DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FEMALE IDENTITY WITHIN OFFICIAL ISIS PROPAGANDA

by

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ABSTRACT

MEGHAN ELIZABETH COUGHLIN. Discursive Construction of the Female Identity within Official ISIS Propaganda. (Under the direction of DR. PILAR GARCÉS-CONEJOS BLITVICH)

Having created a dominant online media strategy, ISIS (The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) has used the internet in order to spread its narratives beyond its geographical constraints to the largest possible audience. To this audience, they provide an ISIS-constructed identity of the ideal Muslim, and within that, the ideal Muslim woman. By incorporating the theoretical frameworks of Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and van Leeuwen (2008), this study focuses on the specific discursive processes of female identity construction found within ISIS's digital magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. Through this framework and analysis, this study found that through strategies such as othering and religious justification, ISIS has constructed a female identity which is submissive to Allah, strictly observant of religious duties, and necessary to the successful continuation of the caliphate. Additionally, this study revealed how in constructing a more inclusive identity which places a heavy emphasis on the necessity of travel to the caliphate, ISIS is able to successfully appeal to Western audiences and recruit individuals to physically join the organization.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"It's not my role to set off bombs…I have a weapon. It's to write…You can do many things with words. Writing is also a bomb" Malika El Aroud (Sciolino & Mekhennet, 2008, NYT).

Known as one of the most prominent and successful Al-Qaeda affiliated 'internet jihadists', Malika El Aroud gave a chillingly accurate explanation of the power of language when weaponized. With the accessibility of the internet, terrorist organizations have been able to reach beyond their borders to a far broader audience where they are able to plant their extremist ideologies and recruit for their cause. To this day, their greatest weapon is language; it has the ability to inspire and instill fear, often simultaneously. Whether it be through social media channels and YouTube, or online forums and digital magazines, terrorism has commandeered certain areas of online discourse with impressive results.

The growing reliance of such groups on online communication brought with it an increase in opportunities for the participation of women within terrorism, particularly through recruitment efforts as women have greater access to information through online sources. The roles of women within religious terrorism organizations are "multifaceted" (von Knop, 2007, p. 398), and though they have been prominent players within terrorism for decades, this participation continues to generate shock in the Western world. The unfamiliarity of images and reports of female suicide bombers and young jihadi brides challenges our understanding of femininity and the female identity, and we struggle in our need to dissect their motives so as to better understand how these women should fit within our social constructs.

This study seeks to better understand the construction of the female identity within the propaganda of the so-called Islamic State.[1] Having created a dominant media strategy including the heavy use of social media, online publications, and YouTube videos of Islamic teachings and executions, ISIS has used the internet in order to spread its narratives beyond its geographical constraints to the largest possible audience. To this audience, they provide an ISIS-constructed identity of the ideal Muslim, and within that, the ideal Muslim woman. While women, such as El Aroud, occasionally make a very public show of their support within their organization, von Knop (2007) notes, "even when women are invisible for the world audience they play an essential role in the short- and long-term survival of the terrorist organization" (p. 398), particularly through their support of the home.

A corpus of 10 issues of the ISIS-produced digital magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* were selected for examination. Each of these digital magazine issues contains an article written for or by women and addresses a female audience. Using theoretical frameworks proposed by van Leeuwen (2008) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005), this study will describe the ISIS-constructed female Muslim identity as well as how that specific social actor is represented within propaganda directed at a female audience.

Chapter 2 covers a review of relevant research surrounding online discourse with a focus on narrative within terrorist propaganda and the ISIS media strategy. I then review the process of identity construction within discourse as well as the research questions to be addressed. An explanation of the methods used in order to conduct this

[1] Throughout academic research, this organization has been referred to by the following names: Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and its Arabic acronym, Daesh. For the remainder of this study, unless referenced within direct quotations from outside sources, the organization will be referred to as ISIS.

study will be found in Chapter 3 along with a review of the theoretical framework applied to the data compiled in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 includes concluding remarks as well as the implications of this study in understanding the specific female Muslim identity constructed and promoted by ISIS.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The role of the internet in terrorist operations

The United States has long accepted the fact that terrorist organizations are not without the capabilities and understanding of modern technology. The internet plays an essential role in the success of modern terrorist operations, particularly in the sophistication with which they are able to produce and deliver propaganda. As the data collected for the purpose of this study was originally published (and continues to remain solely available) digitally, it is important to understand the digital environment it fits within and the scale of audience it has the potential to reach. As we acquire new levels of communication, these online tools and platforms will inevitably be used against us. And yet, the terrorists' use of the internet can just as easily work as a gateway for intelligence (Vindino & Hughes, 2016).

In April 2019, after having spent the previous five years in hiding, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the former leader of ISIS, appeared in a video in which he addressed his followers, acknowledging the success of recent attacks and insisting on the continuation of their fight (Hubbard, 2019). The group began as an off-shoot of al-Qaeda, officially accepted into their parent organization and named al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2004, but separated soon after due to the conflicting strategies and extreme brutality with which the then leader Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi operated (McCants, 2015). Zarqawi proclaimed statehood in 2006, and though he was killed in an attack by the United States soon after, those inspired by his particularly violent jihadism continued recruiting support and gaining momentum until reappearing on the global stage in 2013 (McCants, 2015).

While ISIS's physical presence on the battlefield demands attention with its extreme brutality, the greater threat lies in their presence and impact within the information environment and their use of information warfare in order to reach their maximum potential audience. The Department of Defense (2016) defines the *information environment* (IE) as "the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information" (Department of Defense, 2016, p. 3). It goes without saying, the IE is vast and dynamic, and open to any actor who understands the process (and power) of providing or denying information, so long as they have the means to access it.

ISIS operates within an "*information operations* (IO) architecture that is based on…dissemination of their messages via multiple media platforms" (Lorenzo-Dus & Macdonald, 2018, p. 79). The Department of Defense defines IO as "the integrated employment during military operations of information-related capabilities, in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own" (Department of Defense, 2016, p. 3). Perfectly in line with ISIS's strategy, the Department of Defense states, "IO integrates the application of force and the employment of information with the goal of affecting the perception and will of adversaries" (Department of Defense, 2016, p. 3). With these intentions, the distribution of information remains highly controlled. The success of ISIS's IO lies in its utilization of a "tri-tiered media architecture" (Ingram, 2015, p. 735), which includes 'official' channels of communications, such as online publications created by one of their various media wings and "designed for transnational audiences" (p. 734); local publications such as billboards, posters or radio broadcasts; and

'unofficial' publications such as the social media accounts of recruiters and various group members. This ensures that their media campaign achieves global visibility and is particularly beneficial now, during a time when their physical territory remains uncertain. Imperative to the success of this model, however, is the consistency of the message distributed at each of these levels.

2.2 Narrative and propaganda

Recent studies have analyzed the success of the ISIS media strategy in implementing what appears to be their three main media objectives: attracting the widest possible audience, promoting military success, and marketing the establishment of the caliphate (Siegel & Tucker, 2018; Ingram, 2014). Consistent throughout these three objectives is a common narrative focusing on the rightful establishment of an Islamic state and the destruction of enemies (at home and abroad) who hold ideas different than their own. Halverson, Goodall and Corman (2011) refer to a narrative not as an individual story, but as "a system of stories" (p. 1) which have the power to control different levels of discourse. A common example of narrative within terrorism studies is former U.S. President George W. Bush's 'war on terror,' which many argue has shaped terrorism discourse since the events of 9/11 (Shepherd, 2008). In establishing itself as "the official story" (Chernus, 2006 as seen in Hodges, 2011, p. 5) of 9/11, the 'war on terror' narrative, Hodges (2011) argues, "allowed for the discursive justification not just of a metaphorical 'war on terror' but of the very real wars in Afghanistan and Iraq" (p. 5).

Talbot (2008) claims that the "controlling and legitimizing aspects of discourse are such that proponents of violence are not likely to construct a narrative that is contrary to their values" (p. 4). Just as the 'war on terror' narrative was constructed in line with

American values of "liberty and democracy" (Talbot, 2008, p. 4) rather than negative values insisted on by its critics, terrorist organizations will not construct narratives within which they consider themselves perpetrators of terror. Rather, they rely on the their more positive aspirations, or in the case of radical Islamic terrorists, on the quest for the expansion of Islam and a purer society. Halverson et al. (2011) argue that "the reason the narratives of al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremists carry such potency is because they possess an internal coherence for their intended audiences that connects them to grand, deeply culturally embedded, views of history" (p. 13). In order to accomplish this, such narratives often include "Qur'an *a la carte*" in order to justify violence (Holbrook, 2010). Where even the "cherry-picked passages" (p. 23) of the Quran will not suffice, Holbrook (2010) states, "*Hadith* quotes are frequently used…particularly specifics in terms of targeting and tactics that cannot be easily justified by applying the Qur'an" (p. 18) such as the targeting of women, children and the elderly. The use of religious texts by such groups is telling of the wide audience they wish their narrative to appeal to, as Muslims remain one of the largest religious populations in the world. By claiming religion to be the driving inspiration for their cause, Islamic terrorist organizations use religious teachings in order to construct their idyllic state. Siegel and Tucker (2018) claim that "utopianism is arguably the most important narrative for ISIS propagandists" (Siegel & Tucker, 2018, p. 261). Along the same lines, Winter (2015) argues that a heavier focus is placed on the promise of an Islamic utopia because it is the most difficult concept that ISIS must convince their followers they are capable of achieving.

2.3 ISIS media campaign

It is clear now more than ever, since its territorial claims have diminished, that ISIS's particular strength lies in their media campaign. Ingram (2018) claims that ISIS is not unique in the specific tactics used within their propaganda strategy (she specifies the use of the imminent apocalypse, the role of the caliphate, and the coordinating messages across several mediums), but rather in the "cumulative impact" (p. 5) of these three factors used in coordination to create "an overall campaign that appears radically innovative" (p. 6).

Especially shocking about of ISIS's media strategy is the short amount of time in which they were able to achieve notoriety. Melki and Jabado (2016) argue that the success of ISIS's propaganda shouldn't be credited solely to their ability to produce advanced and attractive materials, but rather in their knowledge that their acts of terror and their progress will be picked up by news agencies and the mass media and spread to larger audiences. According to the authors, "ISIS uses branding strategies to differentiate itself" (Melki & Jabado, 2016, p. 94) from other terrorist organizations, and their goal is not necessarily to appeal to all, but for their brand to be recognized, regardless of whether it draws positive or negative sentiments. Utilizing a dual narrative strategy whereby their message is viewed as one of inspiring strength and success to supporters but is fear-inducing and threatening to opponents, ISIS uses the role of Western media outlets and their journalists against them; they realize that the action of their violence (and likely their broadcast of it) will be disseminated to a larger audience (Melki & Jabado, 2016). Western media is a significant contributor to ISIS's media strategy, as Seib and Janbeck (2011) note that "those who use terrorism as a propaganda tactic are well aware of the

media's ability to instill fear and anger among a widely distributed audience" (Seib & Janbeck, 2011 as referenced in Melki & Jabado, 2016, p. 95). In fact, Siegel and Tucker (2018) found that while the reach of ISIS messaging is incredibly wide, the majority of discussion involving the organization, particularly among the global Muslim population, remains negative. That audience's condemnation of their acts matters little, so long as their name was associated with the violence, their message was delivered and their brand was reinforced.

Macnair and Frank (2018) applied the process of sentiment analysis in order to distinguish the specific narratives of ISIS propaganda and the language that connects them across various digital platforms. Their analysis highlights the frequency with which two words, valued negatively by both supporters and opponents, are used in ISIS's media, 'Islamic' and 'state,' appear in their online media in order to illustrate how the language ISIS uses to describe itself not only instills anger and fear in their enemies, but supports a narrative of "fury and strength" (Macnair & Frank, 2018, p. 449) when referring to their own organization.

Social media platforms have provided countless opportunities for terrorist organizations because they allow for communication between sporadically located groups, "eliminating geographic constraints," (Klausen, 2014, p. 4) but more importantly because they greatly expand the reach of their influence and their potential for growth. ISIS in particular has become known for their effective use of Twitter. Though there has been a significant decline in ISIS-related Twitter usage beginning in early 2015 due to the Twitter suspension campaign (Bodine-Baron, Helmus, Magnuson & Winkelman, 2016), Twitter remains a multifaceted tool for ISIS; it is used for recruitment and community

building purposes, and for targeted attacks against enemies (Klausen, 2014). Shapiro and Maras (2019) note the significant role Twitter plays in the radicalization and recruitment of women, providing a level of anonymity along with the ability to participate in jihad outside of the home. The expectation of women to remain largely within their homes will be explored further in Chapter 4, but it is important to note the opportunities social media platforms (such as Twitter) provide women in not only explaining who they are, but instructing other women on how to become a proper Muslim woman (as seen by ISIS). So women may remain within their gender boundaries, the majority of female recruitment occurs through social media, suggesting intentionally separate recruitment campaigns between men and women (Lehane, Mair, Lee & Parker, 2018).

