the nature of feelings of “familial social pride” and “mutual defense.” He also adds, “Only tribes held together by group feeling can live in the desert” (IbnKhaldun, 2005). Tribal solidarity and tribal loyalty were thus utilized as tools of survival and protection from outsiders in the desert.

Tribes in Qatar, as in many other Gulf societies, played a significant role in the creation of the modern States and the survival of the patrilineal monarchy (Khoury & Kostiner, 1991). The tribal structural system in Qatar is divided into hierarchical classes. These classes began to be seen clearly after the settlements of the nomadic tribal movements in Qatar directly after the discovery and production of oil. This classification of social class is based on the abovementioned concept of *nasab*. “The notion of *nasab* is bound up with the idea of sharing a common male ancestor” (Jaber & Dawod, 2003). Therefore, any tribe’s social status is determined by said tribe’s history and achievements.

The tribal fabric of Qatar is made up of *Bedouin*, who once practiced nomadic movement in the desert, and the settled (or sedentary) people called the *Hadar*, who are considered “civilized” (Zahlan, 1979). As a subset of the *Hadar* are the *Huwalah*, who are “Sunni Arabs who had lived on the Persian coast of the Gulf and had returned to the Arab side at a later date” (1979). It should be noted that the *Huwalah* are one of the most populous of the *Hadar* tribes in Qatar.

Amongst the most renowned of the *Bedouin* tribes in Qatar are: Al-Murrah, Al-Ajman, Al-Hawajer, Al-Qahtani, Al-Manasir, Al-Utaibi, Al-Ahbabi, Al-Duwasir and Al-Subaie. As for

the *Hadar* tribes, they are: Al-Bin-Ali, Al-Mannai, Al-Attiya, Al-Rumaihi, Al-Muhannadi, Al-Humaidi, Al-Buainain and Al-Kuwari.

The discovery and production of oil has certainly catapulted Qatar into a new era. *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes are now witnessing a sudden increase in wealth, a result resulted of several economic, educational and social developments. Men and women from all tribes now have greater access to information. As a result, individual differences between *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes have eroded. Nowadays, it is hard to distinguish between Bedouins and *Hadars*, as they both share one classroom, workplace and practice very similar life styles. They both enjoy the same privileges and developments that their country is undergoing. Furthermore, the intermarriage between *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes resulted in a harmonious relationship between the two. They now both share similar tribal traditions and cultures. Most significantly, they are both building the new modern state of Qatar.

Nevertheless, *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes act differently when it comes to women's rights and liberation, as the *Bedouin* community is comparatively more closed than the *Hadar* community. Yet some men from both tribes believe that women should participate in all areas of the modern economy, while others prefer women to work in limited areas such as teaching in all-girls schools or working in banks with female-only branches. However, there are still men who would go to the extent of depriving women of working outside the home at all (Alrumaihi, 1995).

Professor Sheikha Abdullah Al-Misned, President of Qatar University, presented a speech at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, where she addressed the fundamental difficulties facing women in the Arab world. She stated that "the State has

taken important steps to support the participation of women and has guaranteed them equal rights so that they can contribute effectively to various aspects of life” (Al-Misned, 2006). In affirming the government’s support of women’s roles in development, she also contends that the problem lies within a separate calculus: Tribalism. She informs us:

“[T]he presence of women in legislatures and executive branches of their countries is still rather low for many reasons including: traditional and cultural constraints, tribal value supremacy over state laws in some states, illiteracy, lack of experiences in the electoral processes, legal constraints, financial dependency and poverty, limited access to economic resources and in some parts of the Arab world, armed conflicts and the absence of overall security” (2006).

It is therefore that tribal traditions and conservative values are what concern us in defining “tribalism” in this research, especially given that Qatari culture is strongly rooted in tribal customs and values. This makes it a challenging situation in regards to the development of Qatari women.

Modernity

There are a lot of definitions that pertain to modernity, but one point that unifies these varying definitions is the notion of moving away from one way of life to another entailing a noticeable “upgrade” that offers convenience and efficiency in life’s processes. Modernity relates to the modern era, and thus to the rise of capitalism, democracy, globalization and the broadening of social relations. Many scholars consider the concept of to be relative, but for the sake of providing workable parameters, it is fitting to say that modernity is strongly related to the recent trends and patterns on the global level. Modernity is “[t]he cultural and social world

produced by and in reaction to the processes of modernization, namely the advent of new ways of thinking and the emergence of new technology.”²

In the past few years, modernity has been measured in the form of knowledge and willingness to accept change. It is the Western world which set the standard for modernity, as they introduced new innovations in technology, including computers and the internet (and the social media which goes along with it). Modernity in the developing Arab countries means to “adopt some modern elements of others such as the Euro-American West” (Fakhro, 2009); it thus refers to the model of development that has been achieved by the West. Therefore, “Modernization is the process of change towards those types of social, economic, and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth and have then spread to other European countries and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the South American, Asian, and African continents...” (Eisenstadt, 1966).

From a sociological perspective, modernity is seen as a force that will liberate man from ignorance and irrationality, ultimately moving towards a common understanding of every element in the society. Modernity challenges people to change and adapt to the constantly evolving environment. This could entail changing traditional practices or changing values, as well as changing knowledge, and ultimately, changing beliefs (Bauman, 2000). Adapting to modernity, according to this school of thought, means accepting that change is inevitable; instead of going against it, people should strive hard to go with the mainstream and embrace whatever these changes bring them. Although it is seen mostly as a positive change, there are those who

² "Modernity" *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*. by Ian Buchanan. Oxford University Press 2010. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Lebanese American University. 3 April 2011 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t306.e456>>

see it as something negative and threatening; something that undermines not only the beliefs, but also the culture and religion of various individuals. Modernity could indeed change landscapes and influence the rethinking of people's beliefs, particularly if it complies with modern practices and modern understanding. The key to successfully embracing modernity is to find the right balance between existing knowledge and the new information that is brought about by change (Powell, 2003). Succinctly, modernization theory is the transformation from traditional underdeveloped society to a modern society. Therefore, "Modernization theories, in sociology, are those theories which attempt to explain the global process through which traditional societies achieved modernity."³

It is important not to apply the positive or negative aspects of modernity with a broad paintbrush, for it is up to the individual to decide how it affects his or her life. Others may initially be hesitant to accept modernity, but as soon as modernity establishes itself into the 'rules of the game,' they will then start adapting to the changes (Social Watch, 2010). Modernity has also paved the way to open access to information, and as such, a lot of people have begun to self-teach through the internet. Knowledge is no longer limited to those who can afford expensive education, as it is now readily available with the click of a button. The past decade also saw the acceptance within society for different types of people. Gender, color and ethnicity are no longer considered hindrances to learning and more people are getting equal opportunities for self-advancement. This could be considered as a positive manifestation of modernity, since people are gradually striving to be better.

³ **Bloomsbury Guide to Human Thought.** London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd, 1993. s.v. "[Theories of Modernity](http://www.credoreference.com/entry/bght/theories_of_modernity)." http://www.credoreference.com/entry/bght/theories_of_modernity (accessed April 04, 2011).

Modernity in Qatar

The steps towards modernity came as a result of the many changes that “took place in the [lives] of the people in the [G]ulf following the discovery of oil. No other society has changed as rapidly in such a short period of time as has the Arab Gulf society” (Al-Misned, 2006). Cultural changes in Qatar are due to the transformation of the desert into a city which entailed establishing oil industries and traditional schooling into modern educational institutions (Reda, 2006). The Qatari state has made numerous efforts to establish a solid structure to build its modern society. Qatar established the Qatar National Vision 2030 whereby “Qatar aims to be an advanced society capable of sustaining its development and providing a high standard of living for all of its people [by 2030]. Qatar’s National Vision defines the long-term outcomes for the country and provides a framework within which national strategies and implementation plans can be developed” (Qatar National Vision 2030, 2008).

Modernization can be seen in all sectors of society. However, the education sector is the most crucial tenet in this regard, as it is the key to opening all other doors to modernize all sectors. It is where the traditional methods of teaching are replaced by new modern methods, such as technology. In Qatar, schools as modern institutions for education were introduced in 1951 and the first girls’ school was opened in 1957, before which Qatari people were taught by *al-Mutawa* (Alrumaihi, 1995). *Al-Mutawa* is a title given to teachers who teach the Quran and primary Arabic writing and reading, while the traditional school institutions were called *al-Kutab*.

In 1973, Qatar University was founded as the first institution for higher education in the country. In 1995, the Qatar Foundation was founded by decree of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani as a private non-profit organization for education, community development

and science. Its aim is to transform Qatar into a knowledge-based society. “The Qatar foundation built ‘Education City’ – a complex composed of leading American universities such as: Georgetown, Carnegie Mellon, Weill Cornell Medical College, Virginia Commonwealth School of Arts, and Texas A&M” (Albright, Weber & Cook, 2005). However, it is essential to note that Qatar University is a gender-segregated institution, while other universities in Education City are coed Universities.

Somehow, modernity has been able to shatter some of the restrictive traditions and beliefs in Qatar. It is common knowledge that Qatari women are given fewer opportunities than their male counterparts, and this dynamic has existed for many centuries now. Seeing women taking up books and studying, not only in their homes but also in academic institutions, is proof of modernity in Qatar (ABC News, 2010). In some cases, women are obtaining more advanced degrees than men, with many going on to hold high positions in companies throughout the country. Yet still, the changes brought about by modernity in Qatar have not been enough to shake the established foundations of culture and beliefs. One such indicator is that women are still treated in an inferior way when compared to men (Almalki, 2010). Even with advanced degrees, they are still commonly relegated to lower positions than their male counterparts. Most of the positions they take are limited to areas such as education, health and family affairs. Despite the ubiquitous presence of modernity, women still have no say in politics, even though they are given the right to vote. Finally, in parallel to Qatar’s unprecedented modernity, the country has witnessed equally dramatic social changes that have shaped a new paradigm for women, where they are now practicing their traditional tribal customs while concomitantly engaging in modern society.

It is important to assess the evolution of Qatari society into what has become known as the modern society. Before this modern era came into fruition, Qatar was a traditional society under the total aegis of patriarchal paradigms. One big difference between the tribal traditional society and the modern society is the social grouping (George & Kumar, 1999). In traditional Qatari society, people used to come together engaging in everyday activities, leading to social groupings that would be characterized in any social event such as marriage, circumcision procedures and various family events. In the modern society, however, people shroud their independence with an ideology of autonomy (Bruce, 1999). In other words, many Qataris now focus on their own individual development, going it alone rather than with a group of people. It is this individualistic modern society that has led to developments where people are trying to compete rather than work in groups. In tribal traditional societies, people focused their activities communally, looking for ways in which they could advance together as a community (Sujata, 2004). The locus of civic duty lay in the communal, rather than the individualistic, sphere.

Certainly the argument could be made that the traditional society had its advantages and disadvantages over the modern one. For instance, marriages were seen to be more durable because partners wanted to satisfy the communities of which they were an integral part of (Nora & Richard, 2006). For the modern society, marriage is seen as an individual affair and breakdowns are easier since it is explicitly between the two partners – the erosion of the communal support structure can thus be said to have had detrimental effects on the institution of marriage. However, a crucial disadvantage of the tribal traditional society is that when people work in groups, their labor inputs are relatively less compared to those who work for individual benefits (Catherine, 2010).

However, the Qatari society of today, as with other Gulf societies, is a dual society standing at the nexus between tribalism and modernity (Alrumaihi, 1995). Despite the erosion of the tribal traditional structure as a result of urbanization and rapid economic developments, tribal affiliation still exists in the cultural and intellectual realms; as individualism is seen in the economic sphere, tribalism is seen with equal measure in the cultural and intellectual spheres (Alnajjar, 2008). Thus, the relationship between tribalism and modernity today can be said to be based on modern standards. Tribal customs and values certainly have their influence on modern state institutions.

