The Integration History of Kuwaiti Television from 1957-1990: An Audience-Generated Oral Narrative on the Arrival and Integration of the Device in the City

Ahmad Hamada
The Integration History of Kuwaiti Television from 1957-1990: An Audience-Generated Oral Narrative on the Arrival and Integration of the Device in the City

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Ahmad Mishary Ahmad Hamada

MA, Indiana University, 2011
BS, Kuwait University, 2007

Director: Timothy E. Bajkiewicz, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Broadcast Journalism
Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture

Virginia Commonwealth University
December, 2015
Dedication

To my father, Mishary Hamada, and my mother, Hana’ Al Duhayyim, my own personal history.
Acknowledgments

I would like to present my gratitude to the all merciful and all mighty Allah, for an abundance of opportunities and bliss that I often take for granted. I would secondly like to offer my humble thanks to my parents Misary and Hana’, for being an endless well of faith and belief. Many thanks for my beloved family; my brother Khaled, and my sister Fatimy, Dalal and Heba.

As the Arabic proverb goes: “I am the slave of he who has taught me but one letter”. My appreciation, therefore, also goes to my committee chair, to whom I owe a great debt; Dr. Timothy Bajkiewicz, as well as my esteemed committee members; Dr. Eric Garberson, Dr. Yousif Al-Failakawi, Dr. John T Kneebone, & Dr. Elizabeth Hodges. This gratitude also extends to those who have enlightened me on different disciplines across my undergraduate and graduate educational path; Dr. David Weaver, Dr. Lesa Major, Dr. Heba Al Musallam (doubly thanked), Dr. Aliya Al Matrouk, Dr. Hisham Misbah, Dr. Yaseen Al Yaseen, Dr. Enas Salmeen, Dr. Taghreed Al Mulla, Dr. Abdul Aziz Al Daihany, Dr. Talal Al Tuwajry, Dr. Khaled Al Qihis, Dr. Mahmoud Al Mousawwi, Dr. Manaf Basheer, Dr. Bashayir Al Rashid, & Dr. Anas Al Rushaiyd, I am and will always be indebted to each and every one of you. I would also like to extend my gratitude to those who have mentored and supervised my career outside of the academy; Ms. Najwa Asran, Manaf Awadh, and Mr. Mahmoud Al Qattan, thank you for taking a chance with me, working next to me, and thank you for allowing me to grow in other fields.

This endeavor would have been impossible if it weren’t for my astounding friends, in Kuwait, Indiana, and Virginia. Many thanks for my brothers Abdulla Al Nouri, Ahmad
Zamil, Salamah Ayyad, Yousef Al Qabandi, Faisal Al Shehab, Bader Al Ali, Ahmad Hadi, and especially Omran Al Yousify, for their support throughout these six years. To Dr. Moureq Al Otaiby, Wa’el Al Eid, Benny Howard, Antonio Ros Bernal, Francisco Cortes Alvarez, Eman Al - Sha’ban, Mohammad Qali, Athbi Al Subai’e, Mohammad Al Khulaifi, Salah Al Mulla, Fawwaz Al Otaiby, , Fahad Al Furaih, Dr. Ala’ Yaseen, Dr. Aysar Al Husseini, Nebras Al Ameer, Sevil Mahfoozi, and Chelsea Joe, I am grateful to each and everyone of you for making being away from home bearable.

“He who does not thank the people does not thank Allah”

Prophet Mohammad; peace be upon him
# Table of Contents

List of Tables.................................................................................................................................xi
List of Figures..................................................................................................................................xii
Abstract..........................................................................................................................................xiv

Chapter 1: Introduction........................................................................................................................1

  Research Summary..........................................................................................................................1
  Theoretical briefing.........................................................................................................................5
  Main problem..................................................................................................................................6
  Purpose and significance............................................................................................................... 7
  Methodological briefing..................................................................................................................8
  Chapter breakdown.......................................................................................................................9

  Theoretical Structure: Alternative History and Television.....................................................14
  Categorizational concerns..........................................................................................................15
  The application of alternative histories on television.............................................................25

Statement of the Problem: Television Historiography in Kuwait and the Arab World......................34

  Institutional focus of Kuwaiti television history.................................................................40
  National focus of Kuwaiti television history..................................................................43
  Biographies and other accidental resources....................................................................47
  Concern with effect............................................................................................................... 48
Television History Writing Between Kuwait and Neighboring Countries.....53

Conclusion.............................................................................................................58

Chapter 2: Literature Review..................................................................................61

Examples of the Integration of Television in the History of Kuwait and Other Societies.................................................................................................................61

First area: succession..........................................................................................62

Second are: Novelty..............................................................................................64

Third area: Familiarization....................................................................................67

Fourth area: Domesticity.......................................................................................72

Fifth area: Modernity............................................................................................76

Sixth area: Content................................................................................................79

Conclusion.............................................................................................................86

Historical Brief on Kuwait City.............................................................................87

Early history, leadership, and establishment.......................................................91

Social aspect of the city and its inhabitants.......................................................93

Trade and economic history.............................................................................98

Sheikhdom and diplomatic relations...............................................................101

The discovery of oil, modernity, and progression...........................................103

Urbanization........................................................................................................104

Women’s and minority rights...........................................................................113

The Development of Television in Kuwait.......................................................116

The structure of Kuwaiti television.................................................................119

The programs of Kuwaiti television.................................................................120

Television and the state.......................................................................................124
The spatial reminiscence and contextual experience of cinema.................175
The appropriation of cinema within the community..........................177
The comparison of cinema with television......................................184
Summary..........................................................................................188
Second Area, Novelty: Television’s Infancy in Kuwaiti Society..............189
Initial poetic perception of television..............................................190
The pioneering models and distributors.........................................191
The socioeconomic conditions of early television ownership...........196
Summary..........................................................................................200
Third Area, Familiarization: The Appropriation of Television in Kuwaiti
Society.............................................................................................201
Economical gap of television ownership.......................................201
Geographical and ethnic variables of television ownership.............206
Resistance.......................................................................................210
Summary..........................................................................................214
Fourth Area, Domestication: Television’s Entrance in the Kuwaiti Home....215
Television’s relation with other domestic components.....................217
Television as decor: The cupboard, the drapes, and the aesthetics......223
Television and parental Control.......................................................228
Viewing habits..................................................................................233
Television and the consumption junction.......................................237
The miracle aspect..........................................................................240
Summary..........................................................................................247
Fifth Area, Modernization: Television in the Era of Change.................................248
Enter color television..........................................................................................249
Television and the urban migration......................................................................269
Television and the accompanying technology....................................................276
Social alterations and disappearing acts.............................................................287
Summary.............................................................................................................291
Sixth Area, Content: Kuwaitis and their Television Programs...............................293
Intertextuality.......................................................................................................294
The Kuwaiti television canon...............................................................................298
Content and cross-cultural empathy: Eastern......................................................308
Content and cross-cultural empathy: Western....................................................316
Summary.............................................................................................................324
Chapter 5: Conclusion and discussion ..................................................................327
Deliberations on the Research Questions............................................................327
Conclusionary Reflections on the Integration of Television.................................345
Theoretical and Structural Limitations.................................................................354
Methodological Limitations..................................................................................355
Future Studies ......................................................................................................359
References............................................................................................................363
Appendix A: The Ministry of Information’s Ministerial Decision 536/1992 ..............396
Appendix B: Submission to the Institutional Review Board....................................399
Appendix C: Admission Request to Kuwait University..........................................401
Appendix D.1: Clarification Forms for the Instructors (English)..............................402
Appendix D.2: Clarification Forms for the Instructors (Arabic).................................403
Appendix E.1: Form to be Presented for the Students (English)..................................404
Appendix E.2: Form to be Presented for the Students (Arabic)....................................405
Appendix F.1: Screening Survey (English)....................................................................406
Appendix F.2: Screening Survey (Arabic).....................................................................407
Appendix G.1: Consent Form (English).......................................................................408
Appendix G.2: Consent Form (Arabic).........................................................................409
Appendix H: Selected Photographs of Interviewees....................................................410
Appendix I: Questions for Interviewees......................................................................412
Appendix J: Interviews Progression Log......................................................................414
Appendix K: Interviewees’ Details................................................................................416
Vita............................................................................................................................424
List of Tables

Table 1. The Growth of Televisions Exports in Million.................................................................68
Table 2. Dateline of the institutional development of television in Kuwait..............................118
Table 3. Kuwaiti districts and their demographic populations.........................................................143
Table 4. The demographics of the Kuwaiti over-50s.................................................................144
Table 5. Student populations and demographics in Kuwait University.................................145
Table 6. The demographic composition of the participants.........................................................159
Table 7. The number of television sets (both color and Black & White).......................................272
List of Figures

Figure 1. A photograph from Al-Qabas newspaper taken in 1985.................................................71
Figure 2. Caricatures from the mid-1970s.....................................................................................73
Figure 3. The misconception of televisual abstraction.................................................................75
Figure 4. A 1962 caricature from the Egyptian magazine Rose al-Yusuf.....................................77
Figure 5. A painting of a Kuwaiti quarter.....................................................................................97
Figure 6. A view of the fusion between old and new.................................................................100
Figure 7. The old town wall terminating at the Eastern flank....................................................107
Figure 8. The old town harbor.................................................................................................107
Figure 9. Comparison between the two picture.........................................................................108
Figure 10. An illustration representing the 1951.......................................................................109
Figure 11. In comparison to the previous images.....................................................................110
Figure 12. A portrait shot of Kuwait.........................................................................................111
Figure 13. A landscape shot of Kuwait....................................................................................112
Figure 14. A landscape shot of Kuwait....................................................................................112
Figure 15. The cast of “Open Sesame”....................................................................................121
Figure 16. A 16mm telecinema machine..................................................................................126
Figure 17. The operation at Kuwaiti television...........................................................................126
Figure 18. The destruction of Kuwaiti television station............................................................128
Figure 19. The “summer cinema” in the Ahmadi area.............................................................180
Figure 20. Anonymous photograph of an old cinema theater.................................................................184
Figure 21. A man carrying a television set.............................................................................................197
Figure 22. Image of a chart of the electricity generation capacity.........................................................207
Figure 23. The old Kuwaiti home...........................................................................................................226
Figure 24. Examples of the old Kuwaiti urban structure........................................................................227
Figure 25. An example of the traditional Kuwaiti house.........................................................................227
Figure 26. An advert for color television...............................................................................................254
Figure 27. A 1974 advert for a color PAL-friendly French model...........................................................255
Figure 28. A view of a road branching from the “new street” ...............................................................258
Figure 29. An illustration of the “new street” ..........................................................................................259
Figure 30. Caricatures from the 1974 issue of Aalam Al Fan magazine.................................................267
Figure 31. Photographs from the mid 1980s...........................................................................................285
Figure 32. A press photograph from 1983...............................................................................................296
Figure 33. Al Alami presenting his famed 3x3 on Kuwaiti television .....................................................300
Figure 34. Archival footage of the contribution of women in Kuwaiti television.................................305
Abstract

THE INTEGRATION HISTORY OF KUWAITI TELEVISION FROM 1957-1990: AN AUDIENCE-GENERATED ORAL NARRATIVE ON THE ARRIVAL AND INTEGRATION OF THE DEVICE IN THE CITY

By Ahmad Mishary Ahmad Hamada

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015.

Major Director: Timothy E. Bajkiewicz, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Broadcast Journalism
Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture

This study attempts to compose an account of television history in Kuwait, one that focuses on its integration into society and is told from the audience's perspective and experience. This study represents a cultural alternative to the overwhelmingly national, institutional, and biographical focus that accompanies television history works in Kuwait and the Arab world.

The narrative is gathered and generated through the individual oral stories of 25 Kuwaitis over the age of 50, who generally represent the six geographical districts of Kuwait. Through their oral stories, the narrators examine the different areas in which television has integrated itself into society from 1957 to 1990. These include television's succession to cinema, television's novelty, television's familiarization into society, television's domestication, television's interaction with modernity, and television's content.
The oral stories of the narrators regarding each area reveal a wide range of microscopic topics about living in early Kuwait and television’s integration with it, including the people’s initial “miraculous” conception of the device, television’s relation with Kuwaiti urban growth, and the early economical gap of television ownership in Kuwait.

Besides the general exploration, discussing the research areas indicates a somewhat linear narrative of television’s integration into culture, where television was preceded by the cinema technology that had semiotically paved the way for the device, before an abrupt novelty period in which television was settling in an ever-changing Kuwait, followed by a familiarity period in which the device had lost its gimmicky association, interrelated with all the other sociocultural factors of society, and spatially corresponded with both the extinct and the surviving components of the Kuwaiti house. Kuwaiti television had also corresponded with the social, economical, and urban alterations of Kuwaiti modernity, with its content nostalgically reflecting different stages of Kuwaiti cultural life. In the end, an overarching theme could be found in the “foreshortening” of television’s integration journey into Kuwaiti culture, with the narrators using television to express their yearning to the values of yesteryear.

Future studies suggest more focus on contextuality, qualitative data, and interdisciplinarity in television history.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Research Summary

It is generally known that Kuwaiti television (KTV) started as the private initiative of the Kuwaiti merchant Murad Behbehani in 1957, before being quickly governmentalized on November 15, 1961 (Al-Mudhaf, 2015; Dajani, 2007). Preceding all the other Gulf States of Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UAE, Kuwait has paid extensive efforts to nourish the television industry in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Al-Nadawi, 2011; Bait-Almal, 1986). It could be estimated therefore, that Kuwaiti television has obviously aged to a degree where it deserves its own history. Evidently, a fair amount of scholarship exists regarding the history of KTV as a national instrument and as an institution. However, what is to be said about the generally overlooked audience–related history of Kuwaiti television? How has the Kuwaiti public integrated television into their local culture?

On that note, the story of television in Kuwait offers very interesting social dimensions, considering that television was introduced to Kuwait only 22 years after the initial oil exploration on Kuwaiti grounds, and only four years before the independence of the state from the British protectorate treaty (Abu-Hakima, 1984; Têtreault, 1997). Kuwait, which was only 7.5 Kilometers in size in 1920, witnessed a population rise of 1235% from 1910 to 1965, and an 11792% rise in governmental revenues from 1946 to 1977 (Al-Jassar, 2009; Al-Yahya, 1993). The unprecedented degree of urban expansion turned the mud-based primitive habitats into civic structures with roads, hospitals and parks (Elsheshtawy, 2008; Klaum, 1980).
Television, as both technology and substance, must have accompanied these dramatically introduced social changes. However, the existing work on Kuwaiti television history (both in and out of the academy) suffers from several problems including being institutionally and nationally focused, constituting mostly an institutional or national form of television history, with very little focus on society. Furthermore, when it does focus on society, television scholarship is generally preoccupied with the media effect aspect. Evidently, Kuwait seems to have done very little in the way of documenting the audience-related history of its television, one that documents its integration into social culture.

Therefore, this research is motivated by the inquiry of whether television history in Kuwait obtains a cultural counterpart; a history of its social integration which narrates television’s journey as authored and created by the public and their social/cultural context, rather than by the nation or the institution. This historical chronicle would treat television as a cultural rather than a national instrument. Therefore, this research uses oral storytelling to create a qualitative, audience-generated history of television’s integration in Kuwait.

This is where the term “integration history” comes in, which indicates a history of how television has immersed itself into the local culture, incorporated and appropriated by the common Kuwaiti people, rather than by the nation or the opinion leaders. Integration history therefore, examines television as a culturally organic artifact, with its history shaped and told by the people. For the purposes of this research, the word “integration” should alternatively offer implicative reference to other words like television’s arrival, assimilation, acceptance, appropriation, incorporation, etc. Based on previous local, regional and international literature, the research questions attempt to examine the integration of Kuwaiti television from several aspects, including television’s succession to cinema in the community, its novelty, its
familiarization, its domestication, its interaction with the civic modernity wave, and its content.

Through the method of oral history, this study collects and analyzes different stories from 25 narrators within the over-50 age group, who represent the six main Kuwaiti geographical districts. The narrators represent different social, ethnic, and economic echelons of Kuwaiti society. These narrators, who have witnessed the arrival and integration of television in the city, compose a coherent narrative for the history of the Kuwaiti television audience from 1957 until 1990. Throughout their personal stories, the narrators discuss each of the previous research questions to draw a clear picture of television’s integration into Kuwaiti society.

The narrators’ stories are also sporadically balanced against secondary sources like press extracts and comparative scholarship from other societies. Looking at television’s succession to cinema technology, for instance, highlights the initial confusion between the two technologies amongst early Kuwaitis. Similarly, the novelty period of television contained stories of pioneering models, earlier purchases, and early poetic perceptions of the device. About the familiarization of television in society, the narrators spoke of the economical gap, the ethnic gap, and the public resistance against television ownership. In its domestication phase, the narrators recalled issues like television’s viewing habits, issues of parental discipline, and television’s interaction with now-extinct domestic components. Similarly, when discussing how television has interacted with their exposure to post-oil modernity, the narrators recalled the introduction of color television, the introduction of television-accompanying technology (like the VCR), and television’s role in their urban migration from old to new Kuwait. Finally, discussing their interaction with televised content, the narrators’ memories were associated with previous local and Western television programs as they recalled the influence of such content. The narrators shared memorable televised moments from their past, including the moon landing, and the Arab-
Israeli conflict.

Towards the end of this research, the conclusion and discussion section contemplated these stories against their respective research questions in search of general themes and patterns, and their relation to the wider narrative of television’s integration into culture. The stories, without any clear cut conformation, provide a somewhat linear narrative of television’s cultural integration, that involves the role of cinema in preparing for it, the fluid period of television’s novelty during a time in which Kuwait was constantly changing, and the more stable time of television’s familiarization. The stories also reveal that the device had cemented its cultural status after it had acquired access to the Kuwaiti home, and paralleled the modernity movement that included the urban migration wave, the birth of feminism, and the economic boom. Throughout this entire time, its broadcasted content both reflected and spoke to the mentalities of the different stages of public and cultural life.

One overarching theme throughout the research areas involved the historically foreshortened integration journey of Kuwaiti television, considering the non-gradual shift in the social, urban, and economical structure of the nation throughout the previous five decades. The narrators have also offered conclusionary contemplations – both negative and positive – on the current technological advancement of television technology, with retrospective comparison to the nostalgic TV culture of yesteryear.

Limitations of this research included structural limitations, like the general lack of specific social and qualitative data on Kuwaiti television history, as well as methodological limitations, including the potential subjectivities of oral narratives and the unique structure of the Kuwaiti tongue. Recommendations for future studies concern the need to nurture and grow the social and oral history database, particularly towards the more disenfranchised members of
society. It also stressed the need to abandon the authoritative model of television history, and instead apply a more inclusive, historical discipline of media studies, one that mixes qualitative, quantitative, and semiological perspectives. Finally, it was also recommended that future television history works pay extensive critical attention to the discourse of previous programs for instance, offering a post-structural analytical look on what these programs represent about the social ephemera of the time in which they existed. Therefore, the following subsections shall offer briefings on several elements of this study, as well as highlight the scholarly foundations and protocols for it.

**Theoretical briefing.** Because of its focus on the common person experience, the reception aspect and the oral history method, this study borrows and appropriates from several sub-disciplines of alternative history, since it only relates to some of their principles but not others. This led to the term “integration history,” which was coined in an effort to describe the study’s motif. This research is somewhat inspired by the wave of alternative histories that supplement the usual elite-guided model, and instead take into account the agency and authorship of local cultures (Cronon, 1992; Darnton, 1984; Ginzburg, 1992; Ladurie, 1977). When this theoretical structure is applied to television studies, many scholars have felt that television history in general has been one-sided and in need of more public perspective (Bourdon, 2003; David Morley, 1992; Kortti & Mähonen, 2009; Scannell, 2009; Smith & Hamilton, 2012). Therefore, a socially relevant history of television requires looking at television’s journey of integration as authored and created by society and its cultural context, rather than by the nation, the institution, or the technology (Hanke, 2001; Williams, 1974).²

² Throughout the histories of different societies, television has integrated itself in many unique forms. Much scholarship from different geographical regions, for example, speaks of a practice where an entire neighborhood would gather around one set, also known as community viewing, as witnessed in rural India (Malik, 1989), Japan (Chun,
Main problem. By definition, studying the gradual integration of television in society requires specific scholarly attention toward local culture. However, the main problem with the local history works available is the general denial of authority and agency that should be allowed to the local culture in the composing of television history. Instead, it seems that the written history of television in Kuwait is more occupied with narrating the institutional and national efforts of “placing” television amongst the public.

Between the Arabian Gulf and other Arab regions, some television history studies have been produced in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, that indeed pay attention to the local cultural context (Abu-Lughod, 2008; Dajani, 1992; Salamandra 1998; Salamandra 2005). Similar work has been done by both Eastern and Western scholars in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf (Bait-Almal, 2000; Beayeyz, 1989). Despite that, such scholarly work is rather sparse. With Kuwait, television history work seems to overlook the audience and their social culture, and therefore the “integration process” of television. It prefers to focus on other areas that include the general conception of KTV as an institution or as a national instrument, the biographical focus on the industry’s “pioneers,” and the overwhelming concern with the effect of the medium on the audience.

All the previous kinds of historical research give television a one-way authority in

---

2006), Appalachia (Podber, 2007), Australia (Herd, 2012), and suburban America (Barfield, 2008; Spigel, 1992). Television, therefore, has earned a social dimension to its history, as it usually influenced family power dynamics, domestic space, gender relations, and family privacy. With Kuwait particularly, the drastic growth of television sets escalated to a 96.8% ownership rate amongst resident families in the mid-1980s (Abu-Shanab, 1987). This is according to a study citing secondary citations from governmental research. According to a study by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information, television proved a primary pastime for the Kuwaiti youth in the mid-1980s (Al-Tuhaib, 1985; “Sixty-five percent of youths,” 1984). Ex-information minister Mohammad Al-San’ousy claimed that television has helped transcend the Kuwaiti citizen into the new reality of modern Kuwait (Sa’eed, 1982). Such social manifestations of television’s integration in the society, coupled with the unique sociocultural status of a state like Kuwait, all imply fair potential for the compilation of a rich audience-related dimension of television, which motivates the need for this kind of research.
affecting the audience and shaping the historical narrative, despite the socially rich potential of studying Kuwaiti television’s integration set against society’s urban environment, its gender context, and its religious resistance, preferably through the eyes of the audience. All these categories are unfortunately overlooked. This only highlights the discrepancy between the local region and its Western counterpart, with the latter reaching a stage that focuses more on the cultural context of television history (Kortti & Mähonen, 2009; Morley, 1992; Williams, 1974). This historiographical absence, therefore, acts as a main incentive for this research, which aims to establish a humble starting point for the alternative history of television in Kuwait, from the perspective of the audience.

**Purpose and significance.** The end result of this research is to compile a sufficient amount of material (in the form of oral narrations) to initiate an audience-generated database, one that narrates the story of television’s integration into Kuwaiti society since the 1950s. This study therefore, mainly concerns the first generation of television recipients. Coming into the 21st century, this database comes at a crucial period where the cohort in question has advanced age-wise, making this stage very critical for information gathering before the data is lost permanently. Additionally, this foreseen database is part of a future effort to compensate and preserve the lost television heritage of the Kuwaiti people after the First Gulf War (1990).

Also, because television history remains a matter discussed mostly outside the academy, this research carries a degree of significance in the way it attempts to resituate the historical perspective of television studies in the Gulf. To the researcher’s knowledge, the proposed research appears to be the first of its kind that implements the oral accounts of the common person as opposed to producers/ national figures, to offer a social look on Kuwaiti television’s integration in society.
Methodological briefing. As previously stated, this research’s main method of data collection consists of oral stories, or oral histories as they are known, collected through intensive one-on-one interviews with 25 individuals in the age range of the 50 and above. The population concerned were the Kuwaiti citizens who have witnessed television’s arrival and integration into society. This required interviewing those who obtain clear memories from the year 1957 onwards.

The interviews were generally guided by certain research areas composed initially through the examination of previous historical literature in relation to the integration of television into different cultures, whether in Kuwait or elsewhere. These areas concern television’s succession to cinema, its novelty, its familiarization, its domestication, its interaction with civic modernity, and its content. Each area represents a different phase of the integration of television with the Kuwaiti audience since the 1950s. These general phases were crystallized and segmented further based on the initial responses of the interviewees.

Therefore, while “integration history” is the chosen categorical reference for this dissertation, “oral history” will be used as a method to create the database from scratch. The usage of oral history will take guidance from the protocols offered in the iconic works of Alessandro Portelli (2003), Studs Terkel (1970) and Valerie Yow (2005) amongst others. In addition to general guidance, the work of scholars like Ray Barfield (2008) and Jacob Podber (2007) offer more particular examples of oral histories regarding television.

To achieve a degree of social representativeness, the interviewees’ selection process aimed to include the perspective of Hadhari Kuwaitis (city dwellers), as well as Bedouin Kuwaitis (the initial nomads). The most suitable way to ensure such ethnic diversity was to purposefully sample participants from the six geographical districts of Kuwait; Hawalli, Al-
Asima, Al-Ahmadi, Al-Jahra’, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and Al-Farwaniyya. To guarantee access to these six districts, the study used the diverse student population of Kuwait University as a channel to their kinsfolks who fit the required age group. This is in reference to Kuwait University’s status as an ethnic and ideological melting pot of Kuwaiti students who come from all districts.

**Chapter breakdown.** Structurally, the dissertation breaks down into five consecutive chapters. Continuing the current introductory chapter, this study offers a theoretical structure that guides this research, concerning the attempt to categorize the study in question within a specific category of history writing. After an initial examination, it becomes clear that this study does not necessarily synchronize entirely with the several subdisciplines of “alternative history” available, which invites the newly coined term “integration history,” accommodating the specific features of this research. The theory section of this introductory chapter also highlights these alternative forms of television history writing, including social history, cultural history, and other variations, leading to the coining of the term “integration history”. It mainly examines television history writing from a social/anthropological perspective, as opposed to the more “conventional” television history writing from an institutional/national perspective. Specifically, the chapter is scholarly assisted by the works of researchers from the field of media history and historiography, like David Morley, Paddy Scannell, and Lynn Spigel.

The introductory chapter concludes with a “statement of problem” section that highlights problematic patterns of television history studies in Kuwait and neighboring regions, including the focus on the national/ institutional model of television history, emphasis on biography, and emphasis on effect. It draws a possible connection between such patterns and the lack of an audience-related, culturally inclined aspect of Kuwaiti television history that caters to the
integration process. It also attempts to balance these patterns against television history works from approximate regions in the Gulf and the Arab peninsula. This section cites Arabic scholars and writers like Leila Abu-Lughod, and Hazim Saghiya, as well as Gulf researchers like Abdulla Al-Ghuthaimi, Hamza A. Bait-Almal, Mohammad Mo’awwad, and Waleed Al-Dawood.

The second chapter constitutes the literature review of this study, which breaks down into two significant parts; the first part examines television as the main subject of this study, while the second part examines Kuwait as the main setting of this study.

Studying television, the literature review examines several aspects of how early television has integrated itself with several cultures around the world, with specific focus on the Kuwaiti region, as well as comparative examples from other regions like China, Australia, and Latin America. These aspects highlight how the audience has appropriated television as a technology, through practices like powering early television sets with car batteries, and veiling one’s self from the television screen. These aspects are broken down into six categories; consisting of television’s succession to cinema, the novelty period of television, television’s familiarization period, the domestication of television, television’s interaction with civic modernity, and television’s content. Each category assists in understanding how the audience has allowed television gradually into their lives, thus facilitating the composing of a consistent narrative of television’s integration into Kuwaiti society. literature cites the work of scholars like Nabeel Dajani, Hussein Abu Shanab, and Douglas Boyd.

The literature review also offers much-needed historical context on the environment of the research at hand by illustrating a detailed look on the history of Kuwait and the cultural characteristics of the Kuwaiti community. This includes a briefing on its urban geography, its superstition, and its gender distinctions. This would facilitate in understanding the non-gradual
movement that the state has made from primitivism to modernity within the period of five or six decades during the 20th century. It briefly sheds light on other technologies like the car, the telegram, electricity, and the radio.

Within the lines of Kuwaiti history, the literature review also presents a brief history of the television industry in Kuwait. It draws a semi-linear timeline of KTV regarding its establishment, its administrative structure, its relation to the state, its most credited content over the years, and its current conception amongst the Kuwaiti public. After sufficient coverage of literature, the second chapter is concluded with the research questions, which concern the six historical aspects of television’s integration into local culture, the ones that the narrators are supposed to enrich through their oral stories and personal memories.

The third chapter is dedicated to a thorough discussion of the methods. It starts by discussing the benefits of oral storytelling as facilitating methodology for this historical capacity. The method section will also benefit from the characteristics of qualitative history research by offering a personal account of the researcher’s own experience, which temporarily suspends the academic detachment expected in conventional research. The method section also justifies using Kuwait University and its student as a sampling channel to the 25 participants in question.

Additionally, there will be an attempt to rationalize the sampling strategies of the research, including geographic, ethnic, and age-related variables. Furthermore, the method section will also highlight details of the interview, including the interviewing procedures, the interview questions, and the analyses/transcription particulars. The method chapter concludes by displaying the results through brief statistical models, in which the data outcomes are broken down into demographics and brief statistical interpretations. The resulting data section will set the scene for the upcoming qualitative analysis by characterizing the resulting data.
The fourth chapter; the findings and analyses chapter, represents the core breakthrough of the research. As the findings narrate the stories of the 25 interviewed participants, the fourth chapter therefore, attempts to answer the previous research questions, composing a semi-linear timeline of the integration journey of television in Kuwaiti society across three and so decades.

The oral stories of the participants are themed and categorized temporally across the previously discussed areas of the research; succession, novelty, familiarization, domestication, modernity, and content. Such areas include many examples of how the audience has interacted with television as a new device in old Kuwait, with attention paid to the social context. It was found that when the narrators discussed these six areas through their stories, they broke each area into several branches, recalling many personal experiences including how television has accompanied their transition into new Kuwait, their initial public fear and confusion over television, and the different perception of the technology between genders and ethnicities. Infrequently, these stories were also contextualized and aided by historical citations taken from secondary sources (scholarship, press), and sparse comparison with similar instances from other regions.

Conventionally, the conclusionary, fifth chapter, of this dissertation consists of a general discussion of the research areas, as well as a metatextual look at the limitation and future research recommendations. In the fifth chapter, the gathered stories are recapped, aggregated, and examined, in an effort to compose a general pattern of the integration history of television. Keeping in mind the precedence of this area of research in Kuwait, the research avoids any attempts to form strict conclusions towards the end of the research, as it is not the usual aim for an oral history methodology. However, the research does balance these research areas against
their respective research questions, and sets them in proportion against the wider theme of “television’s integration.”

Towards the end, the research contemplates on the foreshortened life cycle of television in the city as a general theme for all the stories. This in turn relates to the arrival of television during a period in which Kuwait was departing from its previous identity almost completely. The conclusionary section also takes a brief retrospective look, as the narrators nostalgically compare the earlier television culture with the technologically charged culture of today.

Highlighting the limitations and future studies recommendations of the research, it is noticed that many of the structural challenges in this research are inherited from the disciplines of anthropology and oral history. These include subjectivity issues, and concerns over the shared background between the researcher and the researched community. Other limitations include logistical and community related elements, like participation reluctance and coercion. The chapter concludes with recommendations of further branching in the oral history database, focusing more on a qualitative/quantitative measurement of variables. It also recommends more emphasis on the social/cultural/contextual aspect of history as previously explained. Finally, it recommends a more serious critical examination of the earlier television programs in Kuwait, and their relations with their respective sociocultural frames.

This denotes the second section of this introductory chapter, which lays the general theoretical bases that usher this study. Since the aim of this “integration history” is to examine the history of Kuwaiti television alternatively, this in turn invites an inquiry on the many alternative models through which to write television history, besides the usual institutional or national model. The question therefore is: how does this study associate with these alternative forms of history, and what forms of alternative, socially and culturally contextual histories are
there?

**Theoretical Structure: Alternative History and Television**

From a theoretical angle, the categorization process would lean more towards the “alternative history” variation, one that does not emphasize the efforts of the institution or the state or the influential figures of society. In this section, various extractions of the history school will be reviewed, highlighting the proximity of each historical discipline to the research’s substance. The research will also offer occasional chronological briefs for the historical disciplines in question, emphasizing the main distinction between “mainstream history” and “alternative history.”

However, if one were to pursue a theoretical basis for this research, then one would be overwhelmed by the increasingly fluid, breeding sub-disciplines of the history school, especially the more recent alternative, culturally-inclined models. This section will show that such models fluctuate in their relevancy with this particular research. While they agree with certain portions of the research, they depart – either methodologically or theoretically – in others. Therefore, one of the main structural issues with this research is caused by its specifically tailored nature. This will subsequently rationalize the need to coin a new term to fit the previous scholarly requirements, which is “integration history.”

Before examining the various categories, one needs to keep in mind that it is a television-related study, but one that overlooks the technology and production dimension of it, in favor of the integration and appropriation of television by Kuwaitis. This requires a specific balance in which television is still the main axis of the study, yet historically narrated from the audience’s viewpoint. This means that the term “audience history,” one of the terms considered earlier for this research, is not particularly compatible. Additionally, it is a research that not only concerns
the audience, but one that also offers agency to the audience by regarding them as an academic resource, mainly through the method of oral history.

This invites a substantial categorizational question: what is the most suitable historical model under which this research could find comfortable placement?

**Categorizational concerns.** An initial inspection would argue that the most obvious of categories under which to label this research is to call it a work of “oral history.” Someone could argue that this is evident enough through the main data collection method of this research, which would depend almost entirely on the testimonies and oral accounts of television recipients. This label however, is not entirely sufficient, as it misses a principle constituent of the research. As will be stressed in the method chapter, the “oral history” technique will be employed mainly as a method, not as a theoretical model. This study signifies itself as a study of history written from the perspective of the common folk, compensating the overwhelming amount of history written from the perspectives of higher echelons. As a method however, oral history does not discriminate between the historical sources, in the sense that it is not always narrated from below (Lynd, 1993). An oral history could be a history of an institution, a history of a nation, or a history of a neighborhood. Such examples will be deliberated upon in later sections.

What is the preferable/suitable categorization for this research then? Another particular variation of alternative history that draws attention to itself is “social history.” Social history refers to a narrative that navigates away from elite and their political endeavors, and towards a bottom-up history of classes and other disenfranchised social groups (Cannadine in Samuel et al., 1985; Conrad, 2001; Evans, 2008). Social history therefore, views stories of the past within context, removing the exotic association by focusing on the day-to-day microscopic occurrences (Samuel et al., 1985). As it grew, social history arguably replaced other historical perspectives,
like the elite-focused “diplomatic history” for example (Haber, Kennedy, & Krasner, 1997). The subdiscipline of social history retains rich and manifold chronology involving European concepts advocating a non-elite popular-culture driven history (Appadurai & Breckenridge, 1988). One also needs to remember that, moving further into the 20th century, the 19th century conception of history as an objective, scientific instrument of truth was somewhat challenged (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1995). In that sense, social history is linked to German concepts from the 1960s like everyday history (Alltagsgeschichte), structural history (Strukturgeschichte), and the French Annales School from the late 1920s, which channels demographic, serial, and lower-class history (Forster, 1978; Harsgor, 1978; Hobsbawm, 1971; Ladurie, 1977; Zeldin, 1976).

While social history agrees with this research in terms of its focus on the common classes, there is a point where it substantially departs the main narrative of the study. Much of the social history spirit is dedicated to the European binary between the economical elite and the lower classes. In a way, social history is more economically involved than this research cares for, and reads like an attempt to resituate the conception of history away from the power of the upper class. This is evident through works like Eric Thompson’s (1966) The Making of the English Working Class. It is in this particular stress of class that social history parts from this research.

In other words, it is important to note that television history in Kuwait doesn’t quite concern any ideological conflict between the rich and the poor, especially considering that, with the relatively small population of Kuwait, the dividing line between the two strata would be rather obscure. Indeed, later chapters will prove that the economic ascension of the Kuwaiti

---

2 This could also relate to another branch of social history, which is labeled “histoire des mentalités,” and emphasizes customary aspects like domestic habits, sexuality, and death (Hutton, 1981). The “histoire des mentalités” studied the transformation of societies through their smaller quotidian parts; equating “Caesar” on the same level with “the last soldier of his legions” (Le Goff, 1974, p.85). Further more; philosopher Michelle Foucault made his mark on social history during the 1970s by focusing specifically on mental power protocols and civic structures (O’Brien, 1989).
public was inclusive, to those within the city walls at least. In the fifth chapter, it will be shown that Kuwait comprises mostly of an upper middle class stratum, and that no significant conflict between the economic elite and the less privileged has occurred, definitely not by European standards.3

If there was a binary however, it could be detected between the main institutional, production-involved figures of Kuwaiti television, and the audience at the receiving end, with the latter receiving far less attention than the former in the documentation of television history. Also required is a history that attends to the usually overlooked Kuwaiti subgroups; like the Bedouins for example, and those to whom education was inaccessible at the time. The history that this research seeks to document therefore, is not confined to a narrative that caters to the lower economical class, but one that is also inclusive to voiceless ethnicities, the overlooked strata, and the common Kuwaiti individual. It is for these reasons, that “social history” becomes somewhat mismatched as a label for this research.

Other particular manifestations of alternative history that are less involved in economics than social history are along the lines of “cultural history” and “micro history.” (Ginzburg, Tedeschi, & Tedeschi, 1993; Hunt, 1986) The first is beneficial for this research in the sense that it adopts a very holistic view of looking at historical events, understanding the deep subtle cultural meanings behind otherwise one-dimensionally perceived events (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1995). A fine example of this would be Robert Darnton’s (1984) The Great Cat Massacre, which examines the role of the peasant population in creating the legacy of European

3 From a wider perspective, the society of Kuwait represents a certain challenge for the practice of “social history,” considering that it seems to occupy a model that doesn’t possess a clear distinction between the elite and the public. Kuwait, in the beginning of its growth as a nation, only inhabited 8000 households (Al-Rushaid, 1978). That being said, and despite the small size of Kuwait, one needs to remember that it was mostly the relative elites and the merchants who were literate enough to execute such history, leaving the tribesmen and pearl fishers outside of the authorial agency in history.
cultures, using the most inventive of historical records and sources. Other works of the same type include John Putnam Demos’ (2004) *Entertaining Satan*, which casts a very delicate culturally saturated look at the infamous witch scare of Salem. Additionally, *The Cheese and the Worms* by Carlo Ginzburg (1992), which, through several records, microscopically examines the life and trials of the 16\(^{\text{th}}\) century Italian miller Menocchio.

Based on the previous input, should this research be labeled as an attempt of cultural or micro history? If there was one issue to consider before adopting this classification, it would be over the fact that terms like “culture” or “micro” can also lend themselves to the institution, as it is as much a part of the local culture as the common folks. Therefore, to call this research a work of television cultural/ micro history in Kuwait would be an overestimation, since this work aims to only concern itself with the receptive integration of television. The fact that this research only aims to illuminate certain facets of Kuwaiti television culture (the audience-related ones) would make the label “cultural history” slightly misleading. Additionally, a work of cultural history does not necessarily entail audience participation as a source. Later chapters will highlight scholarly work that examines the media cultures of different nations, but without extracting any data from the perspective of the audience, limiting the methodology to archival resources. This research however, hinges heavily on oral history as a main vehicle for the data collection; making the audience both a studied subject as well as authors of their own historical narratives.

Another theoretical range to consider for this research would encompass models like “public history” and/or “popular history.” These theoretical variations are somewhat methodological in focus. In other words, they scrutinize the nature of the transmission of historical data, and the nature of the historical sources (Kean & Ashton, 2009). Such history disciplines ask the question: who is a historian, and what differentiates history and memory?
(Jensen, 2009). The practice of “public history” also concerns principles like inclusivity, historical reflexivity, and is consequently bonded with the oral history method (Bulter, 2009).

These components make “public history” a relevant discipline for this research. However, aside from the historical sources, what is to be said about the data itself? In other words; how do we determine what stories are worth discussing, rather than the proper source/method of acquiring these stories? Public history resonates with this research through the empowerment it provides to the common sources. However, what this research needs is a historical variation that also reprioritizes the importance of stories told, equating the institutional/national events to the daily happenings of the Kuwaiti citizen.

On that note, this attention to daily details can be found in ethnographic and anthropological theory. After general scholarly neglect, this interest in the consumption of media and its role in shaping cultural contexts intensified by the conclusion of the 20th century (Dickey, 1997). Applied to this research, the media aspect of anthropology and ethnography could be seen through the work of scholars like David Morley (1992), who examines smaller substructures within the community, like class and gender, instead of studying the audience as a whole (Hartley, 2002; Morley, 1992). This would also involve examining the practice of media consumption (Spitulnik, 1993). This research could use the microscopic attentiveness of ethnography and anthropology to document the daily minutia of the common person in a non-reductive gradual manner (Taylor, 2002), which together would compose the narrative of television’s integration into culture.

While not necessarily a historical field, anthropology and ethnography obtain a historical counterpart that could be labeled “anthropological history,” a fusionary discipline where history utilizes anthropology’s native humanistic perspective, as opposed to the positivist approach of
disciplines like social history (Kalb, Mark, & Tak, 1996). According to Carmel Cassar (2004) of the University of Malta, anthropological history shows how history “deals with all aspects of human existence – not just politics, government, religion and interstate relations” (p.35).

However, many considerations make this potential labeling lacking in accuracy regarding the aim of this research. While the temporal scope issue was discussed above, another prominent distinction between this research and the anthropological field is a methodological distinction. While it is not uncommon for ethnographic research to last for as long as a year or longer, this research will never be able to emulate the level of gradual progression that anthropology and ethnography usually establishes through methods like long-term observation and fieldwork (Farrall, 1996; McGranahan, 2006). Compared with these two approaches, this research is constrained by temporal and accessibility issues. Another clear methodological distinction is in the permitted resource pool. While this research aims to depend almost solely on oral history accounts, the ethnographic/anthropological process is known to utilize the excess of sources available, including community rituals, archival data, maps, and institutional records (Whitehead, 2005).

Despite the methodological distinctions, another point that differentiates this research from anthropology/ethnography is the scholarly focus of both. It is known that the ethnographic/anthropological fields concern the “holistic” study of “man” and his social/cultural and contextual structure (Mercier, 2015; Whitehead, 2005). This research however, is not necessarily concerned with the history of man in that sense, but with the history of television as it culturally integrates with the history of man. It is for all these reasons that the anthropological/ethnographic realm was deemed not to be the proper category for this research.
Another area that achieves some relevancy with this research is within the academic jurisdiction of critical and textual analysis. This particular theoretical variant is not necessarily historical, and yet it provides an emphasis on the reception process rather than the production process, which is a fundamental variable in this research.

An example of the previous theoretical realm would be “reception theory,” which comes from the need to bridge speaking and listening, and, when applied to media studies, counters the Frankfurtian emphasis on bad media effects (Staiger, 2005). Variations of such theory include German hermeneutics like “reception aesthetics” and “reception study,” elevating the role of the receiver over the author in deciphering the text (Barthes, 1977; Eagleton, 1983). In resonance with, there exists a cultural variation of reception theory that revolves around social, individual, and cultural positioning of the recipient (Staiger, 2005).

If one were to furnish this concept with a historical dimension, a possible term to employ would be “reception history,” which, according to Harold Marcuse (2009) of the University of California, is the study of the attributed meaning of historical events by both experts and observers, whether in time or retrospectively, as received by the elite or the public. There is also a textual element in the idea of reception history, which is employed in the study of Biblical text (Lieb, Mason, & Roberts, 2013).

This continuous dedication to the reception process is what makes reception theory and reception history appropriate to this study. That being said, this research stands at odds with one obvious dimension of all the reception-oriented theories. The main issue is in the definition of the term “reception,” and how it relates to media history. In literary studies, the term reception revolves around the text, and how it can be deciphered from several aspects. When translated to television, this would mean that the history would limit itself only to how the audience interacts
with the television “text,” when in fact, the research intends to study the audience’s interaction with the television as both text and as machine. Indeed, when television is integrated into society, it is integrated through both its material and its ethereal components; as both a storyteller and as a machine with materialistic substance. To label this research a work of “reception history” would provide the erroneous impression that it is only concerned in documenting how the audience “received” the earlier television programs/content.

A final categorizational consideration for this research would be found in the postmodernist body of theory, which encompasses ideas like structuralism and post-structuralism. One particular benefit with the structural discourse is its denunciation of the impression that meaning stems from “within the text,” enabling further consideration to the text’s relationship to the larger lexis of how we assign meanings to the world, as evident in linguistics (Barry, 2002; Barthes, 1972; De Saussure, 2011). There exists much scholarship that studies the signification of television text and its effect on the audience, which became prominent at the height of the structural era, from the 1970s onward (Seiter, 2005; Barry, 2002). Also, the spread of intertextuality and interdisciplinary stimulated structural debates that ranged from the genealogy of the screen to the visuality of the televised text (Manovich, 2001; Mitchell, 2005).

Applied to this study, one could benefit from a research approach that elevates the deciphering and the reception process over the role of the producer and the reader (Barthes, 1977; Tyler, 1992), especially considering that this history will be written from the viewpoint of the common individual. These theories therefore, do have their advantage. However, to be considered applicable for this research, they require a change of scope to fit the historical nature of this study. Furthermore, the scholarly interest of this study extends beyond the actual text. The problem with previous critical, structural, and post-modern theories is that they are devoted
mainly to the transmitted text, even when they examine its significance to the social contexts. However, as Sara Dickey (1997) puts it:

   Just as the medium’s significance does not lie only in its texts, so also it lies not simply in what people do with or to the text, but in the activities that grow out of, contribute to, and often reproduce the medium as a whole (p.423).

   Such theories also mostly overlook the audience as a primary source of data, preferring instead to delve into contemplative semiological analysis that barely departs the plane of theory. To summarize, what this research requires is an alternative television history that is not written from the perspective of the nation or the institution. However, the research in question seems to exist in an academically interdisciplinary area in which many variations of this alternative history intersect. The issue of categorization seems considerably problematic for the research technique of this current study; as it aims to amalgamate the bottom-up approach of “social history,” the holistic view of “cultural history,” the inclusive view of “public history,” the micro focus of “anthropological history,” the reception-oriented attitude of “reception history,” and the reader-empowerment of structuralist theory. However, it stands at odds with many integral elements of the previous theories to a degree that challenges attempts of categorization. For instance, it is incompatible with the class-oriented connotations of “social history,” it does not examine all the cultural institutions in the manner of “cultural history,” it does not adopt the same methodological principles of “anthropological history,” nor does it dedicate itself solely to the textual content in the tradition of “reception history” or “structuralist theory.”

   What is needed therefore, is a research that utilizes all the benefits of the previous theories, but none of the drawbacks; an academic approach comprised individually for this research; one that tends to the audience, but not to the extent where it will no longer be
considered a form of “television history.” What is required is a historical technique that is not necessarily a history of the television audience, but a history of the television “through its audience.” This research compiles a history that utilizes oral history, but as a method rather than a mean, a research that focuses on the experience of the common individual, but with no implications of a class struggle. It requires a cultural research that focuses on one particular facet of television culture, that of the audience. It attempts to document a history that looks at television as both text and machine, uses the perspectives and narrations of the audience, and reflects a historically anthropological feel but without the conventional anthropological fieldwork.

For all these reasons, it was decided that this research would coin the term “integration history” as the main theoretical vehicle of this research. The term integration history refers to the history of television’s arrival, integration and incorporation into Kuwaiti society, narrated from the people who have lived it. It examines television as a cultural product; through a historical narrative that is authored by common culture. In “integration history”, the audience is actively responsible in the integrative process of television into their culture. The term was chosen mainly because it achieves sufficient balance between television (as the main scholarly subject) and the audience (as the data source). In other words, it is audience related, but still maintains the focus on television.

The following subsection of this theory section in this introductory chapter will examine the alternative variations of television history; ones that surfaced as a response to the conventional institutional, national, and upwards-focused television history. It will highlight the difference between the traditional forms of television history work, be it institutional or national, and between the newly surfacing alternative, more contextual forms of television history writing.
Since, by definition, integration history is a culturally and socially rooted concept, the next subsection will examine the current scholarly appeal for a more culturally and socially inclined form of history. It should be noted that in the following subsection, terms like “social” and “cultural” will be used interchangeably, because of the interdisciplinary nature of the history school mostly.

**The application of alternative histories on television.** Daring to look beyond the institutional/national version of television history, the discipline of television history itself is ever-changing and redefining its parameters. Media anthropologist David Morley (1992) argues, “Television is received in an already complex and powerful context. Households, families, are bounded, conflicted, and contradictory. They have their own histories, their own lore, their own myths, their own secrets” (p.202). Therefore, one might ask: How can television history as a topic lend itself to the cultural/social dimension? Is it possible to construct a culturally contextual history of television? An integration history of television? Or an audience-related history of television?

In his historiographical assessment, John Nerone (2006) breaks the broader discipline of communication history into two sub-disciplines; while the first focuses on form, the other focuses on content. Scholars have observed that in between the history of technology, the history of the book, and the history of the public sphere, “each has produced narratives in the midrange between the cosmic and the concrete” (Nerone, 2006, p.254). This could also have been assisted by the rise of interdisciplinarity in the 1970s, which, in relevance with this study, has also reshaped media studies (Moran, 2010).

The complexity of writing television history of course lays in television’s unique relationship with time, as both a part of the historical narrative, and a commentator of time.
through its nostalgic content (Healy, 2012; Holdsworth, 2011). Similarly, television audiences can be doubly and simultaneously labeled as its “users” and its “recipients.” These observations make it impossible to unknott into separate spectrums television’s interaction with histories of the institution, societies, cultures, governments, nations, other media, human psyches, and other technologies.

Categorization issues aside, what is certain is that many media scholars and visual theorists are not satisfied with the current conception of television history. Media historian and analyst Paddy Scannell (2009) problematizes the discipline of television history for its shortsightedness, as it is mostly written from the “other side of the wall.” An interesting example would be the historical assessment of television through the narratives of specific people. In John Logie Barid’s Ghost, Australian historian Nick Herd (2012) detaches agency from John Logie Baird as the sole father of the idea, calling the concept appealing, yet not practical. Other examples include people like 1st Baron John Reith, Herbert Hoover of the BBC, and the elevated list of – mostly male – writers and directors in British and French television (Bignell, 2007; Boyd-Bowman, 1990; Cooke, 2007; Hendy, 2003; Hilmes, 2003).4 This tendency however, may overestimate the genius of these figures; a trend that many have claimed is substantially noticeable in the history of natural science (Darnton, 1984; Hessen, 2009).

It could be said therefore, that many narratives of television histories were written from an “upward point of view,” and have recently been contested. Another form of “upward television history” writing would be to focus on the institutional history of television. Many scholars for example historically analyze the programs of the BBC through the administrative

---

4 Later on, it could be said that Post-structuralism put all of that into question by canceling the author (Barthes, 1977)
and national changes within the institution, including the Second World War, its relation with the English class division, and its competition with the private ITV. (Hendy, 2003; Holmes, 2007; Medhurst, 2003; O’Sullivan, 2003; Winston, 2003)\(^5\). A similar historical comparison was executed by Elana Levine (2003), who examined the ideological discrepancy between American networks like CBC and ABC, during the 1970s-1980s.\(^6\)

Looking at the BBC’s geographical bond to London, it is easy to see how institutional and national television histories are interchangeable, and have on more than one occasion been studied simultaneously (Scannell, 2009). An example of this link can be observed in Ruth Teer-Tomaselli’s (2009) examination of African television’s (SABC) geopolitics. Other work within that genre includes Gutiérrez Lozano’s (2010) research on Televisión Española in the Francoist era, and Stylianos Papanathanassopoulos’ (1997) research on the competitions between Greek networks. Australian media scholar Liz Jacka (2004) comparatively reviewed earlier television histories by Asa Briggs and Erik Barnouw, in the United Kingdom and the United States respectively. Jacka draws attention to the heavy emphasis on individuals and institutions within both histories, considering that they were both written before the rise of what she labels the “cultural turn” in humanities. Jacka states: “In these histories, programmes and audiences are

---

5 This usually leads to examining television history from a mainly institutional dimension; similarly to Sue Holmes’ (2007) historical investigation of the stereotypical misconceptions about the presumed relationship between the two institutions as a conflict between the public service and the commercial model. This analysis can go as far as into the text itself, linking the progression of radio soap characters – like The Archers – to changes in the administrative context (O’Sullivan, 2003).

6 Again, it is important to keep in mind that this display of scholarship should not give the impression that the scholars were in complete agreement with the institution just because the audiences do not fare in their examination. Much research on the BBC does focus on the institution historically, but does not necessarily praise it. Both David Hendy (2003) and Glen Creeber (2003) for instance commented on the BBC’s historical tendency to centralize the English dialect and stress the values of upper-middle-classness. Indeed, much of the BBC related research used in this study belongs to certain edited volumes that categorize their television history research into those focusing on the institution, the technology, and “finally”, the audience. In other words, there is nothing particularly wrong about institutional history. However, this study is comparatively concerned with the wider perspective. Looking at the bigger picture, the question surfacing is “how does the history of television’s integration with the audience fare in ratio against the history of the institution?”
Similarly, Robert J. Savage’s *A Loss of Innocence* (2010), which details the establishment of the Irish station *Raidió Teilifís Éireann* (founded in 1962), barely touches on the local culture of the public, nor does it empower the experience of the common figure. For Savage, the historical interaction occurs between Ireland, the television institution, the Catholic Church, and several other ideological entities. Although not necessarily always the case, but conceiving television history as a purely national concept may indeed overlook the audience aspect of its history, and the cultural integration process consequently. Additionally, when television is viewed as part of the “nation’s history,” it might just inherit the self-aware social consciousness of national history writing. For instance, it was noticed that popular memory generally disregards any examination of German television before the 1950’s (Uricchio, 1992; Uricchio, 1996). Could it be that the morbid context and the national German stigma of the Second World War negatively affects studies of early German television? (Thompson; 1978; Uricchio, 1996). By principle, the German situation resonates with that of the Kuwaiti social model. This is considering that the earlier days of television in Kuwait (1950s), when it was still a public initiative, have also obscurely faded away from public memory after the state claimed the television industry in 1961. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

This invites discussion of the alternative, more “context-focused,” more “reception-concerned” television history models. Such perceptions were possibly aided by a growing interest in pop-culture history to counter the white middle class version of history (Hanke, 2001; Hartley, 2012). In the early 90s, Anthropology scholar Debra Spitulnik (1993) commented that anthropology and mass media were yet to be academically related, at least based on the volume

---

7 Uricchio (1992) discusses the earlier era of television in Germany, concerning the materialistic shift in television technology in 1939, and the tension between international importers and local manufacturers in the 1920s. He contemplates that television in that era has “existed at the nexus of an array of forces central to the epoch's development” (p.169-170).
of literature produced. Of that, Spitulnik explains that the focus of the early 1990s on the analysis of media text needed to be complemented with an examination of many things, including the media consumption practice. In this recent shift, many scholars from their respective regions have offered interesting arguments against the conventional works of television history. Media scholar Raymond Williams (1974) distinguishes between television’s technological history, which examines the technological antecedents, and television’s social history, which examines community institutions and social networks. French historian Jerome Bourdon (2003) believes that a technologically deterministic narrative about television as a mere apparatus is not practical nowadays. Australian scholars like Stephanie Hanson (2010) and Susan Bye (2007), have both challenged the conventional work of Australian television history, which elevates the role of the state and usually illustrates the audiences as passive, marvel-stricken recipients of the technology. Joe Moran (2013), who gathers a particularly rich account of social television history in England, relevantly discusses how the early recipients of television were labeled as “naïve” through nostalgia and condescension:

We like to think of early television watchers as naïfs, responding with wide-eyed amazement to what seem to us absurd or antediluvian programmes, from dull monochrome panel shows to the Saturday afternoon wrestling. Thus we unconsciously patronise the viewers of the past, as if we were colonialists wondering at the strange habits of a remote tribe. This mixture of nostalgia and condescension fails to convey how rich and deep the history of British television is, much of it now surviving only as listings (p.4).

Advocating for a television history that mixes folklore, storytelling, and anthropology, Jukka Kortti and Tuuli Anna Mähönen (2009) define what they call “the third media generation,”
which, in favor of context, transcends the scholarly focus on medium and the content. This, coupled with the rise of the normative paradigm in the 1950s, meant that a more scrupulous, contextual attention to the television reception process is called for (Morley, 1992).

Therefore, as an alternative from those upwards-forms of history being criticized, one of the volumes that offer what can only be called an “audience-oriented history of television” in Britain is Joe Moran’s (2013) Armchair Nation: An Intimate History of Britain in Front of the TV. Moran, a social historian, presents an astoundingly microscopic account of television’s integration and perception in England since WWII, one that also includes personal recollections from the public. His range of topics includes the switch from limited to boundless broadcast, cultural resistance to the programs (by figures like Mary Whitehouse), and the domestication of the device. In his volume, Moran mixes between institutional history and social history.

An interesting amount of work also exists discussing the social aspect of television integration and appropriation in Europe. However, they do range in the degree in which they utilize the audience as a primary data source. Some of the interesting output includes Andreas Fickers’ (2008) examination of television’s public viewings in the 1930s, and W. Burn’s (1985) historical examination of television’s screening in British cinema theaters. Australian scholars have also examined topics like the effect of television on the integration of immigrants (Darian-Smith & Hamilton, 2012; Darian-Smith & Turnbull, 2012).

Even in non-historical scholarship, interest in audience study started growing, which implies a possible interest in the integration process of media as well. Media scholar David Morley (1992) claims that “the 1980s, conversely, saw a sudden flourishing of ‘audience’ (or ‘reception’) studies” (p.272). Similarly, Professor of Cultural Science John Hartley (1999)
evaluates the field of television studies by stating: “TV studies is useful as a systematic inquiry into the personal, ordinary sense-making practices of a modern democratizing society” (p.16).

If one were to take a particular look in the discipline of mass communication, it could be assumed that the rise of theories like “uses and gratification” and the “two-step flow” assisted in understanding the audience based on their motivational differences and psychological requirements (Ruggiero, 2000; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). In the wider field of “technology history” however, ideas like “consumption junction” and “social constructivism” also fit within this more flexible social model of history. Through such theories, technological innovations are not independent of social influences, nor are the latter a direct result of the former (Cowan, 1993; Pinch & Bijker, 1993). These ideas study the integration process of technology culturally.

From a broader scope, some wider work of media history uses extensive interdisciplinary approaches, which also implies the integration process. James Gleick’s (2011) The Information, for example, linearly investigates the evolution of media in its widest sense, from African drum languages to Wikipedia entries. Interdisciplinary scholars like Harold Innis (2007), John Guillory (2010), and James Carey (1992), all attempt to examine the active interaction between media, man, ecology, and culture. Harold Innis (2007) for instance shows how media as a practice has switched patterns from being time-focused and concerned with preserving ideas, to space-focused and concerned with establishing control. These abstract geo-patterns of Innis and others,

---

8 Which in turn moved television research away from the shallow conception of the audience as “the one bulk mass.” This new social conception therefore replaced the immediate, more deterministic model of the “magic bullet” theory, which emphasized a more dramatic effect of the message and a more passive audience (Bower, 1985; Uricchio, 1996). The magic bullet is an earlier theory in the Mass Communication discipline, associated historically with the Nazi propaganda machine; it advocates the wrongly presumed direct substantial effect of the media content on the recipient, with no regards to audience’s contextuality/individuality. Furthermore, and as the next category will discuss, the rise of cultural studies in the 70s sync with the maturing of the “uses and gratification” theory in the same decade (Bower, 1985; Uricchio, 1996). This makes the 1970s an era in which both “cultural history” and “uses and gratification theory” are at their peaks.
have recently become a substantial part of television history, as this section clarifies (Scannell, 2009).

The richness and value of social television history surfaces when one looks at communities outside of the European cultural conventions, or even towards isolated places within developed nations. Such culturally rich texts of television history include Jacob Podber’s (2007) work on television in Appalachia, and Jason Chun’s (2006) documentation of Japanese television history. While the former examines the late arrival of the device in a culturally isolated community, the latter explores television’s history against the backdrop of the Japanese family, agricultural fragmentation, and the rising commercialism. Other examples include Saroj Malik’s (1989) anthropological work on television in Indian villages during the 1980s, and Cecilia Penati’s (2012) research on early television in Italy. All these studies discuss the integration of television into their respective cultures with different degrees of audience agency.

Within the United States for example, credited scholar David Morley (1992) examines television’s interaction with the concept of parental control, and with other household technologies like the washing machine and the video recorder. Another scholar who put detailed efforts in the social integration in television history is Lynn Spigel (1988; 1992), who ties television history with social trends like the American family’s migration into the suburbs, the restructuring of the American home, and the feminist uprising of the 1960s. Lynn Spigel’s *Make Room for TV*, published in 1988, redefines television history by linking it to socioeconomic and geoeconomic aspects like urban studies, American architecture, and the human perception of space. From a wider historiographical aspect, Spigel’s work resonates with the historic approach of William Cronon’s (1992) *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, in which the history of Chicago is tied to the wider matrix of nature, industrialist development, and farming.
“recent media and cultural studies of nationhood have also attempted to respond to geo-political and geo-economic transformations” (Hay, 1993, p. 38). In all these examples, the scholarly concept of television history is a more holistic, organic, and contextual experience.

A more relevant focus on the recipient public of television can be observed with Ray Barfield’s (2008) *A Word from Our Viewers*, and Jacob Podber’s (2007) *The Electronic Front Porch*. As its title suggests, Barfield flips the original phrase “A word from our sponsors” as if in an act of retaliation. Barfield uses personal stories to examine the early experiences of television’s recipients in America, while Podber does the same by gathering oral histories from Appalachians to document the specific integration of television in that particularly isolated area. They both shed light on much of the socioeconomic cultural episodes, like the restructured relationship between parents and children after Swanson invented the “TV dinner,” and the late electrification of the Appalachian area.

To conclude, this subsection of the introductory chapter examined the several variations of alternative, contextual, culturally driven-histories in order to appropriately categorize the research in question, concluding with the term “integration history,” which was especially devised to suit this research. It also examined the application of these historical techniques on the subject of television by drawing a qualitative diagram of how “television history” has evolved across time in association with various schools of thought, and by association with various geographical and social contexts including the academic shift from production/technology to reception/culture. In other words, it could be safely assumed that much of the television history research available is written through the history of its great men, its institutions, its technology, or its nations. These alternative categories of television history however, try to transcend the
limits of the elite and the production process, and it is through them that one can understand how television is integrated into local cultures, and what role the people play in it.

Before progressing to the next section, it is imperative to conclude with some pointers. Firstly, it should be noted that this theoretical section has been merely interested in identifying the existence of such historical variations and their relation to television rather than delve into their contents. As this section is of strict historiographical concerns, more cultural examples of television’s integration would be discussed later in the literature review chapter. Secondly, there was a deliberate avoidance of examples from the Middle East in this particular section. This decision was taken due to the need to draw a strict, fully comprehensible model of the television history discipline, which in turn involves almost exclusive references to Western academia. The historical output of Middle Eastern scholars on television however, will be discussed by way of comparison in the next section of this introductory chapter, specifically to state the problem of the lacking social aspect in television history as documented by Arabs. Finally, it should be noted that some of the previous examples, particularly the references to “traditional” forms of television history, were not meant to be portrayed negatively, as television history could simply be studied through segregated parallel genres.

After the summary, and after obtaining a fair understanding of the theoretical bases, the next introductory section constitutes the actual statement of the problem, which narrows the scope further towards Kuwait, the Gulf, and the Arab world.

**Statement of the Problem: Television Historiography in Kuwait and the Arab World**

In order to explore the research problem of this dissertation, this section will historiographically discuss the current characteristics of history writing in Kuwait, and in the Arab world by comparison. These characteristics include the national emphasis in the historical
conception of television, the institutional tone in television history writing, the focus on biographical and “great men of television” narratives, and the general concern with the media effect aspect of television studies. All these characteristics ultimately hinder looking at television history as an audience-powered narrative or as a device culturally integrated into society. The section will also display the exceptions through the output of credited researchers like Nabeel Dajani and Leila Abu Lughod. Finally, this section will also discuss the incidental secondary resources that could alternatively provide insight on the local media reception culture in a certain point in time, like archival news items for example.

Acknowledgment of the structural complexity of this section is due before proceeding. The studies evaluated in this section will range in geographical scope comparatively between Kuwait, states of the Gulf, and other Arab regions. This is due to the dearth of direct scholarship on Kuwaiti television history, let alone the qualitative audience-guided type. The scarcity of resources also compels this section to refer to books and volumes that were written in a considerably earlier period, whether of the commercial or the academic variety.

It has been contemplated that until the 19th century, Arabic historians were mainly geocentric and content to copying Western output (Haddad, 1961). Despite the rise of post-colonial theories like Edward Said’s (1979) Orientalism, and despite the rise of social scholarship on gender and race, Arabic historiography as a field was still in its infancy during the 1960s (Alatas, 1996; Di-Capua, 2012; Haddad, 1961). Tracing the field back to its roots, it has been contemplated that “Arabic historians were [generally] no pragmatical thinkers or students of social and cultural history” (de Somogyi, 1958, p.385). Many Arabic thinkers, like Rifa'a Al-
Tahtawi, generally view scientific developments as imposters on an otherwise frozen historical narrative. (Choueiri, 2003)\(^{10}\)

Therefore, it could be argued that this Arab tendency in history writing has also influenced the sub-discipline of media/television history writing. Media researcher Mohamed Zayani (2011) stresses: “The need to anchor ethnographic research on the Arab world in a broad historical context capable of showing how certain practices and processes were historically produced and how they evolved” (p.53). Similarly, Ece Algan (2008) stresses the need to move media studies to a phase of interdisciplinary amalgamation between ethnography, political economy, and aesthetics, to compose what he called Media Studies 3.\(^{11}\) Credited media scholars like Leila Abu-Lughod (2008) and Helga Tawil-Souri (2008) both call out the general disregard of human psyche and social dynamics in regional television studies. Obviously, with both of the previous dimensions absent, the academic conception of television’s cultural integration is compromised. Both Abu-Lughod and Tawil-Souri advocate the need to consider executing ethnographic research from both the production and the reception end. They demand consideration for the audience and their social roles. In his assessment of Lebanese television, credited Lebanese scholar Marwan Kraidy (1999) proposes the method of “native ethnography,” which interdisciplinarily studies how the recipients construct their hybrid cultural identity between local and global.

A general tendency noticed with non-academic work of Arab scholars for instance, is the

---

\(^{10}\) In his assessment of the Arab conception of history, Youssef Choueiri (2003) evaluates the work of Arab intellectual Rifāʿa al-Tahtawi, who refuses to conceive the logical and historical progression of scientific development. Choueiri explains that Tahtawi believes that science – isolated from being part of history – has been borrowed by the West from the earlier developed Egyptian nation, and could simply be returned. Choueiri explains: “The concept of science as a process of qualitative change is consequently excluded. History as development over time does not figure in the world of Tahtawi’s mechanistic paradigm.” (p.30)

\(^{11}\) Algan aims to combine studies of effects (media studies 1.00) with studies of active audiences (media studies 2.00).
extensive emphasis on the “national development” model. The national development model conceives media as a tool for national development, pioneered by scholars who studied the Middle East extensively during the 1950s (Lerner, 1958; Morris, 2003; Schramm, 1964). Daniel Learner (1958), who researched the Middle East thoroughly in the 1950s, surveys various strata of Arab societies, ranging from white-collar citizens to farmers, in areas like Jordan and Egypt. Learner associates modernity with many media-related elements, like the ability to embrace cinema and Western music rather than Arabic music for instance. Similarly, Schramm (1964) looks at media as multipliers of modernity, essential in achieving developments like social overheads and agricultural advancements. Other scholars who advocated this early model included Edmund Brunnett (1953) and Roger Stevenson (1986). Needless to say, the national model of media development examines television and its history as it interacts and affects the nation and its culture as a whole. This implies that it doesn’t see eye to eye with the earlier defined “television integration history,” since the latter prioritizes the lower public culture as the author of television history.

Many academic trends have participated in the waning of this particular discourse later, like the rise social theory, cultural studies, and gender studies (Waisbord, 2008; Wilkins & Mody, 2001). Additionally, the mid-1990s assisted in heightening the scholarly attention towards “the multicultural other” and the “marginalized” (Kellner, 1995). Scholars have also contemplated that the rise of concepts likes post-structuralism and post-colonialism, have questioned the authority of Western historical narratives in the 1970s and 1980s (Rogers, 1976; Of that, Roger Stevenson (1986) states: “Still mass media, particularly radio and television, will be important to the developing nations if for no other reason than that the exponential growth we observed in the past 25 years will continue” (1986, p. 124).
However, later parts of this section will show that Arab writers are still attached to this model to some degree. This is possibly related by our removal from the cycles of production and exportation of media technology; areas that are, as Ahmad Abdul Malik (1996) puts it, unquestionably dominated by the Western world.

The question is therefore, between this determined national narrative and the cultural contextual one, how have Arab researchers fared? In the case of Kuwait, literacy arrived to the city considerably later than it did in the intellectual Arab regions. The early parts of the 20th century, roughly from the 1900s to the 1950s, produced what sociologist Fahed Al-Naser (1996) called “local pioneers;” intellectuals who have practiced anthropological and historical documentation before it succumbed to standards of social science, and before the establishment of the oil state. This includes the works of Abdul Aziz Al-Rushaid (1978) and Yousif Al-Qina’ie (1988; originally written in 1926 and 1946 respectively). Both Al-Rushaid and Al-Qina’ie carry a good deal of consideration for Kuwait’s cultural context in their works, including clothing, food, traditional music, and superstition. Other examples of culturally-intimate histories include Mousa Al-Hatim’s (1999) history of the local police force, Khalid Al-Jarallah’s (1996) history of the local medical service, and the memoirs of early foreign residents like Mary Allison

13 In her historical analysis of the Canadian Inuit and their media, Lorna Roth (2005) claims that post-structuralism, along with post-colonial theory, opened the door to include the history of several sub-communities’ reception of television. This becomes particularly relevant to television history in the Middle East, especially when written through Western academics. This is because theories like post-colonialism and post-structuralism question the authority of Western standards, as both theories go under the umbrella of what is called “the linguistic turn” (Faust et al., 2003; Joyce, 1993; Vernon, 1994). The work of Deepak Chakrabarty (2009) on Bengali society for instance, questions the idea that modernity is exported, and that the social European protocols of progression apply without fault elsewhere.

14 The work of Al Qina’ie and Al-Rushaid illustrate an image of Kuwait so intimately that it acknowledges the personal network of Kuwaiti figures at the time. Examples include mentions of Hilal Al-Mutairi, Khalid Al-Khudhiar, and other names associated with the initiation phase of Kuwait.
(1994) and Charles Dickson (1968). The works of the latter highlight many interactions with second-class citizens in Kuwait, discussing topics like the Bedouins’ impression of the World War and the voodoo practice of the slaves. Their perspectives provide a refreshing “upwards” rather than “downwards” dimensionality to their historical work.\(^{15}\) In other words, because of the constrained geography and the intimate nature of Kuwaiti society, social scientists and writers have managed to preserve local culture rather well. Many researchers like Basem Al-Loughani (2010) and Mousa Al-Hatim (1999) produced volumes that discuss the traditional games, the old trades, and the traditional arts, all keeping clear traces with specific names and individuals. It could be assumed that, in the past, the somewhat exclusive accessibility of the elite to literacy was possibly canceled out by the relative small scale of society to begin with, making the line between “elite history” and “cultural history” rather hazy.