Lehane et al. (2018) explore the subject of symbolic annihilation through English-language jihadi magazines and argue that due to the extremely limited inclusion of women, the recruitment purposes of these publications are more directed toward men with their strict reinforcement of gender roles. With the expectation of women in ISIS remaining largely behind the scenes in supporting roles, it seems natural that the strength of their recruitment efforts comes from their use of social media. By providing both instant access to a targeted audience and anonymity in the process, the internet and social media allow women to remain within their gender roles while taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in "traditionally male-sanctioned *jihadi* activities" (Bloom, 2013, p. 156). And they have mastered the art, as Klausen (2014) notes, "the transformation of social media into an offensive strategy of psychological warfare is ISIL's particular innovation of terrorist strategy" (Klausen, 2014, p. 20).

Again, in line with ISIS's committed branding strategy was the consistent release of an English-language digital magazine, *Dabiq*. Named after a city in Syria, 15 issues of *Dabiq* were released between July 2014 and July 2016. The last issue of *Dabiq* was released in July 2016 and is assumed to have been replaced by the digital magazine, *Rumiyah*, which is notably shorter but contains a similar style and content. ISIS was not the first Islamic terrorist organization to publish an English-language digital magazine. The most recognized (and often used in comparison to those produced by ISIS) is Al-Qaeda's *Inspire* magazine, first published in 2010, though it exists alongside several others such as *Jihad Recollections* (Al Qaeda), *Gaidi Mtaani* (Al Shabaab), and *Azan* (the Taliban in Khurasan). The digital magazine has proven to be a valuable tool for organizations because while it provides valuable information to readers (on military successes, training techniques, etc.), it also acts as a source of entertainment through its visual appeal with glossy photos and well-designed layouts.

Much of the appeal of these online magazines is the exceptional quality of their production. Tan, O'Halloran, Wignell, Chai and Lange (2017) address the recontextualization of these images, reiterating the Western news media's role in bolstering ISIS's brand, and Lehane, Mair, Lee and Parker (2018) and Rafiq and Malik (2015) analyze the notable absence of women in these images. A heavily recurring theme within the magazine is the 'othering' of western democracy, while emphasizing the caliphate's role within Islamic history (Ingram, 2017; Lorenzo-Dus & Macdonald, 2018). Lorenzo-Dus and Macdonald (2018) have examined this 'othering' with *Inspire* and *Dabiq* through the use of specific face-threatening impoliteness strategies. While Lorenzo-Dus and Macdonald (2019) explore the magazines' 'othering' of the West

through the self-constructed jihadist identity and the 'other' or institutional (media or government constructed) jihadist identity construction, Ingram (2016) examines *Dabiq*'s strategic messaging, exploring the employment of in-group identity, other, crisis and solution constructs, designed to shape readers' decision-making processes. Ingram's analysis of radical narratives within the digital magazine highlight the attempts of influencing the audience's rational-choice and identity-choice decisions through an 'us versus them' dichotomy.

Welch (2018) and Ingram (2018) note the shifting (though still consistent) themes within each digital magazine and how the slight differences between the two publications give insight into the operational changes within the organization, but Wignell, Tan, O'Halloran and Lange (2017) clarify that the underlying ideologies within the organization remained consistent through the three years of publication; the shifting themes give credit to the organization's excellent ability to adapt and navigate battle tempo. The titles of the publications are a strong example; though still produced by the same ISIS media outlet, Al Hayat Media Center, it is likely that *Dabiq* was replaced (and renamed) after ISIS lost control over the city in Syria for which it was named (Welch, 2018). *Rumiyah*, its name a reference to a hadith stating that Muslims would conquer Rome, allows for the continuation of the online presence without doing so under a name associated with failure.

Welch (2018) categorizes the contents of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* into five recurring themes: Islamic teaching and justification, stories of progress and heroism, establishment of common enemies, appeals to community, belonging and meaning, and inspiration for participation in jihad (p. 189). In focusing on the publications' appeal to women, Musial

(2017) proposes nine narratives: religious obligation of *hijrah*, rewards in this life, promises in afterlife, long-term state-building, life in the caliphate, sisterhood/community, marriage with a jihad fighter, the domestic female role and jihadist feminism. These themes remain consistent through the publications, though Musial (2017) argues that they merely serve as a starting point within the female radicalization process, stating "the official propaganda…must be regarded as kind of a raw version for the later personally distributed contents in social networks" (p. 78). Several issues (though not all) contain short sections dedicated to women which cover topics ranging from the emigration (or *hijrah*) process to advice on the proper behavior of widows (Wignell, Tan, O'Halloran and Lange, 2017). The analysis of such language can provide critical insight into what will be required in the production of successful counter-narratives.

2.4 Online radicalization

Terrorist organizations such as ISIS have given the threat of 'online radicalization' a very real and easily recognized face, though the term radicalization itself (and how it's been used) is a subject of debate. Richards (2015) argues that "'radicalization' evolved to refer primarily to Islamic 'extremism' and terrorism" (p. 374), when in fact, the three have their own distinct definitions which are easily blurred but important to differentiate between. This challenge, Neumann (2013) claims, spurs disagreements among scholars on the legitimacy of radicalization theories and merges the concepts of cognitive radicalization/extremist beliefs and behavioral radicalization/extremist behaviors (Neumann, 2013; Richards, 2015). An important clarification to make, and one supported by many (Macnair & Frank, 2018; Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander & Kaderbhai, 2017), is the role of the internet in the radicalization process as an *enabler* rather than an agent.

The internet provides "a fusion of top-down, bottom-up, lateral and even self-guided radicalization and recruitment opportunities" (Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander & Kaderbhai, 2017, p. 1249); however, it cannot alone replace factors relating to the motivations or influences of the individual engaging in such communication. Neumann (2013) provides helpful clarification on the specific mechanisms of online radicalization (p. 346), and Melki and Jabado (2016) explain how these mechanisms play out in the individual:

> While most audiences who receive the ISIS news frames via the mass media will be horrified, a select curious minority will pursue further information about the group online…For the curious minority, ISIS activates interest and potential fascination, while social media reframing provides the opportunity to initiate and build a relationship in the hopes of ultimate recruitment (p. 98).

In addressing the triggers and warning signs of online radicalization, Neo, Dillon and Khader (2016) warn that "where narratives…create a sense of commonality and shared identity and alleviates the issues faced by the individual, one may feel a strong desire to spend more time online" (p. 1122), providing terrorist organizations with an ideally attentive audience to absorb their one-sided propaganda narrative. Similarly, Gill, Corner, Conway, Thornton, Bloom and Horgan (2017) found that most participants in violent radicalization turned to the internet not with the intent of adopting new ideologies, but rather to have their existing ideologies reinforced. With the restricted access to mosques and Islamic literature that women endure, it is understandable that many would turn to the internet in order to answer their questions and further their exploration (Pearson, 2015; Pearson & Winterbotham, 2017). This is particularly dangerous for those who have a limited understanding of mainstream Islam making them more vulnerable to the adaptive

messaging and distorted interpretations of Islamic law deployed by ISIS (Pelletier, Lundmark, Gardner, Ligon & Kilinc, 2016).

Surprisingly little research has been conducted on the differences between male and female radicalization, and within such research, the emphasis appears to be on psychological factors rather than discursive themes. Bloom (2011) discusses the four R's of female radicalization (revenge, redemption, relationship and respect), with a heavy emphasis on personal rather than political motivations. Pearson and Winterbotham (2017) discuss the push and pull factors of radicalization; push factors include "societal pressures such as discrimination and poverty" while pull factors often include "well-framed ideological messages" (Pearson & Winterbotham, 2017, p. 61) which are aimed at a target audience. In an effort to build upon this minimal research collection, Pearson and Winterbotham (2017) conducted a series of interviews between experts and families affected by (female) radicalization, and discovered five recurring factors: youth, status, issues of identity and belonging, the internet, and extreme interpretations of Islam.

Of these five factors the authors shared, three are pertinent to my research. As the focus of this study is not on specific demographics, age and status are not covered in depth. This section has focused on the role of the internet as an enabler in the radicalization process, particularly in delivering specific propaganda narratives, which include extremist interpretations of Islam. The following sections will focus on the last factor of radicalization discussed by Pearson and Winterbotham (2017), identity and a sense of belonging.

2.5 Identity construction

In his discussion on the multiple important functions of language (outside of speech), Gee (2010) argues that "language allows us to be things. It allows us to take on socially significant identities" (p. 235). Constructed by not only *what* we say, but also *how* and *to whom* we will say it, these identities are largely dependent on our social interactions. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) define identity most simply as "the social positioning of self and other" (p. 586). Their focus on identity as a relational concept insists that the construction of identity occurs primarily through interaction, because it is through interaction that language is able to "gain social meaning" (p. 586).

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) rely on five principles of identity construction which read briefly as follows:

> **The emergence principle**: "identity is viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (p. 588).
>
> **The positionality principle**: "identity emerges in discourse through the temporary roles and orientations assumed by participants […] identities encompass macro-level demographic categories, local ethnographically specific cultural positions, and temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles" (p. 591-592).
>
> **The indexicality principle**: "identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes" (p. 594); derived from the concept of indexicality, and that language (in this case identity) "depends on the interactional context for its meaning" (p. 594).

> **The relationality principle**: "identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy" (p. 598).
>
> **The partialness principle**: identity "will always be partial, produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and other" (p. 605) and is "constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts" (p. 606).

By defining ourselves in relation to those we interact with, our identities are required to have multiple layers; we call upon different identities for specific purposes. Within his extensive work on identity, Joseph (2014) approaches the multiplicity of identity on two levels: that of our tendency to assume various roles depending on the context of our interactions, and the inescapable fact that an individual's identity will always include their own internal understanding of themselves along with the inevitably different understanding others have of them.

de Fina (2010) discusses the complexity of identity, claiming that "the production of identities may involve different kinds of agents and processes of communication" (p. 268). She notes distinctions (but not exclusivity) between individual and collective identities as well as social and personal identities (p. 268). According to Tajfel (1981), identity is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 225). De Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak (1999), in defining national identity, refer to what they call 'imagined communities,' in which all members of a community or social group do not necessarily know each other, but are able

to associate with a common culture and shared history. The concept of national identity being reinforced through imagined communities proves particularly insightful for understanding the concepts of collective and group identity as they relate to this study. The Muslim community, though not located within a specific national border, shares a collective identity through their religious and cultural history. In their efforts to garner support, Islamic terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS rely upon this identity and shape their media strategy in order to appeal to it.

Identity construction is inarguably a social act; one which occurs constantly through interaction. Joseph (2014) states that identity isn't permanent, but also isn't "made anew in each discursive act," (p. 145, as cited in Garcés-Conejos Blitvich & Sifianou, 2017); rather, it stands as "an unfinished product of discourse" (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich & Sifianou, 2017, p. 232). Ochs (1993) claims that individuals establish social identity through verbal performance and that "membership in a social group…depends on members' knowledge of local conventions for building social identities through act and stance displays" (p. 289), which, along with Joseph's (2014) claims, reinforces the notion that identity is not an innate concept, but one continuously learned through social interactions: individuals balancing the knowledge of identities expected of them along with knowledge of those identities they wish to be associated (or not) with. de Fina (2010) claims, "differentiation is a fundamental process of self-affirmation," (p. 271) and central to most processes of identity construction is our need to define ourselves by first defining what or who we are not (Hall and Du Gay, 1996; Mouffe, 2005; Mendoza-Denton, 2008).

An individual's construction of identity occurs through their participation in (and dismissal of) specific identity narratives. Halverson et al. (2011) define narrative as "a

coherent system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary rhetorical form" (p. 14). The appeal of narratives lies in their ability to "provide simplistic, prepackaged explanations of past events and contemporary conditions" (Mahood & Rane, 2017, p. 17).

In considering the role of narrative in identity construction, de Fina (2006) states that "narrators build shared representations about who they are by creating story-worlds in which identities are characterized in common ways and routinely related to specific actions or reactions" (p. 351). As these actions and reactions are repeated and reinforced, the identity narrative is able to establish itself as a normative standard. In this sense, identity narratives, with their 'prepackaged explanations,' are able to eliminate some of the anxiety and confusion associated with the process of self-identification; however, they also provide a prescribed identity that an individual must fit within, always with the chance that the individual may not live up to the set expectations of the group. Additionally, Joseph's (2014) understanding of the effects of group identities on the individual is that "the group identities we partake in nurture our individual sense of who we are, but can also smother it. Individual identity is established in part by rank relative to others with the same group identity" (p. 5). Depending on the intensity of the identity narrative of the group an individual belongs to (or wishes to belong to), their individual self becomes (almost) wholly defined by their conformity to, and performance within, the group.

2.6 Extremist identity

Because of its relevance to terrorist discourse as a whole, a brief overview of the extremist identity seems to be necessary. More often an extremist identity is *assigned* to an individual or group rather than sought out. In that respect, Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2009) claim that to define the parameters of such identities poses a challenge because it attempts to characterize the "parameters of thought" (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2009, p. 100). They argue that one such problematic assumption is that extremist individuals live within a strictly black and white reality and are unable to operate in "nuanced shades of grey" (p. 100). One of the most common characterizations of extremists is the adoption of an 'us versus them' mentality, that their "mindset revolves around an absolutist claim to an authentic truth, coupled with the steady rejection of opposing opinions and beliefs" (Al Raffie, 2013, p. 72). After studying extremist discourse across several terrorist websites, Rothenberger, Müller and Elmezeny (2018) found that when constructing a concrete image of their enemy, "The religiously-motivated terrorist groups…do not discredit certain individuals or entities, but blame more or less everyone with a lifestyle, or point of view, differing from their own" (p. 438).

