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Obesity A sociological Analysis of the body Image Attitudes among young Emirati men

Richard Benson Hoffman

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United Arab Emirates University

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

OBESITY: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BODY IMAGE ATTITUDES AMONG YOUNG EMIRATI MEN

Richard Benson Hoffman

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Under the Supervision of Professor El-Sayed El-Aswad

April 2016
Declaration of Original Work

I, Richard Hoffman, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this dissertation entitled "Obesity: A Sociological Analysis of Body Image Attitudes among Young Emirati Men", hereby, solemnly declare that this dissertation is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Professor El-Sayed El-Aswad, in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at UAEU. This work has not previously been presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my dissertation have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this dissertation.

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the problem of obesity in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE has a high prevalence of obesity (Hajat, Harrison, & Al Siksek 2012: 909). This dissertation provided recommendations to improve obesity interventions in the UAE by exploring the body image attitudes (how people think and feel about their bodies and the bodies of others) of young, Emirati men. The sample was 340 Emirati citizen men between the ages 18-29 from all seven emirates. The data was collected through a survey and individual and focus-group interviews. The prevalence of overweight and obesity of the survey sample was 28.9% and 19%, respectively. Two-thirds of the survey sample consumed fast food (16.8% consumed it daily and 33.8% consumed it several times per week). With regards to physical activity, 43.3% of the sample either rarely or never were doing physical activity or only were practicing on a “light” basis. The most commonly mentioned influences on body image attitudes of young Emirati men were religion, occupation, marriage, region, friends, technology, gym, fashion, and media. The top three most important influences were religion, marriage, and occupation, respectively. The percentage of survey participants who indicated satisfaction with their bodies was 68.3%. In light of this new data, I recommend designing obesity interventions with more health messaging in an Islamic context, targeting married men to prevent post-marriage weight gain, a campaign to prepare young, Emirati men for employment focusing on their appearance as well as expanding the health promotion that already exists in workplaces. This work contributes new knowledge and enlightens readers about the body image attitudes of an
understudied group: young, Emirati men. It also adds literature that could be useful to future obesity research in the UAE.

**Keywords:** Sociology, obesity, body image, attitudes, United Arab Emirates, men’s issues, youth.
Title and Abstract (in Arabic)
الإماراتي" وتقوم أيضا بإدارة أذهان الفارئين بوضوع الصورة الجسدية، كما أنها ستقوم بإضافة مرجع
لطرق التعامل مع مشكلة السمنة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

مفهوم البحث: علم الاجتماع، السمنة، صورة الجسم، الإمارات العربية المتحدة، مشاكل الرجال، الشباب.
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Finally, I am particularly grateful to my advisory committee for their guidance, profuse feedback, support, and assistance throughout my preparation of this dissertation. I am also grateful to the defense examination committee who also shared their feedback and provoked a lot of good discussion during the defense.
Dedication

To the beloved memory of Nancy Dye, former President of Oberlin College and former Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education at UAEU
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List of Abbreviations

BMI  Body Mass Index
HAAD  Health Authority of Abu Dhabi
SPSS  Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UAE  United Arab Emirates
UAEU  United Arab Emirates University
UNICEF  United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Obesity is a significant problem in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Health Authority of Abu Dhabi (HAAD), which represents the healthcare needs of the largest emirate in the UAE, collects data through their Weqaya database on Emiratis. They reported that 67% of Emirati adults (age 18 and older) were either overweight (a body mass index of 25 – 29.9) or obese (a body mass index of 30 or above) (Hajat, Harrison, & Al Siksek 2012: 909). The prevalence is also categorized according to age and gender. The target population for this study is young Emirati men. Among males ages 18-20, 49.3% are overweight or obese; among males ages 20-29, 56.8% are overweight or obese; and among males ages 30-39, 75% are overweight or obese (Hajat, Harrison, & Al Siksek. 2012: 912). This information indicates an upward trend of more Emiratis becoming overweight and obese as they enter adulthood and reach middle age. This study is only an estimated prevalence for the emirate of Abu Dhabi. A more recent study (2013) of children and adolescents (n = 1,018) showed a prevalence of obesity of 34.6%. The study sample was 52% Emirati. The boys comprised 51.6% of the sample. More boys were obese than girls (39% versus 36.7%). This study was also conducted in the Abu Dhabi emirate (Al Ain, to be more specific) (Mehairi 2013: 5). More studies are needed to estimate the prevalence of overweight and obesity in the Emirati population in the whole country.

There are many existing efforts to reduce obesity and overweight among the UAE population. For example, HAAD uses the Weqaya database to target the Emirati population with lifestyle and behavior change interventions (Hajat, Harrison, & Al
Siksek 2012: 913). Also, the “Fat Truth Campaign” was a partnership between the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Health of the UAE to educate parents, children, and teachers about the risks associated with obesity in children (“Fat Truth Campaign” 2012).

Beside this introductory chapter, this dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 2 is the literature review which examines previous research related to the topic of this dissertation. Chapter 3 describes and details the methods used for collection of the data and analysis. Chapter 4 is the presentation of the results from the survey and interviews fieldwork. Chapter 5 is the discussion which summarizes and analyzes the results in line with the original research questions and also connects it with the literature review chapter. The conclusion synthesizes the findings and makes recommendations for obesity interventions and further research.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The focus of this study is on body image. Body image relates to a person’s physical appearance. I posit that the judgment of others influences their feelings about their own body (Waskul and Vannini 2006: 11); however, the more important aspect of this study on body image is providing information to help transform thoughts about bodies into weight management, defined as either losing weight or maintaining a certain weight that is considered within the “normal range” (body mass index of 18.5 – 24.9). Furthermore, although each individual person has a different view about her or his own body, the purpose of this study is to glean the collective views of a particular group, one bound by age, nationality, and gender: young, Emirati, men. These views will then be used to ascertain the salient factors in influencing young Emirati men to possess a healthy
weight. The most important factors will be ascertained in order to make recommendations to improve future obesity interventions.

1.3 Research Questions

This dissertation is exploratory research that seeks to answer certain questions about obesity and body image among young, Emirati men. This dissertation employs the definition of exploratory research as a study that does not seek to attain an explanatory relationship (Shields & Rangarjan 2013: 148). Since this research is exploratory, there is no particular hypothesis. There was not sufficient previous data to come to any conclusions. The following is a list of the primary and secondary questions of this dissertation. The secondary questions are supporting questions that will be answered first in order to help answer the general research question. In other words, the secondary questions explore the thoughts of young, Emirati men, and then the purpose of the general research question is how to turn those thoughts into action.

1.3.1 General Research Question

1. How can obesity interventions in the United Arab Emirates be improved by exploring the body image attitudes of young, Emirati men?

1.3.2 Specific Quantitative Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of young Emirati men related to body image?

2. What factors influence attitudes of young Emirati men related to body image?
   - Is family an influence in body image attitudes?
   - Are friends an influence in body image attitudes?
   - Is the media an influence in body image attitudes?
3. What are the most important factors?

1.3.3 Specific Qualitative Research Question

1. How does family influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?
2. How do friends influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?
3. How does the media influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?
4. How does society influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?
5. How does fashion influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?
6. How does age influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?
7. How does family income influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?
8. How does marital influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

9. How can those factors be used to achieve a positive body image and healthy weight by designing new obesity interventions?

1.4 Conclusion

This introduction chapter has explained the significance of the study by showing data on obesity in the UAE. It has listed the research questions to show the goals of the dissertation.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter reviews literature relevant to the dissertation. There is a wealth of literature on body theories. The first part of this section ("Sociology of the Body") provides an overview of the field of body studies with a focus on sociological theorists and concepts as sociology is the discipline of this dissertation. The second part delves into some substantive issues related to the body and the dissertation (e.g., the body and Islam, media, marriage, employment discrimination, and gyms). The focus of the dissertation is on influences on body image, and so this section gives some conceptual analysis with regards to these influences. The last section of the chapter is a small section reviewing studies specifically related to body image in the Middle East. Body image studies are still new in this region of the world, and therefore, there has not been many studies conducted, especially in the UAE.

2.2 Sociology of the Body

Theorizing on the body has not been a linear process. It has been a struggle over centuries to define the body and embodiment (Judovitz 2001: 4). For example, Michel Eyquem de Montaigne wrote in 1588 that the body should be cultivated mentally and physically. He believed this was done through the medium of culture (Montaigne 1958). This was 50 years ago before René Descartes wrote of the mind-body dualism that dominated discourse about the body. In the periods that followed there were great political and cultural turning points (Judovitz 2001: 2). Friedrich Nietzsche also echoed Montaigne by stating that culture was formed in the body not in the soul (Judovitz 2001: 6). Nietzsche (1968: 41) wrote:
“It is decisive for the lot of a people and of humanity that culture should begin in the right place — not in the ‘soul’ (as was the fateful superstition of the priests and half-priests): the right place is the body, the gesture, the diet, physiology; the rest follows from that.”

The body as a subject of sociological study gained the most popularity starting in the 1980s, but sociologists before the 1980s also addressed the body and embodiment in different ways (Shilling 2007: 1). In general the classical sociologists distanced themselves from biology and other natural science disciplines and instead endeavored to explain social phenomena from a societal perspective (Shilling 2007: 3). Max Weber, in his work on the Protestant work ethic, described the body as a tool in the development of capitalism. In the Protestant work ethic framework, the person must discipline her/his body in order to work hard in order to produce goods and spread capital (Shilling 2007: 4). Weber described how bodily labor is a principle of asceticism (Weber 1930: 105).

On the other hand, Karl Marx discussed the harm capitalism caused to the body. He described how the division of labor alienates the body because capitalism takes away a person’s natural survival instincts and instead makes them dependent on the capitalist system (Shilling 2007: 5). For example, Marx (1844: 5) wrote:

“The raising of wages excites in the worker the capitalist’s mania to get rich, which he, however, can only satisfy by the sacrifice of his mind and body. The raising of wages presupposes and entails the accumulation of capital, and thus sets the product of labor against the worker as something ever more alien to him. Similarly, the division of labor renders him ever more onesided [sic] and
dependent, bringing with it the competition not only of men but also of machines."

Shilling's (2007) work provides a useful link from the past to the present analysis of body theories by extracting the information on classical sociologists that pertain to the body. In another perspective, Herbert Spencer (1860) compared society with the human body. He went into great details about the similarities and differences between living organisms and societies. For example, societies and bodies both grow slowly in size, they become more complex as they grow, and the parts of societies and bodies are mutually dependent on each other (Spencer 1860).

The literature of sociology of the body is reactionist, which means that it has been reacting to movements and other literature that existed in history (Crossley 2005: 442). It has challenged the prevailing norms of social Darwinism, eugenics, and biological determinism. These three concepts are all based on explaining human behavior purely from a biological standpoint (Blackman 2008: 17). Social Darwinists believe that certain traits will dominate among the human species, and those with these certain traits will survive while the others disappear (Rogers 1972: 265). Eugenics is a belief system that takes a more active role (but same basic idea as social Darwinism) in actually stating that certain peoples or kinds of peoples should be eliminated or prevented from being born based on some social characteristics (Wang 1999: 73). Sociologists studying the body reacted against such attempts to simplify human existence from the biological standpoint. They analyzed the body from a social and cultural standpoint. This has created a dualistic nature to the study of the body. The biological side and the social side are seen as separate entities. These are represented by
The problem in this dissertation concerning the theory of biologism, especially eugenics, is the lack of agency and the ability to change. Biologism posits that the most important influence in human existence is biology, but if this is true, then everything about humans is predetermined before their birth. Therefore, humans are forced to accept their circumstances in life (Looy 2013: 263). Émile Durkheim’s social theories about functionalism explain human action in terms of structure rather than a person’s free agency. In functionalism, Durkheim society is defined by the social structures in place, and individuals must abide by the social norms set by the structures. There is a unity and stability formed by such conformity (Blackman 2008: 16). In Durkheim’s book, The Division of Labor he posits that civilization only has value as long as it meets certain needs. This is a functionalist design. Everything must have a use (Durkheim 1984: 44). Durkheim also put forth a theory about the influence of religion on society. In his theory he described how the gatherings of people to express their religion represent an embodied community. The gatherings, Shilling and Mellor (2011: 18) argue, create a sense of excitement felt mentally and physically by the participants. For them, the existence of ritualistic bodily actions and markings of symbols on the body further strengthen Durkheim’s argument about the importance of religion to the body. Later theorists extended the functionalist line of thinking with the concept of reflexivity\(^1\).

There are social structures that exist in society, but rather than humans being solely

---

\(^1\) As Waskul and Vannini explain, there are several different interpretations of reflexivity that dominate in the literature from Giddens, Foucault, Butler, and Bourdieu (Waskul & Vannini 2006: 22). The basic idea is that individuals now reflect on their own body and can choose or choose not to change it in various ways.
influenced by them, humans also react to the social structures and change the structures themselves. Similarly, according to Blackman (2008) people react to their own biology and are able to change themselves. This dissertation argues that the ability to change is an important concept, and it underpins the work of many people working in such fields like social work, public health, and women's empowerment. This interplay of structure and agency is central to the theoretical framework of this dissertation. Emic and etic approaches to the data will help to illustrate this theoretical framework.

Sociology of the body is indicative of a tension in sociology that exists across the discipline (Howson & Inglis 2008: 298). There is a tendency to view social phenomena in binaries. For most of its history, sociologists have been concerned with structure versus action. Similarly, sociologists keep the body separate from the mind (Crossley 2005: 442). However, fresher perspectives (e.g., feminism) have sought a less dichotomous understanding. They have worked to achieve an embodied perspective (Howson & Inglis 2008: 302; Witz 2000). Most influential in this is Maurice Merleau-Ponty who conceptualized the body as a "body-subject." Body-subjects relate to one another and also to the social world. Merleau-Ponty used the analogy of a football player and the field on which s/he plays. During the game the football player is constituted by the field but also re-constitutes the field. Each play unconsciously changes the field. Similarly, the culture of the society influences the individual, and they in turn influence

---

2 An embodied perspective is a view of the body that takes into account people's real lived experiences, as opposed to solely just theorizing about the body. (Howson & Inglis 2008: 302). Imagine an example of someone describing a pizza to an audience who has never seen a pizza. One method would be to debate the origins of where the pizza came from, what ingredients make up a true pizza, and/or eating pizza as a cultural phenomenon. However, an embodied perspective would be if the audience saw, smelled, and ate a pizza and then described their experiences afterward.
the culture and the society. The society and the individual are one just like the player and the field are one entity. They operate together (Howson and Inglis 2008: 303-304).

Lastly, Jean-Michel Berthelot calls into question the whole subdiscipline of the sociology of the body. He argues that the body as itself has taken significance in various fields, but these may lack theory and lack a definition of what the body is (Berthelot 1986: 155). While sociology of the body is incorporated into larger fields such as modernism, Berthelot also believes that these larger fields have failed the study of the body. The body has become secondary because the ideas and representations of the body have taken over (Berthelot 1986: 161). Thus, body theory has become distorted. Sociology always favors looking at the structural, institutional, and cultural factors behind social reality. In Berthelot’s articulation, this does a disservice to body theorizing. Berthelot lays out three levels for how people view the body: social movements, social thought, and social science. The social movements of the nineteenth century concentrated on the attack on the body by industrial capitalism. In the twentieth century, hedonism took over as a dominant mold for body. Between the world wars, both degeneration and hedonism mixed together (Berthelot 1986: 156). Social thought closely mirrors this categorization. Social thought says that the body is ego-driven and narcissistic. With regards to the sciences, in the nineteenth century scientists were very concerned with measuring the body and discovering how its internal organs function. Even though the body should not be described just by focusing on the biology as has been pointed out many times, the other extreme (ignoring the organic level of the body) is not the best solution either. The body’s form can actually symbolize the characteristics of its social conditions (Berthelot 1986: 157). For example, the manual labor workers
who become deformed physically represent their ugly condition in life. The characteristic (an ugly lifestyle of harsh working conditions) has a material reality (a deformed body).