With television history work however, the story seems different. In case of academic work, accessibility is somewhat limited by archival issues like the almost exclusive limitation of the material to hardcopy format. In case of the non-academic work, much of it is low in stock or out of print. Additionally, with much of the television scholarship being sponsored by the Ministry of Information, claims of objectivity are somewhat questioned. The following chapter will show that there is a general historical absence in understanding how Kuwaitis have integrated and appropriated television in their own special way. It is still far removed from the sociocultural aspect and from empowering the audience as a data source, preferring instead to adhere to conventional television history.

\(^{15}\) Mary Bruins Allison was a physician and Christian missionary in Kuwait from the early 1930s until the oil boom era. Within Kuwaiti culture and historical literature, Allison is not as widely known as other iconic foreigners that have lived in Kuwait, like Dr. Stanley Mylrea, Lieutenant Colonel Harold Dickson, and his wife Violet Dickson; each of whom incidentally, has written a book on their life in Kuwait. Allison’s work provides a view at Kuwaiti society from a cross-section of echelons and strata starting from the working and lower class. Allison’s work is typified by her interaction with the plethora of Kuwaiti classes and identities.
Looking specifically at Kuwait, some research does exist that accounts for the social history aspects of media like the Internet (Wheeler, 2001), print design (Al-Najdi & McCrea, 2012), and the more mature Kuwaiti theater (Al-Nijady & McCrea, 2012; Al-Siddiq, 1997; Arti, 1997; Sulaiman, 1997). However, it seems that most – if not all – of the historical scholarship on Kuwaiti television generally overlooks its integration into and by the culture. The following are general problem areas of television history research in Kuwait. They apply to both academic and commercial text, as they do with historical research, anthropological research, and research written at one point of time in the past. They include: the institutional focus of television history, the national focus of television history, the dependency on the “biographical” factor in history, and the concern with the “media effect” aspect.

**Institutional focus of Kuwaiti television history.** In correspondence with the historical categories discussed above, this first tendency relates to the conception of Kuwaiti television history by scholars and researchers merely as an institutional narrative. For instance, one of the new modern volumes that recite local television history is Waleed Al-Dawood’s (2007) *Kuwait Television Between Yesterday and Today*. However, almost a third of Al-Dawood’s volume is comprised solely of biographies of all the subsequent ministers of information, complete with a photograph and dramatic praising. Al-Dawood therefore, deals solely from inside the institution of KTV. A good deal of research has been executed on Kuwaiti television as an institution, whether in context with its respective time, or through a historical perspective. The Ministry of

---

16 This becomes more apparent when the shallowness of television history research is compared to that of Kuwaiti theater, with the latter containing an interesting amount of scholarly reflection on the relation between the text and the social setting (Al-Nijady & McCrea, 2012; Al-Siddiq, 1997; Arti, 1997; Sulaiman, 1997). Plays like *Kazino um Anbar* and *Tagaleed* by Saghir Al-Rushood for instance, were socially and structurally analyzed by scholars who have studied the output of Kuwaiti theater (Khawatmi, 1997). This of course could be due to the maturity of Kuwaiti theater (since the 1920s) compared to Kuwaiti television, and the influence of the English friction with the Kuwaiti public (Al-Zaid, 1983; Amine, 2006; Holderness, 2007). Therefore, theater in Kuwait has earned the attention of local scholars, with work like Khalid AL-Zaid’s (1983) *Theater in Kuwait*, and Salih Al-Ghareeb’s (1989) *Theatrical Movement in the Gulf States*.  

40
Information also publishes a summary of the ministerial achievements on an annual basis, containing details and yearly updates of the Kuwaiti television institution.

An interesting perspective on the institutional history however, one that adds more social depth to it, was Bader Al-Mudhaf’s, (2015) *Kuwait Television in Black and White*. Al-Mudhaf’s work, published very recently, chronicles the history of the institution through its programs and its pioneering figures. Al-Mudhaf’s work is rich with photography and references to numerous people who have contributed to the industry like Mubarak Al-Mayal, Hamad Al-Mou’min, Abdul Razaq Al-Sayyid, and Saleh Al-Shaijy. Al-Mudhaf’s work differs in that he actually uses oral history as a data collecting method, albeit with an institutional, production-oriented focus. Al-Mudhaf employs oral history through the testimony and first account stories from many of the television pioneers; like Khaled Al Siddiq and Bader Bourisley. His body of work definitely provides an interesting addition to the database. Despite the oral component however, Al-Mudhaf’s work does not necessarily cater to the bottom-up, reception-related social perspective. Therefore, it has very little to do with the other side of the story; the integration of television into culture. It also adopts a nationalistic, somewhat praising tone regarding the efforts of local television.

It is also imperative at this point to realize that Kuwaiti television as an institution is categorized under the governmental Ministry of Information, and has been so since 1962 (Al-Furaih, 1999; Al-Shihab, Al-Azimy, Al-Mousawi, Al-Nakkas, & Al-Faraj, 1998; Al-Yasin & Mu’awwad, 1995). This implies that, much like the BBC, an institutional history of KTV feeds into a national history of KTV, another problem area that will be discussed shortly. The work of Mohammad Al-San’ousy (1997) on local television for instance, contains rich numerical data and a clear historical timeline of Kuwaiti television development. However, it does not venture
outside of the institution, does not gauge the role of public culture, nor does it refer to the
Kuwaiti individual as a primary data source.

It comes without question that to create a firm history of integration for Kuwaiti
television, one needs to ensure or dedicate an initial investment in audience research, which,
according to researcher Ibrahim Beayeyz (1989), seemed to be initially lacking in the area:

In many of the Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain, the audience
does not have a direct influence on media decision-making. There is a lack of
mechanisms for audience feedback. Broadcast media in the Arab world do not have
systematic methods for soliciting audience comments and feedback on a regular basis.
Radio and television are operated by governments that have little interest in audience
research (p.111).

A good deal of audience research was also done to gauge the public’s reaction of certain
programs during their specific eras, in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Yousef Al-Shehab et
al., (1998), the Ministry-associated Department of Research and Translation has produced 22
audience-related studies from 1972 to 1994. Such work examines factors like the public
perception of news (Al-Haddad & Ragheb, 1980) and the public opinion over the initiation of
Channel 2 (Al-Haddad & Ragheb, 1979). A good deal of the work is composed of opinion polls
from recipients on programs like The Morning Show. Such studies could probably offer
interesting access to the audience mentality at the time. However, many of these studies are
limited to the quantitative survey format, which provides very little insight into the social
context. Additionally, these opinions were collected at a cross-section in time, meaning that they
are non-historical studies that do not concern themselves with linear patterns, but rather the
short-term goals in question. Finally, despite the fact that these studies contain the opinions of
recipients, they still conceive the television narrative as a one-way reception process, with little agency from the public who integrated it into their culture.

**National focus of Kuwaiti television history.** Another tendency of Kuwaiti television history writing is in its conception as a national venture. This relates partially to the national development model previously discussed. For example, many of the scholars who have written on Kuwaiti television, like Yusuf Al-Shihab et al. (1998), Sahfi’ Al-Nadawi (2011), and Siham Al–Furaih (1999) all echo the usual numerical trivia of Kuwaiti television and Kuwaiti media. This limits Kuwaiti television history to a loop of repetitive numbers and dates concerning its inauguration, its shift into the color system, its most prominent programs, and so on.\(^{17}\) Amongst all these elements, what is lost again is the integration process into culture.

One of the most common historiographical issues with Kuwaiti television histories is the general disregard of its earliest origins, particularly as a private initiative of the merchant Murad Bebehani, who first bought his own private TV circuit in 1957 (Al-Sa’eed, 2013; Asmar, 2010).

Despite the previous incident being a clear example of the cultural integration of television, television’s beginning in Kuwaiti history is looked at as a national venture, rather than as an outcome of social and cultural initiative. The lack of records in that private initial period makes efforts of historical documentation rather prone to misinformation. For instance, the electronic newspaper *Al-Aan* states that the first ever broadcast took place in 1951 rather than 1957 (“A criterion phase,” 2014). Additionally, *Al-Aan* also neglects to name the individual responsible for the introduction of television into society, giving the governmental effort center stage in the historical narrative of television, and orphaning Murad Behbehani into historical

---

\(^{17}\) For instance, besides a brief analysis on the role of the Diwanyya and the Mosque as communication posts, Al-Furaih’s analysis remains institutional and devoted to administrative issues. Al-Furaih herself has commented on the lack of resources on the topic.
obscurity. Local media scholars Al-Yasin & Mu’awwad (1995) only mention “one of the
Kuwaiti merchants” in passing. Both local media figure Mohammad Al-San’ousy (1997) and
Iraqi journalist Zaid Al-Hilli (1982) use the same anonymous label and date the event at 1960
rather than 1957. This indicates that historically, television is viewed as a state initiative with
teleological agendas of national improvement, ignoring its private beginning as an initiative of an
ordinary member of the public.

Repetitiveness is another issue that comes with national television history. All the
previous literature only echoes the usually circulated information like the launch of Kuwaiti
television in 1961, the launch of the second program in 1978, and the establishment of the
Rawdhtain station in 1964 (Al-Ouainy, 1984; Al-Shehab et al., 1998). Therefore, television’s
existence in popular memory coincides with its governmental launch in 1961, the same year in
which Kuwait gained independence from the protection of the British crown (Greenwood, 1991).

This indicates that anything before that particular date (the previous 4 years particularly)
seems hazy and less recorded than the official governmental affair. Therefore, the cultural aspect
of television history suffers in favor of governmental history. In England, social historian Joe
Moran (2013) counters similar conventions that television’s beginning is associated with the
coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953 (Hogan, 2013). Of that, Moran (2013) comments: “This
idea of the coronation as a watershed for both television and the nation is unconvincing. By then,
television in Britain was nearly thirty years old, had accumulated thousands of broadcasting
hours, and been seen by millions” (p.71).

Kuwaiti television has also been examined by non-Kuwaiti scholars who still manage to
overlook the cultural/integration aspect of television history—possibly in favor of the national
aspect. This also applies to non-historical work that was written in previous time periods. For
instance, despite containing interesting statistics on television ownership and usage, Hussein Abu Shanab’s (1987) volume on Kuwaiti media channels a nationalistic overview, contemplating the alleged “invasion” of Western media on Eastern societies. In his book, Abu-Shanab states: “Kuwait devotes noticeable attention to television, due to its awareness of television’s effectiveness in accomplishing the aims of the state, clarifying its policies, enlightening the public, and tying it to daily events” (1987, p.80).

In their assessment of Kuwaiti television’s goals, Al-Yasin & Mu’awwad (1995) comment that:

The television industry pact in the Gulf confirms that the television services aught to commit through connecting its programming with the social, cultural, and political development plans for the states, and through working to enlighten the citizens about them (p.265).

Quoting Arthur Bertrand, Deborah Wheeler (2000) comments:

The guiding philosophy of the state is to… exploit all available facilities to promote the well-being of the people. In the service of this cause, the government invests in all available means of information to serve society, consolidate its policy and support its causes (p.433).

Qualitatively, it seems therefore that much of either the historical or current examination of Kuwaiti television maintains a didactic defensive sense against “Western imperialism,” especially considering television’s status as a governmental institution. This could also relate to the fact that a great deal of the literature in question was commissioned and published by the Ministry of Information itself, which challenges its objectivity.

This could also very possibly relate to a larger complexity of Arabic history writing and its fixation with the German tradition of “promoting national consciousness and for achieving the
far-reaching goal of unification” (Chejne, 1960, p.386). In relation to the previous discussion on the national development model, it is found that Wilbur Schramm (1964), one of the prolific advocates of the model, is referred to in several Arab television scholarships, including Afaf Hamod’s (1992), Mohammad Mushyikh’s (1994) and Mohammad Mu’awwad’s (1994).

Additionally, looking at television history as a history of the institution feeding into the history of the nation would consequently lead to a tendency in which television is lumped with other art forms that are also supposed to represent the nation. In other words, television, music, and theater could all—erroneously—be viewed as part of the collective artistic effort of the nation in question. Examples of such perspective include Mohammad Najim’s (1997) Culture in Kuwait, which constitutes an edited volume discussing Kuwait’s approach to music, cinema, theater, television, and so on. Within those three volumes, the entry of Mohammad Al-San’ousy (1997) on television is but a constituent in the much larger conception of “culture in Kuwait.” In fact, the fourth addition of Khalifa Al-Wugayyan’s (2010) Culture in Kuwait, fails to include television within its artistic categorization, limiting it to literature, theater, music, visual arts, and cinema. Furthermore, another consequence of national television history could be observed when television is discussed geographically, in that Kuwait television history is sometimes lumped with other Gulf States’ television histories. Scholars like Kraidy & Khalil (2009), James Wood (1994), Nabeel Dajani (2007), and Jamal Abdul Hai (2012) all examine KTV as an extract of the television industry from the Gulf Countries Corporation community.

All this indicates that looking at television history from a national perspective hinders a much deeper look at television’s integration within a unique and local culture. It also removes the agency from the viewing public as a primary data source and as authors of their own individual television histories.
Biographies and other accidental resources. Besides the institutional and national focus, the focus on biographies also surfaces in Kuwaiti literature on television, whether historical or otherwise. This very possibly relates to a previously routed Arabic preference of the autobiographic genre, taking into account the work of authors like Rose Al-Yousif and Umar Tusun during the second half of the 20th century (Chejne, 1960). Channeling the previously mentioned conception of television history through the stories of its “great men” and its “pioneers,” Kuwaiti television history is often viewed as the story of the people who make it. Abrar Malik (2010) for instance credits television presenter Anisa Ja’far (also known as Mama Anisa) as an embodiment of the Kuwaiti children’s television.

There is, however, a plus side to the abundance of biographies in the region. In the case of Kuwait, these television pioneers would undoubtedly be versatile artists whose repertoires also include theater and radio. This would make the various autobiographies of Kuwaiti artists act as interesting accidental resources on television history. Examples would be Saleh Al-Ghareeb’s (1997) autobiography of musician Yousif Al-Douhky, Saleh Al-Ghareeb’s (1999) autobiography of actress Mariam Al-Ghadban, and the memoir of cinema director Khalid Al-Siddiq (1980).

Sometimes these accidental resources are even further removed from television than usual. In Saudi Arabia, interesting instances of the religious resistance of television by the neo-Salafis of the 1970s can be extracted from Nasser Al-Huzaimi’s (2010) biography of the Saudi Islamist extremist Juhaiman Al-Otaiby.

Like biographies, the local newspapers have written about television in a way that could incidentally offer a glimpse into local culture. They can do so either through their nostalgic items or through their archive material. Media scholar Ibrahim Beayeyz (1989) has commended the
active critical nature of the Kuwaiti press, which provides a gateway to audience opinions and participation, and communicates feedback from the public to the television industry. Of that, Yousef Al-Failakawi (1999) states:

Previous audience research conducted in Kuwait in recent years has been limited in scope and purpose. Additionally, the majority of the research is conducted by newspapers. Probably, because Kuwait newspapers felt that they were responsible to provide the Kuwait television with some information about the audiences. Another reason might be that some of those people who work with those newspapers, work with television at the same time (p.5).

Looking at the news archive in precise turns them into “a record of the doings of individual men and women and becomes an impersonal account of manners and life” (Park, 1923, p. 276-277). In that sense, Kuwaiti papers like Al-Qabas and Al-Watan are analogous to Paddy Scannell’s (2010) impression of recorded videotapes, providing not only the content but the ephemera of the context through commercials and the like. For instance, articles like “Television Watching: Does It Affect College Educational Input?” (Al-Qina’ie, O., 1988), and “Kuwait's Safety and the Effect on the Small Screen” (Al-Kathimy, 1984) display the model of fear and effect that was associated with the spread of television sets and VCR machines at the time. This latter point offers segue into the next characteristic of television historiography in Kuwait; namely, its concern with effect.

**Concern with effect.** While the previous examples have shed some light on the disregard for the cultural, audience-related, integration research of Kuwaiti television history, it should be noted that some audience-oriented research on Kuwaiti television does indeed exist. This becomes apparent in the case of non-historical research. However, for these studies, the main
concern is the media effect. Also, the flow of television communication ventures one way in such research.

Some of the audience studies are quantitative and numerical in nature, using measures of central location (like means and medians for example). Possibly due to the volume and influence of the programs on local stations, many scholars and journalists have examined the influence and interaction between American programs and the social/moral structure of the Kuwaiti audience (Abdul Rahim, Al-Kandari, & Hasanen, 2009; Mohammad & Queen, 2011; Sheikh Al-Deen, 1987). Other quantitative audience research examines topics like television’s relation with children’s physical health (Shehab & Al-Jarallah, 2005) and adolescent obesity (Al-Haifi et al., 2012). Similarly, Yousef Al-Failakawi (1999) also applies thorough quantitative analyses on the motivations and viewing habits of the Kuwaiti audience in the mid 1990s.

Besides such quantitative audience-related work, there exists a fair amount of qualitative non-historical work on television. Fatima Dashti (2007), of the College of Education in Kuwait University, qualitatively examines the causation between television and the social skills of children in Kuwait. From a more geographically removed perspective, Timothy Havens (2000) examines the influence of minority-related American sitcoms on the Kuwaiti audience’s identity formation. However, as reflected earlier, such qualitative work revolves around the concept of effect. Additionally, these studies are non-historical in scope, and are concerned with the current time period.

Based on the previous contemplations on integration history, it can be safely assumed that, whether quantitative or qualitative, many studies do not consider the role of public culture in authoring television’s identity, rather the reverse. After the Iraqi invasion, the Embassy of Kuwait in Cairo published an entire strategy on the need to utilize the “Kuwaiti media
instrument” to “build the Kuwaiti individual” (Mansour, Ramadhan, & Al-Biblawi, 1991). The research cites different programs and their roles in developing the Kuwaiti woman, the Kuwaiti family, and the Kuwaiti man. Kuwait University scholar Mohammad Mu’awwad (1994) alarmingly discusses the change that has occurred in Kuwaiti television since it’s beginning until the post-gulf war era, especially after the arrival of the satellite dish. Besides the fact that Mu’awwad does not offer any empowerment to the recipient as a primary source, there were no instances of oral accounts or an acknowledgment of culture as an authority in integrating and customizing the television industry in Mu’awwad’s account. The audience therefore, is portrayed as relatively passive, merely reacting to the effect of the industry.18

In other words, many of these studies concern themselves with the reception aspect of television bordering on moral, childcare, and value-driven teleological themes. This becomes particularly apparent through the qualitative work that is commercially published and circulated mostly outside of the academy. This could therefore, be associated with the overly deterministic and now absolute “Frankfurt school,” which focuses on the potentially corruptive influence of the medium on the public (Morley, 1992). Alternatively, these studies could also be linked to the “uses and gratification” model, which does count for the social aspect of television’s function, but mainly concerns itself with reception and quantification (Uricchio, 1996).

This general tendency could possibly relate to the conservative nature of the Gulf societies (Tétreault, 2001), which may lead to a defensive attitude towards television. Additionally, this could also relate to the state’s conception of television as an educational tool, which in turn might very well have affected the conception of its history. Indeed, in its inception

18 Another interesting non-historical study that does regard the social aspect is Khalid Al-Qahas’ (2013) recent analysis on the male/female representation in Kuwaiti television soaps. Al-Qahas study borders more on the structural/critical, text-oriented discipline. However, it attempts to balance the televised text with current alterations in societies and gender issues.
years, television in Kuwait was placed under the Ministry of Education, rather than its current placement under the Ministry of Information (Al-Yousef, 1978). It is also possible that Kuwaiti television research is unable to follow the established Wimmer & Dominick (2011) progression of the mass communication studies from “effects research” to “improvements research.” Despite consideration for the audience, such studies are not technically interested in how the television audiences/users/recipient author their television culture.

When projected against historical narratives, one could see how this impending moral, deterministic, teleological tone potentially feeds into television history in Kuwait. In the current local history narratives, television is not culturally integrated by the people. It is simply placed upon them by the higher-ups. In his candid historical documentation, Exodus from the Time of Innocence, American Iraqi scholar and former KTV writer Mohammad Jawad Ridha (2000), criticizes that particular tendency:

The second phenomenon that was frequently overlooked constituted the social divide that Kuwait has lived and refused to admit […]. It was to the fancy of the authority and official media to constantly speak of the “one family of Kuwait” (p.139).

That being said, it should not be thought that the scholarship pool is completely baron when it comes to social examination. One particularly interesting piece of historical scholarship that actually applies—and heavily depends on—oral history is Aarif Al-Sheikh’s (2007) Kuwait Television in Dubai. Al-Sheikh’s work discusses the initiation and development of the Dubai-based station that was aided by staff of Kuwait Television in 1969. In his study, Al-Sheikh (2007) relies on personal documents and interviews with over 25 individuals. However, Al-Sheikh’s study centers on Dubai—in the United Arab Emirates—more than it does on Kuwait. Additionally, and as mentioned previously, not all oral history is social history. While Al-Sheikh
does use interviews as a primary source, his interviewees are limited to those who have worked in the industry rather than the receiving public. If one had to put a label, this would make Al-Sheikh’s study “an oral history of the institution.” Straddling between the genres, researcher Faisal Al-Qahtani (2013) also presents sufficient historical documentation on the “Kuwaiti television drama,” with a degree of social reflection to it. Al-Qahtani’s work contains two interviews with credited television writers, but none with the receiving public. Al-Qahtani’s research therefore, could very well be considered a work of “critical television history” on the content.

In other words, very little bottom-up, culturally qualitative work has been done on Kuwaiti television history and its integration process with the people. To the researcher’s knowledge, nothing is there that examines the lives of the receiving public, or allows them to contribute to the historical narrative first hand. Ibrahim Beayeyz (1989) of Ohio State University for instance, attempts to look at television as it interacts with the sociopolitical cultural context of three cities; Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain. Beayeyz analyzes the local social groups’ influence on the policy making process of their local television stations, keeping in consideration the dependency of these states on a capitalistic system.19 Beayeyz’s method consists of library research, interviews with media officials, and content analyses of programs, which makes it relatively akin to “public history.” Therefore, Beayeyz’s study may be different in the sense that it pays attention to the reverse communication of television; from the public to the industry.

However, his study focuses more on the socio-politically influential groups in the city

---

19 It should be said however, that Beayeyz’s (1989) study is temporally limited to one-decade only (1976-1986). Also, Beayeyz has held five interviews with television officials as part of his data (which also included television programs and literature). This research, however, aims to depend solely on creating a wider database of oral history, not involving any officials, but regular Kuwaiti elderlies. It is in these respects, that this research differs from that of Beayeyz.
(like the merchants and the religious lobbies), rather than the common person. Therefore, it could arguably be concerned with the policies of integration rather than the integration history of television into culture. It can be said then that although Beayeyz’s work does consider a two-way communication flow, it is not written from a bottom-up perspective. Another study with a similar issue is Albul Latif Al-Oufi’s (1998) study on television production in the Gulf. Despite containing certain historical projections and including qualitative assessments collected through 17 interviews with individuals across the gulf, all the interviewees in Al-Oufi’s study are selected based on their involvement in the production rather than the reception process.

In conclusion, the integration history of television in Kuwait remains a generally alien concept, which represents the main problem of this research. As a conclusionary supplement, the next section will offer comparison between the Kuwaiti pattern of television history writing and that of its neighboring states in the Gulf and Arab region.

**Television History Writing Between Kuwait and Neighboring Countries**

As a state, Kuwait has several shared identities in variant degrees with its neighboring states. With other regions in the Gulf, the shared background is stronger than it is with countries from the Levant for example. However, the nature of television history writing between these two areas is somewhat different. The scholarship available on media is relatively abundant in the Egyptian state and the Fertile Crescent (Syria, Lebanon), seeing that these areas achieved the intellectual status prior to their Gulf counterparts (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009). Some areas in the Arab world, due to the diverse nature of their social makeup, also earn an interesting portion of television scholarship that concerns the local culture. On that, Helga Tawil-Souri (2008) comments with the following:

While media ethnographies of Arab audiences have been slow to develop, there are a few
scholars who have conducted in-depth studies of how Arab audiences interact with TV content, as well as how Arab TV producers imagine their social/political roles (p.1411). For example, between civil war divisions and governmental oppression, the fragmented identity of Lebanese media has been considered in context of its Sunnis, Shiite and Christian recipients by scholars like Nabil Al Dajani (1992) and Marwan Kraidy (1999). Some interesting television-related memoirs in that region have also illuminated the local culture of Lebanon. One particular example is John Klaud Boulis’s (2007) *Television, a Journey to Hell*, which discusses Boulis’ time as chairman of the Lebanese television (1996 – 1999). Boulis’ comments on issues like competition with private stations and the power of nepotism within the Lebanese television industry.  

Another notable scholar who has examined local culture thoroughly is Hazim Saghiya (1992). His much-credited volume *The Arabs between the Atom and the Stone* contains a section dedicated to television. Saghiya links the Arab fear/preservation of television to a wider sense of technophobia and a general binary between cosmopolitanism and retro existence in the Arab world.

Some interesting work has also been done in Egypt and Syria, respectively. Viola Shafik (2007) uses the larger intertextual lexis of Arab arts to historically outline the identity of Egyptian cinema since the early European colonies of the 1920s. In Syria, Christa Salamandra (2005, 1998) offers extensive structural and cultural readings on themes of Ottoman and French colonialism as seen in the Syrian teledramas of the 1990s. Salamanda sets her analysis against the city’s current urban geography. Finally, credited scholars like Abu-Lughod (2008) look at

---

20 Boulis’ work does indeed offer interesting insights into Lebanese culture, but focuses mainly on administrative difficulties of the institution. It also lacks the input of the public on the events discussed in his book.
television in a way that structurally disassembles terms like “the collective culture” which demotes other sub-groups. Through her volume Dramas and Nationhood, Abu-Lughod (2008) uses a mixture of anthropology, interviews, and structural analysis, examining the effect of television on the Egyptian social layers, mainly countrywomen.21

Moving further from the intellectual area of Egypt and the Levant, and into the area of the Arabian Gulf, some attention to local culture in television history can also be detected. It is safe to assume that the conservative cultural landscape of Saudi Arabia made it an interesting area of scholarly analysis in that regard, especially upon the arrival of American and European labor to construct local television stations in these areas. Pioneers in this type of scholarship are American scholars like Douglas Boyd and Joseph Straubhaar (Boyd, 1984; Boyd & Shatzer, 1993; Boyd & Straubhaar, 1985).

Hamza A. Bait-Almal (2000), a Mass Communication scholar of King Saud University, examines the cultural Saudi component of media successfully, albeit without the audience’s participation as a source. Another credited exception is Television: The Falling of the Elitist and the Rise of the Public by Abdulla Al-Ghuthami (2004). In his much-credited volume, Al-Ghuthami dissects the television text and its alternation of social authorities, historically describing the earlier conception of television by the Saudi public. His range of topics includes the acceptance of televised text within the intellectual elite, comparisons with the Arab conception of other technologies, the televised semiological images of gender in the Arab world, and television’s role in all of that. Al-Ghuthami (2004) for once departs from the simplistic

21 Shafik counters the simplistic concept of an authentic isolated culture that has been brainwashed by Western cinema, and cites Barthes and others in her structural analysis of cinematic text and its relation to the local and region culture. Abu-Lughod (2008) for example, studies how art imitates life in hit shows like Mothers in the House of Love and Hilmiyya Nights, she gauges the responses of the viewing public, with specific individual attention to the origins and differences within each of her human subjects.
“reversed colonial” discourse of the defensive Eastern model against the imperialism of Western media, working instead within the scope of critical theory, particularly structuralism and its sister theories.

Despite this previous attention to local culture, in both regions of the Arab world, television history and ethnography studies seem to be generally lacking, especially with regards to the audience’s perspective. In correspondence with patterns previously examined, one of the most prominent shortcomings seems to be the heavy emphasis on the national/institutional model of television history. Even back in Lebanon, scholars like Donald Brown (1975) and Marwan Kraidy (1999) contemplate that the scholarly conception of television has yet to move beyond conceiving it through the usual models of “colonial oppression,” “cultural imperialism,” or “alteration force” (Browne, 1975; Kraidy, 1999). Arab media researchers like Inshirah Al-Shal (1994), Aatif Al-Abid (2008), and Mai Snu (2001) invoke the concept of the “nation” rather didactically, warning against the dangers of Western television on Arab recipients. 22 Snu, who indeed manages access to the audience, uses a quantitative survey on 500 individuals in the fall of 2000.

This indicates that there is still an Arabic dependency on the “national development” model as advocated by Wilbur Schramm (1964) and others. In his doctoral dissertation, Abdulla Al-Usmani (1984) explains: “About the time this trend began to emerge in the United States, Rogers' and Schramm's attitudes were being translated into Arabic by the School of Mass

---

22 One can say that the same effects of cultural invasion may have intensified after the emergence of satellite stations. The post-satellite era has accompanied increasing scholarship of globalization and television effects in the Arab world (Tawil-Souri, 2008). In Egypt, Aatif Al-Abid (2008) of Cairo University also adopts a somewhat didactic narrative in his volume Radio and Television in Egypt, discussing the national and Arab values of television, and the binary between that and Western value. This also emphasizes how the emergence of satellite was seen as a historical criterion in the narrative of Arab media, possibly due to its ethical implications.
Communication in Cairo and hence transmitted to other Arab countries” (p.90).23

Similarly, in the Gulf region, one cannot claim that there is a shortage in institutional television history. Scholars and authors like Abdul Latif Al-Oufi (1998) and Muhammad Al-Ouainy (1984) have written extensively on the programming output and administrative structures of television in the Gulf. Aatif Al-Abid (2008) in Egypt has similarly written about local television and its history. Additionally, scholars like Jamal Abdul Hai (2012), Nabeel Dajani (2007), and James Wood (1994), of both Arab and non-Arab origin, all spoke aggregately about Arab media institutions. Again, what is substantially lacking is an attention to the cultural aspects of history and the input of the people themselves, that same cultural aspect that is tailored by the people and that has allowed the integration of television. What is lacking is a television history that goes both ways, where television affects and is affected by the people across its history.

It seems that, to various degrees, when there is work that discusses the cultural aspect of television history, it does so in a macro generalizable manner. Examples of such work includes Jamal Abdul Hai’s (2012) examination of the interaction between Egyptian television and the Iraqi Ba’th party or the Egyptian Nassirites during the 1960s. Another example is Mark Poindexter’s (1991) assessment of the dramatic spread of media components like VCRs and cable in Morocco in the 1980s. These studies do indeed examine local cultures, but pay little attention to the social delicacies and individual perspectives that collectively make culture.

With the Gulf, the issue is somewhat similar. When attention is actually dedicated to the cultural dimension of television, it is so in the form of “gauging the affect of the television message,” whether quantitatively or qualitatively. Scholars like Hamza A. Bait-Almal (2000)

23 Of course, the Arab echoing of Schramm does not necessarily glorify Western media import as the original “national development” model does. In fact, it could be assumed that when Arab scholars write about their media in this model, the national development narrative is usually assigned to the local media. As a result, Western media is usually viewed as “corruptive.”
Mohammad Mushyikh (1994), Mohammad Al-Hazza (1983), Mohammad Al-Faqih’s (2000), and Ali Najai (1982), have all examined the effects and impressions of television through the Saudi audience. However, their studies are more in tune with the “uses and gratification” quantitative model. Their work concerns a non-generalizable section of the public—like high school students—and in some cases utilizes abrupt (positive, negative) categorization or conventional questionnaires. Some scholars, like Mohammad Al-Faqih’s (2000) examination of television in Yemen, do indicate a fair amount of social context. However, Al-Faqih limits himself with a survey-based “agenda setting” model to access the television public. Similarly, Afaf Hamod’s (1992) examination of Bahraini television’s interaction with local culture mixes between content analysis, decision-makers’ interviews, and other techniques. She does so to examine television’s origin and content against its educational, surveillance, and informational function. However, Hamod’s work only accesses the community through statistical data and literature. Furthermore, Hamod echoes the same “national development” narrative of television history that is previously discussed.24

Conclusion

In conclusion, a general examination shows that the idea of a bottom-up, reception focused, integration television history in Kuwait is not yet the norm nor is it abundant in scholarship, similarly to a lesser degree with the rest of the Arab world. With the exception of credited scholars like Leila Abu-Lughod, for example, this lack is particularly noticeable with the type that utilizes the testimony of the recipients as a primary source of data.

This section has shown that television history in Kuwait seems to adopt a

24 For instance, Hamod comments that television: “Provide an informational link between different social sub-groups, raise their awareness of the environment and how to control it, and help different groups within the social strata achieve social identification” (p.87).
national/institutional focus, elevates the roles of certain television figures through biographies, and emphasize the dimension of medium effects. All these tendencies could have negatively affected the growth of the culturally focused television history in comparison to the West. TV history in Kuwait therefore, departs from the objective experience of the common person, and is generally not narrated from the “bottom-up,” which calls for an immediate attempt of “integration history.”

Looking at the neighboring areas of the Gulf, as well as the intellectual primacy of Egypt/the Levant, highlights exceptions from certain scholars who advocate the need to progress further into ethnographic television research. Despite some interesting memoirs, structural analyses, and cultural contemplations of television history, the public still needs to be included as a primary data source, history needs to be written from the bottom-up, and culture needs to be contemplated more individually and less as firm clusters. This is how integration history is to be achieved. Today, however, much of the scholarship in the rest of the Arab world still exhibits a national vs. imperialist narrative.

To use the description of historian Eric Evans (2008) in his contribution to the Institute of Historical Research, the emphasis was less on society as “the attitudes of individuals” and more on society as a “set of structures.” Evans urges historians to focus on the cultural discourse, and to avoid ugly terminology and lazy writing, which seem to be issues plaguing television history in the Arab region particularly. It is left to say that one should not try to identify causality between the existence of institutional television history and the lack of social television history in the reason.
So far, the introductory chapter included a detailed summary of this research, a thorough examination of the theoretical and terminological structures that guide this historical study, and an exhaustive exploration behind the problematic style of television history writing in the area.

This signals the end of the introduction chapter. The next chapter will constitute a literature review; which offers literary background on both television and Kuwait.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review chapter attempts to offer sufficient background on the subject (television) and the setting (Kuwait) of this study. Firstly, the literature review will highlight the many examples and incidents of television’s integration throughout the histories of societies, comparing them against several cultural episodes from Kuwaiti society (the novelty period, the familiarization period, the content etc.). This in turn will be enable this research to systematically apply these stages on its narrators’ oral stories. Secondly, this chapter will also offer a brief historical account on the city of Kuwait, providing a much-needed background on the regional, geographical, and cultural context of the research.

Examples of the Integration of Television in the History of Kuwait and Other Societies

This section presents several instances to illustrate how was television integrated as a cultural element in the histories of many societies. It will do so by examining a variety of literature, like academic sources and old press clips. Its substance will focus primarily on Kuwait, but will also be comparatively assisted by theories and events from other regions and countries.

Based on the literature available in and out of Kuwait, six different categories in relation to television’s integration in societies were revealed. These categories shall act as a guide for the research phase later, where oral histories of common Kuwaiti folks will be used to complement these categories into a firm, dependable integration history narrative of television in Kuwait from the 1950s to the 1990s.
Based on the readings, it can be assumed that the integration history of television within societies can be classified in six different areas or phases that are not mutually exclusive nor are they necessarily sequential. They are; succession, novelty, familiarity, domestication, modernity, and content. The first (and earliest) phase of television’s integration into culture can be seen through its succession to cinema.

**First area: Succession.** Many media scholars and historians in countries like the United States and Germany stressed the ephemeral, ethereal, and contextual experience of cinema, an experience which started significantly before the beginning of the film (Darian-Smith & Turnbull, 2012; Spigel, 1988; Uricchio, 1996). However, according to media historian William Uricchio (1996), early television wasn’t as clear-cut in its identity. Uricchio explains that there were three main models; TV as telephone, in which the television was considered an extension to point-to-point communication, TV as radio, in which television “visually” supported radio, and TV as cinema, in which the device is watch publicly. One way to examine the way that television was integrated in societies is by looking at it as a continuation or complementary to the visual technology that has preceded it, namely cinema. It seems that, both scholarly and publicly, television was conceived as succession to cinema and possibly to radio, at least in its earlier period. The arrival of television in Australia for example seem to have been eased into people’s minds because of cinema and radio (Darian & Hamilton, 2012). In America, the visual/ spatial nature of early television seems to borrow from the continuity of cinema, amongst other elements (Spigel, 1988, Barfield, 2008). Additionally, looking at countries like Germany around the mid 1940s, historical sources have commented on the now extinct notion of “television theaters” that seated about 400 individuals for community viewing (Uricchio, 1996). Similarly, throughout his research from the 1930s to the 1950s, Scottish engineer Logie Baird was still
considering television’s place within cinema theaters, and has even gone so far as to have reproduced televised images of the Derby at the metropolitan cinema in 1932 (Burns, 1985). Such instances only highlight the early bond in the identities of both cinema and television.

Narrowing the scope further to a more relevant geographical region, this could possibly reflect the situation in Kuwait, taking into account the Kuwaiti cinema experience. The early Kuwaiti sailors encountered cinemas in cities like Bombay, while the first cinematic projector was a royal gift to the sheikh by the prominent Kuwait figure Izzat Ja’far in 1936 (Al-Hatim, 1980; Al-Siddiq, 1997). Historical sources that date back to 1944 also mention a moving cinema van used by the British in Kuwait to show tapes of the war, inviting the Kuwaiti royal family for viewings (The Indian Arab Magazine cited in Al-Hamdani, 2010). The establishment of cinema as an institutional body however, did not happen in Kuwait until 1954, with the Sharq theater being the first official cinema screening theater in Kuwait, built in 1955 (Abdul Aziz, 1982; Al-Nuwairy, 2011). Kuwait’s output in cinematic production—like the rest of the Arabian Gulf states—is ungenerous. However, its limited repertoire remains prominent with films like The Cruel Sea, produced and directed by Khalid Al-Siddiq in 1972, whose style was compared to that of Luchino Visconti (Armes, 2010).²⁵

With Kuwait, the historical gap between television and cinema differs depending on the historical perception. If one were to consider Kuwaiti television to have begun with Murad Behbehani’s private station, then television would have trailed cinema by twenty-one years (Al-Dawood, 2007; Al-Hatim, 1980). However, if one were to consider Kuwaiti television to have

²⁵ Of course, from the 1950s onwards, Arab cinema was—and still arguably is—led by the Egyptian industry, with Egypt being famed for its cinematic output (Zayanai, 2011). After the oil boom, in the 1970s particularly, money from the Gulf started influencing the narratives of Egyptian films, toning down the level of sexual intimacy within them (Shafik, 2007). According to Viola Shafik (2007), while the famous film My Father is up the Tree contained around 100 kisses, the recent films—in order to satisfy the Saudi audiences for example—hardly contain any kisses. This instigates an instance in which the cultural history of Egyptian cinema ties in with that of the Gulf.
begun with the initiation of the governmental station, then television would have trailed cinema by about six years (Al-Dawood, 2007; Al-Shihab et al., 1998). Of course, it’s also important to realize that both television and cinema are supervised and censored by the state. In fact, Kuwait television was monopolized by the government as the sole local broadcaster until 2003, and had also maintained its own cinema department in 1981 (Al-Shihab et al., 1998; Khalaf & Luciani, 2006).

This potentially indicates interesting stories that aggregate both cinema and television in Kuwait as part of the same sociohistorical narrative, at least during the early stages of television. Television’s association with cinema appears to be part of the former’s integration history in different parts of the world. Through oral accounts and individual histories, this research hopes to shed the light on this particular area of television’s integration history in Kuwait. Another cultural episode of television’s history in Kuwait is what could—for the sake of the classification process—be labeled “the novelty period.”

**Second area: Novelty.** The novelty period could generally refer to the earliest cultural perception of the device upon its introduction to society. It could be assumed that the “novelty phase of television” carried different conventions of the device than it does today. In the United States for example, such conventions include trends like the appeal of children’s television to adults in the 1950s (Alexander, Benjamin, Hoermer, & Roe, 1998; Walters & Stone, 1971).

The novelty period of television could have inherited its attributes from the novelty period of technology in general. In his analysis of technological changes in the area, missionary Harold Storm (1938) observed that technologies such as the motorcar had empowered women’s mobility, and simultaneously ended the sport of gazelle hunting by introducing the element of speed into it. Storm believes the radio and telephone to be the most significant changes in the
area. In certain regions of the Gulf, communication technologies were employed diplomatically by elites to bring stability to the region. In Saudi Arabia for instance, after the Turks left Saudi areas, King Abdul Aziz utilized the communication technology that was left behind (Bait-Almal, 2000).

The king felt the benefit of telegraph and telephone, and decided to put up more units. This system could give him a chance to communicate with his regional governors and military leaders. But that was not an easy matter to do with Al-Ekhwan and their religious leaders (Bait-Almal, 2000, p.5).

Therefore, similarly to other technology imported from the West, the novelty period of television in the Gulf is somewhat associated with the United States and the United Kingdom, who, in the 1960s and 1970s, substantially assisted in building Arab television industries (Wood, 1994). This is evident through Lebanon’s television being funded by the French SOFIRAD and the English Thompson Rizk in 1959 (Browne, 1975), and through the Saudi based ARAMCO American television during 1957 (Boyd, 1970). In Egypt, a French company attempted to promote television in 1951 by placing several sets around Cairo, in celebration of the second wedding of the King Farouq (Al-Abid, 2008). In Yemen, television is speculated to have been the main force for the spread of electricity, starting in the city of Eden as a British propaganda instrument in 1964 (Al-Faqih, 2000; Dajani, 2007). Furthermore, In Iraq, the very first television set was a gift from the German government (Abu-Jahjah, 2010).26

With Kuwait, however, the situation was different due to the fact that television (initially) was not a part of the modern development brought about by Western initiative, but an actual

26  Additionally, Saddam Hussein, who has distributed television sets to the peasants of Al-Ahwar in 1979, used television to construct a specific image of himself as father, soldier, tribesman, etc. (Al-Ghuthami, 2004).
local initiative by the curious merchant Murad Behbahani (Al-Mudhaf, 2015), who encountered television upon his travel to New York in 1947 and started a closed TV circuit that eventually angered the local cinema company (Asmar, 2010). This indicates that there was less external pressure and less Western influence placed on Kuwait to embrace television than there was in other regions of the Arab world. Additionally, even with earlier media, Kuwait’s proximity to the intellectual triangle of Iraq, Beirut, and Egypt benefited the former’s media growth (Al-Najdi & McCrea, 2012). Its flat simple geography made for a clear, easily distributed signal.

Historian Zahra Freeth (1972) comments on a Kuwait that faced “a massive growth in domestic wellbeing, exemplified by almost universal ownership of cars, refrigerators, air conditioning, and televisions” (p. 205). The novelty period in Kuwait’s television also highlights the abrupt, foreshortened history of Kuwaiti television, especially considering that the “official” Kuwait radio preceded television only by 10 years (Al-Surayyi’, 2008). All these instances indicate that television’s introduction into the city was not necessarily gradual.

The previous ideas only highlight how dense and exotic the sociocultural conditions in which television was integrated when it came to Kuwait. This research hopes to utilize oral histories and individual memories to understand how was television integrated in its novelty phase through the history of Kuwaiti society, unraveling yet another facet of integration television history.

This segues into yet another dimension of television’s integration into Kuwaiti culture. This particular dimension comes across as more stable and generally longer, which could be
broadly labeled the “familiarization” phase of television history. The familiarization phase looks at the ways in which television gradually familiarizes itself in society, which is a substantial component of the integration process.

**Third area: Familiarization.** Scholarly examination shows that in Japan, television became a household item in the 1960s as it spread to the countryside, accompanied by the spread of Tokyo’s consumerist culture (Chun, 2006). Japanese television arrived to farming communities that were suffering fragmentation and migration; and has in fact affected the family doubly by drawing its members together spatially and yet away from actual interaction (Chun, 2006). It could be assumed also that in the Arab world, and despite the distinctions in the time it required to do so, television was entering a phase of familiarization. Many historical instances show how unique the familiarization process was in each country.

With the Arab world, the familiarization process of the device maintains certain similarity. However, one needs to remember that the Arab world—and the Gulf particularly—lays on the consumption rather than the industrial end in that regard. In Bahrain for instance, television grew rapidly to 90,000 sets in one decade since its introduction in the 1970s (Hamod, 1992). Kuwait is no exception. It was estimated that in 1973, the value of imported television had reached around two million K.D (Almost seven million dollars at the time), escalating to eight million in 1974, and reaching 17 million in 1977 (“Prices have increased locally”, 1980). Media researcher Ahmad Abdul Malik (1996) illustrates the wider economic circulation of the device from 1965 to 1987 through the following table (See Table 1).
Table 1

The Growth of Television Exports in Millions, by region and year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The global total</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arab regions</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The percentage of Arabs within</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the global world</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Recreated from Abdul Malik (1996)

This dramatic embrace of television could be related to the limited possibilities for leisurely outdoor activities in conservative countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and to a lesser extent Kuwait, where bars are not part of the culture and public concerts are almost non-existent (Bait-Almal, 1986; Boyd & Shatzer, 1993; Hamod, 1992). However, it could also be speculated that television’s familiarization process in Kuwait might have been challenged by a society that was still coming to terms with modernity. In an article of Al-Qabas newspaper from 1979, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, Muhammad Al-San’ousy, explained that Kuwaiti television exists within a context of an illiterate majority (Zein, 1979). 28 Television in Kuwait could be tied to the aftermath of the dramatic post-oil boom development. This is underlined in the fact that even in 1970, nine years after television’s inauguration into society, 15,678 Kuwaitis were still living in the desert (Najdi & McCrea, 2012). Therefore, television’s story in Kuwait is an extension to the dilemma of how the Gulf and Arab states can import modernity, yet exclude

---

28 It is important however, to remember that, as researcher, Ibrahim Beayeyz (1989) stated: “radio and television do not encounter the illiteracy barrier” (p.110), a fact which gave them precedence over written media.
the broader worldview that modernity brings with it (Al-Usmani, 1984; Tawil-Souri, 2008).

Television’s integration in the Arab world also relates to instances of resistance, whether religious or cultural (Saghiya, 1992). Discussing resistance, the Saudi integration history of television deserves specific attention due to Saudi Arabia’s geographical proximity—yet dramatic distinction—from Kuwaiti society. In a community that marveled over motorcars and bottled water, King Faysal of Saudi Arabia (1964 – 1975) diplomatically explained the benefits of television to the religious lobbies which speculated that supernatural evil elements were behind such technology (Al-Hazza, 1983; Boyd, 1970; Boyd & Shatzer, 1993; Hegghammer & Lacroix, 2007). Such resistance patterns manifested themselves through the uprising of Islamic fundamentalists like Juhaiman Al-Otaiby, who was responsible for the grand mosque siege of Mecca in 1979 (Hegghammer & Lacroix, 2007). One of Juhaiman’s main arguments was against television technology, photographs, and other visual imagery (Al-Huzaimi, 2010). In the mid 1960s, the former Saudi King’s nephew, Khaled Bin Musa’ed, was shot to death following a demonstration against the entrance of technologies like television into the Kingdom (Ali, 2003; Associated Press [AP], 1975). Prince Khaled reportedly led a group of extremists to attack the radio building (de Launay & Charlier 1987).

The resistance also came from the local culture as well as the religious lobbies. Old women would disparagingly call the device “Talaf Al-Iyoon/damage of the eye,” which humorously enough rhymes with the Arabic pronunciation of the word television “tele-fizyoon” (Al-Assaf, 2012; Al-Ghuthami, 2004). King Faysal, a relative modernizer, came into contact with the technology following a trip to Boston (Al-Hazza, 1983; Boyd, 1970). In the end,

---

29 The Monarchy also argued in favor of photography and the telephone, to convince the religious lobbies of their benefits, explaining that photography is simply a combination of light and shade, and that the telephone can be used to recite anything including verses of the Quran (Eddy, 1963).
television successfully familiarized itself within Saudi society to the extent that it succeeded in lessening traffic and outdoor activities (Sobaihi cited in Bait-Almal, 2000). In a nostalgic news item, journalist Mansour Assaf (2012) reminisces on the humorous social paradoxes generated by the earlier phases of television commercial, like finding cream moisturizer in the house of a family living in the desert.

In Egypt, the neo-Ikhwan religious group was also cautious towards television (Abdul Hai, 2012). Similar reservations were harbored towards cinema in countries like Lebanon and Syria, where interviews with 1200 individuals revealed the effects of religiosity, education and urbanization as variables relating to the “movie-going” practice (Brunnert, 1953). Many Arabs at the time displayed a sense of panic with the upcoming West-imported modernity, possibly underlined by the nationalistic movement that was active in Iraq (Storm, 1938). Such anti-television narratives could also be theological in nature, with the intent of balancing certain Islamic texts as indirectly condemning television (Khudur, 1998). In her book, Mai Snu (2001) writes: “Television has entered people’s lives, took what it wanted from their time, destroyed their lives and built it as it pleased” (p. 146).

In Kuwait, the situation appears to be more regulated than it was in Saudi Arabia. Kuwait, like Bahrain, is more flexible than Saudi Arabia in its media usage (Al-Usmani, 1984). This is not to indicate that resistance didn’t exist. For instance, despite a general liberal social ethos in the 1960s, television may have been affected by the religious revival that was to come in the 1980s, a period that’s been analyzed by several scholars (Ghabra, 1997; Tétrault, 1993).

30 In his analysis of television’s effect on the family, Dr. Mohammad Khudur (1998) refers to the statement of some Islamic scholars regarding the sacrilegious nature of television. Khudur claims that many of television’s programs lead to corruption, pornography, and encourage uncovering and gender mixing, which makes television ownership and viewing an act of iniquity. Such instances relate to many theories and contemplations in mass communication studies as well as fiction, possibly in relation to what is socially labeled “The hopes and fear” model (Penati, 2012). These includes George Orwell’s 1984 (Barfield, 2008), and Jerry Mander’s arguments against television in the 1970s (Mander, 1978).
One very interesting cultural episode that relates to this tendency took place in September of 1985, when a Kuwaiti citizen accidentally discovered an English language station on his television screen. The newspapers responded to the “pre-satellite” phenomenon by running the story across three issues, as the government appointed a team of technical experts to discover the source of the foreign station’s signal (See Figure 1; Al- Inizy, 1985; Al-Khalaf & Al-Ameera, 1985).

![Figure 1. A photograph from Al-Qabas newspaper taken in 1985, emphasizing the bafflement of some who picked up the American station on their sets (Al-Khalaf & Al-Ameera, 1985, p. 20).](image)

To conclude, the familiarization of television in Kuwait was relatively smooth but not without its difficulties, constituting an important part of television’s cultural integration by the Kuwaiti people. In the Gulf and the Arab world, the familiarization process of the device ranged
in its complexity. The research process will employ personal oral accounts to generate data and enrich that particular period of television’s integration history.

The subsequent dimension of television’s integration history involves a rather dense prospect on a cultural level. The next category historically examines the way television made its way into one of the most sacred of spaces in Kuwaiti society: The Kuwaiti household.

**Forth area: Domesticity.** The historical timeline of television can be considerably rich if one were to study it from a domestic perspective. American installation artist Vito Acconci (1990) designated the early television as “special furniture.” Since it wasn’t functional as actual furniture, it overlaps a blurred status between sculpture and painting. In urban America, early television has certainly been considered for its class-related décor potential (Barfield, 2008). Media researcher Lynn Spigel (1988; 1992) speaks of television blending in with the new conception of the American house that fused the indoor with the outdoor, using television as a metaphor for a “window to the world.” When domesticated, television created a “shrine” that replaced previous instruments of domestic entertainment such as the radio and the piano (Holdsworth, 2011; Spigel, 1988). As a domestic component, television later interacted with other domestic instruments like the washing machine and the computer (Gauntlett & Hill, 2002, Holdsworth; 2011; Morley, 1992).

What can be said, however, about the domestication of television in Kuwait? Kuwait’s case was particularly interesting because the integration of television accompanied the already very fast alteration in the urban mapping of the city. This was in a time when Kuwaitis were abandoning the open court wider mud-based buildings that housed extended families for more efficient concrete units (Al-Baqshi, 2010; Khattab, 2005). One particular speculation is whether
or not, once it made its way into the Kuwaiti home, television had to deal with—and rearrange—the ethical standards of the home (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Caricatures from the mid 1970s showing a man bolting the set due to his dissatisfaction with the content (Al-Khazam, 1974, p.50).

Other elements of television’s domesticity look at the misappropriation of the device in a culturally specific manner. For instance, the early generation of television consumers in Appalachian America used car batteries to power their televisions sets (Podber, 2007). Similarly in Kuwait’s history, instances of what is called “the consumption junction” with other
technologies and innovations can be seen. These include early fatalities from penicillin overdoses and people air-conditioning their outdoor gardens when the technology first arrived to the country. (Allison, 1994). Within these instances of television’s integration history, television is no exception. Considering the lack of historical records in that regard, this research hopes to discover if there were any unique forms of television appropriation within the Kuwaiti home.

Discussing the domesticity of television also invites inquiries about what Cecelia Penati (2012) called “the miracle aspect.” With Kuwait, the miracle aspect could to be defined as the inability to completely grasp the abstractness of television visually, which is heavily expected in a society like Kuwait. Many oral tails exist in societies of the Arabian Gulf involving women covering themselves from the television screen, because they didn’t quite understand its mechanism (Assaf, 2012). In Saudi Arabia, a woman reportedly panicked over a televised wrestling match under the impression that “the people inside the television are fighting” (Al-Ghuthami, 2004). Similar accounts took place during the early integration of television in the Nordic societies (Hujanen & Weibull, 2010), and earlier yet in the United States of America, where people were afraid of undressing in front of the screen (Barfield, 2008).

Below is a comparison between two cartoons; one from the Italian print press of 1954, titled “televisione e pudore” (television and modesty; Penati, 2012), and the other is from the Egyptian magazine Roz Al-Yusuf about Kuwait (Al-Rayyis, 2014; see Figure 3). While the first shows a woman watching a television set while changing behind a screen, the second shows a father requesting that his son turns off the air condition because he misunderstood the televised phrase “on air.” Both instances indicate a difficulty in early conception of television’s abstraction.
A final observation of television’s domesticity links Kuwait culturally with other regions of the world, particularly through the practice of “community viewing,” where one television set is viewed publicly in either a private or public space. This practice was sometimes referred to as a TV party in postwar America (Spigel, 1992), and was a common tradition in both suburban areas for socializing, and isolated regions for necessity (Barfield, 2008; Podber, 2007). Kortti & Mähönen (2009) have also reflected on the practice of community viewing in the Nordic countries since the 1950s. In Japan, television was installed in private businesses, like shops and cafes, in order to attract customers (Chun, 2006). The phenomenon of community viewing was also prominent in Australia during the 1950s (Darian-Smith & Hamilton, 2012; Herd, 2012), and in India during the 1980s, as it took place in the house of the main figure of the village (Malik, 1989). In Kuwait, family matriarchs and patriarchs still possess rich stories on community viewings from yesteryear. Sadly, however, none of them appear to be documented academically according to the researcher’s knowledge. This research hopes to delve into this particular area, where television’s domestication is more of a public engagement than it is private. In here, television’s domesticity extends towards the outside.
All the previous examples only highlight the richness of television’s integration in the domestic atmosphere of Kuwait throughout its history, a particularly plentiful area for this study. Through the oral history accounts of the narrators, this research aims to add a certain qualitative evidentiary database to all these accounts, one that specifically concerns Kuwait.

Of course, the changing nature of the Kuwaiti home is an outcome of the post-oil modernity phase in the history of Kuwait. Television, being a device that has accompanied the wider flood of communication and transportation technology, must obtain a distinctive relationship with this modernity narrative. Therefore, television’s interaction with the post-oil modernity is yet another aspect of its integration history that deserves a closer look and an oral component.

**Fifth area: Modernity.** In their examination of this particular area, Douglas Boyd (1984), claims: “Television stations built in developing countries during the 1950s and 1960s were often hurriedly planned and constructed [With the governments] believing that the visual medium would provide citizens with a symbol of modernization” (p.380).

This indicates that television’s initial phase in a society that was just experiencing post-oil wealth might have been foreshortened in nature. But, what is to be said about the recipient’s perspective? Looking at the memorable social occurrences in the Kuwait of the post 1960s, it should be safe to assume that television has assimilated itself with the traits of the age in question (See Figure 4).
Figure 4. A 1962 caricature from the Egyptian Magazine Rose al-Yūsuf, illustrating the novel situation of television in Kuwait (Al-Saqqaf, 1962, p.8).

There are several modernity-related aspects of television’s integration history that could be investigated in Kuwait. One particular aspect for example is the social reactions to the additional technology that has complemented television in Kuwait a bit later. The spread of the VCR market in the Gulf during the 1980s for instance, was examined by several Western, Arab, and Gulf scholars (Bait-Almal, 2000; Hamod, 1992; Mushyikh, 1994; Zayani, 2011). In 1985, the number of videocassette shops was estimated to be 170 shops (Al-Deery, 1987). In Saudi Arabia, the early generation of videocassettes was associated with the English-speaking affluent middle class (Al-Hazza, 1983). In the late 1980s in Kuwait, similarly, video stores received around 150 to 200 clients per day (Harb, 1988). When such technology surfaced in the Kuwait of the 1980s particularly, scholars and journalists alike warned parents from the allegedly addictive,
destructive spread of the VCR machines (Al-Jarihy, 1989; Harb, 1988). By 1981, the
government had confiscated 4500 cartridges and cassettes out of 690 stores (Ministry of
Information [MOI], 1981). This conservative discourse was possibly underlined by the religious
revival of the 1980s, which coincided with the introduction of video recording technology. This
is also possibly due to the fact that, unlike television, video recorders could be categorized as
what Hamza Bait-Almal (2000) labeled a “stand-alone” technology, one that did not require
governmental blessing. In 1984, Al-Jisr magazine cited a study by the Swiss consultant company
Prognos AG, which revealed that 92% of the Kuwaiti families own a VCR unit, making Kuwait
the highest country in VCR ownership at the time (“Kuwait Ranks First,” 1984).³¹

Besides television’s interaction with accompanying technology, the modernity aspect of
television’s integration history could also be studied through the interaction between the early
Kuwaiti recipients and the Western media imports. Has television stimulated the modernization
process that was already taking place in the post-oil boom? Did it possibly assist in altering the
social habits? For example, in 1992, local social figures like Abd Al-Ra'ouf Al-Jardawi & Ali
Al-Tarrah (1992) argued that television changed the social traditions relating to funerals and
deaths, probably by broadcasting the obituaries on a daily basis. Additionally, mass
communication scholar Yasin Al-Yasin (1985), comments in that regard:

Kuwaiti television networks rent and buy North American and Western European
programs, encouraging mass consumerism and changing the values and outlook of the
Kuwaiti culture […] The young Kuwaitis who grew up watching the American and
British shows and films found that they now have the capability of buying and building
modern houses and convenient facilities because of the large oil revenues (p.61).

³¹ However, when the same study is cited by yet another newspaper, the estimation of the Kuwaiti families’
ownership of VCR units is said to be around 72% (Khalid, 1985).
To conclude, modernity as a process with all its components could provide sufficient backdrop against which television’s integration history can be examined. In this research, this aspect shall be corroborated with personal experiences and stories from the narrators.

The last area of television’s integration history is a particularly ample one, which involves television as content rather than as technology. The integration history of television in this regard could refer to the exchange that took place between the programs and the recipients.

**Sixth area: Content.** Another issue that makes television history hard to map is in its uniqueness and defiance of categorization. In other words, television can be examined through its ethereal content, or alternatively from its material content (Holdsworth, 2008; 2011). When it came to Kuwait, it is undoubtable that television content was affected by the standards of local culture. Therefore, its interaction with the audience is far from one-way. Media researcher Ibrahim Beayeyz (1989) states that: “Indeed, performance of Kuwait TV reflects the blend in the country’s sociopolitical order, which includes the emerging conservative groups” (p.142).

Therefore, it is possible that much of these early reflections can be observed by examining the content of television as it was being integrated into Kuwaiti culture. Local media pioneer Mohammad Al-San’ousy (1997) identifies a great deal of what he considers “important television output.” These, according to Al-San’ousy’s testimony, include the popular 1986 comedy *Ruqayya & Sabika*, and the popular children television paragraph *Mama Anisa and the Young*.

Much of the content has naturally depended on the economical flow and the diplomatic relations between the nations’ media outlets. For instance, the cheap import value of American Westerns made them frequent airtime fillers in Japan and Ireland around the 1960s (Chun, 2006;
Similarly, the geo-linguistic proximity between countries like Argentina and Uruguay facilitated the interchangeability of their television programs (Sinclaire, 2009).

Many global examples across the world illustrate how certain television programs have contributed (whether positively or negatively) to television’s integration within the local culture. Examples include the conception of white soap operas amongst the Northern Inuits of Canada, or the rise of the Elvis Presley-inspired “Rockberries” youth in Japan (Chun, 2006; Roth, 2005). In China, the television of the 1980s found itself negotiating its identity between reformism and intellectual elitism (Guo & Zhao, 2009). In South Africa, the local station (SABC) started softening up after the Cold War, which in turn lead it to start broadcasting previously banned material (like the film Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner; Teer-Tomaselli, 2009). In Spain similarly, Televisión Española (TVE) was initially characterized as centralist under Franquist dictatorship, and suppressed Catalanian-based programming (1939-1975; Lozano, 2010). More relevantly, in the United States, the audience’s conception of television’s prominent moments had switched from “entertainment” to “news” between the 1960s to the 1980s, possibly as the public transcended their initial admiration for the medium (Bower, 1985). Finally, another interesting interaction with the content comes from Algonquian Canada, where television shows like The Muppets were disliked because of the association between certain animal characters and local mythology (Granzberg, 1982). All these are instances of how televised content can govern the way in which the public culture integrates television into itself.

With the Arab world, the period between the 1970s and 1980s was a time in which the region was ordering almost half of its broadcast content from the United States (Varis, 1986). Much of this foreign content was aired and devoted to the “second television stations” that were established in several Gulf countries around that time (Boyd, 1984). Media researcher Douglas
Boyd (1984), who has paid extensive attention to televisions in the Middle East, labels this trend as “the Janus effect.” Mass communication scholar Hamza Bait-Almal (1986) explains:

While the major purpose of the second channel is to provide television services for the foreigners who live there, the second channel does attract local audiences for its variety, serious cultural programs, and western series such as "Different Strokes," "The Jeffersons," and "Spectrum" in Saudi Arabia, and "Sanford and Son" and "Newhart" in Qatar (p.91-92).

Considering the vast amount of exposure that the Arab recipient was subjected to, one particular area of interest is the clash between Western imports and the conservative mentality of the recipients. In Lebanon, media scholar Nabil Dajani (1992) explains how television shows like *Eight is Enough* were sometimes at direct contrast with local programs that were broadcasted alongside it. This inconsistency was common throughout the Arab world.

Closer to Kuwait, in Saudi Arabia particularly, the situation was even more dramatic. Douglas Boyd (1970) comments that the introduction of television in Saudi Arabia, initiated a pattern of compulsive censoring:

The town sheriff walks into a bar—censored because alcohol is forbidden. Sheriff talks to woman who is unveiled—censored because woman's face is shown. Sheriff pets dog as he walks down the street—censored because the dog is considered an unclean animal. Finally, all scenes involving the sheriff are omitted because it is discovered that the sheriff's badge closely resembles the Star of David and is unacceptable because of the association with Israel (p.76-77).

32 While television shows like the comedy drama *Eight is Enough* showed liberated girls, simultaneous local comedies like *Abu Melhim* (1969) contained an episode in which a girl is shamed for losing her virginity due to mounting a bicycle (Dajani, 1992).
It becomes clear therefore, that a negotiation had immersed between the discourse/space of pleasure and the discourse/space of condemnation (Al-Ghuthami, 2004). According to Abdulla Al-Ghuthaimi, this also applies to the double standard of anti and pro American culture, with television showing protests against “imperialism” and yet elevating the American social culture.33 William Rugh (2004), the author of Arab Mass Media, echoes that:

It was a common experience for audiences in these countries to watch an evening TV newscast laden with political reports deliberately putting America in a bad light, and then view a Hollywood film or TV series such as Little House on the Prairie or the very popular Dallas (Electronic location, 2835).

Kuwait, despite a cultural tolerance level somewhere between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, found some challenge in accepting some of the content imported at the time. Indeed, the televised broadcast of Carol Reed’s Oliver! (1968), adapted from the Dicken’s classic, received negative reviews from the Kuwaiti press in the 1980s for the trivialization of thieving and the glorification of Fagan’s Jewish character (Mutar, 1980). There exist many examples of the juxtaposition between the Kuwaiti ethos and some of the television content that was being offered at the time, whether locally or foreign. This study therefore, hopes to understand more in that regard, from the perspective of the recipients themselves, thus adding another content specific layer to the integration history of local television.

Looking at how “content” can be part of KTV’s integration history requires a look at what certain programs represent to the Kuwaiti community. Famous programs from the fantasy genre for example, like Habbaba (1976) and the City of Wind (1988), only highlight the attachment of the community to local and regional folklore. These instances are observed in

---

33 Moving further throughout the century, Hicham Al-Alaoui (2011) comments that the Arab recipient attempted to negotiate his religious scruples while simultaneously watching music videos on satellite television.
television programs from other regions similarly. Examining the melodramatic hegemony of Egyptian television for instance, media anthropologist Leila Abu-lughod (2008) explains that the traditional local method of storytelling can be seen through the schema of Egyptian television. The dramatization of the ancient Indian myth *The Ramayana* for example, was very popular amongst Indian recipients in the late 1980s (Malik, 1989). In Algonquian Canada, television replaced the local culture of storytelling; a practice that contemplates the supernatural elements of conjuring, divining, and dreaming (Granzberg, 1982).

Looking at the local output particularly, many television programs from the 1960s onward seem to mirror the specific social trends of their respective time. For example, certain Kuwaiti programs can be discussed through the backdrop of the feminist movement that was taking place in the mid 1950s, as will be discussed in later parts of this study (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011). On that, Ibrahim Beayeyz (1989) comments:

In addition, the appearance of women on television has never been an issue in Kuwait, as it has been in Saudi Arabia. Whereas General Presidency for Girls' Education in Saudi Arabia has forbidden female students from appearing on television or participating in its programs, Kuwait TV in its early years recruited women to be in its crew (Yahya, 1975, as cited in Beayeyz, 1989, p.140).

Women contributed to and participated in television in Kuwait almost as soon as the industry arrived in the country. One shouldn’t forget for instance, that Fatima Hussein broadcasted her subtly feminist program, *Dunya Al-Usra*, only two years after television’s inauguration (Al-Mudhaf, 2015; Al-Shimmary 2011). Television’s sociohistorical relation with gender can also be reflected through its early “feminine symbols.” For instance, television host Amina Al-Sharrah was considered the “doll” of Kuwaiti television in 1964, and it was rumored
that young men kissed the screen when she appeared (Al-Shimmary 2009). Similarly, in the United States, the nature of televised text differed based on the administrative ethics for each of the three giant networks (four with the later emergence of Fox). For instance, while CBS adopted a more socially conscious approach between the 1970s and the 1980s with programs like The Jeffresons and Good Times, ABC chose a more sensationalized slightly sexual route with programs like Laverne and Shirley and Charlie’s Angels (Levine, 2003).

Additionally, iconic comedy programs like Darb Al-Zalag (“Slippery Road”; 1977) and Rgayya u Sabeecha (Rugayya & Sabeeka; 1986) were themed around the Kuwaiti urban and economical migration. In such plots, the characters live in timeworn—now extinct—models of the Kuwaiti house, while the rest of the plot is usually concerned with their inability to deal with their unexpected social escalation. Since the 1960s, scholars have assessed that Kuwaiti television drama was characterized by a focus on the changing nature of Kuwaiti society in the post oil phase (Al-Qahtani, 2013). This coincided with a time when the city of Kuwait witnessed an unprecedented boost in infrastructure, urban planning, and modern household construction, hurling most of its inhabitants up the property ladder (Al-Baqshi, 2010; Al-Jassar, 2009; Alissa, 2013; Elsheshtaw, 2011; Khalaf, 2006). This is, in many ways, similar to how the characters of American comedies like I Love Lucy facilitated a post-war migration to the suburbs in the United States (Spigel, 1988). These examples only stress the structuralist narrative that advocates television’s ability to relate to the cultural and historical context in which these programs were produced (Bignell, 2007; Ellis, 2007). This is evident in the drama genres. Many of these

---

34 With the United States for example, the golden age of television is approximately mapped around the 1960s-1970s, through what is knows as the classical network model, before the emergence of FOX (Mittel, 2003). Defining such canon depends on the survivability of the material, the genre, and socio-historical context of the programs in question, as it is helpful for both nostalgia and pedagogy (Davies, 2007; Wheatley, 2007). Such definitions are also popular with scholars from the United Kingdom who attempt to define the mapping of the “golden age of the BBC,” like Catherine Johnson (2007) and Mair Davies (2007).
programs belong to the acclaimed “golden age” of television, or “television canon” (Davies, 2007; Wheatly, 2007). Similar cultural categorizations were contemplated by media scholars in England, Australia, and Japan (Barfield, 2008; Bednařík, 2013; Bourdon, 2003; Chung, 2006; Gauntlit and Hill, 2002; Healy, 2012; Holdsworth, 2011; Morley, 1992).

Examining the integration history of television through its content also offers a great deal of insight on the memorable moments that were broadcasted at different points in time. Without handing television too much authority, this indicates the prominence and ability of television’s text to either comment on or stimulate changes occurring in societies. A clear example of that would be the “national sacrifice” symbolism that television was able to convey through the footage of the 1986 space shuttle disaster (Seiter, 2005). Certain televised incidents are assumed seared into the mental schema of Kuwaiti recipients, the earlier generations particularly. Such incidents may include the aftermath of the assassination attempt on Sheikh Jabir Al Ahmad in 1985, for example.

When these moments are contextualized in memory, they emphasize how such televised events become part of the collective memory of the entire nation’s shared culture (Turnbull, 2012). In these instances, television seems to exist with Kuwaiti citizens in two different ways—as a maker of history and as a component within their own history (Healy, 2012; Holdsworth, 2011). Appropriately, credited television historian Jerome Bourdon (2003) explains: “Today, especially in media parlance, collective memory is generally understood as the memory of important events, rituals, and ceremonies shared at the level of large geographical collectives” (p.7).