Since the events of September 11, 2001 and the American public's growing awareness of global terrorist activities, the fear of religious extremism and radicalization became far more tangible. The extremist identity naturally has a prominent place within terrorism discourse; however, in much of the literature published since the early 2000's, Richards (2015) argues, "'terrorism', 'radicalization' and 'extremism' have increasingly become merged into a single discursive framework" (p. 371). The blurring of these lines not only spurs disagreements among scholars on the legitimacy of radicalization theories

but it also potentially limits understandings of the extremist identity by automatically categorizing it within the terrorism and counterterrorism genres, and more specifically in relation to Islam (Neumann, 2013; Richards, 2015; Pearson & Winterbotham, 2017). Schwartz, Dunkel, and Waterman (2009) propose that terrorism be understood as an identity-based movement because of the central role identity plays in such discourse, and that one of the shortfalls of terrorism and counterterrorism studies is that it approaches participation as an individual's search for identity, when in fact it is "an expression of the identity they have already developed or have been assigned" (p. 539). To refer back to a previous section, the process of radicalization is the effect of an individual adopting an extremist identity.

As we will see in the following two sections, the concept of feminism is complex and constantly-evolving. Given the focus of this study on analyzing the ideal Muslim woman constructed through ISIS texts, understanding the parameters this identity fits with or strains against is important. In the next sections, there will be an overview of the debates surrounding the Islamic feminist identity, but first it is necessary to understand how these debates are linked to the current (and historical) concept of Western feminism.

2.7 Western feminist identity

Contemporary feminism, as it is understood in the United States, is centered around the wave metaphor, which has shaped, united, and divided feminists. Essentially, the wave is meant to represent the movement of the movements. The first wave was largely defined by the women's suffrage movement and culminated in the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment (Hewitt, 2012). It was followed by the post-war second wave carried by activists of the 1960's and 1970's rallying around labor equality, sexuality, and

reproductive rights (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015). The third wave is less easily defined; it came into being (in the United States) around the 1990's as a younger generation of feminists moved to separate themselves from their second-wave predecessors on the grounds of further inclusivity (Gillis, Howie and Munford, 2007; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015). Recent discussions of feminist waves revolve around the possibility of a fourth wave evolving, which is said to be largely categorized by its reliance on the internet and on social media platforms (Munro, 2013).

The common thread among the women behind each wave is their desire to claim more inclusivity within their generational movement. They all fight for women's rights, but each claims to be fighting for *more* rights than the previous generation. There are many who disagree with the application of the wave metaphor to feminist literature and activism. Nicholson (2010) argues that it suggests feminism represents a unified set of ideas, that it "obscures the differences in the ideas that have motivated different groups of people to pursue different kinds of political goals at different moments in time" (p. 35). Gillis and Munford (2004) argue that it puts generations of women and activists against each other, with each wave competing or rebelling against their predecessors and not allowing "a collective memory of female-based thought" (p. 176). Similarly, Hewitt (2012) notes that "activists highlight their distinctiveness from – and superiority to – earlier feminist movements in the very process of constituting themselves as the next wave" (p. 665).

While some argue against the use of the metaphor, others argue that it is misunderstood. Evans and Chamberlain (2015) suggest that the constant critique of the wave narrative can often inspire feelings of *exclusion* rather than the desired intent of

inclusion. As with attempts at defining any social movement, to define the group is to define who fits within the group and who does not. These waves of feminist identity discourage cross-generational dialogue where instead they "should be used to stress the underlying continuity of the feminist movement" (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015, p. 397). Rather than dismiss the metaphor, Evans and Chamberlain (2015) insist that it becomes "a possible remedy to the problems of disparate identities – it does not demonstrate preference, but engages with the political element of feminist, independent of a subject's identity" (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015, p. 401). It appears, that much of the debate within feminism, amongst feminists individually and collectively, revolves around labels, or rather an inability to settle on a single label (Olson, Coffelt, Ray, Rudd, Botta, Ray & Kopfman, 2008).

2.8 Islamic feminist identity

As discussed above, the label *feminist* and the concept of *feminism* are in a state of constant evolvement. A woman may confidently identify as a feminist, but then she must also clarify what *kind* of feminist she is. Jacoby (2015) asks the important question, "What is the relationship between feminist struggles for recognition and women's struggles for recognition? Should all women's struggles be thought of as feminist?" (Jacoby, 2015, p. 537); should feminism include all women? Contemporary feminism (the third wave) was founded on claims of diversity and inclusivity, yet Jacoby (2015) argues, "meaningful consideration of difference has destroyed the ideal of a unified feminist politics" (p. 526) to the point where feminism itself has become the movement to rebel against. She considers the case of the 'jihadi bride' a name given by Western media to women who, after pledging their allegiance to ISIS, flee their home countries in

order to marry a jihadi fighter in ISIS controlled territory. These women are actively pursuing a lifestyle which seems to represent everything that feminists traditionally fight against, which begs the question, how do these women fit within the feminist narrative?

Some may argue that a woman's choice of religion (such as Islam) is in itself an awareness of her agency and an expression of her freedoms, while others insist in the incompatibility of feminism and Islam. There has been much debate and controversy surrounding the label of Islamic feminism. In what she terms multiple critique, Cooke (2000) supports the label, arguing for the acknowledgement of situations in which "Islamic feminists are choosing to work within the systems that are trying to marginalize them" (p. 93). Cooke (2000) is not referring to the definition of feminism as it is influenced by Western political goals, instead understanding the term more generically as a frame of mind for how gender roles influence society, arguing that "the term Islamic feminism incites us to consider what it means to have a double commitment: to a faith position on the one hand, and to women's rights both inside and outside the home on the other" (p. 93). While Cooke (2000) speaks of an Islamic feminist who stands firmly on both ends of the spectrum, Badran (2005) points to the distinction between both ends, with secular feminism on one end and Islamic feminism on the other. According to this author, secular feminism "is constituted by multiple discourses including secular nationalist, Islamic modernist, humanitarian/human rights, and democratic" (Badran, 2005, p. 6). Islamic feminist, for its part, remains grounded within religious discourse revolving around more modern interpretations of the Quran.

The rise of Islamic feminism was the result of Muslim women on both ends of the feminist spectrum responding to increasingly conservative interpretations of Islam, which

included strict limitations on the freedoms of women within the public sphere (Badran, 2005). It was not inspired, Badran (2005) argues, solely by the rise of feminists in the West and the dominant thought that Western feminism is the source from which all other feminisms come into being. She insists that feminisms feed off of each other, and "feminism/s in the Middle East, as in other places, may and do intersect with, amplify, and push in new directions, elements of feminisms found elsewhere" (Badran, 2005, p. 13). Seedat (2013) seeks a feminism that "values and maintains difference" (p. 27) arguing against the intentions of creating an Islamic Feminist label, that such an endeavor "is more amenable to producing sameness than allowing diversity in the cultural contexts and intellectual paradigms that we may draw upon for equality work" (p. 26). Firmly against the Western feminist narrative which seeks to provide feminism to women in need of liberation, she claims, "whereas the third wave was intended to recognize difference and so to avoid prescriptive determinates of other women's struggles, instead the recognition of difference has unfortunately amounted to a universal confirmation that other women too need feminism, in some or other form" (Seedat, 2013, p. 28-29). The agency of Muslim women in their quest for emancipation, Seedat claims (2013), is lost in the comparison of their struggle and movements for change to those of feminists in the West.

Though her argument is not associated with any forms of extremism, Laulumaa-Leino (2019) addresses the 'notion that feminism and Islam are incompatible' (p. 28) through an important study on the construction of Muslim feminist identity "with, and despite of, two very powerful concepts of West and Islam" (p. 67). By following the Twitter hashtag #lifeofamuslimfeminist, Laulumaa-Leino's (2019) study highlights the

complexities of negotiating between (Western) feminist and Muslim identities, concluding that "the repertoires and identity positions in the material construct an image of a Muslim feminist as separate from the essentialist image of Muslim women" and yet one who challenges the "Western image of quiet, oppressed and uneducated Muslim women" (p. 67). In a similar vein, Auchter (2012) challenges the traditional notions of agency in feminist literature, particularly as they relate to female terrorists, arguing that "agency is an integral part of these gendered narratives regarding the topic of women and terrorism" (p. 134) and as long as we examine the female terrorist's goal as achieving political agency, we underestimate the threat they pose. For if a woman's choice to participate in violent attacks is not motivated, even subtly, by the attitudes and manipulations of men and the gender narrative assigned to her, how can we counter and dissolve that motivation?

The construction of the female identity within ISIS propaganda, particularly that which is directed toward women, requires significantly more attention not only because of its past success in recruitment, but because of the critical role women will continue to play in the future of the organization as that of supporter of the caliphate and its future generations. By applying the research methodologies found within the next chapter, I will attempt to respond to the following research questions:

Research Questions

Research question 1: How is the female identity constructed in ISIS texts directed specifically toward women?

Research question 2: How does this identity differ from or conflict with the current wave of contemporary feminist identity and its emphasis on inclusion and difference?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Analytical approach

In order to address the construction and representation of female Muslim identity and answer the research questions presented in Chapter 2, this study will use a qualitative research approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world…qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (as seen in Lazaraton, 2003, p. 3). As we established in the previous chapter, that identity construction is an inherently social and discursive activity, it is important in studies such as this that the identities in question be properly contextualized. Focusing on language in context, a qualitative approach allows for the observation of attitudes and patterns within language, and in doing so, leads to a greater understanding of their larger social implications.

Lazaraton (2003) notes that "qualitative research has a clear sociopolitical agenda" (p. 3), which makes it a useful approach, given that this research is grounded within a framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA). According to van Dijk (2015), the aim of critical discourse analysts is to "understand, expose, and ultimately challenge social inequality" (p. 466). CDA has evolved from critical linguistics, which "sought to show how language and grammar can be used as ideological instruments" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 2). Building upon critical linguistics, CDA focuses on the relationship between language, ideology, and power. More specifically, it "studies the way social power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijk, 2015, p. 466). In approaching the oppressive

media content distributed by ISIS through a qualitative analysis, I will have the freedom to explore specific patterns and themes which support an imbalance of power between ISIS leadership (and men in general) and the women who support them.

3.2 Data collection

For the purpose of this study, I have selected 10 issues of ISIS's digital magazines – (7) issues of *Dabiq* and (3) issues of *Rumiyah,* spanning from 2014 to 2017. The issues of both digital magazines were originally published through a terrorist website which has since been shut down. Copies of each magazine were retained by the Clarion Project and remain accessible to the public. The Clarion Project is a non-profit organization that claims to "educate the public on the dangers of radical Islam and other extremist ideologies" (Clarion Project 'About' page). The Clarion Project was used to access copies of the selected magazines and was not referenced or utilized for any other purpose of this study.

The amount of ISIS-related propaganda is incredibly vast, and each medium is effective in different ways and with different audiences. While the use of social media offers important insights into the recruitment techniques of both men and women, and is particularly salient in observing the interactions of women and recruiters and the process of radicalization as it unfolds, it was important to utilize publicly available texts directly from the Al Hayat Media center, assuming that such texts would contain undiluted messages from ISIS leadership. The use of magazines published on a regular schedule by the official media wing of ISIS, mitigates the variance of interpretation and allows the capture of an official and uniform language from the so-called caliphate.

The issues listed above each contain one article written for a female audience. As the intent of this study is to analyze the construction of the female Muslim identity and the representation of this identity within official propaganda, it is important to utilize data that addresses this identity specifically and directly. Such articles do not appear in every issue of either *Dabiq* or *Rumiyah*, and while women may be mentioned in other issues, it was decided that their presence was not significant enough to be included in this corpus. Of those issues selected, (6) of these include bylines listing a female author while the remaining (4) do not have a byline and have no reference to a specific author (see Figure 1). This, along with the limited inclusion of women in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* overall, allows for the assumption that these (4) articles were written by men; however, as this study is unable to prove that assumption correct, it will merely have to be noted when comparing themes found within the individual articles.