The sociology of the body as seen through the lens of symbolic interactionist theorists centers on the mingling of body as subject and body as object. The body then also becomes a medium for this process of embodiment (Waskul & Vannini 2006: 2). This section proffers the following example. The concept of frugality can be embodied by a person abstaining from consumption of many material objects. Their bodily actions of sacrifice and minimalism make something physical into something with meaning which then produces the body as subject. Symbolic interactionism is built upon pragmatism which posits that human beings create and act. There is nothing before experience. There must be experience in order to create meaning to the world (Waskul & Vannini 2006: 3). There are five approaches within symbolic interactionism that Dennis Waskul and Phillip Vannini (2006: 4) describe. They are 1) looking-glass body reflexivity, 2) dramaturgical, 3) phenomenological, 4) socio-semiotic, and 5) narrative. In the socio-semiotic approach, the authors illuminate how the body is part of the political economy. Thus, the body has become a product with value, a consumable good and a capital which people can use to their advantage. Indeed the people with high bodily capital have quite literally become the “models” by which others imitate and compare their own bodies. The authors contend that “body image” is born out of this phenomenon (Waskul and Vannini 2006: 11). This is highly useful background for this dissertation to have a basis for the comparison of bodies. In body image attitudes, people are constantly comparing their bodies to those of others or to a standard measure.
Erving Goffman likens the social world to a theatrical production. There is the stage with the performers, and there is the audience. Goffman believes that people perform the self, and the body is a vehicle for the performance of the self. People use body language in social situations to project an image of themselves to the world. To sum up, the body has three aspects according to Goffman. 1) It is a material substance. 2) It is managed according to lexical and hierarchical components. 3) Finally, the body is the liaison between the self and the social world (Coupland & Gwyn 2003: 2).

Goffman even uses the term “body image” in a discussion of doctors and nurses. He references a report where the doctors changed their appearance in order to promote a more collegial environment among the staff. For example, they avoided wearing the white coat and prominent stethoscope. This change in appearance was not arbitrary; the doctors were aware of their body image in relation to their subordinates and wanted to help ease these tensions by appearing more equal (Goffman 1956: 126-127). This section posits that the world of online communication with its new methods may not fit with Goffman’s original model. There are various aspects of performance that are advanced and converted in the online media that are readily available to most of the world’s population. This section argues that it is important in thinking later about how the subjects of this research project themselves to the world based on their own body image attitudes. Body image is also related to the audience, and in online media, the audience is often invisible. Thus, this has a different effect on body image attitudes.

To sum up, sociology of the body has wrestled with defining the body through purely social means versus incorporating the biological part as well. Also, sociology has been influenced by historical events in its characterization of the body.
2.3 Cartesian Dualism

The Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body has left a substantial legacy on the scholarship of body theorizing. Many authors in this chapter make reference to Descartes. As Descartes (1911: 332) wrote,

"Thus because we have no conception of the body as thinking in any way, we have reason to believe that every kind of thought which exists in us belongs to the soul; and because we do not doubt there being inanimate bodies which can move in as many as or in more diverse modes than can ours...we must believe that all the heat and all the movements which are in us pertain only to body, inasmuch as they do not depend on thought at all."

I infer here that soul and mind are interchangeable in Descartes writings. However, the mind-body dualism does not explain how one can describe one’s self through language coming from one’s mind about how the body is feeling. This might be described as an “out of body” experience where one actually feels outside one’s body as if the person is an observer looking inward from the outside (Coupland & Gwyn 2003: 6).

2.4 Different Perspectives on the Body

The body is a topic that lends itself to analysis by many disciplines and subdisciplines. It is a site of constant discussion. According to Sandra Reeve (2011: 1), there are eight main ways to view the body. They are the following: 1) objective, 2) subjective, 3) phenomenological, 4) somatic, 5) contextual, 6) interdependent, 7) environmental, and 8) cultural. In her description of the cultural body, Reeve uses a few different examples. The first example is related to developmental psychology. When people are born, they only relate to the surrounding environment around them. Around age three, they start to
develop a sense of their being as separate from the environment. They develop their own needs and wants (Reeve 2001: 40). Another example is that people's movements, behaviors, and actions are cultural. It is not only the result of what the senses of the body perceive, but the phenomenon that the body uses the senses to perceive the world is cultural. Reeve argues that no one's being can be essentialized. Rather, each movement can be analyzed according to cultural meanings (Reeve 2011: 42). I agree that perception and movement are based on culture. This dissertation also looks at the body within a particular cultural framework (the attitudes of young, Emirati men).

Helena De Preester and Veroniek Knockaert combine the perspectives of neuroscience, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis in order to explain the body. These are all areas that seem fairly distant from one another. Neuroscience focuses on how the brain works and how it influences subjectivity. Phenomenology is about the relationship of subject, object, and intersubjectivity. Psychoanalysis draws out the subjectivity from the intersubjectivity (De Preester & Knockaert 2005: xii). Neuroscience started discussing the body in the early twentieth century, while phenomenology and psychoanalysis both discussed the body in the mid-twentieth century as an outgrowth of child psychology (De Preester & Knockaert 2005: xiii). Even though these fields offer complex and varied perspectives on the body, De Preester and Knockaert discover commonalities through dynamic structuralism. In all three areas, the body is both dynamic and has a structure. For example, the brain is a dynamic location of the body that is always in flux. There are also dynamics of time and environment according to

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3 This means that psychoanalysis seeks to bring awareness of the unconscious (the subjectivity) into communication with others (intersubjectivity). For example, a person may feel anxiety and depression because of some repressed memory from childhood of which they are not aware. Therefore, the psychoanalyst would help the person rediscover this memory in order to deal with the depression and anxiety they feel within their body.
phenomenology. Lastly, the subject and its environment have a dynamic relationship in psychoanalysis. With respect to the structuralist perspective, the brain does not have an actual structure per se, but there is a structuring effect that takes place (De Preester & Knockaert 2005: xiii-xiv). According to phenomenology, the body is an organized structure (De Preester & Knockaert 2005: xv). It is difficult to restructure it as is evidenced by phantom limbs. When someone loses a limb, they will still feel it is there (De Preester & Knockaert 2005: xxxv). Playing an instrument is an example of training the body to be organized. The concept of body image illustrates a phenomenological and psychoanalytic approach to how the body structures itself. Body image places structures on the body (emotionally and perceptually). This starts at the “mirror stage” – the point at which the infant sees her/himself in the mirror. This employs the self as an “other” in which one sees her/his own image. At this point the person classifies her/himself according to prevailing body image structures (De Preester and Knockaert 2005: xv). These examples further illustrate the interplay of structure and agency introduced at the beginning of this literature section.

Pierre Bourdieu offers a different perspective on the body. He explained everything through the concept of the habitus. The habitus is an embodied generative framework which predisposes people to act in certain ways and steer away from other actions. Class is one determinant of the habitus. For example, people from a lower class position would eat, talk, and perform other daily functions in a similar manner. This takes into account the power relations in society which reflect upon the body, a view absent in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological argument (Howson & Inglis 2008: 309-310). For example, Bourdieu mentions how the new bourgeoisie has discovered saunas, gyms, and ski slopes which are new uses of the body which are reinforced by many
areas of society such as marriage counselors, doctors, and fashion magazines (Bourdieu 1984:153). Even though the subjects of this dissertation may be in a similar class position, it might still be important to be aware of the power relations that influence body image attitudes.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Based on the above literature, I choose the theoretical framework of the theory of reflexivity and the dual concepts of structure and agency. This theoretical framework explains the reasoning behind choosing to focus on interventions. The primary goal of interventions is changing behavior, and in the theory of reflexivity, the concept of change is also important. I also choose the phenomenological approach in the analysis of bodies and body image. I also seek to attach meaning to the space, habits, language, and intersubjectivity of the participants. I endeavor to form a “phenomenological attitude” whereby he will be open-minded and actively engage with his data to be able to explain the various phenomena. This attitude expresses an awareness that scientific explanation is always subject to a human perspective (Finlay 2014: 120). In other words, the work of this dissertation is an explanation of the meanings of young, Emirati men’s body image attitudes as interpreted by me. The images the participants have about their bodies are also part of the phenomenological analysis process. The participants are trying to make sense of their body image. I am trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their body images. This is a combination of an emic perspective (insider or participants’ views) and etic (outsider or researcher’s analysis).

For example, it was important to use focus groups before the survey questionnaire construction precisely because of this phenomenological attitude. If I did
not possess a phenomenological attitude, I would have constructed questions on my own based on existing literature or my own pre-conceived notions about how young Emirati men think and feel about their bodies and bodies of others. However, by using the focus groups, I was able to construct questions that were culturally-grounded in my research participants.

2.6 Influences on Body Image

There are many influences on the body. This part of the literature review deals with influences on the body relevant to the fieldwork of this dissertation. For example, I recognized Islam as the religion of young Emirati men. This part of the literature review will connect these subject areas with conceptual analyses of the body in many different ways.

2.6.1 Islam and the Body

This section is an exploration of the religion of Islam and how it relates to the human body. The complexity of the experience of Islam is exemplified in its various dealings with the body. Some scholars argue that Islamic philosophy about the body is teleological meaning that it is an argument by function. In other words, everything about the body exists to perform a function which has a use or utility (Conrad 2003: 1). The fingers do not exist solely for the benefit of the fingers themselves but for the body as a whole. Similarly, an employee of a company does not just exist for his own material benefit but works to benefit the whole company. Another Islamic philosophy states that moral codes should be followed in relation to their impact. In other words, an action is judged as good because the outcome is good, and in contrast, an action is judged as bad because it has a negative consequence (Conrad 2003: 1). Thus, the whole body is needed
to perform good deeds in the world. If one thinks about people who have lost their limbs or one or more of their senses, this argument becomes more complicated. What makes a human body a human body? Must it have all ten fingers and all ten toes in order to function in the service of Allah (God)? It seems reasonable that amputees can still be good people, perhaps even better people than those humans who still have all their appendages attached to them. I conjecture that the less mobility they have in their life may mean more of a focus on their work and good deeds and less on temptations that will lead them to evil acts.

In Islamic tradition everything in the world is either pure or polluted according to its composition. Therefore, some foods are expressly forbidden from being eaten. For example, Muslims should not eat meat from animals with claws or canine teeth (Khuri 2001: 51). Some actions may also cause bodies or animals to become unclean. For example, a Muslim man should not have sexual intercourse with his wife while she is menstruating (Khuri 2001: 75), and Muslims should not eat meat from animals that have been strangled (Khuri 2001: 55). I interpret the purpose of these restrictions as the prevention of harm. However, there are many foods that are permissible in Islam, but they may still be harmful, especially because of overconsumption. Fuad Khuri (2011) could have strengthened his explanation of food in Islam by discussing how overeating can cause harm to the body.

On the positive side (positive here meaning the promotion of food rather than prohibition), meals are a time of socializing in many societies including Islamic/Arab societies. Historically, different tribes who fought with each other would finalize a peace treaty by sharing a meal together. On the Islamic feast of Al Adha, food is shared with
poorer parts of the society. There is an Arabic proverb, "there is salt between us" which symbolizes that a friendship or kinship has been formed through food (Khuri 2001: 106). This, one may argue, can have the unintended effect of leading to an overconsumption of food because food is not seen as just something that our bodies need in order to function. Food possesses other social and political connotations.

A qualitative study on the lives of some Black American Muslim in the United States shows ways in which Islam can also have influence on a personal, individual level. Some of the participants in the study stated that maintaining health is important to Allah. Dressing "Islamically" (meaning covering most of the body) was an important identity marker for the participants, but it could have also resulted in some women neglecting their weight and hair. However, in general, guidelines in Islam tell people to care for the body that Allah gave to them. Probing deeper illuminates some other contradictions caused by people's behavior. Although there are guidelines to take care of one's body by not overeating and not becoming obese, some women believe that the spiritual self is more important than the body itself. One participant in this study stated that Allah made people in all shapes and sizes; therefore, it is not important to dwell on the matter of body weight (Odoms-Young 2008: 2573-2584). This ethnographic work by Angela Odoms-Young does not provide easy answers to how Islam influences the health status of Muslims. On the one hand, they believe that Islam encourages them to be healthy, but on the other hand, they believe that the spiritual self is more important. In this latter belief, this means that even if they have bad health, they are still good Muslims. However, this research proposes there is an important distinction in health. Some areas of health are within people's control, but some are not. Some people may be
afflicted with an illness such as cancer that has no direct cause. However, some diseases may have a more direct cause. For example, Type 2 diabetes is well-known to be related to one’s lifestyle (diet and physical activity) (Gillies, et al. 2007). If someone who is educated about Type 2 diabetes overeats and does not do adequate exercise and as a result develops the disease, then that person has disobeyed Allah by not taking care of her or his body. Although Odoms-Young’s (2008) study provided interesting insights, it would have been more applicable to this dissertation if it had included men.

Additionally on a daily, personal level, Islam encourages movement. One of the pillars of Islam is prayer. Prayer actually is a form of ritual that stimulates the blood flow. During the five daily prayers, four specific positions are performed by the Muslim. They are the following: 1) the standing up straight position, 2) the bending over position, 3) the position of prostration, and 4) the sitting position. These motions are done two times at the dawn prayer, three times at the sunset prayer, and four times at noon, midafternoon, and nighttime (Toda & Morimoto 2001: 132). That means that just by praying alone, the Muslim is moving her/his body many times a day. The act may seem small, but if done over the life course, it may have a significant effect.

2.6.2 Media and the Body

Marika Tiggemann (2014) provides a good summary and critique of media research in relation to body image. Although her article is geared towards only psychological research, it still seems adequate at assessing the worth of media-focused studies in the body image research field. She outlines the usual steps of how topics become significant areas of research. The first step is to establish it as an important field of inquiry, and she conjectures that the plethora of articles establishing the “thin ideal” of the body present
in mass media provides evidence of success in that first step (Tiggemann 2014: 127). The second step is correlational analyses of media exposure and body concern. Following those studies are the more experimental studies attempting to establish causation (Tiggemann 2014: 129). She concludes by looking at future areas of research like interventions. For example, some researchers have recommended warning or disclaimer labels on media products such as magazines of fashion models (similar to the labels one would see on packs of cigarettes warning the consumer about risks to health from smoking such as cancer) (Tiggemann 2014: 131). However, she admits that there still needs to be more research conducted on this aspect. Two major differences in Tiggemann’s (2014) article and this dissertation are the focus on psychology (this dissertation is focused on sociology) and the exclusion of men (the dissertation excludes women). Tiggemann mentions an article whose sample included adult university students, but then she continues with a description of how these articles provide evidence of body dissatisfaction across women’s lifespan (Tiggemann 2014: 129). Presumably the study of just “students” was mixed gender, but that goes unacknowledged (Tiggemann 2014: 131). The point of this discussion of gender in the research studies is the justification of the present dissertation’s focus on men as an understudied group on body image research.

Could looks kill? Maggie Wykes and Barrie Gunter (2005: 15) provide a provocative title to their book about media and body image research. Their main purpose is to present an overview of research both of media representations of the body and also how the media viewers perceive those images in relation to themselves. The authors argue that media images are only a small portion of the overall agenda of gender politics
which seeks to reinforce certain customs in society about how men and women should behave (Wykes & Gunter 2005: 13). As is different from the other studies, the authors acknowledge that men are also subjected to images about masculine bodies. Some studies cited by Wykes and Gunter (2005) have also shown the extent of men’s dissatisfaction with their bodies as related to the media (Wykes & Gunter 2005: 9). However, the dramatic violent title seems to suggest that Wykes and Gunter have an agenda of their own. They seek to point out all the negative effects of the impossibly thin ideal of mass media imagery. It produces body dissatisfaction and eating disorders. They do not show the positive side; some people may view the images and motivate themselves to exercise and eat right in order to achieve a healthy, fit body. However, they do admit that media is always viewed as a frequent culprit when it comes to body image dissatisfaction; there are many other factors - biological, psychological, and social - that are involved (Wykes & Gunter 2005: 6). This dissertation also proposes that there are many influences on body image as described both in this literature review and in the fieldwork.