Similarly, in his much-credited volume, Armchair Nation, Joe Moran (2013) explains:
Any history of watching television inevitably becomes a meditation on the nature of collective memory, for a programme that millions once watched but which has now faded into the atmosphere like a dream is a neat encapsulation of the elusive quality of memory itself. The most banal TV from the past can be extraordinarily evocative (p.5). Moran doesn’t necessarily agree with the idea of the “golden-age shared television culture,” believing early television viewing to be far more complex than that. His contemplations on television memories remain relevant (Hogan, 2013). In comparison, it could be said that Kuwaiti television has functioned within the cultural context in a manner coinciding with the contemplations of Newcomb & Hirsch (1983), who viewed television as both a mirror and a maker of the public sphere. Echoing the ideas of Jerome Bordoun (2003), the memories of Kuwaitis may also show how television memories can function as either habitual “wallpaper” memories, or as “lighbulb” media events. Despite the interesting contemplations that these examples provide, many of them only highlight the production aspect of the content, without any emphasis on the reception, reaction, and integration of television into the viewers’ culture. This shortsighted view therefore, requires the aid of personal stories to complement it.

**Conclusion**

This section offered a brief examination on the range of research areas through which television integration history can be applied. Television made its way through society as a new technology. It functioned as succeeding technology to the one before it, as a novelty, as an instrument undergoing the social familiarization process, as a device entering the sacred space of the home, as a device within the matrix of social modernity, and through its content. All these categories invite several supporting examples from Kuwaiti society and outside of it.

---

35 Having said that, it is imperative to point that Moran states the previous point in opposition of “the golden age” idea, claiming that much of the early television was not excessively accessible.
So far, this chapter has displayed and discussed the outcome of previous literature in that regard, which assisted in turn of creating these areas. Of course, it is imperative to remember that the components of each area shall only be crystalized through the actual research, which invites the need for this study. This study will attempt to illuminate each of these research areas by furnishing them with the oral histories, stories, and personal accounts from people who have lived through them, thus compiling a consistent integration history of television in Kuwait. The oral history therefore, will provide the main method for compiling this integration history of television.

One needs to remember that these categories are in no way exclusive, nor are they subsequent to each other. This categorization system was devised based on preliminary examination of previous literature in and out of Kuwait. The previous section therefore, has offered a look at television’s different functionalities as it integrates into world societies, which will help generate the research questions and, in turn, the different areas that the narrators’ stories shall cover.

Following the previous highlight on the different categories of television's integrations, the next section of the literature review represents general historical background that shall contextually complement the research at hand. In the following section, the history of Kuwaiti society is highlighted through its geographical features, its economical and political evolution, its social alterations, its ethnic makeup, as well as its other components.

**Historical Brief on Kuwait City**

Kuwait is a state within the Arabian (Persian) Gulf that spreads up to 17,818 km$^2$ (11,071 mi$^2$) sharing 240 km (149 mi) of its Northwestern border with Iraq, and 250 km (155 mi) of its Southwestern border with Saudi Arabia (Al-Sayegh, 2013). Kuwait is a coastal country with only
20% of its landmass inhabited across its 500 km waterfront, and a rainfall average that is identified as “negligible” (Oxford Business Group [OBG], 2014). Kuwait’s geography consists of flat deserts with intensely hot summers, slightly smaller than the American state of New Jersey, and roughly the size of the British country of Wales (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2014; Home Office United Kingdom [HOUK], 2012).

As of 2014, 4,091,993 individuals populated Kuwait; only 31.18% of which are actual citizens (Public Authority for Civil Information [PACI], 2014). Kuwait is ruled by the Sabah dynasty, the sovereignty of which began with the election of Subah the First in 1756, and became limited to the direct bloodline of Mubarak Al-Subah (Casey, 2007). From the most basic of perspectives, and despite frequent commotions, the 1962 constitution defines Kuwait as a hereditary emirate through the succeeding male descendants of the late Mubarak Al-Subah (Metz, 1993). It is ruled by the Emir (Crown Prince), who appoints a Prime Minister, who in turn appoints the cabinet members (Katzman, 2014).

The internal civic affairs of Kuwait are managed through “Majlis Al-Ummah,” a parliament composed of 50 elected members whose interaction with the state is characterized with frequent tension, as it has been repeatedly disassembled by the ruler of state (Katzman, 2014; Worth, 2008). The assembly represents the six Kuwaiti governorates of Hawalli, Farwaniyya, Al-Asima, Al-Jahra, Ahmadi (with the highest population of 262,169), and Mubarak Al-Kabir (with the lowest population of 142,374; PACI, 2013).

Kuwaiti politics still attempt to achieve an authorial balance of power between the ruling family and the government. While the Amir has the power to dissolve the parliament, as he’s done so eight times since 1976, the assembly of 50 members holds the power to introduce legislation, interrogate, and withdraw confidence from cabinet members and ministers (Katzman,
The analysis of Abdo Baaklini (1982) on the legislative Kuwaiti experience indicates that the Kuwaiti parliament was specifically cultured as a halfway system between Western political ideals and traditional Kuwaiti principles. According to Baalkini, the cabinet ensures that the royal family of Kuwait stays principally away and yet engaged.

Kuwait is known to be one of the world’s top oil-exporting nations. In the mid-1990s, the oil revenue constituted 75% of the total revenue, making Kuwait rather vulnerable to the movement of the international oil market (Fennell, 1997). By the mid-1990s, Kuwait obtained seven commercial banks, two specialized banks, an Islamic bank, and approximately 24 investment companies (Wilson & Kireyev, 1997). The Kuwaiti Stock Exchange has traded in local stocks and bonds since the early 1970s, suffering a traumatic collapse in 1982 due to factors like an overwhelming amount of post-dated checks and a relatively new financial system (Al-Yahya, 1993). In the 1980s, companies that were partially owned by the government included the Kuwait Investment Company (50% government owned) and the Kuwait Foreign Trading Contracting & Investment Company (80% government owned; Klaum, 1980). In the Middle East, Kuwait is classified as a natural resource, high-income state, in comparison to nations of medium income like Turkey and Lebanon (Mellahi, Demirbag, & Riddle, 2011).

Kuwaitis seem to enjoy a considerably high standard of life, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. The most current Income and Expenditure Survey (2007/2008) estimates the average monthly income of the Kuwaiti household to be around $9,400 (Central Statistical Bureau [CSB], 2010). During the 1980s, journalist Frank Clements (1985) put it best by stating that: “Kuwait is now synonymous with oil, a high per capita income, a significant overseas investment programme and a programme of economic aid of the less fortunate in the Arab world and other Third World countries.” (Introduction).
The 2013 Human Rights Report of the US Department of States estimates that 68% of Kuwait’s residents are non-citizens (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor [BDHRL], 2013). About 30% of Kuwaitis are Shiite Muslims while the majority are of the Sunni sect (BDHRL, 2012), with the two sects disputing the nature of Islamic leadership, whether hereditary or by election. Kuwait’s expatriates bring a mix of theological diversity to the country, with over 450,000 Christians, 600,000 Hindus, 100,000 Buddhists, 10,000 Sikhs, and 400 Bahá’ís (BDHRL, 2012). Out of its 4,091,993 inhabitants, the citizens of Kuwait have adopted a Gulf-spoken Arab dialect, which changes into the Egyptian, Najdi, and South-Levantine variety with immigrants (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014). The internal Kuwaiti social makeup also breaks into several branches, most prominently the Hadhar and Badu; or the “townsmen” and “Bedouins” (Tétrault, 2001).

Like many of its neighboring Gulf cities, although significantly earlier, Kuwait City is a center for commercial consumption; which contains the middle class, the elites, the new middle class (traditional yet educated), and the conservative low-income strata (Khalaf, 2006). During the second half of the 20th century, Kuwait (trailing Singapore) became the second most urbanized state in the world with 97.6% of the public living in urban areas, granting free higher education, medical care, and housing for all its citizens (Casey, 2007; Elsheshtawy, 2008). Amongst its several private institutions, the official university of the state (Kuwait University) was established in 1966, growing rapidly to include 16,000 students in less than 30 years (Al-Farhan, 1960; Ghabra, 1997). Between the late 1950s and the early 1960s, Kuwait formed its Central Bank, invested over $100 billion in overseas blue chip companies, and co-founded OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) in 1960 with neighboring states (Casey, 2007).

Despite social and political waves of feminism, Kuwait did not grant women the right to vote and elect for parliament until 2005, which followed an intense ideological conflict between the Islamist lobby and the state (Shultziner & Têtreault, 2011; Têtreault, 2000). According to the World Economic Forum, Kuwait ranked second (after the UAE) in the Arab countries’ gender index of 2010, while its direct neighbor Saudi Arabia ranked 14th (Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa [MENA], 2011). The Unicef report also states that women over 15 years of age have a 45% participation rate in the labor force.

**Early history, leadership, and establishment.** Scholars contemplate that the identity of Kuwaitis is a fusion of their “practical” bond with the sea and their “ethnic” bond to the desert (Al-Jarallah, 1996). Historical records indicate sparse geographical references to the area. It could be said that Kuwait has only recently achieved its crystalized national identity. During the pre-Islamic period, Kuwait was identified geographically as Kadhima, with historical records indicating a certain association with the Dilmun civilization in the Bronze Age (Al-Tamimi, 1998). An initially misplaced reference to Kuwait for instance appears within French maps in 1652 by the name of Kadhima, and within Dutch cartography in 1756 as Graine (Slot, 2003).36

Like many others, Kuwaiti historian Saif Al-Shamlan (1986) traces the name of Kuwait to the derivation of the word “Koot,” in reference a small fort in the area that was possibly used as a repository for weapons. The fort was most probably built between 1650-1668 by the

---

36 Also mispronounced as Grane, Green, Grijn, all referring to the old Kuwaiti name of Grain, meaning hill.
brothers Aqil and Barrak ibn Urai’ir, the leaders of the early settler tribe “the khawalids,” who lost their control over the area around 1671 (Al-Hamdi, 2005; Al-Hatim, 1980). In the 17th century or so, the Bani-Utub dynasty gained control of the small region from the Khawalids after migrating from Najd to Qatar, and then to Kuwait (Abu-Hakima, 1984). Historians discuss an alliance that took place in 1716 between different sub-families of the Iniza branch of Bani Utub consisting of Al-Subah (who now rule Kuwait), Al-Khalifa (who now rule Bahrain) and Al-Jalahma (Wahba, 1955).

For protection services, Kuwaitis erected three walls that have stretched across the city in its earlier periods. Traveler Stocqueler (1832) believed that the walls were there simply to maintain a façade of security. The first wall was built in 1760 (possibly 1789 according to ‘Hamad Al-Su’aidan’), while the third one was built in 1920 (Al-Hatim, 1999). The third wall in particular represented protection to the city during the battle of Jahra against the Saudi Ikhwan in 1920 (Al-Jassar, 2009). Al-Jassar therefore, in his doctoral dissertation on Kuwaiti architecture, states that the building of the third wall has become a milestone in the crystallization of the Kuwaiti identity. In a later period of Kuwaiti social life, gradual social tension would surface when many started regarding the wall as a sociogeographic identifier of the Kuwaiti identity, historically separating those who had lived within it than those who had lived outside it (Longva, 2006). The 1920s have also witnessed the blooming of political life in the city, with the first citizens’ assembly (by the name of the consultative assembly) being established in 1921 without any significant success (Khaz’al, 1970). Although the final wall was brought down in the end of the 1950s, its main five gates were kept as historical landmarks around the city, and they still stand today (Allison, 1994). After frequent conflicts with its neighbor Saudi Arabia, Kuwait
achieved its current official borders through the Uqair protocol of May in 1922, managed by the British representative in the Gulf, Sir Percy Cox (Khaz’al, 1970).

**Social aspect of the city and its inhabitants.** Across its history, Kuwait seemed to have negotiated its identity into a fusion of several aspects. On that subject, May Ann Têtreault (1995) points out to Kuwait’s tribal affiliations, its port status, its city/state status, and the remains of its feudal economy. In 1765, German mathematician Carsten Niebuhr wrote that Kuwait contained about “10,000 people with 800 boats” (Abdu, 1962). In 1709, pilgrim Mortadha Ibin Alwan explained that due to the barren nature of the Kuwaiti soil, most fruit (like melons) came from Basra by boat (Aal Omar, 2004). While Bin Alwan compared Kuwait’s early urban structure to that of the Saudi town of Hassa, journalist J.H Stocqueler (1832) offered a comment in his travel diaries that illustrates old Kuwait perfectly:

> The streets of Koete are wider than those of Muscat or Bushire […]. Beyond the wall nothing is to be seen but a vast sandy plain, extending to a distance of more than sixty miles. Not a shrub affords the eye a momentary relief (p.18).

Historian Yousif Bin Eisa Al-Qina’ie (1988) spoke of Kuwait as a village riddled with disease, where people rarely ate meat or indulged in footwear. Al-Qina’ie also examines how early Kuwaitis lacked the rudimentary necessities of life: access to water, basic hygiene standards, and a clear legislative system. Socially, Al-Qina’ie clusters Kuwaitis into different sub-committees (merchants, divers, etc.), and claims that until roughly 1911, Kuwaitis knew and practiced basic mathematics like adding and subtracting. After a visit to Kuwait in the beginning of the oil era, Lord Kinross observed that Kuwait had a port that operated quickly but quietly, with honest merchants who haggled well (Al-Shurbasi, 1953).
Kuwaitis lived in modest buildings with their own characteristics, including a lack of outward-looking windows that prevented air circulation (Al-Qina’ie, 1988). Many of the Kuwaiti houses were built of material like sunbaked mud (Freeth, 1972). The manufacturing components of the early Kuwaiti houses included bamboo sticks, palm trunks, ash, and a brand of wood known locally as Kandal/Chandal (Al-Ghunaim, 1999). Of that, Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar (2009) explains:

The old residential districts were divided into different neighborhoods. Each neighborhood was a cluster of homes, which in many cases belonged to an extended family or clan. The dense cluster of homes with narrow alleys and high walls provided a great advantage for a hot arid town. The walls provided shade for the passersby during the hot summer months. The small streets and alleys were safe playgrounds for the neighborhood kids (p.123).

The “Hadamma” (the destructive rain storm), which fell on the third night of Ramadhan in 1934, had also demolished and damaged the houses of grand Kuwaiti families like Al-Subai’ie, Al-Yasin, and Al-Sarhan (Al-Ghunaim, 2005). The preliminary urban mapping of Kuwait contained three main cities that were within the walls. These were the city of Qibla, the city of Sharq, which contained facilities of the mariner trade, and the city of Murgab, which is associated with the plaster makers (Al-Hajry, 2008). Kuwaiti historians also mention several other “villages” and areas that were initially outside the wall and further away from the city, but are now very much part of the municipal order. Such areas accommodated wealthy families as leisure destinations and included Al-Fuhaiheel, Al-Dimna, and Al-Shu’aiba (Al-Farhan, 1960; Al Hajry, 2008).
Within its cities, Kuwait was culturally (and later nostalgically) apportioned into several “fireejs” or quarters, which signified a degree of social segregation. In many occasions, the fireejs were labeled based on their main or most noticeable residential tribe/family, these include the fireej of the Aaqoul family, the Al-Sager family, and the Al-Roumi family (Al-Ghanim, 2013b).

These naming schemes only emphasize the mental significations that Kuwaitis assign to their urban mapping, which in turn is tied to prominent members of the community, certain buildings, or certain crafts. This has apparently become a consistent scheme throughout the Kuwaitis recollection of their earlier days, probably due to the small nature of the community.37

Throughout its early history, Kuwait suffered several diseases like the spread of tuberculosis, smallpox, the famine of 1868, and the plague of 1831 (Al-Rushaid, 1978; Casey, 2007). In 1910, Kuwait was subjected to a practically mandatory vaccination procedure (Casey, 2007). According to the Kuwait-based diplomat Colonel Hamilton, the extension of the 1918 worldwide flu claimed the lives of 4,000 individuals in Kuwait (Al-Jarallah, 1996).38 Kuwait came into the medical profession rather late. When Sheikh Mubarak witnessed the prowess of missionary/doctor Arthur K. Bennet in treating his friend Sheikh Khaz’al of Basrah, he invited the missionaries to Kuwait, initiating medical practice in 1911 (Scudder, 1998). Dr. Khalid Al-Jarallah (1996) also clarified that the construction of the first “state” hospital was stifled as a result of the Second World War, and did not conclude until the year 1949.

In 1926, Kuwait had accumulated around 2,000 ships, 8,000 houses, and 17 schools for

---

37 It will also significantly come into play later when discussing their memories of television.

38 In his detailed volume about the development of the health service in Kuwait, Khalid Al-Jarallah (1996) explains that Kuwaitis depended on traditional cures for illnesses, like ironing and religious treatment. According to Al-Jarallah, conjunctivitis (or pink eye) used to be treated by methods like dropping mother’s milk into the eye.
boys, (See Figure 5; Al-Rushaid, 1978). By the year 1906, Kuwait had witnessed a gradual
decline of drinking water, which was purchased from the Iraqi city of Basra (Al-Qina’ie, 1988).
The water company was subsequently formed in 1939, while the first electricity company was
formed in 1934 with no more than 60 consumers (Al-Tamimi, 1998). Several years later, in the
wake of the oil boom, Westinghouse, from Sunnydale, California, built a new seawater
distillation station (Case & George, 1952).

Local historian Ghanim Al-Ghanim (2013b) characterizes the era of the 1930s with the
waning of regional battles, the turmoil of WWII, inwards migration, the spread of disease
(mainly cholera and typhoid), and more importantly, the intellectual influence of Iraq and
Palestine on Kuwaiti society. The beginning of the 20th century had also witnessed the
introduction of transportation and communication technology to the city. The battle of Al-Rig’a
in 1928 was the first battle fought with the aid of automobiles, after Sheikh Mubarak brought the
Belgian Minerva vehicle to Kuwait in 1911 (Al-Loughani, 2010).
Figure 5. A painting of a Kuwaiti quarter, as envisioned by the artist Mohammad Moathen (Adapted from Shiber, 1964, p.xxxiv).
Trade and economic history. Historians believe that the situation of Kuwait started improving after the Persian occupation of Basra in 1776 (Abdu, 1962). This was also coupled with the departure of The East India Company from Basra in 1773 due to the plague and the Persian Siege (Klaum, 1980). The East India Company therefore, had moved its employees and operation to Kuwait in 1793 (Freeth, 1972; Clements, 1985). It is believed that The East India Company practiced protocols of corporate greed and even possibly engineered local coups in many of the areas it was involved in (Robins, 2004). Therefore, it could be inferred that the arrival of the company to the area had introduced an entirely different culture of highly organized capitalism (See Figure 6). This possibly dates back as far as the 17/18th century, with the introduction of Nestle to the Ottoman Empire (Mellahi et al., 2011).

Kuwait was also an active ground for the smuggling of cigarette paper, sugar, tea, and tobacco to and from the Ottoman Empire, (Al-Hamdi, 2005; Al-Tamimi, 1998). The country had obtained a very active trading industry, challenging the Muscat port by providing a land route linking India, Persia, and Europe, as well as a sea route facilitating trade to India and Africa (Crystal, 1992). Prior to the oil-revenue, the state’s income depended on livestock, palm trees, taxes, and some properties in Basra (Al-Azami, 1991). In the year of 1816 alone, the resources of Kuwait were estimated to be around thirty-one big sized ships (like the Baghla) and fifty small ones, resulting in an export of about 1,500 horses from Basra and Kuwait to India (Abu-Hakima, 1984). Additionally, when Bani-Utub claimed Bahrain in 1783, Kuwait’s excellence in transit trading also grew, reinforcing Bani-Utub’s power against the competing forces of Bani-Ka’ab in Persia (Abu-Hakima, 1984). While the Kuwaiti trade reached India and Malabar during the era of “Abdulla Ibn Subah” (1764–1814), the Kuwait of the 20th century received rice, wheat, barley,

---

39 In the book of Sabri Al-Hamdi (2005), the movement is said to have happened between 1821-1822, due to a disagreement between Mr. Ridge and Dawood Pasha.
dates, sugar, tea, fabrics, pots, wood, and spices from India, Yemen, Iraq, Ihsa’ and Persia (Al-Qina’ie, 1988; Al-Rushaid, 1978).

Until the invention of cultured pearls, Kuwaitis sustained sufficient living from the trade of pearl diving from mid-May to mid-October on an annual bases, with Kuwait possessing around 812 diving ships in the era of “Mubarak Al-Subah”, particularly from 1837-1915 (Al-Ghanim, 2013a; Al-Qina’ie, 1988; Al-Tamimi, 1998; Casey, 2007). Until the 1920s, Kuwait contained around 10,000 pearl divers (Wahba, 1955). After the invention of cultured pearls, however, historian Rashid Al-Farhan (1960) comments that the number of pearl divers gradually dwindled to no more than 3,000 divers.
Figure 6. A view of the fusion between old and new in the Kuwait City of the 1950s (Shiber, 1964, p.xxxix).
Sheikhdom and diplomatic relations. Kuwait has had a succession of Sheikhs from the Subah Dynasty, each ruler witnessing or contributing a substantial change in Kuwait’s sociopolitical or socioeconomic status. Around the period of Mubraka Al-Subah (1896-1915), the city established the model of national customs, and was introduced to technology like the motorcar, the camera, the sewing machine, and electricity (Al-Hatim, 1980; Wahba, 1955). Within the period of the First World War, Kuwait had also established a bond with the global market through the application of the telegraph and the mail (Wahba, 1955). The era of Mubarak was specifically transitional to the identity of Kuwait into the 20th century, since it was the era in which Kuwait signed the protection treaty with the English Crown in 1899 (Casey, 2007). Mustafa Abu Hakima (1984) believes that Mubarak had possessed diplomacy suitable to navigate Kuwait out of the dangerous era of the Ottoman power decline.

During the era of Ahmad Al-Jabir (1921–1950), Kuwait had been suffering a Saudi embargo on trade, a decline of the pearl diving business, as well as an economic depression (Abdu, 1962; Casey, 2007; Tétreault, 1991). In the time of Abdulla Al-Salem (1950-1965), communication, like mail, telephone, and telegraph, was nationalized after it had once belonged to the British government, leading to the picture of the Sheikh replacing the picture of the queen on state-related credentials (Al-Farhan, 1960).

Respectively, the rulers of Kuwait have adopted different attitudes towards the most dominant superpower in the region, which was the Ottoman Empire. Kashmiri historian Revindeer Kumar (1962) describes the relation between Kuwait and the Ottoman Empire as a status of “nebulous control.” Sheikh Mubarak did not follow in the steps of his older brother Abdulla the Second (1866 -1892) who had previously accepted a certain Turkish title in return for military protection (Tétreault, 1995). The Ottoman documents of 1701 seem to support the
hypothesis that Kuwait was under the governance of the Khawalids, who were not on good terms with the Ottomans and outside of their geographical reign (Slot, 2003). With the First World War changing the equation, the Ottoman statesman Medhat Pasha at one point released Kuwait of all its financial duties (Al-Shamlan, 1986). A letter written to the English government in 1905 details the British suggestion to Sheikh Mubarak that he should create a specific Kuwaiti flag, distinguishable to the customs authorities in the Gulf (Al-Azami, 1991). In July 29, 1913, an agreement was signed that “represents an official declaration by the British and Ottoman governments in Turkey for the geographical sovereignty of the State of Kuwait” (Al-U Reid & Al-Shimmary, 2003, p.69).

Another—less vague—relation was the one established between Kuwait and the British Empire. The first treaty between the two countries was in 1841, signed (by proxy) by Subah-Bin-Jabir, and concerned the affairs of the sea (Al-Ghunaim, 2005). These geographical attributes—as well as other factors—made Kuwait an interesting area for the dominant national powers of the time. This includes the desire of The British Steam Navigation Company to establish a port there, the desire of the Ottomans to takeover in 1897, and the desire of the Russians to construct a railway station in the area (Wahba, 1955). The threat of the extremist Wahhabis coming from Saudi Arabia in the conclusion of the 19th century, pushed Sheikh Abdulla towards establishing a relationship with the British (Crystal, 1992). In 1899, Sheikh Mubarak took that relationship further by signing an agreement that placed Kuwait under the protection of the British crown, in which the latter would handle all the external affairs of the former (Casey, 2007). Early modern interactions between the two nations included the visit of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jabir to King George IV and Queen Mary after the First World War (Al-Hatim, 1980). The protection treaty
was terminated in 1961, leading to Kuwait’s admission to the United Nations and the Arab League as an independent state (Greenwood, 1991).

The discovery of oil, modernity, and progression. The visit of S.L. James (British Admiral) in 1914 drew attention to the possibilities of discovering oil reserves in the areas of Bahra and Burgan, eventually leading to the establishment of the Kuwait Oil Co., Ltd, a British corporation (Milton, 1967). A concession was given to the KOC—a joint venture between American Gulf Oil and The British BP—granting them drilling and explorations rights for a period of 75 years (Crystal, 1992). Sheikh Salem Al-Subah granted the oil concession to the explorers in 1934 (Clements, 1985). Operations, however, were put on hold during the hostilities of WWII (Dickson, 1968). After the resumption of the process, the oil revenues were used to construct a public work program in the 1950s by Al-Subah’s successor, Sheikh Abdulla Al-Salem (Clements, 1985).

In what was described as a remarkable undertaking that is compared to a mythical Arabian Nights narrative, the governmental revenues witnessed an 11,792% rise from 1946 to 1977 (Al-Shurbasi, 1953; Al-Yahya, 1993; Freeth, 1956). Historian Lord Kinross stated that the utilization of the new wealth had surpassed all the economic theories, short-circuiting Kuwait from feudalism directly to socialism (Al-Shurbasi, 1953).

The Egyptian press of the 1960s, which operated in a state that preceded most of the Arab world in all modern aspects, called Kuwait “a country reborn” (Al-Rayyis, 2014). Credited publications like Roz Al-Yousif, Al-Ahram, and Al-Musawwir in Egypt, all elaborated on the newly built hospitals, media institutions, educational facilities, and more (Al-Rayyis, 2014).

Many variables came into play that made Kuwait surface on the international economical map, including the wars of 1967 and 1973, the accompanying oil embargo, and the oil price
spike between 1973 and 1980 (Têtreault, 1997). In 1959, Kuwait claimed 54 million English tons of oil in production (Al-Farhan, 1960). In 1950, the KOC started considering—based on a letter from the Kuwaiti sheikh—sending Kuwaiti employees abroad for education, similarly to the practices of other companies in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq (Al-Ubaid & Al-Shimmary, 2003). Kuwait still does not impose any income tax on citizens, and, in the 1970s, the government encouraged citizens’ loans with restriction on interest (Al-Yahya, 1993).

**Urbanization.** Upon setting its roots in the city, Kuwait Oil Company started housing its employees in the city of Ahmadi, turning it into an urban model with recreational facilities, roads, and planted trees (Alissa, 2013). The city of Ahmadi brought a great deal of civic modernity to Kuwait (Dickson, 1968). Al-Ahmadi was the first Kuwaiti town to adopt modern urban typography as early as the 1940s, paving the way more and more for Kuwaitis to abandon the older model of habitation in favor of the new one (See Figure 7 & 8). Kuwait’s urban quintuple plan had set its infrastructure in the 1950s and 1960s, building self-sufficient neighborhoods guided by the Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City model (See Figure 9 & 10; Al-Jassar, 2009; Elsheshtawy, 2008). Architectural scholar Mohammad Al-Jassar (2009) claims that some urban entities—like the mosque—have preserved their identity still. Al-Jassars looks specifically at the disappearance of the courtyard (primarily a space for women) and the prioritization of the diwaniyya (primarily a space for men) within new Kuwait.

Unlike many other urban narratives, the drastic infrastructural flourish in Kuwait was nonorganic and non-gradual. It did not happen out of slow experimental initiative. Instead, it was thrust forward with “modernity” as the main motif in the light of the post-oil economical boom, underlining more and more the idea of a foreshortened history. This resulted in cities that were created mainly for automobile transportation and capitalistic consumption, in what has been
termed “oil industrialism” (Khalaf, 2006). Architecture scholar Muhammad Al-Baqshi (2010) demonstrates how the small Kuwaiti urban setting quickly morphed into spinal units, junctional units, and neighborhoods inspired by the American planner Clarence Arthur Perry (See Figure 11). It could possibly be said that this abrupt modernity has instigated an identity crisis with houses that look modern and yet retain their conservative attitude (Elsheshtawy, 2008). British author Zahra Freeth (1956) illustrated how a city that was once “almost medieval” had altered in the most remarkable fashion by global standards. Freeth (1956), who was the daughter of Kuwaiti based British diplomat Harold Dickson, also contemplated the negative side of modernity. This includes the locals’ lack of a well-informed civic background, overflowing manpower, and the disappearance of some local flora and fauna. The latter point was also echoed by missionary Harold Storm (1938) in his book Whither Arabia.

This dramatic pace of civic modernity had of course come with the fee of a waning national identity, whether on the urban or cultural front, a point that the then-Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jabir understood very well (Crystal, 1992). In his excellent account of Kuwait’s urbanization, written during its peak, Saba Shiber (1964) writes:

The old city, referred to as “as-Dira” in Arabic, was like a huge apartment dwelling, its bazaars a huge store, its alleyways and streets - ‘jada’at’ or ‘hara’t’ - an interesting network of ‘highways.’ […] the ‘mono-metropolitanization’ of Kuwait occurred with a lightning speed setting, quite probably, a record in largescale desert urbanization (p.75).

Similarly, historian and social scholar Zahra Freeth contemplates the drastic alteration that has taken over the urban signature of the city:

At one moment a coastal pattern of domestic building was decided on. Then planning in depth, with inland town-ships growing up around existing habitations took its place.
Between these South of France and Newcastle-upon-Tyne extremes of planning, the monoliths of neo-Levantine, neo-Egyptians, neo-anything went up (See Figure 12, 13 & 14; Freeth, 1972, p.222).

Simultaneously, there was a positive aspect to modernity. Of this, Alan Klaum (1980) contemplates: “Schools, hospitals, supermarkets, parks, gardens, and ultra-modern Government buildings have sprung into being where once desert sands played across the barren land. The shops are filled with expensive imported clothes, jewelry, watches, and perfumes” (p.2).

National Geographic journalist, Paul Case (1952), who had returned to Kuwait after having lived there in 1949, marveled at how the old existed next to the new, and how camels and American cars existed adjacently. Case stated that he had never seen a transformation greater than that of Kuwait. Reflecting a specific form of urban architecture, the Kuwaiti house still maintains family privacy as the main core of design (Khattab, 2005). In the 1960s and 1970s, Kuwait also issued a number of laws to regulate its civil societies and special interest lobbies, including The Labor Law for Civil Workers (1964; Al-Zuabi, 2012).
Figure 7. The old town wall terminating at the Eastern flank (Shiber, 1964, p. 86)

Figure 8. The old town harbor (Shiber, 1964, p. XLIV)
Figure 9. Comparison between the two pictures illustrates the growth that Kuwait has witnessed from the 1920s to the 1960s. The picture on the left (adapted from Shiber, 1954, p.65) “roughly” shows the relative growth of Kuwait beyond its initial three walls, being a small almond shaped town. However, the picture on the right (Adapted from Shiber, 1954, p.67) “roughly” shows the much bigger aerial composition of the early 1960s in comparison, highlighted in red. While the original images were basic satellite mappings, both images were edited further by the researcher to highlight the changes, including the dotted lines representing the walls and the red highlight.
Figure 10. An illustration representing the 1951 Kuwaiti urban plan (Shiber, 1964, p.133).
Figure 11. In comparison to the previous images, this map represents the drastic growth in Kuwait from its initial existence up until current times. While the area confined within the red line represents early Kuwait, the green fenced area represents the recent urban growth of the city. Finally, the area within the blue line constitutes the geographical border of the city. From the 2005 Kuwaiti Engineering Group Consultants and Colin Buchanan and Partners, as cited in Khalaf (2012, p.31).
Figure 12. A portrait shot of Kuwait, entitled Home (Bu-Hamdi, 2014a)
Figure 13. A landscape shot of Kuwait, entitled Hustle and Bustle (Bu-Hamdi, 2014b)

Figure 14. A landscape shot of Kuwait, entitled Breathe (Bu-Hamdi, 2014c)
Women’s and minority rights. Another crucial consequence of the post-oil modernity was the women’s suffrage movement. Kuwaiti women were considered second-class citizens in Kuwait due to their lack of schooling or cultural exposure. Of that, historian Yousif Bin Eisa Al-Qina’ie (1988) stated: “until now in Kuwait, there has not been a woman scientist, nor author, nor poet, nor thinker …nor… nor…she instead remains on the instinct of indolence and illiteracy…” (p.83).

The post-oil era brought significant differences to the city’s social composition and gender relations. The feminist movement of the 1950s and the 1960s was a particularly interesting social occurrence (Tétreault, 1993). With specific backing from the state, this initiated a conflict of opinions between the merchants on one side, and the Islamists /tribalists/ conservatives on the other (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011). Researcher Mary Ann Tétreault (2001) believes that Kuwait has displayed an ambivalent, uneven narrative of the women’s movement, similar to the narrative of its own democracy.

Through that, the appearance of the Kuwaiti woman has also changed drastically. The three generations of Kuwaiti women classify into the conservatively dressed elderly, the young generation who alternates appearance according to context, and the transitional middle-aged generation (Kelly, 2010). This drastic change in the status of women has been met with the usual backfiring rhetoric from conservatives. Dr. Ahmad Al-Muzaini (1988) for instance, alarmingly and dramatically counters the feminist wave and warns against its potential effects on morals and marriages. This liberation was naturally linked to the presumably corruptive influence of Western ideology.

The rapid modernization initiated a heavy wave of foreign migration that eventually overpopulated the citizens themselves, and created a primary dependency on foreign labor for all
manual work (Ismael, 1982; Ismael, 1993). In the early 1990s, it was estimated that an approximate 60% of the population consisted of non-Kuwaitis (Al-Najjar, 1992). This also affected the traditional role of the Kuwaiti woman, as Asian female workers in Kuwait increased from 13% in 1965 to 68% in 1985 (Shah, Al-Qudsi, & Shah, 1991). This also introduced the phenomenon of stateless individuals—or the Buduns—who campaigned for the obtainment of Kuwaiti citizenship (Ghabra, 1997).

Under the new welfare state, the number of Kuwaiti citizens tripled between 1957 and 1975, from 113,622 to 470,123. By 1994, the total number of Kuwaiti citizens had reached 669,000; while the number of non-Kuwaiti residents was 1.1 million. This last figure included the Buduns, individuals with no travel documents, of whom there were an estimated 150,000 (Ghabra, 1997, p. 360).

The Budun issue specifically brought Kuwait under heavy scrutiny from international human rights representatives, as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHRC] estimated the population of Budun in Kuwait to be between 93,000 and 120,000 as of 2013 (Human Rights Report, 2013). Additionally, the introduction of modernity in Kuwait seems to have also underlined the ideological gaps within society. In his doctoral dissertation, communications scholar Yasin Al-Yasin commented on the split that has occurred in the mentality of the Kuwaiti people between the Islamists and the intellectual nationalists of the 1960s (Al-Yasin, 1985). The state also urbanized the Bedouin communities (not to be confused with the term Budun) during the 1960s, which turned the “tribal system” into a semi-institutional force that operated through the official state system (Al-Tamimi, 1998; Têtreault, 2001). This diversification ensured simultaneous—possibly conflicting—ethical models within Kuwaiti society. For instance, while the Bedouins emphasized conservatism and ethnic purism, the
Hadhar were more oriented initially to ideologies like communism and Khomeinism (Longva, 2006; Tétreault, 1995). Kuwaiti scholar Shafeeq Ghabra (1997) believes that the 1960s and 1970s created a new commercial elite and introduced a new intellectual middle class, possibly affected by the extension of Arab existentialism (Di-Capua, 2012). Pioneer intellectual Dr. Ahmad Al-Khateeb (2007) believes that the Kuwaiti political practice is still burdened by superficiality towards women, and that it has lent itself to sectism (between Sunnis and Shiites) and tribalism.

Within the lines of the historical briefings, the next section of the literature review chapter offers a brief on Kuwaiti television, including its origins, its structure, its attachment to the state, and its current status. It is crucial at this point to provide certain notification of the resources that will be used for this next section. In response to the accessibility issues discussed above, the sources employed will be a mix of academic scholarship and archived print news. The print news archive will be used sporadically and will contain clippings ranging from the mid 1970s to the late 1980s. It contains material from all of the five major newspapers that have existed in the city at the time, namely; Al-Qabas, Al-Watan, Al-Siyasah, Al-Rai, Al-Aam and Al-Anba’.
The Development of Television in Kuwait

Despite their similarities, different regions of the Arab world can be clustered differently when it comes to their embrace of visual media. While Egypt for example is famed for its cinema, Lebanon was credited for its renowned pluralistic press, and Saudi Arabia represents the current financial capital for the Arab media market (Zayani, 2011). When it comes to Kuwait, the recognition is mostly in regards of its pioneering status as the first country in the Gulf to have obtained an official television station.

According to the records available, Kuwait’s first interaction with television technology started in 1957, through the merchant Murad Behbehani, who purchased the Radio Corporation of America [RCA] franchise license while in New York in 1947 (Al-Dawood, 2007; Al-Mudhaf, 2015; Al-Yasin & Mu’awwad, 1995; Asmar, 2010). Behbehani started a closed television circuit to promote the sales of sets in his shop. He broadcasted simple content, like cartoons (Al-Hilli, 1982; Al-Yasin & Mu’awwad, 1995). The government purchased the station and upgraded the operation from the American RCA to the CCIR European standard, commencing the official state broadcast on November 15, 1961 (Al-Failakawi, 1999; Gulfvision, 2013). In his historical account, Mohammad Al-San’ousy (1997) estimated the initial crew to have been no more than ten individuals back then.

The television service, which was under the Ministry of Education for some time, was later relocated under the Ministry of Communication in January 17, 1962, which established two broadcasting devices operating on the power of 10 KW and 2 KW in the Mitla’ area (Al-Shihab et al., 1998; Najim, 1997). According to the Kuwaiti media figure Mohammad Al-San’ousy, the initial weak private signal at the time could only reach Kuwait City, but not its suburbs (“Kuwait television on its twentieth,” 1982).
The first person to carry the ministerial responsibilities was Subah Al-Ahmad Al-Subah (the current Crown Prince) in June 19, 1961, while the first television presenters included Ridha Al-Faily and Amal Ja’far (Al-Dawood, 2007). Up until November 15, 1963, Kuwaiti television had only been broadcasting four hours of black-and-white footage a day, with the administrative and technical assignments distributed across several huts in the eastern zone of Kuwait (“A brief on Kuwait television,” 1978; Shehab et al., 1998). By 1966, there were 11 video cameras in KTV (MOI, 1966).

The hourly rate increased to 42 hours in 1967, and further to 58 hours in 1967/1968 (Al-Haddad & Ragheb, 1980). The second technical boost to local broadcast came in 1964, when the coverage signal was broadened towards the northern and eastern parts of the country through Al-Rawdhtain station, which was powered with 2 KW for image, 0.4 KW for sound (Al-Ouainy, 1984). In 1973, Kuwait was managing stations in remote areas like Al-Sulaibiyya and Al-Magwa’, with devices ranging in power from 1KW to 750 KW respectively (MOI, 1973).

It is recalled that the most prominent sets in the 1980s were the Japanese, the German, and the Dutch models (“An incredible development”, 1980). In the late 1980s, television sets averaged at 2.23 sets per Kuwaiti family, and 1.17 sets per non-Kuwaiti family (see Table 2; Abu-Shanab, 1987). Prominent figures in the industry have broken down the pre-1990s development of local television into two phases; the first being between 1964-1985, and the second between 1986 and 1990 (Al-San’ousy, 1997). Citing annual reports of the Ministry of Information, Al-San’ousy claims that while the first period around 1964 included a signal expansion and an increase of local production up to 45.5%, the second period witnessed the first usage of computers in September of 1986 (Al-San’ousy, 1997).\footnote{Al-San’ousy cites himself—without specifying any particular scholarship—in reference to the percentage displayed. Additionally, he cites the annual volume of the Ministry (the 1986 addition) regarding the date displayed.}

In 1973, Kuwaiti television
had accumulated 98 film materials between Arabic and foreign, in addition to 1,085 animated films, amongst other content (Al-Doury, 1977).

Based on the Kuwaiti population count of 1985, which was estimated to be 235,943 families, a sample study had concluded that approximately 35,627 families in Kuwait owned about 39,190 black & white television sets between them (Al-Omani et al., 1986). The same study estimated that Kuwaitis possessed around 495,198 color sets distributed amongst 225,090 families. The 1980s were a particularly rich period for the industry in Kuwait. By October 1, 1987, Kuwait television had sent and received 285 and 153 signals respectively, covering various cultural, social, and sport related events (MOI, 1987).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year’s</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>The initiation of Kuwaiti television, with PAL technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>The establishment of Al-Rawdhtain station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>The initiation of the costume department in the Kuwaiti television institute, allowing for period dramas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Kuwait joins TELESTRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>The establishment of Failaka station (in the Kuwaiti Island of Failaka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>The switch to color television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-9</td>
<td>The launch of the second station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>The launch of the Kuwaiti satellite station</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data compiled from Abu-Shanab (1987), and Al-Dawood (2007).
The structure of Kuwaiti television. In comparison to the rest of the Gulf states, the official television of Kuwait preceded all other stations; preceding Saudi Arabia by four years, Bahrain by 14 years, Qatar by eight years, the United Arab Emirates by seven years, and Yemen by 38 years (Dajani, 2007). Kuwait has paid extensive efforts to nourish the television industry in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Al-San’ousy, 1997).

Assisted by Lebanon, Egypt, and Great Britain, the efforts of Kuwaiti television dramatically intensified after its launch in 1961, building one of the first satellite stations in 1969 with the assistance of Nippon (Al-Usmani, 1984). By 1976, the Ministry of Information had started preparing the process of moving into a self-efficient facility for radio and television (MOI, 1976). The Ministry of Information and its studios are still housed in the city of Sharq. In 1979, the local television operation moved to the new media building, which included two broadcast studios each measuring 29 m² (95 ft²), and three production studios (A, B and C) measuring 500, 300, and 800 m² (2624 ft²) respectively (MOI, 1979). Towards the end of the 1990s, Kuwaiti television distributed its operations across nine studios, four of which were primary ones that measured at 165, 300, 500, and 800 m² (Al-Furaih, 1999). Yousef Al-Failakawi (1999), a mass communications scholar from Kuwait University and a former director in the Ministry, comments:

The complex also houses studios that were once equipped with very sophisticated production and technical facilities. Some of the equipment, such as bilingual character generators that could produce subtitling in Arabic and English, were specifically designed for Kuwaiti television (p.21).

---

41 It is important to note that, while Saudi Arabia established its official television later than Kuwait, it was no stranger to television due to the private station of the American Oil Company Aramco, which was broadcasting from the area of Dhahran during the 1950s (Boyd, 1970).
Administratively, Kuwaiti television was described by Abdul Razzaq Al-Usmani (1984) as “complex but decentralized” in the 1980s, where department heads achieved a fair degree of independence. At the time, the Ministry of Information was broken down into six departments, within which the programming department was meticulously divided into nine sections that included sports, news, and entertainment (Al-Ouainy, 1984; Al-Usmani, 1984). In the ministerial structure of the 1980s, television and cinema were adjacent to each other. By the end of the last millennium, many prominent studios went into renovation, including Studio 160, and Studio 80 for Channel 2 (Al-Furaih, 1999).

In 1962, Kuwaiti television became the first in the Middle East to obtain an external (outdoors) broadcasting vehicle, with three engineers, thirteen technicians and nine operators (Al-Dawood, 2007; “The external broadcasting unit in television,” 1980). In 1988, Kuwaiti television also started applying the teletext system (Al-Yasin & Mo’awad, 1995). Kuwaiti television’s establishment was part of a larger movement in developing countries that intensified dramatically between 1965 and 1981, accompanied with hurried planning and construction (Boyd, 1984; Boyd & Shatzer, 1993). It is estimated for instance that during the 1990s, Kuwait had ordered a large amount of high-quality television transmitters that were disproportionate to its size, with a total of 10,500 MW/LW and SW transmitters (Wood, 1994).

**The programs of Kuwaiti television.** In regards to content, Kuwait gradually became a hub for television production in the Gulf area, training personnel and supervising the Dubai-based station Kuwait Television from Dubai, which was assisted by Kuwaiti content and ran from 1969 to 1972 (Al-Nadawi, 2011; Al-Sheikh, 2007). Kuwaiti television’s broadcast was characterized by several memorable local productions accompanied by heavy dependency on foreign imports. In 1976, Kuwait became part of the Gulf Cooperation Council Joint Program

The Kuwaiti television is the oldest government television system in the region, and as a result of the social and political development of the Kuwaiti people, it is now one of the most advanced television systems in the Gulf region in terms of personnel and equipment. Its facilities are used by the AGJPPI for its programs’ production such as *Iftah Ya Simsim*, the Arabic *Sesame Street* (Bait-Almal, 1986, p.91; See Figure 15).

In 1979, Kuwaiti television was comfortably distributing its content between 307 weekly hours of children’s programs (16%), 173 hours of religious programs (9%), and 192 hours of special interest and educational programs (10%; MOI, 1979).

*Figure 15. The cast of Open Sesame; the official Arabic version to the American Sesame Street. On the left, the puppet of No’man the camel was the cultural replacement of Big Bird (“Open Sesame Comes Back,” 2014).*
This could possibly reflect the structural maturity and standardization that Kuwait television might have finally achieved in the 1980s. According to Beayeyz (1989), Kuwait television had obtained a total of 74,700 information hours and 320,408 entertainment hours from 1976 to 1980. According to press resources of that particular period, Kuwaiti television was financially facilitating private productions pitches with 60% of their cost (Sabri, 1983).

The series format was found to be the most prominent in Kuwaiti television in the 1970s (Nordenstreng & Varis, 1974). According to Al-Ouainy (1984), Kuwaiti television had put significant effort in local drama production, with a 20.1% increase between 1979 and 1980. Out of a study conducted in 1986 on a sample of 1050 individuals, it was found that dramatic content appeared to obtain the lion’s share for television watchers, with 39.6% watching this particular genre (Al-Omani et al., 1986). This continued all the way into the next millennium, where the drama genre constituted 90% of Kuwaitis’ viewing preference (Mu’awwad & Muhammed, 2000). In 1983, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information published a research on a sample of 500 families, with over 97.8% of the subjects identifying themselves as “television watchers” (Al-Khirs et al., 1983).

The programming output of Kuwaiti television in the 1980s included the much credited Open Sesame, comedies like Khaltý Gmasha, and Darb Al-Zalag, all of which had become an integral part of the Kuwaiti collective history regarding television (Al-Ayyaf, 2012; Al-Hamdan, 2008; Al-Najmy, 2006; Al-Rajhi, 2011). Bader Al-Mudhaf (2015) exemplified the Kuwaiti television canon through programs like Darb Al-Zalag, Al-Aswar, To Mom and Dad with Love, and The Crooked Pot. Throughout its output, Kuwaiti television opted to emphasize particular points of its local heritage. This included attempts at writing biopics on either local historical
figures like Abdulla Al-Fudhala (Al-Baba, 1983; Al-Shimmary, 2010) or more regional historical figures like Juha Nesreddin (Ismael, 1979).

Regarding its non-fictional output, Kuwait television has succeeded in covering many of the century’s milestone events throughout its historical context. In 1981, the Undersecretary of the Ministry, Nasser Al-Muhammad, claimed Kuwait to be the first television station in the Middle East to broadcast the recorded footage of the assassination of the Egyptian president Anwar Al-Sadat (‘Kuwait Television the first station,” 1981). In 1969, Kuwaiti television also broadcasted the live event of the moon landing via its satellite technology (See Figure 16 & 17; Al-Dawwod, 2007).

In December of 1978, Kuwait English Language Station (KTV2) was established (Dajani, 2007; Al-Yasin & Mu’awwad, 1995; MOI, 1981). With an initial broadcast of four hours a day, the second station contained a mixture of foreign and Arabic programs until focusing solely on foreign broadcasts beginning October 1, 1980 (Al-Shehab et al., 1998).

Ibrahim Beayeyz (1989) cites several scholars to emphasize the initial intellectual agenda of the second program: “On both channels, daily service begins with the National Anthem followed by a five minute reading from the Holy Kur'an. The first hour of daily service on both channels is always devoted to cartoons and other children's programs” (p.167).

In 1980, Kuwait was preparing to host the Gulf Television Production Festival, which would be held from January 26-31 (Zain, 1980). However, after the third festival in 1984, the pressure of the rising religious lobby at the time succeeded in banning the hosting of any more festivals through a parliamentary decision (Beayeyz, 1989). The festival caused a certain stir amongst many parliament members who considered it a form of depravity and criticized the holding of the event (Salama, 1984).
Television and the state. Television in particularly lends itself to the national scope because it underlined the notion of the unseen, aggregate, national audience that was initially created by radio (Curtin, 2000). It could be assumed then that Kuwait television—relatively speaking—follows the usual moralistic, didactic and nationalistic agenda of the state. This tendency has been noticed with several other Arab states (Chatham House, 2012; Kononova & Al-Habash, 2012; Kraidy & Khalil, 2009; Wheeler, 2000). Media scholars believe that Arab medias are “dependent, fragmented e.g., serving literate elites or urban populations, having low credibility rates, especially due to the importance of oral communication” (Kononova & Al-Habash, 2012, p.3). Deborah Wheeler (2000), who has written on Kuwait extensively, feels that “all media texts contribute socially and culturally to the country’s development and reflect Kuwaiti culture and civilization” (p.433).

Kuwait is no exception. According to the governmental viewpoint, television could be utilized as an educational tool for the citizens (Chatham House, 2012). This, however, also means that the television narrative is positively correlated with the tendency of the state. The teleological didactic tendency is emphasized through the ministerial decision 536/1992, as it highlights these very attitudes of viewing television as a tool for “subjective” moralistic betterment (MOI, 1992; Appendix A).

Yet, compared to other Arab televisions, it is somewhat leaner as it follows a halfway political setting between a passive loyalist system and a revolutionary mobilized system (Abdul Hai, 2012). In the 1990s, Kuwait performed relatively well in the media transition model amongst 17 countries, considering variables like restructurings, coexistence with private networks, and program offerings (Ayish, 1997).

Nevertheless, and up until the establishment of Al-Rai television station in 2003, Kuwait
television remained the only local television station, and is still government run (Khalaf & Luciani, 2006). In fact, governmental sponsorship has sustained the Kuwaiti television service to a point where it did not resort to advertising profit until 1969 (Abu-Shanab, 1987). When advertising was allowed into local television, it brought in 225,458 K.D ($631,282) in revenue during the financial year of 1970-1971 (Al-Furaih, 1999). In 1969, the maximum cost of a 120-second-long advertisement was 150 K.D (MOI, 1969). In his volume, *Arab Mass Media*, William Rugh (2004) explains that the high cost of establishing a television industry, coupled with television’s influential reach, triggered most of the Arab states to adopt it as a governmental venture.

Discussing television institutions in the Arabian Gulf, mass communication scholar Hamza Bait-Almal (1986) observed: “Television in this region is definitely a political institution. It is owned and run by the governments of the countries in the region. Television stations are guarded by armed soldiers, and entry to the stations is highly controlled” (p.110). Obviously, the adoption of such technology is heavily related to the political environment of the state in question. For instance, it is assumed that the adoption of Saudi Arabia and Iraq to the SECAM rather than the PAL system was in support of France’s position towards the Middle East at the time (Al-Usmani, 1984).
Figure 16. A 16mm telecinema machine (Al-Dawood, 2007, p. 281)

Figure 17. The operation at Kuwaiti television (Al-Dawood, 2007, p. 281)
Kuwaiti television in later periods. The flow of television programs took a step back during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which destabilized and rebranded the local station as a tool for Ba’th party propaganda (Al-Surayyi’, 2008). An estimated value of the destruction inflicted on the television station reached $150 million, with Iraqi forces removing “everything from state-of-the-art tape recorders, sound trucks, and camera equipment to lightbulbs and tapes commemorating the station's anniversary. Tapes of Sesame Street, translated into Arabic, were also removed” (Lorch, 1991).

In 2009, Kuwait received a truckload of 20,000 C-band tapes from the Iraqi authority, constituting the first consignment of about 250,000 lost or stolen tapes (Nasser, 2009). Kuwaiti television eventually resumed operation in September 1991 (Wentz, 1991). New York Times journalist Donatella Lorch (1991), comments that the two television stations were mere ghosts of what they previously were (See Figure 18; Lorch, 1991).

On July 4, 1992, the Kuwaiti Satellite Station initiated its experimental broadcasting of five hours a day (Mu’awwad, 1994; Mu’awwad & Muhammed, 2000). The Fourth Kuwaiti television station, also known as the midnight station, was added to the broadcast bouquet in 1993 (Al-Failakawi, 1999). According to Dajani (2007), as of 2010, Kuwait has sustained thirteen television stations, public and private, with more coming into existence today.

42 In July of 2012, Kuwait radio stated—through the official Kuwaiti News Agency KUNA—that it has received twenty-seven boxes of broadcasting tapes from Iraq, constituting the second consignment of its stolen archive, previously labeled “missing” during the Gulf War of 1990 (“Kuwait’s Broadcast Receives,” 2012). According to KUNA, these tapes represented the fourth category of missing documents, including documents relevant to the Central Bank of Kuwait, documents relevant to the official Kuwaiti newspaper Kuwait Today, and the archive of Al-Anba’ Newspaper.
Progressing further into the decade, however, it could be assumed today that Kuwaiti viewers look at Kuwait television rather unfavorably, especially considering the abundance of satellite stations available (Wheeler, 2000). Local director Faisal Al-Misfir broke the narrative of Kuwait television into the establishing phase, the peak phase of the 1970s and 1980s, and the deterioration phase of the 1990s, which is generalizable to most of the Kuwaiti sectors (Al-Yahya, 2012). Of that, scholar Siham Al-Furaih (1999) commented that Kuwaiti media made the mistake of updating itself technologically but not professionally, resulting in a mere superficial development in the field, but without its substantial counterpart.

By the end of the 1990s, Kuwait Television consisted of the primary station (1961), of which 25% was locally produced, the second “English” station (1979), the third “sport” station (1991), the fourth “midnight” station (1993), and the Kuwaiti satellite station (1992), which connected to the Arabic satellite service ARABSAT (Al-Dawood, 2007; Al-Failakawi, 1999).

To conclude, Kuwait Television, which started as a local private initiative, has maintained precedence across the Gulf area during the 1960s, despite its current reputation of insufficiency. Through a mixture of local effort and foreign expertise, the station managed to
ensure a historical character as the most culturally and creatively advanced station in the Gulf between the 1960s and the 1980s. Those three decades also witnessed dramatic growth, both content and technology-related. However, it remains attached to the state, and therefore subjected to its ideological preferences.

**Research Questions**

Until this point, the two chapters have progressed logically through all of the preliminary phases of the research. This has included the search for a proper theoretical body amongst the variations of alternative/bottom-up history, and the coinage and definition of the term “integration history”. So far, this study has stated the main research problem by evaluating the scholarly output of television studies in both the Western academy and the Arab world. Through its literature review, this study also drew examples of the different ways in which television can be integrated by the local culture from different societies, assisting in the composition of the research themes in this study. Successively, the literature review also offered a historical brief on Kuwaiti society and the progression of its television.

As mentioned previously, the goal of this research is to compile an integration history of television in Kuwait, through a bottom-up, cultural driven narrative, as told by the people who witnessed it. It aims to focus more on the reception than on the production aspect of television. The narrations of the 25 storytellers should coincide with the patterns and observations discussed in the literature review, each pattern representing a different component of the integration process of television into culture. The research areas therefore, should discuss the succession of television to cinema, the novelty period of television, the socioeconomic conditions of television ownership, the domestication of the device, television’s interaction with civic modernity,
television’s content, and its recipients. Based on all the previous contemplations, the research questions were formulated as follows:

**RQ 1:** Upon its introduction to society, how did television succeed or follow up to cinema going as a social practice?

**RQ 2:** How was the novelty period of television (roughly the first five to ten years) characterized in the collective memory of Kuwaiti society?

**RQ 3:** During the familiarization period of the device, did social conditions exist for television ownership? What were they?

**RQ 4:** Considering the primal yet drastically evolving nature of the Kuwaiti living space, how was television as a device domesticated in the city? What was the nature of its existence within the Kuwaiti home?

**RQ 5:** Considering the foreshortened and drastic mode in which Kuwait entered the modern era after the 1950s, how did television interact with aspects of modernity at that time?

**RQ 7:** How do the programs and figures of television at the time reside in the collective memory of Kuwaitis? How did they affect, or were they affected by, the sociocultural context of that time period?

Guided by the methodological structure, each research question would result in several more detailed sections. This denotes a departure from the theoretical and literary portion of this study and into the method section, which is the main concern for the following chapter. In the third chapter, a detailed description of the research method will be presented, in which the research will discuss the employment of data collecting techniques, sampling techniques, and analysis techniques.
Chapter 3: Method

Considering the previously discussed lack of qualitative data that deals with the audience of Kuwait Television, the researcher decided to generate data from scratch through the personal histories and oral accounts of different individuals who have lived through the cultural integration of Kuwaiti television. To attain a general sense of social generalizability amongst the participating narrators, the research aimed to collect stories from narrators who come from all the six Kuwaiti geographical districts: Al-Asimah, Al-Ahmadi, Al-Farwaniyya, Hawalli, Al-Jahra, and Mubarak Al-Kabir. To achieve this level of geographical diversity, the participants were pursued through students of Kuwait University, who in turn collectively nominated 25 individuals from their social circles who fell into the required age frame (50+). This technique was devised due to the high level of diversity within the student population of Kuwait University, containing Bedouins, Hadharis, and other Kuwaitis, which should hopefully reflect itself on the participant sample.

Based on the oral histories of the interviewees, each research question ended up encompassing several components of its respective research area. For instance, the narrators’ stories regarding the novelty period of television resulted in categories involving the myth associated with early television, as well as the early models and early purchases. When discussing television content, another research area, the narrators’ stories were organically sorted into discussions of Western programs, the Kuwaiti television canon, and the artistic intertextuality of Kuwaiti television that mixed theater, song, and storytelling.
Additionally, the method chapter will attempt to rationalize its decision to employ oral storytelling as the primary method for composing this integration history of television in Kuwait.

It will also discuss the principles of sampling, including the time period chosen, the age-frame depicted, and other marginal qualitative variables considered in this study, like gender, ethnicity, and economic status. The method section will also discuss the environment in which the sampling took place, clarifying why Kuwaiti University students were used as gateways to their elderly relations. Furthermore, the method chapter will also deliberate on the interviewing and recording techniques for this research. For example, considering how the interviewing process was somewhat inspired by principles of Grounded Theory or GT, there will be a short briefing on the basic elements of that theory.

Finally, this chapter also presents the analysis technique that will be employed to explore the resulting oral histories. The method chapter will conclude with a statistical brief on the resulting data, which breaks the narrators’ samples down into different clusters based on their demographic attributes. This brief will act as a lone quantitative perspective of the data in this otherwise historical qualitative inspection.

As previously mentioned, an aspect that requires attention is the data collecting strategy of oral storytelling. Before discussing oral history, it is important to remember that the discipline of oral history is employed in this research mainly as a methodological vehicle. It is for this particular reason that it was not placed within the disciplinary variations of alternative history discussed in the theory section. The next section therefore, discusses the features and characteristics, as well as the shortcomings, of oral history in research. By way of comparison, it shall assist in understanding how to perform oral history in the best way possible to collect cultural data on the historical integration of Kuwaiti television.
On Using Oral History as a Method

Oral history remains a rich, generally unexplored method that has functioned impeccably throughout many excellent examples of social and cultural research. Examples of such work range from Williams and Cregeen’s work on rural communities, to Jerry White’s examination of urban communities (Thompson, 1978).

Historian Valerie Yow (2005) defines oral history as “the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form” (p.3). On that note, Alessandro Portelli (1981) stated: “Oral sources therefore are a necessary (if not sufficient) condition for a history of the non-hegemonic classes” (p.104). This statements underlines the attachment between oral history with “left history,” “history from below,” and “the history of the inarticulate” (Bhattacharya, 1983; Crew, 1989; Hunt, 1986; Lynd, 1993). Underlining the contribution of the oral history method to the histories of local communities, historian Raphael Samuel (1976) states:

There are matters of fact which are recorded in the memories of older people and nowhere else, events of the past which they alone can elucidate for us, vanished sights which they alone can recall. Documents can't answer back, nor, beyond a point, can they be asked to explain in greater detail what they mean (p.199).

The method of oral history therefore, is believed to be beneficial in widening the vision of the historian, uncovering emotional and familial history, and offering the individual testimony of the workingman (Conze & Wright, 1967; Samuel, 1976; Thompson, 1978).43

---

43 Historians Kim Howells & Merfyn Jones (1983), who examine the Welsh farmers’ protest of 1974, comment on this practice and its features. Throughout its methodological substance, oral history also gave way for the new historical practices of “contemporary history” or “action history,” in which the event is taking place and documented presently (Howells & Jones, 1983).
Paul Thompson (1978) argued that the mere member of the public has always suffered from being regarded only as part of a statistical datum. Oral history distinguishes itself from other historical methods in the sense that it attempts to understand the meaning between historical narratives, between past and present, and between interviewer and the interviewee (Portelli, 2009).

Attached almost exclusively to the memoirs of the elites until the mid 19th century, oral history achieved an organized academic model around the 1940s in Columbia University, and was advocated by British institutions during the late 1960s and mid 1970s (Bornat, 1989). While not all oral history is performed from below, but when it is it highlights the collective community’s experience perfectly (Lynd, 1993).44

One of the most credited examples in the field is Alessandro Portelli’s (2003) The Order Has Been Caried Out. Merging oral recollections with ethnographical documents (newspapers, commission statements, etc.), Portelli brought the Fosse Ardeatine Massacre of 1944 back to life using the direct experiences of many who have interacted with the massacre, including grieving mothers, wives, and harassed youths. What’s interesting about Portelli’s book is the fact that it operated on several temporal and spatial axes. For example, Portelli went so far as to set the scene in 19th century Rome via the stories of the children and grandchildren of the first generation of migrants to the city.45

---

44 Renowned historian Alessandro Portelli (1981) defended oral history against claims of inferiority in comparison with the written word, despite the fact that they both obtain similar temporal and spatial distances from the event discussed. The written word, Portelli claimed, has been academically cultivated as credible by default, which is a misconception.

45 Many of the narrators recall their events based on the houses they have lived in or the neighborhoods they have occupied. For example, the narrators of Portelli’s book nostalgically invoke different locations across the city, categorizing them as significations of class (like the Borgatas), as religious significations (the Jewish Ghettoes), or as components of national history (the historical area of Trastevere). Certain portions of the book are also devoted to the
Portelli’s spatial mapping of stories and memories significantly inspired this research, particularly in later chapters. Throughout the interviews, many of the participants associate their memories with particular areas of Kuwait City. For example, since television’s arrival to the city coincided with a massive wave of urban migration into the outer areas of Kuwait, then the participants’ stories will be threaded—as linearly as possible—through a spatial as well as a temporal dimension.

Another approach that is quite beneficial to this study can be extracted from Studs Terkel’s *Hard Times* (1970). Through his collection of personal reflections from laborers, alcohol smugglers, farmers, miners, journalists, and second-generation immigrants, Terkel presents a series of discrete narratives relevant to the great depression. This research will attempt to reproduce the heightened sense of individualism offered for each narrative in Terkel’s work, where memories are displayed in their most minute details.

Narrowing the method further into the area of television, many scholars are still advocating for further usage of the oral storytelling approach in television history, instead of viewing it as an exclusively “folklorist method” (Kortti & Mähönen, 2009; Sandon, 2007). Several interesting studies have been done in that particular field. Notable analyses include Emma Sandon’s (2007) examination of the BBC workers’ audio archive from 1952-1963, and Cecelia Penati’s (2012) ethnographic examination of television in Italy from 1954-1960.

Commenting on the cultural integration aspect of oral history, Penati states that oral history can offer a “bottom-up” perspective of media studies, one that will highlight how “the

---

46 Terkel’s work however, does not necessarily constitute a history of the common folk, since his sources include people who were politically and economically instrumental during the depression era, like James Farley, the previous advisor of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, or the Republican politician Alf Landon.
medium [television] was incorporated into the private sphere of the home” (p.6). Works of similar aims and perspectives have been done on other media. In his small-scale oral history of early radio recipients, Shaun Moores (1993) explains:

My purpose was to draw on the many recollections which they had of broadcasting’s initial arrival in everyday life—and, through an analysis of these memories, to piece together a cultural history of early radio ‘from the listener’s point of view’ (p.76).

Two very good examples of oral history usage in television studies are by Peter Podber (2007) and Roger Barfield (2008), both published very recently. Peter Podber’s *The Electronic Front Porch* examines the arrival of television in the overlooked area of Appalachia, which involved interviewing members of the community in a snowball manner, from farmers to barbers, in groups and individually. Podber performed group interviews assisted by a method known as the “circle of stories method,” which symbolically channeled the four stages of research: storytelling (data collection), observing the context (contextualizing), remembering the story (recollecting and comparing stories), and sharing the story.

With Barfield’s (2008) *A Word from Our Viewers*, there is more emphasis on the people. Barfield uses personal recollections—although not with the density of Terkel—to examine the early experiences of television’s recipients in America. He sheds light on many socioeconomic cultural episodes, like the restructuring of meal times after Swanson invented the TV dinner (2008). Since Barfield depends on written recollections rather than oral narrations, it is not necessarily classified as oral history, but has still achieved the required common-man theme just the same. Other examples include Gauntlett & Hill’s (2002) exceptionally thorough analyses of

---

47 All this shows is that even the nature of audience studies has changed a great deal from limited quantitative approaches. An example of the earlier model would be the work of Robert Bower (1985) in the mid 1980s, where variables like gender, age, education, and habitat are quantified and compared with earlier data in order to assess the public reception of television.
the diaries of around 470 television viewers (3 million words or so) from 1991-1996. This is not to indicate that oral history as a method does not carry its own challenges. Initially, it could be said that oral history has inherited the academic anxieties of the qualitative discipline, especially with quantitative campaigners; these include the researcher’s potential influence on the setting, informant’s bias, and subjectivity issues (Kirby, 2008; Yow, 2005). Another concern is the need to balance the historian’s own social cause and the need to objectively analyze the subject in question (Armitage & Gluck, 1998).

These concerns may very well be responsible as to why oral history is more accepted in libraries and archives than it is in academic circles (Grele, 1998). Because the usage of oral history in this research is more methodological than it is theoretical, many of these insecurities will be examined in the final chapter. This segues into another section, in which the research departs away from academic contemplations and into the technical details of the methodology, in particular, the sampling process.

**Sampling**

As previously explained, the 25 narrators were selected from the six geographical districts of the city to ensure a degree of qualitative diversity. This section in turn will offer further details of the sampling model that was adopted for this research, including its time period, its selection mechanism, and its qualitative variables.

**Sampling time period.** The time period chosen for the research will be from the documented date of the first broadcast in 1957 (back when television was private) up until the Gulf War of 1990. This is mainly because there seems to be a general agreement amongst the academy and the press alike that the First Gulf War was a criterion for Kuwaiti society. For instance, scholars have contemplated its traumatizing effects on Kuwaiti children (Abdul Khalek,
1997), or the abuse suffered by local women at the time (Ibrahim, 1992). Scholars have also commented on the traditional conservative model of Kuwaiti society that was altered after the Gulf War (Tétreault, 1993). Additionally, the post-1990 period witnessed intensified tensions between the religious Sunni and the Shiite sects (Ghabra, 1997), and introduced new regulations regarding employment (Tétreault & Al-Mughni, 1995). The time period chosen also relates more particularly to the subject of television, considering that the early 1990s were a time when the Kuwaiti youth gradually started abandoning local television in favor of satellite TV (Mu’awwad, 1994).

Considering the destruction that occurred to the television facilities in 1990, it is possible that the nature of television content was also altered in the subsequent era. Some argue for instance that the post-war identity of Kuwaiti TV was affected by the continuous fusion of actors from the Gulf (like Oman and Bahrain), causing a general morphing of the accent (Abu-Lafi, 2012; Al-Suwaidan, 2009; Al-Wazzan, 2011). With all these qualitative factors taken into consideration, limiting the time period of the study from 1957 to 1990 appears adequate in relation to the goals of this research.

**Sampling age frame.** Since this process involved interviewing several individuals regarding their television related memories, it would obviously require drawing a frame around the minimum age group allowed in the data pool. There is something to be said about how certain ages correlate with autobiographical recollection. Although a direct prediction factor between age and recollection quality is dismissed, Jacqueline Baron and Susan Bluck (2008)
demonstrate how elderly storytellers seem less attentive to detail and coherency than younger storytellers.  

If one is to say, for the sake of argument, that the general minimum age for a credible memory is 5 years old, then, demographically speaking, only those who are 62 years of age or older (as of 2014) might remember the actual arrival of television into the country. This is considering that television came to Kuwait roughly in 1957. All the other, younger age groups should naturally be more or less familiar with television growing up, but could not have witnessed its arrival. This is similar to the difference between the United States’ 1930s generation (the WWII generation) and the younger, more television-familiar audience (Barfield, 2008; Gauntlett & Hill, 2002; Holdsworth, 2011). The younger interviewees, however, remain significantly valuable in terms of integration, resistance, and interaction with television for the next 33 years.

Finally, it is important to remember that the age gap is not the only vital gap amongst interviewees in that situation. It is also important to remember that, due to the economical gap amongst the public, it was estimated that television entered different houses at different time periods.

Based on the previous observations, the minimum age group chosen for this sample was set at 50 years old, referring to those born in 1964 or before. Originally, and until the first set of participants were interviewed, the minimum age set for the study was 40 years old. However, as the interviews progressed, and as the details of different stories were compared, it was found that the age of 50 was quite sufficient for a minimum age. This decision was taken since the research

48 However, Baron and Bluck (2008) performed an ANOVA analysis on a group of 129 participants (ages 19 to 86), and dismissed any direct prediction of variables like age and gender on the global quality of autobiographical stories being recalled.
does not only intend to indicate the interviewee’s reaction towards television, but rather their process of growth and familiarization with the medium, which is the main ingredient in the integration process of the device. Therefore, it is doubtable that very substantial instances of integration will be witnessed with those younger than 50 dealing with television from 1964 to 1990. Indeed, closing at the age of 50 constitutes an entire generation of television recipients in Kuwait since 1957. In other words, if the research were to start at 1964 and go backward to those who were born in the mid thirties (probably the oldest to aim for), then it would have defined what could arguably be labeled the first television generation. This makes this research dedicated to the first television generation or older, which offers more clarity to its aim.

**Qualitative sampling variables.** Despite this study being qualitative in nature, two important variables (within the age range decided) need to be fulfilled to achieve relative representativeness in the selection/sampling process. The first is gender, and the second is ethnicity. Other marginal variables, like economic statuses, will be partially considered as well. It is important to specify that, while these variables will come into play during the sampling of participants, they will not be discussed as variables in the actual analysis, nor will the stories be classified based on their relationships to these variables. The term variable here is used in a purely generic sense.