Dabiq, Issue 8, "The Twin Halves of the Muhājirīn"	Female author (Umm Sumauuah al-Muhājirah)
Dabiq, Issue 9, "Slave-Girls or Prostitutes?"	Female author (Umm Sumauuah al-Muhājirah)
Dabiq, Issue 10, "They Are Not Lawful Spouses for One Another"	Female author (Umm Sumauuah al-Muhājirah)
Dabiq, Issue 11, "A Jihād Without Fighting"	Female author (Umm Sumauuah al-Muhājirah)
Dabiq, Issue 12, "Two, Three or Four"	Female author (Umm Sumauuah al-Muhājirah)
Dabiq, Issue 13, "Advice on Ihdād"	Assumed to be a male author
Dabiq, Issue 15, "How I Came to Islam"	Female author (Umm Khalid al-Finlandiyyah)
Rumiyah, Issue 1, "O Women, Give Charity"	Assumed to be a male author
Rumiyah, Issue 2, "Stories of Steadfastness"	Assumed to be a male author
Rumiyah, Issue 10, "Be a SUPPORTER, Not a Demoralizer"	Assumed to be a male author

Figure 1: Selected articles with listed authors

In considering the responsibility of data collection within such a study, Davis (1995) claims that given the "holistic and emic nature" of qualitative research, in order to provide a viable body of research, the researcher must consider "the construction or co-construction of meaning at least one level up from the actual social situation being investigated" (p. 444). While the main focus of the analysis will be on the (10) articles themselves (and within them, the female social actor), they cannot be studied in isolation; they must be contextualized. Attention will be paid to their placement and function within the magazine as a whole.

Several of the texts within the data set contain passages from the Quran. These passages include both the guidance of Allah, as well as references to men and women relevant to the subject of the specific article; however, while the use of religious texts and references for the purposes of legitimation is an important consideration in identity construction, the limits of such an analysis are carefully considered. When including the use of Quranic passages in such an analysis, Halverson et al. (2017) caution that the Quran offers little narrative support; it is a fragmentary narrative that relies heavily on prior knowledge of its audience. I am not studied in Islam, and as it was noted in the previous chapter that ISIS often uses religious quotations out of context, these passages used within the texts will be noted, but not otherwise included in the analysis.

3.3 Theoretical framework and procedure of analysis

This study first aims to analyze how the female Muslim identity is constructed by ISIS leadership. In order to accomplish this, the 10 selected articles of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* were screened for specific references to women. Instances of female references within religious texts and stories were not included in this screening, as the instances

were many and as mentioned above, without sufficient knowledge of Islam, the analysis of religious texts and references cannot be done with proper accuracy. There are select instances in which excerpts will be included which do not explicitly refer to women; for example, "How I Came to Islam" from Issue 15 of *Dabiq* is a first-person account of a female author's journey of conversion and migration to ISIS controlled territory. Though this author most often refers to fellow Muslims as a generic whole, without designation of sex, her use of the first person when describing cultural attitudes and religious practices are telling of her sense of identity and thus beneficial to the aims of this study. Additionally, limiting selections based on their explicit reference to females often fails to properly contextualize the line(s) under analysis, and in such cases, additional lines are included in order to aid in contextualization, such as Example 1:

> **1.11:** As soon as the sun of their awaited state rose, they rushed to it alone and in groups from the eastern and western extents of the Earth.
>
> **1.12:** Their colors and tongues are different, but their hearts are united upon "there is no god but Allah."
>
> **1.13:** I remember the day I performed hijrah, I was the only Arab woman amongst the muhājirah sisters during that trip.
>
> *Example 1:* Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 8, "Twin Halves of the Muhājirīn"

While the author does not mention the "muhājirah sisters" until line **1.13**, lines **1.11** and **1.12** refer to groups of Muslims not specified by sex, and are included in order to aid in the relevance of the difference stated in **1.13**.

All excerpts were manually transferred to a Word document, with original spellings and stylistics intact. Excerpts were given numerical designators for ease of reference, and were separated by individual sentences. Selected screenshots of the magazines themselves were taken using the simple iMac screenshot command.

Following selection and transcription, excerpts were analyzed first for discursive processes of identity construction. In viewing the construction of this identity through a qualitative lens, I will use Bucholtz's and Hall's (2005) framework of identity construction through interaction. Within the five principles defined in the previous chapter, the positionality, indexicality and relationality principles bear particular relevance to this study.

The female identity at the center of this research navigates between several identity positions, that of a Muslim woman, member and supporter of the caliphate, wife, mother, and sister. In their discussion of the positionality principle, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) refer to the process of individuals occupying and abandoning "temporary" roles as discourse unfolds and how identity is "shaped from moment to moment in interaction" (p. 591). And while the level of interaction observed in this study involves a significant distance, this principle will be of value when analyzing the specific texts authored by women.

A Muslim woman's identity is historically situated within her cultural and religious values, and those values determine the expectations of her language use. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) state, "in identity formation, indexicality relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values" (p. 594). These indexical processes may be overtly stated

(such as the assignment of labels), or covertly expressed through pragmatic processes such as presupposition and implicature. The use of identity labels is common throughout the texts in this study, both in referring to members of ISIS and their enemies.

Finally, building on previous work of what they termed *tactics of intersubjectivity* (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004a, 2004b), the relationality principle states that "identities are never autonomous or independent but always acquire social meaning in relation to other available identity positions and other social actors" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 598). Of particular importance to this study is the concept of differentiation, as the process of 'othering' is a heavily relied upon tactic across the whole of ISIS's media strategy.

In coordination with identity construction, this study also aims to analyze how the female Muslim identity is represented in the selected texts. In order to accomplish this, I will utilize van Leeuwen's (2008) framework of social actor representation following the categorization of selected excerpts based on identity principle. van Leeuwen (2008) argues that "representations include or exclude social actors to suit their interests and purposes in relation to the readers for whom they are intended" (p. 28). van Leeuwen's (2008) Social Actor Network can be found in Figure 2.

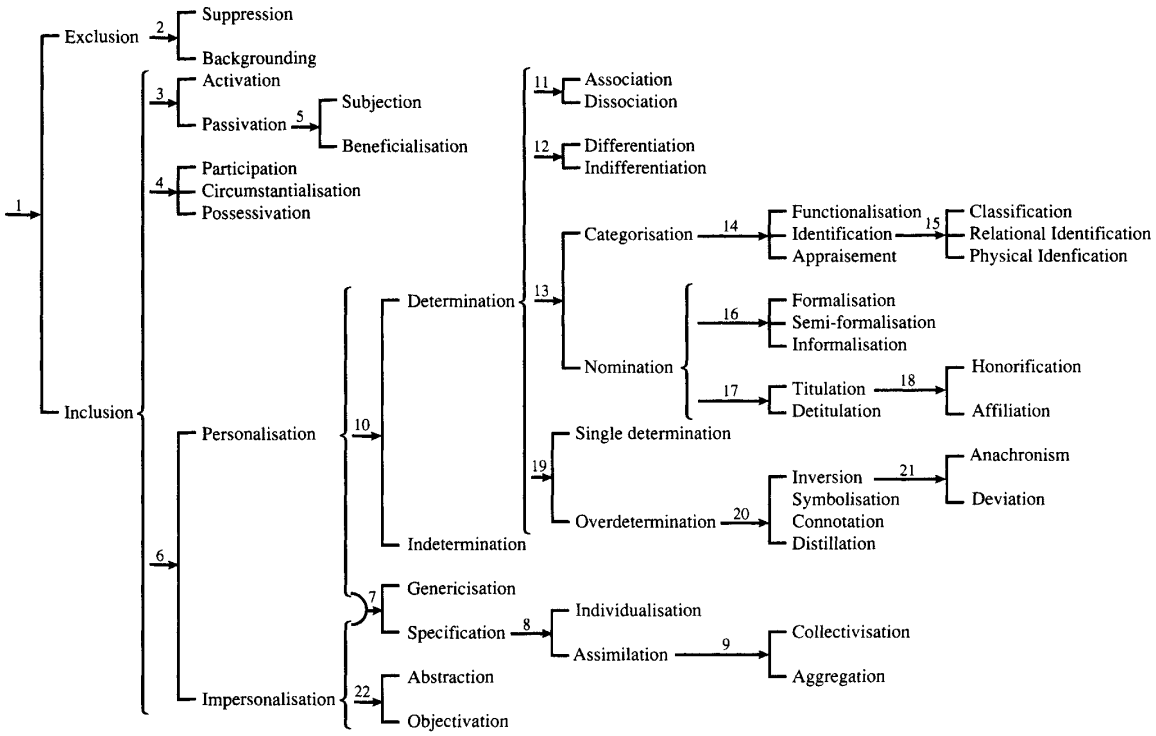


Figure 2: Social Actor Network (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 52).

Within ISIS, and specifically within texts written for a female audience, women are identified strictly as supporters, whose thoughts, actions and words are expected to contribute to the success of the group, and according to van Leeuwen's (2008) model, critical to the construction of these identities is the inclusion and exclusion of several social actors within these same texts. van Leeuwen (2008) provides several classifications with which social actors are evaluated within a text, such as: activation or passivation, inclusion and suppression, personalization or impersonalization, individualization and collectivization, specification and genericization, nomination or functionalization. In reference to the magazine articles, the lack of material directed toward women, and their minimal presence in general makes an argument for the suppression of women within these texts; however, consider the following line from Issue 10 of *Rumiyah*, in the article, "Be a SUPPORTER, Not a Demoralizer":

> As for the matter of men, then it is well known, and their role has already been thoroughly discussed (*Rumiyah*, Issue 10, p. 17).

At the center of the article's focus is the Muslim woman who lives within a constant struggle between succumbing to the distractions of the munafiqin (the hypocrites) and abiding by the rules of Allah. The author claims that the threat of scaremongering applies to all Muslims and briefly mentions Muslim men early in the article, but quickly shifts the focus away from their wrongdoing. The article then, we can safely assume, will be directed toward the struggle of women. What the man's role is, and who 'thoroughly discussed it,' is suppressed. van Leeuwen (2008) notes that "it is often difficult to know whether suppressed social actors are or are not supposed to be retrievable by the reader" (p. 30), and often times, the suppression implies that "the practice…[is] something not to be further examined or contested" (p. 30). This article refrains from referencing men directly involved with the governing body of ISIS, and while it does make repeated references to Quranic texts and the teachings of Allah, as well as those from several religious leaders, it strictly includes guidance rather than decision-making or official policy. The differing roles of men and women within ISIS are well known and publicly enforced, so it is unlikely that this social actor (the author) is intended to be irretrievable. Instead it suggests that the woman's concern ought not to be with the disciplining of men, but rather with her own shortcomings.

In discussing the significance and complexity of social actor representation in texts, van Leeuwen (2008) claims that the discourse analyst can, "investigate which options are chosen in which institutional and social contexts, and why these choices should have been made, what interests are served by them, and what purposes achieved"

(p. 33). Within a critical discourse analysis framework, using the identity construction model of Bucholtz and Hall (2005), I will be able to examine how this female Muslim identity is constructed as well as how this identity is represented based on the categorizations presented in the work of van Leeuwen (2008). The following chapter contains this analysis as well as a comparison of this constructed identity with the contemporary feminist identity.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

The analysis will consist of two sections. The first section will discuss common themes found within process of female identity construction and representation. Within this section, the focus of analysis will be on the 10 issues of the ISIS produced digital magazines, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. The second section will reflect how this constructed identity compares to the contemporary feminist identity.

It should be noted that while the lines listed within each example do not always directly follow one another, they occur in quick succession. In the cases when lines separating those chosen were eliminated, it was done so in order to capture those lines most salient to the topic being discussed.

4.1 Common themes of identity construction

As mentioned earlier, the digital magazine articles selected from *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* are directed at a female, English-speaking audience. As such, they focus on topics primarily related to a woman's role within the caliphate (motherhood, supporting a spouse, maintaining the home). There are also specific themes found within each one which adds to the consistency of the constructed identity, such as the process of differentiating oneself and creating an 'other,' the influence of ideological structures such as religion, and the assumption of specific roles in relation to others. The following three sections will dissect each theme within certain excerpts extracted from the articles.

4.1.1 The relationality principle: 'othering' within and outside of the Muslim community

Othering can be defined as a "discursive process whereby individuals or social groups are represented so as to render them both as radically different to the individuals

or social groups doing the othering (the in-group) and as deviant/distant" (Lorenzo-Dus & Macdonald, 2018, p. 83). Within this study, the in-group can be observed most broadly as Muslims, those who live according to the guidance of Allah; however, this in-group fluctuates in order to support the topic of each individual article. Often, the in-group consists of those Muslims who have pledged allegiance to ISIS. Additionally, in many of the texts chosen for this study which focuses on the female identity, the in-group is further narrowed to exclusively include Muslim *women* who have not only pledged allegiance to ISIS, but have performed hijrah and traveled to ISIS controlled territory.

The definition of othering provided by Lorenzo-Dus and Macdonald (2018) is helpful when applied to the dramatic differentiation found within the texts such as the following:

Example 1: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 12, "Two, Three or Four"

1.1: Indeed, when the Sharī'ah of our Lord was eliminated, the laws and rulings of the kuffār gained power in the lands of the Muslims, Islam was shamefully abandoned, and faces turned towards promiscuous Europe, the voice of falsehood rose and with it the voices of those hostile toward the people of the religion, and the cancer of those who legislate besides Allah ate away at the Ummah's body.

1.2: Their poisoned words crept into the hearts of women from the lands of the Muslims, to the point that we almost couldn't find a single woman that is accepting of this issue, except for those whom Allah protected.