In contrast, in their meta-analysis of body image and media studies, Shelly Grabe, et al. (2008: 472) mention that there may be positive effects to media exposure about bodies, but they are inconclusive because they were only present in 8 of the 141 samples of studies they reviewed. This review of studies (like Tiggemann) is also focused primarily on women and even more exclusively on white women (as they admit in the concluding remarks) (Grabe, et al. 2008: 472). They argue that that there is strong evidence from both experimental and correlational studies that exposure to the thin ideal in mass media across platforms may lead to body image dissatisfaction. Importantly,
they highlight the need for longitudinal (meaning done across a long period of time) studies (Grabe, et al. 2008: 471). These studies provide snapshots in time of how people think at that particular time, but it would be even more valuable to capture the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of people across time (not just across different age groups as Tiggemann highlighted). Unfortunately, due to time and funding constraints, a longitudinal study was not possible in this dissertation.

2.6.3 Marriage and the Body

This next section covers various empirical studies about weight, appearance, and marriage. Much research has provided evidence that marriage is associated with weight gain. Both men and women gain weight after marrying. Sven Wilson’s (2012) longitudinal and cross-sectional study supports this hypothesis and also correlates weight and marriage with four different models: 1) the health investment model, 2) market sorting, 3) crisis model, and 4) shared risk factor. None of the models completely explain the complex interrelationships between weight and marriage, but they did have some interesting findings. The strongest finding from the longitudinal section was that weight was significantly reduced post-widowhood for men and women. Obesity went down by .53 in men and .27 in women for the first two years after losing their spouse. Also, the body mass index for never-married men was the lowest (26.81) out of any categories of marital status for both genders. Petter Lundborg, Paul Nystedt, and Björn Lindgren’s (2007) study of Europeans aged 40-60 years old showed a negative correlation between the divorce rate of the country of the participant and her/his BMI. The survey covered countries from northern, central, and southern Europe. The Gail Tom, et al. study (2005: 458) indicated that body image dissatisfaction was less
important for married couples than for single people. This study used parent-teacher association members, college students, and elder volunteers in California (United States) (Tom, et al. 2005: 459-460). This section posits that the relationship between weight and being married or unmarried is complex.

I argue that it makes sense that people would gain weight after marriage. People marry later in life when their metabolism has slowed down. They become busy with other priorities like working and taking care of their families. In their youth they may have focused more on themselves and playing sports. However, the traditions around marriage have differed throughout time and across the world which would make it difficult to conduct studies that will provide accurate explanations for weight gain or weight loss according to marriage across the life course.

Caron Bove and Jeffery Sobal’s qualitative study (2011: 729) also looked at the relationship between marriage and weight in depth. It points out the dual concern of men in attracting a mate. If they are “too skinny,” then sometimes women will feel insecure about their own weight around them. Many women want a man bigger than they are to feel more secure. However, if the man is too overweight, then that could be considered a health risk and also not a good trait for a marriage partner (Bove & Sobal 2011: 733-734). Although this study provided more narrative details about the relationship between marriage and weight than the studies mentioned above, it still has a Western bias and is not necessarily relevant in a non-Western context such as the Middle East.

Marriage is an important issue in the Middle East and Islamic cultures. Many hadiths (sayings from the Prophet) about marriage encourage followers to marry and
have children. They justify it by asserting that marriage improves eyesight and protects the body (Khuri 2001: 71. In light of the empirical evidence of weight gain associated with marriage, marriage may not realistically protect the body in every case.

2.6.4 Employment Discrimination and the Body

An issue in the exploration of body weight and employment is discrimination. Discrimination is defined as the unjust and prejudicial treatment of a person or group on the basis of a characteristic such as race and gender ("Discrimination" 2014: 1). Many people on earth are expected to work, but many factors will influence whether a particular individual has a job or not. One of those is body weight and more broadly, appearance. Mark Roehling (1999: 982) summates that this particular type of discrimination happens at every stage of the employment process: selection, placement, pay, promotion, discipline, and termination. Roehling looks at all the psychological and legal aspects of weight-based discrimination in employment from a United States perspective. He states that studies showed weight bias was stronger than other characteristics in both laboratory and field studies (Roehling 1999: 983). This seems like the case in the United States as appearance and body weight are not protected categories in civil rights law. Roehling provides justification why some employees are discriminated against because of their weight because of the stereotypes associated with people with excess weight. They are (in no particular order) the following: lacking discipline, lazy, messy, grumpy, ill, missing work frequently, irritable, and having a hard time getting along well with other colleagues (Roehling 1999: 984). Although not the focus of this dissertation, Roehling mentions some gendered components of employment discrimination. He makes the claim that men are only discriminated at the highest
weight category, as opposed to women who are discriminated against more for their weight. In fact, he says that the ideal man is actually somewhat overweight (Roehling 1999: 985-986). It creates a double standard that women are held to different beauty standards than men are.

Frank Cavico, Stephen Muffler, and Bahaudin Mujtaba (2012) provide an overview of discrimination based on appearance from a legal and ethical standpoint. Their article is not specifically focused on weight but about appearance broadly. They do mention weight with regards to other legally protected categories in the United States. For example, a company may have height and weight requirements that are necessary to perform the job requirements, but they must be equally applied to females and males (Cavico, Muffler, & Mujtaba 2012: 92). Also, if weight is tied to a disability which impairs functionality, then it could also be protected legally from discrimination. For example, if someone is morbidly obese, then it could impair their ability to function on a daily basis, and that gives them protection as a person with a disability (Cavico, Muffler, & Mujtaba 2012: 98).

The Cavico, Muffler, and & Mujtaba (2012) article is repetitive in talking about appearance discrimination. The main point is that appearance discrimination is legal in the United States as long as it does not violate other civil rights protections, and it is ethical according to prominent western philosophers cited by Cavico, Muffler, & Mujtaba. It provides evidence to these points in many various ways. However, the examples are mostly based on the United States legal framework, and the authors admit at the beginning that it will not be that applicable to other countries. Even when they explain their choice of ethical frameworks, they excuse them as being focused all on
western philosophy as that is what their audience would feel "comfortable" with. One of the schools of thought reviewed is ethical relativism. This school purports that ethics are based on societal beliefs and cultural norms. The classical phrase, "When in Rome, do as the Romans" is mentioned as a good point to illustrate this concept (Cavico, Muffler, & Mujtaba 2012: 107). This provides an interesting thesis to employment in the UAE. What are the appearance norms in the UAE, and is there discrimination based on them? The article does not really provide specifics about what is seen as attractive or beautiful, but they do say it is loosely based on American Hollywood entertainment (such as films and television) and media in general. An important follow up discussion to that point would be how these American appearance norms influence other societies throughout the world. This would then make it applicable to a UAE context. This dissertation provides some examples of appearance norms and discrimination in the UAE in the fieldwork data.

Lastly, an important issue is how employment itself can have an influence on body weight. Nicole Au and Bruce Hollingsworth (2011) conducted a longitudinal study on Australian women. They took cohorts from a large national survey of Australian women over a three year period. The purpose was to look at the hours worked and its influence on weight gain (Au & Hollingsworth 2011: 310). The women in the first cohort were between 25 – 30 years old, and in the second cohort these same women were 28-33 years old (Au & Hollingsworth 2011: 311). The highest proportion of weight gainers were those who transitioned from full-time employment to not being in the labor force (54.9%) (Au & Hollingsworth 2011: 312), but they explained that as being due to the fact that many of these women gained weight due to pregnancy or ill health (Au &
Hollingsworth 2011: 315). The next highest proportion was the women who were in stable, full-time employment (47.9%) (Au & Hollingsworth 2011: 312). This supports their thesis that weight gain is related to the number of hours worked. However, they only had categories of full-time and part-time (in terms of actual employment), and these were defined as working 35 hours or more or working 1 – 34 hours, respectively (Au & Hollingsworth 2011: 312). The study could be improved if the employment variables were continuous rather than categorical, in order to show a more progressive / linear relationship of the weight gain and the number of hours worked. Even though their purpose is determining that working more is associated with weight gain in women in their late 20s and early 30s, their recommendation in the conclusion section is not for women to work less but to provide opportunities for them to eat healthier and exercise more even though they may be very busy with their jobs and other responsibilities (Au & Hollingsworth 2011: 315). This is a weak argument because they do not explain why women should not work less, especially given the negative consequences of weight gain and becoming obese. Also, there should have been more discussion about the types of employment that these women are working. They stated in the discussion that sedentary work could be a rationale for the weight gain, but obviously some jobs are more sedentary than others.

2.6.5 Gyms and the Body

This section examines the space of the gym. There seems to be much interest in the literature about the gym itself. The gym is obviously dependent on the bodies that visit it, but it also takes on a life of itself. The following research shows the various ways in which the gym embodies identity, power, and values. The issues explored herein are
various kinds of capital that are built within the gym, the gym’s environment, and accessibility.

Some authors have examined the gym as a space that promotes capital in the Bourdieuan sense. Bob Stewart, Aaron Smith, and Brian Moroney (2012: 542) interviewed 13 participants in four different gyms in Melbourne, Australia and found that the participants built high levels of bodily capital and psychological capital but low levels of social or cultural capital. Although the authors exalt Bourdieu’s model of capital accumulation, they found that it was slightly inadequate to describe the participant responses. Thus, they added the category of psychological capital which is the positive emotional feelings about themselves experienced when conducting gym work (Stewart, Smith, & Moroney 2012: 557). This was an interesting new finding of this study, but it is tempered by the fact that they only had thirteen respondents who were mostly from upper middle class backgrounds. In direct contrast, Nick Crossley used participant observation at a private health club in Manchester, United Kingdom to look at the building of social capital through networking while training one’s body. Crossley mentions that a unique part of his study is integrating participant observation with social network analysis (Crossley 2008: 475), but arguably the most unique part of his study is that he discusses the negative aspects of social networking at this health club. The groups formed in the health club became highly integrated, but that integration actually caused tension because it was hard for new members to feel included in the group (Crossley 2008: 498). As is typical with ethnographic work, Crossley gives the readers a lot of detail, but the main purpose is to use the theories of social capital and apply them to the situations of the private club. Most relevant to this study is his
discussion of the health aspects of the health club. Crossley explains that the whole purpose of going to a health club is to become healthy. However, that is not what sustained membership. According to the participants, it was the friendships that formed there. Not only did this motivate the members to come regularly, but also group members encouraged them to train harder (Crossley 2008: 485).

Jan Janssens and Paul Verweel also build on the concepts of social capital and social segregation in their discussion of the “sport club” in a multicultural society (in this case, the Netherlands). The purpose of the study was to compare mixed clubs (spaces where native Dutch people and immigrants are together) and separated clubs (where immigrants are the predominant population inside the club) (Janssens & Verweel 2014: 54). Although the authors admit that there are positive and negative aspects of both mixed and separated clubs, they conclude overall the need for policymakers to keep separated clubs because the purpose of participation is for fitness and socialization not necessarily integration (a side effect). They contend that integration cannot be forced (something it seems they are alluding to that policymakers are trying to do) (Janssens & Verweel 2014: 55). The authors put in many hours and used an extensive research agenda (both qualitative and quantitative methods) to reach what seems to be a somewhat simple conclusion. However, it is noble that they were using participant observation to avoid the pitfalls of self-selection and self-reporting that is apparent in other studies (Janssens & Verweel 2014: 40). In the clubs referred by the authors as “separated clubs,” there was still heterogeneity. In other words, the clubs were not separated by only one ethnic minority; these clubs usually had many different ethnic groups. Although these different ethnic groups may have all encountered racism in some
form or another, their experiences in the Netherlands are undoubtedly varied. This was not reflected significantly in the article. On a more positive side, they use a diverse research team to establish rapport with the sports club users (Janssens & Verweel 2014: 41) and also differentiate from other studies in the article (Janssens & Verweel 2014: 45).

Some members of the sports clubs above bonded together by ethnicity. In the same vein, a gym called Downsize Fitness in the United States and Canada brings together similar people (but this time according to weight). It is a gym designed specifically for overweight people (as defined by people who want to lose 50 pounds or more). The gym focuses on “functional fitness” and health. This means enabling the participants to become comfortable with performing tasks in their daily life. Some members complained of feeling judged at other sporting facilities or while running outside. Therefore, they attend Downsize Fitness to feel free of stigma (Cross 2014: 101). This kind of self-segregation is regrettable in society. The world should be a welcoming environment to exercise freely. Some interesting unanswered questions arise from Catherine Cross’s (2014) article. What happens after the Downsize Fitness members lose the weight? Are they then re-integrated into typical gyms whose membership is not organized by weight? What then becomes of the friendships they have formed? Must they leave behind their companions who are still considered overweight? This is a question particular to this gym because weight is a modifiable characteristic of individuals. Individuals in the separated clubs mentioned in the study above cannot change their ethnicity.
According to Roberta Sassatelli, the body is produced while cultural values are reproduced, translated, and filtered in the space of the gym. In her ethnographic analysis, she looks at the rituals and behaviors of the body inside the space of the gym (Sassatelli 1999: 227). In her analysis, she concludes that the body is a tool but also the agent whereby people transcend their boundaries of gender and class to become the “exercise body.” This exercise body is manipulated and adjusted according to how it engages with the equipment and the physical environment of the gym facility. The person has fitness goals, but the body has constraints. However, the body is also flexible and with the proper motivation and training, the person can mold the body to fit the specifics of those goals, which are aligned with cultural ideals of body image. The ideals of these bodies elevate the status of the gym as the institution that upholds them, and when these ideals are achieved (even partially), the person’s psychological status increases (Sassatelli 1999: 244). These are the same feelings described by Stewart which they labeled as psychological capital. Interestingly, Sassatelli’s article is filled with complex language and nuanced analysis of discrete actions that will prove useful as a background in my analysis. For example, she writes about “glance management” meaning how people look at each other in the gym. The participants look to the instructor’s body for direction, and when that is not available, they look to other participants (usually those in the front line of the classes). Sometimes looks are exchanged but usually quickly (Sassatelli 1999: 237). This complex understanding that Sassatelli explains about the gym space is probably beyond most gym users’ comprehension. Indeed, she is intellectualizing what might seem a very mundane experience for many people. Also, she does not always use examples from her research in the Italian gyms, and so sometimes it is hard to
distinguish what is her opinion or what is grounded in the experience of the gym users. In short, Sassatelli could have summed up the article in a more concise manner.

Similarly, Gavin Andrews, Mark Sudwell, and Andrew Sparkes also use ethnographic analysis to examine the space of a body-builder-specific gym in the United Kingdom. Similar to Sassatelli, Andrews, Sudwell, and Sparkes are seeking to show the physical dimensions of the gym and happenings of the space as reflective of culture. Andrews, Sudwell, and Sparkes go deeper into power dynamics of the space. They discuss how power is seen in three ways: code of conduct, surveillance, and social hierarchies (Andrews, Sudwell, & Sparkes 2005: 888). Although the gym is geared towards body-builders, one of the tensions they list is between the competitive body builders and recreational or casual gym users. This is sometimes mitigated by the code of conduct. For example, the owner tries to ensure that gym users do not use the equipment too long and also put them back in their proper places after use (Andrews, Sudwell, & Sparkes 2005: 882).

The above articles all meet the bodies (in an intellectual sense) when they are already in the gym. However, a cross-sectional survey of 27,894 adults in the United States revealed that 39% of the participants did not have access to fitness facilities. The characteristics of those in the survey who did use fitness facilities were the following: mostly 34 years of age and older, mostly white/non-Hispanic, and college educated (Kruger, Carlson, & Kohl 2007: 500). The most significant barrier to access was cost, but the study was not able to measure income levels due to lack of information on the survey (Kruger, Carlson, & Kohl 2007: 501). These are important areas of concern. Perhaps people do not go to gyms because they are too expensive.
There is much critical theorizing about gyms and the people that use them. The section above has illuminated some of the issues in gyms mostly through ethnographic data. Most beneficial to this study is the discussion of capital accumulation. The positive aspects of attending a gym are important when attempting to change people’s behavior to improve health.