This chapter has introduced the aim of the study, which is to shed light on the impact of tribalism and modernity on the role of Qatari women today. It has examined the relationship between tribal traditional society and modern society, while at the same time making comparisons between both paradigms. This comparison has led to differentiating between the *Bedouin* and *Hadar* traditions. Additionally, this chapter has provided some crucial operative definitions, as it is essential to indicate the specific meanings of key concepts such as “modernity” and “tribalism.” The relationship between tribalism and modernity, and the impact of this relationship on Qatari women, will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. The next chapter will look at the different works that have been produced on this topic to help provide a methodical answer to our thesis’s research question.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Qatar: A Modern Tribal Society

The Qatari community is comprised of various tribes based on patrilineal linkages. Despite possessing many common denominators structurally, each tribe can be said to have their own indigenous structures and value systems. Qatar is a unique nation due to the continuing existence of tribal units in such an increasingly-modernized state. With the proliferation of the *Hadar* and *Bedouin* tribes, the two main tribal categories in the country, Qataris are culturally and ethnically separated by tribal divisions and interests (Zahlan, 1979).

Although there are existing underpinned social stratifications linked with tribal affiliations, contemporary Qatar society can nevertheless be characterized as a nation of peaceful coexistence. His Highness, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar, was able to maintain a healthy relationship between the many agents in society by liberalizing the country's economy and providing equal rights and opportunities to all of his citizens. Qatar's population is composed of 80% foreign workers (mostly from South Asia) that make up 90% of the total labor force. For the last two decades, Qatar has become a favored preference for many South Asian laborers. This interest of the government to employ South Asians can be rooted to their minimal effect as a dynamic force in changing Qatar's societal order (Colton, 2011). Thus, the foreign workers in Qatar, who come from different cultural backgrounds, have their influence in Qatari society. It is more open to accept and sometimes adopt other culture values and customs rather than the tribal conservative ones.

Ibn Khaldun's model of tribalism accurately describes the conditions in Qatar at present. According to Khaldun, tribal identities are flexible, largely depending on *asabiyah*, or group feeling (IbnKaldun, 2005). *Asabiyah* exists when group members act in cohesion with one another, compelled by obligatory ties which hold the community together and help in achieving common interests over extended periods of time. It can be contended that in Qatar, the existence of tribal affiliations does not hinder progress since the whole nation, regardless of tribal affiliation, is compelled by common tribal codes of responsibility and justice along with those of Islamic law, the *sharia* (Fromherz, 2010).

His Highness, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, can be considered successful in establishing a sense of “group feeling” between the two main tribal categories (the *Bedouin* and *Hadar*) of Qatar. Although the indigenous Qatari nationals only comprise 20% of the population, His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani was still able to provide equal opportunities for them without compromising the opportunities of women and foreign laborers. Tribal affiliations now serve only as social constructs to maintain the indigenous culture of Qatar. For instance, tribal affiliations do not serve a Qatari man or women in the workforce or education, as all Qataris, regardless of tribal origins, have the same right to education and job opportunities.

Women's Role in the Qatari society

There is a lingering debate on what role women can play in Qatari society and whether or not it is essential to educate and empower women. Contrary to popular belief, this opinion of women as inferior beings is not exclusive to Arab cultures and societies, as “Europeans used to have the same opinion of women that we have today: that women are inferior due to their mental deficiencies, their low status in religion, and their primary role as temptresses and agents for the Devil” (Amin, 2005). However, this traditional view has drastically changed in the West and is

impressively improving in the East with the passing of time. Many women's rights advocates and intellectuals in the Arab world have showcased the importance of women's participation in society. In his book, "The Liberation of Women," Qasim Amin⁴ (2005) discusses why it is important for women to be active and educated participants in society. He argues that "women comprise at least half the total population of the world. Perpetuating their ignorance denies a country the benefits of the abilities of half its population, with obvious negative consequences" (Amin, 2005). These consequences may disrupt the wheel of development in the country, especially as "[t]he status of women in any society clearly reflects the degree of development of that community" (Abu Saud, 1984). These developments are seen in women's active and effective roles in building their communities. Thus, educating women is a vital step towards empowering them, for "[a] woman needs to be educated so that she can have understanding and a will of her own" (Amin, 2005). Education is therefore crucial in order for women to effectively participate in society.

As a rising economic power on the international scene and an influential powerbroker at the regional level, Qatar has taken great strides to cultivate its status as such. Aside from improving infrastructure to manage natural gas extraction from extensive natural resources, the Qatari government has also committed itself to elevating the status of women in society.

To be sure, Qatari women's status in their respective society does not differ from other women's status in many other parts of the world, since "[t]he question of domination of men is in every society [and] the difference is in the degree" (Abu Saud, 1984). However, through education, elite women have emerged competing for public appointments with men and have participated actively in various public platforms. Habib reported in the *Gulf News* that "[m]ore

⁴ Qasim Amin (1865-1908) is known as the first Egyptian modern Arab writers to treat women's issues.

Qatari women are joining the labor force amid expectations by the government to have their participation rate in the labor force reach 42% by 2016” (Habib, 2011). Through the establishment of the Women’s Affairs Department in 1996 by the council of ministers, women have been able to find jobs that better suit their nature. In addition to this, an Affairs Committee, which is affiliated to the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, was established in 1998. This committee proposes policies, plans and programs required to upgrade women’s potential culturally, economically and politically. It also encourages women to participate and take up jobs in public institutions. For example, women can now run as candidates for public office or vote in elections. Moreover, in the field of education, there are more than 50% of women working in schools both as administrative and staff members. Since the 1960s, women have also been found in health sectors, including central labs, food control and vocational health services. Nowadays, women represent 21% of the total public health workers.

Qatari society is certainly shaped by tribal values and social norms that affect the position of women in it. Despite the government’s efforts to empower women, “Qatari women face certain restrictions in their freedom of movement. While foreign women may obtain a driver’s license, Qatari women are required to have the permission of their male guardian” (Breslin & Jones, 2010). Thus, in many cases, the law codifies the traditional tribal laws. Women are also greatly influenced by their tribal culture, and the “Qatari government takes a mostly hands-off approach in addressing women’s social and cultural issues, tradition and customs continue to control the extent of women’s activities at home and in the community” (2010). However, Qatar’s entrance into a transitional stage of development and modernization due to its booming economic growth, the spread of technology and communication, and recent political

developments has affected the position of Qatari women, resulting in several social changes, incremental or otherwise (Abu Saud, 1984).

Position of Qatari Women in Society

The overarching goal of this study is to examine the positions of Qatari women in society. Moreover, this study will shed light on tribalism's traditional customs and values and their impact on Qatari women today. In order to effectively do so, it is only necessary that a review of previous studies on women's roles and participation in education, the workforce and family be conducted.

Education

Before Qatar's oil boom, and due to colonial obstacles, Qatari women experienced a different model of development from other Gulf countries. The traditional schooling for Qatari women was through private religious education, which was available to girls in both urban and suburban areas. Progressive educational development was accompanied by the commercial production of oil. By 1949, Qatar had begun providing 32,000 barrels of petrol per day. During this time, the Qatari government "was very committed to establishing a modern social infrastructure in the country and opened the first regular boy's school in 1952. The first girl's school followed in 1955 and was directed by Amnah Mahmoud al-Gidah⁵. By then, the memory of pearl diving as a primary means of income in the country was fading away" (Talhmi, 2004). According to Abu Saud, the Qatari women's position had remained unchanged for a long time until 1955, since before then only religious education was available and "[t]he idea of women's education was very controversial when it first came into existence" (1984). The tribal traditional society of Qatar found it culturally inappropriate for women to join modern schooling in place of

⁵ Amnah Mahmoud al-Gidah was the first female government employee.

the traditional mode. However, the first girls' school, founded in 1955, "enrolled 50 students that were taught by one teacher" (Talhami, 2004). In 1961, secondary schools for girls were opened as well. However, Qatari women began their secondary education years later than their male counterparts; however, "[a]fter a slow start in the 1960s, female enrollments grew and, by the late 1970s, began to surpass those of men. By 1978, more girls than boys were graduating from high school" (Bahry & Marr, 2005). As a result, education is now one of the most essential of government priorities.

The emergence of oil brought with it new changes that clearly reflected the Qatari socioeconomic dynamic, as the level of awareness and importance of the women's role in society increased (Imadi, 1999). On June 27, 1995, His Highness, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani, became the formal ruler of Qatar. He envisioned Qatar to become a more democratic society by facilitating the establishment of democratic institutions, including the efforts to support women in uplifting their status and role in society.

Over much of the past decade, the number of Qatari female students has increasingly outnumbered that of their male counterparts. This educational revolution has caused the entrance of female labor in the Qatari labor market. In her article entitled *The Social Effects of the Educational Revolution in Qatar: A Gender Perspective*, Jakobsen (2010) describes the increasing participation of women in the productive sphere as a result of the government's efforts to improve the status of women in Qatari society. The government has spent a lot of resources in its efforts to sensitize the public on the need to have proper education for the girl-child. The result has been encouraging with a recorded increase in enrolment of girls, especially in government-funded schools of basic and higher learning.

Through the efforts of Sheikh Hamad's wife, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned, Qatar became the center of quality education in the Middle East. Sheikha Mozah's efforts became well appreciated by Qatari women who were encouraged to enroll in educational institutions supported by the Qatari government. Statistics from Qatar University show that 77% of the total population of students are female. Aside from this, statistical data also portrays the excellent performance of women in the fields of Business, Economics, Engineering and Law (Jakobsen, 2010). In *Women's Rights in the Middle East and Northern Africa*, a report shows that "[e]mployed women [in Qatar] tend to be highly educated compared to their male counterparts" (Breslin & Jones, 2010). Noticeably, Qatari "[w]omen's outstanding achievements in academia indicate that society has put credence in the idea that education will eventually lead to gender equality" (2010). Many young Qatari women also believe that education is one of the primary tools of change that can be used to achieve gender equality in the country.

According to the Qatari embassy, the workforce at the Ministry of Education alone consists of 52% female workers, while 50% of Qatar University's administrative and staff members are also women. In their study, *Qatari Women in the Workforce*, Felder and Vuollo (2008) recognize the significant effects of education on the women in Qatar and their efficient participation in the workforce:

"...Qatari women...are better educated than Qatari men, they are entering the labor force in increasing numbers, they are ambitious to succeed and advance, and once employed they tend to persist in their professional commitments even through child-bearing years" (2008: 1).

Throughout the Arab world, one of the most pressing issues has been that of illiteracy – a particularly pressing issue for women, as it affects them more than their male counterparts. Felder and Vuollo (2008) argue that this is no longer the case in Qatar. Through the enactment of policies, primarily oriented at improving education among women, the country has been able to produce female graduates equipped to navigate through the international economic market (2008).

Article 49 of Qatar’s constitution grants the right of compulsory and free education up to the secondary level for all Qatari citizens. “The government emphasizes the importance of education for the continued economic growth of Qatar, and beginning in 2001, the Supreme Education Council spearheaded intense reform efforts for the primary, secondary, and post-secondary education system” (Breslin & Jones, 2010). The creation of Education City in Doha “aims to attract leading US universities and diversify the offerings of educational programs in a variety of fields perceived as facilitating the emergence of a skilled and competitive labor force fit for a ‘knowledge economy’”(Davidson & Smith, 2008). Education City universities include Texas A&M University, Weill Cornell Medical College, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Virginia Commonwealth University, Carnegie Mellon University, Northwestern University, HEC Paris, University College of London, and the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies.⁶ Gender segregation does not apply to all universities in Qatar; “[t]he entire public education in Qatar is segregated by gender, and Qatar University has separated campuses for men and women. However, foreign universities within Education City are not required to be gender-segregated” (Breslin & Jones, 2010). The introduction of mixed-gender universities in Qatar has

⁶ Qatar Foundation.
<http://www.qf.org.qa/education/universities>.

had a considerable impact on changing women's roles in the country, as more female students from different tribal origins and backgrounds are applying each year. Families have not only been accepting the notion of mixed-gender classrooms, but they are also encouraging their daughters and sisters to appear in local newspapers highlighting Qatar's booming education sector.