In line **1.1**, the (female) author moves back and forth between general and specific examples of her enemy, from the "kuffār" (infidel), to a slightly more specific

"promiscuous Europe," and then back again to vaguely defined groups including "those hostile toward the people of the religion" and "those who legislate besides Allah." This broad-reaching definition of an enemy reinforces Al Raffie's (2013) claim, referred to in Chapter 2 when discussing the extremist identity, that extremists are often focused on an "absolutist claim to an authentic truth," (p. 72) and adamantly distinguish themselves from anyone who has a mindset or holds a belief system different than their own. And while disavowing the very general category of the non-believers occurs consistently throughout the texts in this study, the enemies are often more explicitly labeled by the authors, such as in Example 2:

Example 2: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 15, "How I Came to Islam"

1.3: I come from Finland, a 'Christian' nation where the people do not strongly adhere to their corrupted religion.

1.4: As Muslims, we need to disavow the disbelievers and live under the Caliphate.

1.5: As for those people who cannot perform hijrah, I advise you to attack the Crusaders and their allies wherever you are, as that is something that you are able to do.

1.6: Don't be tricked by the apostate 'scholars.

Written by a female Muslim convert, who had been raised in a casually Christian family in Finland before pledging her allegiance to ISIS and traveling to Syria, Example 2 illustrates another emphatic 'us vs. them' positioning. The author clearly labels several 'others,' such as the "disbelievers" in **1.4**, the "Crusaders and their allies" in **1.5**, and the

"apostate 'scholars'" in **1.6**, who function as the enemy (the 'them') of ISIS. This labeling of an enemy is further supported but her use of sarcasm in applying quotations to "Christian" and by her use of "corrupted" in **1.3** to describe Christianity, giving it a negative association and implying that "the people" from Finland follow an untruthful or dishonorable religion.

It is important to note that Example 2 consists of the opening lines of this article, in direct succession. Whereas the other 9 articles open with praises (or at the very least, references) to Allah, this author begins her article with a deliberate disassociation, likely in an attempt to further distance herself from her past and emphasize her identity as a proper Muslim. As it was in Finland where she was confronted with these others, and it was from Finland that she fled to ISIS controlled territory, we may assume that Finland (apart from the small community of believers with whom she studied Islam), as a nation, is a collective 'other'; however, Example 3 (below) provides an exception to the enemies described in Example 2:

Example 3: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 15, "How I Came to Islam"

1.7: Finally, I wish to advise the Christians in Finland and elsewhere: A lot of you don't practice your religion because you know it's not the truth.

1.8: I advise you to open your heart and find out about the religion of Islam.

1.9: Don't trust what the media says about it.

1.10: In the end, you'll be so happy you found the truth, because what you're going to gain after embracing Islam is better than anything you might lose or sacrifice.

Example 3 is found near the conclusion of the article, and like the conclusions of many of the articles, serves as a call-to-action for the readers. Here, the author has provided a redemptive opportunity for those individuals whom she spent much of the article admonishing. Not only does she seek to "advise" in **1.7** (not threaten), she encourages these individuals to discover Islam, and thus liberate themselves from the oppression of apostate cultures. As this example begins to suggest, the process of othering found within many of these texts is far subtler, and often more fluid, than the definition stated earlier suggests.

The process of othering, of establishing similarity and difference between individuals and groups fits neatly within what Bucholtz and Hall (2005) define as the relationality principle, which states that identities "always acquire social meaning in relation to other available identity positions and other social actors" (p. 598). The authors further explain that identities are constructed through "several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy" (p. 598). From these relations, I will focus on those of similarity and difference, which the authors refer to as adequation and distinction.

Focused on "the identity relation of differentiation," Bucholtz and Hall (2005) state that distinction "depends on the suppression of similarities that might undermine the construction of difference" (p. 599). In defining the complementary relation of distinction, the authors state that adequation "emphasizes the fact that in order for groups or individuals to be positioned as alike, they need not…be identical, but must merely be understood as sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes" (p. 599). In using the

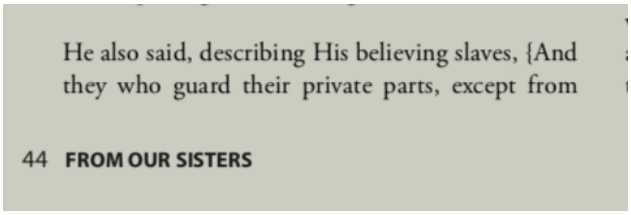
terms adequation and distinction in place of similarity and difference, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) draw attention to the flexibility of each relation, particularly adequation.

This concept of 'sufficient similarity' will be important in regard to the international recruitment efforts and will be discussed again in Section 4.1.3. As discussed in Chapter 2, ISIS recruited heavily from Western countries, often attracting practicing Muslims as well as individuals newly converted or wishing to convert. Naturally, this leads to a variety of ethnicities and nationalities coming together under one collective identity category. This variety is acknowledged, but it is done so in relation to their similarities, as in Example 4:

> Example 4*:* Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 8, "Twin Halves of the Muhājirīn"
>
> **1.11:** As soon as the sun of their awaited state rose, they rushed to it alone and in groups from the eastern and western extents of the Earth.
>
> **1.12:** Their colors and tongues are different, but their hearts are united upon "there is no god but Allah."
>
> **1.13:** I remember the day I performed hijrah, I was the only Arab woman amongst the muhājirah sisters during that trip.

First, let us look at the lines in terms of adequation. This excerpt is taken from a section of the text discussing the irresistible pull of the state on Muslims, and the number of individuals who have left their homes in order to live in what they believed to be the land of Islam. The (female) author acknowledges in **1.11** that the individuals traveled "in groups," which suggests that they were able to unite under a common goal of obligatory migration (hijrah). She clarifies this connection in **1.12**, that "their hearts are united"

through religion, which emphasizes the higher importance of internal rather than external characteristics. The author then puts herself within such a group of "muhājirah sisters" in **1.13** when she reflects on her own experience. Example 4 illustrates the complexity of identity navigation done by the female authors. More so in the articles authored by women, rather than the male-authored articles, the believing women are referred to as *sisters*, with many of the article footers designating the female audience with "TO OUR SISTERS" or "FROM OUR SISTERS," and table of contents listings carrying the same label, as seen in Figures 3 and 4:


He also said, describing His believing slaves, {And they who guard their private parts, except from

44 FROM OUR SISTERS

Figure 3: Dabiq, Issue 9, footer of "Slave-Girls or Prostitutes?"

Figure 4: Dabiq, Issue 8, Table of Contents

This label of "sister" gives a woman access to an identity group to which the (female) authors clearly belong; yet, as we see in Example 4, the author has included lines of distinction to indicate more selective categories within this identity, and thus suppressed "similarities that might undermine the construction of difference" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 599). In referring to these individuals, the author first acknowledges their differences

in **1.12**, referring to their differing skin colors and native languages, before moving on to how they are "sufficiently similar" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, p. 599) through their hearts and their dedication to Islam. Additionally, while she includes herself within the group of sisters in **1.13**, the author separates herself based on her own ethnicity as the "only Arab woman." By acknowledging how she differs from other women, the author is reinforcing the variety of nationalities and ethnicities which make up her community of sisters. By doing so, she is welcoming a larger audience of women into the group she belongs to, while at the same time providing instruction on how to achieve the true identity which all women in this group strive for.

As mentioned earlier in this section, the in-group identity of "Muslim" is further narrowed depending on the particular topic of the article and the author's stance. Example 5 (below) covers the practice of *saby*, which the author defines as the practice of taking slaves through war. Within the article, the author clearly defines her enemy as Western governments, but more interesting to this study is the divide within the Muslim community itself as seen in the following lines:

Example 5: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 9, "Slave-Girls or Prostitutes?"

1.14: After all this, saby becomes fornication and tsarrī (taking a slave-girl as a concubine) becomes rape?

1.15: If only we'd heard these falsehoods from the kuffār who are ignorant of our religion.

1.16: Instead we hear it from those associated with our Ummah, those whose names are Muhammed, Ibrāhīm, and Alī!

While the author spends a great deal of the article rebuking enemies outside of the Muslim community, she also criticizes Muslims who have joined forces with these enemies in order to abolish the practices of saby and tsarrī. In **1.14**, the author clarifies that interpretations of "saby" and "tsarrī" as "fornication" and "rape," are inaccurate. She states her expectation of such accusations from an outside enemy, "the kuffār" in **1.15**, but expresses her shock at the cooperation of her fellow Muslims, "those associated with our Ummah," in **1.16**, emphasizing her incredulity through the use of three common names, "Muhammed, Ibrāhīm, and Alī." By referring to them as members of "our Ummah" (i.e. *her* Ummah), the author positions these individuals within the greater Muslim identity; however, she makes a clear distinction between Muslims who spread "falsehoods," and Muslims within the caliphate who understand the religion and its practices. In denying these inaccurate interpretations, the author appears to be condemning the practices of fornication and rape, but supporting those of saby and tsarrī. Speaking from a position of authority as the author of the article, her stance on these practices is representative of the stance the ideal Muslim woman should take.

Examples 4 and 5 both illustrate the exclusivity of the *ideal* (or correct) Muslim identity within the greater collective identity of Muslims. The following example shows in- and out-groups within the larger identity of Muslim women and gives important insight into how the author positions herself (and defines her own identity) among these groups.

Example 6: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 10, "They Are Not Lawful Spouses for One Another"

1.17: We write this for the wives of the secular-oriented Sahwāt who have stated explicitly or implicitly their intent to rule with democracy, or according to what the people desire, or with division of powers.

1.18: We also write this for the wives of the Sahwāt who superficially claim Islam and stuck out their necks for their secular-oriented brothers and supported them with their lives and with everything precious to them against the muwahiddīn.

1.19: I say, even though I understand your emotions, your sense of motherhood, and your fear of breaking up your family, and even though I understand your fear of poverty, I do not find any excuse for you before Allah, who says…

1.20: And if you are a seeker of the truth, then search and investigate, and Allah will not forsake your deed.

1.21: And here I call on you to make hijrah to us here in the lands of the blessed Islamic State!

1.22: And I remind you of the individual obligation on every Muslim and Muslimah to make hijrah from dārul-kufr to dārul-islām.

The article from which Example 6 is extracted discusses the necessity of women with husbands who have been distracted from the truth of Islam to leave their marriages and travel to ISIS controlled territory. As in the previous example, Example 6 shows the overlapping nature of adequation and distinction. Here, the author is speaking to Muslim women whose husbands have fought against the ISIS fighters on behalf of opposing militaries. Lines **1.17** and **1.18** are near the introduction of the article, where the author clarifies her audience, “the wives” of the Sahwāt. As suggested in Example 5, there is a proper observance of religion and expectation of one who claims the Muslim identity,

and those who don't meet those expectations are immediately excluded from the more selective identity of the proper Muslim. Similar to those Muslims who spread "falsehoods" in **1.16**, this author accuses the women in **1.17** of entering into marriage with Muslims who have cooperated with their enemy, those who "rule with democracy" and "with division of powers." She extends her accusation in **1.18** to suggest that these women "superficially claim Islam." She delegitimizes their roles as wives by suggesting they are in unlawful marriages, and she initially challenges their identity as Muslim women and seekers of truth; however, the author then changes gears by relating herself to these women on an emotional level.

After referring to them in the third person as "the wives" in lines **1.17** and **1.18** (she herself as belonging to a collective "we"), the author addresses the women directly, appealing to them on an emotional level. While not stating whether she is herself a mother, in line **1.19** the author insists that she can relate to their "emotions," their "sense of motherhood" and maintaining a family, as well as their "fear of poverty." And while she clarifies immediately after these empathetic acknowledgements that they do not overrule the guidance of Allah, similar to Example 3, the author provides these women with an opportunity to change their ways and assume a new identity. In lines **1.20** and **1.21** she tells the women that should they choose to "seek the truth" of their religion and "make hirjah", all will be forgiven and "Allah will not forsake" them. This reinforces the fact that seeking the truth and traveling to the land of Islam are things these women have not yet done, positioning them as outsiders to the identity category which the author assumes. And, as if to clarify this point, in line **1.22** she reminds them of "the individual

obligation on every Muslim and Muslimah to make hijrah" to ISIS controlled territory from wherever they are.

Examples 1-6 provide important insight into how the identity of the ideal ISIS woman (through the language of the authors) relates to others, whether those others are despised enemies or Muslim women who have not yet performed hijrah. Examples 4, 5, and 6 are particularly insightful in understanding how the authors have differentiated themselves from the women they claim as sisters, as in each example the author implies that she is *more* or a *better* Muslim woman than the sisters she is speaking to. Often distinguishing themselves from other Muslims, especially Muslim women, through their knowledge of Islam and dedication to religious observance, the authors of the examples in this section have illustrated the necessity of religious studies and obligations to their identity as proper Muslim women. Though we only have access to one direction of these interactions, through each confrontation with an 'other,' we can see more clearly how these authors discursively situate themselves and construct their identity. As members of this in-group of Muslim sisters who have performed hijrah and achieved a level of religious knowledge allowing them to speak (or write) in these authoritative positions, the authors have made clear the differences between themselves and the women they are speaking to while maintaining sufficient similarities with this audience for the purposes of recruitment. The following section will focus on the role Islam plays as an ideological guide for identity construction.