**A. Gender.** Throughout the previous literature review, instances of the relation between television in Kuwait and the feminist movement were discussed and compared with similar instances in other societies. Additionally, details of the Kuwaiti feminist movement and its interaction with modernity were also discussed. These include the feminist movement of the 1960s and the entrance of women into the work force after the late 1960s (Tétreault, 1993; Tétreault, 1995). Reflecting on the work of Yousef Al-Qina’ie (1988), many women in the
earlier part of the century were further removed from modernity than men were, due to the very conservative nature of society. Thus, famous oral tales of women covering their faces from the television screen illuminate the differences of television perception between the genders, and the need for this research to consider it.

An important fact that one needs to take note of, however, is the predicted difficulty of reaching female interviewees and talking to them about their personal memories. This is specifically foreseen with female interviewees of old age, and female interviewees of the Bedouin community. The conservative nature of the community therefore, requires a contingency plan of some sort.

**B. Ethnici**. Scholarly work indicates that one of the prominent variables that responded to the post-oil boom of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s was the diversification of the Kuwaiti populace. While coming into modernity, Kuwaiti society had witnessed the late urbanization of the Bedouins, and the ideological variations between the Sunni, the Shiite, and the liberals, as discussed in the literature review (Ghabra, 1997; Tètreault, 1993). Therefore, it is imperative that ethnicity should come into consideration during the selection of participants. As previously described, one of the aims of this alternative historical narrative is to include voices usually alienated from participating in the historical commentary. In other words, this research intends to gather recollections and oral accounts from most of the components of Kuwaiti society. It will offer a chance for all local ethnicities to contribute in creating this historical database, which was usually limited to the elites.

It is left to say that, due to cultural sensitivities, questions of ethnicity will not be present in the screening forms, but will be considered nonetheless. With an intimate society like Kuwait, ethnic roots are fairly easy to detect through the name and the conversation style of the
participants. There is no reason to believe that participants will shy away from discussing their ethnicity. However, the researcher will not apply any pressure if he senses any reticence in that regard. Therefore, gender and ethnicity will be two values considered in the selection and analysis of these oral histories, and in extension of the wider integration history of television.

Finally, it should be noted that unlike gender and ethnicity, the geographical district of the participant is not a variable. This is for the simple reason that back when television was introduced in Kuwaiti society, these districts simply did not exist.

**Sampling environment.** The choice of sampling environment was guided mainly by the previously discussed variables. What was needed was a sampling environment that would allow fair distribution through gender, ethnicity, and—to a lesser extent—income.49 Because this research does not seek quantitative representativeness but rather a variety of viewpoints, the sampling environment of choice would include all six districts of Kuwait: Al-Asimah, Hawalli, Al-Ahmadi, Mubarak Al-Kabir, Al-Jahra, and Al-Farwaniyya (see Table 3). Using the Kuwaiti districts enabled the researcher to tend to the consideration of income and ethnicity, since many Kuwaiti neighborhoods appeared to be self-segregated to an extent (Têtreault & Al-Mughni, 1995). In their essay, “Modernization and its Discontents: States and Gender in Kuwait,” Mary Ann Têtreault and Haya Al-Mughni (1995) elaborate:

The new neighborhoods introduced new boundaries based on nationality, age cohort, and family status. Some featured rental housing for expatriate workers where, in the early era of modernization, people congregated by country of origin. Hawalli, for example, was the neighborhood where many Palestinians living in Kuwait resided. A few neighborhoods,

49 It is important to state that this study does not intend to establish an accurate numerical representation of the Kuwaiti public, but to examine as many points of view as possible. This is understandable due to the fact that this study seems to pioneer the field of integration television history. Therefore, it only attempts to comb the field. Additional attempts will be left for future research.
like Shuwaykh, are areas where merchant families have built new homes […] Shi‘i Kuwaitis live in large numbers in Sharq, an old city neighborhood, and in the new suburb of Rumaythiya. Bedouin families are concentrated outside the center city, in Jahra, around the oil town of Ahmadi, and along the south coast. Government housing programs channel families into neighborhoods based on the age of the head of household or his occupation. Thus, there are ‘yuppie’ suburbs, like Mishrif, and ‘company towns,’ like Ahmadi (p. 412-413).

The districts are substantially different. In 2005 for instance, approximately only 5% of Al-Jahra district residents possessed university degrees, the least out of all six districts (CSB, 2005). It is important to know that the age group concerning this research is relatively low in comparison with other age groups, since the 2013 census shows that those who are in the 50+ age range only compose 12% of the entire population. This in turn is bound to reflect across the five geographical districts (see Table 4).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Asima</th>
<th>Hawalli</th>
<th>Ahmadi</th>
<th>Jahra</th>
<th>Farwaniya</th>
<th>M.K</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>113,274</td>
<td>105,028</td>
<td>130,032</td>
<td>81,809</td>
<td>109,750</td>
<td>70,530</td>
<td>610,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>119,453</td>
<td>107,997</td>
<td>132,137</td>
<td>85,595</td>
<td>114,785</td>
<td>71,844</td>
<td>631,811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Schedule compiled by researcher through the database of PACI (2013a). The population count includes Kuwaitis only, and is valid for the year 2013.
Table 4

The demographics of the Kuwaiti over-50s, by age sub-group and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>20,547 (14%)</td>
<td>24,834 (17%)</td>
<td>45,381 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>15,156 (10%)</td>
<td>20,236 (14%)</td>
<td>35,392 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>10,030 (7%)</td>
<td>14,298 (9.5%)</td>
<td>24,328 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>7,049 (5%)</td>
<td>10,480 (7%)</td>
<td>17,529 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>5,464 (4%)</td>
<td>6,850 (4.5%)</td>
<td>12,314 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>3,780 (2.5%)</td>
<td>4,235 (3%)</td>
<td>8,015 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>1,747 (1%)</td>
<td>2,000 (1%)</td>
<td>3,747 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84+</td>
<td>1,129 (0.7%)</td>
<td>1,299 (0.8%)</td>
<td>2,428 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>149,134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The following data is calculated from PACI. (2013b).

Sampling gateway. To reach the required applicants, Kuwait University was used as the main data-sampling gateway for the six Kuwaiti districts. The planned sampling strategy involved using the students to gain accessibility to 25 Kuwaitis from the earlier television generation (parents and relatives). The students therefore, would provide them with “demographic screening forms” provided to them by the researcher, which the potential participants would fill out to provide information on their age, their current habitat, their previous habitat, and their names as they wished for them to be printed in the research.

Kuwait University was established in 1966, starting with the previously combined “College of Arts and Science.” (Kuwait University [KU], 2013). As of 2014, KU held 36,970 enrollments that broke down as follows (See Table 5).
Table 5

Student populations and demographics in Kuwait University, by College and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>1,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>1,404</td>
<td>2,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>2,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>3,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist. Medicine</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>4,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shari’a</td>
<td>1,853</td>
<td>1,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>2,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacology</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>1,146</td>
<td>2,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ College</td>
<td>Non applicable</td>
<td>768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center of Medical Science</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9,344</td>
<td>22,991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This shows the provisional amount of diversity that the university enjoys in ethnicity, gender and sects. Since the aim was to locate a variety of interviewees from all six districts, representativeness within the university itself was not necessary. Therefore, and to economize on time, the sampling call was limited to the College of Arts. Once the interviewees from all six
districts were acquired, the research saw little need to resort to other schools. It was expected that the College of the Arts, particularly the Department of Mass Communication, would display more cooperation due to their association with the research topic.

**Procedures and Timeline**

Taking into account the various techniques of random and non-random sampling available between quantitative and qualitative research, the research’s sampling strategy could be considered a fusion of many procedures from the field of sampling (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The sample of narrators principally combines elements from the qualified volunteer sample, the disproportionate stratified sample, and partially—due to its dependency on the Kuwaiti districts—the cluster sample (Ahmed, 2009). Alternatively, the sampling process in this research is also close to the stratified purposeful sample, in the sense that the recruitment has been accomplished before the beginning of the research process, which allows for the rationalization and testing of previous speculations on the phenomenon (Emmel 2013).

It is important to note that although the following procedures were not representative proportionally of the actual gender and ethnicity rates for Kuwaitis in each district, they would still ensure a variety of responses. The initial plan was to select 25 participants based on the nominations of their student relations, with specific consideration to the variables discussed earlier. Despite the fact that the turnout was somewhat different, the ideal turnout should have been similar to the following:

- The 25 applicants would have been broken into four applicants per district, with one narrator to be sorted amongst the districts (possibly to balance the numbers).
- Out of the four interviewees chosen from each district, two would have been female.
To ensure variety in the age groups, the final selection sample would have ensured coverage of all five age groups, including 50–60, 61–70, 71–80, 81+

The ideal model also included a “replacement group,” consisting of subjects to be chosen in case of dropouts.

After the researcher relocated to Kuwait City, procedures were set in motion to obtain the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Virginia Commonwealth university, Richmond, VA, in order to regulate and supervise the interaction with the human subjects of this research. The researcher also sought to acquire the approval of departmental heads and faculty members of KU. The IRB approval was granted on September 5, 2014 (Appendix B). Within the same week, the researcher approached Kuwait University to seek the permission of certain faculty members and gain access to their lectures in order to address their students (Appendix C).

The researcher was graciously assisted by fourteen faculty members, nine of whom were from the department of Mass Communication, three from the department of Philosophy, one from the department of History, and one from the School of Education (Appendix D1 & D2). The faculty members and schools were chosen within the “non-probability random” sampling model, since their academic fields do not impact the ultimate sample in any way. Regardless of the school chosen, the goal was to reach students (and in extension participants) who would qualitatively represent the six geographical districts of Kuwait. The faculty members were chosen mainly through academic association with the researcher.

The usual routine was for the researcher to gain access to the lecture, and, in five to ten minutes’ time, briefly explain the research and its motives to the students. He then would ask the students if they were willing to assist in the research, and if they could nominate anybody from their social circle (first-degree relative, second-degree relative, or friend; Appendix E1 & E2).
Based on a show of hands, the researcher would hand out demographic forms that would inquire about the age, name, and habitat of each potential participant, with particular emphasis that the participants should fill them out themselves. Exceptions were granted for participants who could not read or write, or were too frail to complete the surveys on their own (Appendix F1 & F2). The researcher then required that the students collect these forms from their nominees and hand them back to their respective instructor within a week’s time. The researcher would then collect the papers from the instructors and initiate the calling process.

Due to the segregations of classes at KU, the researcher attended classes of both male and female student populations. The population of classes ranged from five students to over 100. The level of interaction and responsiveness received was relative. In some classes, the researcher was handed only one survey back, in others, up to 25 were collected.

Since all the researcher’s details were documented on each paper, some students were enthusiastic enough to call back on the same day, having secured permission from their elders to be interviewed. With most surveys, however, the return time average was approximately two weeks. By the end, over 200 papers were handed out, while only 55 papers were received, making the response rate lower that 25%. It is important to stress, however, that the response rate of the returns was immaterial at this point, since the researcher had achieved his goal of collecting potential participants from all of the six districts.

Since the screening forms were handed back gradually, the researcher was obliged to start the communication process upon the arrival of the first batch, rather than wait until the return of all the distributed forms. Upon receiving the first batch of forms, the researcher started making calls and checking the willingness of the potential participants, as well as rechecking the
variables in the demographic forms. Gradually, and throughout the interview period, the list of 25 narrators was composed, with 30 more categorized as “back-up” or “discarded” responses.\(^{50}\)

Upon calling, some potential participants seemed reluctant, and were therefore dropped out of the sample, because it also indicated that they didn’t fill out the demographic screening forms themselves. Others were open to the prospect and were scheduled in for an interview. The researcher also came across entries that had to be canceled due to pressing circumstances on both the researcher’s and the participants’ side.

**Interviewing, Recording and Transcription**

Most of the interviews were conducted in the living quarters of the participants, usually on their own terms and conditions. In the usual situation, the meeting would take place in the participant’s household. Six other participants were met in their work places or frequent whereabouts. Typically, the researcher would contact either the student proxy or the participant to confirm the time after the initial call. Then, following a negotiation to the convenience of both parties, the researcher would be provided with (or suggest) a meeting point, a date, and a specific time. While some participants provided an accurate time (8:30, 9:00, etc.), others followed the traditional custom of agreeing to meet “after dusk prayer” or “after evening prayer.” The data-gathering period took over two months, as the first interview was conducted on September 30, 2015, and the last one was conducted on December 9, 2015. On average (with some distinct ranges) an interview would run for an approximate of 25 minutes.

\(^{50}\) The initial plan was to interview 30 participants to ensure a fair degree of “qualitative” representativeness. However, it was found that, after 25 interviews, a phenomenon similar to “thematic saturation” had been achieved, in the sense that stories, people, and information started becoming redundant. Some of the questions that were brought up later into the interview didn’t generate sufficient new narratives, and henceforth were dropped again. It is for these reasons that the researcher felt content with 25 interviewers.
In a typical situation, the researcher would arrive at the required time, and would be met and greeted by the participant. On a few occasions, the participant was accompanied by their student proxy, who sometimes also did the initial greetings. The meeting would usually take place in the diwaniyya, an independent room in the house usually secured with its own entrance, with the main function of receiving guests and conducting events of public nature. Most times, the researcher would arrive to an assortment of pastry, tea, and beverages. Despite concerns of objectivity, common courtesy and community traditions made it culturally unacceptable to refuse partaking. In fact, one particular participant offered the researcher a fully prepared meal as well as the usual complementary items, possibly due to the overly hospitable Bedouin rituals.

The researcher would sit with the participant and discuss the main themes of the project, sometimes after a friendly chat. The researcher would then go across the demographic form of the participant—previously obtained—and ask whether they had filled it out themselves for validity assurance. Afterwards, the researcher would then go through the contents of the “form of agreement/consent,” in which the researcher explained certain academic and institutional aspects of the research to the participant, like copyright and future use of data (Appendix G1 & G2). The participant was then informed of the recording and documentation mechanism, the optional photography, and the Internet archiving potential. More importantly, the participants were also informed clearly of the copyright related relinquishment from the participant’s part in favor of the researcher (Appendix H). The researcher would then switch the recording device on, and commence the interview with a collection of metadata regarding the location and the time/date of the interview. Before the first question is asked, the researcher would record an oral agreement from the participant regarding the content of the previously read form.
Recording was done with a digital voice recorder (ICD-UX533F), and was limited to audio only. The interview was sometimes accompanied with sporadic notes taken during the actual interview, but with enough care not to distract the researcher and the interviewee from the main interaction. The audio was later transcribed into Arabic and printed in hard copy format with numbered pages for indexing purposes. As the patterns of the narratives crystalized further, later interviewees were asked slightly different and additional questions. Loose categories were then created with a specific index from certain pages of each interview to match each category. (For example: Nasser Bu Kubar/page 3, on nostalgic television content). To economize on the research’s time schedule, the actual transcription was done in Arabic, translating only the required quotes into the English language. Only on two occasions did a participant ask the researcher to temporarily turn off the recording device, as the recording usually took place from the very beginning to the very end of the session. Towards the end of one of the interviews, one participant asked for a copy of his audio recording for personal reasons, and received it.

**Interview questions.** For this particular research, the unit of analysis was the story itself. Interviews were guided by a general set of questions deduced from the research questions and areas discussed in the literature review. Therefore, each interview would commence with ten or so initial questions about television memories that generally relate to television’s succession to cinema, novelty, familiarization, domestication, interaction with modernity, and content. The questions were as follows:

**First level questions.**

- Do you remember your first television?
- What can you tell me about it?

(E.g. brand, antennas, frame, decoration, knobs, sound/picture quality)
• How did you install it?

• What had you heard of television before you saw it for the first time (rumors, myths)?

• Do you remember anything else that happened in your life during the time you received your first television? Do you remember anything else that was happening in the country at the time? (E.g. contextual parallelization with personal stories of marriage, first car, employment etc.)

• Do you remember the first house that purchased a television set in your neighborhood?

• Did you go to the cinema? What can you tell me about it?

• Where did the television go in your house? How many sets did you have? When did you get your second one? Did you get your first television set before or after you have moved house? When did you move? Tell me about it.

• Who would you say had the last say when it came to the regulation of television watching?

• Who usually watched television in the house?

• Did the women watch different things on television than men?

• Do you remember any instances of religious resistance against television from the press, your family, or your social circle?

• What do you remember watching on television? What were some of your favorite programs? What were your favorite presenters and actors on television?

• Do you remember anything about television that you didn’t like?

• Do you remember switching from black-and-white to color television?

• Can you tell me about any changes that happened in your house after the television came?
• What were the changes that have occurred on television programs or the technology itself over the years?

After the first five interviews, some questions were canceled and others were composed based on previous answers. For instance, questions about the shape and model of the device were dropped because they had reached saturation level, and because most of the answers were similar. A similar treatment was also taken with questions concerning religious resistance and questions of parental control. Some new questions, including questions about television and the Arab war, provided interesting but few responses, and therefore were dropped in the third collection of interviews.

With that in mind, the first set of questions was assembled and constructed based on the literature review. While the oral histories were being collected, the questions progressed further as guided by patterns picked up in the first five to ten interviews. These initial interviews therefore, shaped the interview questions for later interviews, and thus narrowed them down to specific areas that assisted the analysis process and broke each research area into more detailed points.

**Second level questions.**

• What do you remember about cinemas and other preceding technologies to television?
• How did television interact with the 1967-1973 wars in the Arab region?
• How did television interact with the social practices in old Kuwait?

During the interview, measures were taken so that the questions did not imply a sense of coercion or manipulation of thought. One particular question emphasized this issue across the research and amongst several interviewees. The last question, which is worded as such: “How did television interact with the social practices in old Kuwait?” had prompt request for additional
clarification from the interviewees. In that case, then the question was rephrased as follows:

“Some said that television has negatively affected old traditional street games, causing them to disappear. Do you agree or disagree, explain how?”

In the first phrasing of the question, the researcher had attempted to avoid an emotionally charged discourse. The second version of the question, however, although clearer in tone, risks the possibility of implying the answer through its wording. In that case, the researcher would ask the participant to think about the question and that they did not necessarily have to agree with the statement. Upon reflection, the researcher is satisfied with the level of scrutiny applied to the questions. On more than one occasion, the researcher even received responses that countered that statement, which indicated that the interviewees were not necessarily manipulated by the question (Appendix I).

Finally, it is left to say that this mechanism of organic growth of the subsequent questions from the earlier questions, are particularly reminiscent of the “grounded theory technique,” which is the focus of the next section. It is important to say, however, that “grounded theory” is examined in this research merely as an occasional influence for the methodology, which hopefully justifies the somewhat brief reference of it in this research.

**Influence of grounded theory.** Looking at the questions and their progression, this very specific portion of the methodology is assisted by the principles of “grounded theory.” Without elaborating on the theory itself too much, grounded theory is a methodological strategy that generally utilizes the earlier set of data to guide the formulation of the later questions (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). The technique constitutes an organic buildup to a clear narrative that grows to the level of conceptualization and abstraction, from codes to categories, constantly compared (Birks and Mills, 2011; Montgomery & Bailey, 2007).
This means that in grounded theory, the main ideas and patterns only crystallize during the conduction of the interviews and not before. For example, one of the areas in which this research and grounded theory intersect is in the unexplored area being examined, which means that there is little need for a research hypothesis, rather than general research questions. Using grounded theory techniques to guide the interviews means that the interviewing process will start off with a flexible amount of general questions with the research areas specified, and develop further from there.

It has been contemplated that interview-based grounded theory should accompany certain “meta” side practices. A researcher is advised to take field notes and theoretical memos. While former first contextualize the interview process (location, setting, behavior), the latter offer insight into the theoretical development of the patterns in the researcher’s mind, and later on into the categories of analysis (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007).  

Using interviews for grounded theory constitute a practice of “generating data” rather than collecting data in the sense that the researcher is partially responsible for the creation of the data and controls the final shape of its output (Birks and Mills, 2011). This also draws a parallel between grounded theory and oral history. This research therefore, achieves a middle ground between “oral history” and “grounded theory.” It comes close to the technique of grounded theory in the sense that it is an exploratory research, and that it needs not concern itself with the topic of “generalization,” at least not at this early stage.

Because—similar to oral history—bias is a primary concern of this method, Barney

51 Montgomery & Bailey (2007), who were interested in the application of this to nursing research, believe that the two also offer contextual information to various degrees and assist in combatting potential bias. Montgomery & Bailey also advocate publicizing such documents in the discussion of the research, explaining that there is “relative invisibility” when it comes to such meta-notes within nursing research. However, this study in particular will not be exposing a lot of its meta-notes, despite an additional section dealing with the setting and context.
Glaser (2012) campaigns for grounded theory as a method that can keep bias to a minimum (irrelevant) standard if accompanied by rigorous comparative analysis, conceptualization, and abstraction. According to Glaser (2012), bias can be handled as a variable within the other factors of the analysis.52

Finally, it is important to remember that the grounded theory method will not be applicable to all the phases of this research, which is why its role is strictly influential. Despite it being an all-encompassing method that is usually able to function at several levels of the research including sampling and question formation, this research is only vaguely inspired by the grounded theory technique in the “interview questions” stage.

Analysis

The analysis phase of this research will occur after—and while—collecting the oral histories of participants. While the academic tradition decrees that the discussion chapter is usually the chapter in which the analysis of the data is shared, the overwhelmingly qualitative nature of the data means that the analysis will be accompanying the narrative simultaneously. For these reasons, the next chapter was labeled “Findings, Stories and Analyses,” instead of simply “Findings”, since the analysis will be paralleling the individual oral histories as they are narrated, building into more delicate themes. The discussion section, therefore, will be left to deliberate on the collective ideas, the possible unified patterns for all these analyses, and their relationship to “integration history.”

52 Glaser (2012) states “The GT researcher, in contrast, does not need this [personal distance] attitude to get a description accurate, which is not his goal. The GT method automatically puts him or her on a conceptual level, which transcends the descriptive data” (p.7). Similarly to oral history, grounded theory has been subjected to a degree of scrutiny concerning “researcher’s bias’ (Glaser, 2012), specifically through certain branches of the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) school, which were rather unfriendly to grounded theory as a technique.
The analysis process was a mixture of several elements. Chiefly, it was based on the oral histories being narrated as the primary source. To add historical, geographical, and cultural context, the analysis process will also use secondary sources from previous studies and press clippings in order to underline or support certain claims in the narrations. Occasionally, the narrative will also draw comparison to somewhat similar situations in other cultures.

In sum, the methodology chapter provided an elaborate account on how the integration history of Kuwaiti television would be accumulated. It explained how the technique of oral history would be beneficial in the data gathering and the analysis process respectively. It also discussed details on choosing the time period in question and the most suitable age to comment on it. This chapter also deliberated on the sampling variables (gender and ethnicity) that are taken into consideration during the sampling process for the 25 participants. The method chapter also reviewed the process of formulating and updating the interview questions. Describing the sampling environment, this chapter also stressed social and geographical representations, which required sampling participants from the six Kuwaiti districts. Upon contemplation, it was found that these six districts are best reached through Kuwait University students, who acted as gateways to their elderly relations.

The conclusionary portion of this chapter presented the outcome of these sampling and methodological techniques. It presented a numerical brief of the population sampled and sorted them into statistical segments. This section was unique to this study in the sense that it presented a quantitative outlook in an otherwise qualitative environment. The following numbers in turn represent certain qualitative/social values that might be beneficial in understanding the wider context of this study, and the magnitude of the narrator chosen on the general public opinion.
Additionally, this would highlight the distinction between the theoretical expectations of the method and the realistic outcome.

**Results**

The 25 interviewees ranged well in their ethnic routes, their economical statuses, their genders, their ages, and their perceptions of technology (Appendix J). Presently, the narrators covered the six geographical districts in different proportions. Balanced against old Kuwait, however, the participants also covered the main three areas inside the 1920 wall, which are Sharq (East), Qibla, and Murgab. Many other participants were also born and raised outside the walls, in areas like Shu’aibah, Subahiyya, and Failaka island.

**Demographics.** After the first five interviews, particularly during the month of November, the researcher started considering balancing the social variables in the selection of potential interviewees. It was found for example that a skew existed in favor of inhabitants of internal districts like Hawalli and Al-Asima, which meant that the Bedouin population may have been ill represented in the sample. This in turn had lead the researcher to focus more on the external districts of Kuwait in the next selection process, like Al-Jahra and Al-Ahmidi. Another problem surfaced in the middle of data gathering, which was mainly age-related, and concerned a high cluster of the relatively younger participants (between 50-60 years in age). This necessitated for the researcher to aim toward the more mature potential participants when examining later entries. The conclusive participant database consisted of 25 individuals, and breaks down as follows (See Table 6).
Table 6

The demographic composition of the participants (based on age, sex, ethnicity, and district)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnic origin</th>
<th>Old Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farwaniya: 3 (12%)</td>
<td>50-60: 13 (52%)</td>
<td>Bedouin: 7</td>
<td>Qibla: 6 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmadi: 2 (8%)</td>
<td>61-70: 5 (20%)</td>
<td>Hathari: 18</td>
<td>Sharq: 5 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawalli: 7 (28%)</td>
<td>71 -80: 5 (20%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Murqab: 2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Asima: 7 (28%)</td>
<td>81 -90: 2 (8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Wall: 12 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarha: 1 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mubarak Al Kabir (M.K.): 5 (20%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The schedule above shows that the biggest percentage is that of participants between 50-60 years-old. Participants in their 80s and over, however, were the smallest age-range secured. This is quite understandable considering that the participants over 80, despite being highly desirable in this study, are expected to be more reluctant and disinclined.

It is also noticeable that 56% of the sample lived in the urbanized internal districts of Hawalli and Al-Asima, while 44% occupied slightly further districts like Al-Jahra and Al-Ahmadi. Tracing their previous living areas, thirteen individuals had spent their early lives inside the wall (Qibla, Sharq, and Murgab), while twelve others did not. Calculating the ethnic variables, eight of the participants were female, and seventeen were male. Out of the 25 participants, seven individuals were Bedouin, and the rest were Hadhari (including Kuwaitis of Persian ancestry).

**Individual details.** In the end, the research managed to obtain participants from prominent families of the Kuwaiti public, including Bedouins, Persian Arabs, and Hadharis. The final data contained oral testimonies from members of the Azmi tribe, the Al-Qattan family, the Al-Sayigh family, and the Al-Failakawi family. The main motif of the study was to collect
personal reminisces on television’s integration in the city. However, marginal information was also welcomed. The participating individuals were the following:

1. **Hassan Abbas (66 years old):** A retired school principal who currently resides in the city of Bayan, and is a previous inhabitant of Qibla City.

2. **Um Abdulla (82-84):** A Hadarhi elderly woman who spent her early life in Qibla City, and now lives with her daughter and her family in the urban city of Udailiyya.

3. **Leila Al-Mithin (58):** Laila is Um Abdula’s daughter, who also lives with her in the city of Udailiyya. Unlike her mother, Leila’s childhood relates to a relatively modern Kuwait, and has lived most of her life in the city of Hawalli. Therefore, her memory is distinct from that of her mother, one that is valid for this research despite her blood relation to another participant.

4. **Um Sultan Al-Azmi (73-76):** an unschooled Bedouin woman who is still quite attached to her traditional roots. She grew up in the farmlike environment of Arifjan.

5. **Mariam Khalid (Um Ahmad; 56):** Um Ahmad, who currently lives in the city of Kaifan, spent her childhood in the very urbanized city of Ahmadi during the 1960s.

6. **Jassim Baroun (55):** Jasim Baroun is a Kuwaiti of the Shiite sect and the son of a former janitor at the Ministry of Social Affairs. He is a retired Arabic teacher who held his job for 31 years. He grew up in the city of Sharq and then moved to Al-Rumaythiya.

7. **Sabah Abdul Hamid (55):** Sabah is a widow and the daughter of a gold merchant who spent her early life in Syria, until the age of eight. She now resides in the city of Hitteen with her children.

8. **Ali Al-Qattan (74, based on the birth year listed in the form):** A member of the “cotton weaving” family of Al-Qattan, from which he inherits his family name (he who
makes cotton). He spent his childhood in the city of Sharq, and was famed in the 1960s for playing the character of “Jasoom,” the son in the comedic television family “Bu-Jasoom.” Al-Qattan was the only participant who had also been on the production end of the television industry.

9. **Nawal (59):** Nawal, who merely offered her first name, is a Kuwaiti woman who lived her earlier life in the area of Suwabir, part of the bigger city of Sharq.

10. **Basem Al-Darwish (54):** According to his story, Al-Darwish is the son of the first Qur’anic reciter on Kuwaiti radio, and the cousin of the media figure Dr. Najim Abdul Karim. He graduated from the United States majoring in electrical engineering and currently works at the Kuwaiti Public Authority for Industry.

11. **Buthaina Al-Rushaidan (58):** Buthaina is a 58 year-old Hadhari woman who lived in the cities of Qibla and Murqab respectively. She currently lives in the city of Mubarak Al Kabir. Throughout her interview, Al-Rushaidan projected conservative—yet moderate—values, synonymous to many women from her generation. She also represented the gender gap rather clearly by distancing herself from technological literacy.

12. **Aadil Al-Marhriby (52):** One of the younger interviewees, Aadil’s early years were divided between Hawalli and Qibla. Throughout his interview, he displayed tolerant values and was rather praising of the more accepting era of the 1960s.

13. **Saud Al-Khaldy (50):** Saud is the youngest of the interviewees. Al-Khaldy is a psychology major from Kuwait University, and thus mixes the conservative and culturally charged Bedouin values with the progressive ideologies of academia. Al-Khaldy spent his childhood in the shanties of Ahmadi City.
14. **Abdulla Al-Bloushi (63):** A member of the Bloushi family (originally of the Baluchistan Persian/Afghanistani/Pakistani region), Abdulla is a previous inhabitant of Sharq who now lives in the city of Firdos. He is an avid sports fan, which in turn has affected a great deal of his history narrative.

15. **Bader Al-Failakawi (54):** Al-Failakawi was a local inhabitant of the Kuwaiti Island of Failaka, and a graduate of the United States. He is the only participant who has lived a significant part of his life outside of the six geographical districts. Therefore, he contributes a unique perspective to this study despite his relatively young age.

16. **Fairouz Yagout (67):** A current resident of Salmiyya city, Yagout was the son of a professional weaver, and took up weaving very recently from his late father because he felt that the craft was dying out, as no weavers that he knows of exist today. Yagout’s narrative was helpful in many aspects. An example would be the emphasis on the economical gap between Kuwaitis that surfaced in his stories.

17. **Fahad Al-Dosari (57):** An expert in forensic science who earned his Ph.D. relatively late. Al-Dosari is a member of the esteemed Bedouin Dosari tribe. He is a well-spoken intellectual who on more than one occasion has accompanied his memories with analyses and deductions.

18. **Um Sa’ad (80):** Um Sa’ad is a well-spoken woman with a knack for storytelling. She possesses in-depth knowledge of Kuwaiti society and its people. A daughter of Qibla city, Um Sa’ad was initially educated in the Sharqiyya School.

19. **Sh’ouf Al-Shilahy (74):** Sh’ouf is an elderly Bedouin gentleman who lived in the city of Ahmadi and ended up working for the oil company. He speaks English remarkably well, which is somewhat uncommon to his age group. Al-Shilahy represents a perfect example
of the urban and social elevation that the oil company has provided for the people of Kuwait, having received employment and education abroad on the company’s expense.

20. **Nasser Bu Kubar (58):** A retired gentleman whose ethnicity traces back to the natives of Failika Island, but who lived his early life in the cities of Qibla and Al-Matabba. His old family house was apparently where the Kuwait Airways headquarters is now located.

21. **Muhammad Al-Ghuwainim (70):** A son of the prominent Ghuwainim family, who lived with his family in the Saihad area of Salmiya since the 1950s, surrounded by the Azmi tribe and the Qina’at family. He now resides in the suburbs of Mishrif.

22. **Abdul Wahab Al-Nifisy (57):** Al-Nifisy is a previous resident of Hawalli city who was born in his house in the city of Al-Nugra. The accurate and detailed nature of Al-Nifisy’s recollection (particularly on the subject of color television sets) offered a good deal of data to the research.

23. **Mubarak Sultan (75):** A previous resident of the Murgab area and a football player who played professionally with national clubs like Al-Qadsiya in his younger days. Sultan has an efficient knowledge of local sports, and is a self-proclaimed historical authority on sports in Kuwait.

24. **Rushaid Al-Rushaid (85):** One of the more mature participants age-wise in the study sample. Al-Rushaid is a Bedouin gentleman who is still very attached to his roots. He identifies himself as someone who has lived a strict Bedouin lifestyle (with livestock etc.). He currently resides in the area of Al-Rabiyya.

25. **Khalifa Al-Harran (56):** Al-Harran is a member of Al-Azmi tribe, and one of the Bedouins who settled by the sea instead of by the desert, as many of the Azmi tribe occupied the area of Salmiya and helped build it.
A more detailed version of the interviewees’ list is available in the Appendix section (Appendix K).

**Cultural note on sample.** Many notifications are due regarding the data presented above, with specific attention to their non-formal role in this qualitative study. Firstly, collecting the ages of the participants was not as direct a task as previously thought. If the demographic form contained a “year of birth” instead of an actual age then that year was calculated into its most probable age. It is important to remember that due to the late institutionalization of citizen registration in the city, many elderly Kuwaitis do not remember their real ages, and have provided the researcher with speculations of their respective ages. One woman in particular claimed to be either 73 or 76 years old.

Considering the geographical categories, it is imperative to realize that balancing the participants on the geographical areas of old Kuwait is a very flexible procedure, which challenges statistical accuracy. Many participants for instance have spent their lives within the wall before moving to the outer areas like Shamiyya or Hawalli. Additionally, some participants would mention a certain area in their screening forms while discussing other areas during their interviews. Some participants, similarly, were born in certain areas that they barely remember, but would culturally like to associate themselves with another area in which they spent their most memorable years. Unless specified otherwise during the interview, the area put down was the one noted in the demographic form. Finally, it is important to remember that, since the wall of Kuwait was brought down in the late 1950s, the dividing wall has become but a mere symbol after the 1960s. Since much of the participants’ memories revolve around the 1960s era, the inward-outward wall binary becomes somewhat questionable.
Similar concerns for ethnic roots rise in that regard. Since it is not particularly courteous to inquire about one’s roots, the ethnic count was based on how the interviewees looked at themselves culturally, and how they conveyed that during the interview.

It is imperative, however, to remember that the percentages in this study are employed only in a theoretical manner, especially taking into account the small number of participants in this exploratory study. In other words, they do not signify or communicate any generalizable value.

As previously mentioned, the demographic trends of the final sample were skewed from the theoretical aim. Having said that, considering the exploratory/qualitative nature of this study, the resulting distribution of variables seems adequate enough to withstand an analytical argument. In the case of the male to female ratio for instance, it is always important to realize that the conservative nature of Kuwaiti society makes it more difficult to reach women than men. Indeed, while in class explaining the project to a group of students, one student of Bedouin heritage claimed not to have seen the face of his own aunt, to the bafflement of many in the class. Therefore, the ability of this research to secure eight women is considered quite sufficient for the exploratory purposes of this study. Ideally, however, the researcher would have benefitted from more Bedouin Kuwaitis in the sample.

In conclusion, the current distribution of the geographic and age-related variables shows that they are not equally proportioned, nor are they representative of their actual ratio in Kuwaiti society. However, they still maintain the substance of Kuwait’s ethnic and geographical variety. For example, although the sample didn’t manage to secure an equal number of participants from each of the six modern districts, it did, however, manage to secure participants from all the three historical Kuwaiti cities within the walls—Sharq, Qibla and Murgab—as well as several other
villages and areas outside the wall. These old areas are the main interest in the historical narrative, since most of the Kuwaitis within the walls were living in one of these areas before scattering across the six modern zones. Considering that, the latter cities matter less than the geographical origins of the participants, which, as far as the research is concerned, have been covered at an almost equal rate through the participants. It is for these considerations that the researcher feels a fair degree of satisfaction with the resulting data, at least enough to progress towards the analysis.

**Audio recording.** When calculated, the interviews’ timespan collectively resulted in 14 hours, 32 minutes, and 53 seconds of audio. The narrations had an average time of 35 minutes for each of the 25 interviews. The shortest interview amongst the participants lasted for ten minutes and 40 seconds, while the longest interview lingered on for one hour and 25 minutes. During the first set of interviews, the researcher found that some of his questioning had interrupted the flow of the narrative. The researcher later allowed the interviewees to express themselves with very little questioning for elaboration. Generally, it was found that the interview had run its course after approximately 25 minutes, which somewhat explains the average. The researcher also kept an eye for facial gestures and unspoken signs expressed by the participants.

**Personal Resonance with the Researcher**

It can be assumed today, that historical research should not be written as if from the point of view of God. Gradually, the stigma of putting oneself in one’s research is starting to dissipate within the academy. This is in the light that many history theorists are discussing the concept of shared authority between historian and subject, and the features of being an “insider” versus an “outsider” in the researched community (Borland, 1991; Burton, 2003; Layman, 2009; Yow, 2005). I have been advised therefore, to include more of my own perspective and experience in
the methodological narrative. For these reasons, this will be the only section which is unapologetically personal, and in which the researcher is referred to in the first person.

Additionally, many of the themes discussed here are visited again in the limitation section of the last chapter. This is because the issues in question are relative in perspective, and can be viewed either as obstacles or as unique characteristics to this community-based research. Subjectivity, for example, is a substantial issue, despite the fact that its potential damage on the research is being reassessed in history schools today. For example, is it acceptable for the researcher to share the same community background with the community in question? Halfway through the data collection process, I have discovered that some of the narrators were rather familiar with my family tree, particularly with my grandfather. After presenting myself to one of the narrators, he gleefully informed me that my grandfather, a calligrapher and a Qur’anic reciter, had baptized him when he was an infant. Only a few months after the conclusion of the data collection phase, it was discovered that my first cousin had married the daughter of one of my other narrators, selected randomly. Upon running into him during the wedding ceremony, I began to realize how intimate and small Kuwait was as a community. The previous instances had less to do with serendipity and more to do with the small geographical scope of Kuwait. This fact can be either seen as a negative or positive variable. While I am aware of the traditional restrictions and the cultural background that allows me to ask the suitable questions, I found it hard to maintain that objective distance required to execute credible research, or so it was generally assumed until recently.

As will be revisited in the limitation section, Kuwait is a highly oral community, which eventually led to my growing interest in documenting these recurring oral tales on television’s integration into society. However, keeping up with academic protocols, I felt it necessary to
follow the conventional random sampling steps, or as close as possible to the quantitative-associate methodology. This in turn meant that many new stories would surface, but that also many of the old stories may slip through the cracks of random or pseudo-random selection. For example, my grandmother, a woman with a particular flair for storytelling, once reminisced about the now extinct tradition of a woman putting her television set in the cupboard when in mourning. An acceptable explanation for this phenomenon would be that, according to Islamic teachings, a woman was not permitted to leave her house during the mourning period of four months and ten days. It is possible, therefore, that women in that period viewed the television screen as an extension to the outer world, which they should not be subjected to during the mourning period. It is this specific way of appropriating television that highlights the power of the public in integrating television into local culture.

In the earlier days of this dissertation, many expressed the desire to contribute with their own personal stories, as heard from their parents and grandparents. One person spoke of his father, who apparently sat frozen with his peers in front of the television screen in anticipation of the arrival of color television, under the impression that black-and-white sets would automatically update themselves into color when the time came. However, many of these humorous and exotic stories were reluctantly overlooked due to the semi-random sampling process that this research adopted. That being said, it should be noted that the small nature of the community meant that these stories (with various slight alterations) tend to circulate within the community. It seems that there is always a cultural axis around which many of those stories revolve, and this fact has assisted a great deal in the composition of the interview questions. Kuwait is a small country, which means that one location obtains generally similar historical significations to members of the same generations.
This issue also resonates personally with me as the executor of this research. My father, who grew up in the ever-morphing Kuwait of the 1950s, instantly recognized the location of an anonymous photograph that I have been studying as research material. In the photograph, an exhausted man is carrying a large television set on his back. His clothes are a mixture of traditional and progressive, as he wore the usual Kuwaiti “gown” accompanied by a pair of sneakers. In the background of the photograph, stood a sign that read “Studio Al-Kamal,” an old photography business that stimulated my father’s memory into recalling the entire street that the man was photographed in. In a structural manner, my father was also able to conjure many facts about the photograph merely from a hasty inspection of its visual clues. For instance, the ill pairing of Eastern garments and Western footwear of the photographed subject indicated the ethnicity of the television carrying man—probably an Iranian foreigner who worked in hard labor. Upon looking at the photographs, my father started reminiscing on the sight of his rather religious uncle reprimanding these foreign workers over their choices of religious mantras frequently uttered during their work.

Finally, in retrospect, I can confidently state that the data collection process in and of itself was almost as valuable as the resulting data, as it offered context that can be expressive once incorporated into the analysis. From a meta-perspective, researchers have examined the scholarly value of the journey as well as the aim. Montgomery & Bailey (2007), for example, believe that even the contextual side notes and observations are scholarly valuable in some research fields. Personally, I have found this journey serendipitous from both a temporal and a spatial aspect. It has helped me as a researcher understand the generational gap that separates different sections of the Kuwaiti community, and my personal place within it as both a Kuwaiti and a researcher. Whilst in the United States, I was socializing with a group of Kuwaiti students
who have taken an interest in the research topic. The conversation gradually turned into a discussion of television history, with each contributing by pointing out their favorite childhood programs. At this instance, the room had split into those born before and those born after the 1980s, and friendly banter started to ensue. On a personal level, it was interesting to see the younger students reminisce over their own “memories,” ones that were not particularly nostalgic to me, considering that, from my perspective, they appeared rather recent. The notion of memory by its nature keeps changing, as the new becomes the familiar and the old. These temporal layers helped me understand how important it was to carry out this research, knowing that the older generation probably feels about my memories what I have felt about the memories of Kuwaitis younger than myself.

Besides the time-related perspective, another enriching aspect of this experience was spatial in nature. To gather this data, I had to interview narrators from different geographical locations in Kuwait, which is a state that nourishes several sub-cultures despite its relatively small size. This necessitated for me as a researcher to venture outside of my geographical comfort zone and step out into cities that are further away from the core urban area, most of which I have never traveled to before. Socially, I would most probably identify as a 30-something Hadhari Kuwaiti who has spent his entire life in the suburbs of Mishrif, a self-sufficient town approximate to the coast and the commercial center of the country. Aside from my bachelor years, my entire schooling was also constrained in the city of Mishrif. Throughout this interviewing process, I found myself visiting areas of the country that I would have never otherwise visited. The memories of the people I have met, the different lifestyles that I was exposed to, and the many subcultures that I encountered were regarded as a personal experience of growth. After one particular interview, as I was leaving the residence of my narrator who had
greeted me with generosity and warmth, I almost stepped on his pet tortoise. I then also noticed his parrot, and his small domestic menagerie. Afterwards, we briefly chatted about their nutritional and environmental needs, as I used to keep pet tortoises myself. It amused me to encounter such exotic situations in a country that I have lived in my entire life, that was intimately small to the point of boredom at times, and yet, that turned out to be yet undiscovered.

As previously explained, the sampling process initially started through the students of Kuwait University, who acted as sorting channels for their fathers, mothers, uncles, and grandfathers in their respective geographical areas. However, all of the students existed in the same classroom despite their ethnic and ideological background. Seeing the students as a multicultural aggregated group with geographically distributed lineages provides a researcher with a clear visualization of the linear continuum in which the later generations merge into one social cluster.

In the following chapter, the television-related stories, memories, and experiences of the narrators will be displayed and analyzed. They will in turn reflect several historical aspects of television’s integration within Kuwaiti culture, concerning succession, novelty, familiarization, domestication, modernity, and content.
Chapter 4: Findings, Stories, and Analyses

In different lengths, and with various degrees of clarity, the 25 participants narrated personal events from their lives in relation to television. In turn, it gradually assimilated into a generally linear life story of television itself within the city. Reflecting upon the categories discussed in the literature review, the narrators were asked questions concerning the history of television’s integration in the city from six different dimensions: succession, novelty, familiarization, domestication, modernity, and content.

It was found that the stories of the narrators broke each of the previous categories into different sections. In other words, the constant revision of the questions and the variety of subtopics surfacing resulted in the creation of several sections under each of the categories discussed. For example, the first category below represents memories concerning television’s succession to cinema. In many aspects, this category represents an era in time that has paved the way for the public perception of television. It provides an understanding of the previous context in which television was presented and subsequently integrated. This category breaks down into “cinema’s contextual experience,” “the appropriation of cinema within the Kuwaiti community,” and more relevantly, “cinema’s comparison with television.”

First Area: Succession: Television as a Follower to Kuwaiti Cinema

“In the old days, we depended on cinema, they would screen at Sufat [public square], we would go through the exertion of walking from Sharq to here, where Nayif Palace [currently] is” (Al-Qattan, 74).
In 1936, the first cinema projection device in Kuwait was given by Izzat Ja’far to the ruler of the state, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jabir Al-Subah, with historical records indicating that an incident involving a cigarette caused the film reels to be incinerated (Al-Hatim, 1980; Al-Siddiq, 1997). Nineteen years later, in 1955, Sharq Cinema was established as the first movie theater in the city (Abdul Aziz, 1982). The date of establishment confirms the precedence of cinema over television. It seems that, similarly to other regions of the world, television’s introduction and conception with the public was somewhat paved by the precedence of cinema. What is interesting, however, is that with Fahad Al-Dosari (57), all these forms of entertainment existed on a linear timeline that was initiated by of the practice of “storytelling.”

Before television… our house was in Salmiyya city, which used to be called Al-Dimna before. I’m talking about possibly 1959 or 1960. I was about three years old. Back then, we would gather in the evening time. My mother, or if my grandmother and grandfather were there, would tell us stories […] especially during the winter, the nights were long […] tea and milk and pastries, and they would tell us stories, and they were stories similar to that of Cinderella, but in a different way. Then, there were nights, when special occasions took place, especially when they would gather the kids after they’ve circumcised them or so…they would bring a film.

Al-Dosari lived in Al-Dimna, an area adjacent to the Kuwaiti coast urbanized mostly by members of the Bedouin Azmi tribe, which today is labeled “Al-Salmiyya” (Al-Rushaid, 1978). Another inhabitant of the Salmiyya area was Muhammad Al-Ghuwainim (70), who remembers the educational cinema screenings that the government used to throw for the community. Al-Ghuwainim reminisces over an area in Salmiyya that is now occupied by a modern shopping mall, and its historical importance to the practice of local cinema viewing:
Where that Marina [Mall] is, there used to be a yard, with two tamarix trees [...] and they weren’t removed until a very recent year. They stayed there, their traces are maybe still there. These tamarix trees, they used to hang a very big white sheet on them, and they would play the film and everybody would be seated (Al-Ghuwainim, 70).

The tamarix trees and the Salmiyya courtyard near the Uthaina Mosque—which still stands today—acted as substantial spatial context for Al-Ghuwainim’s memory of cinema. Al-Ghuwainim remembers this particular yard to have also held the Ardha dance ceremony: a traditional sword dance from the Bedouin heritage. Al-Ghuwainim remembers Saleh Al-Harran, a member of the Azmi tribe, to have been the first Ardha dancer in this yard. By sheer coincidence, the next participant in the study happened to be his son, Khalifa Al-Harran (65). Al-Harran Jr. invoked his memories of cinema in the city mainly through the theater of Hawailli Al-Saify, an open theater that operated in the summer months:

The taramix trees weren’t in my time. No, I was young. They said they were next to the mosque in the yard, yes [...] we would wait for Hawailli Al-Saifi [cinema theater], because it was spacious, more so than other theaters. It would open up, possibly at the first of April or the first of May, you’d look at the stars above you in the sky… very relaxing, I don’t know why […]. At the front, it was 64 Fils\(^{53}\) to enter, behind that [in the back rows], it was a 100 Fils, and behind that, it was a quarter (250 Fils; Al-Harran, 65).

Al-Harran remembers the unfortunate souls who sat at the front rows, where the seating system encouraged a functional chain of harassment that involved things being thrown from the back rows on the front. According to Al-Harran, the further back you sat, the better you fared.

\(^{53}\) A Fils was a low form of currency that is still valid today. It is the cultural equivalent of an American cent or a British penny.
Al-Harran’s accounts only highlight the contextual experience of early cinemas, which segues into the next section.

The spatial reminiscence and contextual experience of cinema. Many of the interviewees spoke of specific movie theaters, most prominently, Sharq’s theater, Fardos theater, Al-Andalus theater, Ghurnata theater, Al-Hamra theater, and Hawalli Al-Saify theater. These pioneering six buildings seem to stimulate the memories of the early generations of Kuwaiti filmgoers significantly. The theaters seemed spatially distributed across the old city in a way that made cinema going fairly accessible, at least for those who lived within the walls. Each theater, therefore, signified where the interviewee grew up or lived at the time, whether it was in core cities like Qibla, Sharq, or Al-Murgab, or slightly further than that. Many of the storytellers seem to arrange their memories spatially:

There was the Sharqiyya cinema at the time, which was in Sharq approximately, and it was a normal cinema with reels. It wasn’t… and there was also a theater in Ahmadi. And, in Fuhaihell, there was the cinema theater of Hawalli Saifi (summer theater), which was exposed […] then they’ve built Al-Hamra cinema, Al-Fardos cinema, and they’ve designated them so that this one would screen Indian films, and the other one would screen Arabic films. Then Khaitan built one and, as I said, so did Al-Ahmadi. And of course, the most modern one was Al-Andalus. It was diverse, and very beautiful. I still feel sorry that they’ve demolished it (Bu Kobar, 58).

It is also important to note that the reference to Kuwaiti cinema should not imply any reference to the Kuwaiti film-making industry, since the Kuwaiti box office has been substantially lacking and unimpactful for local economics. Instead, Kuwaiti cinema theaters have
opted for screening American, Egyptian, and Indian reels, as these were the most prominent stories with the widest appeals.

Looking back at the narrators’ stories, they seem to coincide with cross-cultural contemplations from Western scholarship, where it was observed that the early generation had experienced cinema-going as a highly charged and contextual experience (Turnbull, 2012). In Kuwait, the situation was not necessarily different. People simply had to appropriate what ever was available to make use of the cinema-going experience. While Bader Al-Failakawi (54), a resident of the Kuwaiti Island of Failaka, sat on Pepsi crates in his island’s country club, Fairouz Fairouz (67) regularly paid his half Rupee to attend the Sharq theater in his childhood. He sat on the ground in the exposed theater, listening to rain and enjoying the interaction of the viewers who threw bottles at the screen if they didn’t like the ending. Fairouz and other storytellers spoke of the social impact of cinema, which frequently screened Bollywood products: “Some people who went [to the movies] have learned the Indian language from cinemas. He’d speak Indian fluently as if he studied it. You’d ask him ‘where from?’ ‘From cinema!’”. (Fairouz, 67)

The Indian cinemas, don’t forget that there was a significant Indian population in the country. It is still there but, proportionally to Kuwaiti society they were still a lot, working in the electric industry and such… so cinema had beautiful elegance (Bu Kubar, 58).

Fairouz’s account is illuminating yet slightly off on a few points, like the ticket price, which was at least a rupee and a half more than what he remembers, according to the recollections of local historian Ya’qoub Al-Ghunaim (“Al-Ghunaim: The history of cinema,”

---

54 As will be discussed in later part of this study, the Rupee was the Indian currency that was circulated in Kuwait before it obtained its own currency.

55 Bollywood is a cultural term that refers to the Indian equivalent of Hollywood.
According to Abdul Wahab Al-Nifisy (57), another participant who lived in the area of Hawalli, cinema tickets coast 65 Fils at the time of his youth (the equivalent of 22 cents today). Kuwaiti historian Ya’qoub Al-Ghunaim also corroborates Fairouz’s story of an open cinema theater that was covered with drapes during the wintertime, and his story of a rather rowdy audience that caused the Sharq theater to close down in 1965 (Al-Ghunaim: The history of cinema, 2012).

Therefore, the contextual experience of cinema is a major part of its cultural history in Kuwait, one that underlines cinema’s precedence to television in the city. This illuminates on the cultural aspects of how the public accepted cinema and how it slowly paved the way for television technology. Another view that can help explain how the two technologies were linked is one that examines how cinema was appropriated in Kuwaiti society.

The appropriation of cinema within the community. With Kuwait, the cinema experience historically breaks into three activities. The first was the “educational” films screened by the state. The second concerned the conventional “ceremonial” theater attendance in cities like Hawalli and Sharq. The third involved neighborhood screening nights, usually instigated and led by a community member who could afford to rent a projector. This particular practice is substantial to the memory of Buthaina Al-Rushaidan, a 58-year-old woman who lived in Qibla and Murgab City.

At night, our neighbors… we had a family that was somewhat wealthy, they would get a cinema, a big one, possibly 2x2 meters (6.5x6.5 feet) or maybe bigger. They would spread the word and each one would tell the other ‘We’re putting up a cinema on that day’ (laughing). Each neighbor would tell the other, and we would visit them, and sit in
their courtyard while they rolled it for us… Arabic films and nice things…the whole neighborhood. That was at night” (Al-Rushaidan, 58).

The situation was somewhat different with other social clusters. The Bedouin residents of Kuwait for example, were initially nomadic tribes who obtained distinct social values—bordering on the conservative—and were initially situated geographically outside the main wall of the urban city structure (Ghabra, 1997; Longva, 2006). Um Sultan is a woman in her 70s who implied that she spent the pre-marital period of her life in a purely Bedouin context, and lived in the remote desert areas of Shu’aiba and Arifjan. She clarifies that the cinema theaters were for those who lived within the walls of the city (the latest built in 1920 and demolished in the early 1950s), rather than the Bedouins. There were, however, those who brought the projectors indoors from time to time. Many of those who lived outside the city had also encountered cinema whenever they came into the city for trading.

Look, before the independence [Independence from the English Crown that is, in 1961], by ‘52 or ‘53, the Kuwaiti oil company would screen films at the Sufat Square […] in the old days, the square consisted of cafes, shops, and a bazaar. The travelers who would be coming from the desert, displaying their yogurt and wool and sheep and such, they would sit at night and watch films, and they were marveled (imitating Bedouin dialect), ‘what is this?’ (Abbas, 66).

Hasan Abbas, who would later grow up to be a historian, remembers being brought by his father to watch the screenings at Sufat Square, where his father owned a coffee shop prior to the

56 Of that, Kuwaiti scholar Shafeeq Ghabra (1997) explains: Tribal migration to the urban centers of Kuwait began in the 1950s as a result of that country's rapid educational and economic development. Most migrants settled in Kuwait City, and a few went to other developing urban centers such as Abu-Hulayfah, Ahmadi, Fahahil, Jahra, and Salmiyya. As urbanization increased, Kuwait City expanded beyond its walls, urbanizing the desert as it did so and redefining Kuwaiti citizens to include many of the desert's tribes (p.363).
early 1950s. Sufat Square was the main social square of the city, which held many political
events and functioned as a trading ground for traveling Bedouins and city dwellers alike (Al-
Sabah, 1989; Hussain, J., 2014). The reminiscence of Abbas relates those of another narrator,
Sh’ouf Al-Shilahy (74), a Kuwaiti Bedouin who inhabited the remote city of Ahmadi and, had
the wall been up at the time, would have been on the other side. Al-Shilahy only remembers two
trucks that offered rides to the inner city of Kuwait every Friday, and in which several Bedouin
families would have crammed. Many were making their way to Sufat Square for trading.

Al-Shilahy’s account of visual technology is rather intriguing. Having lived in the city of
Al-Ahmadi, his initial community consisted of sporadic straw shanties. However, Al-Ahmadi
was also the location of the Kuwaiti Oil Company [KOC], which put forth tremendous efforts to
alter the city into the first and most urbanized zone in the entire country. In the 1950s, Al-
Ahmadi was a well-mapped oasis, complete with gardens and containing leisure facilities like
tennis courts and cinema theaters (Al-Rayyis, 2014; Alissa, 2013; Dickson, 1968). Al-Shalahi
therefore, gained access to the KOC cinemas after he became an employee of the company (See
Figure 19). Al-Shilahy was housed in the employees’ residence before moving into the new
state-granted households.
“For us it was free, but it required a ‘grade of employment.’ No one would enter this cinema but the middle graders and those above. The common people weren’t allowed entry. You needed clearance” (Al-Shilahy, 74).

Another Bedouin resident of Al-Ahmadi at the time was Saud Al-Khaldy (50). Unlike Al-Shaliy, Al-Khaldy did not have the privilege of joining the Kuwaiti Oil Company, and remained in the shanties until he moved to the city of Jahra during the urbanization wave. Born in 1963, Al-Khaldy links cinema and television as subsequent and causal to each other. His earliest memories of cinema involve a period when the Kuwaiti government used cinema for educational purposes.

The idea of the television was conveyed to us by the Enlightenment and Counseling [governmental initiative] […]. So, they would come to the remote areas, like Al-Ahmadi, the old straw shanties, in the old neighborhood days. They would come and show films (Al-Khaldy, 50).
For Kuwait, cinema has offered a rather interesting outline for television’s arrival in the city. Like television, cinema was one of the early instruments to have presented a counter-narrative to the conservative Kuwaiti lifestyle, since its contents came from other cultures with dissimilar ethos. One of the narrators, Jasim Baroun (55), reminisces over one particular screening in a neighbor’s house when he was around 14 years of age. In the film, which was attended by many in the neighborhood, a scene appears in which famed Egyptian film starlet Su’ad Husni is being sexually abused:

When the scene came up… of course we didn’t know, we were separately seated; the boys were at one end, and the women were at another in the courtyard […] There was a voice over there (imitating the cries of insulted women), and they covered up, and he [the screener] put his hand on the lens so that the projection wouldn’t show. He put his hand until… he knew when, he would watch the, ‘whatchamacallit’…until the scene finished then he took it [his finger] away (Baroun, 55).

Contemplating the incident above, it seems that the cultural distinction between Kuwait and Egypt was initially challenging for the Kuwaiti psyche. Despite sharing a fair degree of the conservative/Arabic social character, Egyptian cinema ethos were fairly liberal in that they allowed for intimate displays of affection between the performers (Armbrust, 1998). Kuwaiti producers, even after having progressed into the 21st century, still did not allow that sort of intimacy excessively in its television scripts.

When television came, Egyptian cinema was so popular that it managed to secure a popular chunk of airtime on it, and received a similar degree of criticism with conservative families. The difference with television, however, was that it was in the home, and therefore inescapable.
A film would appear that slightly borders on ethics, [and] you’d find the family’s elder, the father, the grandfather, would get angry and shuts off the TV […]. Kuwaitis were very conservative [repetition], to a degree where a simple romantic scene between Fatin Hamama and Abdul Halim Hafiz (popular romantic icons), just a normal dialogue, [like] “I love you,” and so on, the mother and father would be agitated, and then shut it off, [telling me to] ‘Go wash the dishes!’ (Al-Rushaidan, 58).

The previous testimony belongs to Buthaina Al-Rushaidan, a 58-year-old woman who lived in the cities of Qibla and Murgab respectively. Buthaina’s narrative implies that the ethical concern with television’s content became a variable that separated the older Kuwaiti generation from the younger ones. Similar elderly impressions of cinema as “corruptive to the youth” have taken place in other Arab regions outside of the Gulf, like Egypt and Lebanon (Lerner, 1958).

The conservative nature of early Kuwait also meant that the cinema going experience was a rather male-privileged experience for some families, as underlined in the memories of Um Sa’ad, an 80-year-old previous resident of Qibla.

Not everybody would go to the cinema. The boys and youths would go. [Not] the women like myself and others. The father of the children wouldn’t let us go to the cinema. He would say ‘there’s no justification [for you to go], they’re boys and [therefore] could go, what business do you have going?’ May Allah rest his soul, he had the Bedouin tick to him […] (Um Sa’ad, 80).57

That being said, even the boys did not always have it easy. When gender protocols were secured, then one had to overcome issues of religiosity and social habits. Basem Al-Darwish (54) highlights this through a glimpse of his childhood from the mid 1960s, back when—according to

---

57 Um Sa’ad’s usage of the term “the father of the children” could either be in reference to her husband or her father. Either way, it seems that a male authority usually called the last shot.
him—a ticket cost 65 Fils, which was 2% of what it cost today. He would walk from his house in Sharq to the approximate Fardos and Al-Hamra cinema theaters, where American and Indian films screened, much to the disdain of his father. Al-Darwish remembers watching *Dr. Zhivago* just before high school, and not understanding a single thing:

> Our family didn’t like us going to the cinema, based on the fact that it was an alien factor to society, or maybe they had their own perspective, I don’t know. Even, my father, may Allah rest his soul, would be angry if I purchased a *Pepsi*, saying, ‘what is that you’re drinking? … the Jews probably made that so they can […]’ Cinema was not very recognized by them (Al-Darwish, 54).

Cinema would later become very familiar and substantial to the entertainment of the Kuwaiti community. In June 1976, a group of intellectuals and media enthusiasts, including Drs. Muhammad Al-Rumaihi and Mohammad Al-San’ousy, founded the “cinema club” (Al-Furaih, 1999; Al-Mudhaf, 2014). This initiated an organized, self-aware reception process for cinematic content, and created a critical fan base. The cinema industry required a “religious scholar” and an “educator” to choose its reels during the conservative 1980s, and later grew to amass an audience of 1,332,080 cinema goers in 1984 (Abu Shanab, 1987). Kuwait television established a cinema department at the end of 1963, and by 1966, the department had developed reels collectively equating 271,980 ft. (Abdul Aziz, 1982; Al-Nuwaity, 2011; MOI, 1966).

In June of 1981, Kuwaiti television had even established a cinema supervision department (Abdul Aziz, 1982; Al-Shihab et al., 1998; “With Little Hollywood,” 1981), pushing further the encompassing idea of the state’s media and the interdisciplinarity of art. This latter merge between cinema and television requires further examination. The following subsection, discussing the relationship between the two medias, represents an early era of television’s
integration in Kuwaiti society, and thus concludes this particular category of television’s integration history (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Anonymous photograph of an old cinema theater, 2010.

**The comparison of cinema with television.** As the literature review has previously discussed, Daniel Lerner (1958) linked cinema with the concept of “abstraction,” a concept that assisted modernity in the Arab world significantly. The memories of Aadil Al-Maghriby (52) with his family, show how the abstraction concept was also inherited to television upon its arrival into the Kuwaiti home. Al-Maghriby remembers his extended family and their initial reaction to television when it first came into their grandfather’s house in Shamiyya, between 1969-1970.
“They switched the television on. They [the men] were fooling both us and the women. They said, ‘This is cinema,’ ‘Seriously? Cinema?’ He said ‘Yes, it’s a small cinema.’ And then he said, ‘No no, it’s a television set!’” (Al-Maghriby, 52)

This link between the two medias comes almost naturally. The memory of Mubarak Al-Mubarak (75), a working class Kuwaiti who lived in the city of Nugra, underlines this very common association.

We knew cinema…we had radios at the home, they’d listen to news and songs and whatnot. Television emerged, Kuwaitis like my mother didn’t call it ‘television,’ they didn’t know the name. They called it a ‘radio-cinema,’ because they knew the radio, and they’d seen the cinema (Al-Mubarak, 75).

This naming scheme may have been a local innovation, but it’s not at all unique to the rest of the world. In America, some early radio models even faked a “visual button” to associate themselves with the upcoming device (Barfield, 2008). Early German television similarly, was culturally conceived as complementary to radio’s audibility (domestic audience), or cinema’s aggregate reception (public audience; Uricchio, 1996).

Abdulla Al-Bloushi (64), who grew up in the city of Sharq, remembers a “wooden box” that was placed as a promotional stunt for the Ma’rafi family stores in 1961. The “box” was showing Egyptian films that were traditionally seen in cinema. While people were crowding, Al-Bloushi, being a child of 11 or so, witnessed a rather intriguing abstraction that shook his understanding of conventional cinematic content to the core.

You’d see Arab [cinema] films, those films that we’ve known and watched, with [Egyptian] actors like Fareed Al-Atrash, Ismael Yaseen. However, they would be speaking Persian! Hey! What’s that about? Me and the people who were watching were
puzzled. Turns out it was a voice-dubbing procedure. They would dub the movies to the native language of the country in question […] (Al-Bloushi, 64).

Al-Bloushi’s reminiscence indicates that he was very possibly watching the Iranian station, which, due to its regional proximity, could be picked up in certain weather conditions around the city. This childhood experience invited him to reevaluate several conventions, all related to the abstract nature of the visual broadcast. Firstly, films did not only belong to cinema theaters, they could be adapted to television, and morphed into something else for yet another medium. Indeed, even the cultural bond between the film and its original region could be tampered with, and Egyptian actors could be made to speak Persian. It is possible that for Al-Bloushi, television represented all of these new ideas.

More importantly, Al-Bloushi seemed to stress the visual representation of television as a box, emphasizing further the narrative of something akin to magic or miracle, where images come from within, rather than cinema, where images are clearly projected. On the distinction between the two medias, he says:

No, when it comes to television, you have a box in the house, and it shows you people, it displays them to you. With cinema, it’s a projector, you install the film. If you don’t put it there, it won’t show up, you got me? You have bought the film, you have chosen it, you want it, and you set it on to the machine, and operate it, and would spread for yourself a white sheet in the courtyard as your screen. But, this [television] came to you in the heart of your house. They’ve brought you a box and it brings people up to you (Al-Bloushi, 64).
The following two quotes offer examples of the variety of distinctions between the two medias, as contemplated by the narrators, with various impressions regarding which one was the superior medium and why:

The difference was in the time duration and the width of the screen…we used to go to the Fardos and Al-Hamra theater near here, the screen was huge, so you’d feel that something is quite close to you. With television, you’d sit with eight, nine, or maybe ten individuals; you’d feel like ‘did the screen get smaller?’ With cinema, however, the scene is very clear, if something were to fall down [on a cinema screen] you’d watch it descending from hiiiiigh above! With television, it’s just…tuck! And it’s fallen (Baroun, 55).

Television was accepted because it was from the core of society itself. Cinema would bring us films from outside, while television contained local programs and consisted of a Kuwaiti station, so it was much more accepted. That, I think, was the main reason. Also, considering that it [television] was in the home, under the family’s supervision and in the presence of the mother and father, it was a more controlled environment, while with cinema, usually when we go as guys and kids, we were far away (Al-Darwish, 54).

For the women, they would go [to the cinema] in their full attire and looking demure and so on. But, the fact that television has entered the house, she would be wearing pajamas or a house gown. ‘This guy is looking at me!!’ (Al-Maghriby, 52)\(^{58}\)

\(^{58}\) The last quote particularly raises an important social issue. One of the criterion factors in television technology was its domesticity and its infiltration of indoor-gender protocols, which were naturally more flexible than outdoor ones. This borders on the fact that the clothing culture of the Kuwaiti woman remains a rather complex issue. Since being dramatically disturbed in the 1960s, women’s clothing protocols remained contextual to the space in question (Kelly, 2010). The Kuwaiti woman therefore had an understanding of what to wear indoors and what to wear outdoors. This however, was met with television’s ability to act as a disrupter to the borders between the outside and the inside (Spigel, 1992), thus putting all the protocols of women’s appearance into hiatus. The way in which Kuwaitis dealt with this particular abstraction of television will be discussed in detail in a separate section.
Finally, television’s competition with cinema in the early 1960s was undoubtedly
governed by the former’s constraint with a four hour broadcast (Al-Shihab et al., 1998). Jumping
a decade or so forward, television’s ubiquity could not be denied within the Kuwaiti public.
However, it seems that cinema still had a ceremonial function in society, even after television’s
arrival.

Each thing had its own importance. I mean, radio was for the high morning, noon, and
afternoon period. Television was [watched] from the afternoon until midnight, and
cinema would be at dusk and the evening time, sitting with the neighbors and watching a
film (Al-Rushaidan, 58).

Therefore, despite the temptation of the claim that “video killed the radio star,” it could
not be said that television has “killed” cinema attendance. In Kuwait, television and cinema
ended up achieving a gradual segregation in their cultural functions.

Summary. How can these contemplations be summarized in the context of the Kuwaiti
society of the 1940s and the 1950s? The narrators’ stories, balanced against the secondary
sources, reveal that cinema preceded television indeed, but for a relatively short period of time.
Cinema-going as a practice could be socially segmented into three categories. Despite the
educational and governmental use of cinema in the community, for many, cinemagoing was a
cultural practice that was adopted and appropriated by members of the community, who either
attended the local theaters or arranged private indoor screenings. In Kuwait, cinemagoing was a
contextual experience that depended heavily on the economical and ethnic distinctions within the
community.

From a meta-perspective, the intimate nature of the community, both geographically and
socially, created very effective memory triggers regarding cinema, through which the memory of
cinema-going is navigated spatially around the few theaters that have existed in the city at the
time. For Kuwaitis, this turned memories of the old city and memories of cinema-going into one
nostalgic bulk.

Kuwaiti cinema was, for the most part, reliant on foreign reels, and still managed to pave
the way to the arrival of television, in the sense that it softened the concept of televsual
abstraction, and furthered the understanding of cross-cultural ethoi. Many, however, perceive the
two media differently, comparing the two in terms of technical attributes, domestic accessibility,
accompanying social etiquette, controllability, and the nature of their visual display between
internal (broadcast) or external (projection).

In time, the cinema industry continued to expand, and cinematic content and attitude
seemed to coincide with the religious and social alterations in the Kuwaiti culture. Even after the
introduction of television, cinema-going secured its own “ceremonial” function that required
more preparation and was usually associated with a different area of the daily routine than that of
television.

The next assortment of stories and recollection takes the narrative of television
integration history another step forward, into an era of novelty—when television was a device in
its cultural infancy, still navigating its identity amongst the Kuwaiti public.

Second Area, Novelty: Television’s Infancy in Kuwaiti Society

In the literature review, television’s novelty period was discussed through the social
context in which television had arrived, and the introduction of the technology through either
foreign or local authorities. When asked about this particular period, it was found that the
memories of the narrators regarding television’s novelty could be assorted into three distinct
areas: an initial poetic conception of television, the pioneering models and distributors, and the socioeconomic conditions of early television ownership.

**Initial poetic perception of television.** When the car first came into Kuwaiti society, many local poets added a certain poetic value to it, making it a central theme of many poems. Kuwaiti poets from the earlier part of the century (between 1912 and 1930), like Fahad Al-Loughani and Zein Al-Aabideen Baqir, wrote interesting poems about the car, comparing it to camels and horses (Al-Loughani, 2010).

It seems that for those who were considerably remote from the urban setting, like members of the Bedouin communities, television was mentally placed within the “myth” category, at least before its arrival. Um Sultan, a Bedouin woman in her 70s from the Azmi tribe who spent her early life in the desert of Uraifjan, remembers her grandfather’s account when she was at the age of 13 or 14.

He said, ‘you will witness the iron speaking, and the iron flying, and you would go about in cars.’ We would say, ‘By Allah may it not be, we do not desire it.’ When it first came…iron [indeed] spoke; we heard the radio, then the television. You would get television, you would watch pictures in black and white, and then we got color (Um Sultan, 73-76).

Additionally, the memories of Mohammad Al-Ghwainim, a 70 year-old resident of Salmiyya, highlight that this poetic/cryptic tendency to view television’s arrival was not limited to members of the desert Bedouin community.