Despite the Qatari government's support for women's education, women are still challenged by traditional tribal values and customs. According to Almalki (2010), "Some families impose on women certain traditional attires to study or work in mixed gender environments. The 'niqab' or face cover has been very popular in the last decade or so among Qatari working-women and has been a topic of controversy...However, the 'niqab' can be seen as a direct result of women leaving their private spaces and being exposed to men...giving them the opportunity to participate in the public sphere without crossing any traditional boundaries." Thus, some Qatari women are faced by several conditions when it comes to their right to study or work in a mixed gender community, beginning with their dress code. However, it is worth highlighting that teaching was the first traditionally-acceptable career for women, especially by strict tribal communities. According to the Planning Council's data, as cited in Felder and Vuollo (2008), "53 percent of Qatari women held jobs in education in 2004." Clearly, women tend to be more involved in the field of education as it is an acceptable career path in Qatari culture. However, Dr. Loulowah Al-Misned's study, *Educational Policies And Their Role in Increasing Women's Productivity*, as cited in Abu Saud (1984), stresses on the "need for more variety and specialization at university level, as, according to her, this is an essential prerequisite for women's contribution to development. Most women graduate as qualified teachers (a trend that is also prevalent in the West), but there is an urgent necessity for women to devote their talents

to other fields.” It is important to note that this study was written well before Qatar’s educational reforms, as, according to Almalki (2010), reforms in education are the reforms that have benefited women in Qatar the most. Women’s involvement in studying law, politics, engineering and other majors have become more acceptable to Qatari society since these reforms. In late 2008, “women were accepted into the electrical engineering program at Qatar University for the first time...The University also recently permitted women to study architecture and chemical engineering for the first time” (Breslin & Jones, 2010). In 2006, Qatar University established an International Affairs program where “[a]nnually 40 female students and 20 male students are enrolled in the program” (Qatar University, 2011). The number of female students registered for the new majors at Qatar University are unequivocally more than the number of male students. However, “the fields that women can enter are still limited and some jobs are not considered socially acceptable” (Almalki, 2010). Accordingly, this study will next examine Qatari women’s position in the workforce.

Workforce

In the past, it was deemed culturally inappropriate for Qatari women to work outside of their homes:

“In the sixties and early seventies, Qatari women were simply not expected to go out and take a job. Their basic role was believed to be in the house, as it was the husband’s obligation to provide for the family. During this time, the women who did work were mainly the widowed or divorced. The early seventies was the time when social schemes and the developing educational process began to affect the nature as well as the pattern of women’s work” (Abu Saud, 1984: 177).

Over the past 25 years, however, Qatar has been witnessing a great increase in the numbers of working women. Additionally, there are positive changes in the attitude of Qatari society towards this new phenomenon of working women. However, despite the increasing numbers of working Qatari women over the past two decades, their roles continue to be scrutinized by conservative ruminations:

“Qatar is still a conservative society, to be sure, and the issue of women working remains sensitive, especially among a minority – both men and women – that is resistant to change. Those who object to women working usually give several reasons. One relates to sharia, or Islamic law. In one way or another, working women have to deal with men, something that, in this view, is forbidden (haram). People who adopt such a view feel that a women's place is in the home, raising children and caring for the family. A second reason for opposition to working women is encompassed in the word ayb (shame), a concept springing from tribal values” (Bahry & Marr, 2005: 4).

Words like *‘ayb* (shame) or *haram* (forbidden), which hold religious connotations, are often used by tribesmen when it comes to women’s issues in Qatar. Accordingly, Chapter 4 of this study will discuss in more detail the differences between religion and culture and how both concepts are sometimes misread in Qatari society. Nowadays, there are “some Westerners [who] still argue that Islam negatively influences girl’s access to education. In answer to that, a clear differentiation should be drawn between religion and culture” (Abu Saud, 1984). Many cultural traditions are falsely linked to religion, when in fact these traditions usually take root absent of any religious influence.

In 1997, the Qatari government enacted its “Qatarization” policy to increase the percentage of Qataris in the workforce. The policy aimed to employ at least 20 percent of the total employees in every sector as Qatari nationals. The splendor of this policy lies in its fair treatment of women, as all Qataris are eligible to for social benefits regardless of gender and their place of work. This feature of the policy encouraged private employers to hire not only men but also women, thereby creating greater equal opportunities between the sexes (Felder & Vuollo, 2008: 5-6). Additionally, the Civil Service Act (Law No. 1) and the regulations provided by the Council of Ministers (Order No. 13) institutionalized gender equality in the Qatari workforce. The legislation also gave women access to retirement benefits with Law No. 24 of 2002 (the Pensions Law). Generally speaking, through the enactment of various legal aids to protect the rights of Qatari women in the workplace, their labor status is relatively advanced compared to other women in the region.

This progress is precisely because of the Qatari government’s recognition of the importance of education, without which there would be no real improvement in the social status of women in Arab countries (Al-Qazzat, 1977). Qatar also expects an increase of female participation in the workforce by 42 percent in the year 2016. This dramatic increase in women’s participation in the workforce entails a huge cultural shift in Qatari society. The government has prepared itself for such an expectation by through the 2009 Law on Human Resources Administration, which aims to provide women a 60-day maternity leave, two hours per day for a year allotted time for breastfeeding, and also allows women, whose children are disabled and under the age of six, to be entitled to extended care leaves (Tuomi, 2011).

Despite the government’s efforts to empower Qatari women and more actively involve them in the labor force, women have been confronted with anachronistic tribal customs and

values that make it challenging for a working woman to balance between tradition and modern life. The notion of “[w]orking women [is] not universally accepted. In fact, the phenomenon has led to cases of divorce. Some women have insisted on holding their jobs over the objections of their husbands. Some men, complaining that their wives did not have enough time for them, have taken a second wife” (Bahry & Marr, 2005). Regardless of these obstacles, many women remain employed in education, health care and clerical professions – fields that are mostly gender segregated (Breslin & Jones, 2010). To be sure, there are many previous factors that have limited Qatari women’s participation in the workforce that have been overcome. For instance, “younger women seem less concerned about working in mixed-gender environments and less likely to accept that they must make a choice between family and career” (Felder & Vuollo 2008). The younger generation of Qatari women is clearly more ambitious about their education and careers than the previous generations.

Statistically, employed Qatari women tend to be more highly educated compared to their male counterparts (Breslin & Jones, 2010). In addition, interviews conducted with employers in Qatar have indicated that the “employers interviewed seemed to think that Qatari women worked harder than men and also reported that women were more responsible and had a keener disposition to work. Some employers seemed to have recognized the change in women’s own expectations and attitudes, and were willing to encourage their full participation by means available to them” (Felder & Vuollo, 2008). But despite the number of highly-skilled and educated working Qatari women, they are only “slowly growing [and] so too are occupational choices, and a small percent of women are now doctors, lawyers, and police officers” (Breslin & Jones, 2010).

It is important to note that the total number of Qatari women participating in the

workforce is 37.2 percent, compared to 89.3 percent for men (2010). And “according to statistics, there are 456 Qatari women with leadership positions in the society. However, this number represents only 3% of the total Qatar female labor force, and 9% of the total female labor force in the governmental sector. Statistics further showed that only 22 women occupy high political or leadership positions” (Al-Ghanem, 2008).

Table (1)

Distribution of leadership civil service positions according to gender for the years 2001-2004

Position	2001		2004	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1- Minister	32	0	42	2
2- Undersecretaries	18	3	38	1
3- Assistant undersecretaries	20	1	31	1
4- Secretaries of the ministry	5	0	2	0
5- Ambassadors and	115	0	148	0
6- General managers	92	1	98	2
7- Directors and heads	52	8	55	15
8- Assistant directors	64	9	56	11
Total	398	22	470	32

Source: Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Planning Council, Man and Women in the State of Qatar - Statistical Overview - April 2006.⁷

In research conducted concerning Qatari women and leadership challenges, Dr. Kaltham Al-Ghanem indicates that the main obstacles preventing Qatari women from reaching leadership positions are:

⁷ Al-Ghanem, Kaltham. "Qatari Woman and Leadership Challenges." Supreme council for family affairs, 2008. <http://www.scfa.gov.qa/studies/more/57>.

- Customs and traditions 23.7%
- Husband's disapproval 22.9%
- Mixing with males 15.8%
- Long hours spent outside the house 15.7%
- Institutions 'lack of interest and trust in hiring women for leading positions 13.5%

Clearly, customs and traditions are the main hindrance facing women from occupying leadership positions.

Family

Intrinsically linked with the increase in labor participation is the Qatari woman's struggle to balance work and family responsibilities – the 'dual burden.' In 2001, the country's workforce consisted of 27% female workers, which rose to 36% in 2008 and steadily glided in 2009. Now with the expected 42% of women participating in the workforce, the role of Qatari women in the family becomes an increasingly important focal point (Tuomi, 2011).

A survey conducted by Dr. Nizam Khan et al. (2011) determined the status of women in Qatari society based on three indicators, namely: (1) the women's participation in household decision making; (2) women's freedom of expression of opinions; and (3) women's freedom of movement. The first indicator is of importance at this point in determining the role of women in family matters. The survey shows that 39% of women make household decisions alone without the consent of men, while 59% prefer to make joint decisions with their husbands. Meanwhile, only 3% of women are entirely subjugated by men in terms of economic decisions in the household. These findings show a surprising improvement in the status of Qatari women in

society and highlight their increasingly progressive roles within their family units (Khan, et. al., 2011).

The survey also concluded that 88% of Qatari men agree that women have the right to express their opinion even when they disagree with their husbands, whereas 89% of women agree to the same thing. Qatari women's participation in household decision-making is also shown to be high, along with the respondents' attitudes towards women's participation in these sorts of affairs. Respondents' attitudes towards women's freedom to express their opinions are also positive. A key finding also suggests that educated respondents were more supportive of women's freedom to express opinions in the household decision-making process.

Based on these statistical analyses, the role of women in the family is likely to change together with the improvement of their status in society, prospects which are bolstered by their increasing levels of education and wider participation in the workforce. Unfortunately, women's political participation in Qatar is repressed by their own families and remains marginal at best (Eltahawy, 2007).

Women's Participation in the Municipal Council

In 1999, the Qatari government passed a law allowing women to vote. At the time, Qatar was the only country in the Arabian Gulf to grant women's suffrage (Noris, 2004). The ability of Qatari women to actively participate in politics ensures that their issues are addressed and their current status in society is retained. Not long after this monumental law, women were also given the right to run for office, but no woman candidate won until the 2003 municipal elections.

The October 2009 issue of the Egyptian women's magazine *Her* published an article about Sheikha al-Jufairi, the first Qatari woman ever to win a position in the Central Municipal

Council (CMC) in 2003 (Jakobsen, 2010). For her part, Al-Jufairi vehemently opposes the proposal to establish a quota system that would reserve seats for women in the CMC. According to her, “Both men and women should run for elections, and the decision concerning who should be in the municipal council left to the voters.” In an interview with Qatari Tribune’s Aisha Sidahmed (2011), al-Jufairi elaborates on her belief that Qatari women have proven their worth and therefore do not need special treatment in the CMC vis-à-vis a quota system: “I wanted to change the way our community views women and prove that men and women are equal.” (Sidhamed, 2011).