4.1.2 The indexicality principle: the influence of religious ideology

As one may expect, religious texts and teachings fill the pages of each of these articles, if not for inspiration, certainly for justification of behavior. Though it was

mentioned briefly in Chapter 3, I will mention again that an analysis of the specific religious texts or teachings cited within the articles is beyond the scope of this study; however, I will pay close attention to how and when they are used within the selected excerpts in order to understand why the inclusion of such texts is important in the construction of the female Muslim identity. Islam is the theological foundation of ISIS, and the members of the organization are expected to be well versed in their religion as it must also be the foundation of their own identities. In discussing their principle of indexicality, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) emphasize the importance of ideological structures in understanding the construction of identity, as they typically define "the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language" (p. 594). Speaking and acting as a religiously minded Muslim is an expectation of ISIS members, as can be seen in Example 7:

Example 7: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 11, "A Jihād Without Fighting"

2.1 You know that acquiring knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim and every Muslimah, and Allah has blessed the Islamic State, which has not been stingy towards its women in providing institutions and courses on the entirety of the Sharī'ah sciences.

2.2 So shake off the dust of laziness and procrastination and come forth, free yourself from ignorance and learn the matters of your religion.

Here, the author is speaking directly to those Muslims who have not performed their religious duties to an acceptable standard. By referring to both men and women in **2.1** (Muslim/Muslimah), it would initially seem that the author's criticisms are aimed at

the broader Muslim identity; however, as she follows this reference by noting that ISIS has not "been stingy towards its women" in providing educational opportunities, the fault is clearly with *women* who have not taken advantage of such "institutions" and remain uneducated in their religion. It was mentioned in the previous section that ISIS assigns the label "sisters" to those women whose intentions toward the organization and Islam are pure, though they may not (yet) be well educated in Islam, or are unable to perform the obligatory migration to ISIS controlled territory. It allows them to identify with a specific group, while instances such as Example 7 clarify that more is required before rightfully claiming the ideal Muslim female identity.

Figure 5: *Dabiq*, Issue 11, "A Jihād Without Fighting" footer

The article is addressed to those women who identify as sisters (see Figure 5), but **2.2** points out that these sisters are struggling with "laziness and procrastination" and the metaphorical chains of "ignorance." Within the context of the article as a whole, which focuses on the differences of a woman's jihad in comparison to a man's, the statements in Example 7 serve as reprimand for the woman who watches her husband and sons leave to fight but neglects the responsibility of her own jihad. The author holds a superior position as a woman who is apparently knowledgeable enough of her religion in order to be in a position of advisor or enforcer through official organizational documents.

In line **2.1** of Example 7, the author uses the Arabic term Sharī'ah, which is the Islamic law derived from the Quran and the hadith. While the articles are written in English, for an English-speaking audience who may or may not speak Arabic, the authors

choose selective words or phrases to leave untranslated. In her study of non-translation within ISIS radical discourse, Bazzi (2019) argues that the strategy is used specifically to appeal to foreign and non-Arabic speaking recruits. The author argues that certain concepts or terms "tend to be left untranslated as a way of reinforcing perceptions of Muslim unity, power, allegiance, and brotherhood against the enemy" (p.1). One of the many ISIS narratives Bazzi (2019) addresses is that of a Muslim brotherhood, which offers "an escape into a new identity in a Caliphate devoted to the protection of Muslims and to fighting what is perceived as an unfair, repressive system" (p.3). One important (and highly visible) aspect of belonging to this new identity category of brothers (or in this case, sisters) is having the ability to speak the language, or to codeswitch. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) note that "languages and dialects may also be indexically tied to identity categories" (p. 597). It has been reflected in several previous examples that a woman wishing to commit herself to Islam and ISIS is not expected to be an expert in her religion from the start, but she is expected to learn it, and in order to do so she must also learn Arabic. On her way to achieving fluency, she is expected to retain specific terms relating to her new identity, as is made obvious in Example 8:

Example 8: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 13, "Advice on Ihdād"

2.3: This is some advice for the noble widows of the blessed shuhadā in the mighty lands of the Khilāfah pertaining to the rulings of 'iddah, especially those of ihdād (mourning their husbands).

2.4: During her 'iddah, it is haram for the mourning widow to use kohl and dyes, just as it is haram for her to wear jewelry, whether of gold or silver or otherwise.

For the ease of this section, Figure 6 includes simple translations of the Arabic words found in Example 8.

shuhadā	martyrs
Khilāfah	the Caliphate
iddah	a woman's observance after the death or divorce of a husband
ihdād	a mourning period
haram	forbidden by Islamic law

Figure 6: Arabic to English translations found within Example 8

The non-translated terms in Example 8 represent concepts or processes important to the observance of Islam within ISIS. By using the strategy of non-translation, the author accomplishes two levels of identity construction. First, he[2] establishes himself as well versed enough in Islam as to be giving advice to others; it is clear that religious knowledge is an important aspect of his identity. Second, he challenges the reader to correctly interpret such non-translated language, therefore challenging her identity (though subtly). Line **2.3** prefaces the article with the clear statement that "this is some advice for the widows," which immediately identifies a specific group of women. One piece of advice the author goes on to mention is line **2.4**; however, unless the reader understands the term "haram," she won't know whether using "kohl and dyes" or wearing jewelry is allowable or unallowable, just as she won't understand when these practices are "haram" unless she understands the term "'iddah." In line with the findings of Bazzi's (2019) study, the use of non-translation within these articles is an important factor in the

[2] This article has no listed author and is thus assumed to be male. As is the case in all four articles with unlisted authors, women are spoken of in the third person and the author does not speak directly to the readers, though the footnote of this article is also labeled "TO OUR SISTERS."

discursive construction of identity, both in terms of the interlocutor and their audience by providing the opportunity for both unification and alienation. By leaving certain terms in Arabic, the authors are including in the interaction those who understand Arabic and the significance of using it in such instances, while excluding those who do not.

In a strategy similar to non-translation, there is a heavy reliance on using Muslim women of historical significance as role models for women to follow. While many of the articles provide background to the story of each woman, they often reference religious texts. The intertextuality of such references further challenges the woman who does not know her religion – they stress that a proper Muslim woman ought to know these stories and live to follow in the lead of these women.

In Issue 10 of *Rumiyah*, the article "Be a SUPPORTER, Not a Demoralizer" speaks to the dangers of women who fall victim to the taunts and scaremongering of their enemies, in that they will inevitably bring such negativity into their homes, passing it on to their husbands and children. The article contains lengthy references to both the Quran and various religious leaders, advising Muslims (and explicitly Muslim women) how to react when faced with such a dilemma. The article includes four sub-headings. The last three of these refer to the admirable actions of women, as shown in Figure 7:

Figure 7: Sub-headings, *Rumiyah*, Issue 10, "Be a SUPPORTER, Not a Demoralizer"

Each sub-heading is followed by religious justification for women's expected behavior, including the personal stories of both Khadijah Bint Khuwalid (the prophet Muhammad's first wife) and Asma Bint Abi Bakr (the daughter of the first caliph) about how they endured their own moments of adversity. While this particular article does contain a significant backstory along with the name references, others rely more heavily on intertextuality, such as Example 9:

Example 9: *Rumiyah*, Issue 1, "O Women, Give Charity"

> **2.5:** If this was the condition of the Mothers of the Believers and the women of the Companions regarding charity and spending for Allah's cause – and they are who they are – then is it not more appropriate for those Muslim women who are less than them, those whom Allah has given of His bounty, to make preparations for the everlasting life while they are able and living?

Referring to Allah's command that those who cannot wage jihad through violence can wage jihad with their wealth (through charity), the author of Example 9 calls again on the historical references as role models for women to follow; however, unlike the subheadings found in Figure 6, the references to the "Mothers of the Believers" and the "women of the Companions" require the reader to draw on background knowledge of Islamic history.

In considering the consistent use of historical role models through van Leeuwen's (2008) model of social actor representation, particularly the processes of *individualization* and *assimilation*, it becomes clear that the only instances in which

women are referenced by name is when their stories are extracted from religious texts. van Leeuwen (2008) defines individualization as the process in which "social actors can be referred to as individuals," (p. 37) whereas, assimilation refers to social actors within groups. The focus of this study is the construction and representation of the female identity with ISIS, not Islam altogether, and as ISIS only came (formally) into existence within the last decade, the limitation of role models to those several centuries past suggests that the ideal Muslim woman is unreachable. This concept is emphasized explicitly in Example 9, after referring to the charity of the role models in 2.5, the author asks readers what should be expected of "those Muslim women who are less than them." The sentiments of the author in Example 9 are repeated several times within each of the articles selected for this study, though not always in as aggressive of a manner. Take for example, the sub-headings in Figure 6. Two of the headings include the names of specific Muslim women to preface the inspiring stories to come. Both sub-headings refer to events of the past. The third sub-heading (top in Figure 6), "Believing in Qadar and Having Trust in Allah's Promise is the Believing Woman's Armor," is written in the present tense, and again refers to women only as members of a group. When discussing the significance of assimilation as a form of social actor representation, van Leeuwen (2008) mentions the importance placed on conformity within certain societies. Given the elimination of personal names, replaced with collective identity labels such as "sister" or "Muslimah" or "woman," the limiting expectation of women within ISIS is conformity rather than individuality.

The evidence of conformity present in many of the articles within this corpus. As was also the case of Example 6 in the previous section, Example 10 discusses the

necessity of Muslim women leaving their unlawful husbands. In expressing an opinion using the first-person pronoun "I," it would appear that the author is speaking for herself, though that is unlikely the case. To contextualize the excerpts, line **2.6** is found within the opening paragraphs of the article, after briefly explaining "the situation," while line **2.7** is taken from the conclusion, just before the author encourages the "wife of the Sahwah soldier" to seek the true Islam and travel to the land of Islam.

Example 10: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 10, "They Are Not Lawful Spouses For One Another"

> **2.6:** With the situation having reached this point, I decided to write an article offering advice and guidance to the wives of the Sahwah soldiers, in order for me {to be absolved before your Lord and perhaps they may fear Him} [Al-A'rāf: 164].
>
> **2.7:** Perhaps the wife of a Sahwah soldier will be shocked by my words if she reads them and is faced with the reality of her husband, but I say to her, by Allah, I am only a compassionate advisor.

The author claims to be taking a stance on a particular situation she finds disagreeable, or according to the title of the article, a situation that is "Not Lawful." Bucholtz and Hall (2005) refer to stance as one of the aspects within the indexicality principle, which is "the display of evaluative, affective, and epistemic orientations in discourse" (p. 595). The stance an individual takes in a given interaction speaks strongly of their personal identity, in terms of how they interpret a specific utterance, how they orient themselves in relation to it, and how they choose to respond. In line **2.6**, after having considered the gravity of the situation regarding hypocritical Muslims fighting for the causes of Western

governments, the author claims to have "decided to write an article offering advice and guidance" to the Muslim wives of these hypocrites. The author's stance is based entirely on her identity as a Muslim woman and a believer of a specific interpretation of Islam, which is clear when she justifies her stance with the phrase "in order for me," which is followed by a religious reference referring to Allah's good graces. She has oriented her stance under the influence of her religion and the expectations of what her opinion and stance ought to be as a Muslim woman committed to ISIS.

This section has covered the how an individual's identity ought to look according to the ideological structures that the individual falls within. With the heavy use of both religious texts within the articles as well as references to the guidance given by Allah, women are expected to become knowledgeable servants of their religion. Through the repeated use of female role models from Islamic history, along with the authors' use of the non-translation strategy, they construct the ideal Muslim woman's identity to be one who can effectively reference her religion. The effectiveness of these ideological influences can be seen through the specific stances the authors take in regard to thoughts and behaviors that stray from their interpretation of Islam.

4.1.3 The positionality principle: roles in relation to others

Throughout the selected articles, as the topic and audience shift, women continuously adopt new or slightly different identity roles in order to fit the given interaction. They are described as Muslims, sisters, wives, mothers and supporters. Importantly, in the case of the female authored texts, the authors shift between advisor, chastiser, and empathizer. Put most simply, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) state that "identity emerges in discourse through temporary roles and orientations assumed by participants"

(p. 591) in addition to the broader demographic positions they fall under. Their positionality principle states that identities include both macro- and micro-level categories, and that within these micro-level categories, roles are adopted and dropped in relation to changes in discourse throughout the specific interaction. Because the texts analyzed within this study do not involve conversational discourse or any visible reciprocity, the changing of roles occurs less frequently than in other forms of interaction. Though still interactional in theory, we are unable to see the response of the audience, and therefore only one direction of the interaction is available for observation.

As most would assume of the female Muslim identity enforced by ISIS, a woman's role is first and foremost determined in relation to men, as seen in Example 11:

Example 11*:* Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 11, "A Jihād Without Fighting"

3.1: Still, the absence of an obligation of jihād and war upon the Muslim women – except in defense against someone attacking her – does not overturn her role in building the Ummah, producing men, and sending them out to the fierceness of battle.

3.2: Therefore, I write this article for my Muslim sister, the wife of a mujāhid and the mother of lion cubs.

3.3: As for you, O mother of lion cubs…And what will make you know what the mother of lion cubs is?

3.4: She is the teacher of generations and the producer of men.