2.7 Previous Studies on Body Image

The following is a review of studies in the United Arab Emirates and the Middle East region that are related specifically to body image which is the focus of this dissertation. The purpose of this section is showing that there are only a few studies that have been conducted in this area of the world.

Valsamma Eapen, Abdelazim Mabrouk, and Salem Bin-Othman looked at disordered eating attitudes among a sample of 495 adolescent girls in the UAE. The results showed that 23.4% of the sample scored “high” on the Eating Attitudes Test meaning that they had a disordered eating attitude (Eapen, Mabrouk, & Bin-Othman 2006: 53). Also, 66% of the sample thought they were overweight (Eapen, Mabrouk, & Bin-Othman 2006: 56). The study indicated that the UAE is more open to western influences and thus is leading to an increasingly unhealthy outlook about eating. This study is useful to the proposed study because it explores some of the factors that influence body image attitudes such as the western media, knowing someone who is dieting, age, and family. Eapen, Mabrouk, and Bin-Othman looked at how body image attitudes led to eating disorders, but the proposed study will see how body image attitudes can lead to achievement of a normal/healthy body weight. Also, the proposed study will be more geographically diverse. Eapen, Mabrouk, and Bin-Othman did use a
large sample size, but they only drew from one city (Al Ain) in the United Arab Emirates (Eapen, Mabrouk, & Bin-Othman 2006: 53). Studies should recognize the geographic diversity of the UAE and recruit participants from different parts.

Justin Thomas, Salim Khan, and Amani Ahmed Abdulrahman (2010) focused on establishing the prevalence of disordered eating attitudes among female Emirati university students and comparing those attitudes with concerns about body image. The sample was 228 female Emirati university students. The results showed 24% of the sample population had a disordered eating attitude according to their responses on the Eating Attitudes Test. There was a positive correlation of disordered eating and dissatisfaction with one’s body (Thomas, Khan, & Abdulrahman 2010: 595). Like Eapen, Mabrouk, and Bin-Othman, this study also provides evidence that the UAE is characterized by disordered eating attitudes and body image dissatisfaction. These authors also point to the increasing influence of western sociocultural aspects as contributing to this (Thomas, Khan, & Abdulrahman 2010: 597). This provides useful context for the present study that there is growing concern about body image attitudes. Like Eapen, Mabrouk, and Bin-Othman this study also only presents the negative side of body image attitudes. The present study seeks to discover how body image attitudes can be used in weight management motivation. Also, while the age range is similar between the Thomas, Khan, and Abdulrahman study and the present study, the focus was on female Emiratis.

The goal of Sarah Trainer’s (2012) study was to assess the weight, nutritional status, and attitudes towards weight of young Emirati females. She drew two samples of Emirati females between ages 18-30 from two different universities in the United Arab
Emirates (n=103) (Trainer 2012: 314). She showed that the participants overall had poor nutrition and did not exercise frequently (Trainer 2012: 318). However, they expressed a desire for thinness not because of health or the threat of chronic disease but because of Western media, peer pressure at the university, and for reasons related to marriage (both being attractive to a potential partner and because of fear of gaining weight later after marriage and pregnancy) (Trainer 2012: 319-320). This study categorized participants based on their dress from more liberal dressing styles to more conservative dressing styles. However, Trainer did not find any relationship between conservativeness of dress and corresponding body mass index (Trainer 2012: 317). This study is especially useful because it provides ethnographic data to supplement the quantitative data about body image attitudes. Trainer indicates that the participants were aware that obesity and chronic disease is a growing problem in the UAE (Trainer 2012: 318). This study also reports that these influences such as peer pressure at school are leading to dieting strategies to achieve a normal/healthy weight, but in her estimation, the dieting methods used were nutritionally poor. In other words, the participants lost weight, but they were not acquiring the nutrients necessary to sustain a healthy life (Trainer 2012: 322). The proposed study is different because the qualitative data will focus on discovering whether it is possible to transform body image attitudes into healthy, nutritionally beneficial, weight management motivations. Also, like Thomas, Khan, and Abdulrahman, Trainer's study is focused on educated Emirati females. The proposed study will show both the other side of the gender spectrum (males) and will be more inclusive along education levels.
A recent study of female Kuwait students looked at the impact of media on body image concerns. The study used a sample of 228 female students from one college in Kuwait (Musaiger & Al-Mannai 2013: 229). They used a validated questionnaire but updated it to include more current items. They found that the internet had a more significant influence on dieting for these girls, but television provided the most significant body size ideal. The authors discussed the role of rapid change and "westernization" in the Arab Gulf states (Musaiger & Al-Mannai 2013: 231). It is good that the authors updated the questionnaire, but they did not explain how the questionnaire addressed the internet. This dissertation argues that the internet is a more diverse medium than magazines and television, and thus, it would serve the study better to know how nuanced of an understanding they were able to extrapolate about the internet. For example, did girls go on the internet to look up information on dieting, or did they view images of ideal body sizes? The internet is a very interactive tool with much more choice and freedom. This study used a test pilot (Musaiger & Al-Mannai 2013: 230), which is a good tool to improve understandability for the target population. The current study did the same.

Tamara Mousa's, et al. study in Jordan looked at body image dissatisfaction, which they define as having a negative outlook about one's physical looks. They found that 21.2% of the sample (n=326) had body image dissatisfaction, and they indicate that this is a growing problem in the Middle East region (Mousa, et al. 2010: 46). They argue differently from other studies that body image dissatisfaction is actually more common in traditional rather than westernized contexts (Mousa, et al. 2010: 49). This study by Mousa, et al. is important because it provides a definition for body image dissatisfaction.
I used a similar definition for body image but without the negative part, "dissatisfaction." The Mousa, et al. study is also interesting that they report that there was more body dissatisfaction in traditional rather than westernized contexts. They theorize that the Jordanian girls in this study portrayed a conflict between the Arabic tradition of larger body size and the western ideal of thinness which led to body image dissatisfaction (Mousa, et al. 2010: 49). In contrast, body image in westernized contexts is based solely on the western ideal of thinness. This dissertation research is different in that it was able to test the influence of all these factors on a male, Arab population. Also, Mousa, et al. recommended interventions to improve body image (Mousa, et al. 2010: 46), but this dissertation seeks recommendations for reducing obesity in a positive way. Like the other studies, Mousa, et al. showed a lack of geographic diversity by only recruiting from the capital city of Amman (Mousa, et al. 2010: 49).

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief glance into the many perspectives and ideas surrounding body theories. This chapter also gives many examples about how the body interacts with influences such as Islam, the media, marriage, employment, and the gym (influences that are also dealt with in the fieldwork). The last portion of the chapter is more specific to this dissertation: body image studies. However, it is important to contextualize these studies with the understanding of the history of the intellectualization of the body. The next chapter shows the methodology and methods that the current dissertation used.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

The dissertation's methodology was exploratory and phenomenological. As explained above, this meant that there was no hypothesis. There were no overarching relationships to explain by testing hypotheses and isolating variables (Shields & Rangarjan 2013: 148). Instead there were research questions about a relatively new research population in the academy. In addition, the methodology is also described as phenomenological as defined above (Finlay 2014: 120). This means that there was an open-minded attitude about data collection. As a result of this methodological framework, the research for this dissertation involved both quantitative and qualitative methods in its fieldwork in order to be more explorative and inclusive. I used a survey as the quantitative method, and focus groups and interviews as the qualitative methods. The interviews were supposed to provide important insights as they represent the narrative aspect of the research. I was the main instrument of data collection. The fieldwork was approved by the UAE University Ethics Committee prior to the start of data collection. I endeavored to assess how young Emirati men think and feel about their bodies as well as other bodies in general and to evaluate the factors that influence those thoughts and feelings to provide information to design obesity interventions in the future. Although this approach was eclectic and contained some inconsistencies such as the use of an external perspective which is mutually exclusive to phenomenology, the approach seemed appropriate at the time in order to accomplish the research goals which were to capture a wide public opinion from the young Emirati male population as well as delve deeply into the issues surrounding their body image in order to make obesity intervention recommendations.
3.2 Study Design, Location Description, and Period

This dissertation employs a cross-sectional study design\(^4\). The field research was conducted in the United Arab Emirates in the Middle East. The UAE is a federation of seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, Ajman, and Umm Al Quwain. The capital is Abu Dhabi. It covers an area of 83,600 kilometers\(^2\) (including the islands). The UAE shares borders with Qatar (to the west), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (to the west and south), Oman (to the south and east), and the Arabian Gulf (to the north and east). Arabic is the official language, and Islam is the official religion (Government of the United Arab Emirates 2014). The focus groups were conducted in March and April of 2013. The survey was conducted in January and February of 2014. Lastly, the interviews took place between March and June 2014.

3.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis\(^5\) is Emirati males between the ages of 18-29 recruited from different parts of the United Arab Emirates. The 2011 population census estimates (the most recent available for the total population) from the National Bureau of Statistics of the UAE reveals that the Emirati male population totals 479,109. The 2005 estimates (the most recent available for the population by age brackets) reveals that Emirati men ages 20-29 total 90,069 (there were no estimates for only ages 18-19) (National Bureau of Statistics 2012). That means that Emirati men in the target population comprise approximately 19% of the total population of the Emirati men. Most likely, the target population has grown significantly since 2005; therefore, it may actually comprise a

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\(^4\) Cross-sectional studies are used to find out prevalence or how widespread a phenomenon is (Mann 2003).

\(^5\) The unit of analysis refers to the major entity being studied (the “who” or “what”).
larger percentage. However, the total population of young Emirati men is tiny as compared to the world’s population.

The United Nations defines youth as ages 15 – 24 (United Nations). However, because I deem the topic of this study as a sensitive nature, it was best to include youth above 18, which is when most Emiratis typically finish high school. Also, the life expectancy of the Emirati population is 79, which is higher than the world’s average (World Health Organization 2012). Therefore, extending the age limit to 29 gave a more sufficient number to compensate for the high life expectancy. The focus is on Emirati men (as opposed to Emirati women) because they remain an understudied group in the literature on body image in the Middle East. Also, as I am male, it would have been difficult to approach Emirati women in the UAE. My resources were limited, and therefore, I was the main person to collect all the data used in this dissertation.

3.4 Focus Groups

3.4.1 Sample

I conducted focus group interviews6 with three different groups of young Emirati male students from UAE University in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. Each focus group was approximately five to eight participants. The type of sampling7 used for this was snowball/chain because the point of the focus groups was to generate ideas for the questionnaire (therefore it was exploratory and not concerned with representativeness at this phase). I looked for groups of students from UAE University that would interact well and be information-rich. I asked professors and administrators at UAEU for help in

6 Focus groups refer to small gatherings of people who are asked questions and discuss the answers with each other while the interviewer observes.
7 Sampling refers to the method of choosing which participants to be in the study.
selecting appropriate participants to be included in the focus groups. I simply described the purpose of the research to the professors and administrators and relied on their discretion in the selection process. I attempted to include participants of different weight categories (normal, overweight, and obese) since weight is the focus of the dissertation.

3.4.2 Data Collection Plan

To validate the survey questions, focus group interviews were conducted at UAE University. The focus group interviews were completed with three different groups to add validity. They were not recorded, but I took copious notes. The focus groups were conducted in English, as I only speak Arabic at a beginner’s level. They were held in private conference rooms inside the UAE University campus and lasted for approximately an hour. I posed questions, and then the participants discussed the questions together while I took notes. For the focus groups specifically, I used the themes from my notes to formulate questions in the survey questionnaire.

3.4.3 Focus Group Feedback

The following were some of the body issues topics that the participants mentioned discussing with friends:

- How to lose weight / diet
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Bariatric surgery
- Comparison of bodies (ex: “Is he fatter or thinner than myself?”)
- What they can do with a fit body (ex: go to beach more)
The same question was asked but within the context of family. Some of the topics mentioned were the following:

- How to lose weight / diet
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Gender and weight (girls can gain weight but guys cannot or vice versa)
- Lack of exercise due to weather
- Sedentary lifestyle

I asked the respondents, “When I say ‘body image,’ what does that mean to you?” to try to establish a baseline of knowledge. The respondents talked about body image ideals, such as being “fit” and “attractive.” They described body image as a level of confidence. They also described physical traits such as height, weight, and shape. Some made judgments about the body. For example, fat people are lazy, or a fit person cares about himself and organizes his life. Out of the three focus group sessions, only two respondents said something similar to “how you think and feel about your body” which is the way that this dissertation defines it. All participants were given the operational definition after they described their initial thoughts.

When asked “what things influence body image in UAE society?” the respondents mentioned family, friends, clothing, marital status, technology, gyms, media, social media, occupation, religion, age, and region (ex: living in Al Ain versus Abu Dhabi, rural versus urban, inland versus coastal).
3.5 Survey

3.5.1 Sample

Previous studies (Thomas, Khan, & Abdulrahman 2010; Trainer 2012; Musaiger 2013) have relied on university campuses in order to recruit participants for their quantitative studies. I decided differently than those studies and used a variety of public venues in all the emirates in order to capture a wide, diverse sample. Some examples were malls, coffee shops, cafes, and gyms. At the location itself, I chose the participants that I spotted in the vicinity. If I only saw one person nearby, I would approach that person. If there were many potential people, I would choose one or two out of the whole group. I tended not to approach families or wife/husband couples as that would be disruptive and might be viewed as disrespectful in Emirati culture. I collected in-person questionnaires from 300 young Emirati males. I sought sufficient precision in the estimated percentages of responses. Specifically, for "yes or no" answers with approximately 50% in each category, the goal is a 95% confidence interval that is approximately 12 percentage points wide or less (a standard error of three percentage points). The formula is \( N = \frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{se^2} \) where \( N \) represents the sample size and \( se \) is the standard error. If the \( p \) value = 0.5 and \( se = 0.03 \), then the sample size equals 278. Taking into account a few missing (or obviously incorrect) answers, 300 participants seemed the appropriate sample size. Also, to achieve geographical diversity, I recruited Emiratis from a specific percentage for each emirate according to the national census (National Bureau of Statistics 2012). I asked the participants at the beginning which emirate they were from, and throughout the data collection process, I kept totals of how many participants came from each emirate. This enabled me to have exactly the right number of participants according to emirate. For Abu Dhabi (with the largest population of Emiratis) the
percentage is 38.7%. Therefore, out of the 300 respondents, 116 were from the Abu Dhabi emirate. The percentage for Dubai is 18.3% which yielded 55 participants from Dubai. The percentage for Sharjah was 14.7% which yielded 44 participants from Sharjah. The percentage for Ras Al Khaimah was 13.3% which yielded 40 participants from Ras Al Khaimah. The percentage for Fujairah was eight percent which yielded 24 participants from Fujairah. The percentage for Ajman was four percent which yielded 12 participants. Finally, the percentage for Umm Al Quwain was three percent which yielded nine participants from Umm Al Quwain. The emirate question was one of the first questions on the questionnaire, and sometimes I also asked them in person which emirate they were from. If the Emirati was from an emirate for which the numbers were already reached, then that person was skipped.

3.5.2 Data Collection Plan

The second step was the written questionnaire. In addition to the questions constructed from the focus groups, I used the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ-3). This questionnaire measures the internalization of body image ideals, the sociocultural influences on body image, and risk factors for eating disorders. The SATAQ-3 possessed high convergent validity with measures of body image and eating disorders (Thompson, et al. 2004). It asks questions related to the goals of the proposed study, but it is not as comprehensive or culturally grounded as the questions that were constructed from the focus groups. The questions in the SATAQ-3 are mainly focused on the impact of media on body image and also focused more on women (Thompson, et al 2004). The questionnaire was then pilot-tested on a small group of young Emirati men in both UAE University and one of the malls in Dubai.
Based on that pilot-test, the questionnaire was revised to ensure clarity and that it was appropriate for the target population. When the questionnaire was finalized, it was distributed to the whole group. Questionnaires were in both Arabic and English in order to include a more diverse sample. The questionnaires were translated from English to Arabic and back translated to English by two different translators to ensure consistency. I used an online software called iSurvey to conduct the survey. The written versions (both Arabic and English) were uploaded into the software. I then administered the surveys on ipad mini-tablets through the iSurvey software. This ensured more accuracy and efficiency in the data collection. Written copies of the survey were available, but none of the participants requested to do the survey by hand. However, two of the survey respondents were illiterate. For one of the participants, a survey assistant read the questions and chose the answers on the ipad according to what the participant said. For the other illiterate participant, his friend and family members helped him to complete the survey. I encountered other problems also. The university provided a document authorizing permission to conduct research in the United Arab Emirates as I was approved by the UAE University Ethics Committee. However, this did not prove sufficient for every circumstance. On two occasions, my assistant and I were asked to stop administering the survey because we did not have specific permission from the mall marketing management.