In March of 1999, “only six women ran for CMC elections [and] none were able to get enough votes to be elected...What has failed women is not only their inexperience in running their own campaigns, but the culture that stifled them from reaching out to the public, both men and women...The traditional culture that is prejudiced against women has won back then” (Almalki, 2010). Thus tribal customs and values played a decisive factor in not accepting the involvement and participation of the Qatari women in the CMC. Obviously, women needed help and support not just from the government, but also from society. In 1999, “Dr. Khaled Bin Jaber Al-Thani, deputy chairman of the permanent election committee in Qatar, spent about three years preparing 150 Qatari women to run for their country’s municipal elections in April...[b]ut none of the six women candidates who ran that year [were] elected” (Eltahawy, 2007). According to Mona’s Eltahawy⁸ (2007) article, *Families Stop Arab Women Achieving Real Potential*, Qatari women failed to win the first round of elections because their own “families didn’t want them to

⁸ Eltahawy is an Egyptian journalist who writes on women’s issues. She currently writes for Qatar's *Al Arab*, *The Jerusalem Report*, *The Washington Post*, *Metro Canada* and the *International Herald Tribune*.

compete,” as most of Qatari families live in a relatively conservative society that follows tribal customs and values (Craze & Huband, 2009). However in 2003, Shaikha Al-Jufairi was the only female candidate that had won the second election of the municipal council.

In an interview with *Al-Qabas* newspaper, Shaikha Al-Jufairi stated that there are still men in Qatari society who tend to follow tribal values when they are dealing with women. However, despite tribalism and male domination, women in Qatar now have their own voices and have the capacity to make their own decisions (Idaabes, 2007).

Government Support for Qatari Women

The Qatari government has been actively supporting the development of Qatari women for years now, mainly due to the initiatives of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned, the wife of the Emir. Her Highness has been engaged in women’s welfare activities in Qatar, especially in establishing educational institutions to uplift the knowledge of every Qatari woman and child.

In 1996, the Women’s Affairs Department (WAD) was established by the Council of Ministers to promote jobs that are compatible with Qatari women’s role in society. The WAD is also responsible for the development of policies regarding maternity and childcare services, including proposals to raise the standards of competence and potential among the women of the country.

Based on the enacted laws and government efforts, women are given particular precedence in the field of education. The laws and policies supporting the welfare of Qatari women specifically emphasize their role in the development process by promoting their potential culturally, economically and politically. The Qatari government sees the potential of Qatari

women to be successful in key positions in society and on the international scene, therefore upholding their general rights as both women and citizens of Qatar (Brewer, 2007). In February 2001, Dr. Ghalya Bint Mohammad Al-Thani became the first Qatari member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Qatar Supreme Council for Family Affairs (QSCFA) was also established in 1998 by decree of His Highness Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani. QSCFA “works in collaboration and coordination with the cabinet, the ministries, public corporations, and various councils and institutions” (Karoly & Mattock, 2006). One of the Council’s achievements is in “[l]aunching an initiative to develop women’s sports in the State of Qatar, through the decision of the Chairman of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, issued in 2000 and establishing the Girls Sports Committee” (Supreme Council for Family Affairs). The QSCFA’s main goals concerning women are as follows: “To work for the empowerment of women and their participation in the social, political, and economic life...[and to] improve the conditions of working women” (Karoly & Mattock, 2006).

In an interview with Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs Noura Almalki with *The Peninsula* newspaper,⁹ she stated, “The council is keen to encourage women’s roles in all sectors but we should also consider the responsibilities of women in families. It is necessary to support women to balance between the work place and their basic role as housewives” (*The Peninsula*, 2010). Despite its hybrid emphasis on traditional modalities (i.e., women’s “basic roles”), the Supreme Council for Family Affairs remains one of the government’s most powerful mechanisms for the empowerment of Qatari women. “The objective of the Department of Women is to empower women and increase their participation in

⁹ *The Peninsula* is a local Qatari newspaper.

the economy and public life. The department is interested in general indicators of women's status, social status indicators, education and labor indicators, and indicators of participation in civil society. Current areas of focus include assessing the status of women's health, compensation for women in cases of wrongful death, women's rights under civil law and status law, women in high positions of authority, women in self-employment, and the wellbeing of Qatari women married to non-Qatari men" (Karoly & Mattock, 2006). Additionally, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs also empowers men and children.

Women in the Qatari Media

Qatari media has been gender-biased for the longest time, primarily because of male domination in the profession of journalism. However, recent developments (as mentioned above) regarding women's ascendancy in Qatari society have necessitated the call for more women to participate in the media enterprise.

The Qatar Professional Women's Network (QPWN) recently conducted a forum entitled "Educating Women as Professional Journalists: A Journey in Empowerment," where the leading women journalists of the country were invited to speak about the role of women in the media. The QPWN indicated that 37% of the stories in the Qatari media are written by women while 67% percent are written by men, according to the Global Media Monitoring Project. Studies also show that stories written by female journalists consist of more female content and are normally focused at challenging stereotypes, whereas men were found to write mainly about political issues (*The Peninsula*, 2011).

In her article, *What Stifles Qatari Women?*, Almalki (2010) wonders: "When all visual and print media are owned by the government, why aren't they then furthering the government's

agenda of empowering Qatari women?...Shouldn't there be a responsible media in such transitional phase complementing the government's efforts in promoting equality between genders and acceptance of the new generation of working women?" (Almalki, 2010). Therefore, Almalki therefore thinks that there is a "lack of a planned media strategy in promoting new women's role." Media plays a significant role in empowering women; however, the Qatari media is not following a responsible plan or strategy to empower Qatari women according to several studies, including Al-Ghanem's (2008) study. And while many of the abovementioned studies stated that Qatari women are supported by the Qatari government, they are still nonetheless challenged by their families and traditional communities which put several conditions and limitations on their modern roles.

The topics mentioned above, especially the topics covering Qatari women's roles in politics and the media, as well as the government's support of Qatari women, will be explored further over the next chapters in tandem with quantitative and qualitative analyses. It is apparent that many previously-cited studies and works discussed women's roles and the relationship between tradition and modernity. However, this study's uniqueness lies in testing whether or not *Bedoium* and *Hadar* tribes behave differently or similarly with regards to the role of Qatari women in today's society. Accordingly, the next chapter will discuss research methodologies and the results.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Results

Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the dual impact of tribalism and modernity on Qatari women and their increasingly-salient roles in modern society. Is tribalism a barrier to modernity in the Qatari society, or can the two concepts coexist? Furthermore, what is the impact of this duality on role of Qatari women? Qatar's state-run newspapers and national television rarely discuss issues concerning the role of Qatari women and the challenges facing young women in Qatar. The tribal traditions and values impacting Qatari women, which function as a hindrance to modernity, is a topic that has been considered taboo to be discussed openly. Therefore, this study relies on specific primary and secondary sources of information such as surveys, interviews and newspaper articles in order to examine the impact of tribalism and modernity on the role of Qatari women today. Other sources of information used in this paper are books, journal articles, websites, questionnaires and academic reports. Those who dare to speak about this issue are mostly foreign writers who have been living in Qatar, such as Abeer Abu Saud, author of "Qatari Women: Past and Present," as well as Qatari writers who have been living and studying abroad, such as Amina Imadi and Amal Almalki.

Both qualitative and quantitative research techniques are employed throughout this paper. The importance of choosing a method is to identify how the research question will be answered. The focus of this study is on how Qatari women are in a constant struggle between tradition and

modernity. The aim here is to uncover how, if at all, Qatari women are able to simultaneously cope with the demands of the modern community as well as those of their tribes.

Definition of Terms

It is important to establish operational parameters to some terms that may bring about confusion, particularly with regards to “tribalism” and “modernity.” Tribalism simply comes from the word “tribe,” which is a loosely localized group of people whose bonds are based on kinship; additionally, tribe members consider themselves to be culturally distinct from other groups (Miri, 2004). In essence, tribalism entails the act of belonging to a tribe as a unit of identity, which is usually through blood heritage. The two main tribes to be discussed in this study are the *Bedouin* and *Hadar*. Modernity, on the other hand, is characterized by capitalism, democracy, globalization and the broadening of social relations. It relates to the current era and its progressive tendencies (Eisenstadt, 1966). Modernity thus entails new ways of thinking and the utilization of new and emerging technologies.

Research Design

This study uses the descriptive method for its research methodology; this entails gathering information about the present existing condition (Day, 2008). The emphasis in this method is placed on describing, as opposed to simply judging or interpreting. The descriptive method’s main aim is to verify the formulated hypotheses that give the picture of the current situation in order to better illuminate it. This method was favorable in that it is most practical in terms of societal aspects. Additionally, this method is flexible, particularly as some other important issues and questions arose during the study time; the descriptive method thus allowed the study to make further investigations along the margins when necessary.

This approach helps give detailed information concerning the nature of the situation and the way it exists during the duration of the study. It also helps in exploring the causes of a given phenomenon (Ethridge, 2004). With descriptive research, the study is capable of getting an accurate profile of the people being studied as well as the events or situations of the study. Particularly, it helps in obtaining first-hand information from the respondents – these pieces of information will later be used in formulating rational and sound conclusions as well as suggestions vis-à-vis the overarching thesis.

In terms of context, this study employs descriptive research methods so as to identify the impact of tribalism and modernity on the role of Qatari women at present. The aim of the study is to determine how a new era of modernity had changed the role of Qatari women in the Qatari tribal society. It sheds light on these women who are confronted with the duality of modernity and tribalism. Consequently, this study also touches on the impact of educational, political and social reforms vis-à-vis the status of Qatari women. The descriptive method here proved appropriate, since this method is generally used in gathering data in the prevailing conditions.

The quantitative method that was used is centered on the quantification of the relationship between the variables. When quantitative methods are used, the study cannot determine the outcome of the research since it is detached from the research. Measurements including numerical data and various statistics are the main substances relied on in this research method (Kumar, 2005). For instance, the total number of those who supported the idea that Qatar is a tribal society was 11; 3 viewed it as a modern society; and 50 said it is both tribal and modern, for a total of 64 respondents with 1 person skipping the question. In addition to the above mentioned benefits of this approach, it also gives a detailed description of a phenomenon

and a generalization of the gathered data with provisional data. It thus prevents bias in gathering and presenting data.

The qualitative approach used in this research relied on verbal information rather than numerical values as shown in the quantitative method above. This method uses content or holistic analysis in explaining and comprehending research findings – the use of inductive reasoning (Richards & Renandya, 2002). A qualitative approach provides valid and reliable measurement that can be generalized with clear anticipation of cause and effect (Lang, 2010).

It was decided to include this approach in the study because of its significant advantage; it proved more open to changes and refinements of researched ideas as the study progressed. The methods of gathering data in this approach are centered on the understanding of the occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring states (Bui, 2009). This method made the research setting more realistic, something which we cannot obtain solely through quantitative measures. It allows for a holistic presentation of the phenomena under investigation.

Participants

The personality questionnaire does play a considerably important role in carrying out the human resource process, and for this reason the study had 68 male and female Qatari respondents from both the *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes who participated in this research. In order to get pertinent information, the study imposed certain inclusion criteria. The participants qualified for sample selection had to (1) be of Qatari origin; (2) and have experienced both traditional and modern Qatari society. As a result, age was a factor to be considered. With these qualifications applied, the participants were then capable of understanding the nature of the personality questionnaire and its impact on the whole of Qatari society, allowing them to accomplish the

survey item without difficulties (Lang, 2010). The structured interview method was used in interviewing Qatari female and male students from Qatar University and Georgetown University in Qatar who were both asked the same format of questions. The interviews were conducted using questionnaires addressed to a sample of 20 female and male students. They were divided into 5 *Bedouin* males, 5 *Bedouin* females, 5 *Hadar* males and 5 *Hadar* females. An online survey was also sent via email to a number of Qatari males and females that come from both *Hadar* and *Bedouin* tribes.