This was of course in 1957, or approximately before 1957. We used to hear them say that television would arrive to you, and we didn’t know the word ‘television.’ What was
television? They said, ‘this is a television set that you watch; people acting and playing and singing.’ And we didn’t believe this (Al-Ghuwainim, 70).

Looking at these narratives from a meta-viewpoint, an interesting comparison between the Hadhari and the Bedouin perception surfaces. Despite both expressing their initial astonishment at the device, Al-Ghuwainim’s narrative was clearly explained in the interview. In comparison, however, the Bedouin poetic quality of Um Sultan’s speech made it considerably harder to decipher at times, linking her cultural discourse more with poetic value.

In conclusion, this poetic tendency towards technology seems to apply to Kuwait on both sides of the demolished wall, at least in the early period of that technology. For instance, one particular rhyming riddle about television that has faded into obscurity reads: “I ask you of something big that serves you through stone, naked in the cold, receiving no mercy, with its ears and mouth all within its arm.”

Very little information exists about the riddle, as it is a cultural artifact of anonymous authorship. However, what is certain is that the answer is “television.” In Kuwait, the novelty period of television’s integration in society also seems to associate itself with certain brands, certain names, and certain patterns of consumerism.

The pioneering models and distributors. The work of British diplomat Harold Dickson in Kuwait highlights the intimate family oriented nature of the country, based on the records of the families that have formed the 1921 and the 1983 National Council (Ismail, 1993). This appears to be one of the factors that have affected the Kuwaiti adoption of technology, and in extension television. In other words, with its vital and small familial matrix, Kuwait indeed has made it fairly possible to trace different technologies to their individual pioneers, linking the history of technology with the history of the people. Historians, for instance, are able to trace that
in 1934, the first radio was brought to the city by Major Holmes of London, and that the first refrigerator was imported by Haj Hussein Ma’rabi as a gift to the Sheikh (Al-Hatim, 1980).

Similarly to television, the Behbahani family, particularly the merchant Murad Behbehani, is acknowledged by historical sources as the first to have officially brought television into the city (Al-Mudhaf, 2015). Murad was the son of the prominent merchant Yousef Behbehani, who opened the first hotel in the city of Kuwait in 1947, and imported weapons and cigarettes (Al-Habeeb, 2012; Al-Hatim, 1980). In the testimony below, Mubarak Al-Mubarak (75) remembers how the Behbehani house was a frequent destination for the neighborhood kids.\(^{59}\)

Originally, they weren’t called the Behbehani House. When we were young, we called them Sherine House. Sherine was a Persian word meaning “beautiful.” So, the kids grew up…’Where [are you off to]?’ ‘Sherine house Sherine house!!’ They were a prominent family. There was an area in Iran called ‘Behbahan’ [from which they got their name]. Their ethnic roots were from there (Al-Mubarak, 75).\(^{60}\)

Mubarak also remembered the Behbahani house as the first to have broadcasted a radio signal. Historical sources in the press state that Murad Behbahani had also purchased the franchise license for the RCA while in New York in 1947 (Asmar, 2010). Muhammad Al-Habeb (2012), a history researcher, cited several local and British scholars to support the Behbahani family origins and their association with the name Sherine, as well as the popularity of the name Sherine amongst Kuwaitis during the early years of radio.

\(^{59}\) This is despite the fact that Behbehani’s name is not as widely referred to in historical sources as much as it should be, as explained in previous parts of this research.

\(^{60}\) Mubarak was so accurate in his recollections that at one point he recited the acronym for Radio Corporation of America. According to Mohammad Al-Habeb (2012), a Kuwaiti historian, Sherine’s 1947 station only achieved a one-mile diameter.
Murad Behbahani subsequently went on to become a name associated with television. Hassan Abbas (66) remembers that between 1957 and 1958 the Behbahani store sold electronics (Oris watches, refrigerators, and speakers). Abbas remembers that the store had displayed the television set for people to watch, intriguing Abbas the boy, who was yanked away from the store by his conservative father. According to Abbas, the Behbahani family also owned the franchise for both Buick and Porsche motors, as corroborated by historian Basem Al-Loghani’s (2010) History of the Automobile in Kuwait.

He (Behbahani) was the establisher of television, because the governmental television originated from Behbahani, and he was the first to broadcast […] We used to buy cars from him as well, because he had a car dealership, originally. So, the government seized [his] television. By then, at around 64/63, all the young men entered the television industry (Al-Qattan, 74).

In their scholarship, Al-Yasin & Mu’awwad (1995) underlined the “experimental nature” of Behbehani’s station, citing the foreign, canned, cartoon-saturated, format-poor programs. In the Kuwait of the 1960s, those pioneering merchants and models were fairly synonymous with the conception of television. The ubiquitous set at the time was a device called Andrea. The device is a product of Frank Andrea Inc., one of the pioneering enterprises that manufactured its first “television kit” in 1938 (Pine, 1950).

Fairouz Fairouz (67), a son of a local straw weaver, recalls that the economic situation of his family did not allow the luxury of television. Therefore, his first memory of the set was at his grandfather’s place, in which he lived during the 1960s.

They’ve brought a television set which was also black and white. I remember that it was called Andrea. It was old, that if we wanted to change channels we would actually have
to get up and manually change stations with this Andrea television [...] The dealerships at the time were I think, by Allah I can’t remember… it was Behbehani who also had television sets, and then came National, which brought down the entire market (Fairouz, 67).

Similar memories from several participants show that the beginning of television in Kuwait is nostalgically associated with specific models, like the Andrea and the Admiral models. This ranged from the core cities of Qibla, Sharq, Al-Murgab, to outer areas like Al-Ahmadi, which held many Bedouin families.

I remember, Philco television, Philips television, these were the trademarks: German, European, and American. The Japanese hadn’t arrived yet at that time. I don’t remember, but I think that television at the time was at 60 or 70 Dinars maybe (approximately $168 at the time; Al-Dosari, 57).

The oldest company was Andrea, we used to go there next to where the Awadhi mosque is now, at Ahmad Al-Jabir’s Street. It was so crowded, like a grocery store. Everyone [would say] please give me one [a television]. They’d tell him it’s not your turn in the queue, none [available] […]. Because, whenever a new shipment came in, they’d run out… later, the National brand spread, and subsequent companies and dealerships were found… (Al-Qattan, 74).

Me and a friend used to study at the elementary level of night school, and we’d go home on foot. We would pass the market...in the Ahmadi market there was a store that they called the National Store, and it had television sets…they would put the set outside and turn it on, so that passersby would come look at the television and buy it, as a promotional scheme. At the time, we didn’t realize it was a promotional act. We wanted
to see how does television summon those people inside it? Where would they appear from? We would pass by on our way to and from school, stand in front of it, and gaze at it (Al-Shilahy, 74).

In Kuwait, the local distributors of the early devices included the local merchant Murad Behbehani, Asad Amadi, the Ma’rafi family, Al-Yousefi family, and Al-Ghanim family. Within the memories of those who witnessed television’s arrival, each particular model was associated with its respective family business. Hasan Abbas (66), who lived in Qibla and moved to Maidan Hawalli in the mid-50s, remembers for instance that the Tukhaim family owned the right for the Grundig model. Abdulla Al-Bloushi (63) recollected similarly:

In Sharq […] there were shops that belonged to Muhammad Rafei’ Ma’rafi. The Ma’rafi family owned all this and they were importing brands of television, possibly, possibly Philips. So, as a promotional stunt, he put a television set inside the display window, and people were crowding. We were young, saying ‘What’s with the crowd? Lets check this out!’ and by God it was a box! […] There was this company, and the distributor was called Asad Allah Amadi, who exported a television model called Andrea. This Andrea model was the one that spread rapidly, within the houses of Sharq. I’m speaking about our neighborhood (Al-Bloushi, 63).

On a marginal note, these promotional public viewing stunts echo similar attempts in England. In 1952, John Logie Baird screened approximate images for around a million individuals at the Selfridges department store in Oxford Street (Moran, 2013).

It seems, therefore, that the inception of television in Kuwaiti society was assisted by specific family businesses, which reflected itself rather firmly on the memories of Kuwaitis. This of course involved the economic circulation of television as a device, not as an institution.
However, while the device was beginning to find its grounds in Kuwait as a commercial product, this invites certain contemplations on the socioeconomic conditions of television ownership amongst this small community by the sea.

**The socioeconomic conditions of early television ownership.** This drastic paste of television integration in Kuwait can be put in perspective when paralleled with other historical threads. For instance, the foreshortened nature of television history becomes apparent upon realization that television’s introduction into the city (in 1957) followed the introduction of electricity by only 23 years (Al-Hatim, 1980). Additionally, television was adopted in the city before it had fully crystalized itself as an official state, or before it had even obtained its own currency (See Figure 21).

One need not forget that the introduction of television was during a period when Kuwait was still under the protection of the British Crown, which took place from 1899 until 1961 (Abu Hakima, 1984; Casey, 2007). At the time, Kuwait had adopted the Indian Rupee as a main currency. The testimony of Mubarak Mubarak (75) for example, highlights the nature of television’s circulation in this early market climate.

It was even during the time of the Rupee. I remember the Rupee, a blue banknote of a hundred, which had a depiction of an elephant, and of George [King George VI]. George of Britain, and an elephant, it had the picture of the King on the back, and on the back a blue print. I’m not sure how much [did the TV cost], a thousand, or a little short of. ‘Mother! I want a radio-cinema.’ ‘Oh son!’ I said, ‘I want one!’ They brought it and
installed it for us. We started fiddling with it. During dusty weather, we’d get Aramco station, in Saudi Arabia (Al-Mubarak, 75).61

The testimonies of other narrators from different parts of the city seem to highlight certain distinctions in the price ranges of these early purchases. However, it shows that most—if not all—of these purchases were made with the Rupee rather than the local Dinar, considering that the Dinar had only come after the independence of the state in 1961.

61 It was only natural for Mubarak’s “radio-cinema” to pick up Aramco’s station. Aramco Station was an American station founded and operated significantly early within the Saudi region by the employees of the Aramco Oil Company, established in 1957 (Al-Sarami, 2007; Boyd, 1970).
“When we first bought it, it was for two thousand Dinars, and had two doors [the currency was later corrected by her daughter], two thousand Rupees” (Um Abdulla, 82-84).

I don’t know how much did we buy it for. It was in Rupees…I don’t know. It was cheap, it wasn’t expensive. The Rupee was the currency of Kuwait. It [the Rupee] was blessed, it had such a blessing. They’d give your pay, fifty or sixty Rupees, you’d eat and drink with it and get the groceries with it (Fairouz, 67).

According to Paul Case (1952), the 1950s in general was a period in which American merchandise was rerouting straight to Kuwait, and the influx of Westerners changed the prices in the city. One of the narrators, Ali Al-Qattan (74), speaks of a period in which the government set a certain deadline before which both currencies were valid. Al-Qattan also speaks of a certain regulation of prices after the spread of the National model around the 1960s.

“The price started going down a bit. It wasn’t that expensive at the time to be honest […]. We used to buy it [for] 200 Rupees (around $42 at the time). 200 Rupees, possibly about 12 inches” (Al-Qattan, 74).

After the 1961 independence from the British Crown, Kuwait switched from the Indian Rupee into the newly printed Kuwaiti Dinar, exchanging the Rupee for Sterling in the Reserve Bank of India (Al-Yahya, 1993).62 Despite the earlier purchases discussed above, an equally adequate assumption would be that television in Kuwait was generally purchased with new money.

“You had Al-Ghanim dealership, Al-Yousifi dealership, you had Al-Itihad company, they all sold, they would sell [television sets]. It wasn’t cheap […] about 300, 250 Dinars

62 Financial scholar Mohammad Al-Yahya (1993), who believes that Kuwait has come to its currency rather late in its life, speaks of a Gulf-restricted Rupee that was issued shortly before the production of the Dinar. This was due to the drainage of the currency caused by the illegal gold trade in the area.
(approximately $800 at the time). Yes…it used to be in Rupees before mind you. Later, the Dinar happened” (Um Sa’ad Bshara, 80).

“No by Allah, it wasn’t expensive. By Allah, within the range of 60 Dinars, 70 Dinars” (Al-Shilahy, 74).

In the remote city of Shu’aiba, Um Sultan, a Bedouin woman from Al-Azmi tribe, remembers switching from the Rupee to the Dinar almost two years into her marriage. She bought her first device in the 1960s, during her “bride years,” as she calls them. She estimated that it cost 700 Rupees, purchased and paid for in installments of about 100 Rupees a month. Whether by the Dinar or by the Rupee, a comparative assessment of the participants’ recollection on that particular subject indicates gross inconsistencies and contradictions in the prices of the devices. While many agree over the fact that television had cost something within the 60-70 Dinar range, the Rupee prices range from 200 to 1000. The question is therefore: what to make of these contradicting accounts? And how would one be able to validate them? The absolute validation of such accounts, as well as identifying the precise cost of the device, might be beyond the abilities of historians, especially with the lack of clear sales records and such.

Additionally, many variables restrict the process of this investigation; some are memory-related, like age, memory functionality, and bias of the participant. Others, however, are content-related, like the model of the device, the width of the screen, and so on. An interesting historical record in that regard comes from Haj Abbas Ashkanani. Ashkanani, an iconic historical figure in Kuwaiti culture, has kept a receipt for an Andrea television set purchased on November 10, 1963, which at the time cost 260 Kuwaiti Dinars (Approximately $1000; Ashkanani, 2009). Soon enough, however, the way of all other technological adoptions, the novelty period of television came to an end.
Summary. If one were to summarize the distinct characteristics of this period of television’s integration into culture, it would mostly involve the poetic and cryptic aura that surrounded television’s arrival at the time. This is also reflected in the stories being told in preparation for the phenomenon, with particular attention to how differently such stories were told based on how approximate the narrator was to modernity in the first place. In this instance, certain economic and ethnic variables also may come into play.

From a meta-perspective, in a demonstration of the extensively familiar and name-based social matrix of Kuwaiti society, the arrival/novelty period of television creates an almost unanimous narration of memories that refer to specific members of the community, linking the early period of television integration with certain models, certain devices, and certain Kuwaiti families. In this instance, the name of Murad Behbehani, as the pioneer of television in Kuwait, surfaced in the mind of the early generation of television recipients. In the cultural version of television history, Behbehani takes the forefront rather than the government, and is remembered as the merchant who brought television into the community as a cultural initiative, before the government took over. This is despite the fact that today Behbehani’s name has somewhat faded into obscurity.

Additionally, television seemed to have penetrated the community during a period of “economic crystallization” in which Kuwaiti was trying to find its economic identity. While the later sets were purchased with the newly introduced Kuwaiti Dinar, the early black-and-white sets were mostly purchased with the Indian Rupee. When such reminiscences are analyzed externally, they display certain inconsistencies in the prices recalled.

Corresponding with the literature review, the next section discusses yet another variation in the integration history of Kuwaiti television: that of the familiarization process.
Third Area, Familiarization: The Appropriation of Television in Kuwaiti Society

This section discusses a more mature era in television’s life story with the people, one in which television affirms itself as an integral component of Kuwaiti society. While the qualitative nature of this study and the flexible nature of personal memories prohibits providing these periods with clear dates, it is generally safe to assume that television began familiarizing itself in Kuwait during the mid-1960s. In the literature review, television’s familiarization process concerned its dispersion into society, its drastic sales figures, and the resistance patterns it encountered. The oral accounts of the narrators in that particular period seems especially rich, considering that this period stretches longer than the novelty period of television. The narrators discussed several aspects of this period, including the economic gap in television ownership, the geographical/ethnic gap in television ownership, and the resistance of the community to television.

Economical gap of television ownership. Despite the small and intimate nature of the community, it couldn’t be denied that a certain economical gap did exist at the time. This was particularly noticeable in the period before the middle class was widely dispersed and regulated across Kuwaiti society in the wake of the oil boom. Muhammad Al-Ghuwainim (70), an inhabitant of the Salmiyya coastal area of Kuwait since the 1950s, refers to the elite Kuwaiti families—like Al-Bader family—as one of the early adopters of the television technology. He cites the merchants’ ability to travel and their accessibility to other cultures as main elements in the spread of television in the city.

The merchants, the people of the sea, those who traveled to India, Zanzibar, and those countries [...] technology would come to us from those who came, the travelers outside.
They would import it, they would discover these things there, they would bring it and set stores in here, and sell it to the people (Al-Ghuwainim, 70).

This is certainly true. Cinema figure Khalid Al-Siddiq (1997) documents that Kuwaiti sailors for instance were exposed to cinema technology as early as their seafaring days, when they docked in cosmopolitan cities like India for instance. With television, it seems that the upper strata were also among the first to adopt the television technology.

Not everybody had a television set […] just the well-off people, those who were doing well, to be honest, possibly the merchants or the ship captains, or those who have traveled and seen India and Africa, and saw the television at other places (Bu Kubar, 58).

At the time, not every house could own a car, cars were expensive and [were available for] he who was opulent and well off. It was the same with television, no one could buy it. Television was expensive […] people have suffered trying to accept this thing inside their houses. Their bewilderment, their fear, this boom that has occurred from ‘71 to ‘73 (Al-Maghriby, 52).

In many ways, these trends are related to the much cited ‘Adoption and Diffusion Model’ by Everett Rogers (2010). Put simply, Rogers breaks down the adopters of innovative ideas into: 1) Innovators, 2) Early adopters, 3) Early majority, 4) Late majority, and 5) Laggards. The theory was even particularized further by the Frank Bass (1969) model, which concentrated on consumer products (and referred to color television specifically). The question that presents itself here, however, is how applicable are these principles to such a small social assembly, which in 1945 consisted of about 100,000 individuals? (Freeth, 1956).

It could be estimated that early television ownership was tied to the prominent families in Kuwait. Other witnesses of this early economical gap were Basem Al-Darwish (54) and Fairouz
Fairouz (67). While Al-Darwish attended school with a member of the royal family, Fairouz was the working class son of a straw weaver. In his testimony, it seems that Darwish is linking his first clear knowledge of television through this chatter that involved a member of the royal family.

The school, being close to Dasman palace [the royal palace]…so, some students with us were from the Subah [royal] family. So, they had more advantages. I think…I don’t remember exactly. But, there was a kid I knew…I don’t remember his name. He was very polite and quiet and isolated […] I remember walking along with my friends, and I think among the chatter they would speak of television or such (Al-Darwish, 54).

We were young of course…we were in Sharq and we didn’t have a television set. But we would hear about those who were well off [economically], they had TVs…which was in black and white. So, we would be at…for example the house of Abdul Rahman Al-Roumi…had a television set. We would go and gather there and watch television (Fairouz, 67).

Indeed, Al-Roumi family, the family that Fairouz referred to, is one of the influential families of Kuwait, with many members still linked very powerfully within the Kuwaiti social and financial matrix. Earlier testimonies highlighted how the adoption of cinema had also followed similar patterns. The memoir of Dr. Mary Allison (1994), who practiced medicine and missionary work in Kuwait between the 1930s and the 1960s, also recalls visiting the houses of highly placed members of the community, and encountering certain auditory and visual technology (like wide-lens-cameras and radios).

Despite their differences, all the previous testimonies share a certain common factor, and that is that their narrators have all been living within the Kuwaiti mainland. Away from that
mainland, however, and particularly in the Kuwaiti Island of Failaka, another instance of social conditioning was taking place.

“The economic status of the people wasn’t luxurious enough for everybody to afford a [television set], […] and in the beginning of the 60s, possibly ‘67 or ‘66, television began to enter the island” (Al-Failakawi, 54).

The previous testimony belongs to Bader Al-Failakawi, a 54-year-old man with a slightly different context and story. Al-Failakawi’s situation is unique because he spent his entire childhood in Failaka, a small island adjacent to Kuwait, with relics that trace all the way to 334 BC, dating back to the time of Alexander the Great (Abdu, 1962; Al-Shamlan, 1986; Al-Tamimi, 1998). When Abdul Aziz Al-Rushaid (1978) wrote his historical account of Kuwait in 1926, 1,200 individuals inhabited Failaka, and it contained 200 houses and 4 mosques. The people of Failaka were placed in a cultural axis, considering that they were not contained within the city walls, nor were they travelers or Bedouins. The Failakawiyya (as the natives of Failaka are called) are composed mostly of Arab Persian immigrants living over ten miles from the mainland, with many associated with fishing and sea trade (Al-Rushaid, 1978; Al-Shamlan, 1986). The island is known for its simplicity and self-sufficient living, before the 1990 Gulf War resulted in its complete desertion. According to Al-Failakawi’s testimony, there existed a significant lag in technological adoption between Kuwait and Failaka.

Because not everybody had the ability to buy a television set, you’d possibly only find the one house in the neighborhood which would do so. My father, may Allah preserve and heal him, he worked in trade and groceries and all that, so he was economically comfortable. So, he bought a television set. I think it was called Andrea, or Admiral, and
it was a wooden box with a full frame and a screen, and buttons that go tuck, tuck, tuck (Al-Failakawi, 54).

In the pre oil-boom era, many others were interested enough in television to an extent that drove them to overcome this initial economic gap. With Naser Bu Kubar’s (58) family, the purchase was made through a joint payment between his father and his uncles, who possibly all inhabited the same house at the time. Bu Kubar lived in Qibla during the 1960s, in an Arabian style house that stood exactly where the Kuwait Airways building stands today. His house held nearly four to five families, which made a joint purchase for a set only fitting to their situation.

Close by, in the other core city of Sharq, lived Ali Saleh Al-Qattan (74), who grew up as a young boy practicing the craft of cotton weaving from which he gets his family name, which literally translates to “he who makes cotton.” Al-Qattan claims that following the death of his father, his older brother bought a television set in approximately 1960. If so, Al-Qattan’s house received their set significantly early, and possibly preceding the actual governmental broadcast:

There were people [who bought it] before us, there were a lot of people before us. Because it became renowned, everyone got a television set, people were getting jealous [imitating a child] ‘So and so’s family has a television set dad, why not us?’ They would fight, and make a kafuffle in the house (laughing) ‘Would you want me to get a loan so I can buy a television set? ‘Fine!’ (Al-Qattan, 74).

It is undoubtable therefore, that television purchasing accompanied a certain economical gap amongst the Kuwaiti consumers. However, besides the economical gap, testimonies of narrators also imply other conditional factors in television ownership, namely the ethnic and geographical variables.
**Geographical and ethnic variables of television ownership.** Besides the economical gap, television’s familiarization in the city may have also related to a geographical and/or an ethnic gap, both of which interrelate with the economical gap previously discussed. Television ownership therefore, may have also depended on the relative modernity of the respective region within Kuwait. Nawal, a 59-year-old woman who spent her childhood in the area of Suwabir, comments on that:

First time I watched it was at our neighbors’ house, because they were, you know… a little well-off [financially]. Then, we started going frequently, accompanied by kids. And, at the time we only knew cartoons. The first [television set] we saw was black and white, and the colors were obviously nowhere near clear. Afterwards, we saw it [television] at yet another house. Then, my father said ‘Why would you have to go to people’s houses every evening? Let’s go and get one’ […] . Because, many of them didn’t have a television set, you know? And, they had weak electricity, but us, with the others near us, we had very strong electricity. [It was] based on the circumstances of the neighborhood (Nawal, 59).

By that time, the government had established a steam station operating to the power of 30,000 KW, and had launched its first steam generator in 1954, with the consumers of electricity escalating from 2,464 to 50,000 individuals in approximately seven years (Abdu, 1962). Television’s usage therefore, as explained by Nawal’s testimony, could very well have been influenced by the regional distinctions of energy production and consumption in the city (See Figure 22).
Another intriguing area that highlights this particular divide was the city of Ahmadi, a relatively remote area south of the main city, which also made it ideal as an operating base for the Kuwaiti Oil Company. Al-Ahmadi was named after Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jabir, the Crown Prince of Kuwait at the time (Freeth, 1972). The city presented an interesting paradox of highly urbanized British residential zones, as well as approximate Bedouin shanties in the northern area (Alissa, 2013). In 1959, Al Ahmadi was inhabited by 800 Americans/British, 3,000 Indians/Pakistanis, around 2,000 Kuwaitis, and 2,000 other citizens of the Gulf area (Al-Rayyis, 2014).

One of the residents of the less luxurious sides of Ahmadi, where the Bedouins lived in straw shanties, was Sa’ud Al-Khaldy (50), who speaks particularly of what might be labeled “the
I was born in 1963. Because, by the nature of my origin, I belong to a tribal Bedouin society. In Kuwait, that society’s reach for civilization was delayed. It remains civilized, like all of Kuwait after the establishment and independence. However, the tribal residue remains still. The norms, habits, and traditions, have slightly delayed the Bedouin community from early civility. So, as an idea, we have heard of television, the device…a machine that talked and contained pictures […] Possibly by [19]62/63, we’d received, as a Bedouin society, the idea that there, inside your house, was a device that broadcasted sound and pictures and such… so we understood the notion of television. For me personally, my father bought a set in ‘68, and it was about 14 inches, a very small device (Al-Khaldy, 50).

Al-Khaldy, who lived far away from the city, received his first set seven years after the official broadcast, and around eleven years after the introduction of the device into the city. The Bedouin component of Al-Khaldy’s conception of television is one of great substance, and one that would surface constantly through his subsequent testimonies. Despite a current full integration within the local social matrix, members of the Bedouin community still hold significantly different social characteristics than those of the Hadhari “or city dwellers;” these include marriage habits and conservative values (Al-Tamimi, 1998; Ghabra, 1997; Longva, 2006). While the sea folks maintained a relatively secure lifestyle and in consequence grew more accommodating, the Bedouin folks faced a harsh desert existence and in turn developed particular loyalty to their tribal structure (Al-Yasin, 1985; Storm, 1938).
Like all Kuwaiti cities, the city of Ahmadi grew more familiar to the arrival of television. In fact, it is most likely that Ahmadi had preceded the rest of Kuwait in that venture due to its European inhabitants. In the following testimony, Sh’ouf Al-Shilahy recalls his childhood days during the spread of television sets in the city of Ahmadi, and the visual alteration that occurred in the city as a consequence.

We’d be walking the streets on our way to Kuwait or anywhere else, looking at television aerials, they’d say ‘This house has a television set, this one doesn’t, their neighbor doesn’t!’ ‘How would you know?’ They’d say ‘this aerial coming out of the house, it tells you where a television is.’ So, they would look at the aerials above the houses (Al-Shilahy, 74).

A similar visual/urban signification of the TV aerial was also observed during the early days of the device in the United States, where antennas started representing their own social and cultural implications, and children indulged in the street game of “watching the antenna rotate” (Barfield, 2008). Similarly in the Gulf, the 1970s are recalled as a period that had witnessed a surprising increase in the sightings of television aerials on house roofs (Abdul Malik, 1996). This is according to the recollections of Dr. Ahmad Abdul Malik (1996), the head of media affairs in the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf.

Outside of Al-Ahmadi, in the less isolated city of Salmiyya, similar phenomena were also witnessed by the young. Salmiyya was a vibrant Kuwaiti village that used to be associated with the fishmongers, until members of the Bedouin Azmi tribe urbanized and inhabited it. Khaleefa Al-Harran (65), a member of the Azmi tribe who lived in Salmiyya during the 1960s, shared similar cultural perceptions of the antenna. For Al-Harran, the antenna provided additional excitement for his childhood antics with the slingshot. According to him, he wasn’t the only one.
“A pigeon would land on it [the antenna] or any other bird […]. We would sling it, it wouldn’t pass us (laughing), we had nothing to do, we were idle at noon” (Al-Harran, 65).

Going back to Al-Shilahy’s life in Ahmadi, it is important to realize that some of the residents of Ahmadi had obtained the geographical advantage of living where a certain fusion was occurring between Bedouin and Western cultures. For other Bedouins, life was significantly more rudimentary. Rushaid Al-Rushaid (85), only purchased a television set upon the insistence of his children:

“In the old days, we sat at it [television] casually, just for news and the like. Otherwise, we didn’t care much for it, we were Badu “Bedouin” people in the past, people of camels and sheep and…” (Al-Rushaid, 85).

Television ownership therefore, may have also been affected by the ethnic and geographical nature of the Kuwaiti sub-community in question. It is important to remember however, that such gaps, whether geographical, economical or ethnic, were eventually to be bridged in the community, especially when television had regulated itself economically in society. When that happened, and when television altered its status from phenomena to regularity, it became a force to be reckon with for those who resisted it. The next subsection of the familiarization period of television discusses that very topic. It recalls and analyzes the resistance efforts towards television, as narrated and supported by the stories of the interviewees

**Resistance.** In his Adoption and Diffusion Model, Rogers (2010) states that usually (pointing specifically to the third world to illustrate an example), those early adapters of technology seem to need it the least in terms of improvement and vice versa, labeling this the innovativeness/needs paradox. In other words, the ones who have adopted television early did
not necessarily require the liberal and tolerant values it brought along with it, since they were
open-minded enough to purchase the device in the first place.

Some therefore, felt an initial degree of resistance to television in Kuwait, whether on a
religious or a social level. Hasan Abbas (66), who lived in the city of Maidan Hawalli,
remembers that his father exhibited similar resistance to the device. Abbas and his brother kept
going to other houses to watch television, and their mother grew anxious. Later on, for the sake
of his two sons, Abbas’ father finally relented to his wife’s pleas.

My mother compelled my father, ‘It shouldn’t be, Abu-Hamza! It shouldn’t be that your
children are outside at night because of television!’ […] It was all right in the summer,
they would play in the alley: hol and marbles and spirals and balboul (variations of
Kuwaiti street games). That was fine. However, [when television came] it was school
season, and television started in November I think. November, the height of the school
season. It was pressure, pressure, and pressure (Abbas, 66).

Abbas’ mother urged her husband to buy a small set, so that his children would not feel
compelled to watch it outside until a late period. Abbas recalls that his father originally wanted a
small model. He went to the previously referenced Asad Allah Amadi, who was a member of the
Al-Kandiry family, related by ancestry to Abbas’ family back from the days of the Persian
desert. According to Abbas, despite his father’s earlier intentions for a small set, he was
gradually mesmerized by the bigger models once he was in the store.

He left [the store] with a television set bigger than 21” […] and my mother told him ‘Oh
Abu Hamza! This one is very big,’ and he said, addressing me: ‘Listen to what I’m about
to tell you. Focus! ‘I didn’t want to buy it, but I was worried for the safety of my children
being late, and you’ve pressured me so. I am going to Hell, but I wouldn’t want to enter
Hell through its narrowest doors, I want to enter Hell through the widest gates’ (Abbas, 66).

This association between “Hell” and “television” offers an interesting analogy of a structural and semiotic nature. In it, the connotation is between “hell and the size of the screen. Since television was already culturally established as a right of passage to hell in a conservative culture that was only coming up to modernity, then the next significant symbolism would be “the size of the screen.” Here, television again embraces its “window” symbolism in the mentality of the audience. However, this time the association is slightly altered in regards of where the window leads. Scholars have discussed the screen’s semiotic function as a window to the outside world (Spigel, 1992; 1988) or as a reality within a reality (Manovich, 2001). However, the screen in this particular cultural instant represents nothing short of a gateway to hell. The natural conclusion therefore, assisted by the amount of viewing pleasure gained by the size of the screen, is that the bigger the screen, the bigger the iniquity, and the wider the entrance gate to hell is.

As thoroughly discussed in the literature review, the religious stigmatization of television has been a habitual phenomenon throughout its integration in the Arab world. Having said that, the Kuwaiti society’s grip on religious preservation was much looser than that of the Saudi society for example. This is possibly because the coastal nature of the Kuwaiti community may have lessened the religious resistance against the medium, while at the same time it was stimulated in places like Saudi Arabia for instance. The Saudi religious lobby, or the Ulama as they are called, made television adoption a particular challenge for King Faisal in the mid 1960s (Abdul Hai, 2012, Boyd & Shatzer, 1993). Indeed, the rise of Islamic extremist groups like Juhaiman Al-Otaiby in the 1970s was fueled by their opposition to many aspects of modern technology, including television (Al-Huzaimi, 2010; Hegghammer & Lacroix, 2007). In his
memoirs, Naser Al-Huzaimi (2010), comments that many fundamentalist Saudi youngsters fled their houses seeking refuge with Al-Otaiby after television was brought into their households.

Despite not being geographically remote from Saudi Arabia, Kuwaitis of the past appeared as if they have been governed by intimacy and tradition rather than clear-cut religious doctrines. When asked about whether they have sensed any religious resistance to television during its inception years, many answered negatively.

Nowadays everything has evolved and such, there is [that discourse of] ‘that is halal and that is sacrilege!’ In the old days it wasn’t like that, people were living insouciantly, they were kind and with good intent and they didn’t have such things (Um Ahmad, 56).

No, look… the people of Kuwait in the old days were living on instinct and on a day-to-day basis. As I told you, the neighborhoods were like one family, there was no religious extremism. Even the idea of the head cover didn’t enter society until maybe 1978 or 1979 (Al-Maghriby, 52).

Twenty years onwards from the 1960s however, the ideological makeup of Kuwait would change with what was labeled the “Islamic revival,” which swept Kuwait in the 1980s (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011; Tétreault & Al-Mughni, 1995). The Islamic revival apparently caused a degree of gradual alteration to the intellectual mentality of the 1950s and 1960s, as previously affected by the more liberal Pan-Arabism discourse (Ghabra, 1997). This religious caution over visual technology seems to have been strengthened further in the next stage of television’s development, particularly when the satellite dish surfaced.

“I don’t remember any religious resistance to television. We, we have transformed from the simple tolerant nature, into a state where… pardon what I’m about to say… I mean, I believe that religion has become a business brand” (Al-Darwish, 54).
One should not, however, ignore that no community is completely unanimous in its views. Abdulwahab Al-Nifisy for example (57), who belongs to a religious Islamic mission, views the later religious undertones of television conception as a good thing rather than a disadvantage, in contrast to other participants. He believes the previous liberal conception of television to be a mere inadvertence. He also believes that nowadays, people are more aware of their religious duties than in the old days.

“I would say that it was an inadvertence, a religious inadvertence regarding that issue. Plus, as far as I know, [in the old days] people didn’t care to pray in mosques as much as they prayed in their houses” (Al-Nifisy, 57).

Regardless of the conflicted viewpoints, it is almost unanimously agreed that people’s perception of television was somewhat liberated in the past, and that much of their fear was fueled by the misconception of abstraction, rather than by religion. And, once the resistance (religious or otherwise) had subsided, then the familiarity period took over, and television started making its way into the Kuwaiti home.

**Summary.** Looking at this period in its entirety, how could the familiarization period of television be summarized? And how in turn does it relate to its integration in the Kuwaiti culture? Firstly, while the previous section, that of television’s novelty, displayed that television had made its way to the market through the businesses of prominent families, this section shows that early television purchases was also linked to families who could afford it, according to the narrators’ personal accounts. The economical gap therefore, seems to have been present through both the selling and the purchase of the device. Following the usual economic models, many families who could not afford the technology right away may have faced familiar and social pressure to do so, and timed payment was also a possible solution.
Besides the usual economical factor, television purchase was also linked to other relevant factors, like the geographic region and the quality of its infrastructure, highlighting the differences between areas like Sharq, Al-Ahmadi, or even the island of Failaka. These factors had not only governed whether one could buy a television, but also how late would one acquire it in comparison to the rest of the community. However, while it is safe to assume that Bedouin Kuwaitis outside of the urban plane have received television later than those within the town walls, such distinctions were soon bridged with the help of many elements like community relations and timed payments.

Instances of resistance to television could have also been either community or faith driven. However, many agree that the religiosity of the community was moderate and community modeled, in the sense that it did not compare to the much stricter model of the neighboring Saudi Arabia. This made for a smoother entrance of television into the community than that of its neighboring state. The religious approach to television may have also mirrored the changes that have occurred in society from the progressive 1960s to the conservative 1980s.

The next phase of television’s cultural integration also has its own unique cultural features, that of television’s domestication. While some narrators remembered that period casually, others obtained more distinctive reminiscences about televisions in their houses.

**Fourth Area, Domestication: Television’s Entrance in the Kuwaiti Home**

Making its way through the novelty factor and the accompanying gaps, television gradually made its way inside the conservative Kuwaiti houses.

When my mother, may Allah rest her soul, told us that ‘your father went to buy a television set,’ we sat at the house, me and my sisters and brother. We couldn’t wait until
the Hajji\textsuperscript{63} came with the TV. The television got there and it was as if a wedding was taking place in the house. We set it down and were swirling around it and so…I remember it being a black and white set. There was no color television [at the time] (Al-Darwish, 54).

The previous testimony belongs to Basem Al-Darwish (54), who self-identifies as the son of the first Quranic reciter on Kuwaiti radio. He came upon television at six or seven years of age, presumably around 1967. He was in his Sharq City house, a particular neighborhood that was labeled “the neighborhood of Kurds” in reference to the one family of Kurds that resided at the end of the street. Breadwinners across the core cities of Kuwait, who were mostly men, were apparently treating their children to television sets, provided that they could afford it.

“My father, may Allah rest his soul, bought it for the children in [19]62. Yes, black-and-white, and he bought it. He said, ‘Mmm, cartoons and whatnot, for the children,’” says Um Sa’ad (80), a then–resident of Al-Thnayyan building in Qibla, near one of the local graveyards. An 80-year-old woman who witnessed the urban alteration of Kuwait in its entirety, Um Sa’ad’s family purchased television relatively early, which provided an adequate source of entertainment for her children, especially after the death of her husband: “I did not let my kids go outside, so they would sit by the television.”

It seems that the primary cycle of television purchase—at least among the working class—was fueled mostly by peer pressure from spouses and/or children. Abdulla Al-Nifisy (57), a previous resident of Hawallli city, tells of his father’s decision to purchase a television set in

\textsuperscript{63} Hajji is a word commonly used to describe members of the elderly sects in Kuwait. It comes from the term “Haj,” which means, “pilgrimage.” Labeling someone Hajji (Hajjiya in the case of the woman), indicates that they have accomplished their pilgrimage duty, a required practice in Islamic theology, which by implication, refers to their age as well.
order to please his wife. His wife, until the purchase of their own set, was used to watching it regularly at other people’s houses.

It was settled for him. He said, ‘I must buy a televisions set.’ So, one time he dropped her off [at the place where she regularly watches television], and [secretly] went to buy a television set, and brought it home without an antenna. He turned it on, and it’s the same clear picture, but it was a bit hazy, so he went to my mother at her friends and asked for her to come with him. She said that she was watching a film. He said that he nagged her and nagged her until she said, ‘Fine, let’s go.’ The Hajiyya [his mother] went to the house. He switched the TV on for her. She was surprised, she was happy (Al-Nifisy, 57).

In the literature review, the domestication period of television was a particularly rich period in its cultural integration, concerning aspects like television’s interaction with the home decor, its embrace by the family and the parents, and the conceptual difficulties that came with it. This section was broken down by the narrators’ memories into topics considering television’s relation with other domestic components, television as décor, parental control, viewing habits, the consumption junction, and the infamous miracle aspect.

**Television’s relation with other domestic components.** As discussed in the literature review, the Kuwaiti house—and in extension the city—was dramatically and abruptly altered in a manner that is completely detached from the old model (Al-Baqshi, 2010; Al-Jassar, 2009; Elsheshtawy, 2008; Freeth, 1972). Television however, came into the city briefly before the Kuwaiti domestic signature achieved that 180° shift. Therefore, it had a brief chance before the 1960s to appropriate itself within the earlier domestic model. In the beginning, the modern device that was a visual marvel may have clashed with its primitive surroundings. In the old Kuwaiti home, technology existed side by side with its crude counterpart. This fusion between
traditional and contemporary is a specific cultural form of adoption that is not uncommon in regions of the third world. In Bengali kitchens for instance, simultaneous sightings of the ancient “saddle-quern” and the modern “electric stove” were quite common (Chakrabarty, 2009). Similarly in Kuwait, television was domesticated in a very cultural fashion. Television found its way amongst the now instinct component of the Kuwaiti household, like the pottery cooling urn, the karouka (the children’s bed), and the gas lamp. One narrator, Muhammad Al-Ghuwainim (70), recalls the structure of his old home in Salmiyya city, and the placement of the television device within it:

An old Arabian structure, chandal [wood], a brick house, with chandal on the top, and pillars, if you know what those were, and paschile [a different kind of wood], and they would pour cement over it. It was light cement because they were poor and they had nothing. We’d pour the cement and it would result in five or four rooms with a “leewan” opposite them […] We’d put the television in the room where we ate lunch and dinner. The whole family with my family, mother and father and children, would sit in that room during dinner or lunch time, and television would be in that room to view (Al-Ghuwainim, 70).

I was young, about five or six years old, we’d sit in the courtyard in Salhiyya, okay? They would put it [television] in the “leewan” and we’d sit and watch it there. We’d spread a mat and sit and watch it […], we were at Qibla, opposite Nayif Palace. It [television] was with us in the house, we’d take it out of the room and put it in the leewan […]. The weather before was hot and dusty and poisonous. We loved the courtyard and the roof, meaning that from day to night we’d be sitting in the leewan…we’d have breakfast, lunch, dinner…all in the leewan or the courtyard, right? So we’d be protective
of the device, we’d put it inside to keep it safe from the dust and the wind and the sun, the severe heat. Later, in the evenings, after the sun set, we’d take it out and that was it (Al-Rushaidan, 58).

The old Kuwaiti house was one of distinctive characteristics. One of these distinctive characteristics was the “leewan,” which contextualizes the experience of television watching in the memory of Buthaiyna Al-Rushaidan and Muhammad Al-Ghuwainim. The leewan was a shaded space that lay between the rooms and the courtyard (Al-Ghunaim, 1999). In the Levant culture, the leewan dated back to 2,000 years ago as a covered mountain terrace, and is a vaulted portal connecting some rooms to the outside (Hadid, 2002; Khoueiry, 2002). The leewan was an architectural element that did not survive the urban alteration into the second half of the century. Perhaps there’s no better way of describing the pre-oil town house and the leewan better than by quoting architect Muhannad Al-Baqshi (2010), through his impeccably executed account of Kuwait’s spatial history:

Mud courtyard houses extruded from the ground, their silent walls facing the road, while lively laywans (colonnades or verandas) surrounded the sun-flooded inner yards. The streets were corridors in which no event was scheduled, yet any scene was possible; it was as much a playground for passersby as for children. There were no sidewalks, no front yards, no corner bakeries, no cars, and no signs; camels, mules, and people traveled through to a main square, the bazaar, or the sea front (p.25).

Similarly to Buthaina Al-Rushaidan, Al-Baqshi addresses the leewan (or laywan) as a substantial characteristic of the old Kuwaiti house. Television viewing for Buthaina was close to an actual event, that involved taking the television out of its resting place and placing it in the leewan. For Buthaina, there was less passivity or casualty than there is today. Television’s
viewing involved a great deal of context, and apparently some preparation. She spoke of a period when the Kuwaiti house was exposed to the elements, before the new models added the “roof” feature, making it unnecessary to protect the device, which at the time was already losing its novelty. Another narrator who contributes to that narrative is Khalifa Al-Harran (65), a previous resident of Salmiyya City.

In the winter we would put it in…we didn’t call it the “saloon” as we do now, they called it the “sitting room.” It was the saloon and it was big, 10 meters (32 ft), I remember it being 10 meters, or 8 meters, or 7 meters […] The Kuwaitis before, what would they say? “The refrigerator room,” “the provision room.” This “refrigerator room” was for the refrigerator (repetition), the provision room was for provisions […]. And, in the summer we would put it, as you say, with a fan, sometimes we put it in the leewan (Al-Harran, 65).

Another domestic component that connects to television history in Kuwait is the diwaniyya, which has been thoroughly examined by scholars. The diwaniyya is a substantial part of the Kuwaiti house that functions as a social channel to the family in question, where the men would gather to chat, play games like backgammon, and drink tea (Hussain, A., 1984; Khattab, 2005). When asked where their early televisions were placed, many narrators seem to connect their television related memories with the diwaniyya, similar to how they did with the leewan.

Friday night, they’d have an Iraqi music concert [on the television], every Friday. We had, like… a diwaniyya, where we put a second smaller television set for the men folk […]. The big television was for us, the small one was in the diwaniyya for the men (Nawal, 59).
We had a table (drink crate), either a *Sinalko*[^64] crate, or a *Pepsi* crate, we’d stack one on the other, and drape a curtain over it, we’d cover it so it would look good (laughing), and we’d watch it […] in the main diwaniyya, the family one, where we gathered (Al-Qattan, 74).

The diwaniyya is considered an integral, almost daily part of the Kuwaiti social mechanism, and is one of the protected cultural spaces that contribute significantly to policy making, like the mosque (Al-Kandary, 2002; Al-Najjar, 2000; Tétreault, 1993).

“It was [television] in the place where we’d sit, the salon, the diwaniyya in a way…yeah, we would all gather there. It was like a living room for us” (Al-Mithin, 58).

According to Leila Al-Mithin (58), their television placement was seasonal, where they kept it in the salon or diwaniyya during the winter, and brought it into the courtyard in the summer.[^65] Unlike the leewan, the diwaniyya very much survived the morphing of the Kuwaiti house, albeit significantly modernized (Al-Baqshi, 2010; Al-Jassar, 2009; Tétreault & Al-Mughni, 1995). Television and the diwaniyya have been bound together culturally within the Kuwaiti domestic living space. In his socio-spatial analysis of the Kuwaiti house, Omar Khattab (2005) highlights this relationship by categorizing the television set as an integral part of the modern diwaniyya, along with possibly a music set and a reading area. Furthermore, Muhannad Al-Baqshi (2010) particularly points to the “flat-screen television” as one of the more contemporary components of the modern diwaniyya.

As a space, the diwaniyya was also very gender-specific, which in the old Kuwait

[^64]: *Sinalko*, a German soft drink that was ubiquitous in the Kuwait of the pre-oil era. Today, the *Sinalko* drink is emblematic to a particularly nostalgic period of Kuwaiti history.

[^65]: Because the diwaniyya in Kuwait is primarily a male space, Al-Mithin’s reference to the diwaniya may have either been casual or during a time when the men weren’t gathered there.
provided political precedence for men over women (Tétrault, 1993). Considering that the television has treated the diwaniyya in a usual context, this could also highlight the relationship between television and domestic gender habits:

[The women] would tend to the house, and the children, and their schooling. She cared about the house more than she did about television, (repetition). Once in a blue moon, she’d watch television. My mother didn’t have any inclination for television. But the men, they were there. They’d put it in the diwaniyya and they’d put it outside in the courtyard here. The old sets were big, and wooden, not like the current plasma ones or others that you could carry (Fairouz, 67).

Another specific analogy could yet be drawn from this association between the diwaniyya and the television set in Kuwait, one that has less to do with gender and more to do with spatial policies in Kuwait. Globally, scholars believed that television represented a merging point between the indoors and outdoors, in a period when the American home for instance was embracing natural or “green” symbolism more and more after WWII (Spigel, 1992). In Kuwait, certain parallels could be drawn if one were to consider that television was placed in the diwaniyya, which was also considered a space that bestrides the public-private divide in Kuwaiti society, bringing non-family members into the domestic realm (Tétrault, 1993; 2001).66

Things were slightly different within the Bedouin living quarters, mainly outside of the main city. Um Sultan (73-76), a member of the Azmi tribe who covered her face with a burka, remembers tents made of stock plumage during her younger years. She moved from the area of Arifjan, where she tended a farm, to the area of Shu’aiba, where they most probably received their first television set. In the light of the urban migration, she moved to the village of Fuhaiheel

---

66 This was because the diwaniyya was a room in the house, but obtained a separate entrance to ensure security for the house folks who didn’t sit there, mainly the women.
in 1971, and then to Subahiyya. This means that despite her further urban movement inward, Um Sultan and her family remained relatively outside the cosmopolitan “Hadhari” region. In Al-Subahiyya, Um Sultan remembers a house where television was on one end of the house, and livestock was on the other. With Um Sultan, the arrival of television is associated with the memories of marriage, as it came shortly afterwards. Um Sultan is illiterate, but all of her children and grandchildren subsequently attended school.

Um Sultan was not the only Bedouin to have had a fused urban existence. Rusahid Al-Rusahid (85), a previous resident of Al Jileeb area, purchased his first black-and-white set upon the insistence of his children. In his house, he cared for 40 heads of livestock, which accompanied him throughout his later migration into the more urbanized areas in the late 1960s. He currently resides in Rabia, having secured his livestock in their own Jakhoor (stable).

Whether for Bedouins or the Hadharis, television has managed to exist in that particular transformative era of the Kuwaiti domestic space, incorporating itself into the old domestic system successfully, and merging with gender and spatial politics. It also witnessed the morphing of domestic components like the diwaniyya, and the disappearance of other components like the leewan, as the Kuwaiti house changed. After understanding television’s interaction with other domestic components, the next section discusses an era in the narrators’ stories when television is looked at as an actual part of the domestic décor itself.

**Television as decor: The cupboard, the drapes, and the aesthetics.** Once it secured its place as a familiar fundament in the Kuwaiti house of the 1960s, it seemed that television in Kuwait had corresponded with the more global tendency of becoming part of the decoration, which mostly characterized its early stages in the home (See Figures 23, 24 & 25). While early American televisions were adorned with huge frames to aesthetically represent the impact of
theater (Barfield, 2008), television sets in Kuwait, the Andrea models especially, are remembered mainly for their cupboard-like appearance.

It had a wooden cupboard and a door that would open, two doors opening two ways [...] there was a control knob which consisted of two rings, the first ring for the channels, and the second ring was for refining the channel. And of course, you would turn [the knob] until your hand falls [of exhaustion] in order to get a decent broadcast (Al-Darwish, 54).

During its initial domestication in the Western world, television was briefly categorized as furniture, indicating the social status of the owner (Barfield, 2008). In urban America, televisions were hidden behind cupboards during social visits, before its existence became less clashing with the aesthetics of the house (Spigel, 1992).

In our neighborhood, there were maybe two houses that had television [...] They’d look at that new thing, which was a box. It looked, luxurious, you know! It had a door and a cupboard and such. It was beautiful, like a curio, a bauble, decoration and such. They’d put it in the middle and on top of it they’d put some sort of fabric (Abdulla Al-Bloushi, 63).

In this particularly visual memory, Al-Bloushi speaks of a cultural tradition that would surface in several other stories, that of the TV burka. “Television had a door that closes and locks and it was neat. I mean, you would put it in a certain place. They’d keep it safe. The house [folks] would cover it up with fabric, shelter it. Some people would knit [the cover] at home” (Al-Bloushi, 63).

According to the stories of the narrators, the TV burka was a standard practice back when television was a precious domestic commodity. Um Sa’ad (80) reminisces on how “they would cover it, like you say…like it was something important in the house, they’d turn it into a
They would cover it from the sun, and… it had, what you would call a burka, they’d put it on top, a bag that they would design at a special tailor. Yes, they’d drape it… not anyone could [simply] turn it on, oh no! Not television! You couldn’t touch it! Your mother or father or elder brother would come and take that cover/bag off from the television, and it also had a key by the way. He’d open that door, and turn on the television set (Fahad Al-Dosari, 57).

A sheet, yeah, a protection, we had a cupboard, and when it [the broadcast] concluded, we’d close the cupboard. Sometimes, someone would come, a child with something in his hand or something, and hits the screen, so this cupboard was protection, and then we’d drape a sheet over it. At lunchtime we’d put water [jugs] on top of it for protection as well, but we’d drape it with nylon, so it wouldn’t trickle on it (Nawal, 59).

Whether viewed through its interaction with other domestic furniture or as furniture in and of itself, television’s materiality is only one aspect of its domestication process. Looking at its cultural integration history, the memories of narrators also present a different, more serious dimension of television’s relation with the home: namely, its relation with the parent-child power dynamic.
Figure 23. The old Kuwaiti house (Al-Ghunaim, 1999, p.46)
Figure 24. Examples of the old Kuwaiti urban structure and the old Kuwaiti house (Freeth, 1956, p.16)

Figure 25. An example of the traditional Kuwaiti house (Al-Ghunaim, 1999 p.80).
**Television and parental control.** In Kuwait, many of these previous testimonies also emphasized the element of power distribution within the home, more particularly, parental control.

“My mother [was in control]. I mean, during exam season, it was impossible, she’d shut it off for three months” (Leila, 58).

“It was my father of course, because we had school, yeah! After dinner it was ‘go to sleep,’ but during Friday nights he’d let us be, so he could spend time with us as well. Either he’d go to the diwaniyya to watch the Iraqi concert, or he’d sit with us (Nawal, 59).

It seems that between the 1960s and 1970s, the device started stimulating and restructuring the power balance between parents and their children, in a manner similar to how it functioned within American and English households, and roughly during the same time period (Bower, 1985; Gauntlett & Hill, 2000; Lull, 1980; Morley, 1992). For decades to come, the five local Kuwaiti newspapers would keep examining the link between television, violence, schooling, and child rearing (Al-Qina’ie, 1988; Karkatuli, 1981; Mutar, 1980).

However, the interesting thing about Kuwait is the patriarchal nature of the society, as well as the generally conservative family agendas. This in turn could have affected its relationship with television.

It was my father, there was no one else! Sometimes, they would put a certain film that starts off well, and we’d be hooked with it. So, sometimes, me and my brother would want to get close to it to watch the scene, so we’d crowd on the television, and he [my father] would simply get up and switch [off] the button. That’s it! It’s done! (Baroun, 55). My father, once he told you ‘no,’ that was it! Television time is over! I would be wanting
to watch a show and he’d say ‘go to your books,’ ‘go study,’ or something like that. ‘You have no business with television! There are some things that are indecent for you to watch! Some things that are just coarse!’ And he’d remove us [from the set]. But sometimes, when someone tells you ‘this is a vice,’ you would want to see what that vice is. I wanted to discover […] How did my father remedy that? He would push us to exhaustion so that we wouldn’t watch television. He would wake us up, and we would sleep at 9 o’clock [pm], weary from the housework and such. It was a big house with balconies. As you know, the houses in the 1970s were honestly deathly [to clean] and sturdily built, so we’d hardly ever get to watch TV because of his scheming. We’d miss it for all the work and cooking and such. He’d wake us up at five in the morning, drop us at school at six to study, so he’d shut every access [for television] that you’ve got (Sabah, 55).

That was Sabah Abdul Hamid (55), a Syrian-born Kuwaiti woman with a very peculiar story. After categorizing the participants’ input, it was decided that Sabah deserved a significant share of analytical attention amongst the narrators. Sabah’s story had a standalone quality due to its resonance with themes of migration, patriarchy, and gender divide. After her father brought her from Syria, she lived as a little girl in a house with about 14 other individuals (let alone the seven boys, according to her testimony), in the newly built city of Qadsiyya.

In the 1970s, the house contained her, her sisters, her brothers, and her rather domineering father. Sabah remembers the steel bunk beds in her Qadsiyya house that were put up for her and her sisters. To her, this humorously invited a mental image of military bunkers. Her father had imposed severe regulations and rituals for his children’s television viewing, including covering the buttons with tape, and drawing a red line between them and the set that
they were not to cross.

Yes, a red line, you’d sit here, and you’d be punished and wouldn’t watch it for two days [if you crossed it]. So, we would avoid this red line, we’d be lined up. No chairs! All on the floor, like a classroom. You sit here, you sit here, you sit here, don’t come close to there! Your feet got close to the red line! So, we would avoid [it]. Television was like a very exciting instrument, as a reward for any of us. Did you study well? You get to watch the program you love, but not in its entirety (Sabah, 55).

Sabah’s relationship with her parents, and the fact that she grew up in two culturally distinct regions, provided for two parallel narratives of parental regulations regarding television. As a child, she spent the first eight years of her life not knowing her father, living very modestly with her Syrian mother in Syria without the benefit of schooling. While there, she had a particularly interesting relationship with television. Her childhood, says Sabah, was too busy for cartoons:

My life was a bit of a grind. My beginnings were strenuous; you know? Since I was six years old. Of course, my life wasn’t [initially] in Kuwait, so I’ve been working since I was five or six, making chairs and such… so I didn’t have much time for television to begin with. So, I worked on my craft daily, and I’d come home about to fall down you know? After the exertion of a long day, I had made chairs or so…I would come and switch on the cute little television. I would watch an Arabic film for Abdul Halim Hafiz (Sabah, 55).

Television for Sabah was a relaxing distraction while she worked in the home with her mother in the Syria of the 1960s. In a Mediterranean environment that was much less harsh than that of Kuwait, Sabah plucked lemon leaves from the trees near her house, and watched
television while making blancmange for her mother.67

I would take it to the kitchen, and I would take the lemon leaves so I can fix the blancmange for her, so she’d say ‘you watch it, but don’t get too distracted, watch television.’ So, I would work. I was young. I’d get my chair and sit, do the mixing and such, whenever I was done with it [television] I’d take it and put it [back] in the living room (Sabah, 55).

Sabah later discovered that her father had married her mother a while back and brought her to Kuwait, before she was born. When she arrived to Kuwait, Sabah’s mother found herself sharing her husband with other wives, an Iraqi and a Kuwaiti (very possibly in the same house). After giving birth to two daughters, Sabah’s father, Abdul Hameed, sent his wife and her children back to Syria. He conceived Sabah after one visit to Syria. She doesn’t remember seeing him—nor knowing his name—until he came back and claimed his children in 1977-1978. She found herself in Kuwait shortly before he divorced her mother. She also found herself having to cope with half-sisters she had never known.

Watching him pull gold from buckets of yogurt, she also discovered her father’s involvement in the business of gold smuggling.68 In Kuwait, Sabah started receiving schooling. Sabah’s recollection of television is very contextual, and is bonded with memories of her father. Sabah’s father was a disciplinarian to the highest order, and Sabah believes that the gold business had put a strain on his back. When Sabah remembers television, another memory that surfaces is of her, standing on her father’s back to massage it.

67 The blancmange, or mahallabiyya, is a traditional dessert dish eaten regularly in the Arab world, akin to jelly.

68 Kuwaiti merchants are no strangers to the practice of smuggling. During its establishing phase, World War I, and World War II, Kuwait was a fertile setting for smuggling merchandise, from tea to weaponry (Al-Farhan, 1960; Al-Tamimi, 1998).
At 12:30 pm, he would finish his lunch. At 1:00, she whose turn it was would stand on his back to massage it […]. So, he’d put on the television set for us. Sometimes, I would be intrigued [by the television], so he’d tell me to shut it off, because ‘you’re not concentrating [on the massage]’ (Sabah, 55).

Sabah’s father made sure his daughters saw as little television as possible, making her compensate with news programs and music records. As a schoolgirl, Sabah used to hide her magazines from her father with her neighbors. Sabah’s reminiscences only underline the contextual experience of television watching that was advocated by Morley (1992), Spigel, (1992) and Holdsworth (2011). A fair example would be this surreal memory—one that she still cannot decipher—of Sabah (55), television, and her father.

[He] put television in a very handsome cupboard. It looked beautiful, beautiful, I mean…we’d sit and watch but he wouldn’t let us turn the knobs…there wasn’t anything really [to be afraid of], if you think about it. He threatened us, ‘I will know the fingerprint of each one who touches the button […]’ He would bring an Iranian piece of bread,69 I don’t know what was that about, and he would put it on the ceiling fan, tuck tuck tuck, don’t ask me why. He would tie it with a sackcloth rope, you know? He’d bring an Iranian piece of bread and tie it there, and leave it to spin and spin, we’d be watching television, but we would be annoyed from the noise if he turned it [the fan] on level 5 […]. By the time we’d make him his yogurt and cucumber for dinner, then he’d tell us, ‘You have half an hour [of television watching]’ (Abdul Hameed, 55).

It should be pointed that, by living her early years in Syria, Sabah had missed out on the early Kuwaiti domestic model all together. Her television experience in Kuwait was short-
circuited by moving from one culture to the other, directly into the modern Kuwait of the 1970s, and directly towards color television. More on the latter point will be discussed in its own respective section.

Another aspect of the domestication category is the specific patterns and habits of television viewing that have characterized the history of television’s integration into Kuwaiti culture. The next subsection examines these patterns of watching television, whether aggregately or individually.

**Viewing habits.** Viewing habits are another interesting element of television’s domestication that was previously discussed in the literature review chapter on a global scale. For instance, one particular phenomenon that is documented almost globally during the infancy of television is the practice of community viewing, which apparently found its way to Kuwait.

We’ve lived this. We would be going and coming. ‘Where are you?’ ‘At whatshisname’s house.’ ‘Where are you?’ ‘At Abu Sa’ad’s house.’ ‘Doing what?’ ‘Watching television.’ Until we bought a television, then our friends were gathering at our house, and we’d watch television together, until every house got a television set […]. My father, may Allah rest his soul, was the first to get it. When he got it, wow! We were snobbish towards the whole neighborhood…that’s it! We wouldn’t have to go to Abu-Eid’s house, nor to Abu-Rashid’s house, we had a television of our own, so why go? (Al-Dosari, 57).

Community viewing consisted of turning television watching into a social experience. It was assisted by socioeconomic factors like the rarity of the device and the intimacy of the community.

Then came television. It had gathered us even more. How come? I had a television, my neighbor didn’t, nor did my second neighbor, nor did the tenth. At sunset, they’d knock
on our door, ‘We want to watch cartoons at your place!’ (Al-Qattan, 74).

Out of ten houses, one or two had a television set, and at night, people would visit them. He [the man of the house] would take the television and extend a wire outside...the men would sit at one side and the women on the other side over there, and they would watch it (Al-Ghuwainim, 70).

The practice of community viewings has been documented in Japan between 1953-1970 (Chun, 2006), in the rural Indian villages in the 1980s (Malik, 1989), in Australian cities in the 1950s (Darian-Smith & Hamilton, 2012; Herd, 2012), and in both the urban and Appalachian American landscapes (Barfield, 2008; Podbear, 2007). With Kuwait, this practice suffered similar fates as it did in other societies, after the novelty of the device wore off. Bader Al-Failakawi (54), who lived on the island of Failaka, comments on the disappearance of “the community viewing” tradition:

For us, it was, you know...possibly when people started getting money, and we’ve moved to our new houses. Each had his own television set. But, in the beginning of the sixties, oh no! The whole fireej (neighborhood) was there, the children were lying about here and there, and everybody was like, ‘Come on, when? What time? It’s time for Felix the Cat, Felix the Cat!’ (Al-Failakawi, 54).

The situation was similar for Leila Al-Mithin (58), who lived in the city of Hawalli during the 1960s, and moved to the newly urbanized city of Udailiyah in the 1970s. When the device became more common during the 1970s, Leila remembers that her family bought their second TV set. For Leila, this ubiquity of television in the household coincided with the marriages of both of her brothers, who lived in separate quarters in the house with a television set for each. When asked, Leila stated her belief that this ubiquity generally ended the community
viewing habit.

By its nature, the practice of community viewing was somewhat related to the economic status of the family in question. Khalifa Al-Harran (65) was the son of a man who owned six attached houses and several stores in the 1960s, situated within the Salmiyya area. While many Kuwaitis claim that their earlier households contained their extended families, Al-Harran explains that his household was a rather small one. His grandfather was a Nokitha (a ship captain), and his father was a diver. He lived with his father, his father’s two wives, as well as their children, in a house that he claimed added a second floor to its structure in 1935. Therefore, Al-Harran’s family was quite well established economically, and never truly experienced that particular phenomenon of community viewing: “By Allah, we bought a television and so did all of our friends […] , some people may [have experienced this], but we didn’t have that” (Al-Harran, 65).

Besides the community viewing, many of those who were but children in the Kuwait of the 1960s could clearly recall the context of viewing television, as it came with specific traditions. Many of their memories are illuminated by the characteristics of the old analogue model, like the color bar, limited broadcast hours, and white noise.

The height of the fun was when the cartoons started. The cartoons, we’d usually be playing in the street, playing ball and anbar and what not…and we would seat our youngest by the television, waiting for it to start, until the Quran recitation was concluded,70 followed by the national anthem, and then he’d go, ‘Popeye has started!’ and we would all come running. The neighborhood and the alley would be dead silent. You wouldn’t hear a thing […] sometimes we would mock our friends and tell [one of

70 At the time, television started by a brief recital from the holy Quran, followed by the national anthem.
them], they should employ you in television so you could go ‘shhhhhhhhhhh’ after the conclusion of the broadcast (Al-Darwish, 54).

The “shh” that Al-Darwish was talking about was a humorous reference to the white noise, an analogue component long gone with the introduction of digital and 24-hour broadcast. For Al-Darwish, white noise seems to be an integral part of the television ephemera. For Naser Bu Kubar (58) however, another nostalgic television tradition takes the forefront.

“I remember when I was young, when the national anthem began towards the end, they broadcasted it at the beginning and at the end, and we would stand up, we were young, see? ‘Why are you standing upright?’ We’d say, ‘The Crown Prince is on TV!!’” (Bu Kubar, 58).

Two members of the Bedouin community, Sh’ouf Al-Shilahy (74) and Um Sultan (73-76), spoke of yet another viewing tradition. Although this cannot be limited to the Bedouin community, their preoccupation with the laborious nature of their lives meant that television was mainly a leisure activity for those who weren’t as busy. Um Sultan thought of television mainly as a children’s activity, while Sh’ouf saw it as an activity for women and children.

According to Al-Shilahy, television viewing was also associated with a certain period of the day. “Television only came at night, while they were eating dinner and drinking tea, when the people of the house were done and idle” (Al-Shilahy, 74). Al-Shilahy’s contemplation also sets another comparison between Kuwait and other societies that have designated a certain “period of the day” for television. Kuwait’s association between television and suppertime corresponds with television being an after-sauna activity in the Nordic countries, or an after-tea activity in England (Kortti & Mähönen, 2009).

---

71 Bu Kubar’s memories channel arguments of scholars like Amy Holdsworth (2011) and David Morley (1992). Holdsworth and Morley examined television’s transportation of the domestic, assumedly private environment, into the national consciousness, presenting the nation as one big family, and as a collection of smaller families.
This in turn leads into another very culturally specific appropriation of television, that takes place prominently within the home, but could very possibly also extend outside it. The concept in question is what could be generally labeled as “the consumption junction.”

**Television and the consumption junction.** The best example for what is culturally known as the consumption junction phenomenon could be displayed through the following quote:

My father got a television set in 1968, and it was about 14″, a very small device, and it operated on the car battery […]. We even nagged our father to go get us a reserve battery, keep it charged for us, and keep it. He’d go back to charge it in the car and it was a nuisance for him to keep detaching the battery from car to car (laughing) in order to charge it, he’d go a long way to charge it. Me and my brother also suffered, we were grown ups so we’d take it on the bicycle to the garage to charge it and back. So, this battery thing was a tragedy, because we had no electrical current in the area (Al-Khaldy, 50).

This shows that between the 1950s and 1960s, the Kuwaiti media recipients had adopted mannerisms that paralleled those observed in isolated places thousands of miles away. In Appalachian America, as in Kuwait, public initiative led to early radios powered by car batteries (Podber, 2007). As a narrator, Al-Khaldy’s relatively young age is compensated by the late arrival of the device in his social circle, which caused him to witness not only its arrival in the town of Ahmadi, but also its specific instances of cultural consumption. In the literature review, the concept of the consumption junction was discussed in detail (Cowan, 1993). According to the testimonies, the “consumption junction” could also be witnessed in the ways Kuwaitis tried to improvise in order to get a better television signal. In the early days of television, the
geographical limitations of the signal were noticeable before Kuwait established its official broadcast. It seems that Kuwaitis devised culturally specific methods to counter such minor challenges.\textsuperscript{72}

I remember in our house, if television got a little fuzzy or dotty or unclear, they’d take a plate, a metal plate, pierce it with a nail or tie it to a metal wire or rope, and leave it at the aerial on top. It would assist the gravitation [of the signal]” (Abbas, 66). During humidity, we’d get Basra, and Iran. This was what we had, three stations that would appear, and we would wait for it to be humid, because you cannot keep moving the television towards…. And then they later said that you could install something that goes on the television. I don’t know how to say this for you. It was like something that you’d put on the old aerial, like a restrainer (kitchen utensil; Al-Bloushi, 63).

A milk carton, the one which was spiral and long, about the size of an arm, they’d pierce it from behind and they’d put a metal wire, and extend it towards the television set … and we would orient it towards Saudi Arabia. We’d point it there so we would get a strong signal, so you’d get… and sometimes you did. If it was a little humid, you would even get Iran […]. They said, it was “rays” [cynically] that would emanate, reach you, hit it right there [on the bottle], and come down at the antenna and reaches indoors! That was our mentality back then (Baroun, 55).

Amongst the participants, there seems to be unanimity on the nostalgic benefit of humidity to the signal. This association between the two puts the island of Failaka at a particular advantage between the late 1960s and the early 1970s.

\textsuperscript{72} This is despite the fact that Kuwait’s flat geographical nature provided for a higher clarity than in regions like Saudi Arabia (Boyd & Shatzer, 1993), Appalachian America (Podber, 2007), and the Southern Australian region (Herd, 2012).
They would put this [kitchen] pot as if it was a satellite receiver, we’d move it right and left…especially in Failaka, because in Failaka the weather was humid, which made the signal strong, so we started following programs we received from Iraq. Also, Iran was broadcasting the boxing match of Muhammad Ali Klay, and other matches, and they were mostly at a late hour, so we would try to watch those (Al-Failakawi, 54).

They told us that there was a station for people in Basra. There was no satellite. Observe this innovative practice! We’d take a restrainer and put it on top of the aerial so it would attract [the signal]. Seriously! During humid times we would get Basra, and… we had a house in Failaka…my maternal uncle’s house. When we went there—we’re originally from Failaka—so it was the same thing, and we would get Bahrain as well, and Iran, because Iran was close (Bu Kubar, 58).

It was previously discussed that in comparison, the flat landscape of Kuwait meant that there were significantly fewer broadcast challenges than those found in the vast Saudi landscape (Boyd & Shatzer, 1993). According to mass communication scholar Yousef Al-Failakawi (1999), Kuwait’s proximity to the sea made its signal more manageable. Al-Failakawi also states that the geographical proximity between Kuwait and neighboring Gulf States played an important role in the development of television in the area. However, quoting Douglas Boyd, Al-Failakawi explains that the cultural orientation of some stations (like Iraq or Iran) had cost them the attention of the Kuwaiti audience.

Departing that particular area, another aspect of television’s entrance into the home relates to the exposure that the house folks were succumbed to. One of the most intriguing and culturally circulated stories in that regard concerned conceptual difficulties in understanding the devices, particularly by the less educated. This related generally to what scholar Cecilia Penati
(2012) labeled the “Miracle Aspect.”

The miracle aspect. When a slave of the Al-Rashid family supposedly brought the first gramophone to the city around 1915, it was reported that people started anticipating the “end of time,” thinking that the devil was singing inside of the actual contraption (Al-Hatim, 1980). According to Al-Hatim, Sheikh Salim Al-Mubarak, known for his extensive conservativeness, banned the gramophone. The introduction of television into the city in 1957 rekindled some of the same fears associated with the abstract nature of media technology, particularly with the older generation.