3.5: So you have understood, my Muslim sister, the enormity of the responsibility that you carry?

In this example, a woman is first and foremost labeled as a Muslim woman, as in **3.1**; however, as a Muslim woman, she is automatically assigned the role of "building the Ummah" which is achieved through another role of "producing men." Following a similar pattern, after being referred to in **3.2** by her identity as a "Muslim sister" the woman's role is shifted back again to her relation to men, as the "wife of a mujāhid and the mother of lion cubs." Lines **3.1** and **3.2** illustrate both macro- and micro-level identity labels. On the macro-level, she is a woman and a wife, and to be more culturally specific, she is a wife of a mujāhid. These roles all reference the woman's identity within the larger Muslim community; however, in the most immediate sense, the woman is an engaged listener, reader, or mentee.

Similarly, the author, while like the reader remains foremost a Muslim woman, takes on the immediate role of writer, or mentor. In **3.3**, she is an asker-of-rhetorical questions, asking the reader "As for you, O mother of lion cubs…And what will make you know what the mother of lion cubs is?" Similar to how teachers will test their students, she challenges the reader to think critically and again in **3.5**, whether she understands "the enormity of the responsibility" the author just explained. Similar roles are assumed by the author in Example 12:

Example 12: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 10, "They Are Not Lawful Spouses for One Another"

3.6 And here I call on you to make hijrah to us here in the lands of the blessed Islamic State!

3.7 Do you not love Allah and His Messenger?

3.8 Do you not desire to live in a land over which no rule is established other than the rule of Allah?

3.9 Then come, make your way to dārul-islām.

As seen in Example 10 from the previous section, the author begins the article claiming her responsibility of advising the misguided wives of the Sahwah soldiers. She has placed herself above them, in a position of power because they are lacking knowledge that she is in a position to give; however, she self-identifies as a knowledgeable and "compassionate advisor" in line **2.7**. In lines **3.7** and **3.8** from Example 12, we can see a shift in her role as a compassionate advisor: she moves from a compassionate advisor to a recruiter, still speaking directly to the wives, but putting them into a corner by challenging the level of commitment to their faith. Examples 11 and 12 illustrate the temporary roles that the writers adopt and drop as the article progresses, shifting from admonishment to compassion and then inspiration.

In looking at the role assignments in Example 11 through a lens of representation, it is clear that the author does not define *who* the Muslim woman is, she defines *what* she is. Social actors can be represented through nomination, which acknowledges their unique individual identity, or they can be represented through categorization, which relies on their group identity. As was mentioned in the previous section, unless referring to one of the religious role models, the female social actor is not represented through nomination. Within categorization, van Leeuwen (2008) refers to two different types of representation: identification and functionalization. According to van Leeuwen (2008), "functionalization occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of an activity, in terms of something they do, for instance, an occupation or a role," (p. 42) such as the

"*teacher* of generations" and the "*producer* of men" in line **3.4**. Identification "occurs when social actors are defined, not in terms of what they do, but in terms of what they, more or less permanently, or unavoidably are" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 42), such as the "*mother* of lion cubs" in **3.2** and **3.3**. By referring to women based on their function within the Muslim community, the authors imply that women exist in order to serve a specific purpose, and nothing beyond that. And if this is the case, then women can also be considered interchangeable, or replaceable, with little consideration of the uniqueness each woman carries.

Most of the articles included in the corpus are written as some form of guidance or advice. Both issues 8 and 15 of *Dabiq* contain articles in which the author speaks specifically of her own journey to Islam and her process of hijrah; however, the article in *Dabiq*, Issue 15, "How I Came to Islam" contains the most personalized story. As such, the author provides multiple opportunities for her own identity-role changing throughout. Example 13 illustrates four excerpts extracted from various sections within the article; each illustrates the different roles the author assumes:

Example 13: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 15, "How I Came to Islam"

3.10: Since I didn't have any strong Muslims around me, I was trying to do the research on my own, and it was hard to find the right information but despite that, Allah would always facilitate a way for the truth to become apparent to me.

3.11: You're going to see hardships and trials, but everyday you're thankful to Allah for allowing you to perform hijrah and live under the Shari'ah.

3.12: After four months of us being here, my son was martyred, and this was yet another blessing.

3.13: I advise the Muslims in Dar al-Kufr not to be intimidated by the media, and to instead listen to the words of Allah and His Messenger.

Line **3.10** represents the time the author spent in Finland after having realized that she wanted to pursue studying Islam. Noting that the Muslim community near her was small, the author acknowledges the challenges she faced in finding Muslims capable of helping her. In line **3.10**, she reflects on her time as a new student admitting that she "was trying" to study on her own. As action of trying implies a possibility of failure, we can associate a level of vulnerability with her willingness to share this part of her journey. At the end of this line, she acknowledges the all-powerful and enabling ways of Allah. By acknowledging that "Allah would always facilitate a way," the author ends this line assuming the role of a humble follower of Allah. In line **3.10**, the author assumes the role of a vulnerable and humble storyteller. Lines **3.11** and **3.12** represent different moments the author experienced during and shortly after making hijrah to ISIS controlled territory. In assuring the reader that they would "see hardships and trials," but that they would be "thankful" and eventually succeed in their efforts, we see the author using the knowledge of her own experience in order to make these assurances. Similarly, in line **3.12**, the author shares that her son was martyred soon after arriving, but again assures the readers that this was "another blessing." Not only does this position the author as a mother, it positions her as a mother who has experienced loss. Additionally, in acknowledging this loss as a "blessing," we can associate pride with the mother. In lines **3.11** and **3.12**, the author assumes the role of a knowledgeable and experienced Muslim woman. Finally, line **3.13** represents the final shift from the author. In beginning **3.13** with "I advise," the author assumes a position of knowledge and authority. There are several lines that follow

the selected excerpt which also begin with "I advise," (see line **1.5** from Example 2) and the author's stylistic use of repetition suggests her confidence in this position. By referencing the "Dar al-Kufr" (the land of the non-believers), the author positions herself against an 'other,' but assumes the superior role by acknowledging her awareness of their "media" strategies in regard to Islam.

By moving between several of the identity roles discussed above, the author makes herself relatable to her audience. With each transition, she acknowledges a different aspect of her own identity based on the likelihood that her audience will have had similar experiences. She assumes the specific identity roles of her audience and adapts in order to connect with them. In doing so, she reinforces the idea that any woman, from any community or in any stage of life, is also capable of pursuing the author's lifestyle in the hopes of achieving the true Muslim woman identity.

This section approached the construction of identity through the authors' placement of Muslim women within their articles, as well as the author's own self-placement. Bucholtz's and Hall's (2005) positionality principle highlights the multiple layers of identity, but more importantly, the dynamic nature of identity as it shifts throughout interaction. The authors claim, "it is not a matter of choosing one dimension of identity over others, but of considering multiple facets in order to achieve a more complete understanding of how identity works" (p. 593). In reviewing the relationality, indexicality, and positionality principles as they relate to the construction of the female Muslim identity within these texts, this section of the analysis addressed the first research question of this study, which was concerned with the construction of the female identity in ISIS texts directed toward women. The authors consistently use strategies of

differentiation in order to emphasize that they, and ideal female Muslim, are different from the woman in their audience; they have achieved what their audience has yet to achieve, namely strict religious observance to include the obligatory practice of hijrah. Alongside this difference, however, they insist that the possibility for achieving this ideal identity is available to all women willing to begin the required journey. The following section will explore the second research question [how does this identity differ from or conflict with the current wave of contemporary feminist identity and its emphasis on inclusion and difference?] of this study.

4.2 Expectations of ISIS women through a feminist perspective

In Chapter 2, Jacoby's (2015) question of whether feminism should include all women bears significant relevance to this section of the analysis. She notes that feminism continues to remain unresolved in issues such as "the causes of women's oppression…what women's emancipation would look like once achieved, and the strategies by which to achieve it" (p. 527) and focuses her research on the 'Jihadi brides' who, she claims "stand as the epitome of difference relative to the mainstream feminist movement" (p. 533). The jihadi bride represents only a portion of the Muslim women committed to ISIS, though the concept of her, and the publicity that such women achieved, fueled arguments such as those found in Laulumaa-Leino's (2019) study on the stereotypical assumptions that feminism and Islam are incompatible.

Such assumptions are made by the lack of female presence in the public sphere. There is a common practice of female exclusion when it comes to specific forms of propaganda, such as the digital magazines in question. As mentioned earlier, of the 25 issues of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* published online, only 10 include content directed toward

women. As was made relevant in the previous section of the analysis, the important role that women play in the successful functioning of the caliphate is well known and advertised; however, if one were to approach the magazines visually, they would receive a very different interpretation. Within these 10 articles, there are 27 images, 14 of which include people. Of those 14, only one image includes a female (Figure 8) – a young girl (who is not in focus) who appears to be running behind or chasing a young boy (who is in focus). Both children are smiling.

Figure 8: *Dabiq*, Issue 15, from "How I Came to Islam." Originally captioned "Muslim children being raised in the lands of Islam."

Aside from the single image of the young girl, the visual representation of women within these 10 articles is a "symbolic form of social exclusion" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 142), whereby certain individuals are intentionally left out of the visual representations of the societies to which they belong. The images included within the selected *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* articles contain several images of urban landscape, areas women would occasionally frequent, and yet they are absent. This doesn't necessarily suggest that viewers are expected to believe that women have no important role, but rather

emphasizes what their role in this particular society is. It is one which exists behind the scenes, within the walls of the home or (metaphorically) behind a veil. What is significant of this absence is that even within the pages written to (and by) them, women are not visually represented. The images, which include urban landscapes and men, reinforce their expected roles as supporters of the caliphate and then men who lead it.

Visually, and in considering the written content of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* as a whole, assumptions that the role of women is viewed as less than (or less important than) men would seem to be correct. In an effort to address the second research question posed in Chapter 2, which is concerned with how the constructed female Muslim identity conflicts with the contemporary feminist identity, the remainder of this section will focus on three distinct expectations which appeared systematically throughout the selected texts and emerged as being of great importance to the identity of women in ISIS:

1) Women should be knowledgeable and pursue a religious education.

2) Women should remain within the home.

3) Women should marry believing men and bear children.

In approaching these three expectations, I am able to compare narratives that are heavily present within both the contemporary feminist identity, and the ISIS female identity, though in different (in some cases, drastically different) ways.

4.2.1 Women should be knowledgeable and pursue a religious education

Line 2.1 in Example 7 reads, “You know that acquiring knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim and every Muslimah.” Though limited in several practices, particularly outside of their home, Muslim women within ISIS are not expected to remain intellectually stagnant. They are encouraged from all angles to build upon their

knowledge; however, the options and the content available to them is limited, as can be seen in Example 14:

Example 14: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 11, "A Jihād Without Fighting"

4.1: My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujāhidah, and if the weapon of the men is the assault rifle and the explosive belt, then know that the weapon of the women is good behavior and knowledge.

4.2: Because you will enter fierce battles between truth and falsehood.

4:3: And for that reason, you are in need of a lot of patience and goodness and what suffices of beneficial knowledge in order to build a generation capable of bearing a trust that the heavens, the earth, and the mountains have all declined to bear.

4.4: Furthermore, my sisterly advice to you as you are preparing the lion cubs of the Khilāfah is that first some knowledge, then the weapon.

4.5: The danger of a weapon without knowledge is great and very rarely does it get things right.

4:6: And here before you are the Sharī'ah institutions, training camps, and even the kindergartens. All of them in our state – may Allah support it.

Example 14 approaches the narrative of knowledge and education from two angles; first for the Muslim woman herself, and secondly, for her children who will lead the next generation. To contextualize the excerpts, the article "A Jihād Without Fighting" focuses on reminding the woman that though she is exempt from participating in violent jihad, her responsibility to her own education stands in its place, as it is through her education

that her children will be brought up correctly. What can be seen from these examples (and from Example 7 in the previous section) is that the education in question revolves fully around Islam. In **2.1** from Example 7, the author reminds readers that there are "institutions and courses on the entirety of the Sharī'ah sciences" within the caliphate, dedicated to providing instruction to women. In **4.5**, the author makes another reference to the "Sharī'ah institutions, training camps, and even the kindergartens" emphasizing the commitment ISIS has to training its members, including women and children; however, this commitment (within the caliphate, at least) is only dedicated to religious education, hence the focus on Islamic law (Sharī'ah), derived from the Quran. The beliefs on studying material outside of the religion can be seen in Example 15:

> Example 15: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 8, "Twin Halves of the Muhājirīn"
>
> **4.6:** Yes, the sister is their honor and it is their right to fear for her, by why do they not fear for their honor when the sister wants to travel to Paris or London to specialize in some worldly field of knowledge?
>
> **4.7:** Rather, you see them hailing this, supporting it, and being proud of it!

The women the author refers to here, are women living outside of ISIS controlled territory, likely Europe, given the references to Paris and London and their family's reaction to them traveling for the sake of education versus traveling for what they consider religious freedom.