Instrument

The interviews and the online survey questionnaires were the main instruments used in gathering data in this study. In the interview conducted, there was a section that was set for respondents to indicate their perception on personality questionnaires to examine how different tribes think individually. The questionnaire was made up of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. The respondents' choices represent how they view a given set of statements or questions. The multiple-choice questions fall under the profile section, highlighting socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender and tribe. In addition, the respondents were also asked many questions about their attitudes toward Qatari women's empowerment, how they evaluate and support Qatari women's political participation, their acceptance of a mixed gender society, and their opinions on how both *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribesmen empower their women. The purpose of the questions raised to Qatari students is to evaluate and compare both answers that are coming from the *Bedouin* and *Hadar* backgrounds. The outcome of these answers will show how *Bedouin* and *Hadar* people deal with women's issues in Qatar.

The online survey questionnaire enabled a quantitative approach in an effective way by using statistics for data interpretation. The questionnaire was also tested before it was used for actual research. It was tested on 10 respondents, who did not become part of the actual study. Test respondents were also asked for any suggestions they had which may help in the improvement of the instrument prior to the actual administration of the survey. The questionnaires were then revised based on their suggestions and excluded those questions that seemed irrelevant; additionally, those questions with difficult terminologies were simplified.

Ethical Considerations

There are a number of ethical issues that were considered during the study, mainly for the purposes of securing the safety and privacy of respondents in the study. The participation of respondents was purely consensual and confidential. To ensure the consent of respondents, the main details of the study were relayed to them (i.e., the purpose and aim of the study). Respondents were informed that their participation was purely voluntary and that they were at liberty to withdraw at any time. Participants were also assured of their confidentiality by explaining to them that their names and personal information would remain private. The respondents will thus be identified by their tribal category and gender along with an arbitrary number for the sake of differentiation (e.g., **Hadar male respondent 1**).

Data Collection

This paper also employs existing sources to explore what is already known about the modern roles of Qatari women today and how it is affected by tribalism. This paper will also highlight how women are empowered in Qatar and the implications this may have on their modern role. The data is collected through an online survey and structured interviews with Qatari students. The respondents completed the survey online by using a widely-used online survey

service: www.surveymonkey.com. Survey Monkey places all the results into a spreadsheet format so it may easily be merged into SPSS for statistical analysis. The online survey was completed by 68 respondents. The online survey was sent via email to a number of Qatari males and females that were chosen at random from both the *Hadar* and *Bedouin* tribes. It was also sent to the author's Facebook friends from Qatar who took the initiative to complete the online survey. The survey was posted online on May 2, 2011.

The structured interview method, on the other hand, interviewed male and female Qatari students from Qatar University and Georgetown University in Qatar; both groups were asked the same format of questions. The interviews were conducted using questionnaires addressed to a sample of 20 female and male students from both universities. They were divided into five *Bedouin* males, five *Bedouin* females, five *Hadar* males and five *Hadar* females. Questionnaires were distributed to Qatari students from both genders and tribes and they were interviewed on staggered dates – for Qatar University, the interviews took place on April 25, 2011; for Georgetown University, the interviews took place on June 13-14, 16 and 18, 2011. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this research. “Qualitative research methods include observation, interviews, surveys, and focus groups. In contrast, quantitative research depends on numerical data” (Maimon, Peritz and Yancey, 2010). Therefore, data was collected through document analysis, interviews, surveys and observation.

Results

The results are based on an online survey that was sent to different Qatari males and females from different tribal origins via email. The survey resulted on the following findings:

1. Is Qatar a tribal or modern society?

Response Percent			Number of Participants	
It is tribal	It is modern	It is both tribal & modern	Answered question	Skipped question
17.9%	4.5%	77.6%	67	01

2. Do you think that *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes in Qatar act differently or similarly towards accepting women's liberation and modernity?

Response Percent		Number of Participants	
Differently	Similarly	Answered question	Skipped question
74.2%	25.8%	66	02

3. Is there a misunderstanding or mixture between religion and tribal values and customs in Qatar?

Response Percent		Number of Participants	
Yes	No	Answered question	Skipped question
81.6%	18.4%	49	19

4. Is there an acceptance for a mixed gender society (School/Work.) in Qatar?

Response Percent			Number of Participants	
Yes	No	Maybe in future	Answered question	Skipped question
32.8%	43.3%	35.8%	67	01

5. Do you think that tribal customs and values have an impact on women's roles in Qatar?

Response Percent		Number of Participants	
Yes	No	Answered	Skipped question

		question	
89.2%	10.8%	65	03

6. Is it a negative or positive impact?

Response Percent			Number of Participants	
It is negative	It is positive	It is both	Answered question	Skipped question
19.0%	25.4%	58.7%	63	05

7. Do you accept and support the political participation of Qatari women?

Response Percent		Number of Participants	
No	Yes	Answered question	Skipped question
26.2%	73.8%	65	03

8. Does the modern law in Qatar support tribal traditions and customs?

Response Percent			Number of Participants	
Yes	No	Sometimes	Answered question	Skipped question
29.7%	23.4%	46.9%	64	04

9. Who empowers women in Qatar?

Response Percent						Number of Participants	
Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned	Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani	Dr Khaled Bin Jaber Al-Thani	Sheikha Al-Misned (QU dean)	Supreme Council for Family Affairs Qatar	No one	Answered question	Skipped question
93.6%	44.7%	2.1%	10.6%	6.4%	00	47	21

Structured interviews were made with students from Qatar University on April 25, 2011; they were given a questionnaire paper to fill in as well. The interview was made with eight students: four of them are male students divided into two *Bedouin* and two *Hadar*, and the other four are female students divided into two *Bedouin* and two *Hadar*. The importance of these interviews is to show how both genders from *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes respond to the modern roles of Qatari women and the impact of tribal values and customs. The same format of questions was asked to both female and male students.

Hadar male respondent 1 is a male student at Qatar University. He thinks that the *Hadar* are becoming more open than *Bedouin* tribes in accepting the modern role of Qatari women. He stated that *Bedouin* view women who work in a mixed gender workplace or who study in mixed-gender classrooms as inappropriate and shameful. He added that women are empowered by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned, the Emir's wife, and Sheikha Al-Misned, the Dean of Qatar University. **Hadar male respondent 1** believes that since Sheikha Al-Misned was appointed as the Dean of Qatar University, more Qatari women staff joined the university. He also pointed out the importance of the new educational reforms in changing Qatari women's roles, as it has been resulting in more openness and acceptance of women's modern roles in competing with Qatari men in building the country. **Hadar male respondent 1** supports Qatari women's political activities and their running for elections. However, when he was asked if he would allow his wife, sister or mother to run for elections, his answer was no. The reason he gave for not accepting his female relatives to run for elections was that it is against tribal values and customs. He preferred that his female relatives work in a traditionally-accepted career, such as a teacher or doctor. **Hadar male respondent 1** condones

the appearance of Qatari women in the media; however, this does not apply to his female relatives for the same reason mentioned earlier.

Hadar male respondent 2 is another male *Hadar* student who agrees with his colleague that *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes act differently concerning the modern role of Qatari women in society. **Hadar male respondent 2** mentioned that *Bedouin* and *Hadars* have a slight difference in their traditions. He added that Qatari women are empowered by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned and the reforms that Qatar has been experiencing resulted in empowering women. In addition, he responded that the reforms have a positive impact on Qatari women's roles, particularly as they have allowed Qatari women to hold leadership positions. In his opinion, change is a gradual process and Qatari women will achieve their goals with time. When asked if there is an acceptance for a mixed gender society, **Hadar male respondent 2** responded that there is a relative acceptance but not a full one. He supports women running for election, even if she is a member of his family, because he thinks that change starts from within. He prefers Qatar University to be a mixed-gender university. **Hadar male respondent 2** also believes that there is a misunderstanding, as well as a mixture between the two concepts of religion and tribal values and customs. He ended the interview by hoping that there will be more support and empowerment for women, starting with their families.

The third interview was done with **Bedouin male respondent 1**. He believes that *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes are similar and that they both support the modern roles of Qatari women. He stated that the society is integrated as a result of inter-marriages between *Hadar* and *Bedouin* tribes. **Bedouin male respondent 1** added that Qatari women are empowered by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned. However, he believes that Qatar is still a male-dominated society ruled by men. He does not accept a mixed-gender society. In addition,

he supports women running for elections, but this acceptance does not apply to his female relatives, as he does not accept his female relatives to be in the media and to reveal their faces to what he refers to as “strangers.” He believes that tribal traditions and customs still affect women’s roles in Qatar.

Bedouin male respondent 2 is another *Bedouin* student from Qatar University who believes that *Hadar* tribes have different views regarding the modern role of Qatari women in society. According to him, *Hadar* tribesmen have more acceptance and openness towards women’s modern roles than *Bedouin* tribesmen. Similar to the previous interviewees mentioned above, **Bedouin male respondent 2** agrees that Qatari women are empowered by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned and that the new reforms lead by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifah Al-Thani and his wife have been changing women’s roles for the better. When **Bedouin male respondent 2** was asked about the influence of tribal customs on modern laws, he replied that laws for the Qatari women’s benefits, and not the opposite, now influence modern laws. **Bedouin male respondent 2** is supportive of women’s modernization and modern activities; however, he does not support the notion of a mixed-gender society. In addition, when he was asked if he would vote for a woman one day, his answer was no for the reason that tribal customs and values do not allow voting for a woman. For him, the male is the figure for decision-making.

Qatar University female students, both *Bedouin* and *Hadar*, agreed on the following questions: (1) The four female students agreed that there is a significant difference between *Bedouin* and *Hadar* traditions vis-à-vis their acceptance of women’s modern role in society; (2) the four female students stressed the importance of education as a key factor to every ambitious Qatari woman to achieve her goals (for them, gender equality can be achieved through

education); (3) they also agreed that the Qatari society is still a male-dominated and tribal society; (4) moreover, tribal customs and values that hinder women's achievements have not yet ended, although they have been weakened, especially since women in Qatar are becoming more empowered through government support thanks to Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned, the Emir's wife.

In addition, a questionnaire survey form was distributed to Georgetown University students in Qatar on June 13-14, 16 and 18, 2011 along with an in-depth interview. Students were asked a number of questions relating to the research topic. This was done with 12 students divided into 3 *Bedouin* male participants, 3 *Bedouin* female participants, 3 *Hadar* male participants, and 3 *Hadar* female participants.

Hadar male respondent 3 believes that Qatari society is 80% modern and 20% tribal. He also added that there are *Bedouin* who are more *Hadar* than the *Hadar* themselves and *vice versa*. **Hadar male respondent 3** also strongly believes that the *Hadar* and *Bedouin* tribes are now having marriage ties which make their cultural values and customs interact. However, according to him, the *Hadar* treat women's issues differently than *Bedouin* families. *Bedouin* families are more protective and conservative when it comes to women's issues compared to the *Hadar*. **Hadar male respondent 3** believes that Qatar's modern society has now more of an acceptance of a mixed-gender society in classrooms and workplaces than it did 10 years ago. He added that he accepts women's political participation as long as the candidate, whether male or female, is qualified. However, when he was asked about how he can measure women's political participation in the municipal elections, he replied that we have nothing to compare these accomplishments to as women's political participation is a fairly nascent phenomenon. **Hadar male respondent 3** also added that Qatari women are empowered by the Qatari government.

Hadar male respondent 4 has a contrasting opinion on the Qatari society. He sees it as a tribal society, especially when it comes to family issues and things related to women in the family itself. He also believes that it is still a male-dominated society where men are still the decision-makers. **Hadar male respondent 4** added that there is a slight difference between the *Bedouin* and *Hadar* customs and traditions due to their different heritage and historical backgrounds. He explained, however, that to this day, the strict Qatari tribal society will see it as inappropriate for a male tribesman to say his sister's, mother's or daughter's name in public, especially to other men, even if they are close to him or his friends. He added that he accepts Qatari women's political participation as long as the candidate is qualified. However, **Hadar male respondent 4** thinks that the political role of Qatari women is more figurative than instrumental. In addition, **Hadar male respondent 4** sees that the Qatari law today follows tribal traditions and values. For instance, Qatari women are required to have written permission from their male guardian (e.g., father, uncle or husband) in order for them to have a driver's license. **Hadar male respondent 4** believes that women's empowerment from tribal societies is moving at a slow pace while governmental efforts are moving much more rapidly. He finally stresses on the importance of reputation for a tribe which can only be maintained when they follow tribal customs and values, even if it sometimes goes against Islam itself.