It was like a box. A talking box? A box. These old ladies, ‘A box, oh, how wondrous! The end times are near,’ they used to be afraid like that. My grandmother was amusing, I still laugh at her and at what she did back in the day. Oh my, oh my, oh my! She would prowl and prowl about it, ‘Oh how wondrous!’ She’d look at it, ‘What is this? Oh, my lord. What an iniquity! What’s happening? Are there people in that box?’ (Um Ahmad, 56)

In television, eye contact is established between the recipient and the figure being televised. One of television’s most intriguing appeals therefore, is the powerful reevaluation it had imposed on the concept of a “gaze.” Michelle Hilmes (1985) clarifies that television’s key historical feature is in its ability to directly address its viewers, as if it was aware of their presence. In Kuwait, despite being previously exposed to the technology of cinema, this “direct address” function had forcefully reevaluated the conception of “outside/inside,” of modesty, and gender principles. This led to an inability to situate television within the conventional parameters of domestic ethos and traditional Islamic gender relations.

I remember that my mother, as well as her neighbors…if Jasim Shihab [presenter]
appeared, they would wear their abayas,\textsuperscript{73} and would say that Jasim Shihab was looking at them [during] the news broadcast. I am speaking about the beginning of television. They would cover up. These are some of the humorous things that we remember. Some women would watch Muhammad Shukuku, who used to sing and wink in his monologues. And, some women, they were our neighbors and from the Azmi tribe, they would cover up from him and say that he used to wink at them (Al-Dosari, 57).

These testimonies are analogous to many oral tales of the same account that had circulated in Kuwaiti society. They suggest that television’s visual abstraction has caused an identity crisis to the spatial assignment of women in early Kuwait. This becomes understandable when one considers that early Kuwaiti houses generally lacked outward looking windows, mainly due to their impression that the women in the house should not be heard outside (Qina’ie, 1988). As previously explained, Kuwaiti women, who went outside sporadically in the first place, had achieved a specific standardization of what to wear inside and what to wear outside. When outside, they were mainly covered. When inside they were exposed. According to Margeret Kelly (2010), the post-oil period (the 1960s onwards) altered this convention in ways that created distinctions between three generations of Kuwaiti women. While the elderly women in Kuwait generally maintained their clothing culture, the younger transitional generation, as well as the younger college students, learned to adapt to the spatial context in order to decide what to wear (Kelly, 2010). Television, with its feature of blurring between the indoor and outdoor space (Spigel, 1992; 1988), put all that into question, making it difficult for the unanimous social model to adopt television’s abstractness. This seemed to have operated on dual narratives: it was a problem for women who did not know how to behave, and for men who did

\textsuperscript{73} Abayas: a traditional gown, usually black in color, associated with conservative clothing culture.
not know how to regulate the technology for their women. Logically, it could be assumed that the mental struggle with that issue would progress in the following order:

1) Was there a man in the house?

2) If so, is his appearance physical or virtual?

3) If his appearance is virtual, can he see the woman indoors?

4) Even if he couldn’t, would it still be applicable for the woman to look at men other than their husbands?

When television was turned on, a presenter would appear, like Ridha Al-Faily or someone, may they all rest in peace…women used to cover up! I’ve seen that with my own eyes, she would go ‘wee wee wee’! A man is on television!’ She’d go and put the veil on her face, people who knew her would come up and tell her this is television. ‘Knock knock!’ They’d knock on the screen. ‘There’s nothing there! It’s someone far away […]’ By Allah, there were people who would go home and their wives, [their wives would tell them] ‘We went to the neighbors to watch their television.’ He’d say, ‘Have you no shame? Sitting opposite men at the television?’ He didn’t conceive what television was (Al-Ghuwainim, 70).

Of course, not all applications of the miracle aspect relate to gender issues. Sometimes, viewers simply didn’t understand the general detachment of the device from reality.

Imagine people who were living on diving and seafaring and fishing, and suddenly such things [like television] would penetrate their lives […]. We were playing in the courtyard, and heard the women screaming. ‘What’s going on? What’s wrong with you?’ They said, ‘They’ve murdered the man!’ ‘Who did?’ We were afraid, we didn’t know (Al-Maghribi,

---

74 An expression of dread associated mostly with the Kuwaiti female verbal tradition.
In that particular incident, Al-Maghriby was talking about his neighbor. The alleged murder that reduced the woman to tears was, of course, nothing more than a fictional portrayal on television. Aadil Al-Maghriby, who spent his childhood in the city of Hawalli and Shamiyya, explains that the abstraction was only part of the complexity, as some didn’t understand the distinction between news and fiction programs.

Once again, a possible variable here could be the ethnic or geographical gap. It is, at this particular point in time, nearly impossible to assess with certainty whether members of the Bedouin community were more prone to the miracle aspect than Hatharis, at least quantifiably so. However, that assumption seems fairly reasonable. Rusahid Al-Rushaid, a 58-year old man who still keeps fairly in touch with his Bedouin roots, vouches to that: “One of them was my own sister. If they [the presenters] appeared, she’d cover up. I’d say, ‘What’s wrong with you?’ She’d say, ‘This television exposes us to men’…we haven’t seen a television before, we would laugh at her” (Al-Rushaid, 58).

Another Bedouin gentleman was Sh’ouf Al-Shilahy (74), a man who spent the 1950s and 1960s in the city of Ahmadi. Al-Shilahy recounts a humorous story of an elderly neighbor they used to know.

The television [cable] went through their sitting room, where they were seated. They would rest and watch the television. One of the folks of the house has gone and stepped on the wire, she said ‘No son! No son! Don’t step on them, you’ll hurt them!’ She thought the wire transported people, transported humans into the television. She thought that people went through it (Al-Shilahy, 74).
Also in the area of Ahmadi was Saud Al-Khaldy (50), who lived among a close-knit community of Bedouins in shanties. Al-Khaldy’s family fought their own battles with the concept of abstraction. Al-Khaldy’s family received their television earlier than several neighbors, which made their house a meeting point for the neighborhood women. The house, which contained around eight individuals, found itself cramped with many women who came over around dusk prayer, after hastily getting their housework done and putting their children to bed. Al-Khaldy’s story of his grandmother provided an interesting emphasis on the generational gap, especially with regards to the abstraction issue:

‘Grandma, the situation is so and so. We can see him. He cannot see us.’ So when the man appeared she would say, ‘Cover up!’ So, between instant and instant, and between scene and scene, the man or the actress would appear, ‘Cover up!’ So the women’s hands were like fans [moving compulsively] in order to satisfy her. So, one of the humorous things that they did…we had a neighbor who was rather funny, she used to hold her abaya, and seat me next to her. Because, I was a bit jumpy when I was a kid. She would tell me ‘I’m tired [of moving my hands to cover up every time], look! If the man appears, you lift the abaya between us and your grandmother, so it would appear as if we were covered (Al-Khaldy, 50).

This story only highlights that, even amongst the conservative Bedouin strata, an awareness of some sort was taking place amongst the younger generation of women, while the older maintained their strict disposition. This becomes more apparent through the story of Um Sultan (73-76), who, despite spending her childhood years in the remote Bedouin region, quickly familiarized herself with television upon living in the city of Shu’aiba. Um Sultan explains that she has witnessed other women covering up, although she personally was aware of the
abstraction and did not feel the need to do so herself. In the following story, she remembers such women who were somewhat pressured by their husbands.

She would cover up, [imitating the man] ‘Cover up!’ And shut off the television, ‘You’re watching men!’ Although, they weren’t men, they were images! One of our neighbors, if she was watching television or a man has passed her tent, ‘Why has this man passed? Cover up! Cover up!’ She’d be covered here and here and here [different parts of the body], as if she was imprisoned (Um Sultan, 73-76).

Whether purposefully or not, Um Sultan’s narrative bonds between abstraction and religiosity. It also acknowledges that she wasn’t affected by the miracle aspect of television, despite her grandfather’s—previously noted—rather “poetic sense of foreboding” about the machine.

Going back to Al-Khaldy’s humorous altercation between his grandmother and the women in his family, the generational gap appears to have been an effective variable in understanding abstraction, for both Bedouins and Hadharis. Ali Al-Qattan (74), a Hadhari from the city of Sharq, associates the “covering up” phenomenon mainly with the older generations of Kuwaitis. This idea is supported by Bader Al-Failakawi’s account of his grandparents, who were not only disadvantaged by age, but may have also been somewhat disadvantaged by living in the Island of Failaka.

My maternal grandparents were at a house near us, they weren’t far, as they were [also] living in Failaka, and I had a small black-and-white television, one that required twisting the button like ‘chuck chuck chuck!’ That one stayed with me, whereas the house had a color television. So, they lived alone in the house and I would go spend the night at their place. One day I removed the television from the room and took it to their place. This
was in the seventies. I put it in their living room and turned it on. They weren’t used to television in the first place, because they would perform their dawn prayer and have breakfast, perform their midday prayer and take their lunch, and nap and wake up. They had no business with television. So I turned television on and talked them through it and all. I came in the next day: ‘How are you, Grandma (may Allah rest her soul)? Where’s my grandfather?’ She said, ‘Your grandfather has locked himself in his room since yesterday.’ ‘Why grandma?’ She said, ‘We were watching TV, an episode. So, he pointed at the screen, and popped the man’s eye. The man went to get the police; the episode contained such events. As soon as he saw the police, he went to his room since yesterday and hasn’t been out today. ‘Have they left?’ (Al-Failakawi, 54).

Al-Failakawi’s grandparents have not only lived the miracle aspect, but also did so relatively late. These events took place during the 1970s, when the phenomenon was supposedly waning, supposedly even further after the introduction of color television. The miracle aspect was observed in several places around the world including Italy and Inuit Canada (Granzberg, 1982; Penati, 2012). It should be pointed out however that the miracle aspect was not necessarily common to all Kuwaitis. Several participants didn’t witness it first hand. Participants like Jasim Baroun (55), and Khalil Al-Harran (65) for example, do not remember encountering it, at least not on a personal level. Baroun moved to the urban city of Rmaythiyya from Sharq in 1964, where he got his first television set, and Al-Harran claims to have lived in a financially secure environment. Both factors could have assisted in refuting the miracle aspect. Additionally, and counter to what was mentioned above, it seems that one does not have to be a Bedouin to be more prone to the miracle aspect. Judging from the stories of women like Um Sultan, an Azmi woman from the city of Shu’aiba, even the geographical factor does not always correlate with the
existence of the miracle factor.

In conclusion, the storytellers themselves seem to have had a relatively smooth transition when it came to the conception of television broadcasting. However, they also point to an elderly stratum in their stories, members of a challenged generation who have not only endured a complete shift in life style, but a vigorous transition from a direct attachment to the world around them into a new paradigm of abstraction. They had a great dilemma to deal with, and they needed to achieve a degree of compromise in order to accustom themselves to it.

**Summary.** In summary of this particular phase of television’s cultural integration, television’s entrance into the Kuwaiti home is a particularly rich one, considering that the concept of the Kuwaiti home itself was going through dramatic alterations. It is possible that many of the breadwinners ended up purchasing the device after a pattern developed in which children and spouses were watching it outside, as if to regulate and contain their family activities once again. Once domesticated, television started acquiring a specific association with certain members of the family, which was relative according to the speculator in question. For example, while some men thought that it was for women, some women perceived it as mostly for children.

The early generation of Kuwaiti television watchers existed in a mixed, culturally specific environment where technology coexisted with traditional artifacts. Early televisions also interacted with domestic components like the leewan, which is now extinct, and the diwaniyya, which similarly to television merges private and public spaces. As the second generation of television recipients grew into the social circulation of marriage and urban migration, television moved in the domestic priority ladder from leisure to necessity, and houses started featuring a second television set, usually in color. There was also a time in which television entertained an aesthetic component and was treated as décor, which caused the public to indulge in practices
and products that are now extinct, like the TV burka. Besides the materialistic dimension of
television, the broadcasted programs called for parental regulation to a technology that was now
in the home and threatening the exposure of children to disagreeable content.

Gradually, television started shaping its own viewing habits and traditions in the
community, many of which are now extinct. These include memories of the white noise for
example, and the internationally documented community viewing amongst neighbors. Similarly
to other societies, the community also designed certain practices that were symptomatic of what
is called the consumption junction, mainly to overcome technical difficulties. Examples of the
consumption junction include using kitchen pots to act as signal receivers. Finally, television’s
domestication has placed the recipient directly against the idea of the miracle aspect, and faced
many to try and decipher the nature of the televisual presence and how to deal with it based on
religious and traditional principles. In this instance, the situation possibly varies based on the
age, the ethnicity, and the gender of the recipient in question. Soon enough however, these
distinctions were regulated into total familiarization.

Of course, television’s infiltration of the old Kuwaiti house meant that—by extension—it
would soon succumb to the changes that would occur to the Kuwaiti house itself in the
aftermath of post-oil modernity. The next category, as devised by the literature review and
furnished further by the narrators’ stories, considers television’s interaction with the wave of
modernity in the city, civic or otherwise.

**Fifth Area, Modernization: Television in the Era of Change**

By the 1970s, Kuwait became a society almost detached from its previous social,
economic, urban, and political self. From 1963 to 1977, the illiterate majority became educated,
and both the oil prices and the national income spiked drastically, with the latter reaching up to
$8.9 billion (Al-Yahya, 1993; Ghabra, 1997; Ismael, 1982). Our narrators, similarly, speak of a
time when life around them was changing.

In the 1970s, Sh’ouf Al-Shilahy was sent by the Kuwait Oil Company to the United
Kingdom to study delicate machinery. He remembers marveling over everyday technologies that
he encountered in the United Kingdom in 1972, like the illuminated street map or the interactive
public telephone. In the island of Failaka as well, Bader Al-Failakawi (54) had finished high
school and went straight to the United States for his college degree, joking that he had short-
circuited his modernity by moving straight from the island to America without transitioning in
Kuwait City. His island, which was once connected to the mainland only by wooden boats,
started using hovercrafts, shortening the travel time by forty minutes.

As the lives of the participants changed, so did their experience with television. Previous
sections within the literature review chapter presented a detailed portrayal of television’s
interaction with modernity through its relationship with accompanying technology and its effects
on certain social habits. This section therefore, examines how television, a relatively new
spectacle barely familiarized in society, had negotiated itself in this continuously changing
matrix of the 1960s, into the 1970s and 1980s. Through the oral accounts of the participants, it
was found that the integration of television into modern Kuwait was applied through many
simultaneous forms. The integration history of television in the modernity period relates to
events like the entrance of color television, urban migration, accompanying technology, and
television’s influence with social alteration.

**Enter color television.** No sooner did the Kuwaiti recipient familiarize himself with
television then the next inventive technology appeared, possibly with as much impact as the
previous one. Color television entered Kuwait in March of 1974, supported by the PAL system
The arrival of color television seemed to be somewhat preceded by similar misconceptions to the ones associated with the black-and-white set.

During the old days of television, I don’t know what did they used to do, they’d put something that would imitate colors, or that they would put a screen on the black and white television set, a colored [screen], green and blue and white, what for? Colored television! But it wasn’t really colored, the screen was colored, they would put plastic on it, I remember seeing it (Fairouz, 67).

We were school children, I expect I was in the first year of elementary maybe, so we would walk the street and hear the people talk about color television, and we would be baffled. Colored how? How would it be colored? Did it have paint in it? So we were walking in the street, right? There were coffee shops in the city of Hawalli. The coffee shops would set their televisions for wrestling, and people have always enjoyed this wrestling. So, we were passing by the coffee shops and saw that the television sets looked different, they looked as if they were really in color. We inspected it, wow! A color television set! It was the first time we saw one. We looked, but the color wasn’t from the set itself. You get the feeling as if the colors were all just the one shade, either it was all yellow, or all red, or all pink. The trick was, to put cellophane paper and stick it on the screen. And sure enough, when you looked at it, not knowing what color television was, you would watch it as a color set. True enough, we did it at home, we copied them and put cellophane (Al-Nifisy, 57).

The colors weren’t the colors you knew now, but it was like…you’d see green and red but not in…I mean, I think…even the screen itself…I mean you didn’t see the green you
saw now, nor the red, but still it made for a transition that allowed you to see the face in color, and see, it was different! I think it even affected the presenters, I think they started wearing makeup and such (Al-Dosari, 57).

Such early imitation games coincide with social memes that were practiced in other parts of the world. In the United States, similar sheets tinted with different color bands were marketed as having the ability to “colorize television” in the 1950s (Barfield, 2008). However, the actual color television made its entrance into society, putting an end to these misleading practices. The Kuwaiti public then had braced itself for a thrilling phenomenon.

[It was such] a substantial transition, what can I tell you! A complete…transformation. I was approximately in my fourth year of high school, in [19]74. I mean, I remember it! When color television started…very different! As if you were blind and then you opened your eyes…it was very joyous, we really enjoyed it. By Allah! I mean…it was like cinema (Al-Mithin, 58).

Leila’s association between television and cinema is a rather curious one, because it corresponds with the testimony of Abdulla Al-Nifisy (57), who narrates a story from his father’s memory during the early phase of color television. In Al-Nifisy’s story, television and cinema temporarily achieve the same previous media association between the two that was gradually waning as black-and-white television became familiar. In the following story, Al-Nifisy repeats a story he had heard from his father:

When color TV first arrived, there was this company that wanted to promote color television. Hawalli Al-Saifi cinema…do you remember it? Hawalli Al-Saifi theater, right? He said that they put a color television set and allowed people to watch the colors. Also, when you passed by, they put a camera, so that when you passed by, your image
would appear in color on the television. And, the employees of that company wore red clothing, and they themselves would pass in front of the camera so that their images would appear on the television, clear and in color, so that everyone would see (Al-Nifisy, 57).

In the old days, we had black and white. We’d say to whoever, ‘Our television is better than yours, because…’ It would give a black and dark hue, so we’d say, ‘Our television is better than…it gives better colors. The black is better than yours [our black is better than your black].’ Today of course, when color television appeared, it was such a transition of course (Bu Kubar, 58).

Truth came closer to you. You used to watch in black and white, so the disagreement was on the shade of this actor’s skin, you didn’t know originally. But, the black and white gave gestural distinctions, personal distinctions, external attributes. But, with color on the screen…when television broadcasted color, I mean… the shadow, the shadow became clearer, let alone the personal reality. When color came, even though you were accustomed, and even though the program was a repeat, you would look at the color, the picture, you want to remember the particular episode when this guy struck or made his entrance, you want to watch it in color. So, there was a new yearning to watch things (Al-Khaldy, 50).

Apparently, these episodes of amazement were not limited to the recipients. Even pioneer television presenters like Huda Al-Muhtadi and Amal Abdulla have spoken of their memories about the introduction of color television, and their anticipation over how the public would perceive their appearance and makeup in color (Al-Yahya, 2014). According to Al-Yahya, these
pioneers recalled receiving additional instructions on how to behave in front of the cameras in the new color broadcast system.

According to Dr. Abdul Latif Al-Oufi (1998), most of the Gulf states, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, chose 1974 as the year of color broadcast.\textsuperscript{75} The introduction of color television had obviously brought the device into a second cycle of purchase, and those who bought black-and-white sets eventually went to purchase color sets (See figures 26 & 27).

\textsuperscript{75} While Al-Oufi claims Bahrain started its color broadcast before the rest of the Gulf (in 1973), Hamza Bait-Almal (1986), records Bahrain as starting at the same year as its Gulf peers, in 1974.
Figure 26. An advert for color television from the 1974 issue of Aalam Al-Fan (Inside Back cover, 1974, p.71)
Figure 27. A 1974 advert for a color PAL-friendly French model from the Al Ghanim dealership (Inside front cover, 1974, p.1)
Days would turn. Mubarak Al-Mubarak (75) would grow up, go to high school for one year, then make a living through a job at the Ministry of Interior. His mother would approach him inquiring about color television. The roles would reverse, and Mubarak would take his mother to get a color set, similarly to how she took him reluctantly to purchase him a black-and-white set when he was but a boy. Mubarak remembers being so enthralled over the spectacle of the colored set that he refused to take any device other than the one on display.

He got me one that was in a box, and he wanted to open it. I told him, ‘No brother, I don’t want that one!’ I was afraid that the colors won’t be. ‘I want that one.’ I told him, ‘I bought that one, put that one in the box and take the new one for yourself’ (Al-Mubarak, 75).

Other participants similarly would mature in age, relocate, and disperse within the growing city. Color television would be part of their personal narratives. By then, Um Sa’ad (80) had moved from Qibla to the city of Sharq, where she became a neighbor to Violet Dickson, the wife of the historical figure Col. Charles Dickson, who had a pivotal role in the discovery of oil in Kuwait. Um Sa’ad remembers Mrs. Dickson blessing her on her wedding in the usual Christian manner. Upon her third house move, Um Sa’ad received the color television moving from Sharq to Faiha, where her father rented a house for 500 K.D (around $1,400 in the 1960s), an unbelievably low price by today’s standards. “So we got color television, color television came, and we got it in the house and the children were jumping, ‘green and red and blue!’” (Um Sa’ad, 80).

Another narrator who’d had an interesting personal experience in that regard, was Basem Al-Darwish (54).
The next event in television history, later, as far as I can remember, it was…they’ve
gotten a color television, the first color television that came to Kuwait, and they put it in
the Gate’s Roundabout in Fahad Al-Salem St., they put a huge base for it and put it on an
elevated place as such, and people used to gather. It was like a garden: the gate [at] the
big roundabout, and people were gathered to watch the programs broadcasting in color. It
was of course certain programs, the rest was all still in black and white (Al-Darwish, 54).

Two casual observations from Al-Darwish’s testimony require further inspection. The
first concerns television’s partial or gradual switch to color broadcast, which is indeed true. The
Annual Book of the Ministry of Information (1976), states that the complete switch to color was
only completed in 1976. Similarly, according to a recent interview in Al-Jarida newspaper with
the writer Mohammad Al-Durai’, local television indeed had to gradually shift to color, due to
the fact that it had already recorded a number of its programs in black and white (“Kuwait
television today,” 2014).

The second observation is more related to Al-Darwish’s mode of recollecting. His
memory of his first color TV carries him to the Gate Roundabout, one of the city’s historical
landmarks. With Kuwaitis, it is as if the memories of purchasing the color sets takes them back
to memories of the old city, as it seems to be a suitable memory context. For them, the memory
of color TV purchase is contextualized spatially. Of that, social scholar Sara Dickey (1997)
acknowledges that “media is not consumed in uninflected spaces, but in theaters, living rooms,
tea stalls, and subways, of which refracts the meaning of the medium through the experience of
consumption” (p. 423). This is also true retrospectively, since the spatial context becomes part
of the television viewing memory, and therefore integration history. Hassan Abbas (66) for
instance, associates the purchase of color television with his trip to what they then called “the
new street,” labeled as such for being the first street in the city to have been furnished with both asphalt and sewers (See Figure 28 & 29). Whether in 1974 or 1975, Abbas remembers two stores in this new street selling the device. Abbas claims that each new shipment of color sets lasted for about a week. For Abbas, and possibly for many other Kuwaitis as well, television’s second purchasing cycle attached itself to the growing infrastructure of the city.

Figure 28. A view of a road branching from the “new street” (Al-Hatim, 1980, p.159).

---

76 This is according to the testimony of the participant.
Figure 29. An illustration of the “new street” from author Saba Shiber (Shiber, 1964, prologue).
Similar accounts came from Um Ahmad (56), who was born in the city of Murgab, then moved until finally settling in the European-and-American-occupied city of Ahmadi, on account of her father’s job at the oil company. As a little girl in Ahmadi, she encountered both generations of television, from the black and white to the color set. Al Ahmadi had always maintained the advantage of modernity far ahead of other Kuwaiti cities. Um Ahmad’s memories could indirectly be linked to her spatial context, since when she thinks of color television, she vividly remembers images of flowers on the screen, as if they are blooming in her mind.

We saw…what are these flowers? The color! In my life I haven’t seen flowers like these. Even though we were in Al-Ahmadi, and our city was beautiful and such, but these flowers! Red and yellow and green and whatnot, waving like so, and the birds. It was wondrous! Wondrous! When colors first came, it was wondrous (Um Ahmad, 56).

The memory of flowers is an interesting one, and may be directly linked to Um Ahmad’s surrounding space. This is only expected, as Al-Ahmadi was a European-modeled town where the first planted tree was placed in 1948 (Alissa, 2013; Freeth, 1956). In the mid 20th century, Al-Ahmadi had neat gardens organized by the Kuwait Oil Company, preceding any other area in Kuwait. These gardens have attracted many Kuwaitis coming from elsewhere.

At the weekends, Fridays and Thursdays, Al-Ahmadi would fill up completely with visitors, coming to observe on their cars or by foot. Men, women, and children. Everybody! Ahmadi had gardens, and the company tended to the gardens and beautified them. True…people would look at them because they haven’t seen gardens. Gardens started only in Ahmadi, then they grew and spread into other cities (Al-Shilahy, 74).

Al-Ahmadi has since lost its green appeal. For Um Ahmad, whose old house still stands at Northern Ahmadi, flowers act as proxy to times gone by in Ahmadi and Kuwait, stimulated
further by the introduction of color television, similarly to how her nostalgia of Ahmadi is linked to her nostalgia of color television: “Sigh... the best days of my life, Al-Ahmadi. Oh yes my son, the most beautiful part of my life, you cannot replace it” (Um Ahmad, 56). Of that, scholar Toby Bulter (2009) explains, “Place and mobility has become a major concern for geographers and increasingly historians interested in narrating place (…). Place, home, and ‘roots’ are deep-seated human needs and they shape our cultural identity” (p.225).

Examining Um Ahmad’s memory, it seems that she was speaking as if she had never seen flowers before she viewed them on color TV. For her, the case was related to the probability that she didn’t see many flowers before she lived in Ahmadi. In a way, the beautiful flora of Ahmadi was alien to the rest of Kuwait, and was only intensified by the flowers broadcasted on color television, similarly alien to the conventional black-and-white sets. For Um Ahmad, the two memories seem to merge rather perfectly. On a similar note, pioneer television presenter Amal Ja’far remembers that the introduction of color television made her carefully select the color of the flower that she would regularly pin on her vest, to ensure consistency in style (Al-Yahya, 2014).

The interaction between Kuwaitis and color television also had deeper dimensions when observed in the Kuwaiti homes. From the 1950s onwards, the narrators who lived in Qibla, Sharq, Murgab, and other areas had all relocated to the more conjunctional units in areas like Rumaythiyya, Al-Khaldiyya, and Al-Udailiyya (Al-Baqshi, 2010). The open-court Arabic house models described previously were forsaken. This in favor of the new concrete two floors units, in which gardens were introduced but courtyards—and in extension leewans—disappeared (Al-Jassar, 2009). It seems therefore, that the arrival of color television to the new Kuwaiti home renewed the old struggle between the black-and-white device and the old Kuwaiti home.
Mohammad Al-Ghuwainim (70), lived in the city of Salmiyya, surrounded by members of the Azmi tribe (who helped build the city) and the Qina’ie tribe. In 1968, the government purchased his family’s house with a handsome sum following the tathmeen policy. The tathmeen policy refers to the procedure that the government had undertaken in the wake of the oil-boom, which stimulated the economical status of the citizens. During the tathmeen era, the government purchased the previous homes of Kuwaiti citizens who have been living in the core areas, and demolished them to construct the urban mapping of the new city. Al-Ghuwainim therefore, moved within the same city in 1969, but into a modern home, where color television came in: “Then color television came, buildings changed. We built a house of two stories, and the situation changed completely” (Al-Ghuwainim, 70). In his mind, these two narratives seem synonymous.

Similarly, Abdul Wahab Al-Nifisy discussed how color television had affected the domestic aesthetics of Kuwaiti society.

In the beginning, all their seating arrangements were on the ground, they wouldn’t consider this sofa-seating thing, unless there was a room with sofas for the guests […]. Later on, oh no! Developments happened with color televisions, especially in modern houses which didn’t have courtyards…it all changed into living rooms, and they started putting sofas, step by step, people started adapting to television (Al-Nifisy, 57).

By then, the urbanization of the city beyond the walls had taken effect on the Bedouin community, with 36,000 people benefitting from limited-income housing between 1965-1970 (Ghabra, 1997). While Bedouin women attended literacy classes, members of the Bedouin community in Kuwait started joining the employment and educational facilities of the Hadharis (Longva, 2006). And, despite the substantial distinctions in the social ideologies of both groups,
it could be safely assumed that the gap between the two ethnicities in receiving the color television set seemed smaller than that of the earlier black-and-white model, at least with the younger generation. In other words, by the time color television came along, the Kuwaiti Bedouin had achieved a degree of familiarization with the device similar to that of the Hadhari. Our storyteller Um Sultan (73-76), who at the time had most probably moved from the area of Shu’aibah to that of Al-Subahiyyah, remembers purchasing the color set for her son as a present for passing high school. In what could be interpreted as a classic gender-hierarchy act, Um Sultan gave the black-and-white set to the girls upon purchasing the color set for her son. Today, as she remembers this particular incident, she giggles, while murmuring, “poor things.”

When the interview first started with Um Sultan, she was asked what she remembered about television in general, and she went on to recite her memories of television. After a while, it became clear that Um Sultan had started her historical narrative strictly with the introduction of color television, as if color television was the actual beginning of television in the memory of Um Sultan. I had to explain to her that I was also interested in the history of the black-and-white sets. This incident provided the impression that black-and-white television did not register on her nostalgic chart. Later during her interview, she made a statement that implied her belief that television had either instigated or accompanied a massive wave of social change: “When the color came the Arabs went about, they would be making televisions and showing cinema on the walls.” Later on, she goes on in her beautiful Bedouin rhetoric to explain: “color came and ‘colored’ all these people.”

Like her black-and-white set, Um Sultan remembers buying her set in installments. However, while the first one was purchased with Indian Rupees, the second one was purchased
with Dinars. Um Sultan, who paid an approximate of 70 Dinars for her set, humorously comments that the whole thing is probably worth ten dinars today.

We were pretty amazed! In the neighborhood, I was the first to purchase the color television. They would all come, my son’s friends. They would gather and cheer ‘Color! Color! Color!’ One of them drove his father mad, he [his father told him upon knowing that the neighbors had a color television set] told him, ‘Her children changed it [the TV], they’re in high school and they colored it for her, they fixed it up for her… look at that [black-and-white] set, its normal (Um Sultan, 73-76).

Here, the abstraction issue returns very briefly, in which one of Um Sultan’s neighbors refused to believe that television could be in color. According to Um Sultan’s story, the neighbor was under the impression that her children (with the benefit of schooling) had simply updated the black-and-white model by adding color inside it. This incident also refers to the impression of some Bedouin citizens of the advantages of schooling, a practice more recent for the Bedouin communities than for the Hadharis.

Going back to the main argument of this section, Um Sultan also considers color television a historical reference in time, after which the homes were altered. “The houses were light wood, and you would install an Arish [a shading structure], if you wanted coolness. There were no air conditions, and there were no bathrooms as there are now. It was a manhole.” Um Sultan nostalgically laments the old beautiful era, altered drastically in the post-color television era. For some, color television seemed to have also stimulated previous economic gaps, which may have still existed to some, at least in the initial period.

When it [television] was colored, we were from the poor class. We were poor, us and some others. There was someone in our street who was very rich, when television first
came, he bought it. So, we’d sit at Dhaha tea.\textsuperscript{77} The women would chat saying whathisname’s house got a color television and…. and… they have a color television! So, when this rich man’s wife came to sit with us, we’d tell her that we wanted to go and watch it at her place. She’d say, ‘You’re welcome.’ In the afternoon, meaning from the evening time, we’d go to her. We would watch, amazed, the woman had a yellow shirt, a red skirt. We were startled at how colored it was, but I don’t remember the exact date (Al-Rushaidan, 58).

Nawal (59), who left to Al-Rumaythiyya after the government purchased her house in Sharq, found a way to get around that particular economic gap.

Our paychecks in the old days were good. It was pretty nice, simple. We said, ‘What do you think? This television set is old; you can’t see anything.’ What the girl was wearing, what she has on and such. They said, ‘Let’s do it!’ We put our money together, 20 [Dinars] upon 20. It was cheap, not like it was today, possibly up to a 100 or so (Nawal, 59).

‘Leave it! Leave it! This is a black and white set! We don’t want it! We want the colored one!’ We’d run, go and buy it from National, Al-Ghanim dealership, and Phillips. It was beautiful, beautiful, amazing! Natural! Everything was natural! That was the beautiful thing about…Also, they started broadcasting the Gulf Cup matches. Oh! What can I tell you? It was grand! We got a 26 inch [model], instead of the 12 inch [that we had before], where people appeared as small as fingers (Al-Qattan, 74).

\textsuperscript{77} Dhaha tea; a tradition in Kuwait akin to that of high tea in England, however, taking place during the late morning “dhaha” period. In Dhaha tea, women would traditionally gather, sit, and converse over tea and treats.
Al-Qattan remembers buying his 26 inch set for about 220 Dinars (around $610 at the time). Another narrator, Hassan Abbas (66), offers another particularly humorous recollection on the consumption junction, linking television with the “groovy” 1970s attire:

The first color television that we bought was small, and we used to take it with us to the chalet [the sea resort]. We had a chalet in Dhibai’iyyah that we used to take it to, and if we saw a car with families or such, we’d fix our appearance [dress up], we’d put the television on the car’s bonnet, and sit like that, getting our ‘groove’ on. Oh yes! He who had a color TV, he who had a color TV back in the day…nifty! Some would wear cufflinks, and if you wore [the head cover with] the fuzzy end, you’d rest that on the front, and a shiny pair of shoes (Abbas 66).

Abbas remembers that at the same time, he had also purchased the smaller color models that ran on car batteries. The devices, reaching as high as 200 Kuwaiti Dinars, had placed high pressure on distributing companies (See Figure 30; “The Television of Color Invades Kuwaiti Houses,” 2014; Abu-Shanab, 1987; Al-Dawood, 2007).
“What signaled the entrance of color television? What was the catalyst for turning television into color? The Gulf Cup. There were matches, I think the Gulf Cup. I’m thinking the third tournament” (Hassan Abbas, 66).

Indeed, the introduction of color television in Kuwait coincided with the commencement of the Gulf Cup soccer tournament, which was held in the Kingdom of Bahrain on March 15, 1974 (Yahya, 2014; MOI, 1974). Jassim Baroun (55), who lived in Rumaythiyya in the 1970s,
had a brother who was a member of the national team (although he stressed that he didn’t play in
the actual games). Baroun provides an inside perspective of the story:

Before the tournament began I think they [the national team] gave us a television. And
then, the gifts came after we won! So, when it transformed from black and white to color,
it was wondrous for us. I mean…it was strange! It was as if you were looking at yourself
in colors, which were as vibrant as you could feel. Obviously, it wasn’t of great quality,
but it had colors, so it was a color television! The television was even…if I’m not
mistaken, it was a German set I think (Baroun, 55).

Baroun described his relationship with television as quite sporadic in general, as most of
his childhood was spent playing football in the streets of Rumathiyya. From a meta-analytical
perspective, one could say that the Gulf Cup had also affected the television related memories of
the participants, particularly those who were interested in sports. For them, color television was
associated with Kuwait not only playing, but also winning the Gulf Cup tournament,
emphasizing the “national golden age” of the 1970s. When reminiscing about color television
therefore, the Gulf Cup was for Jasim Baroun what the flowers were for Um Ahmad.

Abdulla Al-Bloushi (63), also an avid soccer fan (even by his current profession in the
Authority of Youth and Sports), remembers something similar. His memory however, slightly
betrays him as he connects the arrival of color television erroneously with a different sports
event.

Oh yes! We got a color television. True, it was in ‘74 because there was an international
sport-related event, which was the World Cup. The World Cup, I don’t remember if it
was 74. In Italy […] I was young, I don’t know, but, it was in 1974, the National
[television set], possibly 120 [Dinar] (around $400 at the time) , 120, or a hundred, either
100, 120. I mean, it was still expensive, but we got it, because they said that the color set was coming…it’s here! The color set is here, and broadcast is in color! And now, your black-and-white television had to be disposed of (Al-Bloushi, 63).

According to the stories, the model that was mostly associated with the arrival of color television was the newly immerging National set, much like how Andrea was the iconic representation of black-and-white televisions in the city. In a subsequent stage of television’s development, studies have shown that color broadcasting also revitalized the novelty factor, affecting attention patterns, learning, and memory (Gilbert & Schleuder, 1990).

In conclusion, the new Kuwaiti home seems to have embraced the second generation of television sets. However, and based on the narrators’ stories, this had mostly happened after Kuwaitis had left their old lifestyles and moved on to new ones, migrating further and further away from the old areas. The next subsection of the modernity category, therefore, discusses television’s relationship with urban migration.

**Television and the urban migration.** By the 1970s, Kuwait had departed from its previous urban demeanor completely, much to the dismay of many who noted the aesthetic inconsistency and the forceful westernization of its newly formed urban structures (Al-Baqshi, 2010; Elsheshtawy, 2008; Freeth, 1972). This period also witnessed an overwhelming wave of urban migration from the old city, and the creation of the “new Kuwaiti house” as discussed in Chapter 5. Hassan Abbas (66), who moved from Qibla to Maidan Hawwalli as early as the 1950s, remembers the disappearance of the Bashcheel and chandal woods that were once used for the construction of houses. Similarly, Fahad Al-Dosari (57) remembers the coast of his old neighborhood being buried for more urban construction that started materializing in 1963-1964 to house more foreign workers.
They’ve [the government] purchased the houses, people got their houses valued, they gave them land outside, so they can build, you know? We lived in Sharq…they would value your house and give you a piece of land and tell you to build in Al-Rumaythiyya for example, you know? They gave the ones in Qibla, they gave them [land] over there in Khaldiyya and Udailiyah (Al-Bloushi, 63).

Whether by will or by obligation, each and every one of the participants ended up moving house, recontextualizing themselves in modern surroundings in which television was a substantial factor.

It [television] entered our house in Faiha’. Yes. In Sharq we didn’t have television. We didn’t have television because our house was made of mud, and was very old—chandal wood and mud and such—and we didn’t have electricity. Our whole house was [lit] with gas lamps (Fairouz, 67).

Fairouz moved out of Sharq in the 1960s, after his grandfather purchased a house in Faiha’. Fairouz had to wait until the urban migration to obtain a television set in the house. With Basem Al-Darwish (54) however, who took a different urban migratory root, the movement involved a “second cycle” of television purchase.

We moved from our house in Sharq, we were given a government house in Subahiyya, so we took our enormous television with us. Ah! Obviously that was the first thing we carried with us, as it represented the spirit of joy in the house, so we cared about it. Later, my father bought a second television set, while the old one stayed there as decoration, because I told you, it had wooden doors and looked very neat, like a cupboard, but we remained a while with only one television in our possession, which was the focal point of family gathering. We didn’t have more televisions until my brother got married and had a
room or a small apartment in the house. That was in the late 70s, the beginning of the 80s, something like that (Al-Darwish, 54).

In the new city, the next cycle of television purchase didn’t seem nearly as irksome as the first one. It was possibly part of a much larger import craze in the Arab world, with a particular peak in the year of the “color set,” making the 1970s and the 1980s decades of ubiquity for television importation (Abdul Malik, 1996). In the late 1980s, television ownership in Kuwait reached as high as 423,000 sets, with 96.8% of the families owning a set (Abu Shanab, 1987).78 Towards the end of the 1990s, the ratio of color to black-and-white sets in Kuwait was 454:7 (See Table 7; CSB, 1999).

---

78 However, records seem to be slightly contradictory in that regard. Scholar Siham Al-Furaih (1999), for example, rates the ownership of television with Kuwaiti families at 80%. Al-Furaih’s writing, however, makes it difficult to determine the exact year she was referencing, which could either be the late 1970s or the late 1980s. Both Al-Furaih and Abu Shanab (1987) seem to agree on the number of devices owned however. According to Mu’awwad & Al-Yasin (1995) who quote an earlier study of theirs, ownership of television receivers in the approximate mid 1990s reached an approximate of 580,000 sets, within a population which in 1993 was estimated to be around 1.4 million individuals (Mu’awwad & Yasin, 1995).
Table 7
The number of television sets (both color and Black & White) in a sample of Kuwaiti households in 1999-2000, based on appliance and the size of household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appliances</th>
<th>Size of Household (from a sample of 1488 households)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freezer</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stove</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing Machine</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dish washer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boiler</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacuum cleaner</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air condition</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heater</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color tv</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and white TV</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape Recorder</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite channels</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal computers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The following data is recreated from the CSB of Kuwait (1999).
Like Al-Darwish’s first set, the Andrea cupboard television sets faded into obscurity. This was definitely the case with Um Abdulla, who grew up in Qibla then moved to Hawalli where she received her first set. When Um Abdulla (82-84) finally made the move to the newly constructed city of Udailiyyah in the 1970s, she kept her set for about two years. She doesn’t remember what happened to it today. Her daughter, Leila Al-Mithin (58), remembers the entry of the second television set in the 1970s, after her brothers got married and moved in their own self-contained flats within the house. Like in the case of other participants, it seems that while the first generation of family TV recipients had to incorporate the device into their homes, the second generation couldn’t conceive starting a home without it.

Between the 1950s and 1980s, the residential area had increased from around 360 to 720 km² (223 to 447 mi²), and the middle and low-income houses had increased from 2,000 to 16,478 units (Al-Sabah, 1989). The previous testimonies therefore, may display how television has historically been viewed as one of the many measures of realizing “the Kuwaiti dream.” In this, Kuwait once again echoes trends of other societies. In the 1950s, when American soldiers returned from the war, they began fashioning their idea of the American dream, which involved owning a home in the countryside, and owning a television set (Spigel, 1988). In Italy, the aftermath of the economic boom carried radical social changes with members of the Italian community, and was commonly associated with owning the first TV set (Pendai, 2012). Therefore, as the Kuwaiti houses increased and grew, one of the most substantial factors that may have assisted the cycle of television purchase was the rise of what is labeled the “new middle class” in the Kuwait of the 1970s (Ghabra, 1997; Khalaf, 2006; Tetreault, 1995). 79

79 Scholars identify this “new middle class” as a traditional yet educated social stratum that intermediates between the merchant elites and the government (Ghabra, 1997).
Indeed, in 1977, the sum of imported televisions had reached around 17 Million K.D (around 59 million dollars at the time), and by 1980, devices were being imported from Japan, Germany, and the Netherlands, with knob-operated models gaining favor due to the humid climate of the region (“An Incredible Development,” 1980). This may coincide with the wider television import trend in the Arab world, which soared from 0.9 million units in 1956 to 18 million units in 1987 (Abdul Malik, 1996). By 1982, the number of television viewers in Kuwait was estimated to be 1,300,000 individuals (Al-Ibrahim, 1986).

After settling into the new home, the colored television set started gaining more weight as a household object. In the United States, as the values of the Victorian household started waning, television had gradually replaced its radio predecessor, and the piano before it, as a domestic focal point (Spigel, 1988). The contemplations of Jasim Baroun (55) seem to fall within that area.

I remember my uncle—may Allah rest his soul—had a television, and next to it, I think, was a radio. I think it was a radio because it looked a little big. I mean, television was in the middle, and on its left was the pick-up [gramophone], and on its right was the radio, and of course, he’s made a glass [cupboard]…he was the boastful type…a cupboard and above it…was like a glass triangle, so he could watch himself (Baroun, 55).

What Baroun described also relates to what Amy Holdsworth (2011) labels the “television shrine,” in which television starts creating a distinguished surrounding area for itself as a household item. Similarly, there was also Sabah (55), who—as previously explained—was brought by her father from Syria at the age of eight. Having lived in Syria during the 1960s, Sabah had missed out on the entire urban shift. Instead, Sabah had lived a shift of a different

80 Abdul Malik, however, believes the rate to be minuscule still, constituting only 2.4% of the global flow.
kind, one of geographical perspective. She left the modest houses of Syria, into the newly built villas of Kuwait. Her initial vision of Kuwait is that of the new modern city. Sabah has short-circuited the change and engineered her own modernity. Leaving her small television with the “accordion-like doors” in Syria, Sabah remembers the new set in her new Qadsiyya house. Sabah’s marvels at her father’s city, at her father’s house, and at her father’s television, all blended together in her memory.

Yes, a big screen, and the house, there was wood, my father made half of it in wood. There were clocks here, for decoration, and the doors were in red leather, and each one had its color, and he put the television in an elegant cupboard. I mean, it looked beautiful! (Abdul Hamid, 55).

It seems that, even after the urban migration and the new domestic model, television still maintained its strong bind with the living room, or whatever the equivalent to it was. Even progressing towards the end of the 1990s, television sets never became a familiar component in the Kuwaiti kitchen, for instance (Al-Failakawi, 1999).81

In conclusion, the participants show that television’s relationship with the urban migration is one of great substance and vitality. While some devices successfully made the cut, others did not gain the right of passage into new Kuwait until their reinvention. Those early generations of television sets were soon replaced, or found themselves competing with the color models. Based on the oral accounts of the participants, few Kuwaitis managed to get the color set before achieving this urban jump.

It is left to say that television was not by any means the only technology that accompanied this urban migration. Upon its entrance into the Kuwaiti home, the television set

81 Yousif Al-Failakawi, who examined the consumption habits and motivations of the Kuwaiti television audience through a 400-individuals sample, found that only 9% of the participants kept TV sets in the kitchen.
found itself coexisting with other domestic gadgets. This is discussed in the following subsection of this area.

**Television and the accompanying technology.** In his groundbreaking vision of television ethnography, David Morley (1992) realized that the relationship between television and its viewers were underlined through their day-to-day lives, and through television’s interaction with other technologies. Kuwait was no exception to such a system. By the testimony of the participants, the entrance of television into the Kuwaiti home meant that it had to interact with many other domestic technologies. Hassan Abbas (66) remembers that the Bebhahani store that sold television sets also sold other electronics. For example, the Bebhahani store also sold speakers, which apparently entered Kuwait in the 1950s and helped with the mosques’ prayer calls:

Before, the beacons had a ladder and he [the caller] would climb up and call for prayer.

Even, Al-Huseini, our neighbor, used to call, we used to see him. In the end, the speakers came through Murad Behbehani. Murad Behbehani [also] had cameras (Abbas, 66).

Abbas remembers this period also introducing the automatic gear shift, and more importantly, the decline of house fans in favor of air conditioning:

In the old days if it got hot, he [a man] would take his wizar (garment), take some water [and soak it], clasp the wizar and put it on it [the fan] and turn the fan on. When he turned the fan on, with the humidity, he’d feel cool. Fans started decreasing. Air conditioners that could be fitted on windows came in (Abbas, 66).

Air conditioning…In the old days, poor us…we didn’t have an air conditioner. I was pregnant… I don’t know, [with] one of my daughters (pointing at her daughter), I don’t know if it was that one [or the other daughter]. I don’t know. And, our father bought us
an air conditioner, and bought us a car from Al-Ghanim—Chevrolet, with an air
conditioner in it. I mean, praise be to Allah, we progressed a little (Um Abdulla, 82-84). 82
In her memoirs about living in Kuwait since the 1930s, missionary and physician Mary
Allison (1994) dedicated an entire subchapter to the difficulty of life in Kuwait before the arrival
of air conditioning. Participants’ accounts are dissimilar as to where television and air
conditioning stand in the historical timeline. However, the 1960s was a period when both became
quite ubiquitous in the city. Answering the interview questions, Abbas agreed that a temporal
parallelism did indeed exist between television and air conditioning. A clearer connection
between air conditioning and the television set within the domestic space could be detected in the
memory of Muhammad Al-Ghuwainim (70), who remembers the arrival of air conditioning in
their old Arabic style house as partially responsible for creating their viewing environment.

We put it [the television] in the room that we sat in for lunch and dinner. All the family
with my mother and father may Allah rest their souls, and our children, would sit in this
room during lunch and dinner time, and have the television there in this room watching it.
And, at that time, don’t forget that air conditioning was difficult. I mean, because
electricity was weak. We bought it in 1962, an Antar brand air conditioning, from Al-
Jasim, he imported Antar. We put it in that room for the summertime, so they could sit
and watch television (Al-Ghuwainim, 70). 83
It’s the same idea [as the television], in the house. I mean…I’m speaking about my
house, we had one air conditioner; Antar, in one room, a big one. In the summer, if it got

82 Again, this highlights the same tendency that Kuwaitis have of tying historical events and artifacts with
families and individuals. Many participants—similarly to the way they remembered their first television sets—were
able to summon these technologies into their memories by binding them to their respective dealers, like Al-Ghanim
family, Al-Tukhaim family, and Al-Mulla family.

83 The word Antar is a cultural corruption of the original brand name, which was International. Most probably,
Antar was a reference to the popular Arabic warrior and poet, Antar Ibin Shaddad.
humid, they would take it away and we would go to sleep. Or at noontime. Later of course, every room got an air conditioner. It was the same thing with television when it first came, it was just the one television set (Fahad Al-Dosari, 57).

“With television, [came] the air conditioning… […] But of course, the big guys [elites], no…they had it previously, for years. I mean, like the government, the Sheikhs, Behbehani, Al-Ghanim, Al-Hamad. Oh yeah, they’ve had it for a while” (Al-Qattan, 74).

Of course, air conditioning was not the only technology to have possibly bonded with television in the new modern Kuwaiti house. The technological bond in the domestic space can be more clearly viewed with Sh’ouf Al-Shilahy (74), who, upon working for the Kuwait Oil Company, was relocated to their residential facilities. He then moved again into another house handled by the state, and remembers furnishing it with a refrigerator, an air conditioner, and a television set all at once. Sh’ouf became the possessor of all the devices that were rooting themselves as domestic necessities at the time. He was married, with no children, and in his early 20s. For him, these technologies came together and represented one thing, domestic modernity.

Contrarily, in the memory of Basem Al-Darwish (54), television stands alone as a device, despite possibly arriving at a similar time period with that of air conditioning. Al-Darwish believes that television garnered most of the attention for him and his peers.

Television came before, if I remember. Before the washing machine [undecipherable word]. Because, I remember that we had a television, but my mother, may Allah rest her soul, washed the clothes inside the basin in the courtyard. We didn’t have a washing machine, of course. I don’t know about the rich echelons of society. We had a gas stove of course…refrigerator…I’m trying to remember our old house in Sharq. I imagine we had a fridge, but the cooling pottery vase was also in the house (Al-Darwish, 54).
The car however, precedes everything else in Al-Darwish’s memory, including television. His father, a previous employee of the Ministry of Electricity, had a taxi on which he worked part-time. Jasim Baroun (55) on the other hand, who lived most of his childhood in Rumaithiya, trusts his memory enough to assert that television entered their house before the car did. His father, a janitor at the Ministry of Social Affairs, bought his first car in 1966, while the first television entered his home in 1964. Before the car, Jasim and his father went about in a rented auto rickshaw, commonly known as a Tuk-Tuk.

Away from the mainland, in the small Island of Failakawi, Bader Al-Failakawi (54) was experiencing the relative flourish of the 1970s, where parts of the island were also being valued by the government, segmenting it into an old and a new Failaka despite its small size. Al-Failakawi remembers the 1970s as a period when the island’s natives started investing their money in inner Kuwait, and cars as well as color television sets became common. Similarly to Baroun however, Al-Failakawi remembers television entering their house before the car did. His father, who owned a grocery store, managed on a bicycle before purchasing his first car. Al-Failakawi remembers the 1960s.

There was electricity. There was electricity, the old kind of electricity, you remember? The round switch and all the wires were outside and such…and this was all in houses [that were located in what] we called the old city, until we moved into the new city…at that time, the cost of the car, in comparison to television, there was a difference. So, us, with the entrance of television, and the trend, and people talking and all that. My father, may Allah heal him…I mean, I think he thought of television before he thought of the car, and the distances in our city were not far (Al-Failakawi, 54).
Besides the obvious budgetary considerations, this heightened interest in television ownership in comparison to a possible reluctance in car ownership could possibly relate to the difference in their social functions. While television is primarily a leisure product, the automobile was a practical product. Since the early small Kuwait of the working class was mostly accessible by foot, walking became part of the social culture, and there wasn’t a great need for automobiles, at least not until the urban expansion. Television however promoted the need to be entertained, which was always a present requirement in social structures. Other interesting domestic technologies that possibly interacted with television were the washing machine, the refrigerator, and modern plumbing.\textsuperscript{84}

Approximately in the ‘60s, around ‘65, they all got it \([\text{the refrigerator}],\) but it was for he who had the means to buy it. He who did not… no. People would bring us their \textit{Pepsi} and such \([\text{because we had a fridge}.]\) They would ask us to store it until the next day, similarly with those who lived near by \((\text{Nawal, 59}).\)

A big house and an artificial lake in the middle, they didn’t have water tanks. Father would say, ‘It’s just three or four years and we would have moved to our new house, why the tanks?’ They stayed for 15 years in that house repeating the same phrase \((\text{Al-Nifisy, 57}).\)

Kuwait then moved further into the 1980s, a decade that witnessed the surface of more prominent technology that had accompanied television. While achieving the highest income per capita, the 1980s in Kuwait were riddled with external and internal issues including the Iranian revolution, the subsequent war with Iraq, and the activation of an Islamic subculture \((\text{Al-Najjar,}\)

\textsuperscript{84} The interconnectivity of technology in Kuwait seems to have capitalized on the image of the new, modern Kuwaiti home. For example, the early period of Kuwait involved importing their drinking water from the Iraqi city of Basra, while the new home contained proper water sources, following the building of the first seawater distillation unit in 1953 \((\text{Abdu, 1962; Al-Tamimi, 1998}).\)
2000; Al-Yahya, 1993; Al-Yasin, 1985; Ghabra, 1997). On the media front, the decade had also witnessed the first Festival of Television Production in the Gulf, launched in Kuwait on January 26, 1980 (Gulf Vision, 2013). However, one of the most important developments of the 1980s was the gradual emergence of the satellite dishes.

I have a friend, Mahdy Al Mousawi, in ‘82. We were in Al Subahiyya’s School. While there, he asked me ‘Do you know what a satellite is? Do you know of this stuff?’ I said, ‘I’ve heard of the satellite, but I don’t know what it is.’ He said, ‘Come on.’ One afternoon, we went to see it, and he showed me one indeed. On the Fahaheel Rd.; one of the buildings had two small dishes, like the small dishes that are seen now, I found two of those, and then, on the Fifth Ring Road that they had newly built, the house on the corner. If you were going into the city you’d see it on your right hand side, three dishes on the ground, and then he showed me the one in the Shi’ib…Behbehani, I think. He showed me. He said, ‘This is a satellite,’ and so and so, and things like that, so I said to him, ‘Ok, how do we install it in the house? (Baroun, 55).

Baroun’s recollection brings the narrative once again to the urban mental mapping aspect, where his memory of satellites illustrates itself through old Kuwait and its growth. Baroun’s memory of the satellite carries him to when the Fifth Ring Road, now a vital highway, was newly constructed, and he was observing the very sporadic satellite dishes like rare birds. Similarly, narrator Saud Al-Khaldy (50) draws a particularly interesting analogy in order to explain why the satellite receiver was well accepted in their community:

We’ve accepted the receiver, why? Because, I remember the Land Rover jeep, it was a one to eight car system…with my father, and I remember another car that he has purchased. Its cushions were not dry, it had a degree of luxury and sponge and such, so
there were developments in the manufacturing and transportation and luxury that evolved with any machine. So, television was amongst these machines (Al-Khaldy, 50).

The satellite dish has eventually led to dramatic, social, and administrative changes in the television industry of Kuwait and the Arab world (Al-Abid, 2008; Al-Faqih, 2000; Dajani, 2007, Mu’awwad, 1994; Poindexter, 1991; Snu, 2001; Tawil-Souri, 2008). Its introduction however, seems to have revitalized the previous religious argument, partially by a smaller dose. Basem Al-Darwish (54), who is particularly disdainful of over-religiosity, recalls the statement of an alleged religious scholar in the 1980s. The scholar, through an interview in Al-Watan newspaper, deemed it sacrilege for young men to marry an inhabitant of a house that carried a satellite dish. In the neighboring state of Saudi Arabia, one commercial street, which was reputable for the trading of satellite dishes, earned the name Satan St.—a name it carries to this day (Hareedy, 2014).

However, that didn’t stop the trend growing dramatically in the 1990s, with omnipresent low-priced dishes ranging in size from 6 to 20 feet (Al-Failakawi, 1999). This caused many to warn against foreign stations that might “conflict with the dominant social values of Kuwait” (Mu’awwad, 1994). With all that taken into consideration, there is still an additional dimension to the story of satellite dishes. Fahad Al-Dosari, a 57-year old man who stayed in Kuwait during the First Gulf War, offers a significantly different analytical view on the satellite:

We were in the year of the invasion [1990], or before the year of the invasion. It wasn’t as it is now. It consisted of a big dish over two meters (6.5ft) approximately, they would

---

85 Twenty to 30 years later, the ubiquity of satellites would attract the local youth away from their local station, nurture an industry of genres like game shows and music videos, and cause a certain disturbance in the governmental ethos (Dajani, 2007, Mu’awwad, 1994; Tawil-Souri, 2008). Similar tendencies and fears about the satellite later surfaced in Yemen (Al-Faqih, 2000), Lebanon (Snu, 2001), Morocco (Poindexter, 1991), and Egypt (Al-Abid, 2008). In 1999, Al-Failakawi found that, out of 400 participants in a quota sample from Kuwait, 45% owned one satellite dish, and 12% owned three satellite dishes instead of the one.
put it on the houses and it was [costing] 3000 Dinars or 4000 Dinars at the time ($1000 at the time). And, they said that it caught I don’t know where, and that it got Europe, and it got.... That was the start. And, it was very rare for someone to have it. After the liberation [in 1991], since the people...we were in the midst of the invasion; I was one of the people who stayed in Kuwait. We obviously didn’t have anything but *Al-Nida’ Television* [pro-Saddam, Iraqi propaganda television], that of the Iraqi republic as they called it. So we would be looking for whoever had satellite at the time. Because, we wanted to see the news of the world. We were cut, after the liberation (Al-Dosari, 57).

Al-Dosari’s account refers to a point in time that is relatively late in the integration history of television, late enough to constitute the end of the time period that this study is concerned with. Besides air conditioning, the washing machine, the car, and the satellite dish, the 1980s witnessed the introduction of technologies that were fundamentally attached to the television, and had caused a significant stir in the social scene. Many Kuwaitis recollect being introduced to the remote control and the VCR:

Possibly in ‘86, me...during this period, ‘86, I was working in teaching. I had another job, I was also working at DHL. So, in 1986, I would visit our company manager in his home. He was infatuated with electronics, so at his place I came across some kind of a remote, possibly—let us say the length of the hand, the length of the elbow, from half of the hand to the elbow. My brother bought a video recorder, the cubic one, and it was like this box [pointing at a floppy-disc box], like the disc box, about the size of a disc box but bigger, it was this big. Maybe I’ll ask him if he has one of the tapes. I could get it...It would pop at the top, like the VHS. Of course, it is extinct now. I have one in the house, I have a *Sony*, and I have a *National* (Baroun, 55).
Khalil Al-Harran (65), who had left his childhood house in old Salmiyya, remembers purchasing his first video recorder soon after his marriage.

“The video [recorder] was, when it first came out, a *Toshiba*. I purchased it for 450 Dinars, it weighed 18 kilograms. This was possibly in 1978 or 1979, around that time, let’s say 1980! No, 1979” (Al-Harran, 65).

In Kuwait alone, it was estimated that video machines later reached an annual growth rate of 20% in homes, with over 100,000 units being imported in 1980 (Khaled, 1985). According to researcher Suheil Khaled (1985), around a million and a half VCR units entered Kuwait between 1977 and 1984. Similarly, the arrival of the VCR had seemed to negatively affect cinemagoing in the neighboring state of Bahrain (Hamod, 1992). In Saudi Arabia, which still had no cinema theaters, the video machine was looked at as a way of relaxing the public pressure on the government station (Bait-Almal, 2000). It was associated somewhat with the English speaking affluent middle class, initiating an active youth underground market (See Figure 31; Al-Hazza, 1983; Boyd & Shatzer, 1993).86

---

86 Slightly further, geographically, in Morocco, VCR units had soared from 17,000 units in 1981 to 52,000 units in 1982 (Brahimi cited in Poindexter, 1991).
Another interesting addition to the integration history of television was the remote control. Two humorous incidents about the remote control highlight two kinds of gaps, one temporal, and one geographical. Both incidents come from the memory of Basem Al-Darwish (54), who remembers visiting a distant older relative in Dogha city when he was a boy.

We made our way to them and we were sat there. I was sitting there and he and my father were chatting. And, he was saying to him, ‘Do you know Hajji, with televisions nowadays, they’ve made something that if someone would say ‘what do you want to see?’ He’d say, ‘I’d like to watch the second station’ Click, and the station would change! How? While he’s at his seat. What do you want?’ Anything you want, you want something without getting up for the television, you’d change stations from afar. My father asked him how, and he told him about his friend with that television of which he’s seen or heard. I was listening to them, of course. I was young. He said, ‘He pulled out a box the size of a matchbox.’ That was his description back in the day, he hasn’t seen the earlier remotes that were like a small fridge. He said, ‘He got out a box the size of a
matchbox or a cigarette case, and he’d change the television stations with it,’ and my
father said, ‘Oh give me a break!’ (Al-Darwish, 54).

In the description of Al-Darwish’s relative, the remote control was made out to be much
smaller than its actual size at the time. Looking at this obvious misattribution, it only highlights
how the novelty attitude keeps resurfacing with each new technology, rather than just television,
with obvious variances in the significance of the impact.

The second incident happened much later, upon his trip to receive his college education
in the state of Florida during the late 1970s. Upon sharing a house in Coco Beach with three or
four other students, the friends paid collectively for a cable TV subscription that came with a
“wired remote control box.” Al-Darwish remembers using this novelty to his advantage by
pulling a prank on another Kuwaiti friend who reprimanded them for missing their lecture:

He said, ‘How ridiculous! You’re here and you’ve missed the lectures for a television
set!’ Someone then told him, ‘You idiot! Look, look! Just utter the name of any station,
and the television would switch by itself, by voice.’ He answered, ‘No way!’ He said,
‘Name a station.’ Now, Ismael was sitting in the corner with the remote beside him (Al-
Darwish, 54).

Al-Darwish’s friend was briefly under the impression that television was responding to his
verbal commands, while a friend was hiding with the remote in his hand. All the previous stories
only indicate a strong connection between television and other technologies, some closer to it in
nature (like the satellite dish, the remote control, and the VCR machine), while others were only
relevant spatially because they shared the same domestic space. This highlights the contextual
nature of television’s interaction with civic modernity in Kuwait, which is yet another dimension
of television’s integration history in the culture.
The next subsection, which still falls under television’s relationship with modernity, relates to the usual accusations that are directed towards television, as a major influence in the alteration of social habits.

**Social alterations and disappearing acts.** Many participants also spoke of television’s interaction with—and to some degree, responsibility for—the social alteration of society. Whether it was an accompaniment to the changes in society, or a more direct influence in them, television in Kuwait has been associated with both negatively and positively perceived changes in the community. In reference to the social influence of television programs, Abdulla Al-Bloushi (63) offered praising testimony, noting how Kuwaitis gradually started learning from the adventures of the television characters.

Things got better, matters improved, and the situation became much much better, undoubtedly. Everyone, even the serials that they’ve watched, they would say, ‘Did you see what whatshisname did? Did you see what they did to him? Had he been on the straight and narrow this wouldn’t have happened to him’ (Abdulla Al-Bloushi, 63).

However, television had many other critics at the time. A particularly intriguing case that acts as an example would be the appearance of the late Abdul Aziz Al-Nimash in his famous drag act, which started due to the lack of female theater performers in the old days (Al-Najmy, 2005; Al-Wasil, 2009). Al-Nimash and his female alter ego Um Ilaiwy were so successful that the two ended up becoming synonymous for the rest of his career. Some viewers however, considered the act rather scandalous.87

---

87 Al-Nimash was a Kuwaiti middle-aged man who dressed as a woman on stage and perfected the speech, mannerisms and clothing culture of the old, feisty, irritable wench who was a stereotype in the pre-oil era. Having Al-Nimash on stage provided a certain advantage for the male performers against him, since they were able to practice physical contact such as hugging him and kissing him, which was not permitted between different gendered performers.
Abdul Hussein and Abdul Aziz Al-Nimash, may he rest in peace, it was, wow! Some would even say it is sacrilege to watch Abu Ulaiwy because Al-Nimash was dressed up as a woman. A colleague in school said to me, ‘You keep saying that you watched so and so, you should be ashamed!’ I said, ‘Why?’ He’d say to me ‘Isn’t there a holy saying, cursed is the man who wears women's clothing?’ (Hassan Abbas, 66).

Another instance comes from the memory of Jasim Baroun (55), who recited a phenomenon that he witnessed in the early 1970s, when he was about 10 or 11 years old.

I’ll tell you a story that happened to us in the fireej (neighbourhood). Someone came with a piece of white cotton in his hand, or white cloth, walking about among us, and he’s soaked it in gas, and was inhaling it. It was the first time we’ve seen something like that. So, we took him and sat with him and chatted and chatted, and we found out that he was suffering family tribulations and such. So I said, my father was asking while we were listening. He asked, ‘Did you find out about this [thing with the cotton] somewhere? When you did this, who told you? Your older brother? Your father?’ He said, ‘No, I watch what they do and I do the same.’ This phrase, when he said ‘I watch what they do and I do the same,’ he certainly watched it either on television or in the cinema (Baroun, 55).

Citing scholar Raymond Williams, social historian Joe Moran (2013) points out that television has always been negatively associated with the disappearance of previous recreational activities that have preceded it. This criticism seems to apply on an international level. For instance, while some speculated that television is linked to the disappearance of the Japanese tradition of Shishimai (the lion dance), others claimed that it had altered the outdoor activities of Australian children in the 1940s (Chun, 2006; Smith-Darian & Turnbull, 2012). One is to ask
therefore, whether the introduction of television to Kuwaiti society was largely responsible for the elimination of outdoor games that once defined Kuwaiti history, like *Mugsi* for the boys and hopscotch for the girls.

Between you and me, it had an effect. It was that it drew the children who were in the streets during the evening. We didn’t have streets in the old days. We had alleys. The children in the alleys, after dusk, they would gather by the television. The night games that we used to play, *Uthaim Sari* and hide and seek, and these evening games, they started to…that’s it! Television took them [the children] inside. Storytelling began to not be, I mean, stories were preserved [instead] to desert outings. We couldn’t take along the television at the time. The desert wasn’t what is it now, with electricity. It was truly a desert, just the tent and the gas light, so the storytelling would take its place there, when we camp and so, but [in the city] television has taken that away (Fahad Al-Dosari, 57).

There was no television or anything like that in the old days, you would sit in the gathering, my mother would come, may she rest in peace, my aunt, who was a great conversationalist, very good, loved chatting and so. They would tell stories and riddles and all. Afterwards, each would go to his home and sleep (Um Sa’ad, 80).

It is possible to argue that storytelling resituated itself not only to the desert, but also within the actual television content through remediation. Television in Kuwait may have incorporated the Kuwaiti passion for storytelling through its programs.

There were many outputs from Kuwaiti television. It spoke to the minds of the young and the youths to instill traditions. Stories and tales…our families, with the fairytales and old stories, like *Habbaba*, even through the serials. Me, as a youngster, I’m a Bedouin, so when you tell me about the traditions and habits of the deserts, and the stories of…
would’ve heard them from my folk’s gatherings. But, I was ignorant of what civilization was, what the Hadhari’s traditions and habits were, I didn’t know. I have lived [the examples of] how the father dealt with his son in Bedouin society. [However,] I didn’t know how the sea folks lived. But, when I saw it visually, and saw it clearly transported to me with no impurities, then I realized that geography was the only main social difference; that this [Bedouin] had a geography of arid deserts, and that this [Hadhari] was facing sea waves and financial destitution (Al-Khaldy, 50).

According to Al-Khaldy therefore, television apparently not only trans-mediated local folktales, but introduced alternative folktales to other sub-communities of Kuwaiti society. In his narration, Al-Khaldy cites Habbaba; a show which is still considered part of the Kuwaiti television canon that starred the late Mariam Al-Ghadban, one of Kuwait’s first actresses. Habbaba initially started on radio, with Al-Ghadban playing the storytelling grandmother Habbaba, a name that was associated with her until her death. Habbaba was produced in 1962, and has since become a cultural phenomenon (Al-Ghareeb, 1999).

In the old days, we had someone called Habbaba, Mariam Al Ghabdan. She would tell stories and we would listen to her every night, every night. Now, no! Now they have this television and these programs, they have the internet (Nawal, 59).

Looking back at the literature review, the Kuwaiti program Habbaba shows how television could be used to transmediate and preserve local folk, particularly through the stories that Habbaba told on television. Similarly, television in Egypt, India, and Algonquian Canada has been used as a creative vessel for traditional stories (Abu-Lughod, 2008; Granzberg, 1982; Malik, 1989).

However, besides the storytelling practice being reflected in the programs, the question to
be asked is, “Did television end storytelling as a community practice?” In Japan, Jason Chun (2006) contemplates that the introduction of television has removed the storytelling skill from the family elders to the television screen. On that note, Nawal (59) believes that the previous lack of electricity in the neighborhood meant that the gathering had to take place before dusk, which made the storytelling practice take place within the house. It is possible then that television had simply replaced the prime source of indoor entertainment when it came along. Also, considering the possible effect of the radio on storytelling, it is of course possible that television may have assisted in the termination of an already waning practice. However, Nawal believes that television had not necessarily killed storytelling, but that storytelling had died as a consequence of the generally changing times.

Similarly, many other participants do not share this—possibly—romanticized opposition between television and old community traditions. Jasim Baroun (55), who lived in the city of Rumaythiya, still remembers a healthy outdoor childhood in the post-television era of the 1970s, where he went trick-or-treating and played outdoors constantly. Baroun ironically states that he doesn’t remember his grandparents ever telling him a single story. Um Ahmad (56) similarly, remembers a time when women used to spread their mats out in the streets. She believes that, although television did lure women and children indoors, it should not take sole responsibility for the dying habit. Um Ahmad believes that times have simply changed in general.

Summary. One of the most criterion points of television’s cultural integration was in its interaction with a very fluid very drastic wave of modernity, in which society was witnessing the spread of literacy, infrastructure, and economical prosperity. For many, color television seems synonymous to that particular period, to the extent that many of the narrators summon their
memories of the color sets spatially, remembering certain areas in old Kuwait that associate with the promotion and vending of the color sets. This is parallel to the earlier instances with the black-and-white sets. The introduction of color television introduced similar social reactions to the ones exhibited with the introduction of the black-and-white sets, but in shorter cycles. For example, it was associated with certain misconceptions, bafflement, and a reinforcement of the economic gap. These instances however, were quickly regulated, possibly due to the previous conditioning of the earlier black-and-white set.

Synchronizing with the massive wave of urban migration, color television also became part of the Kuwaiti home. Those who could not afford a black-and-white set while living in the old Kuwait felt that the color set was somewhat of a natural requirement in their new urban homes. The device possibly caused a surge in sales for the people who could now afford such items of luxury to incorporate in their Kuwaiti dream home, especially after the middle class status started spreading and the geographical, ethnic, and economical gaps began to dissipate.