3.5.3 Data Analysis

The questionnaire was the quantitative portion of the study and also comprised part of the etic (outsider) approach. The survey included a list of statements that the respondents were asked to agree or disagree using a scale comprised of “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,”
“Neutral,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree.” These responses were then coded from 1 to 5 with 1 being “Strongly Agree,” 2 being “Agree,” 3 being “Neutral,” 4 being “Disagree,” and 5 being “Strongly Disagree.” I constructed the statements in a manner that would represent the participants’ thoughts and opinions about the various influences on body image. These influences were listed on the questionnaire as well. They are the following: religion, occupation, region, friends, technology, gym, fashion, family, marriage, and media. I took the mean score (between 1 to 5) of the responses for each category. For that, I used version 21 of the computer program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to identify the most important factors influencing body image attitudes in the young Emirati male population. I also used SPSS for descriptive statistics and the creation of all charts, figures, and tables. The BMI calculation performed in SPSS was based on the heights and weights of the participants. I did not measure the participants’ height and weight myself, as this was not the central focus of the dissertation research and would have required more time from the participants during the survey process. It was instead a self-reported measure. However, since the dissertation was about obesity and body image, it was important to ask for height and weight. The survey used the metric system. Since the respondents reported the height in centimeters, the answers were divided by 100 to give the measurement in meters. The statistical tests used were cross-tabulations, chi-square statistic, nonparametric independent sample Kruskal-Wallis one ANOVA test, logistic regression (to determine if there were any outside influences on the strength of the attitude categories), and ranking of average values. All variables will be tested at the .05 significance level.
3.6 Interviews

3.6.1 Sample

I conducted lengthy interviews (usually 45 minutes to an hour) with 20 young Emirati men separately for a period of approximately two months. The sampling method was convenience sampling. Two of the interview participants had also participated in the survey. Nine of the interview participants were approached in a public place similar to the survey recruitment. Three of the participants came from referrals from friends and other participants. Finally, the remaining six participants were recruited through the social media website, Facebook. It was difficult to find people in public places who were available for the length of the interview; therefore, I used Facebook to search for Emiratis in order to set up a meeting in advance that was a convenient time and place for the participant. I interviewed the participants in their homes in empty, closed rooms, or if meeting in a public place, I used areas that were empty and away from other people. All of this was done to ensure the privacy and comfort of the participant. I used the same algorithm for recruiting participants from different emirates. Thus, eight participants came from the Abu Dhabi emirate; four participants came from the Dubai emirate; three participants came from the Sharjah emirate; two participants came from the Ras Al Khaimah emirate; one participant came from the Fujairah emirate; one participant came from the Ajman emirate; and one participant came from the Umm Al Quwain emirate.

3.6.2 Data Collection Plan

The final step of the fieldwork was conducting the face-to-face interviews. For eight of the interviews, I utilized the assistance of an Arabic/English translator to conduct the interviews. As with the focus groups, I opened with some easy background questions at
the beginning to make the participants feel more comfortable and to establish rapport.
The answers to these questions were not included in the analysis. I repeated the question from the focus groups. “What does body image mean to you?” After the participants gave their definitions of body image, I informed them of the operational definition used in the dissertation. I then asked questions based on the questionnaire results, i.e. factors associated with body image attitudes. All interviews were recorded, except for one participant who refused to be recorded.

3.6.3 Data Analysis
The purpose of the interview data is to provide an emic (insider) perspective to this dissertation. Unlike the survey (which had structured, pre-written responses that the participants selected), in the interviews I asked the respondents to describe the issues in their own words (displaying their agency). I then extracted common themes from the results which helped to form recommendations for policies and interventions that incorporate the factors in weight management motivation.

3.7 Ethical Considerations
I obtained ethical approval from the UAE University Ethics Committee prior to the start of data collection. Participants gave an “informed consent” (written for the literate and verbal for the illiterate) acknowledging that I had communicated to them that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any moment from the study without any negative consequences. I strictly adhered to standards of confidentiality. All information collected from the participants was stored securely, and I only used the data for the purposes of this study. No real names were used in the reporting of the data.
3.8 Conclusion

As the dissertation is more exploratory in nature, the aforementioned methods seemed logical for collecting the desired data. It was important to have a step-by-step approach. The focus groups data were used to inform the development of the survey. The survey was used to develop the interview questions. However, as the survey is quantitative and the interviews qualitative, the information gleaned from each must also be treated differently. I used the survey data to generalize about the population of young, Emirati men; in contrast, I used the interview data to have a more thorough understanding of the issues involved.
Chapter 4: Results

The following is a detailed account of all the findings from the fieldwork of this dissertation. There are two parts of the results chapter corresponding to the two main methods: the survey and the interviews. Part of the focus group data was already presented in the methods section as it was critically important to explaining the survey questionnaire. The tables and figures help illustrate the findings. The survey results are first.

4.1 Survey

The mean age of the survey sample participants was 23.73 (±3.396 SD). The mean body mass index (BMI) was 26.33 (±7.683 SD). The response rate for the survey was 71%.

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics \( (n=300) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total Number (n)</th>
<th>Valid Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>23.73 (±3.396 SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean BMI</td>
<td>26.33 (±7.683)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>300.00</th>
<th>100.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emirate of Origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Dhabi</td>
<td>116.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharjah</td>
<td>44.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ras Al Khaimah</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujairah</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajman</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umm Al Quwain</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban vs Rural Residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>209.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>69.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>91.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single / Never Married</td>
<td>223.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>74.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed Primary School</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed High School</td>
<td>109.00</td>
<td>36.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed or Still College</td>
<td>161.00</td>
<td>53.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>5.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants. Since I purposefully recruited participants according to emirate, the percentages above mirror a close approximation of the actual dispersion of the population of Emiratis by emirate.

Figure 1: Student Status

![Student Status (n=300)](image-url)
Figure 1 shows the distribution of students and non-students in the survey.

Figure 2: Scholarship Status

![Scholarship Status (n=148)](image)

Figure 2 shows the distribution of students on scholarship. If the respondents were students, then they were asked if they have a scholarship or not. If the student did not have a job, then the scholarship could be considered their primary source of income.
Figure 3: Work Status

Figure 3 indicates the percentage of respondents who were currently working and not working. Although the study population was young, it was still old enough that the participants could have been working. Therefore, it was important to determine the percentages of the categories of employment and non-employment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Category</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>18.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aviation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil and Gas</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Economics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military / Police / Firefighter</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>26.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague or Declined to Say</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For those who answered "yes" that they were working, the next question asked what is their job. The questionnaire gave space for the participants to write in their responses. I took this information and created categories based on the responses to make the data more organized. Table 2 shows the percentages of the different categories of the occupations of the participants.
Figure 4: Salary

Figure 4 indicates the percentages of participants in different ranges of salary that they earned. This salary could have included scholarship money or income earned from their employment.
Figure 5: Mother’s Educational Level

Highest Level of Education Completed by Participant's Mother (n=300)

Figure 5 indicates the percentages of participants whose mother was in a particular educational level category.
Figure 6 indicates the number of participants whose father was in a particular educational level category. It was important to ascertain the education of the family as well as the participant as the families are important cultural units in the UAE.
Figure 7 represents the distribution of the family incomes of the respondents. Since I observed that many Emiratis lived with their families, it was not sufficient to ask the participant’s salary information alone. It was also helpful to ask what it is the family income.
Figure 8 indicates the number of participants whose mother had a certain employment status. The survey included a special category, “housewife” specific to mothers. I considered this as a form of employment. In contrast, the “unemployed” category could reflect participants’ mothers who were actively seeking a job but did not possess one at the time of the survey.
Figure 9: Father’s Employment Status

Figure 9 indicates the number of participants whose father had a certain employment status. This figure does not show in which industries the fathers of the participants worked or were working.
4.1.2 Influence Factors

Figure 10: Religion (n=300)

Figure 10 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the three statements related to religion as an influence on body image attitudes.
Figure 11 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the four statements related to occupation as an influence on body image attitudes.
Figure 12: Region (n=300)

Figure 12 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the three statements related to region as an influence on body image attitudes.
Figure 13: Friends (n=300)

Figure 13 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the three statements related to friends as an influence on body image attitudes.
Figure 14: Technology (n=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think hormones/steroids are a good way to improve the way men's bodies look</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think protein supplements are a good way to improve the way men's bodies look</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to put my body on display in Blackberry Messenger (BBM), Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, and/or some other form of social media</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think surgery is a good way to lose weight</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the four statements related to technology as an influence on body image attitudes.
Figure 15 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the three statements related to gym as an influence on body image attitudes.
Figure 16: Fashion (n=300)

Figure 16 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the three statements related to fashion as an influence on body image attitudes.
Figure 17: Family (n=300)

Figure 17 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the three statements related to the family as an influence on body image attitudes.

Figure 18: Marriage (n=300)
Figure 18 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the three statements related to marriage as an influence on body image attitudes.

Figure 19: Media (n=300)

Figure 19 shows the level of agreement of the participants about the three statements related to media as an influence on body image attitudes.

Figures 10-19 show the distribution of the attitudes of participants regarding different influence factors. Each percentage listed next to a particular statement indicates the percentage of total participants who fit into that particular category of agreement level. The figure starts with strong agreement on the far left, to agreement on the left, to neutral in the middle, to disagreement on the right, and to strong disagreement on the far right. For example, in Figure 11 (“Religion”) there were three statements. For the first statement, “I focus on my appearance during the Holy Month of Ramadan more than any
other time of year." 24.7% of the total participants strongly agreed with this particular statement. Next, 25.3% of the total participants agreed with the statement. Next, 21.7% of the total participants had a neutral feeling (neither agreeing nor disagreeing) towards the statement. Next, 14.3% of the total participants disagreed with the statement. Lastly, 13.7% of the total participants strongly disagreed with the statement. The legend on the right shows the colors that correspond with those different agreement level categories.

### 4.1.3 Practices

The following are figures corresponding to the questions on the survey about behavior.

Figure 20: Fast Food\(^8\) Consumption and Frequency

![Fast Food Consumption (n=300)](image)

Figure 20 shows the percentages of the participants who were consuming fast food and those who were not. For those who answered "yes" that they were consuming fast food, a second question was asked about how often the participant was consuming the fast food.

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\(^8\) This dissertation did not employ a standard definition of fast food.
food. The smaller pie chart to the right shows the percentages according to different frequency categories. This was an important inquiry as I considered fast food consumption as a factor leading to weight gain.

Figure 21: Eating Past 10 P.M.

![Pie chart showing eating habits past 10 P.M.](image)

Eating Past Ten P.M. (n=300)

- Yes: 31.0%
- No: 69.0%

Figure 21 shows the percentage of participants who were eating past ten o’clock at night. This question may seem arbitrary, but the importance will be explained in the discussion chapter.
Figure 22: Frequency of Wearing the National Costume (*Candora*)

**Frequency of Wearing the Candora**  
(*n=300*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Day</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several Times Per Week</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 Times Per Week</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few Times Per Month</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 22 shows the frequency with which the respondents were wearing the traditional costume of the United Arab Emirates, the *candora*. 
Figure 23: Loose or Tight Clothing

**Loose or Tight Clothing (n=300)**

- **83.7%** Loose-fitting clothes
- **16.3%** Tight-fitting clothes

Figure 23 shows the percentage of respondents who were wearing "tight-fitting clothes" and those who were wearing "loose-fitting clothes."
Figure 24 shows the level of physical activity that the respondents had. “Light” physical activity could have included activities like walking, nonstrenuous bicycling, or gardening that are performed approximately once a week. “Moderate” physical activity could have included regular activity at least once a week such as walking, bicycling, gardening or walking to work 10-30 minutes per day. “Heavy” physical activity could have included regular activity more than once per week such as intense walking, bicycling, or sports.
Figure 25: Gym Attendance

Figure 25 shows the percentage of respondents who were going to a gym and those who were not. For those who answered “yes” that they were going to the gym, a second question was asked about how often they were going to the gym. The smaller pie chart on the right reflects the percentages corresponding to the different frequency categories of going to the gym.
Figure 26 above describes the percentage of respondents who were going to the beach and those who were not.
If the respondents answered "yes" that they were going to the beach, then the next question asked if they were wearing beach clothing or not wearing beach clothing at the beach. Figure 27 shows the distribution of those who were wearing beach clothing and those who were not wearing beach clothing at the beach.
Figure 28: Body Satisfaction

Body Satisfaction (n=300)

- Yes: 31.7%
- No: 68.3%

Figure 28 shows whether the respondents were satisfied with their body or not.
Figure 29 shows the distribution of BMI according to the World Health Organization designations of underweight, normal weight, overweight, and obese ("BMI Calculations" 2006: 1).

### 4.1.4 Correlational Analyses

I conducted correlational analysis on different variables from the data using a bivariate correlational analysis with Pearson’s coefficient for the variables of education level and salary of the respondents. The result showed a positive correlation of .284. This result was significant at the 0.01 level. Since .284 is closer to 0 than 1, it was considered a weak correlation. Similarly, for the variables of father’s level of education and the family income, the result showed a positive correlation of .275. This result was significant at the 0.002 level. Since .275 was closer to 0 than 1, it was considered a weak correlation (even weaker than the correlation between education level and salary of the
respondents). The same test was performed for mother’s education and family income, but there was no significant relationship found.

### 4.1.5 Influence Factor Strengths

Table 3: Influence Factor Rankings (n=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Factor</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Agreement Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.79599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.89298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.17140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.41249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.59197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.78372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.83724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.08473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.17503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.19147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The primary aim of this study was to extract which influences were the most salient. I took the mean value of all the mean scores of all the statements of each category. I then compared all the mean values of all the categories against each other category. The result was that the following categories had scores that were closest to 1 (indicating a strong agreement with the statements). The inference was that the stronger the agreement with the statements, the stronger that particular factor had on how young.
Emirati men thought and felt. Based on these calculations, the top influence was religion with a score of 1.79599 followed by marriage with a score of 1.8928 and occupation with a score of 2.17140 (shown in red in Table 3). I preferred to focus on the top three factors as a well-rounded, multipronged approach.

Table 4: Logistic Regression of Influence Categories and Sociodemographic Variables (n=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sociodemographic Category</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>10.001 – 19.999 dirhams per month</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Emirate</td>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Emirate</td>
<td>Fujairah</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Mother’s Education</td>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Mother’s Education</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Mother’s Education</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>.021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Father’s Education</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Father’s Education</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>20,000 – 39,999 dirhams per month</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>Emirate</td>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>20,000 – 39,999 dirhams per month</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>Father’s Education</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Emirate</td>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A logistic regression analysis was performed in SPSS between the influence categories and the demographic variables to determine if there were any outside influences on the strength of the influence factors. Table 4 shows the statistically significant results of that logistic regression.