Hadar male respondent 5 believes that the Qatari society is a mixture of both tribal and modern society in all respects. On the one hand, it is tribal to the extent that there are areas in Qatar that are named after tribes. On the other hand, it is a modern society because of the increasing number of foreign laborers and expats who force the tribal society to be more open by meeting other people from different cultures and interacting with them. This impacts the local Qatari people from different tribes and causes them to be more open and accepting of women's

modern roles. However, it is felt that the tribal society is still the dominant force despite expectations that Qatar will shed what's left of its tribal identity in place of a modern one. ***Hadar male respondent 5*** added that the *Hadar* and *Bedouin* have similar values and customs. However, when it comes to women's issues, *Hadars* are more "open-minded" than the *Bedouin*. The *Bedouin* society is more strict and conservative about women's issues, according to him. ***Hadar male respondent 5*** supports a mixed-gender society but within a certain framework and to a limited extent. He also believes that the position of Qatari women has been tipping towards modernity, particularly as women are now capable of holding leadership positions. In addition, the *Bedouin* now express greater acceptance of women's modern roles than ever before, particularly with the observation that their daughters are now joining mixed-gender schools, universities and workplaces. ***Hadar male respondent 5*** also accepted the political participation of Qatari women if said candidate(s) is/are qualified. He believes that Qatari women are empowered by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned who broke a taboo by appearing on national television for the first time, a watershed moment which had an impact on both *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribal societies.

Bedouin male respondent 3 believes that Qatari society is a mixture of both *Bedouin* and *Hadar* societies as well. However, he thinks that *Hadar* and *Bedouin* tribes have different values that differ from one tribe to another. He truly believes that the treatment of women nowadays has more to do with the immediate family rather than tribal roots. Two brothers do not necessarily provide their daughters with the same rights. ***Bedouin male respondent 3*** thinks that there is a high acceptance of a mixed-gender society today; and though there are some who are conservative, he also believes that the more educated the person is, the more he or she accepts the mixed society they are living in. However, there are some taboo issues such as not allowing

women to drive, but he thinks this is changing with the emergence of a more educated youth. Another issue is the way of dress for women – that is, wearing the *abbaya* – but the same could be said about the men, with the expectation of wearing a *thobe*. In terms of municipal elections, he accepts women's participation as long as they are participating in political elections for the cause of developing their respective areas. However, he does not accept it if they are using it as a means to prove to others that a woman can do it or if they do not have a long-term plan. However, in terms of sincere political participation, he accepts and supports it. Political participation in the municipal elections can be measured and evaluated today by how effective Qatari women are at their jobs. **Bedouin male respondent 3** thinks that women are empowered by education; the more educated a woman is, the more aware she is of the potential input she can provide for her community. Tribalism can hold back women's advancement in Qatar. However, this also depends on the family she comes from. Being from a certain tribe does not necessarily mean that she can or cannot do what she wants – it depends on the direct family. According to him, modern tribal families do not hinder the advancement of women.

Bedouin male respondent 4 also believes that Qatar is a mixture of both tribal and modern societies. He added that *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes have different values especially when it comes to women's rights to drive and work or study in a mixed society. He also thinks that the *Bedouin* tribe exhibits more solidarity than the *Hadars*. Additionally, the acceptance of a mixed-gender society depends on the family itself and not the tribe and their perception on modernity. **Bedouin male respondent 4** supports Qatari women's political participation. He added that empowerment lies in the effort of the individual and not the society as a whole. **Bedouin male respondent 4** believes that tribalism does not hinder the advancement of women in Qatar.

Bedouin male respondent 5 considers the Qatari society to be a mixture of both tribal and modern societies. However, *Hadar* tribesmen empower and support their women's modern roles more than *Bedouin* tribes, according to him. This also depends on whether you are an educated or uneducated *Hadar* or *Bedouin*. The majority of the *Bedouin* families are now strict when it comes to women's issues, especially regarding their participation in a mixed-gender society. However, there are small *Bedouin* groups that agree with women's involvement in mixed-gender schools or workplaces with certain limitations. **Bedouin male respondent 5** believes that the impact of tribal customs and values is a negative impact when it comes to women's rights. These values sometimes limit women's choices in life, according to him. He also added that he does not accept women's political participation for the current period but may do so in the future, the reason being that Qatar is still currently a male-dominated tribal society. He added that women now are empowered by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned and that empowerment extends from the government and not the tribe itself.

Bedouin female respondent 3 believes that Qatar is a tribal society. She added that being attached to tribal customs and values depends on the individual himself and not his tribe. **Bedouin female respondent 3** believes that there is not a full acceptance of a mixed gender-society today. She believes that tribal customs and values protect women rather than harming them. She also supports women's political roles. However, she believes that there is no way to measure and evaluate the Qatari women's participation in the municipal elections as the municipal elections is a fairly new experience for both men and women. She also added that modern law follows Islamic law and not tribal law. For her, Qatari women have been empowered since the 1960s and it is not a topic that should be discussed. **Bedouin female respondent 3**

believes that tribalism does not hold back women's advancement, as women who are wearing the *niqab* are still studying and working.

Bedouin female respondent 4 considers Qatari society a tribal one that does not accept women working or studying in a mixed-gender society. However, *Hadar* tribes can be more understanding than *Bedouin* tribes, and that goes for educational and cultural differences as well. Women's participation in the municipal elections is not really working, according to her, especially since only one woman won since the formation of the Central Municipal Council (Sheikha Al-Jufairi). **Bedouin female respondent 4** thinks that tribalism is holding back women's achievements, especially if we are looking forward to a modern society that is treating everyone equally based on his or her citizenship and not his or her tribe or gender.

Bedouin female respondent 5 considers the Qatari society as a tribal one as well. She believes that the *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes have a slight difference in their tribal traditions and values. However, these differences are no longer seen due to marriage ties between both *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes. She also added that a mixed-gender society is not accepted by the majority.

Hadar female respondent 3 believes that the Qatari society is a mixture of both tribal and modern society and that there are different social norms between both the *Hadar* and *Bedouin* tribes. She also noted that there have been many changes due to globalization and thus the *Bedouins* are now just as educated and civilized as the *Hadars*. In addition, **Hadar female respondent 3** thinks that the acceptance of women in a mixed-gender society is slowly and gradually becoming more accepted. She also supports women's political roles, expressing hope of witnessing more female ambassadors and ministers. **Hadar female respondent 3** stresses the importance of modern values and customs that are replacing the tribal ones.

Hadar female respondent 4 believes that Qatar is a mixture of both *Bedouin* and *Hadar* society. She thinks that both tribes have no different tribal customs and values. Similarly, she believes that both tribes also value women's roles in society. They take different approaches but their goal is one is ultimately to empower Qatari women. **Hadar female respondent 4** thinks that there is now more of an acceptance of a mixed-gender society in classrooms and workplaces than ever before. She thinks that Qatari society is becoming more liberal and open and that the effects of tribalism have been weakened but not eliminated. **Hadar female respondent 4** indicated that the Qatari government provides women with the support they need to achieve their goals. In addition, Qatari families from all tribes are becoming more supportive by sometimes circumventing tribal traditions in order to better enable women.

Finally, **Hadar female respondent 5** believes that Qatar is in fact a modern society. In addition, she thinks that the *Bedouin* still remain strict with traditional customs and values whereas the *Hadar* are shifting to a more modern way of life. Therefore, *Bedouin* women are practicing traditional roles while *Hadar* women are practicing more modern roles. However, **Hadar female respondent 5** is not sure about the acceptance of a mixed-gender society in Qatar. She accepts Qatari women's political roles and she thinks that it is to the benefit of the Qatari government to benefit from her qualifications. **Hadar female respondent 5** stated that Qatari women are empowered by their families and Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Thani who she believes to be an idol of every Qatari woman. However, **Hadar female respondent 5** thinks that traditions and tribalism are not as bad as they are made out to be in the media. Qatari women are required to find a balance between their tribal traditions and their modern role.

To conclude this chapter, the research findings show that the effects of tribalism and traditional modes on Qatari women have been slightly ameliorated because society better

understands the need to treat Qatari women in the same way that they would treat Qatari men. Qatari society understands the need to grant opportunities to women in social, educational and political fields (Pfeffer & Behera, 1999). The stated objective of the study was to determine Qatari women's balance between strict tribal customs and their contributions toward a modern state, as well as to shed light on their predicament. Through its hands-on approach, this study made Qatari women realize that they have a role to play in changing the societal view from a traditional perspective to a modern one. The methodology applied in the study also proved successful. For example, the quantitative method helped in measuring how people thought and felt about modernity and tribalism in the Qatari society, whereas the qualitative method provided us with an overview of the effects of Qatari culture, values, systems, attitudes, behaviors and aspirations. *Bedouin* and *Hadar* male students' answers differed markedly, as *Hadar* were seemingly more open to accepting women's modern roles and a gender mixture in the workforce and classrooms, while *Bedouins* were more conservative concerning women's issues in Qatar. However, both female *Bedouin* and *Hadar* students' opinions were nearly identical as they both supported the modern role of women in Qatar.

Chapter Four

Analyzing Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Common attitudes

Throughout the study, Qatari students from the *Bedouin* and *Hadar* from both genders were interviewed. The particular type of interview employed in this study was the structured interview and respondents were exposed to the same questions. “[S]uch interviews are capable of producing the same result when given to similar individuals” (McNeill & Chapman, 2005). As a result, all five *Hadar* male respondents who were interviewed agreed that there is indeed a difference between *Hadar* and *Bedouin* customs and values, especially when it comes to women’s right and issues. The other five *Bedouin* respondents agreed on the same topic; however, one respondent disagreed by indicating that *Hadar* and *Bedouin* customs and values are more or less the same. We can conclude that there exists a general common attitude among the males in both tribes that there is indeed a difference between *Bedouin* and *Hadar* customs and values – that the *Hadars* are more open and liberal while the *Bedouin* tend to deal with women’s issues with a more conservative or strict attitude.

Another common attitude is that the two *Hadar* male and the two other *Bedouin* male respondents from Qatar University had similar attitudes about the prospects of a mixed-gender society in Qatar. The two male *Bedouin* respondents did not feel that there was an acceptance for a mixed-gender society in Qatar, whereas the other two *Hadar* male respondents felt that there is not yet a complete acceptance for such a notion. However, the other six respondents from Georgetown University in Qatar held different attitudes, whereby both *Bedouin* and *Hadar* male

respondents felt that there exists a general acceptance for a mixed-gender society. Another common attitude is that all five *Bedouin* respondents agreed that Qatar is a tribal and male-dominated society. In addition, they all agreed that there is a slight difference between *Hadar* and *Bedouin* customs and values, especially when it comes to women's issues.

All 20 respondents believe that Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned is an idol to every Qatari woman, viewing her at the forefront of notable figures that have been empowering women throughout the country. In addition, the online survey indicated that 93.6 percent of the respondents believe that Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned is responsible empowering Qatari women.

The online survey indicated several common attitudes between both tribal categories and genders. The majority of the online respondents agreed that Qatari society does not accept a mixed-gender society, although they did believe that Qatar possesses elements of both a tribal and modern society. The majority of the respondents also accept Qatari women's political participation.

Differences

As a result of observation, we can conclude that *Bedouin* males from Qatar University tend to be more strict and conservative towards women's modern roles than a *Bedouin* male from Georgetown University in Qatar. For instance, ***Bedouin* male respondent 1** from Qatar University supports women running for elections, but this acceptance does not apply to his female relatives as he does not accept his female relatives to be exposed in the media and to reveal their faces to what he refers to as "strangers." He also believes that tribal traditions and customs still affect women's roles in Qatar.