This parallel between color television and modernity caused the device to interact (and sometimes race) other domestic technologies that had transformed the Kuwaiti life substantially, like the air conditioner, the refrigerator, and the car. The linear order in which these devices entered the home depended on many elements, including their individual necessities to the Kuwaiti consumer, the economical comfort of the Kuwaiti consumer, and the pace of the consumer’s introduction to modernity. While all these modern appliances were acquired together for some, for others the process was much more gradual. More relevantly, as Kuwait went through its modernity phase, television also incorporated and interacted with complementary technology, like the VCR and the Satellite dish, both of which caused substantial restructuring of the local media consumption culture. Television gradually merged into the “new” domestic
environment, creating its own “shrine” and turning the focal attention of the home towards it.

From a meta-perspective, color television represented many mental and cultural associations that were relative to the narrator. These include natural scenery, the clothing culture of the 1970s, the changing nature of home furniture, and more importantly, the Gulf Cup championship of 1974. The latter particularly, being won by Kuwait, possibly highlights the strong bond between color television and the golden age of the nation.

Finally, the modernity discourse urges the question of whether television was responsible in altering (or killing) some of the previous community habits. While some believe that it did so to some degree, many also think that such habits have disappeared as a natural result to the nature of the generally changing times. Others, similarly, claim to have lived a healthy outdoor childhood unaffected by television, countering the romanticized binary of “television vs. outdoor activities.”

This concludes another historical episode of television’s cultural integration as complemented by the oral stories of the recipients. They have spoken on the entrance of color television, their urban migration, television’s relation to several other technologies, and the influence of television—both negative and positive—on Kuwaiti society. In correspondence with the literature review, one final aspect of the integration history of television needs to be addressed, an aspect that is particularly distinct from the others in the sense that it involves another perception of television altogether. The next section looks at what the people had to say—and how they interacted—with television as content, not as device.

**Sixth Area, Content: Kuwaitis and their Television Programs**

Previously, the literature review discussed how television’s content could have been an integral part of how the local culture integrated it, drawing examples from several cultural
settings in Canada and South Africa. The literature review also highlighted the diplomatic and economic conditions in which these programs are circulated between nations and broadcasted to the public. It also underlined the interaction between Arab recipients and certain imported Western programs, and the identity crisis that this interaction helped create. Finally, it discussed the idea of the television canon, and how it can function as a vital memory stimulus and a representation of its respective time of broadcast.

With specific attention to these topics, the narrators’ stories broke the content category into three distinct areas that do not divert significantly from the topics discussed in the literature review. The integration history of television through its content relates to the intertextual nature of its programs, the Kuwaiti television canon, and cross-cultural empathy with Eastern and Western imported programs.

**Intertextuality.** One of the most rudimentary features of Kuwaiti television was its intertextuality. In other words, at an earlier point in its life, television in Kuwait had gradually become an access gate to an amalgamation of Kuwaiti cultural arts, including its music, its theater, and its storytelling traditions. In this sense, Kuwaiti television became an illustration of local culture in its entirety, as it appears to do in the memory of participants. When the storytellers spoke, they usually summoned the golden age of Kuwaiti theater and music, as both these art forms were broadcasted regularly on television.

“Some of the very important programs were the Kuwaiti theatrical plays of the time. I remember the play *Kuwait in The Year 2000* [which at the time was a science-fiction play], which discussed what was to come in the year 2000” (Al Darswish, 54).

Indeed, in his examination of Kuwaiti television drama, scholar Faisal Al-Qahtani (2013) discusses the initial lack of segmentation in television writing. Al-Qahtani explains that the early
phase of television in Kuwait depended on principles borrowed from Kuwaiti theater, like the "improv method" for instance.

The seventies [were] a time of many things, and is considered for us, the golden age of everything, from theater, arts, sports. That was the period of the seventies. At the time when television and Kuwaiti citizens were going through the 1970s, Kuwait has already become a cultural center. Everything! [It had] precedence in everything, in the arts aspects, theater, the abstract arts, and the cultural [aspects] as well, because we started getting exhibitions… and I remember, the intellectual centers spreading across Kuwait (Abdulla Al-Bloushi, 63).

It can be said that Kuwaiti art forms were very connected, which was possibly a result of its small scale but impactful art scene. Many of the figures of radio and theater ended up in television. For example, pioneer Kuwaiti musician Yousif Al-Doukhy had credited the role of Kuwaiti television in affirming the Kuwaiti musical identity, which possibly originated from early Kuwaiti friction with African and Indian cultures (Al-Ghareeb, 1997). This is evident from the governmental initiative to form the television music group, "Firkat Al-Talfizion," in the early period of television (See Figure 32; Hamdan, 1997).
Also, don’t forget, there was the Samri [the Kuwaiti traditional song and dance routine]. Nowadays you don’t see these things. True enough, it was black and white, but there were these beautiful interviews and the Samri and these beautiful things (Um Ahmad, 56).

Similarly, Saud Al-Khaldy (55) discusses television’s fusion with theater and its role in the development of society. Al-Khaldy also explains how television’s transmediation of local dances helped bring Hadhari and Bedouin communities closer together. In the following narration, Al-Khaldy discusses how television helped explain the Hadhari art performance to the Bedouin and vice versa. He also explains how the plots of certain theatrical plays—which were broadcasted on TV—channeled the changes that were occurring in society.

Songs were pure in their nature, and the Bedouin society had the Ardha and Samri art and such, right? When you watch the Hadhari society, they [in turn] have the Ardha dance.
Maybe the “naming scheme” is different. He [the Hadhari] had the Samri, he had the traditional dance sessions. This was despite the fact that at the time, there were certain mentalities of people who were not sophisticated, not modernized, not educated … illiterate, and also prejudiced in favor of the traditional ways. They wouldn’t accept the idea, but they did [eventually]. Kuwaiti television had a great role in the cultural and scientific revolution of Kuwaiti society. I have noticed that in the old theatrical plays, like *The Lost Hen* or else, when Mohammad Al-Mansour [as in the plot] comes back from studying abroad, and does his usual gigs. I don’t remember its name, but the plays of the time echoed the fact that there was education abroad, and that Kuwaiti society had young manpower who had to go and get educated and bring back degrees (Al-Khaldy, 55).

Kuwaiti television also broadcasted many films, which helped merge the two arts of cinema and television in the memories of many participants. Similarly, the Kuwaiti Cinema Company was brought under the television’s Ministry of Information in 1961 (Al-Siddiq, 1997). Twenty years later exactly, the ministerial Cinema Department of Information was completed (Shehab et al., 1998). Another intertextual practice was the constant usage of Kuwaiti television to broadcast Kuwaiti theatrical plays, similar to the tradition of television in countries like Bali for instance (Hobart, 2002). This tendency of television to fuse its content with other art forms is not limited to Kuwait. As discussed previously, American television borrowed very heavily from the conventions of cinema and Vaudevillian theater in its early decades (Spigel, 1988).

Through its songs, its televised theater plays, its films, and its programs, Kuwaiti television has utilized all its efforts into creating a canon: an assortment of memorable content that represents the age. The question of whether the canon exists only in the nostalgic romanticisms of the early recipients or not, and whether it was created intentionally or not, is out
of this study’s remit. However, this next subsection discusses the interaction between early recipients of Kuwaiti television and the television canon.

The Kuwaiti television canon. As discussed in the literature review, a television canon—despite the difficulty of compiling it—constitutes the cream of the television output in a certain culture (Davies, 2007; Johnson, 2007; Wheatly, 2007). From the 1960s onwards, Kuwaitis seem to have assembled a frequently credited model of their favorite and most iconic programs. One frequently cited program was the documentary styled Window over the World, which many participants say has introduced them to curious cultures from other societies. What they also remember the most seems to be the unprecedented animated introduction of the program.

It used to come up and the men loved it. My father and my uncles would sit and watch it.

It would be an image of a man wearing ghutra and uqal, he would stand and look over the window. It was a news program, bringing us news from the whole world, so our fathers would sit, drawn to it (Buthaina, 58).

“I very clearly remember, I loved it, Window over the World, which displayed scenes and anthologies and news from societies. Traditions, customs of people, so I loved it” (Al-Darwish, 54).

The frequently mentioned trivia program Window Over the World was apparently representative of some programs that involved cultural trivia and random facts, emphasizing on

---

88 With the United States for example, the golden age of television is approximately mapped around the 1960s-1970s, in what is known as the classical network model, before the emergence of FOX (Mittel, 2003). Defining such canon depends on the survivability of the material, the genre, and socio-historical context of the programs in question, as it is helpful for both nostalgia and pedagogy (Davies, 2007; Wheatly, 2007). Such definitions are also popular with scholars from the United Kingdom who attempt to define the “golden age of the BBC” through scholars like Catherine Johnson (2007) and Mair Davies (2007). Relevantly, each culture treasures specific televised events that become part of its historical psyche, like the Japanese’ royal family wedding in 1956 (Chun, 2006), or the Eastern European hospital drama Nemocnice Na Kraji Města in Czechoslovakia (Bednářík, 2013).
the more neutral informational output of television. In 1981, *Window Over the World* had broadcasted 152 subjects, 22 of which were local (MOI, 1981). This could possibly be linked to a period where Kuwait was updating its educational curriculum and attempting to achieve more cultural interactions with the outside. Another television figure associated with that category was Sharif Al Alamy.

I remember a program called *Seen Jeem* [question and answer], this program was very exciting. The information! You would benefit from its general information. You haven’t read a book. It wasn’t like it is today [with] *Google* and whatnot. This has evolved today, it’s different…but the *Google* of that time was this program of Sharif Al Alamy, *Seen Jeem* (Bu Kubar, 58; See Figure 33).
Kuwaiti researcher Faisal Al-Qahtani (2013) believes the 1970s and 1980s to be the golden age of television, rich with memorable output of comedy and fictional period pieces, as well as the signature work of writer Tariq Othman. Kuwaitis also seem to remember the fair amount of comedy material that became a substantial part of their television identity. The comedy program *Mahkamat Al Fireej* or the *Neighborhood Court*, produced in 1967, lightheartedly parodied and discussed several rising social patterns, like feminism and ethnic identity, through the setting of a primitive local court.89

When it first started they had *Neighborhood Court*, this program was unmissable, people would wait every day, because, it was a court, a comic one, and they had a manner in which they presented matters of the people. The judge would be sitting, and the other

---

89 This also refers to a relatively recent period in which the Kuwaiti judiciary was one of tradition and public endorsement rather than of clear academic and institutional standards (Al-Qina’ie, 1988).
person was next to him, and they were wearing their gowns and such. It was funny (Al-Bloushi, 63).

It offered a truly powerful idea, I remember when the Bedouin and his wife presented themselves to the judge in dispute, and the Hadhari and his wife were also in dispute, so they switched wives and divorced for the purpose of switching wives. What did that entail? It was addressed to those with fossil-like mentalities. Hadhari; you should not be repulsed by the Bedouin. Bedouin, you should not be repulsed by the Hadhari. Society was really two sects: Hadhar and Badu (Al-Khaldy, 50).

The contemporary beginnings of Kuwaiti television can be underlined by the fact that some of the actors who played the neighborhood judges, like Abdul Hussein Abdul Ridha, are still quite active in the industry today. In 1988, the archive of Kuwait TV had contained 6,591 tapes of various genres, while the feature film library possessed 31 foreign films in both black/white and color (Al-San’ousy, 1997). These iconic Kuwaiti programs of the day were fairly easy to identify. However, due to their powerful impact and their functions as memory-incentives to many participants, certain programs seem to deserve their own discussions, namely, Fatima Hussein, and Abu Jassoum.

**Fatima Hussein.** With the beginning of television, Kuwait witnessed a crack in the glass ceiling through the feminist contribution of Fatima Hussain to the local television industry (See Figure 34). A Kuwaiti thinker, media figure, and one of the biggest and most documented feminists, her famed memoirs, *The Pages of Fatima Hussein*, credit her as a historian of the cultural, feminist, and literary movement in Kuwait (Al-Mas'oudy, 2005). Her version of feminism however, seems to have been cultured into a specific Kuwaiti practice, which did not keep her from presenting domestic related content, like cuisine art and principles of etiquette.
She used to cook, back in the days of cooking. She was fun! I mean, Fatima Hussein cooked Kuwaiti cooking, and spoke to you in Kuwaiti, and you enjoyed her. She was different, and it was a strange experience for us—a woman in front of you cooking and working and such. Even for the housewives, they would come and visit and sit around the time that Fatima Hussein was on. With tea and nuts, and they would be so happy watching her (Um Ahmad, 56).

Fatima Hussein’s appeal consists of her pioneering—and successful—attempt to bring the previously private housewife practice of cooking into the public space via television, thus reevaluating and underlining the overlooked role of the Kuwaiti housewife into a regulated, clearly cut craft. Her work therefore, was an attempt of fusion between etiquette and tradition.

We felt a bit of progress. She taught people etiquette, exotic cuisine. I mean, our Kuwaiti cookery before was limited and conventional, then she started introducing Lebanese dishes, Egyptian dishes. So this started introducing exotic things into our lives (Al-Mithin, 58).

Hussein’s program only followed the establishment of the local station by two years, in 1963. Her television program, *Along with the Family*, was successful enough to ensure its continuous airing for 13 whole years despite the culturally sensitive times for women during that era. One of Hussein’s main problems was attaining girls who were willing to appear on television (Al-Shimmary, 2011). According to Hussein, the show presented a counter-ideology to the masculine dominance of the time, and supported the concept of shared familial responsibility between both genders (“Fatima Hussain Al-Eisa,” 2011).

When we first found out about pasta, we used to consume it in two ways; some made it into gravy and put it on top of rice…this is a piece of information that you may not have
heard of. But I tell you, macaroni, some houses made it into gravy and put it on rice, or put it in a sandwich and ate it as a macaroni sandwich. One of the things I remember which still lingers in my memory. May she be remembered well, Mrs. Fatima Hussein, she went on television and said, ‘You shouldn’t eat macaroni in toast and bread because these are [both] starches,’ and at the time I was young. ‘What are starches?’ (Al-Dosari, 57).

Hussein was also claimed to be the first woman in Kuwait—and in extension the gulf—to remove her veil and black cowl and set fire to them as an act of protest in 1953, symbolizing retaliation against traditions and masculine oppression (“Fatima Hussain, the First Gulf Woman,” 2007; Tétreault, 1993).

In the old days, when she would appear at 7 o’clock, she was on every night at 7. She who loved cooking for example, and she who was just attending night school, would love to write [her recipes]. What beautiful dishes did she have; which were all Kuwaiti, for example she made the Mutabaq Zubaidi, cake, she made such things. For me, for example, I was still in my fourth year of grade school, I would write what she made, cake and whatnot, she even made pizza! (Nawal, 59).

According to Um Sa’ad (80), Fatima Hussein also had the advantage of coming from an intellectual open-minded progressive family, which were the Al-Qina’ie house.\footnote{The 1960s was a decade of abrupt strides for Kuwaiti women that included the founding of the Arab Women Development Society, (AWDS) and the Women’s Cultural and Social Society (WCSS) in 1963 (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011). The Kuwaiti feminist lobbying was relatively relentless as it dates back to the 1970’s, an issue that pitted Islamists, tribalists, and conservatives against women in the era of Ahmad Al-Jabir (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011; Tétreault, 2001). The traditional Islamists for example strongly opposed the secularization of the Kuwaiti women, linking the movement to corruptive Western Ideology (Tétreault, 2000).}

Television was similarly tied to the rise of feminism in the United States during the 1940s, a decade where women were leaving the house and going into the public setting of the
work force (Spigel, 1988). In the 1960s, Japanese television also coincided with a period of reevaluation towards gender relations (Chun, 2006). With Kuwait, the feminist movement had pitted Islamists, tribalists, and conservatives against women in the era of Ahmad Al-Jabir (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011; Tétreault, 2001). The 1960s similarly, was responsible for the establishment of important feminist lobbies (like the AWDS), as explained in the fifth chapter (Shultziner & Tétreault, 2011). Fatima Hussein’s work therefore, acts as a clear reflection to that particular era.

Indeed, there exists a heavy distinction between aristocratic “secular” women and traditional “Bedouin” women (Tétreault, 1993). Here, Saud Al-Khaldy remembers how television was partially responsible for his father’s shifting attitude towards women’s education:

I knew my father, he had the idea that a girl is not to study, should not study, that it was shameful for a girl to study, shameful for her to leave the house, shameful to so and so… but, things he learned from television has eased it up for him. We gathered, and said, ‘Father, my sisters today are nine years old, it is wrong for them that they did not study, and that they do not read nor write.’ So, we found that he had a level of acceptance and tolerance that we did not foresee. Thanks to Allah, we were able to convince him and register the girls in school and they did indeed study. However, he said one thing, he said, ‘I don’t want them to become actresses’ (Al-Khaldy, 55).
Another interesting selection from the Kuwaiti television canon, one that ended up in this research by sheer chance, is *Bu-Jassoom*.

**Bu Jassoom.** Bu Jasoom [which literally means Father of Jassoom] was remembered sketchily but fondly by many of the participants, who nostalgically recall the antics of a family of four: Jasim (or Jassoom), Ruwaishid (or Rashid) and the mother and father (Bu Jassoom and Um Jassoom, respectively). The program was initially an initiative of the government, who sought the participation of members from the Kuwaiti army (Ahmad & Al-Inizy, 2011).

From the Ministry of Defense, you know, the army and armed forces. These were soldiers who created certain television programs, and *Bu Jassoom* struck. When Bu
Jassoom appeared with his wife Um Jasoom, and Ruwaished [his son]. Ruwaishid just died two or three years ago, may Allah rest his soul (Abbas, 66).

In an instance of sheer serendipity and as a gesture to the compact nature of Kuwaiti society, the next participant on my list happened to be the actor who played Jasoom himself, who is now 74. Ali Al-Qattan, who played the character back at the age of 19, reminisces over the creation of a character that ended up becoming a part of him for life. Like other iconic television programs from Kuwait, the birth of Bu Jassoom was through the medium of radio, before making its way into television to gain further popularity.

Television has asked us to…they’ve assigned us with the task of moral guidance, which was the army program…Mubarak Al Abdulla [the sheikh and minister of information at the time] asked for a Kuwaiti group to form. We wanted to put these guys as a pillar for the army, so they’ve brought a lot of people who put together a lot of acts. We put together an act and so did another group. When Sheikh Mubarak heard us, he said, ‘That’s the original army group!’ (Al-Qattan, 74).

Al-Qattan attended the Ahmidiyya School as a child, which was one of the first institutional education facilities in the country. According to him, his constant failure to meet the required formal appearance, as well as the long walking distance that he had to endure daily, made him decide to leave school and join the long family line of cotton weavers from which he gets his last name. At the age of 19, Al-Qattan entered the army as a weapon technician who tended to English and Canadian rifles. He was catapulted into relative fame after he assumed the part of Jassoom on both radio and television, the elder of Bu Jassoom’s sons. He remembers being in the Iraqi city of Basra for a visit, and witnessing how the people had crowdeded to see him, resulting in a degree of popularity that he had to become familiar with.
Some in the city of Zubair invited us: me, Rashid, Bu Jassoom and the Hajiyya. Can you believe it? Over the walls of the house, they were climbing on top of the man’s house, he then said ‘get up, leave and let me be! My house will collapse on me (Al-Qattan, 74).

In the beginning of the 1960s and immediately after its independence, Kuwait was undergoing the threat of annexation from the Iraqi government and its then leader Abdul Karim Qasim. Al-Qattan (74), who was working with his usual Bu Jassoom crew, also implemented a political dimension to his sketches.

When we were suffering Iraqi hostilities, we were performing acts, especially the Bu Jassoom family. We became famous through television from this. We would preform sketches involving Abdul Karim Qasim. What would the Baghdad radio say politically? We’d translate it into Kuwaiti, and offer commentary on it (Al-Qattan, 74).

Al-Qattan, who parodied Qasim in his comedy sketches, still marvels over the fact that a small media group took on a country as menacing as Iraq in those days. He remembers receiving a personal greeting from the then-ruler, Sheikh Abdulla Al Salem Al Subah, who asked for the sketch to move its broadcast slot half an hour later so that he would be able to hear it. In a press interview, members of the Bu Jassoom crew claimed that they have only received a quarter Dinar each per episode (Ahmad & Al-Inizy, 2011).

Fatima Hussein and Bu Jassoom remain part of the Kuwaiti television canon, along with other comedic and dramatic output from the local station. However, there was also imported content, from both Eastern and Western television producing nations. The following subsection examines these different televised imports and their influence on society.
Content and cross-cultural empathy: Eastern. Many participants expressed the influence of other Arab cultures on the nature of Kuwaiti television content. They also discussed how this interesting fusion of Kuwaiti and Arab content affected the social composition of the country, specifically regarding its perception of other cultures.

“It started in ‘62…I mean, we were young. In the ‘70s the programs have changed, Egyptian films have come into the scene, the shows, the serials, yeah…” (Al-Mithin, 58).

“Most of the songs that reached us, Sabah and other singers at the time…I mean, it was all…about 90% were singers and songstresses from Egypt, and 10% were from Iraq” (Al-Bloushi, 63).

Most of the credit in that regard could be traced to the Egyptians, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Lebanese mindsets and manpower that had made their way into the Kuwaiti art and television industry. This is understandable, considering that the states of Iraq, Beirut, and Egypt were known for being the intellectual triangle of the East (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009). Some say that the Lebanese civil war of 1975 switched the cultural focal point from Beirut to Kuwait, which at the time was gradually developing its urban and social standards (Abu-Shanab, 1987). In 1985, the ratio of non-Kuwaiti to Kuwaiti employees in KTV was 312:475 (Abu-Shanab, 1987). It’s no wonder therefore, why many of Kuwait television’s prominent figures were not from Kuwait; figures like Hamdi Farid (Egypt), Tariq Othman (Palestine), and Tal’at Hammouda (Egypt; Al-

---

91 This Egyptian contribution to Kuwaiti art can also be found in the theater through the work of ‘Zaki Tulaimat’ in 1961, and in the Kuwaiti music industry through the Kuwaiti students who were sent to the Egyptian music institute, also in the early 1960s (Al-Nadawi, 2011; Arti, 1997; Ghareeb, 1994; Khawatmi, 1997; Sulaiman, 1997). Even before its independence in the 1960s, and possibly underlined by the 1975 civil war, Kuwait had achieved a gradual dependency on intellectuals and laborers from the Fertile Crescent and Egypt (Abu-Shanab, 1987; Al-Shurbasi, 1953).
Fulaih, 2012). Indeed, much of the Kuwaiti television canon in the 1980s was formed and complied by non-Kuwaiti artists.

Nothing could be compared to the Blackbird and Samira Tawfiq. They had a transitional impact on television broadcasting. The Blackbird; the songstress Sabah, her songs had clean enunciation and they were clear, and spoke of beauty and love and such, but her accent, was pure Lebanese, right? Fairouz similarly, she conveyed nationalism and homeland passion and such things in her accent. These two however, have delivered to Kuwait an illustration of their Lebanese society in an incredible manner across Kuwaiti Television (Al-Khaldy, 50).

There was, even inside the institution itself, heavy dependency on foreign Arab experts who trained local television pioneers at the time, which reflected the humble status of television production during the 1960s (Al-Qahtani, 2013).

At that time, Cairo was of course considered superior to other Arab states. A part of Egyptian culture has moved on to us. So, I think it affected the mannerisms on clothing and many other things. I think television even affected such behaviors like the uncovering of the head, the [wearing of the] abbaya, and this was a conflict that has existed in the 1960s, the disposal of the abayya and wearing the minijupe skirt and the micro (Al-Dosari, 57).

The impact of Egyptian cinema had also made its way into the Kuwaiti television screens, and in time, became the obsession of many Kuwaiti youngsters.

It was in the 1960s but I don’t remember the exact date, I mean we had an Arabic film every Friday, we loved it! We’d see, I don’t remember the names of the actors, there was Anwar Wajdy, and the other actress, what was her name? The actress, I’ve forgotten her
name. Anwar Wajdy, Fatin Hamama, Shadia, we loved them! Abdul Halim Hafiz (Al-Rushaidan, 58).

The 1950s and 1960s were a period in which the Egyptian artist Abdul Halim Hafiz was a typical heartthrob, assisted by his versatile artistic repertoire that enabled him to sing and act. His death of Schistosomiasis distressed fans in and out of Kuwait alike. When participants remember Abdul Halim, it is usually in company of many Egyptian cinema stars of the age, who embodied the aesthetics of Hollywood elegance and panache. Sabah Abdul Hamid (55) particularly, had a specific obsession with the Egyptian cinema galore even before she left Syria and came to Kuwait to live with her father. She remembers feeling immense sadness over the death of Abdul Halim in the late seventies (a date she identified closely enough).

Sabah remembers how color television provided her as a child with more insight regarding the appearance of the actors, which made her pay more attention to how handsome the men were and how elegant the ladies were with their shoes, hair, and overall conduct. Sabah’s infatuation however, was somewhat stopped short by her father, who alarmingly noticed her impeccable ability to imitate what she saw on television.

My father noticed me a lot because I absorbed myself in the character and imitated it, the hair-do of an actor or an actress, the way she wore her clothes, because, my mother, her dresses resembled those of Shadya [the film star], you know those frilly dresses and such? Since I was six or five years old, I’d finish my work, wear her high heels, and imitate Shadya, I adored her! I loved her (Abdul Hamid, 55).

Sabah, who received awards for acting in school, was afraid to bring them home and kept them at her friends’. She humorously remembers that when her father found out that she played an Israeli soldier in a school play, he imprisoned her in her room as punishment. While the
women had Abdul Halim Hafiz, the men had their television resonance in the historical war film *Antar & Abla*, which the participants brought up in their narratives time and time again.

“Black and white, we didn’t have color. They’d show us Egyptian flicks and put on *Antar & Abla* and so on, and they [the people] would get rowdy” (Muhammad Al-Ghuwainim, 70).

“My father, may Allah rest his soul, loved *Antar & Abla*. It would show up on screen and they would be completely engrossed” (Buthaina Al-Rushaidan, 58).

The famed film was watched on both cinema and television screens. Both Hassan Abbas (66) and Fairouz Fairouz (67), remember *Antar & Abla* as one of the most iconic cinema pieces of that period. The film recounted the tale of Antar Ibn Shaddad, the dark skinned pre-Islamic Arab hero and poet, and his love story with Abla. One particular war scene in which Antar cuts his chains resonated with some viewers as the signature part of the film.

And when Siraj Muneer [the actor playing Antar] entered, and I think it was, ‘If I don’t break my chains then the worst of slaves would I be!’ or something like that, at that scene we would be shouting in the yard. People outside wouldn’t know what was going on from all the cracking and the clapping and the racket (Al-Failakawi, 54).

This cultural interaction between Egypt and Kuwait however, wasn’t as successful for everyone. Sh’ouf Al-Shilahy (74), a Bedouin who lived his childhood in the city of Ahmadi, didn’t absorb the Egyptian dialect as easily, possibly due to his overpowering Bedouin origins: “The Egyptian [content] was there, Egyptians would appear but we didn’t understand their language or accents. We’ve taken a while until we related to their accent. All the films were Egyptian” (Al-Shilahy, 74).

With the rest however, the influence was clear and frequently cited in their stories. Even outside their contribution to the content, the impact of Egyptian and Arab intellectualism has
assisted the Kuwaiti conception of television in general. “[There were] other ideas like Arab Nationalism and all these ideologies. So, people started opening up, and television helped them with news” (Al-Failakawi, 54).

Of course it was no secret that most of the teachers were of Palestinian nationality, and may they be greeted with respect and appreciation. They explained to us about the device, that no one was putting people in there, no! This was a device, through the air, broadcasts and such. So we would go home, explain to our mothers and fathers, ‘Grandmother! it’s nothing really, this was not inside the machine, no, this was outside making its way through air.’ How would you explain this aspect to them? (Bu Kubar, 58).

The affect of Arabic culture on the Kuwaiti recipient was not limited to dramatic content nor was it limited to specific programs. The frequent conflict between the Fertile Crescent area and Israel also garnered a degree of attention that stimulated the television integration on both the production and reception end.

It was the end of World War II, people were watching television [to see] what the war has done to people across the world, the disasters that had occurred, the turmoil, like the distress, like the war between Israel and the Arab states, with Palestine. People started perceiving what was happening in [other] Arab states and not just their own (Al-Maghriby, 52).92

Al-Maghriby’s testimony about the Arab-Israeli conflict rings true in some parts, since it was contemplated that Arab media was influenced by political issues like of the Nassirian regime

---

92 Al-Maghriby, due to his age, couldn’t possibly summon any memory over the end of WWII. Therefore, he might have been speaking on relative terms. However, his understanding of the relationship between television and the Israeli-Arab war, which came approximately two decades later, is not inaccurate.
and the Palestinian issue (Abdul Hai; 2012; Al-Alaoui, 2011; Baaklini, 1982). Saud Al-Khaldy (50), a previous resident of Al Ahmadi area, offers a detailed account on this issue.

There was a case in the Arab world called the Palestinian case. So, the media…90% of the men were accepting of television in the house I tell you, as an outcome of the nationalism movement, 1967. The war of 1967, was, for Muslims and Arabs, considered a draining war. So, after 1967 television entered the houses of the weak and the poor overwhelmingly so. He, who was economically challenged, put the television in his house so he could follow the case and its affairs, you know, out of sympathy with the Palestinians. The war of 1967, I think was revolutionary in terms of production, for the companies that were exporting television sets to Kuwait on a grand scale. The first company I remember, NEC, a Japanese company, released the NEC set of 14” with a very cheap price, and made it available (Al-Khaldy, 50).

Al-Khaldy claims that such sets costing around 15-17 K.D (around $40 at the time), in a time when the average pay was 80-100 K.D, making it quite proportional to the standards of Kuwaiti society. Indeed, Kuwaiti television was very much in tune with the war and its progressions, with a fair amount of hours dedicated to programs discussing the Palestinian case in the 1980s (Abu Shanab, 1987). Its efforts also included broadcasting daily messages on the progressions of the war in 1973, and broadcasting many conferences of Arabic leaders between 1973 and 1974 (Al-Ouainy, 1984).

In the ‘70s, oh no, in the ‘70s the situation has made a 180-degree shift, why? Because the news was reaching us on television on a full scale, about the people. And, there was the Egyptian crossing and the wars with Israel, and there were wars in Africa, and they
would deliver the news, which appeared at 9 o’clock since these days up until today (Al-Ghuwainim, 70).

Again, Saud Al-Khaldy (50), provides a certain memory about his father that illuminates these particular times in television’s integration history.

My father, at 8:30 [in the evening], it would be complete silence in the house. I mean, television affected the family, silence. Why? Because my father was sitting at the edge of his seat waiting for the news at 9 o’clock, and when the news did come, it was complete silence, and the house was muted. He had to understand every word. There were terms that appeared in the news, like names of states and such. My father didn’t read nor write.

One of the humorous things that he did, if he heard a piece of news, he would gesture to my brother, as in, ‘listen,’ like the name of an American state or a foreign country, or the name of some organization in foreign matters, so he’d say ‘recognize these names.’ He’d go ask my uncle because he knew how to read and write and because he read the newspaper. But, I remember that my father shut the television off for three days, when Egypt has lost the war (Al-Khaldy, 50).

All these testimonies indicate that the flood of foreign workers in Kuwait, as well as the Eastern content received from intellectual Arab regions had increased local awareness of Arabic Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s. In a wider sense, television may have also caused a raise in awareness regarding the news of the world, even progressing further into the century (Al-Yasin & Mu’awwad, 1995).93 In 1977, Kuwaiti television started broadcasting its news in the English language in addition to the usual Arabic news brief (Al-Haddad & Ragheb, 1980). The Arab media of the 1960s for instance, commented extensively on specific issues vital in the Arab

---

93 Quoting a study from the Foundation of the advancement of science (translation unit) in 1980, Al-Yasin & Mu’awwad (1995) cited a 50.8% rate of committed viewership of news amongst Kuwaitis.
world at the time, like the Iraqi Ba’th Party and the Egyptian Nassirist regime (Dajani, 2007; Kraidy & Khalil, 2009; Lerner, 1958). However, it wasn’t to the interest of everyone, particularly those who were younger at the time.

“We would here, we would hear, like, you had Anwar Sa’eed or the outspoken guy from Egypt. A presenter, I forgot his name, Sa’eed or something like that. He would bring the roof down” (Al-Mubarak, 75).

Indeed, the figure that Al-Mubarak was struggling to memorize was the commentator Ahmad Sa’eed, an iconic broadcaster who led a very active pro-Arab campaign on radio, and headed the Arab Voice broadcast during the Nassirist era, particularly from 1953-1967 (Farouq, 2015). Besides that, Mubarak doesn’t seem to remember nor care much for the situation at the time. It is also important to place Mubarak’s age in context, being a young man with devout interest to sports and little else. This only indicates the various degrees of interest that the war had on the viewers. Khalil Al-Harran (65), a previous resident of Salmiya city, went through a similar degree of apathy.

I wasn’t following. I remember, the war of 1976 happened, and we were sitting by the sea, fishing for maid (mullet). I remember it was, high morning, one of my friends told me, ‘your family says a war is happening.’ I said, ‘With whom?’ He said, ‘Israel with Palestine.’ What did we know? And that was that. I remember my family gathering by the radio in the middle of the courtyard: ‘Announcement! Announcement!’ Every minute you’d get an announcement, they’ve struck so and so, and then the whole thing ended (Al-Harran, 65).

In conclusion, Kuwaiti television was significantly effected by its Arabian imported content. Many have associated with these programs significantly. The identity of the Kuwaiti
television establishment similarly, was shaped into maturity with the help of the foreign expertise that came to Kuwait during this period. The system received help from experts in Egypt, Lebanon, and Great Britain (Al Usmani, 1984). Kuwaitis have also associated themselves further with the collective Arab identity through televised news, possibly as an extension to radio. In the end, Kuwait was heavily affected, both by the imported content and by the post oil gradual dependency on foreign labor (Al-Shurbasi, 1953; Ismael, 1982; Ismael, 1993). Kuwaiti television therefore, is a unique blend of several local and regional Arab identities, benefitting from their previous trials and errors.

All these instances of influence between Kuwait and Eastern (Arabic imported) television content invites an inquiry regarding the recipients’ interaction with Western imported content, by way of comparison. The next subsection discusses this particular area of television content and its cultural integration history.

**Content and cross-cultural empathy: Western.** Kuwait, especially after the establishment of the second English-language station, also depended heavily on foreign shows. In the 1970s Kuwaiti television broadcasted a variety of American programs, including *Kojak*, Hitchcockian thrillers, *Tarzan, Room 222*, Julie Andrews’s performances, and *Abbot and Costello* (Al-Doury, 1977; Ragheb, Al-Fulaij, & Al-Matrouk, 1974). The second station kept up to the standards of American pop culture by airing syndicated serials like *The Jeffersons* and *Little House on the Prairie* (Hussain, H., 1984). Fahad Al-Dosari (57), remembers a humorous incident that took place in the national prison back when television started segregating the audience through different offers:

Some were, when there were more stations in Kuwait, I’ll tell you a story about a fight that occurred in the central prison once. They had one television set, one wanted to watch
the first station, and the other wanted to watch the second station. They had a fight, and the reason was that each of them wanted a [different] station. By Allah, I remember [that it was] before the invasion [before 1990]. Then they put a television set with the first station on the upper floor for whoever wanted to watch it, and a set with the second station on the ground floor for whoever wanted to watch that (Al-Dosari, 57).

Many of the narrators have memories of certain programs, some more lucid than others. Hassan Abbas’ (66) for instance, retains a vague vision of a beautiful woman falling in love with a gorilla, and of *The Beatles* playing their instruments, broadcasted on Basra television. Others similarly recall instances that stuck with them:

“We would all watch what they call now “animations,” cartoons. I think it was called *Felix the Cat*, about a black cat like so who would fly. He had a rocket and would go to the moon” (Al-Failakawi, 54).

The one that we loved and were very tuned to, was *Popeye*, and his fat friend Pluto. And Olive, his wife, those were the ones we were eager for and loved. Yes, and as soon as television broadcast commenced we would all run and switch it on. First, we’d get the Qur’an, yes, we’d sit and wait. The presenter would appear to recite the programs’ lists, about which we didn’t care, the cartoons would start and one would call for the other, ‘*Popeye! Popeye! Popeye!*’ and we would run from all ends to watch *Popeye* (Al-Rushaidan, 58).

What’s humorous in the recollection of Buthaina Al-Rushaidan (58), a mildly religious woman in her fifties, is her identification of the character of Olive Oil as Popeye’s wife, rather than his girlfriend. It is not clear whether this particular recognition was based on misconception, or social modesty. However, this only emphasizes the compromise that had to be instituted
between the relatively conservative nature of society and the imported media it was subjected to. The following conversation takes place between Leila Al-Mithin (58) and the researcher:

**Leila Al-Mithin:** *The Three Stooges*, yeah. Those are the ones that I remember, and cartoon television was black and white.

**Researcher:** They said that they enjoyed *Popeye*.

**Leila Al-Mithin:** Yes, then it was *Popeye*, first it was that black cat.

**Researcher:** Felix.

**Leila Al-Mithin:** I don’t know what he was called.

In the 1980s, Leila Al-Mithin went to the United States to accompany her husband, who was attending graduate school. She reminisced about the abundance of stations that she came across while there. Laughing, she remembers rushing with her housework whenever *The Price is Right* came on air. Leila is placed in the categories of Kuwaitis who have traveled abroad and seen a different technological spectrum, in terms of both the machine and content. Similarly, Basem Al-Darwish (54), who traveled to Florida for his college education in the late 70s, recalls shows that he almost never missed, like *Three’s Company*, and upon the insistence of his friend, *Jonny Carson*.

Back in Kuwait, the television industry was also diversifying despite its relative limitation in comparison with the United States. Even with the significant amount of local output, Mohammed Al-Sanosee, the Deputy Minister of Information in Kuwait, felt it necessary to import content from the United States (Al Nahdha, Issue. 216, as cited in Al-Yasin, 1985). Even progressing into the mid 1990s, American programs constituted 89% of foreign programs on Kuwaiti television, while most of the Arabic imports were Egyptian (Mo’awwad, 1994). Muhammad Al-Ouainy (1984), who has quoted a variety of sources, pointed out that between
1976 and 1980, Kuwaiti television purchased 71,544 hours of foreign material, equaling 14,309 annual hours, about 69% of which was of the drama genre. A similar situation occurred during the inception period of the Irish station RTA (Raidió Teilifís Éireann), which was publicly criticized for depending heavily on Spaghetti Western flicks during its initial period. The Japanese television similarly also covered a great portion of airtime by purchasing relatively inexpensive American content before the 1960s (Chun, 2006). It appears that around half of the broadcast content in the Arab world was imported from the United States between the 1970s and the 1980s (Varis, 1986). With 50% of the content in the Arab world being imported, this indicates that a clear local programming plan was lacking.

Another important factor to be discussed here is the feeling of association between the recipient and the content. With this amount of Western imports, it would only come as a natural consequence that some viewers—the younger ones particularly—would associate with figures they saw on television, similar to the phenomenon noticed with Arabic imports.

It was called Lassie, may Allah honor you [common phrase when referring to a canine], it was about a dog and the person who raised him. And then, we had that horse, Fury, which was also a show about a horse and such, a loyal horse, so we would imitate from it and observe how loyal the horse was and how he would never leave his master. And there was also Ringo, we had Ringo in the old days, then we’d go outside with each one of us armed with a stick and smash smash! (Bu Kubar, 58).

True enough in the case of the latter two programs: the short-lived Johnny Ringo, which ran on CBS from 1959 to 1960, and Fury, which ran on NBC from 1955 to 1960 (AP, 2005; Beck & Clark, 2002). The programs, which communicated themes of the American West, may
have garnered certain appeal to Arab audiences. Another very interesting remark about this association comes from Aadil Al-Maghriby (52).

Look, regarding foreign programs, they mostly broadcasted Hitchcock. This Hitchcock specialized in horror films, my father and grandfather loved him. Hitchcock was mostly a director of horror flicks. And, they used to put on black-and-white American films, involving action and cowboys, which they loved. Why? They were relating to the desert and the horses. Because, what were the lives of the cowboys? Horses and deserts, and that they lived in the deserts of the country. Since the Gulf area was implicated with the desert and the horses, this was what resonated with them. They loved cowboy flicks, wow! They were like Arabic knights! They’re like Arabs! They had horses like us! They ride horses as we do! They have a desert landscape similar to ours! They had so and so. Even the Native Americans had tents, they also have tents, they have so and so! (Al-Maghriby, 52).

It could be deduced that the televised image of the Arabic knight that was discussed in Antar & Abla, also found an equivalent in Western media. This cross-cultural character association was not limited to the third world or the Arab region in any sense. Robert Fuller, who portrayed the cowboy Jess Harper in the famed 1960s American Western Laramie, was much appreciated by Japanese children (much to his surprise) for embodying Japanese samurai or warrior values (Chun, 2006). Closer to home, in the state of Yemen particularly, a significant local association occurred with the character of Tarzan through comics, toys, and cinema, equating him to the traditional Arab tale of Ibin Yaqzan (Nesteby, 1981).

---

94 The show Laramie was dubbed by Japanese voices while broadcasted in Japan, a procedure which ensured its integration into Japanese culture.
Despite this association, there were other types of content that the recipients were not able to associate with or absorb. One particular televised event that received unanimous interest globally and caused bafflement locally was the moon landing.

I remember a very important event that has occurred, possibly, if I’m not confused, in ‘67 or ‘68, when the Russian space craft…or ‘69. No! Uh-uh, they said Yuri Gagarin, the Russian astronaut, has circulated the earth, in 1967 as I remember. And, they broadcasted it live through, I don’t know how did they do it but, and the picture was really bad, you didn’t see any thing, but we were happy it was such a big event…In 1969, which was the first, as they say, the first man who’s landed on the moon, the American, Neil Armstrong. And they would broadcast. The broadcast was also very bad and it would appear for a second and disappear. I also remember something funny being said. One of our neighbors, the eldest amongst them, he would say, ‘Boy, they fool us by talking of night and day and such things, and say that the earth turns. Liars! If the earth did turn then why hasn’t America folded in on us (Al-Darwish, 54).

It seems as if the televised moon landing stimulated a wider range of technophobic tendencies and speculations between scientific developments and the detached third or developing world. These fears parallel what Hazim Saghiya (1992) discussed regarding the Arabs’ initial resistance of television, it too being an outcome of scientific development. In here, metaphorically speaking, television and the moon landing had become one and the same. They both elicit similar fears of modernity, and one of them actually leads to the other. This relates to the wave of interesting theological discussions on the Arabic-Islamic identity that was brought into question through televised events like Neil Armstrong’s moon landing (Najai, 1982). Najai
States: “The dramatic walk on the moon by Neil Armstrong in 1969 brought vividly to the Saudi public through television, caused a great deal of discussion” (p.78).

The launch of the American space flight Apollo 12, on November 14, 1969, is said to be the first satellite event broadcasted locally (Al-Dawood, 2007; Al-Ouainy, 1984; Al-San’ousy, 1997). By then, according to the memory of Ali Al-Qattan (74), some Kuwaitis felt familiar enough with television to purchase battery-powered models that could be watched in the outdoors. When the moon landing was happening, Al-Qattan remembers being on a camping trip in the Kuwaiti desert: “Just as we were there, that American went atop. One of the guys seated said, ‘By Allah, you know what? This guy who went to the moon is not enjoying the Machboos [rice feast] that we’re enjoying."

During the moon landing, the popular Islamic Scholar Sheikh Abdul Karim, who refused to believe that the moon landing was taking place, speculated whether the devil himself was disguised as the moon while seen on television, thus fooling the viewing public (Al-Ghuthami, 2004). The famous Saudi monologist, Abdul Aziz Al Hazza, recited his humorous musical line: “Oh moon, Apollo has landed on you, say what you wanted to say” (Al-Assaf, 2012). Bader Al-Failakawi (54), a previous resident of Failika Island, remembers the statement of one particular elderly gentleman:

He was firmly convinced that all this wasn’t real ‘Why is it not sir?’ He said, ‘Didn’t they go to the moon?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘So they saw the earth beneath them?’ ‘They saw the earth. ‘Did they see Gog and Magog?’95 ‘No they did not see them.’ ‘Then they did not go on the moon’ (Al-Failakawi, 54).

95 Gog and Magog, or Ja’jooj and Ma’jooj as they are called in Arabic, are theological characters of the Abrahamic faiths, mentioned in the Qur’an as well as in the Bible.
The local sources available refer to *Apollo 12* as the event broadcasted on Kuwaiti television (Al-Dawood, 2007; Al-San’ousy, 1997). However, rather than referencing Charles Conrad Jr, the associate astronaut, some participants have spoken of Neil Armstrong, in reference to the previous moon mission, *Apollo 11*, which was not mentioned in the local sources. This indicates that their television memory is fused with external elements possibly from other media.

Either way, the moon landing was one event that created an internal contradiction for the Arab recipient. It was a trip that was too abstract. However, many other remote places were much easily absorbed through television. This segues into another influence that imported content has besieged on the Kuwaiti public, which was an increasing curiosity in other cultures, and a growing interest in inspecting them.

After television entered people’s houses, people started observing the lives of people abroad. People became curious and wanted to travel, with the other mode of transportation, which was the airplane. How did I go to Lebanon? People used to travel the land route by car to Syria and Lebanon and Iraq. People wanted to see Europe, Britain for example, America, the Slavic countries. How to get there? Television delivered the message to them, and the idea that there was something called an airplane. You could travel by plane like you saw on television (Al-Maghriby, 52).

Al-Maghriby’s testimony meticulously echoes a statement by the assistant undersecretary of television, Muhammad Al-San’ousy, in 1982. In a press interview of *Al-Qabas* newspaper, Al-San’ousy explained that television had succeeded in activating the curiosity of travel for the Kuwaiti citizen (Sa’eed, 1982).
This ability of television to transcend space has also been stressed in the work of Abdulla Al-Ghuthami (2004), who praised television’s ability to introduce the Arab audience to cultures out of their reach. According to Shaun Moores (1993), television acted as a mediator between private and public by constructing a “symbolized” home and yet allowing its members to travel elsewhere—what Raymond Williams labeled “mobile privatization” (Morley, 1992).

This marks the end of the content category, and consequently the conclusion of the stories and analysis chapter. The final section therefore, has inspected the relationship between the recipients and the broadcasted content at the time, be it local, Arabic, or Western. It examined the intertextual nature of Kuwaiti television that mixed song, theater, and other art forms, shaping and borrowing from the Kuwaiti social identity simultaneously. Additionally, it examined the Kuwaiti television canon and its representation of Kuwaiti culture, including the work of Fatima Hussein and Bu Jassoom. Looking at events like the Arab-Israeli war and the impact of Egyptian cinema, this section also displayed manifestations of the cultural associations between Kuwaitis and Middle Eastern imported content. And, looking at events like the moon landing, this section also examined the association between Kuwaitis and the imported Western television programs.

Summary. Aside from the materialistic module of television, a great deal of its history and its cultural integration relates to its programs and its contents. Unlike Kuwaiti cinema, which mostly depended on foreign reels, Kuwaiti television produced a great deal of its content and was in tune to the local culture. It held distinct characteristics including an intertextual nature that mixed the principles of theater, music, and cinema. The local television content catered to the local culture, and also incorporated elements of Kuwaiti folklore and storytelling. Additionally, it
helped bridge the gap between different subcultures, like the Bedouins and the Hatharis, by catering to the lowest common denominator, music being an example.

Slowly and organically, local television had achieved what could arguably be labeled the Kuwaiti television canon, which could be regarded as the extract of the finer output of Kuwaiti television over the years: programs that are still remembered and considered as the benchmark for television quality. Programs like *Open Sesame, Bu Jassoom,* and *Neighborhood Court* exemplify social alterations through comedy, scientific interest, and feminism.

Despite a big share of local programming, local television also incorporated Egyptian and American programs in its grid. Administratively, KTV was also projective of the foreign expertise that was brought to Kuwait television in its infancy, by testimony of the narrators. This fusion between local and regional efforts contributed substantially to the creation of the Kuwaiti television canon. This also created a degree of cultural interaction between Kuwait and its Arab neighbors, mainly the Levant area and Egypt, with the latter also cementing its cultural impact that started with cinema. Many of the narrators fondly recall the cinematic and musical oeuvre of the Egyptian art scene, which had made its way into Kuwaiti television, but not without facing a degree of cultural conflict. Another instance of empathy with other Middle Eastern content could be observed through the Kuwaiti perception of the Arab-Israeli conflict throughout the 1960s and 1970s, which was also continuously examined on both television and radio.

Besides the Middle Eastern imported programs, KTV also included American and foreign productions which targeted different ages based on their genre. While the narrators remember iconic animated creations like *Felix the Cat* and *Popeye,* many also remember programs like *The Three Stooges* and *Three’s Company.* In this particular situation, the recipient’s memory depends on his or her accessibility to such programs, since those who traveled abroad for example had
exposed themselves to more content than the limited range of KTV. Such content managed to create a degree of association and resonance with the Kuwaiti recipient, a possible example would be the metaphorical connection between “the Western cowboy” and the “Arabian Knight.” Outside the field of fictional television, the internationally broadcasted event of the moon landing also instigated many interesting responses, forcing the public to visually encounter a phenomenon that possibly caused them to reexamine their ideas and perspectives on time and space. However, Arabic or American, fictional or factual, such programs did not escape various degrees of cultural and religious conflict.

This chapter has gathered — and to a lesser degree analyzed — stories relating to the integration history of television. The narrators therefore, have highlighted how television was gradually integrated into their culture. They have shared parts of their personal pasts in relation to the several categories of television history as discussed in the literature review, namely, television’s succession to cinema, television’s novelty, television’s familiarization, television and modernity, television’s domestication, and finally, television’s content. Their stories have crystalized these categories further, breaking them into more clustered and organized subsections.

The next chapter constitutes the closing remarks of this study. It attempts to answer all the previous research questions and reflects on the previously observed patterns in the integration history of television into culture, in an attempt to deduce a general theme or tone for this history. The fifth and final chapter also examines the general limitations of this particular study and how to overcome them in future research. It is important, however, to recognize the infant nature of this exploratory study, and how that in turn might negate the need for a clear-cut deduction. More on the latter will be discussed in the limitation section.
Chapter 5: Conclusion and discussion

The previous stories offered a variety of micro personal accounts that complemented the history of television in Kuwait with a powerful, bottom-up, social proportion. As they narrate events from their childhood and adolescent years, the narrators also provide insight into the old Kuwait, contextualizing the narrative of television history with the respective social ephemera that suits it. Additionally, the narrators’ choice of rhetoric, their moral stance on some issues, and their nominations of certain memories over others all provide access to their own mental schemas, allowing infrequent opportunities for meta-textual analysis. The previous chapter attempted to place these memories within a broadly linear life-story of television in society, using the narrators as widely distributed points in television’s historical time to cover the most possible perspectives of this life-story. The diversity of their perspectives is ensured by their respective ages, ethnicities, and genders.

Deliberations on the Research Questions

Each of the previous stories was linearly introduced and individually told, as is the nature of oral history. The resulting data therefore, does not share a common ground firm enough to be compatible with quantitative clustering for example. This invites the question of whether it is possible—or necessary—to deduce an ultimate theme or a grand motif from all the oral accounts, something that connects to previously contemplated hypotheses for example. Is there something encompassing to be learned from the social history of television, now that it has been exposed?
The discussion chapter examines the validity of this idea and offers certain odds in that regard, mainly by balancing the gist of the stories against the main research question.

RQ 1: Upon its introduction and integration to society, how did television succeed cinema as a visual medium? Examining the first research area, the documentation of early television’s succession of to cinema produced several personal stories on the spatial experience of cinema in Kuwait since the 1950s, the cultivation of cinema in society, and the initial confusion and comparison with television.

Historical records indicate that cinema in Kuwait found its way through the social curiosity of the elites, and afterwards through the educational efforts of the state. Its incorporation into society was highly successful whether through community screenings, formal theater going, or public screenings in trading spaces. Kuwaitis spoke of the contextual experiment of cinema, which distinguishes it from the later practice of television viewing. For them, cinema represented an interactive activity with the screen. Additionally, they spoke of specific cinema theaters that acted as geographical markers of a Kuwait gone by. This tendency repeated itself when they later spoke of their early television purchases and the shops that provided them. This is an area in which television and cinema intersect, an area that requires looking at them materialistically, regardless of their content.

In answer to the research question, television’s succession to cinema is characterized by several illustrations, some stronger than the others. While it cannot be denied that cinema had paved the way for television in the mind of recipients, many speak of the different nature of televisual abstraction in comparison to cinema. Some spoke of the difference in size, others spoke of the different level of consumer authority over the two devices, and the different nature of image productions between television and cinema. Similarly to television, cinema has
depended heavily on Egyptian content, which at times represented challenges to the conservative nature of the Kuwaiti community. This was an attribute that television apparently inherited from cinema. To answer a more direct question however, it does not seem that television has killed cinema in Kuwait, in the same tradition of how “video killed the radio star.” Each technology (in addition to radio) obtained its own leisurely function in society, and television soon found its rightful place. Therefore, if there was any confusion or comparison between the two technologies, it soon died out.

It should definitely be taken into account that this time gap between the two technologies in Kuwait is still significant to analyze, despite its relative briefness. When television and cinema are examined as national industries, the gap between them amounts to 7 years (Cinema, 1954; Television, 1961). However, when cinema and television are examined as outcomes of social initiatives, the gap between them becomes considerably wider (Cinema, 1936; Television, 1957). This only highlights the prominent distinction of the social history perspective. In conclusion however, the attachment between the two is undeniable, from both social and artistic perspectives.

The question is therefore, how has cinema assisted in the integration of television? One could not possibly deny that cinema indeed paved the way to television’s acceptance into local culture. After all, it is only another instrument within the chronology of visual media. It can be safely assumed that cinema (possibly in continuation to stationary visual media like magazines) brought foreign visual cultures to the psyche of the Kuwaiti recipient, and furthered the gradual alteration of a society that was realizing how people abroad lived, what their clothing culture was, and the nature of their urban aesthetics. This moves all these stories from the oral arena into the visual, and with cinema, into motion. Cinema can also be a continuation to other media that
has redefined the idea of “presence,” widening the concept from its mere physical conception by presenting characters through projection. This practiced was underlined by television, which even took the miracle further by promoting the concept of “the people in the box.”

From a meta-analytic perspective, it is only left to say that all the previous exercises weren’t automatic or self-aware in their occurrence. They were certainly outcomes of cultural and social appropriation of the technologies, and remain in history as testimony of how people author their own narratives in media history, whether consciously or organically.

**RQ 2: How was the novelty period of television characterized its integration into Kuwaiti society?** Exploring the next research area, the stories discussing the novelty period of television in Kuwait revealed the initial poetic conception of the device, the pioneering models and distributors, and the socioeconomic conditions of early television ownership. Each participant spoke of a time when television—as both an idea and a device—was not fully crystalized in the mind of the public. With the exception of the pioneering elites, early television may have created an air of uncertainty between myth and reality within the mentality of the Kuwaiti citizen. This was due to the spectacular notion of the device, merged with the primitive early understanding of some members of Kuwaiti society.

From a meta-textual viewpoint, early television purchases were tied to certain families and certain businesses, a phenomenon that highlights the familiar matrix of the Kuwaiti community. For example, Kuwaitis registered the initiative of the local merchant Murad Behbehani and remember his display sets as some of the earliest in their memories. Young boys at the time remember their bewilderment at the early promotional sets displayed in shop windows or in the houses of neighbors. The Behbahani story, which is unanimously brought to light by the narrators’ memories, is the strongest evidence of the value that historical narratives
gain when local culture is taken into account, as it removes the much credited authority of the state.

It is important to remember that the early days of television ownership had accompanied a drastically transitional period in the social, economic, and political structure of the city. Such factors include the Kuwaiti independence from the British protection treaty, the establishment of the parliament, and more importantly, the printing of new currency. While offering significantly different memories of the monetary value of the devices at the time, possibly muddled by nostalgia, many Kuwaitis spoke of purchasing their television in Indian Rupees.

What does that say about television’s integrational journey into culture? Where does that period fit in the initiation of the device? An obvious answer would state that the novelty period is an integral one to television’s integration within Kuwaiti society. Although, examining the parallel and linear development of television and society simultaneously, one could assume that all the changes that Kuwait was facing made it more difficult to familiarize television. Logically, the part wouldn’t be able to assemble into the whole if the whole was in a constantly shifting mode. This may be the reason as to why the integration of television in Kuwait was somewhat forshortened, possibly a little forcefully and less gradual than envisioned. This is evident through the many incidents of misconception that have accompanied television even after its entrance into the Kuwaiti home, as will be discussed shortly.

What is also interesting about this novel period of television’s integration is how distinctly it sets Kuwait as a cultural environment against the rest of the world, mainly, from the more industrially involved Western world. For example, scholars like Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong labeled the electronic age (roughly the 1970s) as an “age of orality,” which by definition follows “an age of literacy” (Gleick, 2011). However, considering that Kuwait was an
imporivshed—mostly illiterate—country before the oil boom, one could not say that it had ever experienced an extensive “age of literacy” to begin with. How does this model of technological and cultural development fit the history of television in Kuwait?

All of this highlights how the introduction of television in the city was more foreshortened than gradual. In other words, when these narrators bought their first sets, Kuwait was a significantly different place, with a different social ethos and different daily routines. It was a nation facing the promise of growth, a nation caught between old and new in an overwhelming and disproportionate ratio. Television in its novelty seems to fall in the middle of that.

**RQ 3: What were the main features and attributes of the familiarization period of television’s journey in Kuwaiti society? Additionally, what was the significance of the familiarization period in the television integration process?** The third research area, that of the familiarization of television in society, used oral testimonies to reveal how television’s adoption was affected by social variables like the economical gap, geographical factors, and the resistance of the community. In Kuwait, it seems that there was a unanimous agreement on the roles of the intellectual and economical elite in introducing television technology to the city, with this particular stratum being exposed to it earlier than the rest of the public through travel. As the narrators reminisced on the spread of the devices, they highlighted several interesting gaps that may have characterized that period, be they socioeconomic, ethnic, or geographical. This was supported by the social distinction between Bedouin or Hadhari television owners, or between those who lived in the Qibla area and those who lived in the Ahmadi shanties for example. The general gap between the “innerwallers” and the “outerwallers” becomes apparent, despite the fact that. At the time, the walls were reduced to merely symbolic constructions. It is most
probable however, that such gaps were swiftly bridged in the wake of the oil boom, due to the compact nature of the population.

Besides the possible desire to catch up with an increasing population of television owners, many of the breadwinners purchased televisions upon the insistence of their spouses or children, some more reluctantly than others. Through television’s increasing ubiquity, the early city also incorporated an extra visual element through TV aerials on rooftops, signaling the continuing changing of the Kuwaiti urban landscape. This only emphasizes the contextual and cultural manner of television’s integration. Analogously, a look at the evolution of domestic apparatuses in the America of the 1800s for example, offers clear example of that. After the iron stove replaced the open hearth, it began taking its noticeable effect of the designs of public buildings (Cowan, 1993).

In Kuwait, one significant indication of familiarization could be the short-lived resistance that the device encountered, as resistance mainly becomes apparent in the form of a consistent “threat.” It seems, however, that television came in a time where Kuwaitis were living without firm or rigorous religious doctrines, adopting a broader sense of Islamic routine driven by cultural conventions. This possibly indicates that resistance came from either a traditional or a religious motif. Traditionally, scholarly work on the phonograph and other technologies show that this manner of criticism and cultural skepticism had accompanied novel technology in almost all its forms, both in and out of the Arab world (Al-Ghuthami, 2004; Gitelman, 2006).

Religiously however, the Kuwait of the late 1950s and 1960s adopted a liberal social agenda up until the rise of Islamism in the 1980s, which regulated the resistance to the subsequent VCR, for example. What could be said about the familiarization process within the wider integration narrative of television? In Kuwaiti culture, the device commenced its
familiarizing process by setting its roots in a society that was possibly not fully equipped for it. The familiarization process therefore, invited elements that emphasized how society was taking the device seriously, rather than on a simple technological whim.

When discussing the gramophone, Lisa Gitelman (2006) explains that the earlier generations of the device were promoted as simulacra of the “human sound” until the gimmick wore off and the promotion started focusing on the mechanical attributes of the devices. Similarly, while its previous novelty period, television implied an era in which it was a somewhat alien artifact, not yet seized by the cultural scheming of the public, nor yet appropriated through the organic cultural channels. The familiarization period instead signaled the removal of authority from the technology to the hand of the people. The familiarity period instigated a period when the awe factor had departed the technology. In a way, one could say that the novelty era was the last period of television’s isolation from the public grasp. What followed in a social shaping of technology where a bond was created between the technology and the social groups (Bijker, Hughes, & Pinch, 1993). In many ways, the familiarization period constituted the heart of the integration process of television. It was a time when television became part of the local story, obligated to interrelate with all the other social, religious, ethnic, urban, and familiar elements that characterized the community, sometimes in ways paradoxical to the nature of the technology itself.

RQ 4: Considering the primal yet drastically evolving nature of the Kuwaiti living space, how was television as a device domesticated in the city? When discussing the fourth research area, that of domestication, the narrators’ memories contextualized television within the domestic structure of old Kuwait, a structure that began diminishing around the second half of the 20th century.
Television’s existence in the home altered the segmentation between outside and inside, in a similar way that the gramophone, a device initially invented for managerial diction, had brought public sound indoors, and was reclaimed as a domestic component (Gitelman, 2006). As a leisure device, television may have been especially helpful for those more homebound than others, like Kuwaiti women. This came in a time when the women already were gaining their rights outside of domestic boundaries. Like in many other Gulf States, with specific attention to the relatively tolerant social model of Kuwait, television presented a relief from the harsh climate and lack of outdoor leisure for both genders. A study conducted in 1972 showed that, out of a 2,404 persons sample, 877 stated that they watched television for lack of any other entertainment, while 23% of the same sample regularly watched other stations in Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia (Abdul Rahman & Ragheb, 1981).

Meta-textually, one of the most interesting aspects of television’s integration history is one that invites the narrators to visually summon memories of space, particularly in remembering where their old television sets were placed in their homes. This in turn requires a clear understanding of the distinction between the old and new domestic model in Kuwait. The challenge here is that the first generation of television sets in Kuwait had existed in homes that are already extinct. Since both the object and its context are history, it would not be possible to develop a clear retrospective analysis based on the current model of Kuwaiti houses for instance.

Television in Kuwait interacted with many domestic components like the “leewan” and the “diwaniyya,” some of which were on the verge of extinction, while others simply morphed into the new Kuwaiti home. Television also seemed to have interacted with the gender politics of certain Kuwaiti spaces, which explains the distinction between its existence in the diwaniyya and its existence in the living room for instance. Television was also treated as décor, achieving its
own aesthetic value as a household item. In the process, it blended in the background of the traditional Kuwaiti lifestyle, compromising the modernity it represents.

Of course, the placement of television is not the only part of its domestication history. Once in the home, its operating and viewing techniques also became uniquely specific to the local community. Elements of the consumption junction included the usage of everyday items like car batteries and copper pots to operate the earlier television models.

However, it should be pointed out that this domestication process was not necessarily a smooth procedure. While television’s material existence negotiated its way through the domestic space, television’s ethereal component had the more trying task of negotiating its way through the Kuwaiti morale. Regarding the younger generation, the fact that television was inside the Kuwaiti house and undermining its privacy instigated certain parental guidance measures that ranged in strictness based on the household in question. Regarding the older generation, television’s entrance into the Kuwaiti living space obligated people to deal with the issue of visual abstractness. Many of the less educated members of the public needed to devise a compromising update to a previously conventional system that taught them how to handle the existence of a strange male figure in the house. It seems as if the televised figure required a complete reevaluation of concepts like “space” and “modesty” for some Kuwaitis, especially the less liberated women of the past. This was also more heightened with those who were not regular cinema attendees. This miracle aspect gave way to many oral tales that circulated in society about women covering their faces from the screens. In these stories, age and gender act as vital variables, with the older and the women being more susceptible to the miracle aspect.

The initiation of television in the household also presented interesting social viewing habits. It turned television watching into a contextual practice for children, who narrate several
factors of the television watching experience, from eagerly waiting for *Popeye* to white noise. One of the most noticeable phenomenon in that regard was community viewing, a tradition that possibly followed cinemagoing, and a tradition that was supported by the earlier, more socially intact structure of the community. The tradition however, appears to have been relatively short-lived, particularly after the drastic morphing of the Kuwaiti house, and after the economic regulation of the devices. As incomes went up and prices went down, community viewing became a thing of the past.

That being said, where does “television domestication” stand in the story of television’s integration into Kuwaiti society? This particular period may be the richest component of television’s interaction with local culture. This is a period when the distinction of Kuwaiti society from its peers becomes very clear, especially because of the abrupt transformation of the Kuwaiti domestic model in the span of three decades or less. If, for the sake of argument, it could be assumed that the Kuwaiti house was a miniature representation of the Kuwaiti society, a parallel could be drawn in the way that television was assimilated into each realm. Like Kuwaiti society, the Kuwaiti house was fluidly changing too quickly for the early television to find its rightful and concrete place. In this sense, both the Kuwaiti society and the Kuwaiti television created challenging encompassing environments for the device. At the risk of romanticizing the narrative further, it could be said that television has acted as an anchor around which the Kuwaiti house has evolved. From the perspective of the device, usually placed in the sitting room or in the leewan, it witnessed the disappearance of some components and the introduction of other components.

There were many aspects of television’s domestication, all adding to the density of the television’s integration history in Kuwait. What could be assumed for certain is that the domestic
appropriation of the device was culturally specific, and hardly similar to Western societies. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2009) makes a similar case discussing the adoption of technologies in Bengali communities that simultaneously still existed in traditional settings. This is probably because television’s interception of the Kuwaiti home represented the end of its journey, and in many ways signaled a triumph of the technology in appealing to the Kuwaiti community. However, it is also a period in which the Kuwaiti people, even the most reluctant of them, could not escape dealing with the device. This caused many of the social, ethnic, geographical, and economical gaps to be temporarily amplified.

**RQ 5: Considering the foreshortened and drastic mode in which Kuwait entered the modern era after the 1950s, how did television interact with aspects of modernity at that time?** The next research area concerns television’s integration during the modernity era of Kuwait, mainly the 1970s onwards. This produced oral accounts on television’s transition into color, television’s interaction with the urban migration, television’s interaction with accompanying technology, and television’s influence on the social alteration.

The second generation of television sets, circulated roughly around the 1970s in the Kuwaiti market, could be associated with the post-urban migration period of Kuwait, when the citizens were abandoning their old life and embracing a Kuwait with infrastructure, modern villas, and a functional communication system. Kuwaitis were being educated, sent abroad, and economically elevated. The narrators’ stories imply that the introduction of color television heightened the realism of sensory exposure, providing a new colorful perspective to the televised image that could possibly be considered analogous to the drastic aesthetic shift that Kuwait itself was going through. This analogy possibly also stands when applied to television and the Kuwaiti home. While the black-and-white set was initially associated with the old domestic model, the
new color sets provided the perfect embellishment of the modern Kuwaiti house that incorporated more and more colors into its interiors. While the black-and-white sets did survive into the new domestic model, the introduction of color television signaled the demise of the old generation.

Between the late 1960s and the 1970s, television became a component in the wider matrix of modernity that flooded the market and the Kuwaiti house with products and services that eased the haste of daily life. Kuwaitis speak of television similarly to how they speak of the car, the fridge, the air conditioner, and the washing machine. The respective significance of each technology and the precedence of one over the other vary based on the economical status and necessities of the family. All this however, yet again highlights the foreshortened, abrupt introduction of the technology to the city. Other technologies were more relevant, and caused a relatively greater stir in their adoption. Technologies like the VCR, the satellite, and the remote control, all changed the equation of television adoption significantly in Kuwait, some even may have brought back the miracle aspect slightly.

The 1980s were a time where it could be assumed that Kuwaitis had achieved a high degree of familiarity with television and all of its technological accompaniments. During the 1980s, a study on a sample 3000 young participants revealed that 65% admitted preferring television watching to reading, while a sample of young Kuwaitis between 12 and 25 years old revealed that 27% of the participants admitted to watching television “always” (Al-Tuhaih, 1985; “Sixty-five percent of youths,” 1984). In the mid 1980s, it was also found that daily television watchers in Kuwait ranged between 822,300 and 841,300 individuals over 15 years of age (Al-Omani et al., 1986).
Finally, television’s simultaneous existence with modernity caused it to engage in a quarrel that remains to this very day, taking different versions with the introduction of each new technology. It was a time when street games were disappearing and socialization was being mitigated by the widening urban landscape and the racing haste of life. Like in other societies, television’s introduction could also be linked to the ever-growing commercial tendencies in Kuwaiti society after the oil boom. By 1981, there were 36 advertisement agencies dealing with Kuwaiti Television (MOI, 1981). This invites questions of whether television had certain influence on social habits, whether positive or negative. While some associate television with the disappearance of certain social trends like street games or storytelling, others link it with moral decay or moral betterment. Many however, simply attribute these changes to the nature of social evolution itself. Regardless of their stance on that particular issue, most of the participants possess a strong nostalgic sense of loyalty to the early days. Many of them even incorporate early televisions as part of their romanticized remembrances of early Kuwait. At this point, one should consider the following: Every time the text evolves, a renegotiation of loss vs. gain occurs. In the case of print, many claimed that it killed the uniqueness and beauty of information, and caused an informational regime that eventually caused warfare. The Greeks had similar attitudes towards the invention of writing, that it—in their view—killed memory and personal intellectuality. The easy dissemination and standardization of text has killed the alleged “aura” of Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 2008). All these ideas are worth contemplating when looking at television in the city. One should ask therefore, what are the main characteristics to this era in the broader integration of television in Kuwait? Where should this period be placed in the history that this study is trying to bring together?
Like in many parts of the Arab world, the introduction of a better world to the Kuwaiti citizen came at a price; some would say that that price was the dissemination of their local culture (Crystal, 1992; Storm, 1938). Others however, may argue that the culture was simply morphed into another form, incorporating different components within its textile. These changes came in the form of an urban infrastructure, and urban superstructure, an institutionalization of the Kuwaiti existence, and a technological adornment to daily life. In this more grandiose alteration, television may have lost its status as a technological marvel. This was a time when technological developments were progressing at an almost autocatalytic rate, and a time when Kuwaitis grew more and more accustomed to change.

At first, if one was to judge the active authority of the Kuwaiti recipient in this particular period, it is quite possible that the Kuwaiti public was less involved than in other areas. This is considering that, at this stage, the Kuwaiti people may have concerned themselves more with receiving the flood of technology than they were with appropriating it. This is but an assumption that cannot be entirely substantiated due to lack of statistical evidence.