4.2 Interviews

I decided to repeat the question, ‘‘What does body image mean to you?’’ during the interviews because the answers were varied in the focus groups. As similar to the focus
groups, the respondents in the interviews described body image as an ideal appearance (five participants), physical traits (three participants), and bodily judgments (six participants). For example, one respondent said body image means “beautiful, feminine, flexible. Things in harmony.” Another respondent said, it means “physical characteristics – age, weight, gender, sex.” Yet another respondent said, “Fit, not fat or skinny. Even if overweight, it doesn’t matter, as long as you’re healthy.” Additionally, they also described body language (three participants), a reflection of a picture with many definitions (one participant), the importance of being presentable (one participant), “Einstein’s monster” (one participant), genetics (one participant), how you project oneself to others and how you feel about yourself (one participant), appearance described psychologically/scientifically (one participant), and personality impression as reflecting culture, behavior, and thinking (one participant). An example of the body language definition is the following. A respondent said body image means, “different way of talking, shortcut to deliver information.” The last three definitions are closest to the one used in this dissertation. I asked the participant who responded with the answer “Einstein’s monster” what he meant by that answer, and the participant responded, “I imagine something with many body parts.” I asked what the participant who responded “genetics” meant, and he responded, “The image of the body comes from the family.” In other words, he believed that the way a person looked was based on what was passed on by genetics.
4.2.1 Religion

All the participants (100%) interviewed were Muslim. Nine participants (45%) of the respondents mentioned that in Islamic teachings everyone should learn archery, how to swim, and how to ride a horse. Six participants (30%) also mentioned specifically that in Islam it is important to be clean.

They also mentioned another teaching in Islam that Muslims should leave space in their stomach. The respondent did not know the exact wording or calculation of the stomach size, but overall, they knew that the stomach should not be full. There should be room left. Ten respondents (50%) mentioned about this. Six respondents (30%) mentioned that in Islam, people should not do harm. They should not harm their bodies. This means avoiding things that will harm their bodies.

All of the respondents (100%) only identified information from the literature of Islam in connection with body, health, exercise, and food. When a few were asked how they learned the information about Islam, they usually said from their family or from the school. However, when asked how the mosques in the UAE have helped or could help encourage a healthy body, none of the respondents (0%) were able to answer the question with something definitive. One of the respondents said. “All the mosques have to say the same thing in UAE so there is nothing about body or health.”

4.2.2 Marriage

The majority of the participants (thirteen or 65%) were single. The others (seven or 35%) were married. When asked about how they prepared or will prepare for marriage, four respondents (20%) mentioned specifically about the financial status. They wanted
to be stable financially and in their career before they would get married. However, when prompted about their physical appearance, eleven respondents (55%) talked about that they did try or would try to work on their appearance by losing weight before marriage. The vast majority - sixteen participants (80%) - said that body image was important in marriage and was important both for the man and the woman. Some mentioned that it will prevent problems in the future in the marriage. One participant said, “Yes, it’s important because you need to be able to satisfy your partner.” Another participant said, “Everyone looking for the beauty.”

An issue that frequently arose in discussions about marriage and body image was the change in bodies before and after marriage. This was mentioned by nine respondents (45%). Some said without prompting from me that they witnessed other friends or family members gaining weight after marriage, and some talked about it when prompted. In sum, the respondents reported that most Emirati men gained weight after becoming married. One respondent even reported that one of his friends lost weight before marriage, but then he gained triple the weight he lost after the marriage. One respondent said that the reason for the weight gain was because “wives spoil them.” However, others talked about the added responsibilities that come with marriage such as taking care of their children. They explained that the added responsibilities mean less time for taking care of their bodies.

4.2.3 Occupation

Some respondents were currently in college, and some respondents were currently working. Most respondents said that appearance was important in employment. Nine respondents (45%) said that it was important across the board in all sectors of
employment. Seven respondents (35%) said that the importance of appearance depended on the type of job. One respondent said, “It [appearance] is the first impression. Fit people are more confident and social. Fat people are seen as lazy.” Thirteen respondents (65%) pointed out that military and/or police either have requirements for weight or actively discriminate against people based on their weight. Some of them spoke about the military and/or police even before I asked if they thought some young, Emirati men were discriminated against because of their weight. However, one could have argued that the weight requirements in the military and police were simply the stated conditions of the employment that the people have to be physically fit rather than unjust discrimination. When asked the question about discrimination based on weight, seven respondents (35%) did report that they knew of discrimination based on weight in jobs other than the military and police. One respondent said, “Weight is a main factor [in discrimination] like in engineers you will get injured in time if high weight.” Another respondent shared that he, himself, had been rejected from a job because of his weight. The respondents said that overweight and obese people were perceived as “too relaxed” and thus would not have done a good job in employment. Some of the focus group respondents had mentioned this type of discrimination before; therefore, it seemed like a point worth following up on. In contrast, four respondents (20%) discussed how the degree and the experience were more important than physical appearance. Ironically, two respondents posited that some jobs like working in an office actually lead to weight gain because they were sedentary positions.

When asked about how employers could have encouraged having a good body, twelve respondents (60%) suggested some kind of incentive programs. The employer
could offer vacation days or more pay for losing weight or maintaining good health. Also, some companies already offered or could offer discounts to gyms, or they had a gym inside the office building that was open to employees to use. Three respondents (15%) mentioned the quality of food being served in cafeterias in places where Emiratis worked needs to be improved. They should serve healthier food to encourage employees to have a good body. Seven respondents (35%) liked the idea of sports competitions between employees in the same company or between employees of different companies.

I then asked the interviewees to briefly talk about other influences on body image: family, friends, emirate, technology and social media, mainstream media, society, fashion, age, family income. The following are highlights of those conversations.

**4.2.4 Family**

Six respondents (30%) mentioned that family could have a negative influence meaning that they encourage an unhealthy lifestyle. Three respondents (15%) framed the answer as what families “should do” to encourage a healthy lifestyle. Four respondents (20%) said it was the “biggest influence” or “main factor,” and another respondent said it is a “very big influence.” One respondent said “Some families have farm and so are more active.” Another respondent shared, “The family has a cook who will make food for you anytime.”

**4.2.5 Friends**

Eleven respondents (55%) mentioned friends were encouraging healthy lifestyles. One respondent mentioned it is a “main factor” while another mentioned it is a “strong influence;” however, two respondents (10%) said it has “no effect.” One respondent
said, “Many people now are superficial and blunt and will tell you if you’re fat. This might motivate people to better themselves.”

4.2.6 Emirate

Eleven respondents (55%) said that the emirate that the Emiratis are from has no effect on the body image. Five respondents (25%) said that Dubai Emiratis were more fit or more health conscious than Abu Dhabi Emiratis or any other Emiratis from any other emirates. One respondent said it depended on the tribe the Emiratis are from more than the Emirate. One respondent had the following opinion: “Dubai is more western, and western is more body conscious. Abu Dhabi is also westernized but Al Ain has traditional Emirati.”

4.2.7 Technology and Social Media

Seven respondents (35%) talked about the negative side of technology and social media itself. This meant that the actions of using technology and social media could have led to addiction and a sedentary lifestyle causing weight gain for the users. Eight respondents (40%) talked about appearance in social media. There were pictures of attractive people on these platforms, and also people used them to promote their own bodies. For example, one respondent remarked, “There are lots of pictures of models and good bodies on Instagram. Many are taking steroids, and you must debate in your brain if you want to do that.” Ten respondents (50%) mentioned the technology, social media, and the internet in general as a valuable source of information on health and fitness.

4.2.8 Media
Eight respondents (40%) talked about the influence of advertising specifically. Advertising promoted both healthy and unhealthy products. In terms of physical appearance, one respondent said he “doesn’t want to be like action movie actors” meaning he was not influenced by their physical appearance, but another respondent said that “famous people take care for their bodies and this motivates people to work harder.” He characterized this as “superficial” however. One respondent expressed interest on being on a television show which was the Arab equivalent of the *Biggest Loser*.

4.2.9 Society

There was a diverse array of opinions with regards to society’s influence on body image. One respondent said, “People gossip negatively about overweight people. If you’re not strong, it could make you eat more.” One respondent said, “Guys take care of body 90% to attract a girl and 10% for themselves.” Another respondent said, “Multiculturalism has a good effect by educating people.” Still another respondent said, “UAE all about trends – gyms on Facebook, Instagram. Bariatric surgery trendy, half of women in my family have done it). One other respondent said, “There is no law about looking good. People are influenced by tribes.” This was a different respondent than the one who had earlier said that it was not the emirate that they are from but the tribe that holds influence. One respondent shared, “Older Emiratis will advise overweight people random on street. Overweight not seen as good thing.” Fourteen respondents (70%) said that clothing and fashion were a motivational force for body image. Three (15%) of them talked about the need to diet and lose weight before Emiratis travel because they would not have been able to wear the looser-fitting *candora* when they were going abroad.
4.2.10 Fashion

Only one participant (5%) said that fashion has no effect on body image. Two participants (10%) did not have an opinion about it. Four participants (20%) talked about how Emiratis do not wear the candora when traveling outside UAE. For example, one respondent said, “Prepare in winter to dress well when you travel in summer.” Seventeen respondents (85%) talked about the influence of clothes on the body. One respondent said, “If you have a good body, you can wear tight t-shirts and people are jealous.” Another respondent said, “Emiratis are more into Western clothing now which is more slim-fitting.” One other respondent said, “Candora hides the body, have to be middle weight in order to fit into fashionable clothing.

4.2.11 Age

Seven respondents (35%) said that age had little or no effect on body image. The rest - thirteen respondents (65%) – just talked about how younger people were fitter than older people in general. For example, one respondent said, “Younger you are, the slimmer you are. As you age get more comfy and lazy.”

4.2.12 Family Income

Twelve respondents (60%) said that family income had no effect on body image. Three respondents (15%) said that money helped to improve health and/or looks while two respondents (10%) said that wealthy people were the fattest people. One respondent said, “Good income you have more ability to keep fit, if limited resources, make it difficult to keep fit.”
4.2.13 Obesity Problem

When asked if obesity is a problem in the United Arab Emirates, thirteen respondents (65%) answered in the affirmative. One respondent said it is the "biggest problem" and that "Sheikhs...ask someone to leave the meeting if they are overweight/unhealthy."

Only one person said it was not a problem. The other six respondents (30%) said it was a problem but not a problem in the UAE. One of these six respondents explained that obesity was not "scary numbers in the GCC." Another respondent said that there was "not a lot of obesity" [in UAE] but that "people do love junk food in UAE."

4.2.14 Health Improvement

The respondents were asked how to improve the health of young, Emirati men, and they gave the following suggestions:

- Awareness/educational campaigns in malls, schools and universities, television and other media on social media, on billboards, and in businesses
- Close junk food stores and eliminate fizzy drinks from schools and colleges
- Make a class in school for exercise
- Tell doctors to manipulate their patients
- Free health check ups
- Lower the price of healthy foods
- Encourage more walking and bicycling and create paths for them
- Have more role models like sports stars
- Take away their health insurance if they are purposefully doing harm to their body
• Make fitness tests more difficult in school\textsuperscript{9}

• Increase the tax on smoking and unhealthy food

• Encourage “slow food”\textsuperscript{10}

4.3 Conclusion

The information above presents the results of all the fieldwork of this dissertation. There is information about the sociodemographics, the attitudes, and the practices of the participants. Correlational analyses were carried out using the SPSS software. The interview data represents a qualitative side to the findings. The discussion chapter will summarize the outcomes of the research in more detail.

\textsuperscript{9} Fitness tests refer to students having to do certain physical activities and are assessed by teachers. For example, the teacher may instruct the student to climb a rope to the top of the room. The teacher will time how long it takes the student to complete this activity. The teacher will then use this to help assess the level of fitness of the participants.

\textsuperscript{10} “Slow food” is a term in direct opposition to “fast food.” It refers to food that is produced slower with healthier, fresher ingredients.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter summarizes the results from the fieldwork. The aim of the fieldwork was to answer the main research question of how to improve obesity interventions in the United Arab Emirates through exploring the body image attitudes of young, Emirati men. The results chapter presented the main body image attitude variables (religion, marriage, occupation, gym, friends, family, media, region, fashion, and technology) and gave the strength of each based on the survey. This discussion chapter reiterates the importance rankings of the variables and also connects them with relevant qualitative data from the focus groups and interviews and other studies. This chapter also connects the data from the fieldwork with the substantive issues explored in the introduction. This chapter is divided into four main headings: “Summary and Explanation of Results,” “Phenomenological Analysis,” “Connection to Body Theories and Body Image Studies” and substantive issues like “Islam,” “Media,” “Marriage” “Employment Discrimination.” The discussion will provide useful background to the results data. It also contextualizes the data within the literature of the academy in order to give more credence to the study itself as it is part of the larger work of sociological analysis of the body.

5.2 Summary and Explanation of Results

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine what young Emirati men’s attitudes are (how they think and view) about their bodies as well as others’ bodies. It is an exploratory study, and as the focus groups and interviews showed, most of the participants had other ideas in mind about what body image meant than the definition
used in this dissertation ("how people think and feel about their bodies and bodies of others"). This means when they heard the phrase, "body image" they imagined different concepts than this. However, a few participants in the study did define it in a similar way as it is used in this dissertation, which is "the way people think and feel about their bodies as well as other people's bodies."

There was nothing remarkable about the descriptive statistics in the survey sample. The mean age was 23.73 (±3.396 SD) (right in the middle of the age bracket of 18-29). The sample was mostly from urban areas (69.7%), mostly single (74.3%), and mostly college-educated (53.7%).

What was surprising was a discrepancy between behavior and attitude. This is an important point. According to the results, approximately half of the dissertation sample participants were engaging in some unhealthy behaviors. Seventy-five percent of the sample admitted to eating fast food. Of those who answered yes that they were consuming fast food, 16.8% consumed it every day, and 33.8% consumed it several times per week. That's over half. The transition of consumption from traditional food to fast food among Emiratis is well-documented (Amine & Samy 1996; Musaiger & Abuirmeileh 1998; Badrinath, et al. 2000; Kerkadi 2003; Matroushi & Fikry 2005). It is a trend that goes along with urbanization. In other words, Emiratis are living a more fast-paced lifestyle in general, and fast food is a part of that lifestyle. Also, 69% of the sample participants eat past ten p.m. at night. I observed that there is a trend towards more activities at night in the UAE. This may be due to the fact that the weather is hotter during the sunlight, or it may be attributed to other cultural factors (such as fasting during the day during Ramadan). This survey question does not take into account that
some participants may eat past 10 p.m. but also may sleep at around 2 a.m. This action may allow enough time to digest the food and would not be as unhealthy as originally surmised during the formation of this survey question. With regards to physical activity, 43.3% of the sample either rarely or never were doing physical activity or only were practicing on a “light” basis. Over half (51.3%) reported that they were not attending a gym, and of those who do, 14.4% only were attending a few times per month or 1-2 times per week. Lastly, the mean body mass index for the survey sample\(^\text{11}\) is 26.33 (meaning overweight). The prevalence of overweight of the sample was 28.9%, and the prevalence of obesity in the sample was 19%\(^\text{12}\). This gave a total of 47.9% of overweight and obesity prevalence, which is comparable with the data collected in the Weqaya database. 49.3% for males ages 18-20 and 56.8% for males ages 20-29 (Hajat, Harrison, & Al Siksek 2012: 912). In contrast, a dataset of Danish men enlisted for conscription between 2006 – 2011 identified a prevalence of overweight of 31.9% and a prevalence of obesity of 9.4% (Hohwü, et al. 2014).

Yet, despite these negative health behaviors and larger body size, 68.3% reported that they are satisfied with their body. There was also an example of body satisfaction (in spite of unhealthy indicators) from one of the interview respondents. The respondent had had two surgeries because of his weight and was planning to schedule a third surgery because he was still overweight. He reported having been teased in school because of his weight. He was rejected from both an office job and a position in his field of engineering because of his weight. Despite all this, he still said he felt self-confident.

\(^{11}\) This is shown in Table I in Chapter 4.  
\(^{12}\) This is from Figure 29 in Chapter 4.
In contrast, a study in the United States found that 95% of "college-aged" men experience some amount of body image dissatisfaction (Mischkind, et al. 1986).

This is an interesting finding about young Emirati men's body image. Why did most of the survey respondents report being satisfied with their body? It may be due to "social desirability" preference. As Ian Brace (2008: 195) explains, this is a form of preference in which a respondent will give responses that s/he thinks are more socially desirable even if they are not the most accurate or truthful. With regards to the survey and interview, this type of preference means that the respondent was trying to protect the impression of himself by giving a response that put him in a better light (Brace 2008: 198). The respondents in the survey and the interviews may have said that they were satisfied with their body and had self-confidence because they did not want to appear in a negative light to me and my assistants. Also, the western ideal of thinness as used in other studies like Mousa, et al. (2010: 49) may not be an appropriate theoretical explanation for the young, Emirati male population. It is too simple just to state that young, Emirati men want to mimic the western body type. As evidenced in this dissertation, an Islamic interpretation of the body is more important.