Differences in opinion are clear, as 17.9 percent of respondents viewed Qatar as a tribal society whereas 4.5 percent viewed it as modern. However, 77.6 percent of respondents viewed Qatari society as an amalgam of both tribal and modern elements. In addition, there is a difference in attitude relating to tribal implications on the rule of law, with 29.7 percent respondents agreeing that the law supports tribal customs and 23.4% disagreeing.

Discussion: Forces of Change in Qatar

Education has been highlighted as a universal right, for both men and women. An enduring adage states that if you educate a woman, you educate a nation. Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned seems to be a champion of this maxim, as she strongly advocates the empowerment of Qatari women, specifically through education. Women empowerment is a strategy led by the Qatari government in order to enable Qatari women to participate effectively in their society.

The survey results in this paper indicate that 93.6% of the participants believe that Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned is one of the outstanding figures in the country who has been empowering Qatari women through the use of many tools, but particularly through education. In addition, all the Qatari female students that have been interviewed at Qatar University look up to Her Highness as a role model. On December 19, 2003, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned addressed the graduating class of 2003 at Texas A&M University in Qatar by mentioning the following:

“If we want to improve women’s status, we have to improve the status of each member in the family. All family members need to be educated and aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. To make this brief,

it is in my opinion that issues related to women's development must be viewed in a holistic manner within the context of the family and the society at large. Women have full rights to participate in the society in any context they choose, and, at the same time, the society must preserve the traditional respect for the role of women at the center of family. It is women's choice, when educated to be aware of her rights and privileges, to choose whichever path of participation she wishes, knowing that whether she decided to run for office, serve as a minister in government, head a university, or stay at home and focus on her family, her role and participation will be equally valued" (Supreme Council for Family Affairs:2006).

Equity requires giving Qatari women both the choice and freedom to choose her own path unencumbered by tribal restrictions. Her Highness stresses the importance of education to develop women's situation in the country, and this applies to educating both men and women equally. It is a basic fact that women in Qatar are thirsting for education, but at the same time they do not want to simply abandon their traditional cultures. Education City was thus built with an aim to empower Qatari women while at the same time respecting their culture and traditions.

The word "empowerment" is the act of giving someone power to do something, or enabling someone to do something (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami, 2002). When we talk about empowering Qatari women, such a notion entails not only giving them the freedom to do as they please, but also providing them with the tools for self-sustainability as well as giving them the knowledge that they require in order to handle the encounters of today. The aim of empowering

Qatari women is thus to expand their roles in society and to modernize them without abandoning their tribal traditions and culture.

Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned

Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned was born in 1959 in the city of Al-Khor in northern Qatar. She married the Emir in 1977 while she was attending Qatar University (QU) and in 1986 she received a BA degree in Sociology from Qatar University (Orr, 2006).

Sheikha Mozah also held title of President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs from 1998-2009. She is now the Chairperson of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development since 1995. Additionally, she is Chairperson of the Arab Democracy Foundation, Vice-President of the Supreme Education Council, and was UNESCO's Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education in 2003. Currently, she also serves as a member of the Board of Overseers for Weill Cornell Medical College. Additionally, she is also currently Chair of Sidra Medical and Research Center in Doha and the organization Your Link (Ikhlas, 1996).

Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned has been a high-profile figure in Qatar's politics and society, and has been actively involved in Qatar's government (1996). She was a driving force behind Al-Jazeera's Children's Channel and Education City. Additionally, she has been named as one of Forbes' 100 Most Powerful Women at number 74 (Anderson, Seibert & Wagner, 2007).

Qatar Foundation

Founded in 1995, the Qatar Foundation focuses on community development, education and scientific research. It is a private, chartered, non-profit organization chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned. Qatar Foundation houses Education City, home to

Qatar's many universities, as well as the famous Programs Park, which has more than 21 companies focusing on scientific research, education and community development. The foundation's objective is to make lives better and easier through developing initiatives via Al-Jazeera as well as joint venture partnerships in areas of management, ICT, telecommunications policy studies and design assistance with fulfilling the main aim of the Qatar Foundation (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami, 2002).

Main missions for the Qatar Foundation, particularly for children and women, include:

- f Creating cultural programs and awareness through the Al-Jazeera channel.
- f Assisting in provision of housing and accommodation for specific people, in addition to orientation services and subsequent care.
- f Providing legal assistance and recommendations targeting groups exposed to abuse.
- f Constructing rehabilitation centers for victims who have been abused.
- f Introducing strategic local, regional and international partnerships.

Education City is an initiative of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. Located in Doha, Education City covers 14 square kilometers and houses educational facilities from school age to the research level, as well as branch campuses of some of the world's leading universities (Barakat, 1993). Education City introduced the first mixed-gender schools and universities in Qatar, as the traditional tribal customs and values before did not allow for coeducational facilities.

The main objective of the facility is to offer excellent education to students throughout the region by offering them with a wide range of disciplines. The highlight of Education City is that its main goal is to enlighten both men and women on the advantages of women

empowerment through opportunities and liberties which have been denied to them for centuries. With this aspect in mind, Education City will still uphold the cultures and beliefs of the Qatari community.

Education City also offers employment to Qatari men and women through a variety of courses. Education City is operated by both men and women who assist with decreasing the gap of gender discord as they learn to appreciate one another by working together (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami, 2002). Education in Qatar affords women with equality as well as intellectual ability to work in their own fields of interest. This is not only beneficial to the adult women, but also for Qatar's younger female generation. The successful women become role models to the younger generations; in turn, this motivates them to go to school at the required age and to pursue higher education. Previously, some majors were reserved strictly for men. In Education City, however, women have the right to study politics, sociology and economic so that they are able to distinguish the difference between the cultures that oppress them and those that protect them (Keddie, 2007).

To be sure, men and women are not equal in terms of opportunities for scientific study abroad, and there is little diversity in such opportunities available to women. The numbers of female students sent to study outside the country increased to 33% in 1997; by 2001, that figure had increased to 37 %. However, male students still enjoy a greater range of opportunities to study abroad than their female counterparts. This situation does not indicate an official policy so much as a cultural reality bound up with the situation of women in society and their limited freedom to travel, be it for scientific or professional reasons. Education City has attracted a growing number of women who have earned respectable professions and advanced their careers thanks to the commitment of Education City to challenge and change their lives (Anderson,

Seibert & Wagner, 2007). The Qatari government also gives scholarships to both men and women equally. However, due to tribal customs and values, Qatari women are sometimes not allowed to travel alone unless they are with a *mahram*, or “a man's close female relatives.”¹⁰

Supreme Council for Family Affairs

The Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA) in Qatar was founded in accordance with the Emir’s Decree No. 53 of 1998. The decision to establish the Council came as an embodiment of the political leadership's aspiration to have a supreme national authority in charge of the affairs of the Qatari family and the empowerment of women. A body that cares for the Qatari family examines its reality, diagnoses its ills and needs, and at the same time fulfills its aspirations. The Council is directly attached to His Highness the Emir. It seeks to adopt policies, lay out plans and programs, and launch initiatives that may contribute towards preserving the family unit as a structure by working for the development of its capabilities and protecting its members (Heper & Israeli, 1984).

In 2009, His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani issued Decree No. 15 of 2009 which reorganized the Council. This decree served as a vehicle for the renewal and restructuring of SCFA’s vision. Its new role is focused on planning and strategy, formulation and policy analysis, legislative analysis, research, and oversight, all in the areas of family affairs. As such, it had become a crucial part of Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030).

¹⁰ "Mahram." In **The Oxford Dictionary of Islam**, edited by John L. Esposito. **Oxford Islamic Studies Online**, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1391> (accessed 03-Jun-2011).

The SCFA guarantees the protection of women in Qatari society and enhances the role of women politically and economically. The Council is also responsible for compliance with international conventions and charters and is responsible for representing Qatar in international forums related to its relevant scope, including the empowerment of women. Additionally, Qatar has joined the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2009. Qatar also entered into many reservations with respect to CEDAW. These include articles 2, 9, 15, 16 and 29 of the Convention. Many of these reservations were made on the grounds that certain articles may run counter to Shari'a and the normative Islamic ethos. Women's issues have also been included among Qatar's developmental priorities and are high on the agendas of decision-makers. Since 1995, the country's legislation has been amended extensively. In tandem with the evolving attitudes towards the status of women, the Qatari government has undertaken additional spending for programs relating to the advancement of women in the fields of health, education, vocational skills, and social matters in general; additionally, many institutions concerned with women's issues have been upgraded and overhauled, such as the SCFA.

In its capacity, the Council has assumed responsibility for women's issues, replacing the Women's Directorate within the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. Moreover, the past few years witnessed vital developments that have had a substantial impact on the strengthening of the role played by Qatari women in their society. One of the developments has been the increasing number of women holding leadership posts compared to the preceding period. For example, a woman minister of education was recently appointed in Qatar, a first not only for Qatar but for the entire Gulf region. Women now occupy a variety of other important and influential posts as well. In general, it can be said that the period here under review has been

marked by greater participation by women in public life. Much of the credit goes to the leadership role played by Her Highness, Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned.

Qatari Women in Leading Positions

The presence of women in leadership positions is a strong benchmark for gender equality and the equal opportunities afforded to both men and women in the field of decision-making. This equal opportunity indicates fair distribution of developmental benefits in Qatari society. In the past few years, Qatari women have been empowered and supported by their government to hold different leadership positions in education, politics, health, economy, sports, law and media. Here are some of the successful Qatari women that have held leadership positions in the past few years:

f Sheikha Ahmad Al-Mahmoud

Sheikha Ahmad Al-Mahmoud was the first female to occupy the position of minister in not only Qatar, but also the entire Gulf region. In 2003, she was appointed to the post of minister of education. She has been deputy minister of education since 1996, in addition to being a highly-experienced and qualified teacher (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2006).

• Dr. Sheikha Al-Misned

Dr. Sheikha Al-Misned is the first female to hold the presidency of Qatar University, a position she has held since 2003. “Professor Al-Misned received her undergraduate training at Qatar University where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Education (1977), and subsequently a diploma in Education in 1978. She then enrolled in doctoral studies at Durham University in the United Kingdom, where she was granted the title of Doctor of Philosophy in

Education in 1984” (Qatar University). She is on the board of directors of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and is a member of the Supreme Education Council, where she continues to be an active Qatari female figure in the area of educational developments (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2006).

- **Sheikha Al-Jufairi**

Sheikha Al-Jufairi made history by being the first woman to win a seat on Qatar’s Central Municipal Council (CMC) in 2003, and she remains the only Qatari woman elected to the Council.

- **Sheikha Hessa Bint Khalifa Al-Thani**

Sheikha Hessa Bint Khalifa Al-Thani is an English literature graduate, and she has a Bachelor of Arts degree in art and education from Qatar University. She also has a Masters degree in social planning. “In July 2003 the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Anan, appointed Sheikha Hessa Bint Khalifa Bin Ahmed Al-Thani as Special Rapporteur on disability to the Commission for Social Development at the United Nations for a term of three years” (2006). Sheikha Hessa Al-Thani was also Vice President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs ranked Minister and was Vice President of the National Committee for Special Needs.

- **Dr. Ghalia Al-Thani**

Dr. Ghalia Al-Thani was the Head of Pediatrics Hamad Medical Corporation and she was appointed Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the National Health Authority in 2005.

Additionally, Dr. Ghalia Al-Thani is the Vice-President of the National Human Rights Committee (2006).

- **Dr. Lulwa Bint Abdulla Al-Misned**

Dr. Lulwa Al-Misned was the first Qatari woman to attain a doctoral degree in economics from George Washington University in 1990. She is the “Assistant Secretary General for Investment Promotion and Economic and Industrial Researcher at the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting (GOIG)” (2006). During the period from 2002 to 2005, Dr. Lulwa Al-Misned was also a member of the executive board of the United Nations Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

- **Sheikha Maha Mansour Salman Jassem Al-Thani**

In 2010, Qatar appointed Sheikha Maha Mansour Salman Jassem Al-Thani as the first woman judge in the country's history.