No era is everlasting however. Even considering the drastically fast rate that technology progresses today, the Kuwaiti citizen’s threshold for technological bewilderment has been elevated to a degree quite hard to overcome. This meant that the earlier gaps that defined their acceptance to the device became smaller and less significant. In comparison to the other more previous eras of television’s integration, this era is emblematic to a time when the magma has cooled and the social, cultural, and civic arena started to slowly settle. The end of the oil boom created an almost entirely new country which television could merge into.
RQ 6: How does the content and figures of television at the time reside in the collective memory of Kuwaitis, and how did they affect, or how were they affected by, the sociocultural context of that time period? The final section inspects the relationship between members of the Kuwaiti society and the television programs that reside in their memory, be it locally or imported. For example, the narrators spoke of many memories that emphasize the intertextual nature of Kuwaiti television. Their recollections of their favorite plays, musicians, and television programs, indicate that Kuwaiti television was seen as a gateway to communicate the amalgam of Kuwaiti arts; performance arts particularly. This possibly relates to the variegated nature of Kuwaiti arts to begin with. While traditional music borrows from Bedouin, sea folk, and remote cultures of India and Africa, Kuwaiti theater is very influenced by Egyptian standards (Al-Ghareeb, 1997; Sulaiman, 1997).

Many of the programs remembered point to what the narrators consider elements of the Kuwaiti television canon, which in turn reflects on Kuwaiti culture. For example, memories of a feminist Kuwait come to the surface through the work of Fatima Hussein. Similarly, memories of the comedic antics of Bu-Jassoom refer to the previous diplomatic conflict between Kuwait and Iraq. The narrators therefore, indirectly contextualize these programs in their narratives, and act as surrogates to a discourse analysis between the programs and their respective social environments. They offer certain implications of how the Kuwaiti social landscape was in a certain time.

Besides the local programs, the stories communicated the clear influence of imported content from both ends of the world. This influence can be witnessed both on the local population and on local television output. Regarding the influence of other Eastern regions, Kuwait was affected by the intellectual regions of Egypt, Iraq, and the Fertile Crescent. Even
institutionally, local television canon is in debt to many non-Kuwaiti individuals, which reflects the wave of inwards migrations from the rest of the Arab world, particularly in the wake of the Kuwaiti oil boom. Additionally, Kuwaitis seemed to be heavily affected by Egyptian cinema and music, which was televised and inherited from the previous cinematic output. Besides comedy, music and drama, the news was another influential output of television programming, particularly the subsequent occurrences of the Arab-Israeli conflict during the 1960s and 1970s. The latter also resonated with an era in which Kuwait and much of the Arab world was stimulated by the Nassirian ideals (Al-Alaoui, 2011, Abdul Hai; 2012; Al-Yasin & Mu’awad, 1995; Ghabra, 1997).

Therefore, it is possible that the news would have been a substantial variable in arousing this initial interest in television in Kuwait, and furthering its cultural integration within the community. A study published in 1980 revealed that 95.9% out of a sample composed of 2,406 individuals watched the Arabic news brief either constantly or sometimes (Al-Haddad & Ragheb, 1980).

A similar flow, with different rules and consequences, occurred between the Western world and Kuwaiti television. In a time when television content was flowing towards the new stations of the Arab and Gulf region, Kuwaitis recall iconic American programs like *Lassie* and *The Three Stooges*. Some content (like Spaghetti Westerns) was embraced to a degree that shaped a certain metaphorical association between the Kuwaiti recipients and the program subjects, transcending geographical and ethnic barriers in favor of common cultural denominators. After the establishment of the second English language station, these programs provided an element of selectivity to the viewing public. Exposure to such programs prompted the curiosity to travel and discover remote parts of the world, for a community that was generally
contented to road trips to approximate regions only.

With the founding of the local airlines in 1954 (Al-Hatim, 1980), television stimulated the leisure of travel that was becoming further facilitated. This speaks of the cultural association between Kuwaitis and other parts of the world. Additionally, certain televised events like the moon landing disrupted the conventional conception of the world for some of the elderly Kuwaitis at the time, temporarily bringing the issue of abstraction back to life from the earlier days of television.

As a conclusion to the previous categories, how does content translate into the integration history of television in Kuwaiti society?

If all the five previous periods of television integration could be viewed linearly, this particular category stands alone, merely because it is not constrained by a certain time line. The discussion of content examines a topic that stretches across all five periods, since content has always existed simultaneously with television as a device. That being said, it is undoubtable that television content has evolved since the early experimental days of television, especially since it turned from an amateur endeavor into a governmental enterprise. More and more, the content and the recipients started affecting each other interchangeably, either representing public culture, or representing the desires of the people to view cultures other than their own, or representing a cultural association of some kind between Kuwaitis and other societies. Additionally, some scientific events that were mediated by television brought some inescapable discussions to the table. In many ways, the moon landing for instance had become emblematic of the wider disregard for scientific development by some—a disregard that some of the reserved viewers had to face in the era of television.

The answers to all the previous research questions are qualitative in nature, leaving more
potential for future investigation. They provide a glimmer of insight that caters to the initial curiosity about an area uncharted before. The next section contemplates the possibility of an overarching general theme regarding the integration of television, from all the previous themes.

**Conclusionary Reflections on the Integration of Television**

The theoretical chapter of this study discussed in length the need to coin and new historical category that provides a culturally contextual look at television history, one that considers the agency of the television audience in authoring this historical narrative. The term “integration history” was used due to its interdisciplinary nature and its ability to balance the numerous academic angles in a narrative that chiefly concerns the audience but to which television is still central.

This in turn relates to the meaning behind the term integration. It seems that besides its generic usage, the term integration is relevant to enterprise and informatics literature, where scholar Thomas R. Gulledge (2006) claims that the employment of the term requires furnishing it with context. This is why this term was chosen for this particular study. Despite the specific nature of Gulledge’s remarks, the lexical principles are the same; the fact that the term “integration” is flexible with its respective context, makes it a perfect fit to a study that attempts something new. This makes one ask at the end of this research: has television integrated itself in Kuwaiti culture? And what was the nature of this integration? And finally, what was the role of the people and their culture in this integration process?

As mentioned before, the qualitative, exploratory nature of this study makes it challenging—possibly undesirable—to find definitive answers for these questions. What can be said however, is that the integration of television was undoubtedly achieved indeed. Whether intentionally or organically, consciously or inattentively, television has become part of the local
culture. What cannot be fully examined is the speed and the efficiency in which it was integrated. This is because to do this, one needs to build a comparative database of different societies and their respective methods of integrating their televisions. There is no fixed point against which societies fluctuate. Each society is different in the way its culture incorporates television into itself, and that is exactly the point of this research.

Additionally, to ask, “What was the nature of this integration?” would take us back to the general definition of the word itself. Information science scholar Thomas R. Gullege (2006) points out that the term “integration” has been used in both business and academic literature to describe “a process, a condition, a system, and an end-state” (p.5). Based on the stories reviewed, there is no doubt that the integration of television was culturally specific, as television became simply a way of the people to instill and receive their cultural variables. One of the most interesting facts about television as a cultural object is its ability to mutate inside different settings. Television could be viewed simply as a technological apparatus, or if needed, as an element of local culture. On more than one occasion in Kuwait, television was also viewed as an alien object forced onto culture. Television can be viewed as a cultural initiative, or as a governmental enterprise. Television can be examined as an extension of other visual technology, as a testimony of the development of visual media, or as a representation of the golden age of the culture through its content. The possibilities in which someone can study television culturally are endless. What is certain however, is that as Kuwait progressed, television became yet another subject of the development process and a window of commentary on it.

If one was pressed to come up with one word that sums up the nature of television’s integration in Kuwaiti society, the least that could be said about it is that it was “foreshortened.” This is in the sense that television’s implementation and circulation into society was nonorganic,
or at least not as organic as it would have been in a society accustomed to technology. The miraculous conception, the inconsistent placement of the device, as well as other instances, are all manifestations of a technology that was not suitably prepared for. Indeed, much of the previously discussed instances were observed and documented in other societies, and, with technologies like television, the properly constructed reception situation is probably non-existent anywhere in the world. However, Kuwait obtains a rather unique story in that regard because, as explained before, television is but one manifestation of the modern flooding that Kuwait simply “had to deal with” after the oil boom.

Ironically, the fact that television’s journey in Kuwait was foreshortened—much like the car and the gramophone to a degree—is an ideal situation in which this sort of contextual history is required. When television is treated as a national venture, this element of foreshortening disappears, and the state or nation claims its place in history as presenting the technology with class and diplomacy. The lack of clear-cut data prevents us from offering a counter point. However, integration history offers a much more realistic image from the microscopic daily routine of the people. We see them stumbling, frightened, and confused over the technology, which presents a densely rich component of history, one that does the technology justice.

However, we still need to remember that the “foreshortened” claim is far from a concrete assumption. It is scholarly known for example, that public stories circulated among the community to a degree until they achieve a gradual consensus (Schrager, 1984). Here, it is important that one does not attempt to over-romanticize the narrative of the space-age technology in the midst of a Bedouin landscape. In qualitative research, speculation is a beneficial tool to regulate the hypothesis in question. It is therefore imperative to remember that the fear and panic discussed was very possibly less apparent than nostalgia makes it appear.
Despite exotic tales of the first impression, Kuwaitis possibly received the device with less amazement than people have in other areas that were not flooded with consumerist goods.

That being said, one needs to take into calculation that television came into the city almost simultaneously with water, electricity, and the rest of the leisurely necessities. Television’s integration history feeds into the integration history of technology, of the Kuwait citizen, and of the Kuwait landscape. Post-oil Kuwait was a fragile arena hosting an abundance of simultaneous forces that were either in conflict or in harmony. These include religious, economic, social, traditional, geographic, ethnic, and class related forces. In the midst of all that, television was there, being both used and received by the people, and that was possibly the main feature of its integration.

In answer to the third question; none of this could be accomplished without the people that represent the public culture. In that sense, it can be said that the study has accomplished its goal of highlighting the agency of the public in the story of Kuwaiti television, especially in comparison to the historically exaggerated role of the state or the administration. It is the people who allowed for television to be integrated, and made active decisions on how to appropriate the technology into their cultures and their homes. Their role was hardly restricted to the reception process.

So what is to be said of the people? How did their unique status affect the way they integrated television? Looking at the historical context, Kuwaitis come across like a society that is living every social trend for the first time. There seems to be very little repetition of historical patterns, since, as a national entity, Kuwait has had a relatively short history. The situation of the Kuwaiti people acts as an antithesis for the conventional gradual growth of a society. Much of the literature discussed above, particularly the content of Chapter 5, shows that Kuwait—as a
state—put extensive effort to remove itself from its previous image. It is a society that looks, behaves, and profits in drastically different ways than it did at the beginning of the century. Almost every product of modern technology can act as a fragment or representation of this abrupt jump into the post-oil future. Television is no exception.

The people of Kuwait received television in their own way. Whether as device or as content, early Kuwaitis attempted to make sense of television based on the same principles that they’ve used to make sense of the world at the time. Later, they used television to make sense of the world as it evolved around them. As previous mentioned, the initial sense of amazement soon not only disappeared, but was replaced with what can possibly be described as a sense of numbness to the “autocatalytic” development of television technology. As Kuwait settled into its new modern form for the sixth decade of its life, Kuwaitis had achieved a general sense of immunity from the miraculous conception of the technology. The following quotes are taken from a portion that was decidedly not included in the stories chapter, as it concerns a retrospective reflection on the history of television in Kuwait from the perspectives of the narrators themselves. In here, the research lets them have the last word on how television fared in the end. Towards the end of this research, the narrators looked back on their lives to evaluate the chronicles of television’s existence as both a companion in their life stories, and as a broadcaster of milestone events in their respective lives. Avoiding any attempts to meta-analyze, the fact that many of these narrators remember the early generation of television sets that entered the city, indicates both the hurried evolution of television technology and the foreshortened history of the device in the city:

It wasn’t as it was now with that flat one, no. It wasn’t flat. If it got faulty, I wouldn’t have a problem opening it from the back and connecting the wires and doing stuff. Yes, I
mean they have taught us the simple tasks—the red wire, or you crisscross them, it was all instinctive (Sabah, 55).

It’s so different now honey. Now, the other day I pressed a button unknowingly, and it malfunctioned completely, and I sat there idly, the television had crashed and I didn’t know of it. And it turns out, it was touch-based. When I brought the [maintenance] man he told me it was touch-based. ‘Don’t touch it!’ (Um Ahmad, 56).

About television, I mean, technology is developing so quickly that we don’t know what to do with the television sets we have, I mean, with television, I started out with the plasma, and briefly afterwards they said ‘Oh no, now there’s the LCD, forget the plasma.’ I removed the plasma and took it to Abdali [where the farm resorts are for most Kuwaitis], and I bought an LCD. Briefly afterwards they said, ‘Who watches LCD anymore? People are watching LED!’ Ok, I took off the LCD and put in the LED. They said ‘Man, they have 3Ds now, and they have glasses and…’ I put the 3D and they said, ‘But this one doesn’t connect to the Internet.’ I connected it online. I was listening to Dr. Salah Al-Rashid, if you know him. He has a program called Latte, he was speaking about ‘change.’ He says that the world changes every eight months, and now we can’t even keep up with the eight months pace (Bader Al-Failakawi, 54).

Oh yeah, it changed a lot. That older device, who could carry it? It had such weight, and light bulbs. We would even examine it from the backside and see how this presenter was sitting inside, and we would talk about it, that the man was sitting inside the screen, and that we should break the screen in order to find him (Fahad Al-Dosari, 57).

We must know, that he who invented the television is a great human being, it doesn’t have to do with any religion, Muslim or any other sects. Television became akin to a
village, the world is small within your eyes and palms that you would watch it. I would say, no matter how much we praise this person who invented the television, since the black and white, to color, until it turned into plasma and became similar to a canvas to be looked at (Aadil Al-Maghriby, 52).

In the comments above, the narrators retrospectively examine the integration history of television, speaking from the authority of having witnessed its arrival, its growth, and its current status in society. While not necessarily coming to a unanimous verdict, they spoke of television both materialistically and ethereally. Looking at the device, the narrators discussed the snowballing level of abstraction, where television has condensed into the flat model. The old generation of television recipients shared fond memories of “the box” and contemplated “the canvas.” As the cathode tubes turn into computer circuits, some expressed the growing feeling of their removal from technology, as the new models removed the recipients further and further away from any preliminary ability to fix them.

They have also spoken of the content. The narrators, who mostly were boys and girls commenting on the environment of parental control in their houses, are ironically echoing the earlier fears and caution of their parents in their own years of parenthood.

When we used to gather together, my mother and father beside me, if there was anything wrong he would straighten my ideas right away. He wouldn’t let it sink into my mind wrongly. It is a duty, a duty in which when television is turned on that there was an adult supervising individual seated beside the child. But, our problem lies in the fact that television started facing a stronger competition, which is the mobile phone (Saud Al-Khaldy, 50).
I’m the type with religious tendencies, I like religious programs, I mean religious and cultural programs. I do not like the dirty Western films, which corrupt the ethics of our youths, things that cause my heart to cry blood when I see them (Um Ahmad, 56).

I wish for us to deal with communication media with awareness, including television, so that it wouldn’t disconnect us from our familial and social bonds. I think that this is much more important. We started feeling like in the old days we knew the diwaniyyas and the neighborhoods of this and that family. It took so much from us and violated our social life (Basem Al-Darwish, 54).

Give us the Kuwaiti values and ethics. Where is the family? Back in my generation, I never reached out for the plate before my father was seated at the table. I never conceived it, and never took my own gravy, he would pour it for us, and it’s still like that now.

Where have I learned that from? From television, from media. Why? Because television in the old days was different, media in the old days were different (Hassan Abbas, 66).

Many also extend that caution to the whole of society, feeling that television, the national station particularly, has let society down. For those, television becomes an embodiment of the diagram of social evolution in Kuwait. When Kuwait was a cosmopolitan society going through a period of promising growth, television echoed that with quality programming and an efficient structure. Therefore, television’s current downhill reputation is only an extension of the failure in the wider national environment.

In the end, it is important to reiterate that reaching a consensus on either side of any of the arguments here is immaterial. The exploratory nature of this study values the generating of data rather than their overarching patterns, and in the end, all we are left with are contemplations
made steadier by a collection of oral accounts. The conclusion therefore, remains equivocal. In here, nothing rings truer than the comments of John Nerone (2006) on communication history:

But although this situation is not good for theorists, it’s good enough for historians.

Historical practice doesn’t need theoretical coherence beyond what is required to be able to tell a compelling story. In fact, the failure of grand theory is one condition that impels scholars to turn to historical research. Within comfortable zones of theorizing, histories are projected without any need for recourse to the archives. One might say that it is the job of historians to produce disquiet for these zones of theory, to defamiliarize (p.260).

What is important is that this study has hopefully managed to create a database that obtains a certain complementary value for the conventional history of television in the city, a collection of data that would probably have been considerably harder to gather 10 or 20 years later. The authority therefore, is removed from the national narrative of television, and is placed back in the grasp of the Kuwaiti people.

The next section of this final chapter offers general closing contemplations regarding the body, structure, and methodology of this research. Limitations and challenges of this study may be regarded to be relatively high for the conventional dissertation. This of course relates to the previously discussed issues of the available data, the exploratory aim, and the social sensitivity of the community. This section will close the dissertation by pondering on these limitations. The limitations of this research break into limitations relating to theory, structure, and method. While some were dealt with by compensation, others require the support and supplement of future studies.
Theoretical and Structural Limitations

Some of the limitations of this research are of theoretical nature. They borrow from the wider discipline of history and historiography, while others only become clear once narrowed down to the Kuwaiti community. Because of the structural complexity of this topic, one particular problem was one of disciplinary and semantic focus. One example is in the need to distinguish between television historiography and television history, as well as their different magnitudes in this research. The first discipline, that of television historiography, is mainly interested in combing the scene to generally evaluate whether the current count of historiographical television studies in the region are sufficient or not, and to what school of history do they belong. When talking about television history however, the main concern is the developmental journey of television itself. Another confusion was between the terms “social” and “cultural” when discussing the community and the history of television’s integration, which are sometimes used interchangeably when talking about history, including that of television. Sometimes, the term “socioculture” or “sociocultural” appears most adequate.

The second structural problem concerns geographical and temporal scopes. This is to say that due to the lack of direct material on television’s integration history in Kuwait, the sources were used comparatively as they ranged from the Arab region, the Gulf region, and Kuwait, with specific attention the relative similarities and differences between the regions.

Similarly, when discussing the scholarship in relation to time, the literature varies regarding the time in which it was written and the historical period it examines. Examining these two axes, resources range from literature written in certain points in time that are not considered historical, literature written recently and evaluating a specific point in history, and literature written recently dealing with current issues. This also relates to the differences between
culturally-oriented history and ethnography. Albeit not all of these studies are technically historical, they alternatively highlight how the present academic perception of television is chronologically related to the historiographical pattern.

The final structural issue relates to the Kuwaiti environment as context for this study. Regarding the data pool for example, a certain challenge surfaces by the limited circulation of ministerial literature and the non-availability of much of the non-academic literature relating to the topic in question, specifically the output of previous decades (the 1970s and 1980s for instance). Aside from all the structural limitations, other limitations involve the method chosen for this research.

Methodological Limitations

Upon reflection, it seems that the applied methodology for this study deviated slightly from the ideal model devised earlier. One particular concern is the potential effect on the interview generated by the shared sociocultural background between the researcher and his community. Historian Susan K Burton (2003) has studied interviewers’ interactions with societies that distinguish between “insiders” and “outsiders.”96 It is important to consider therefore, that both the researcher and the narrators are Kuwaiti in origin. However, the researcher could be classified under several sociocultural categories by the narrators. While a Bedouin narrator, for example, could perceive him as a Hadhari, the over-50s could conceive him as part of a younger generation. In consistency with the work of Western scholars, the

96 One of the positive effects is in the sense of familiarity that the researcher will provide. Historian and Virginia native Akida Mensah (1982), for example, performed an astute historical documentation of the Church Hill area during the earlier part of the 20th century, which was then a prominently African American inhabited area of Richmond VA. However, although it might be true that the “outsider” researcher allows for less cultural caution, it is important to consider that the subject in question (television history) does not open itself up for high sensitivity. The other face of the argument is that the researcher’s shared cultural background will allow him familiarity with the social ethos, needing little further clarification from the informants.
Kuwaiti elderly community could loosely be classified as a “memory community,” isolated from the researcher’s temporal context (Conway, 1993; Yow, 2005).

The problems of oral history break down into problems related to the researcher’s potential influence on the setting, problems related to the bias of the informant, and issues of subjectivity of data (Kirby, 2008). This shared authority between the two poles of research in oral history also extends beyond the mere interviewing process, possibly into the subsequent interpretation. The sensitivity of these issues become particularly apparent based on the proximity of the interviewer to the human subjects whom he’s researching (Borland, 1991). The researcher for instance had to consider the fact that—by coincidence—some of the interviewees recognized the researcher’s family, and some have even personally encountered his elder family members. The researcher therefore, had to strive for as much detachment as possible during the interpretation process. This of course needed to be achieved without the risk of compulsive interpretation patterns; what Doreen Massey labeled as “moral hypochondria” (Morley, 1992).

With all that taken into account, through the interviews the researcher had to recognize his potential impression on the narrator, pay close attention to their expressed reticence or visual signifiers, and navigate the “shared authority” between himself and the narrator (Layman, 2009; Yow, 2005).97

Another interesting challenge was the rhetoric of the interviews. The researcher also found that on more than one occasion, he had to deal with the bias of many elderly interviewees who seemed to have displayed a didactic and nationalistic attitude towards the country. One

---

97 After interviewing her grandmother, historian Katherine Borland (1991) contemplated the interpretive discrepancies between interviewer and narrator, considering that the first carries the critical expertise, while the second carries the actual memory.
participant spent the last 20 minutes discussing the deterioration of Kuwaiti television, and used this as an excuse to offer a detailed account of the merits of the old Kuwaiti values, and their disappearance in modern times. These narratives however, are not necessarily useless for the study, rather the reverse. They provide psychological context of what the narrator believes took place (Portelli, 2009; Thompson, 1972). Paul Thompson (1972), in his article “Problems of Method in Oral History,” speaks to a particular problem that resonates with Kuwaiti society due to its heavily conservative nature, which may also affect data outcome. It is best here to quote Thompson’s own words:

What we are really collecting information about is social behavior, and when you ask people about this, you get a statement somewhere between the social behavior and the norms of the time. With retrospective interviews we have the additional problem of deciding whether they are being influenced by recent changes in values and norms and so re-interpreting their perceptions (p.4).

It was found that oral history as a method is very fitting to Kuwaiti anthropology because it caters to the oral nature of the community itself. In the 1950s, Daniel Lerner (1958) spoke of the heightened role of orality within the communities of senior Arabs. While scholar Mamoun Fandy (2007) illustrates the general dependency of the Arab world on the oral over the literal. Ellen Feghali (1997) for example outlines categories of Arab speaking patterns, like replication, elaboration, and indirectness. Mary Alison (1994), during her stay in Kuwait in the 1930s, wrote about the unique speech patterns of Kuwaitis who stressed theological idioms (like

---

98 Paul Thompson (1978) argues that certain nations (like Germany and Japan) become protective of their histories at one point or another, while oral history would provide the unique perspective of the workingman.

99 In his book, The (Uncivil War of Words, credited scholar Mahmoun Fandy states “Forms that privilege the domain of the written over that of the oral, or standard Arabic over the vernacular, fail to take root in an Arab world that largely remains within the realm of illiteracy, orality, and vernacular speech.” (Fandy, 2007, p.123).
Insha’Allah, God willing, and Al Hamdu-li-llah, Thank God) very frequently.

One particular example surfaced and resurfaced throughout the interviews conducted for this research. Many of the interviewees for instance exhibited a reoccurring tendency to recite their memories in the form of a generic dialogue with an unspecified person, repeating phrases like “he said, they said…” without any clear indication of who he or they were. Similarly to other Arab countries, the Kuwaiti accent is cultured and appropriated to a level that makes it significantly different from classical Arabic dialect.  

This would come into attention particularly while transcribing. How much will this research misplace when changing the nature of the oral testimony into text? Specifically, with stories relating to a certain era that involved a lot of illiterate Kuwaitis?

Raphael Samuel (1972), the founder of the History Workshop Movement, highlights the distinctive standards between written and oral text. One needs to remember, Samuel urges, that people do not impose verbal paragraphs or commas in their regular speeches. Scholars like Basil Johnson (1999) and Marjorie Shostak (2006), all had to deal with the problem of transcribing delicate oral dialects from culturally unique communities, like the dental clicks of the Kung people for instance, or the distinctive orality of the Anishinaubae tribe. Granted, the Kuwaiti community is not as oral as the Anishinaubae tribe, nor is their verbal culture as isolated as that of the Kung people, but it is an oral community nonetheless. This is considering that in the 1970s, the majority of Kuwaitis were still illiterate, and that “until 1980, illiteracy in Kuwait was 72.2 percent” (Ismael, 1982; Najdy & McCrea, 2012).

These limitations were dealt with organically, with solutions being devised throughout

---

100 Much work has been done to bridge the gap between the oral culture of Kuwaiti tongue and the written text. Kuwaiti historian Saif Al-Shamlan (1986) for example, dedicates specific attention towards filtering the origins of the Kuwaiti tongue, separating Kuwaiti words of Turkish origin from those of Persian roots.
the narrative. After the first ten interviews, a general idea was developed regarding what to edit out of the speeches and what to maintain. One had to ensure that the interviewer was emotionally interactive with the interviewee and yet treading lightly, that the biased narrative is presented as self-aware of itself, and that the translation does not alter nor deform the delicacy and uniqueness of the Kuwaiti rhetoric. With the limitations discussed in details, this study concludes with the following recommendations for future research.

**Future Studies**

While this research has hopefully provided modest access to an alternative historical perspective on one of the most intriguing outcomes of Kuwaiti modernity, there exist several opportunities to complement this particular study for the future. Some approaches would feed directly into the potentially growing field of television’s integration history, while others shall contribute to the general betterment of visual media studies.

Starting off microscopically, one could say that the most immediate response is to strengthen the credibility of this research by widening the population examined. More research could be done to incorporate the voices of the disenfranchised members of society, particularly those who did not have chance to write history when literacy was a rare skill in Kuwait. A second and a third installment of television’s oral history could be written, with particular attention to the segmentation between decades, for example.

This also segues into the possibility of a multi-method approach: a form of scholarship that would accommodate oral stories with heavier emphasis on archival research, television programming extracts, and other data. With the current changes of the history discipline in the academy, television history studies require a substantial update by working with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A certain dependency on numbers would provide interesting data
regarding certain preferences and their statistical correlations with age, ethnicity, and other variables. All this in turn requires abandoning the concept of television studies as soft science that only matters when discussing television’s impending effect on the viewers. Television studies need to cater to the two-way communication concept, where the audience affects television culture and vice versa.

Another obsolete approach is the teleological, didactic, and nationalistic approach of television history. Now that this television history has been written through the eyes of the people, the future will hopefully devote less attention towards the efforts of the state, the efforts of the pioneers, and the efforts of the institutional structure. The academic conception of television—particularly the historical—needs to abandon the concept of television as a tool of moralistic elevation. It should instead tolerate the fact that history—as a narrative—does not require a social conscience, that people make mistakes, and that historical mishaps need to be brought into the light.

Finally, one vital consideration is to develop a much-needed field of “discourse analysis,” which appears to be near absent, and would truly provide a rich addition to television’s historical research. Television content analysis seems to be an area in which the press and the drama schools take interest (Abdul Min’im, 2012; Al-Shuhaib, 2012). However, in relation to what was discussed in detail earlier, much of the emphasis in the mass communication academy is dedicated to fields like the news (Jamal & Melkote, 2008), media effect (Dashti, 2007), and new media (Dashti, 2009). The content of Kuwaiti television, therefore, needs to be treated with similar elegance to that of Kuwaiti theater, which, understandably so, gains more academic observation, possibly due to its relative maturity (Abdulla, 2013; Al-Ghareeb, 1989).

---

101 On February 2013, Theater student Sa’ad Al-Dilh earned his doctorate degree through an analysis of the dramatic image of Kuwaiti television across the last ten years (Abdulla, 2013).
The stories of the narrators clearly indicated the strong bond between many of the iconic Kuwaiti programs and the shifting realities of Kuwait, whether economic, ethnic, or social. As these programs are gaining more nostalgic value, the Kuwaiti population is apportioned to those who associate with the “golden age” and those too young to do so, possibly similarly to the difference between the American 1930s television recipients and the younger television audience to whom television is familiar (Barfield, 2008; Gauntlett & Hill, 2002; Holdsworth, 2011).

Television programs in Kuwait, both comedies and dramas, need to be examined thoroughly, possibly more qualitatively than quantitatively. To do so, we must remove them from their association with their respective authors, and in turn embrace a post-structuralist perspective of discourse analysis, through which these programs will be the outcome of the collective cultural mentality of the time (Barthes, 1977). Our television requires a critical discourse that ties television—and its text—into an interdisciplinary linkage of linguistics, art, and semiology (Barry, 2002). Historian Helen Wheatley (2007) believes studies of representation to be one of the five major categories of television history.

By looking at these programs post-structurally, we allow them to tell us much about the ephemera of the society that has engulfed them, without devoting much attention to the intention of the author or the state. When these programs are subjected to post-structuralist discourse analysis against the backdrop of Kuwaiti cultural history, the audience becomes empowered as a decoder of its own text (Tyler, 1992).

All this would obviously be problematic without the development of an actual archive for Kuwaiti television, an all inclusive database system that suits the current hypertextual media narratives, incorporating clear sorting and categorization of programs, interviews, references, and other resources. This is but a first step in order to reevaluate our concept of media and television
history, a history that was initiated by the people, and will hopefully achieve a full circle.
References


That Al-Salasil.


*Ahmadi summer cinema* [photograph]. (n,d.). Retrieved from the Kuwaiti Government Online website: http://www.e.gov.kw/sites/kgoenglish/Pages/Visitors/AboutKuwait/KuwaitPicturesPast.aspx


Al-Hatim, A. (1980). From here, Kuwait has started. Kuwait City, Kuwait: Dar Al-Qabas


Al-Jardawi, A. & Al-Tarrah, A. (1992). In G. Al-Najjar (Eds.), *Features from Kuwait’s social history* (pp. 75-98). Kuwait City, Kuwait: The Community of Social Scientists.


Kuwait City: Suad Al-Subah Publishing.


Munayyis, & M. Abdul Majid. (Eds.), *Media studies* (pp. 262-293). Kuwait City, Kuwait: That Al-Salasil Publishing.


Alissa, R. (2013). The oil town of Ahmadi since 1946 from colonial town to nostalgic city. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, 33*(1), 41-58.


Barry, P. (2002). *Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory*. Manchester,
UK: Manchester University Press.


Bu Hamdi, S. (2014b). *Hustle and Bustle* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://m.flickr.com/#/photos/88432238@N04/17367655872/

Bu Hamdi, S. (2014c). *Breathe* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://m.flickr.com/#/photos/88432238@N04/13958711015/


Chatham House. (2012, February). Kuwait study group: Identity, citizenship and sectarianism in the GCC Chatham house middle east and north Africa program in partnership with the gulf university for science and technology. Workshop held at Gulf University of Science and Technology Kuwait Workshop Summary, Kuwait City: Kuwait.


Ellis, J. (2007). Is it possible to construct a canon of television programs?. In H. Wheatley (Ed.),


Havens, T. (2000). Appropriating the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air for youthful identity formation in...


Hujanen, T., & Weibull, L. (2010). The public reception on early television: When television was new in the Nordic countries. In J. Gripsrud & L. Weibull (Eds.), Media, markets and public spheres: European media at the crossroads (pp. 97-115). Bristol, UK: Intellect Ltd.


Ismael, K. (1979, August 9). Juha, through the individuals working in it. Al-Qabas.


Karkatuli, F. (1981, April 7). Kuwait television maintains the long standing expertise in confirming the Islamic and social and cultural concepts in society. *Al-Siyasah*, p. 3.


Mourtada-Sabbah & M.Al-Mutawa (Eds.), *Globalization and the Gulf* (pp. 244-266). New York City, NY: Routledge.

Kuwait television the first station in the Middle East to broadcast the recorded tape of the Sadat assassination. (1981, October 15). *Al-Qabas*.


Malik, A. (2010). *Mama Anisa, between yesterday's young and Today’s old*. Kuwait City,
Kuwait: Author.


Mansour, T., Ramadhan, K., & Al-Biblawi, V. (1991). *The strategy of building the Kuwaiti human through the media instrument of the state of Kuwait*. Cairo, Egypt: The Embassy of the state of Kuwait in Cairo.


Prices have increased locally 10-30 percent. (1980, February 2). *Al-Qabas*.


television. *Al-Anba',* p.18.


Seen Jeem with the host of the most famous television program in a quarter of a century. (1989, January 10). *Al-Qabas.* p.10.


Sixty-five percent of youths prefer television over reading (1984, August 19). *Al-Qabas*.


Author.


Regulating censorship for artistic classification, text, theatrical shows, parties held at hotels and public places, license of retailers selling and renting audible and visual print, advertising houses, publishing, distribution, translating, artistic production, bookstores and print houses.

Section two:
The censorship of artistic classifications aims to establish the following foundational rules:

1. Improving the artistic quality and unleashing the creative energies of artistic innovations.
2. Preserving the general decorum and general order, and protecting the young from deviation.
3. Substantiating the religious, spiritual and ethical values of society and developing general culture.

Section three:
Following up on the aims of the previous section, in is not permitted to license the production, display, sell, rent, distribute, advertise any classification referenced in the first section if it included particularly any of the following:

A. Atheistic promotions or malice of Abrahamic faiths or religious beliefs …

B. For the work to include incitement or prompt, whether directly or indirectly, to alter the governing system of Kuwait or orienting criticism towards the self of the Amir or the destruction of the foundational orders of the state.
C. Depicting vice or displaying it in a manner that would constitute it the dominating, targeted and key factor of the piece, without it being effective or vital to the progression of events. What classifies as vice would be the following:

- Displaying the human body naked or so that the attire of the male and female performers would reveal physical details that would negate that which is familiar in society.
- Scenes of sexual nature, scenes of sexual perversion, gestures and phrases used to express them or imply them. Scenes of dancing performed in a manner that would lead to arousal. The usage of foul phrases or gestures outside general taste or characterized with vulgarity.
- The display of drunk behavior, the use of alcohol and narcotics as if familiar or favorable.
- Ignoring the ideal values of family and society and the presentation of scenes contradicting the required respect towards one’s parents, unless intending to infer good advice.
- The presentation of crime in a manner that would provoke sympathy, favoring or trivializing the action conducted. In addition, the presentation of scenes of murder, sorcery and horror due to the impact they create to the audience.
- The presentation of suicide as a reasonable solution to human misfortune.
- The presentation of historical facts, particularly those concerning national figures, in a forged or deformed way.
- The offense of a foreign country which is bonded to Kuwait by friendship, or the presentation of topics concerning a human sort, a certain population or a denomination in a mocking or ridiculing manner.
• The presentation of social trouble in a manner that endorses the spread of despair and depression. And the arousal of compulsions, the forming of class or domination-related gaps, or the breach of national unity without offering an objective solution to it.
Appendix B: Submission to the Institutional Review Board

Considering that the study concerns itself directly with human subjects in its methodology, it consequently relates directly to the Institutional Review Board of Virginia Commonwealth University. It is worth noting that the researcher has fulfilled his credentials through undergoing the basic CITI examination in 2011. Due to its classification as a dissertation research, this study most likely falls within exempt or expedited research. However, the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board also points out, that the nature of the research does involve several sensitive areas, including “interviewing elderly who might not understand the English language”, “interviewing elderly who are possibly illiterate”, and “a letter of approval from Kuwait University”. The main IRB strategies that concern this research directly are classified under the following titles of the guidelines section:

- **Title 1**: Research Subjects with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
- **Title 11**: Involving Foreign Institutions/Sites in VCU Human Subjects Research

The IRB therefore, requires the consent of the interviewee in both languages, the approval of the University used in the sampling process (Kuwait University). Upon contacting the Institutional Review Board, it is found that one of the main issues of the research is in the fact that it is being conducted abroad. However, what facilitates the process is that the researcher is a native to the research area, making the researcher able to simultaneously fulfill the following IRB requirements:

- A consultant who is culturally aware
• Translation of all IRB documents for the research subjects.
• Obtaining a letter of approval from Kuwait University in order to provide to Virginia Commonwealth University

It is worth further examination as to whether Kuwait University is “involved in the actual research” in the sense that the IRB refers to, since they are only used as a gateway for the sampling process. So far, the researcher has prepared certain documents that might assist in the IRB submission process, including:

• The emailing list for the faculty of the Mass Communication Department in Kuwait University (for recruitment purposes), along with a clarification about the project for both the instructors the students and their elderly. Each form is available in both English and Arabic
• An initial version of the demographic questionnaire, in both English and Arabic (to present to student in order to reach their elderly
• A consent form for the oral history interview, in both English and Arabic.
Appendix C: Admission Request to Kuwait University

KUWAIT UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS
Department of Mass Communication

Research agreement form

Dr. Yasin Al Yasin
Chairman of the Department of Mass Communication, College of Arts
Kuwait University.

The following form is in aid of the completion of a doctoral degree on the social history of television in Kuwait (1950s-1990). The study intends to benefit from the oral history accounts of the earlier generation of Kuwaiti television recipients. To achieve this aim, Kuwait University has been used as sampling gateway. Therefore, the student population shall be used to reach the elderly population, whom I intend to interview.

The researcher would like to kindly request the participation of the professors, by informing their students on the study and its aims, and providing the volunteer forms.

The willing students are supposed to deliver the volunteer forms to those within their social circle, particularly the individuals fitting the required age of the study (40 year +).

Those who agree will be participating in an intensive oral history interview, documented by audio technology.

Accept our gratitude in advance
Ahmad Hamada
Virginia Commonwealth University

Mr. Ahmad, I agreed and hope that you will succeed in your research. I think it's an interesting research, and definitely Kuwait will benefit from it.

Dr. Yasin Al Yasin
Chairman of the Mass Communication department
### Appendix D.1: Clarification Forms for the Instructors (English)

#### 1. Clarification form for Professors

To the esteemed academic faculty of the College of Arts  
Department of Mass Communication  
Kuwait University.

The following form is in aid of the completion of a doctoral degree on the cultural history of television in Kuwait (1950s/ later revised as 1957-1990). The study intends to benefit from the oral history accounts of the earlier generation of Kuwaiti television receivers. To achieve this aim, Kuwait University has been used as sampling gateway. Therefore, the student population shall be used to reach the elderly population.

The researcher would like to kindly request the participation of the instructor, by providing the researcher with access to the students, and providing them with the participation forms. The willing students are supposed to deliver the clarification form to those within their social circle who fit the required age of the study (40 year +/- 50+), and those who agree will be participating in an intensive one-hour oral interview, documented by audio and text. Please noted that no details of this research should be made public to the students.

Accept our gratitude in advance

Ahmad Mishary Ahmad Hamada  
Hamadsam@vcu.edu  
KW: +965 66680061  
US: +1 804 2638419  
Virginia Commonwealth University
Appendix D.2: Clarification Forms for the Instructors (Arabic)

1. وثيقة توضيح لاعضاء هيئة التدريس

للسادة المحترمين أعضاء هيئة التدريس في قسم الإعلام
كلية الآداب
جامعة الكويت

تتعلق الوثيقة التالية باستكمال متطلبات اطروحة الدكتوراه في تاريخ التلفزيون الاجتماعي في الكويت (1960، تم تغييرها لاحقا إلى 1957-1990). وعلى ذلك، يTrim الناشر في الاستعداد من التاريخ الشروفي للأجيال السابقة من الجماهير التلفزيونية في الكويت. لتحقيق ذلك، يرغب الباحث في استخدام جامعة الكويت كموقع للمرحلة الأولى من تجمع عوائد البحث، حيث يقوم الطلبة الجامعيين بمتابعة حلقة الوصل إلى كبار السن.

يطلب الباحث شاكراً مشاركة أعضاء هيئة التدريس عن طريق توفير مداخل إلى طلبة القسم وترويهم الاستمارات المتعلقة بالبحث. في حال قبول الطلبة بالمشاركة، عليه إرسال استمارات البحث إلى الأشخاص الذين يتمنون إلى اللائحة الورقية المطلوبة من ضمن ميخائيلة الاجتماعي (معاً بأن اللائحة الورقية المطلوبة هي من هم في سن الأربعين وما فوق، تم تغييرها لاحقا إلى الخمسين وما فوق). و في حال قبول أعضاء اللائحة الورقية بالمشاركة سيقومون بإجراء مقابلة شفوية تستغرق لحدة ساعة، ومن ثم تسجيلها سوريًا و كاتبًا.

يرجى العلم أنه، في سبيل الأمانة الأكاديمية، يفضل عدم شرح تفاصيل البحث إلى الطلبة وفقاً للشروط والاحترام

أحمد مشاري حمادة
جامعة فيرجينيا كومونويلث

Hamadaam@vcu.edu

KW: + 965 66680061
US: +1 804 2638419
Appendix E.1: Form to be Presented for the Students (English)

2. Form to be presented for the students

Greetings, the following document is presented by a PhD candidate who is working on his dissertation. The research generally involves television in Kuwait and requires the participation of Kuwaitis of both genders who are 40 years and older of age (later revised to 50 years and older). Therefore, the researcher would like to kindly request your participation as students. If you know of a person within your social circle (parents, 1st degree relative, 2nd degree relatives, neighbors, family friends or personal friends, both male and female) who fits the age required (40 years and older, later revised to 50 years and older), please ask them to contact the researcher through the information below. Contact through phone would be preferable.

P.S: Please be aware that no academic credit or reward of any kind is offered to the students in this process, therefore, we do not encourage you to coerce or pressure such persons in any manner, as it is highly unprofessional. If the researcher senses any attempt of coercion upon contact with the potential participant, his or her continuation in the research will be discouraged

Accept our gratitude in advance

Ahmad Mishary Ahmad Hamada
Hamadaarn@vcu.edu
KW: + 965 66680061
US: +1 804 2638419
Virginia Commonwealth University
Appendix E.2: Form to be Presented for the Students (Arabic)

2. وثيقة بقرض تقدمها إلى طلبة جامعة الكويت

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

يتم تقديم الوثيقة التالية من قبل طالب بصدد تحضير أطروحة الدكتوراه. يتعلق البحث على نحو عام بالذين في دولة الكويت، ويتطلب مشاركة الكويتيين من الجنسين من بينهم في الأربعين وما فوق ذلك (تم تغييرها لاحقا إلى سن الخمسين وما فوق). و على ذلك، يتطلب البحث مشكولا مساعدته الطلبة في تحديد العينة المناسبة لإجراء الدراسة.

يرجى الاتصال عن طريق المعلومات المدونة أدناه.

يرجى العلم أن التواصل عن طريق الهاتف هي الطريقة الأكثر فعالية.

ملاحظة: يرغب الباحث بالتشديد على أنه لم يتمتع الطلاب الأكاديمياً بالجهد المبذول (بدورات الدراسة أو باباة طرق أخرى)، لذا فيرجى عدم ممارسة أي شكل من أشكال الضغط على الأشخاص المطلوبة مشاركتهم، حيث ينافي هذا مبادئ الأمانة الأكاديمية والاحترافية البحثية. يرجى العلم كذلك أنه و في حال التماس الباحث لا يضغط على الشخص المبحوث ستم ايقاف مشاركته في البحث.

و فضلوا يقولون فائق الشرك و الاحترام

أحمد مشاري حمادة
جامعة فرجينيا كومونولث
Hamadaam@vcu.edu
KW: + 965 66680061
US: +1 804 2638419
Appendix F.1: Screening Survey (English)

4. Screening survey

Admission form for an historical study on television in Kuwait

1) Name: ______________

2) Student proxy: ______________

3) Age: ______________

4) Nationality: ______________

5) Current occupied zone: ______________

6) Current occupied district: ______________
   a) Al-Asima
   b) Hawaili
   c) Al-Ahmadi
   d) Al-Jahra
   e) Al-Farwaniyya
   f) Mubarak Al-Kabir

7) Previously occupied area by parents / grandparents: ______________

The part below will be filled during the initial meeting and not during the initial phone conversation (unlike the rest of the survey)

........................................................................................................................................

8) Would you agree of having your photograph taken?
   (Yes)    (No)

9) Would you agree of having your audio material archived on the internet for future use?
   (yes)    (No)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>لا. استبيان معانينة</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>للمشاركة في بحث التأريخ الاجتماعي للفزيون الكويت</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) الاسم: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) الطلب المطلق: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) العمر: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) الجنسية: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) منطقة السكن الحالية: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) محافظة السكن الحالية: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ج. الإحمدي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>د. الجهراء</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ه. الفروانية</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>و. مبارك الكبير</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) منطقة سكن الولدين سابقا: __________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**سيتم الإجابة على القسم السابق خلال المقابلة الميدانية ويتم خلال المقابلة الهاتفيَّة**

| (8) هل توافق على اخذ صورة فوتوغرافية؟ |
| (6) هل توافق على استغلال المادة الصوتية الناتجة عن المقابلة عبر الإنترنت للاستخدام التعليمي والعام لاحقا |
| (7) |

407
Appendix G.1: Consent Form (English)

3. Consent form

The Interviewee is to be notified (and is to offer oral agreement without coercion) that this interview will be interpreted, transcribed and edited in writing form, which would subsequently provide it with potential of publication for both educational and public use, either individually or as part of an oral history collection of documents. The interview will be recorded in audio format, and the interviewee will be contacted within an agreed-upon duration after the interview for the purpose of clarification and/or belated accompaniments. The interviewee is also to be notified that the researcher would exchange contact information. Marginally, the interviewee will also be asked whether his/her photograph can be taken. The refusal of the interviewee to be photographed will not be substantial to the research. The photograph will be used to help the researcher’s memory in identifying the interviewees, and may be included in the final text of the research if the interviewee provides proper consent. It should be noted that the photograph is optional to the study and should not determine whether or not the interview should be executed.

Additionally, the interviewee is to provide his/her agreement to the archival of this material on the internet in audio or text form for future educational and public use. It is to be known by the interviewee that the interviewer would not display the contact information (such as addresses and phone numbers) within the archive. However, fundamentals such as name, age, and geographical district will be kept within the archive for educational and public use. Please note that the archiving is also optional.

By conducting this interview, the interviewee would be relinquishing their right to use the material of this interview for commercial or personal gain; thus handing over full copyright of the outcome to the interviewer. The interviewee will be notified that during any period of this research (even after the conducting of the interviews) He or she has the right to ask for his data and information to be withdrawn from the study and destroyed.

Finally, the interview acknowledges that during this process, no attempt of coercion was made in regards of participation or questions.

Ahmad Mishary Ahmad Hamada

Hamadaam@vcu.edu
KW: + 965 66680061
US: +1 804 2638419
Virginia Commonwealth University
3. استمارة موافقة

يوافق الخاضع للمقابلة (موافقة شفهية و بدون أي اجبار) على ان يتم تحليل وتتبييض وتحرير اللقاء على شكل نص كتابي، مما سيؤدي توظيفه للنشر و يؤهله للاستخدام التعليمي و العام، و سيكون ذلك اما منفصلا ام ضمن مجموعة من النصوص الشفهية المماثلة.

سيتم تسجيل النصوص صوتيا، و سيتم عليه الاتصال بالمشارك لاحقا بغرض التوضيح أو للاستعلام عن رغبة المشارك في إضافة أي ملاحظات أخرى. يتم احتفاظ المشارك علما ان البحث سيقوم بالاحتفاظ معلومات الاتصال (من هاتف و ايميل و خلافه). و هامشيًا، سيتم أيضًا الاستعلام عن امكانية التقاط صورة للشخص المشارك، مع العلم ان رفض المشارك للتصوير لن يؤثر على استمرارية البحث و كفائة المقابلة. الصورة التفتوغرافية بغرض التصنيف و قد يتم إدراجها ضمن النص النهائي للاطروحة الدكتوراه في حال موافقة المشارك.

من الضروري التذكير ان الصورة التفتوغرافية هي مجرد مبادرة اختيارية لا يتطلب على المشارك بالدراسة الموافقة عليها، ولا تعتبر شرطًا قطعيا لاستكمال الدراسة.

سوف يتم ذلك الاستعلام من المشارك على امكانية رفع المادة الصوتية التالية عن تلك المقابلة على الإنترنت للاستعمال المستقبلي للاساليب العلمية أو العامة. و عليه، ستتم حفظ المعلومات الشخصية المتعلقة بالمشارك (من الهاتف و رقم الهاتف) من الارشيف، بينما سيتم البقاء على المعلومات الأساسية مثل الاسم، العمر، الموقع الجغرافي.

في حال الموافقة على إجراء المقابلة، يوافق المشارك ضمنيا على التخلي عن امكانية استخدام مادة المقابلة لأي غرض تجاري أو شخصي، و عليه يتنازل المشاركون عن حقوق المقابلة للاباحث بالكامل و أخيرًا، يعنى المشارك انه و خلال فترة البحث، لا يتم إجباره بأي شكل من الأشكال على المشاركة بهذا البحث.

أحمد مشاري جماعة
Hamadaam@vcu.edu
KW: +965 66680061
US: +1 804 2638419
Virginia Commonwealth University
Appendix H: Selected Photographs of Interviewees (From Top to Bottom: Rushaid Al-Rushaid, Abdul Wahab Al-Nifisy, and Muhammad Al-Ghuwainim [primary source]
Appendix I: Questions for Interviewees

First level
It is important to keep in mind that these questions are not necessarily chronological in order, nor are they exclusive. The questions may be lumped together or asked separately, as the nature of the interview will be organic. It is also most probable that the interviewee will elaborate on a certain point without leaving space to ask all the questions listed. Furthermore, some additional questions may surface based on the previous answers of the interviewees. The questions are set only as a default rubric to indicate the focus of the study.

Q1 What can you remember about television in Kuwait?

Q2 Do you remember your first television? What brand was it? Who brought it in and how was it installed? What channels do you remember receiving?

Q3 What was your personal reaction to the first television? What was your family’s reaction? What was the neighborhood’s reaction? Do you remember any resistance?

Q4 What year do you remember receiving the first television? Where did you live at the time?

Q5 What can you tell me about your old city (zone/ district)?

Q6 Describe your previous house as you remember it. Where was television placed in your house?

Q7 Do you remember any other developments that have accompanied the city along with television? Did any of them have any personal relationship to you?

Q8 Do you remember any personal incidents in your life that have accompanied television? Would you please share these stories?

Q9 How did you watch television in your house? Did members of your family/ spouses have a special way of watching television?

Q10 How/what did the women in the house watch on television?

Q11 How/what did the children in the house watch on television?

Q12 Did you move from your old house at any point? What year did the move take place?
Q13 Did you get another television after the move? Do you remember the second television?

Q14 Do you remember hearing special news or events on television? What was happening in Kuwait at the time?

Q15 What were your favorite programs and favorite presenters?

Q16 Would you like to add anything else?

**Second level**

Q1 What do you remember about cinemas and other preceding technologies to television?

Q2 How did television interact with the 1967-1973 wars in the Arab region?

Q3 How did television interact with the social practices in old Kuwait?

**Notification:** Upon clarification, the question above would be rephrased as follows: some said that television has negatively affected old traditional street games, causing them to disappear. Do you agree or disagree, explain how?
# Appendix J: Interviews’ Progression Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Current habitation</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Met at</th>
<th>Professor</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hasan Abbas</td>
<td>Qibla</td>
<td>Bayan</td>
<td>Hawalli</td>
<td>1:25:25</td>
<td>His house in Hayan</td>
<td>Dr. Alyah</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cake and orange juice</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Um Abdulla AL Mithun</td>
<td>Qibla</td>
<td>Udailiya</td>
<td>Al Astin</td>
<td>1:40:40</td>
<td>Her house at Udailiya</td>
<td>Dr. Alyah</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Hot drinks and treats</td>
<td>82-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latifa Al Mithun</td>
<td>Hawalli</td>
<td>Udailiya</td>
<td>Al Astin</td>
<td>1:57:07</td>
<td>Her house at Udailiya</td>
<td>By assoc w/ her mother</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Hot drinks and treats</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Um Sultan Al Ameeni</td>
<td>Shu’ah</td>
<td>Mubarak Al Kabir</td>
<td>Mubarak Al Kabir</td>
<td>21:19</td>
<td>Her house at M.K.</td>
<td>Dr. Alyah</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Lunch, traditional dinner (with TV and laptop) dates and coffee</td>
<td>75-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryam Khalid (um Ahmad)</td>
<td>Kafan</td>
<td>Kafan</td>
<td>Al Astin</td>
<td>29:28</td>
<td>Her house at Kafan</td>
<td>Dr. Alyah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Baked goods and tea</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jatin Baroni</td>
<td>Sahra</td>
<td>Mubarak Al Kabir</td>
<td>Mubarak Al Kabir</td>
<td>46:23</td>
<td>His office at Behbahani tower</td>
<td>Dr. Alyah</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Tea mug</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabah Al Savijah</td>
<td>Hitte</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>38:05</td>
<td>Her house at Hitte</td>
<td>Dr. Alyah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Lemonade</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Saleh Al Qurani</td>
<td>Sharq</td>
<td>Sabah Al Salem</td>
<td>Al Astin</td>
<td>44:14</td>
<td>Kuwait stock market</td>
<td>Dr. Alyah</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Old Actor</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawal</td>
<td>Sharq</td>
<td>Sabah Al Salem</td>
<td>Mubarak Al Kabir</td>
<td>23:35</td>
<td>Her Rumsaythiyya apartment</td>
<td>Dr. Khalid</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Her registered house is different from her meeting place</td>
<td>59A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basem Moussa Al Darwish</td>
<td>Al Subhiyya</td>
<td>Sabah Al Salem</td>
<td>Mubarak Al Kabir</td>
<td>130:13</td>
<td>His house in Sabah Al Salem</td>
<td>D. Aziz</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cinnamon drink, Lemon flower drink, biscuits etc. Calligraphy enthusiast and a researcher in Islamic history</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruthana Al Rehaidan</td>
<td>Qibla</td>
<td>Mubarak Al Kabir</td>
<td>Mubarak Al Kabir</td>
<td>24:04</td>
<td>Her house at M.K.</td>
<td>D. Aziz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Coffee (and very possibly other treats)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atef Al Maghraby</td>
<td>Qibla</td>
<td>Mubarak Al Ahmed</td>
<td>Al Astin</td>
<td>46:58</td>
<td>Coffee house At Sulaibekhat</td>
<td>D. Aziz</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bad noisy environment</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saad Al Khalidy</td>
<td>Al Salihiyah</td>
<td>Al Salihiyah</td>
<td>Al Jabra</td>
<td>1:03:40</td>
<td>His work place opposes the Central Prison of Kuwait</td>
<td>D. Aziz</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Majored in psychology, very knowledgeable, the best interview to date</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdullah Al Baldski</td>
<td>Sharq</td>
<td>Al Firdos</td>
<td>Al Farwanitya</td>
<td>54:04</td>
<td>His work place at Surra</td>
<td>D. Yousef</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badar Al Fallakawi</td>
<td>Falak</td>
<td>Quruba</td>
<td>Al Astin</td>
<td>39:11</td>
<td>His house at Quruba</td>
<td>D. Yousef</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairouz Yagout</td>
<td>Sharq</td>
<td>Al Salimiyya</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>26:17</td>
<td>His work place at the traditional coffee shop</td>
<td>D. Mahmoud</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>67A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fahad Al Dosari</td>
<td>Al Margab</td>
<td>Quruba</td>
<td>Al Astin</td>
<td>34:40</td>
<td>His house, at Quruba</td>
<td>D. Habeeb</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Very knowledgeable, forensics expert, cinnamon cake and Arabic coffee</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Um Sa’ad</td>
<td>Qibla</td>
<td>Salwa</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>23:57</td>
<td>Her house at Salwa</td>
<td>D. Hiba</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Very knowledgeable, but occasionally strayed into other areas</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinouf Al Shalabi</td>
<td>Al Ahmed</td>
<td>Al Salihiyah</td>
<td>Al Ahmed</td>
<td>48:59</td>
<td>His house at Subashiyah</td>
<td>D. Hiba</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Great instances of Al Ahmed, and his interaction with technology abound</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalfin Al Harman</td>
<td>Al Salimiyya</td>
<td>Salwa</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>26:19</td>
<td>His house in Salwa</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Discussing his family roots, being greeted by his son</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Phone Number</td>
<td>Reason</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahad Al Rashid</td>
<td>Al Jleeb</td>
<td>11:44</td>
<td>His house in Rabia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mubarak Al Mubarak</td>
<td>Al Murgab</td>
<td>35:37</td>
<td>His house in Farwaniyya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nesset Bu Kubar</td>
<td>Qibla</td>
<td>21:37</td>
<td>His house in Jabir Al Ali</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul-Walab Al Nifisi</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>21:24</td>
<td>His house in Abdullah Al Mubarak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Al Chuwaimim</td>
<td>Al-Salamiyya</td>
<td>25:47</td>
<td>His house in Mishrif</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Below are examples of potential interviewees from the returned survey who eventually weren't interviewed due to reaching saturation of other reasons:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haya</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saleh Abdulla</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saad Al Azmi</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saad Al Minkhi</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Al Qahtani</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karima Al Jar Allah</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdal Karim Al-Matar</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Called several times but phone switched off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdal Hamid Shihab</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Called several times but phone switched off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saad Al Khady</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Called: no response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badeh Al Bloushi</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Called: no response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samira Bu Shiri</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Called: no response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saliah Al Snaif</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Called: was dismissive and didn’t recognize proxy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadid Munsag Al Khady</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dropped for being close to the minimum age (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Al Kandiy</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted and then dropped due to possible subjectivities, low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janim Al Kandiy</td>
<td>Al Jafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted and then dropped due to feelings of coercion, little</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By association with Janim in his relation (below)
Appendix K: Interviewees’ Details

**Hassan Abbas (66 years old):** A retired school principle, and a previous inhabitant of the Qibla city who currently resides in the city of Bayan. Abbas is a historian in his own right, an interest which may have effected his expertise on matters, skewing it to the professional rather than the personal level. His work includes several volumes of his book (pages from memory). Additionally, it was noticed throughout the interview that Abbas was maintaining a positive, rather didactic rhetoric on Kuwait and its people. Such implications were scrutinized later in the analysis, and removed to the best effort of the researcher.

**Um Abdulla (82-84):** Um Abdulla (who did not disclose her actual name) is a Hadarhi elderly woman who spent her early life in the city of Qibla, and now lives with her daughter and her family in the urban city of Udaïliyya. Um Abdulla’s memory was quite accurate in some portions of history, while somewhat skewed with other parts. For example, due to the fact that the elderly Kuwaiti citizens existed before the application of official documents, many of them do not know their accurate ages. Her old pattern of speech reflected the rhetoric of old Kuwaitis, like using the term “our father” in reference to her husband. Um Abdulla was somewhat economic with her narrative. However, the few information that she did donate, like the earlier television content and memories on accompanying technology, proved helpful in the end. Due to her age, she also maintains the advantage of witnessing Kuwait before the emergence of the earlier technology.
**Leila Al-Mithin (58):** Laila is Um Abdula’s daughter who also lives with her in the city of Udailiya. Laila’s interview was the only instance (that is kept in the database) in which two relatives are interviewed subsequently. Laila was the original choice for the interview, but she in turn suggested her mother due to her age advantage. After securing the permission of both (with no coercion), Leila and her mother were interviewed subsequently. It also provided an interesting opportunity to compare their answers. For instance, while Um Abdulla lived in Qibla, Laila was born in the city of Hawalli, and remembers television as simply “being there” rather than “coming into her life”. Laile only offered slight assistance to her mother’s memory, not, in the researcher’s point of view, enough to manipulate the narrative in anyway.

**Um Sultan Al-Azmi (73-76):** Um Sultan, who chose a pseudonym for her first name, is an illiterate Bedouin woman who is still quite attached to her traditional routes. She grew up in the desert of Arifjan and gradually moved internally into the city. She identifies herself as either 73 or 76 years old.

**Mariam Khalid (Um Ahmad) (56):** Um Ahmad, who currently lives in the city of Kaifan, grew up in the very urbanized city of Ahmadi during the 1960s, which provided her with very distinctive memories that will be elaborated on shortly. Um Ahmad was schooled as a girl, her father was an employee of the oil company and is one of the early educated individuals abroad. Um Ahmad maintains a very spontaneous, rather intimate warm manner of speech that resembles ladies much older than her, and made it quite a challenge to transcribe sometimes. Through out the interview, she repeatedly kept addressing me as “mother” or “love”, both terms of endearment used by mothers to address their sons.
**Jassim Baroun (55):** Jasim Baroun is a Kuwaiti of the Shiite sect and the son of a former janitor at the minister of social affairs. He is a retired teacher of Arabic language who held his job for 31 years. He grew up in the city of Sharq and then moved to Al Rumaythiyya. Baroun is an avid sports fan and many of his memories on television seem to revolve around that particular topic, despite attempts to focus on other areas. He also offers a youthful perspective on the historical narrative. His blunt and somewhat unemotional, yet rather lengthy responses, provided a much needed balance against the emotional nostalgic discourses of other participants, as the analysis will display. I met Baroun at his work office in the city if Sharq.

**Sabah Abdul Hamid (55):** Sabah is a widow and the daughter of a gold merchant who has spent her early life in Syria until the age of eight. She now resides in the city of Hiteen with her children. Sabah’s memory of her father and her transition between two very distinct cultures in the 1970s offers a very unique perspective on television and modernity, one which deserved a significant portion of the upcoming section.

**Ali Al-Qattan (74, based on the year listed on the form):** A member of the “cotton weaving” family of Qattan, from which he inherits his family name (he who makes cotton). Al-Qattan adds a dramatically enriching value to the research, being of the earlier icons of Kuwaiti television, who ended up participating in the study by sheer coincidence. In the 1960s, during the inception period of Kuwaiti television, Al-Qattan played the role of “Jasoom”, the eponymous character of the much loved oldie “Bu Jassoom". His memory of Kuwait and television is admirably intact, as he constantly injects humor into his narrative.
**Nawal (59):** Who merely offered her first name, is a Kuwaiti woman who lived her earlier life in the area of Suwabir, part of the bigger city of Sharq. Besides the demographics and her rather interesting personal reflections on television, Nawal provided very little information about herself.

**Basem Al-Darwish (54):** Al-Darwish is the son of the first Qur’anic reciter in Kuwaiti radio, and the cousin of the Kuwaiti media figure Dr. Najim. He graduated from the United States majoring in electrical engineering and currently works at the Kuwaiti Public Authority for Industry. Al-Darwish lived his early life in Al Subahiyya.

**Buthaina Al-Rushaidan (58):** Buthaina is a 58-year-old Hadhari woman who lived in the cities of Qibla then Murqab respectively, she currently lives in the city of Mubarak Al Kabir. Al-Rushaidan is self-identified as someone who previously belonged to the economically challenged portion of society, and as a person of “religious tendencies”. However, her religious identity seems more in tune with the traditional Kuwaiti mentality rather than the organized conservative model. Buthaina held her own recording device, and initially was somewhat cautious that it contained a camera.

**Aadil Al-Marhriby (52):** Aadil’s early years are divided between Hawalli and Qibla, and his grandparents come into his narrative frequently. Despite certain inaccuracies in his timeline recollections, he is quite knowledgeable of Kuwait’s social scene and its shift from liberal to conservative. He also offers good insight on the novelty years of television in Kuwait, the interaction of elderly ladies with it, and Western television content.

**Saud Al-Khaldy (50):** Saud is the youngest of the interviewees. However, what he lacks in age he more than compensates for in memory and analytical ability. Al-
Khaldy is a psychology major from Kuwait University. An extremely intellectual person, he is quite proud of his Bedouin heritage, and his education background enables him to offer astute analysis on the shift of Bedouin culture into modernity, their interaction of both sects of the community with each other, and the role of television in these spectacles to name a few. Al-Khaldy has asked for his work place not to be disclosed due to its sensitivity.

**Abdulla Al-Bloushi (63):** A member of the Bloushi family (originally of the Baluchistan Persian/ Afghanistani/ Pakistani region), Abdulla is a previous inhabitant of Sharq who now lives in the city of Firdos. Similarly to Baroun, he is an avid sports fan, and works at the Public Authority for Youth and Sports.

**Bader Al-Failakawi (54):** Al-Failakawi was a local inhabitant in the Kuwaiti Island of Failaka, and is the only participant who’s lived a significant part of his life outside of the six geographical district. A graduate of the United State, Al-Failakawi was entered into the database because of his substantial contribution to the historical narrative, bringing in the perspective and experience of the native Islanders that no longer occupy Failaka and have – since the early 1990s – made their way into the city. Al-Failakawi is a former member of the Ministry of Interiors.

**Fairouz Yagout (67):** Yagout was the son of a professional “weaver”, and took up weaving very recently from his late father because he felt that the craft was dying out, as there were no longer any weavers that he knows of today. He lives in Salmiya and has developed an interesting outlook on television history considering that his economic status was rather modest in his childhood years.
**Fahad Al-Dosari (57):** An expert in forensic science who spoke about earning his PhD degree relatively late, Al-Dosari is a member of the esteemed Bedouin Dosari tribe. Throughout the interview, Al-Dosari has displayed an admirable level of articulacy and intelligence. His analytical input on television history has contributed greatly to this research.

**Um Sa’ad (80):** Um Sa’ad is a well spoken woman with in-depth knowledge of Kuwaiti society and its people. Her grasp and command on the Kuwaiti network is impeccable. She straddles the cultural line between Bedouin and Hadhari, as her speech and stories reflect values of both. A daughter of Qibla city, Um Sa’ad was initially educated in the Sharqiyya school, but she implied that marriage kept her from going into high school. She then moved to Sharq where she was the neighbor of the English historical character Violet Dickson, whom she remembers meeting at her wedding. Um Sa’ad has a tendency to loquaciously wander off into marginal conversation topics.

**Sh’ouf Al-Shilahy (74):** Sh’ouf is an elderly Bedouin gentleman who lived in the city of Ahmadi and ended up working at the oil company. Sh’ouf has the advantage of not only witnessing the urban shift, but participating in it by moving from the improvised parts of Ahmadi into the newly renovated ones initiated by the oil company. Unusually so, Sh’ouf speaks is able to converse in English rather well, and has been educated in the United Kingdom as part of the Kuwait Oil Company initiative. He was also an expert in delicate machinery within the company.

**Nasser Bu Kubar (58):** A retired gentleman who ethnically belonged to the natives of Failika Island, but lived his early life in Qibla and Al Matabba. The old family house was where the Kuwait Airways headquarters is. Bu Kubar’s well worded
testimonies were quite beneficial to the data, particularly regarding his memory of the television content of previous years.

**Muhammad Al-Ghuwainim (70):** A son of the prominent Ghuwainim family, who lived with his family in the Saihad area of Salmiyya since the 1950s, surrounded by the Azmi tribe and the Qina’at family. Having lived in one of the most vital areas of Kuwait, Al-Ghuwainim offers accurate spatial memory of Salmiya city, and the massive urban alteration that has occurred within it, turning into the commercial hub it is today.

**Abdul Wahab Al-Nifisy (57):** a previous resident of Hawalli city, and a recent member of an Islamic education group. The accurate and detailed nature of Al-Nifisy’s recollection (particularly on the subject of color television set) offered a good deal of data to the research. Upon accepting to participate in the study, Al-Nifisy visited his father to inquire about memories of the device. Few stories from Al-Nifisy’s narrative are retold from his father’s memory. The researcher took measure to ensure that the reference is documented as a second account testimony, and felt that this didn’t affect its validity. The researcher was also aware which stories came directly from Al-Nifisy, and which stories came from his father. Al-Nifisy’s narrative therefore, is the only one in which the researcher allows himself to use second-account references.

**Mubarak Sultan (75):** A previous resident of the Murgab area, and a football player who played professionally with national clubs like Al Qadsiyya. Sultan has an efficient knowledge of local sports, and is a self-proclaimed historical database on sports in Kuwait. Sultan is partially blind, and is one of the Kuwaitis with a darker skin tone, which – although not culturally addressed – usually indicates a different social upbringing.
Rushaid Al-Rushaid (85): One of the more mature participants age-wise in the study sample. Rushaid is a Bedouin gentleman who is still very attached to his Bedouin routes. He identifies himself as someone who has lived a strict Bedouin lifestyle (with livestock etc.) and was remote from the technology, later feeling a sense of obligation from his children to participate in it. Rushaid didn’t offer much in terms of speech, but the content of his contribution allows for a great deal of comparison with other social echelons of Kuwaiti society.

Khalifa Al-Harran (56): Khalifa is a member of Al-Azmi tribe, and one of the Bedouins who settled by the sea instead of by the desert, as many of the Azmi tribe occupied the area of Salmiyya and help build it. Khalifa has great pride in his ancestry. Like Baroun, his memory of television also seems drained of any nostalgia or emotional accompaniment, providing a fair amount of objectivity.
Ahmad Mishary Ahmad Hamada
P.O. Box 24551
Safat, Kuwait 13106
Ahmad.M.A.Hamada@hotmail.co.uk
Hamada@vcu.edu
http://hamadaam.wix.com/ahmad-mishary

PROFILE

• Active member in college and community
• Creative and hardworking, interested in cultural and social awareness
• Research oriented
• Fluent in Arabic and English, and Hearing Impaired Sign Language
• Passionate about writing and directing

EDUCATION

Kuwait University
• Bachelor of Arts, Mass Communication, January 2007
• Major: Radio and Television Broadcasting
• Minor: Philosophy
• Overall GPA: 3.44

Indiana University
• Masters of Arts; Journalism, May 2011
• Overall GPA: 3.6

Virginia Commonwealth University (In progress)

• Doctorate of Philosophy; Media, Arts and Text, December 2015
• Overall GPA: 4.00
• Have received full graduate scholarship for U.S. graduate school

WORK EXPERIENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

CNBC Arabiya – Kuwait Branch

• Financial Reporter, June 2007 – April 2008

EQUATE Petrochemical Company

• PR Executive, April 2008 – July 2008

Al-Wattan Television Station

• Format Editor, July 2008 – Present

Other

• Translator: Association for Communication Educators Conference – 2005
• Host: Video Conference (Kuwait University & Northwestern Louisiana University – 2006

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK

• Certified Sign Language Translator at the Kuwaiti Deaf Sports Club (2003)

DIRECTING AND FILM MAKING

• Participated in the following festivals: -
  • Kuwait Amateur filmmakers (2008)
• Gulf Film Festival (2008)
• SoCal Film Festival (2011)
• Gwinnett Center International Film Festival (2015)
• Recently wrote, directed and edited the more than 15 short and feature films:
• Posses the following visual skills: -
  • Expert in film editing (specialty; Final Cut Pro -7; Final Cut Pro X)
  • Excellent in motion filming, adequate knowledge of most HD cameras
  • Good at artistic still photography, possesses moderate ability of taking photographs, evaluating lighting and measuring depth.
  • Fairly good in Adobe Photoshop, possesses moderate ability of editing Photographs
  • Fairly good in Adobe In-Design; possesses moderate ability of designing websites through In-Design
  • Currently learning and improving in HTML, CSS and Dream Weaver in regards of web design
  • Fairly good in recording and mixing sound through Audacity and Sound Forge, moderate ability as a voiceover artist.