There was a study done in South Africa that measured the body satisfaction of adolescent boys. That study used a more comprehensive measurement (the Multidimensional Body Self-Relations Questionnaire) but found a similar result: 64.7% of the sample were satisfied with their bodies. However, only 20.7% of the sample was

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13 The author uses the word, "bias," but I contend that this word puts the subjects in a negative light. Therefore, I decided to change "bias" to "preference" to have a more neutral perspective.

14 This type of analysis is methodological because it explains the data by examining the relationship between the respondent and me (and the public at large that I represent).
in the overweight or obese category for BMI\textsuperscript{15} (Gitau, et al. 2014: 196) compared to 47.9% of this dissertation sample. This provides more evidence that the body satisfaction of young Emirati men is an interesting phenomenon. Lastly, the literature review section of this dissertation presented two studies in the United Arab Emirates that showed that 23.4% and 24% of their sample of Emirati females had a disordered eating attitude (Eapen, Mabrouk, & Bin-Othman 2006: 53; Thomas, Khan, & Abdulrahman 2010: 595, respectively). In contrast, 31.7% of the dissertation sample said that they were not satisfied with their bodies. However, the Eapen, Mabrouk, and Bin-Othman and Thomas, Khan, and Abdulrahman studies did not measure the BMI of the participants, and they did not collect data on their behaviors. Therefore, although these studies showed a lower percentage of body image dissatisfaction (or “disordered eating attitude” as they referred to it), these studies lack the comparative analysis that the present dissertation has between body image satisfaction/dissatisfaction, body size, and bodily practices.

I recruited participants according to the populations of the various emirates.\textsuperscript{16} For example, Abu Dhabi is the largest emirate, and therefore, the respondent pool was 38.7% Emiratis from Abu Dhabi. This is the exact percentage corresponding to the population of Emiratis who live in Abu Dhabi (out of all Emiratis who live in the UAE). However, the “regional” influence was ranked #8 out of the total 10 influences.\textsuperscript{17} Therefore, this provides evidence that region was not a very important influence when it came to how Emiratis viewed their bodies. Only 20.7% of the respondents strongly

\textsuperscript{15} The study had separate samples for White South African boys and Black South African boys. However, for the simplicity of comparison with the dissertation sample, I combined the percentages for the Black and White boys.

\textsuperscript{16} This is shown in Table 1 in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{17} This is shown in Table 3 in Chapter 4.
agreed or agreed with the statement, "The young, Emirati men with the best bodies live in Dubai." Also, 55% of the interview respondents said that the emirate that the Emiratis are from had no effect on body image. Therefore, in retrospect, it was probably not necessary to recruit the participants according to the different Emirates; however, without recruiting them the study may not have been able to reach this conclusion.

The rural/urban divide made sense\textsuperscript{18}. Most of the participants (69.7%) were from urban areas. All the recruiting for the survey was done in urban centers like shopping malls. Except for the initial criteria of ages 18-29, I did not recruit participants for the survey according to age. However, the mean age was 23.73, which is in the middle of the age group. The age balance was a serendipitous byproduct of recruitment.

The questions in the survey about scholarship status, work status, category of employment\textsuperscript{19}, salary, and family income were all used to verify the economic status of the participants.\textsuperscript{20} Most of the students were on scholarship (79.1%); most of the participants were working (62.3%); 45.3% of the sample worked either in government or the military / police / fire (steady jobs); 39.9% of the sample earned 20,000 – 39,999 dirhams per month; and 29% of the sample had a family income of 50,000 dirhams or more per month. This data seems to indicate that the young, male Emirati population is an economically stable population.

\textsuperscript{18} This is shown in Table 1 in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{19} Since the survey asked participants to write in their jobs manually, there were many varied responses. I tried my best to take the responses and categorize them into broad categories. However, there are some discrepancies.

\textsuperscript{20} This is shown in Figure 2 [Scholarship Status], Figure 3 [Work Status], Table 2 [Job Categories], Figure 4 [Salary], and Figure 7 [Family Income] (all in Chapter 4).
With regards to marital status, the overwhelming majority (74.3%) were single at the time of the survey. This may be due to the fact that it was a young sample age, but also I specifically did not approach couples or families because I did not want to disturb a family dynamic. I have observed that often women and families are separated from single men in the United Arab Emirates, and therefore, it could have been a sensitive situation to disrupt them. The interview respondent pool was more even with 13 respondents reporting themselves as single and 7 respondents reporting themselves as married.

Steroid use is an interesting phenomenon among the Emirati population. There was a statement in the attitudes section of the survey about steroids ("I think hormones/steroids are a good way to improve the way men’s bodies look"). The results from this statement yielded a relatively low level of agreement (9.0% strongly agreed and 20.7% agreed). The Al Falasi, et al. study (2009: 76) about anabolic steroid use among gym users in Al Ain, UAE, found that the usage among their Emirati male participants was 42.03%. This was higher than any other nationality in the study. There are several possible explanations for the difference in the studies. The Al Falasi, et al. study (2009: 76) included participants from any age (this dissertation sample restricted the age range to 18 – 29 years old). They only performed the study in Al Ain which has a higher concentration of Emiratis than other places. Also, the studies were done at different times. The Al Falasi, et al. (2009) study data were collected in 2006. The dissertation data were collected eight years later. Perhaps public health efforts led to the decreased usage of steroids among Emiratis from 2006 to 2014. For example, the

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21 This is shown in Table 1 in Chapter 4.
Ministry of Health maintains that steroids are not allowed unless they are prescribed by a physician or used for science. They have a monitoring system and encourage the public to report misuse of steroids (Billinghurst 2014: 2). Perhaps there was also a difference between opinion and behavior. The present dissertation did not ask the participants if they took steroids. All of these are possible explanations for the difference in outcomes between the Al Falaši, et al. study and the present dissertation.

I performed correlational analyses on the data and found a positive correlation between education level and salary of the participant and also between father’s level of education and family income. This has a simple explanation. I posit that the more educated that a person is, the higher their salary is because educated employees are more valuable. They have a greater skill set than employees with less education. This statistically positive relationship between education and income has been documented in other studies (De Gregorio & Lee 2002 and O’Neill 1995).

5.3 Phenomenological Analysis

As relayed in the introduction chapter, I chose to employ a phenomenological analysis. I attempted to keep an open mind during the data collection process although I assumed it would be difficult. I initially thought the participants would have no knowledge about body image and not care to think about their bodies. Although the participants had different ideas about body image than the definition used in this dissertation, they still did think about their bodies and the bodies of others. When asked more specific question about body topics, the participants showed that they did have opinions about these issues. In order to guide the conversation, I did provide the operational definition of body image used in this dissertation to the focus group and interview participants after
collecting their views about what they thought the definition was. I thought that the survey participants would have answered the survey questions randomly and not have paid attention to their responses. However, as shown by the similar agreement/disagreement on similar statements, most of the participants were paying attention. This is also bolstered by the similar amounts of time that the participants took to complete the survey. This may be attributed to Emiratis being a proud people. I have observed that Emiratis take pride in their country’s achievements, in their identity as Emiratis, and in their leaders. Frauke Heard-Bey (2005) describes the pride of Emirati citizens extensively. The pride felt by young, Emirati men also connects with the concept of embodiment as described by symbolic interactionists (Waskul & Vannini 2006: 2). By answering “yes” that they are satisfied with their body, the participants were embodying that concept of pride. They are translating the pride in their identity into a physical characteristic (a proud body). Perhaps also the young, Emirati men enjoyed explaining about their identities to an outsider (etic perspective), and they realized the importance of research on the United Arab Emirates in order to work towards progress in the country.

I had an etic perspective in my discussions about Islam with my interview participants because I am not Muslim and have only a basic understanding of the religion. Therefore, I relied on my interview participants to inform me about the assets of Islam applicable to this research. This led to some confusion on my part as I interpreted the issues differently than my participants. For example, in the discussion about the Islamic teaching about learning to swim, ride a horse, and become an archer, I initially misunderstood the participants thinking they had said to learn to shoot a gun. I
learned later that there were no guns available at the time of this original teaching. If I possessed an emic (insider) perspective, I would not have made this mistake.

I also possess an etic perspective with regards to marriage. I have never been married. I tried to express sympathy for the interview participants who talked about the struggle to work on their appearance prior to the marriage and the difficulty with post-marriage weight gain, but it is not something that concerns me directly. I also chose to treat divorce as a sensitive subject when talking with the interview participants. Therefore, I did not ask the participants to elaborate if they mentioned problems in the marriage.

5.4 Connection of Data to the Literature

5.4.1 Sociology of the Body

This dissertation helps to advance knowledge in the field of the sociology of the body. It continues the tradition of sociologists who seek new understandings of the body that are grounded in social and cultural theories and not just reliant on the natural science disciplines. The participants in this dissertation described their thoughts and feelings about their bodies. For example, one interview respondent said, “People [in UAE society] gossip negatively about overweight people. If you’re not strong, it could make you eat more.” This shows the symbolic importance of the body. In this scenario, overweight bodies symbolize shame in UAE society.

5.4.2 Structure and Agency

The literature review introduced the concepts of structure and agency which can seem in opposition to each other. However, the continuum of etic and emic approaches to the
data of this dissertation integrates these conceptual analyses. For example, the literature discusses the structures in society that have connections with the body such as religion and marriage. The survey data of this study also indicates the importance of these structural influences on body images. The interview data gives a deep emic perspective to body images; it illustrates a personal narrative from the participant's own words about his experience managing his own body. All of these are needed for a rich understanding of the body images of young, Emirati men. To sum up, both etic and emic approaches endeavor to explain how agents (the individual young, Emirati, men) understand their culturally constructed body images.

The analogy of the football player and football field by Merleau-Ponty (Howson and Inglis 2008: 303-304) further illustrates this point about structure and agency. In this dissertation, the football player is the young, Emirati man. The football field is the UAE society. This football field is full of structures that influence the football player just like the UAE society is full of structural influences on the body image of the young, Emirati man. The football player reacts to these structures (lines, goal posts, and other players) as he maneuvers the ball across the field just like the young, Emirati man reacts to the structural influences (religion, marriage, occupation, etc.) on his body image. The survey data presents information about the importance level of these structures to the young, Emirati men. The practices section of the survey data also gives a myriad of examples of the choices the young, Emirati men make about their body (the food they eat, the kind of clothing they wear, and the amount of exercise they perform). The interview data shows the various ways that the young, Emirati men interpret these structures to form their personalized opinions about their bodies and other people's bodies.
In a similar vein, Goffman uses an analogy of a theatrical production comprised of actors (agents) and the audience (structure) (Coupland & Gwyn 2003: 2). This same analogy applies to young, Emirati men who are the actors performing themselves to the audience (UAE society). If the audience hates the performance of the actor, the actor may or may not choose to change himself to become more appealing to the audience. Similarly, a young, Emirati man may or may not choose to change his body in order to become more appealing to the UAE society.

As illustrated by these two analogies, the concepts of structure and agency are not static phenomena or polar opposites. They are in a dialectical relationship where one can affect the other, and both can change independently of each other as well. This is also explained in the theory of reflexivity. In that theory humans do not merely act according to the structures in society. Their actions are also constantly changing the existing structures. It is a reciprocal relationship. Keeping this in mind it was imperative to present both the etic and emic perspectives. An integrative framework of structure and agency (also characterized by the theory of reflexivity) enables researchers to predict better how negative body images and attitudes can change into positive ones and enables decision makers to design and implement better interventions.

5.4.3 Symbolic Interactionism and Embodiment

Wasikul & Vannini (2006: 3) explained symbolic interactionism as a theory that states there is nothing before experience. Human beings create and act, and that makes meaning to the body. They also stated that through the process of embodiment, the body becomes subject. For young, Emirati men, clothing is an example of this. The candora is the traditional clothing that most young, Emirati men wear, and when they wear it, it
embodies their national identity and culture. In the interviews, the young Emirati men experience the candora, and this experience creates meaning to their bodies. It also has a physical effect of hiding most of the shape of the body. In contrast, wearing “western” clothing has the effect of exposing more of the body which produces different thoughts and feelings. This is fitting in the theory of symbolic interactionism because there would be no meanings attached like this without the physical experience of wearing the candora or the “western” (i.e. slimmer-fitting clothing).

5.4.4 Islam

Religion was the strongest factor according to the survey data. Fuad Khuri mentioned that Muslims should avoid eating meat from animals with claws or canine teeth, and the purpose behind this is the prevention of harm (Khuri 2001, p. 51). This idea was echoed by six interview respondents who also talked about avoiding harm to one’s body. Nine participants (45%) mentioned archery, swimming, and horse riding are important skills mentioned in Islamic teaching. This implied that exercise was important. They said that if someone learns these things, then they will have a healthy body. Also, fathers should pass this knowledge on to their sons. This would ensure that there is a continuance of a healthy tradition across the generations.

In the Odoms-Young study (2008: 2573-2584), the participants mentioned how dressing in an “Islamic” way is an important part of their identity. The participants in this survey overwhelmingly agreed (74.3% with strong agreement and 21.0% with normal agreement) with the statement, “My religion encourages me to have a good

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22 Table 3 in Chapter 4 shows the rankings based on a mean score based on the responses to the attitude statements. A caveat to this is the following. If the respondents did not know how to answer, they may have just checked the “neutral” button. Indeed, this may have been the preferred response by many participants as I have observed Emiratis like to be seen as a neutrally opinionated people in general.
physical appearance.” The survey respondents may have interpreted the statement in the same way that the Odoms-Young participants talked about their appearance. Islam has a modesty code in which followers should cover most of their body. This could equal a “good physical appearance.” In the opinion of the Odoms-Young respondents, Islam thus promotes a physical appearance as defined by wearing appropriate clothing, but this is not the same as the present dissertation definition of physical appearance which involves people’s body fat composition.

Also, Masahiro Toda and Kanehisa Morimoto (2001: 132) explained how prayer in Islam involves movement of the body. One interview respondent explained that prayer in Islam makes healthy blood go to the brain. Also, six interview participants (30%) also mentioned specifically that in Islam it is important to be clean. Every Muslim is supposed to pray five times a day, and before each prayer, they must clean themselves. Therefore, Muslims are generally very clean, which could lead them to having a healthy body. However, what was lacking from the interviews was how the leaders in the Mosques encouraged having a good body. For example, one respondent reported that there was no talk of health or the body inside the Mosque. Another respondent said there was no specific method in the Muslim community for health improvement. He said that the Islamic teachings themselves were advising the people to be healthy (like for example leaving space in one’s stomach empty in order to avoid eating excessively). I cannot generalize that the comments from these two participants means that it is true throughout the entire United Arab Emirates in every mosque. Also, six interview respondents (30%) mentioned that in Islam, people should not do harm. They should not harm their bodies. This means avoiding things that will harm their
bodies. One respondent mentioned that the Qu'ran says that olives are good for the body, but the overall concept is that harmful things should be avoided. However, these issues are worth researching further. I am familiar with some other religiously-based health programs. For example, a certain church may have a fitness festival with fitness games for children and screening for adults and children for diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. These programs happen in the United Arab Emirates, but it seems like according to the participants it is not something organized directly by Mosques or Islamic leaders.

5.4.5 Media

Media was ranked seventh in level of importance according to the survey data. Maggie Wykes and Barrie Gunter discussed how the media has often been the main influence factor in body image research. However, as evidenced by having a ranking of 7 out of 10 influences, this dissertation proffers that in the case of Emirati men, it may not be useful to blame the media for body image dissatisfaction (or even satisfaction). There is a small caveat to this discussion in the next paragraph.