- **Ahlam Al-Manna**

Ahlam Al-Manna is president of Qatar Women Sports Committee (QWSC). She hails many achievements worldwide by winning many medals.

- **Dr. Ilham Bader Al-Sada**

Dr. Ilham Bader Al-Sada is a Qatari radio and television presenter; she presents a well-known daily live radio program entitled *Watani al Habib Sabah al Keer* (Good Morning my Beloved Country) broadcast on Qatar Radio.

There are many Qatari women who are empowered by the government; however, there are still many Qatari women whose ambitions are severely limited by traditional and archaic tribal customs and traditions. Against the backdrop of these problematic cultural and tribal restrictions, the successful achievements of Qatari woman in their society are truly remarkable.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Qatari Women: Between Modernity and Tradition

This study proves that shifting from a traditional tribal society to modern one is a step-by-step process that happens over time. Accordingly, “[t]he process of modernization emphasizes change from one stage of society to the next” (Al-Shawi, 2002). This is due to several internal factors, including technological, economic and political conditions. This study has succeeded in meeting its aim by shedding light on the plight of the Qatari women who are living in a society that is simultaneously tribal and modern – a reconciliation of two odd ends of a spectrum. It focuses on the notion of empowering Qatari women and their modern role while it is affected by tribal customs and traditions. Education is one of the elements that has affected Qatari women’s position in their society, facilitating the transition from a tribal traditional society to a modern one.

Qatar is a state that is rapidly growing and modernizing as part of a globalized society, but its population has been consistent in maintaining traditional practices and tribal customs. According to Almalki (2010), Qatar’s tribal setting is characterized by the following: the society adheres to traditions and customs; it is patriarchal; and strict religious values play a prominent role in daily life. Women in Qatar face a challenging situation in that they have to find a balance between tradition and modernization. Tradition maintains segregation and opposes a woman’s right to do as she pleases, while modernity encourages a society balanced in gender and encourages female empowerment educationally, economically and politically. Khoury and

Kostiner (1991) highlighted that tribes were essential in Arab Gulf societies in the development of modern nations and in maintaining a monarchy system. The concept of origin (*nasab*) determines social class, history and achievements within the society and will therefore determine social status. Modernity in most Gulf States has come about due to the discovery of, lead to rapid development in many vectors (not just the economy). Modernity in Qatar is reflected in the development of infrastructure, changes in the education system and the establishment of many business entities in the state.

As a result of its inextricable modern condition, Qatar has experienced changes in its social system and is faced with the task of reconciling tradition with modernity. The position of women in Qatar is continuously changing with women competing and actively participating in the modern social environment, which has been facilitated primarily through the vector of education.

Bedouin vs. Hadar: Modernization of Women Role in Society

The aim of this study was to identify the impact of tribalism and modernization on the roles played by women in Qatar. The main question that the research asked is whether tribalism plays a significant role in inhibiting women's participation in a modern society. Traditional customs and values are strong in the country and the study reviewed its impact on a woman's place in a modern society. The research also evaluated the effect of political, social and educational reforms on the status of Qatari women.

Different tribes in Qatar have different ideologies on how a woman should behave and what her duties and privileges in the society should be. Tribes such as the *Bedouin* have strict views regarding what activities a woman can and should participate in; most males in the *Bedouin* tribe

do not want women to work. However, other tribes such as the *Hadars* are less restrictive on women's empowerment. This research investigated women from different tribal backgrounds, assessing the means through which they find a balance between tradition and modernity.

This research aimed to answer the following questions relating to tribalism and modernity in Qatar:

- Are *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes different in accepting Qatari women's liberties and modernity?
- How are Qatari women empowered?
- Is there acceptance of a mixed-gender society in Qatar?

Qatari society is strongly affected by tribes, shaped by tribal values and traditions that affect woman's roles in one way or another. It has been thought that gender segregation is an Islamic value when in fact it is a tribal value. The survey results show that 80.4% of the respondents believe that there is a misunderstanding between the two concepts of religion and tribal customs and values. Qatari women from the *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes are both affected by tribal customs and values; however, this study shows that *Bedouin* tribes are more conservative in their acceptance and openness to women's modern roles than the *Hadar* tribes. *Bedouin* tribes follow tribal customs and values more adherently than their *Hadar* counterparts.

Regardless, the government has been at the forefront of empowering Qatari women through various avenues. Institutions empowering Qatari women are all owned or funded by the Qatari government. Moreover, tribesmen have not been involved in any activities within their tribe to empower their women. The dichotomy is that Qatari women are empowered by their

government while facing several challenges from their tribal communities. Tribal society has been using words like *ayb* (shame) and *haram* (forbidden) to hinder the development of a woman's modern role. However, the Qatari government, through Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned, has supported the empowerment of women through many different means. Consequently, this empowerment of women has become a means of pressure on the tribal society to open up to their women's new roles.

Research Findings

This research has applied descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods in order to attain study objectives. This method was chosen because it is both practical and suitable in analyzing social settings. A descriptive method was used in collecting the data, whereas a quantitative method was used to analyze the data statistically. Finally, a qualitative method was used to interpret the research findings.

Out of 68 respondents who responded to the online survey, 77.6 percent believed that Qatar is both a tribal and a modern state and 17.9 percent believed that it is a tribal state. 81.6 percent responded that a misunderstanding between religion and tribal values and customs exists in the country. Relating to the position of *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes on women's modernity, 74.2 percent said that the two tribes act differently towards women's liberation, while 25 percent believed that the two tribes held a similar view on the issue. 43.3 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that the society in Qatar does not accept a mixed-gender society; 32.8 percent said that it does; and 35.8 percent indicated that there might be an acceptance in the future.

An overwhelming 89.2 percent of the respondents held the view that tribal customs and values had an impact on women's roles in the society while 10.8 percent believed that tribalism

was not a factor in the roles played by women. 59.7 percent said that the impact was both positive and negative; 25.4 percent said the impact was positive; and 19 percent believed that the tribal impact was negative. Additionally, an astounding 73.8 percent of the respondents support Qatari women's participation in politics, with 26.2 percent not supporting gender equity in politics. Relating to laws in Qatar, 46.9 percent believed that the law does occasionally support tribalism; 29.7 percent believed it always does; while 23.4 were of the view that it does not support tribalism. 93.6 percent of the respondents also believed Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Minsed to be main contributor driving Qatari women toward empowerment.

From the interviews conducted with four male and four female participants, the results were as follows: the male participants believed that there was difference in the way *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes acted towards women's empowerment. In general, they do not support the participation of women in politics and believe that Qatar is a male-dominated state. The female participants were of the opinion that relative differences exist in way the two tribes view women's modernization. They believed that education is the main channel through which women in the country can be empowered. They believe that the country is dominated by males and that Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Minsed was the main driver in liberalizing and empowering women in Qatar.

From these results, we can conclude that traditional tribal customs and values have had an impact on women's roles in society. 88.9% of the respondents believed that tribal customs and values impact women's roles, thus indicating that Qatari women's participation in modern practices and areas is influenced by traditional values. It is evident that tribalism and tribal affiliations affect women's roles in modern society with a majority of the respondents believing that there is a difference in how *Bedouin* and *Hadar* tribes act in regards to women's

empowerment and that there is a difference in views and attitudes towards women's empowerment amongst the two tribes.

The research contributes to cultural modernity theory which can also be referred to as a human development perspective. There are four theories explaining gender equity and they include economic modernity, cultural modernity, historical legacies and institutional design perspectives (Alexander & Welzel, 2011). This research contributes to cultural modernity theory that identifies links between social modernization values that propel social reform through changes in existing challenges that hinder social change. The research contributes to the theory by identifying tribalism and traditional values as factors that determine women's social, political and educational statuses.

Achievements and Barriers to Women's Empowerment in Qatar

The main achievement in the state is the use of education as the principle strategy to promote and enhance women's empowerment within Qatar. In this regard, Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misned has played a significant role in promoting the education of women. Educating women is the first step towards liberating them from archaic traditions which forbid their equal participation in education, politics and social participation. The creation of bodies such as the Qatar Foundation and the Supreme Council for Family Affairs has greatly promoted gender equity among the Qatari population.

However, barriers to women's empowerment exist due to various factors. These factors include social constraints such as traditional customs and values that prohibit a woman from actively participating in modern society; tribalism is a major factor determining the role of women in society, and retrogressive views or beliefs will hinder the liberation of women.

Another key barrier is a lack of knowledge among the population concerning gender equity. Education is the key in providing people with the capacity to identify that women should not be limited to a certain social status.

Why the State of Qatar supports Women Advancement ?

One this research results indicates that the Qatari government has been supporting and empowering the Qatari women to overcome their tribal customs and values that might limit their advancements in a higher than their tribal societies. Comparing to other Gulf States the Qatari women can work and study in a mixed gender Universities and workplace, they can vote and stand for elections, they can drive, and they have been in leading positions in the country, while women in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to drive, work in a mixed gender workplace, study in a mixed gendered societies, and can't stand for elections. The Qatari government is playing a major role to be part of the international community and have signed several international conventions that protects women. Thus, the State's aim is to be part of a globalized modern community while respecting tribal traditions. The harmony between traditions and modernity is clearly seen in the Qatari society.

Research limitations

The research methodology is limited in a few ways. The first limitation is that the number or sample of participants in the study is numerically small; this could thus lead to an overgeneralization. There were only 68 questionnaires and 20 interviews. While this number is relatively small, it provides us with research clues that can be further expanded and inform subsequent narratives. The other limitation is the method used to analyze the data; the analysis does not provide any variations or deviations that could have existed in the data collected. Proper statistical analysis provides a variance of data collected.

Further research can be encouraged to identify specific tribal customs and values that affect women's liberation and modernization. This can provide the direct challenges that inhibit modernity. Further research can also be carried out to determine the extent to which women are influenced by traditions in a social setting.

Prospects of Modernity in Tribal Society

The main question that has been addressed is whether the Qatari woman is playing a tribal or a modern role. The study results show that Qatari women are in fact playing both roles. They are playing their modern role while simultaneously maintaining their tribal customs and values. Tribalism is no longer hindering Qatari women's modern roles. Through empowerment, women are now allowed to practice their modern role which they could not practice before due to tribal customs and values that traditionally prevented them from working in a mixed-gender workplace or stand for elections, among other things. However, the relative openness and acceptance of Qatari women's roles differ from one tribe to the next. For instance, *Bedouin* tribes are more conservative when it comes to the issue of women being exposed to unknown men while working or studying in a mixed-gender society, while *Hadar* tribes have come to accept Qatari women's modern roles, more or less. Unlike other Gulf countries, the Qatari government is unique in that it has empowered Qatari women fairly rapidly while overcoming tribal paradigms.

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Appendix I: Survey Questionnaire

1. What is your age group? Please circle

- 18- 21
- 21-25
- 25-30
- 30-40

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3. To what tribal category do you belong?

- Badouin
- Hadar

4. Is Qatar a tribal or modern society? Why?

- Tribal society
- Modern society
- A mixture of both tribal and modern society

5. Do you think Hadar and Bedouin tribes in Qatar have different values and customs? If yes, how?

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.....

6. Do they both treat women's issues and modern roles similarly or differently? Explain how and why?

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7. Is there now an acceptance for a mixed gender society (School/Work.) in Qatar? If not, why so?

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8. What impact does tribal customs and values has on Qatari women's role today?

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9. Do you accept and support Qatari women's political participation? If not, why so?

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10. How can women’s political participation in the municipal elections be measured and evaluated?

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11. Does the modern law in Qatar support tribal traditions and customs? If yes, how so?

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12. How women are empowered in Qatar and by whom they are empowered?

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13. Does tribalism hold back women’s advancement in Qatar?

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