Examples 14 and 15 are helpful in understanding the contrast between the two identities mentioned earlier in the section as they relate to the knowledge and education narrative. Line **4.6** explains that the hypothetical daughter (still referred to as a Muslim

"sister") seeks to "specialize in some worldly knowledge," which garners pride and support from her family. A woman seeking higher education most often possesses a respectable level of intelligence and education, and will likely be able to provide for herself. Higher education for women leads to greater opportunity for professional success, which ultimately leads to greater equality within the professional sphere. The pursuit of such an endeavor would be met with pride and support from feminists concerned with the general advancement of women; and yet, the author clearly disapproves of the hypothetical family's support, asking in **4.6** "why do they not fear for her honor" as she sets out to achieve this. More appropriate for the Muslim woman is to specialize in "good behavior and knowledge" as the author insists in line **4.1** in Example 14, because with these as her "weapon," she will be prepared for the "fierce battles between truth and falsehood" which she will inevitably face. Similar to the beliefs expressed in Example 15 on "worldly sciences," lines **4.1** and **4.2** imply that critical and independent thought are also unnecessary to a woman's education. Battles of "truth and falsehood" provide only two options, particularly when prohibited from education outside of religious law.

Finally, there is an emphasis on the woman's education in line **4.3** "in order to build a generation." Line **4.4** explains that her knowledge is needed in "preparing the lion cubs of the Khilāfah." There is an emphasis on education and a value placed on a Muslim woman's level of knowledge, which on the surface level implies an intellectual value of the Muslim woman; however, the end goal in this expectation is to benefit the caliphate.

4.2.2 Women should remain within the home

In what she refers to as the "women as homemakers repertoire," (p. 35) within her own research, Laulumaa-Leino (2019) describes the notion that a woman belongs within

the home, maintaining the home while raising her children. While a woman's choice to remain at home raising her children is supported within feminism, the assumption that home is where the woman belongs and should stay, is certainly not. The expectation of a Muslim woman remaining in her home is explicitly mentioned in Example 16:

Example 16: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 13, "Advice on Ihdād"

4.8: Thus, the mourning widow should remember that the Muslimāt – widows or not – do not leave their homes except occasionally and only for good reasons.

4.9: Allah said to the Muslimāt as a whole, {And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as in the former times of jāhiliyyah} [al-Ahzāb: 33]

Line 4.8 explains that regardless of whether a woman is in mourning or not, she does not leave her home unless she has "good reasons," though the author does not elaborate on what these reasons could be for a woman who is *not* in mourning. The author explains that instances of eviction, or demolition of the home would be the only suitable occasions for a mourning widow to leave the home of her dead husband, but little beyond that. The author clarifies in line **4.9** that this applies to all Muslim women (Muslimāt) and legitimizes this statement with a religious reference, advising women to keep out of the public eye. The article "Advice on Ihdād" does not include the author's name, which in this study has been assumed to mean that the article was written by a man. While this does not detract from the constructed identity of a Muslim woman revolving around the support of her home, it does little to show how this expectation is accepted among the Muslim women to whom it applies. Given the author's use of a religious reference and

the religious obedience seen in previous examples, we can assume that restriction to the home would not be contested, and the following example supports this assumption:

Example 17: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 9, "Slave-Girls or Prostitutes?"

4.10: I write this while the letters drip of pride.

4.11: Yes, O religions of kufr altogether, we have indeed raided and captured the kāfirah women, and drove them like sheep by the edge of the sword.

4.12: Therefore, I further increase the spiteful ones in anger by saying that I and those with me at home prostrated to Allah in gratitude on the day the first slave-girl entered our home.

4.13: Yes, we thanked our Lord for having let us live to the day we saw kufr humiliated and its banner destroyed.

The excerpts in Example 17 were taken from an article by a female author. It was mentioned in previous article excerpts that, unless being attacked, women within ISIS are prohibited from engaging in violent jihad. Here, the author uses a collective "we" which suggests she partook in the actions. While physically we know this is not true, her "pride" in **4.10** comes from having belonged to the group in **4.11** who had "raided and captured" "by the edge of the sword." Within this group, it is the men who engage in raiding, fighting and capture, though they aren't mentioned specifically as performing these actions. This suppression of the men is seen again in **4.13**. We aren't told who "humiliated" the kufr or "destroyed" their banner, but again, as women are prohibited from violence and restricted largely to their household roles, it is highly unlikely that they actively participated. In line **4.12**, the author admits that while the raids occurred where

these women were being captured, she, and those with her were waiting at home. The author makes no reference to her restrictions from leaving the home, other than from within the home she felt "pride" in **4.10**, looked to Allah with "gratitude" in line **4.12**, and "thanked [her] Lord" in **4.13**.

Examples 16 and 17 show both explicit instructions and implicit acceptance of the woman's restriction to her home. By supporting these gendered assumptions of women (particularly Muslim women) avoiding the public sphere, the identity constructed within these texts stands firmly against a woman's freedom to pursue a life outside of the home. Laulumaa-Leino (2019) states that the "women as homemakers [repertoire] strengthens the conception that Muslim women are not a part of society as academics or contributing members of the work force, but as wives and mothers" (p. 36). The final section of this analysis addresses the expectations of women in marriage and motherhood.

4.2.3 Women should marry believing men and bear children

The power of gender stereotypes is constantly challenged within contemporary feminism, particularly in relation to building (or not building) families. The previous two sections covered the expectation of Muslim women in acquiring knowledge and education (of her religion) and remaining within her home. This section addresses the expectations of Muslim women with regard to marriage and childrearing.

The following example is from the article "Two, Three or Four" which discusses the practice of polygyny. Within the article, the author provides readers with justification for the practice through several religious references regarding its legality as well as the benefits for allowing it, as seen in Example 18:

Example 18: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 8, "Two, Three or Four"

> **4.14:** Furthermore, Allah might afflict a woman with infertility, but instead of divorcing her Islam has permitted the man to marry another woman while keeping his infertile wife honored and supported.

Example 18 indirectly addresses the role of the Muslim woman as a producer of children. After addressing the possibility of a woman's infertility, the author adds that Islam "has permitted" her husband to marry another woman. By also acknowledging that this allows the husband to keep his "infertile wife honored and supported," it can be inferred that her only fault within the marriage was infertility. The role of bearing and raising children was noted in Chapter 2 as one of the primary roles of women within ISIS, which can be seen again in Example 19:

> Example 19: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 11, "A Jihād Without Fighting"
>
> **4.15:** Still, the absence of an obligation of jihād and war upon the Muslim women – except in defense against someone attacking her – does not overturn her role in building the Ummah, producing men, and sending them out to the fierceness of battle.

In **4.15**, the author explains that "the absence of an obligation of jihad" (the religious obligation most often associated with men), does not exempt the woman from her own religious obligations of "building" the Muslim community, "producing men" and sending them toward their own jihad. Though previous examples have referred to the Muslim woman's motherly duties of caring for and educating her children, line **4.15** uses the term "producing." The woman is expected to have the child for the sake of continuing a cycle. From a biological standpoint, this is a female role regardless of culture or social

movement; however, it is the expectation, and the obligation which clash with feminist beliefs. Similarly, the concept or desire for marriage itself does not clash with feminist beliefs, merely the obligation of a woman taking a husband in order to bear him children. As Example 6 shows, a Muslim woman seeking the truth has no obligation in remaining with a husband who has turned away from Islam or is hypocritical in his beliefs; however, for the wife of a believing husband, she is expected to remain in her marriage, and perform her duties as a supportive wife and mother. Example 20 deviates from the style of the other female authored articles in its specific address to men. The author addresses the husbands wishing to take more wives, offering guidance on how to navigate their wives' sensitivities toward the subject:

Example 20: Excerpts from *Dabiq*, Issue 8, "Two, Three or Four"

4.16: Don't be afraid of her initial reaction, be patient with her, and use in your advice the words of Allah and the hadith of His Prophet.

4.17: And if she's stubborn, then frighten her with the Almighty and remind her that this is a part of this Sharī'ah, and that we are in a state whose system of rule is khilāfah upon prophetic methodology inshā'allāh.

In this example, the author is suggesting in **4.16** that the husbands "be patient" with their wives, using "words of Allah" and the "hadith" in an attempt to calm their "initial reaction." The author's use of "initial" suggests that there will be additional reactions, perhaps different than the first. If this is not the case, the author suggests in **4.17** that the husband "frighten her with the Almighty." Elsewhere in the article "Two, Three or Four," the author lists several religious references justifying the polygyny, which she hints at in

4.17 when advising the husband to remind his wife that polygyny is "a part of this Sharī'ah" and the governing law within the caliphate. Of note, however, is the author's advice to "frighten her," which implies that the author is aware of the power of religious influence and its ability to confine a woman within her marriage.

The three expectations of Muslim women within ISIS covered in this section, those of education, maintaining a home, and marrying for the sake of childbearing all factor prominently into contemporary feminist debates; however, there is little overlap in the ideological stances of each. Where feminists fight for freedom and equality, these expectations of ISIS women support limitations and inequality, and where feminists fight for women's choice, the women represented within these articles live contently with the mere illusion of choice.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The aims of this study were twofold; to determine how the identity of the female Muslim is discursively constructed within official ISIS propaganda, as well as to understand how this specific identity compares to the beliefs of contemporary feminists. In Section 2.8, two research questions were established in order to guide this study in the direction of answering these questions. The following sections will revisit these questions through a discussion of the results of the analysis.

5.1 How is the female identity constructed in ISIS texts directed specifically toward women?

In order to address this question, a corpus of 10 articles within ISIS produced digital magazines were analyzed to determine common themes in linguistic strategies used for constructing the identity of the Muslim woman. These articles were selected because of their intended audience, which was presupposed to be female. Despite the intended audience of these articles, the presence of women within the digital magazines was nearly non-existent. Using Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework of identity construction in linguistic interaction, along with van Leeuwen's (2008) model on the representation of social actors, my analysis unveiled that the Muslim woman's identity is consistently represented throughout the 10 articles as one which is submissive to Allah, strictly observant of her religious duties, and necessary to the successful continuation of the caliphate. The different aspects of this identity discovered through this analysis were not necessarily surprising; however, the processes involved in the construction of this identity, particularly by the female authors, is important in better understanding the success of female recruitment to ISIS.

van Leeuwen's (2008) model proved valuable in determining the social placement of the Muslim female. Through representational strategies such as differentiation, functionalization, and assimilation, it was made clear that the Muslim woman within ISIS is first and foremost a member of the caliphate. Having only ever been referred to as a member of a group; her individual identity was ignored in preference to the group identity. Focusing on Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) principles of relationality, indexicality, and positionality, it was clear that the ideal Muslim woman is an identity reserved for historical reference. Through the constant comparison of modern Muslim women to those of religious notoriety, the identity of the female is situated as one which needs constant guidance and improvement.

By positioning themselves as distinct from women who have not completed specific obligations such as marriage, bearing children and most importantly, hijrah, the authors of these articles have reinforced the necessity of relocation to the caliphate in order for a woman to achieve her true Muslim identity. Additionally, authors were often found to be shifting between identity roles as their articles progressed. In doing so, they relate to a larger audience of women and support the idea that the opportunity to pursue a true Muslim identity is open to all women willing to make the necessary sacrifices. In constructing a more inclusive identity which places a heavy emphasis on the necessity of travel to the caliphate, these articles help to explain not only how ISIS attempts to appeal to Western audiences through their female authors, but also how they recruit individuals to physically join the organization.

5. 2 How does this identity differ from or conflict with the current wave of contemporary feminist identity and its emphasis on inclusion and difference?

In this section of the analysis, I considered how the constructed female identity found within the previous section contrasted with views of the female identity found within Western nations, where large numbers of female ISIS members have fled from. In Chapter 2, the current wave of contemporary feminism was said to be grounded in further inclusivity of who fits within the limits of feminist definitions. It is a movement which claims to fight for a woman's agency above all else. In that sense, the women who have chosen to pledge their allegiance to ISIS certainly argue that they have intentionally sought the truth within Islam, and within the articles selected for examination, there is no evidence of the authors supporting gender equality beyond the standards in place.

The three prominent identity expectations assigned to women that were explored in this study were the expectations that women gain knowledge and an education in their religion, the expectation that women remain predominantly within the home, and the expectation that women take a husband and produce children for future generations of ISIS, none of which were for the benefit of the woman outside of her fulfilling her religious obligations. There were several instances of both male and female authors explicitly referring to the Muslim woman's responsibility in child bearing and rearing and commitment to her husband, as well as the importance of educating herself within the religion. More implicitly noted was the expectation of women remaining in their homes, though the implicit nature of such references is telling of the level of acceptance of such expectations.

This study aimed to explore the relationship between the Muslim female identity supported by ISIS and the Western feminist in the hopes of better understanding the pull of Western women to the organization. With existing literature often focused on

motivational factors aiding radicalization and recruitment, the study of identity construction and expression within the organization is of importance to the field of terrorism research surrounding women as its strong appeal is necessary within ISIS's recruitment strategies. What was made clear throughout Chapter 4 was the consistency with which understandings of the Muslim female identity were displayed by authors and the surface level of agency associated with the Muslim women. Given the fact that any instances of agency or expression were grounded in religious justification, the study has shown the success of a male-dominated culture maintaining the illusion of equality and respect of the female Muslim.

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