In her research on media and body image, Marika Tiggemann (2014: 127-133) mentioned how some researchers have wanted to introduce warning labels on fashion magazines, but she believes that there still needs to be more research to know if placing a message about negative body image effects on fashion magazines would be effective. In the survey, 21.7% strongly agreed and 44.3% agreed that “advertising is an important source of information about fashion and being attractive.” Therefore, it seems that

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23 This is shown in Table 3 in Chapter 4.
fashion magazines could be an area of intervention for young Emirati men since they mostly agreed that it has been an important influence for them.

5.4.6 Marriage

Marriage was ranked second in importance according to the survey data. The literature shows support for post-marriage weight gain (Wilson 2012 and Lundborg 2007). Forty-five percent of the interview respondents mentioned noticing a gain in men’s weight either close to the marriage date or after marriage. The Bove and Sobal study (2011: 733-734) discussed physical attraction as related to weight in marriage. This topic was brought up many times in this dissertation study. In the focus groups, some defined body image as “being sexy” and “attracting women.” In terms of the survey, for the statement “I think physical attractiveness is necessary in romantic relationships” 75.3% either strongly agreed or agreed. Only 7 participants out of 300 participants strongly disagreed. Eighty percent of the interview participants said that body image is important in marriage. Three participants mentioned about “cheating” in marriage as related to physical appearance. One participant said that you “need to be able to satisfy your partner.” When asking about society as an influence, one participant said, “Guys take care of body 90% to attract a girl and 10% for themselves.” When talking about improving the health of young Emirati men, this same participant said that 30% of marriages in the UAE end in divorce. Fakir Al Gharibeh and Nicole Bromfield (2012: 440, 443, 448) conducted research on divorce in the United Arab Emirates. They found the 2009 divorce rate for each emirate (28.3% in Abu Dhabi, 23.5% in Sharjah, 21.8% in

24 This is shown in Table 3 in Chapter 4.
25 The inference here is that these divorces may be caused by a lack of physical attraction between the husband and wife.
Ras Al Khaimah, 17.5% in Dubai, 4.3% in Ajman, 3.07% in Fujairah, and 1.4% in Um Al Quwain. They stated that it was extremely difficult to elicit the reasons for divorce among Emiratis in the UAE. They only found 4 women willing to do interviews with them. However, they stated one of the reasons for divorce stated by the participants was “male infidelity.” When asked about their physical appearance, 55% of the interview respondents mentioned how they did try to work on their appearance prior to the marriage. One respondent said that he tried to gain weight because he thought he was too thin. The others either talked about losing weight or improving their health and/or physical appearance in general. In one of the focus groups, the participants said, “Women like muscular guys.”

5.4.7 Employment Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as “unjust and prejudicial treatment” (“Discrimination” 2014: 1), but it is unclear from the fieldwork whether the discrimination in the United Arab Emirates based on weight is unjust or not. Occupation was ranked third in the level of importance according to the survey data. Indeed, there was strong agreement overall with the statements: “I believe overweight or obese people have a harder time finding employment.” (62.3% strongly agreed or agreed), “I need to have a good physical appearance for my job.” (72.7% strongly agreed or agreed), and “My occupation requires me to maintain a certain body weight/size.” (62.3% strongly agreed or agreed). However, 65% of the interview respondents said that the military and/or police discriminate because certain heights and weights are required to perform the jobs. A

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26 This is shown in Table 3 in Chapter 4.
smaller percentage (35%) reported that they knew of discrimination outside the military and police.

Mark Roehling (1999: 984) explains the reasoning behind weight discrimination is based on stereotypes not because of inability to perform the functions of a job. However, there was not much evidence in the fieldwork to support these stereotypes. Only two interview participants mentioned that overweight is viewed negatively. Sixteen of the respondents (75%) said that appearance is important in employment (nine of them said in all sectors and seven of them said depending on the job). This might indicate that the discrimination is more internal. The interview respondents may have thought it was important to be good-looking and physically fit even though there was no evidence (either through policies or actions) of actual discrimination taking place. They may have based it more on societal norms. If there was more concrete discrimination in the UAE based on body size, then it might have provided more motivation for Emirati to control their weight. However, the ethics behind these types of policies could be seen as problematic.

5.4.8 Gyms

The gym was the fourth strongest influence on body image attitudes\(^{27}\) according to the survey data. There are different forms of Bourdieuan capital produced in the space of the gym (Stewart, Smith, & Moroney 2012; Crossley 2008; Janssens & Verweel 2014). In the first focus group, some participants said that for young Emirati men the gym is just “for show.” They explained further that these men even eat unhealthy foods but still have to maintain a good shape by training in the gym. They also said that the gyms do

\(^{27}\) This is shown in Table 3 in Chapter 4.
not have aerobic exercises implying that body building is the main focus of the gyms. They also mentioned how young, Emirati men mostly focus on the upper part of the body and do not participate in group classes. In the second focus group, they mentioned that Arnold Schwarzenegger (a well-known celebrity and former body builder) is posted all over the gyms in UAE. In the third focus group, they mentioned how there was no doctor in the gym. In contrast, the survey produced mixed results about the gym. On the statement, “I think the gyms in UAE mostly focus on the health of bodies” only 13.3% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. In other words, the most of the survey participants thought that the gyms did focus on health. On the statement, “The gym is an important source of information about being attractive” 57% of the survey participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. One possible explanation might be that the survey participants equated health with physical attractiveness, but this would still contradict the statements made in the focus groups when they mentioned how some men were having a poor diet but still being physically attractive. On the statement “The trainers in gyms ONLY teach how to have a muscular body.” only a slight majority (52%) strongly agreed. Forty-five percent of the interview participants talked about going to the gym or exercising with their friends. This supports Nick Crossley’s (2008: 485) thesis about the importance of social networking in the gym or health club.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter summarized the fieldwork results and also discussed the findings with relation to the literature and my analyses and observations. Although body image researchers often point to the media as the primary catalyst for attitudes towards body image, the focus group participants believed that Arnold Schwarzenegger's presence in the UAE gyms played a significant role in shaping their attitudes towards body image. The survey results indicated a mixed perception of the gym’s role in promoting health and attractiveness, with a notable difference between the focus groups and the survey participants. The interview participants highlighted the social aspect of the gym, emphasizing the importance of social networking in their gym experiences.
image. I offer a novel explanation that is grounded in the experience of young, Emirati men. Religion, marriage, and occupation are much more salient influences for how young, Emirati men think and feel about their bodies and other people’s bodies than the media. The most interesting and surprising finding of the fieldwork was the predicament that most young, Emirati men were satisfied with their bodies but approximately half were engaging in unhealthy behaviors, such as eating fast food and refraining from exercising in a gym. This is useful for the conclusion chapter when I discuss obesity intervention recommendations. An Emirati may not get a job because he does not have a certain size of body. There was some evidence of this phenomenon, as the military and police have weight requirements. The results showed that 26.7% of the sample was in the military, police, or firefighter sector. This was the category with the largest percentage. Therefore, this is a significant finding as it relates to one quarter of the young, Emirati male population.

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29 This is shown in Table 2 in Chapter 4.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the dissertation with a synthesis of the findings as answers to the original research questions. The findings are tempered by listing my limitations. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the research in light of the findings and their support of my endeavors.

6.2 Synthesis of Findings

As established in the introduction and agreed upon by the participants\(^\text{10}\), obesity is a problem in the United Arab Emirates. The research in this dissertation led to a discovery of which factors are likely to speak directly to young Emirati men in the most relevant way to address the problem of obesity in the UAE. The three factors with highest importance were religion, marriage, and occupation. The other factors (gym, friends, family, media, region, fashion, and technology) are also influences on the body image attitudes of young Emirati men, but they may not have as strong an effect on body weight management as messages about religion, marriage, and employment would. Thinking about this logically, it makes sense. All Emirati men have the same religion. I have observed that most Emirati men eventually get married, and most of them acquire employment at some point (62.3% of the survey sample was working at the time of the study). The other influences have less consistency among young, Emirati men. For example, the participants seemed to have different friend and family dynamics. Even fashion varied among the participants. According to the survey, 19.3% of the

\(^{10}\) All the interview participants were asked if obesity is a problem, and nineteen out of the twenty participants said affirmatively that obesity is a problem
participants were not wearing the *candora* every day. One of the interview participants mentioned that Emiratis often do not wear the *candora* when they go abroad. In contrast, it seems age and family income were not influences on body image attitudes. Age is a difficult category, as the study had specific age parameters. Therefore, there was no comparison group composed of older Emiratis as they were purposefully excluded from the study. As the results chapter reported, 60% of the interview respondents thought that family income had little or no effect on body image. As presented and discussed in the results and discussion chapters, the qualitative questions about how the factors influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not were not very consistent. This was in the latter part of the interview, and in the interest of time, each respondent gave brief answers that went in many different directions. Therefore, it was of limited use to this dissertation.

In the introduction chapter, there were also other factors mentioned as research questions (society and consumer culture). However, these were not included in the survey as they were either too difficult to make into specific understandable questions or did not seem to hold resonance with the focus group participants. Society was included in the interview question, but the responses were so diverse that it was hard to extract any meaningful theme. Consumer culture was a very broad concept that could not be simplified for the purposes of surveying and interviewing the participants.
6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Policies

I recommend using the findings from this dissertation for policies, programs, and interventions that will benefit the United Arab Emirates. With an agreement score of 1.79599, religion was the most important factor influencing the body image of young Emirati men. A close second was marriage with an agreement score of 1.89298. The third top factor influencing the body image of young Emirati men was occupation with an agreement score of 2.17140. How can these body image factors of religion, marriage, and occupation be used to influence a positive body image for young, Emirati men? The discussion chapter revealed a majority of the participants having had satisfaction with their bodies despite the negative health behaviors and overweight body average. Therefore, a positive body image may have already been achieved with most young Emirati men. If this is the case, then new obesity interventions should focus primarily on changing behaviors to ensure that young Emirati men achieve a healthy weight and maintain that throughout their lives.

As relayed in the discussion chapter, the interview participants identified methods to improve the health of young Emirati men such as governmental interventions, media campaigns, and school-based programs. What should be the content of these intervention campaigns? This is where the analysis of the body image attitudes becomes important. Since religion, marriage, and occupation are the top three factors, then the intervention language should incorporate values related to these issue areas. The following are example recommendations based on the body image attitude factors.
1. Religion: There should be messages about eating healthy food and exercising as dictated by Islamic teachings. Both Khuri (2001: 51) and six respondents mentioned the importance of avoiding harm to one’s body. The campaign authors can work with Islamic scholars to make sure the messaging is accurate and appropriate. The mosque may be a new venue with which to disseminate information, but more research on the policies of the religious leaders and the government are needed in order to establish whether that is possible in a UAE context or not.

2. Marriage: Post-marriage weight gain has been identified as an issue by some of the participants; therefore, campaigns could target young Emirati men and encourage them to continue to keep a healthy weight in order to have a healthy marriage. The Marriage Fund is a United Arab Emirates government organization whose vision is to build strong Emirati families for the betterment of society. They have an awareness program for Emirati couples who are planning to marry as well as couples who are already married. They conduct seminars on different topics. One of the topics is how to deal with problems in the marriage (“Marriage Fund” 2016). The Marriage Fund could potentially benefit from this dissertation research if they use the data in their seminars.

3. Employment: There could be a campaign tailored to young Emirati men looking for employment with messages about being physically fit in order to be appealing to companies who are hiring. The workplace is definitely a place where health education and the encouragement of a healthy lifestyle already exists and can expand in the future. That was why I asked
specifically about how employers can encourage having a good body. Those suggestions have already been summarized in the results chapter.

Intervention campaigns about the harm of fast food and educating about obesity in general could also be useful. The above recommendations are not an exhaustive list of intervention strategies that the United Arab Emirates could employ to address the problem of obesity. However, these interventions make the most sense given the context of this research. Another approach to curb obesity prevalence could be laws that make fast food and other junk food either more expensive or less accessible to young, Emirati men. However, given the relative economic stability of the young, Emirati male population, this may not be an effective deterrent.

There should be testing and evaluation of these proposed intervention strategies. For example, researchers could select an experimental group and expose them to messages about weight loss as related to their Islamic faith. The researchers should also have a control group that is not exposed to the religious messages. Then the researchers will compare over time if the experimental group has greater weight loss than the control group. The same study could be replicated using messages about marriage.

Also, the intervention studies should advocate positive methods of weight maintenance. For example, the studies should address the use of steroids among Emirati males and try to have them replace this negative behavior with a positive method of body-building.
6.3.2 Future Research

As mentioned above, there should be formative and evaluative research done as part of the intervention programs. Doing research before and after the intervention could help to ensure its effectiveness and also that it can be replicated successfully. Also, the United Arab Emirates needs more research measuring the extent of obesity in the UAE among Emiratis, not just from the emirate of Abu Dhabi. This can help in many areas of research, not just body image and intervention studies because obesity is a medical, public health, and social problem. There should also be more research on the body image of Emiratis, both men and women. They should be population-wide studies and not just in university and/or school settings.

In the literature review section on marriage and the body, I identified how the studies were all done in Western countries. This dissertation discovered how marriage is an important factor in body image among young, Emirati men. This provides ample justification for further studies looking at the relationship of marriage and body weight. Research on a population-wide scale could provide more explanation of this phenomenon.

In the literature review section, there was research cited about social capital that is built within the gym. For example, Nick Crossley (2008: 475) argued that friendships formed through gym membership both encouraged people to go to the gym and to exercise harder while in the gym. This is an interesting avenue of research that could be replicated with young, Emirati men as the target population. There could be ethnographic research examining the networks of young, Emirati men who go to the gym and what kind of friendships are formed there (if any) and how they may impact
gym attendance and physical exertion while inside the gym. There should also be more research about the kind of exercise that happens in gym. Do most Emirati men only do exercises to attain a muscular physique ("body-building") and thus do not spend time on cardiovascular exercises? Do they split their time equally between these forms of exercises? The social capital research could also be done in football clubs, as I have observed that this is a popular sport in the United Arab Emirates.

The media is a comprehensive and multifaceted influence. More research is needed to identify the differences among different forms of media and body image. The present dissertation was not sophisticated enough to determine any nuanced understandings about media. For example, social media has many different platforms. Constantly, there are new ones becoming popular, and they each carry varied experiences. Focusing on media and body image among the young Emirati population would make a fascinating study.

There should also be more research on the various technologies used by Emiratis with regards to weight maintenance and body building. For example, there were questions on the survey about steroids, supplements, and bariatric/cosmetic surgeries. However, the survey asked about their attitudes. Future studies could assess how widespread is the use of these technologies and how the technologies are evolving over time. Since these are sensitive topics, they should be treated with care and discretion.

6.4 Limitations and Delimitations
There are few limitations in this study. I am a foreigner who has only lived in the United Arab Emirates for five years. Therefore, my understanding of the cultures, traditions,
and views are nascent. A distinct weakness was non-fluency in the native language of
the Emirati people (Arabic). I relied on the help of assistants to act as an interpreter
during the surveys and interviews. The focus groups were conducted solely in English.
Emiratis who are fluent in English may have a higher education than the general
population of Emiratis, and therefore, it presents a bias towards more educated Emiratis
by focusing on obtaining qualitative data mostly in the English language.

As mentioned earlier, the focus of the fieldwork was on Emirati men between the
ages of 18 and 29. The research was conducted only within the borders of the United
Arab Emirates. There were no participants recruited who were living or visiting outside
of the UAE at the time of the study. Part of the reason that I excluded women from the
samples is because I thought it would be difficult to talk to Emirati women as I am a
man. Similarly, I avoided approaching couples (man and woman) and families. I thought
it would look inappropriate in the public eye, even though the purpose was for academic
research. The study was a cross-sectional design and thus cannot establish causality. The
sampling was thus not completely random. Additionally, I relied on self-report of height
and weight of the participants rather than measuring them himself, which could have
provided a more accurate measure.

6.5 Research Success
To sum up, this dissertation has opened a window on the thoughts and feelings of young,
Emirati men with regards to their bodies and the bodies of others using both etic and
emic approaches. This dissertation contributes new knowledge to the academy. It
focused on men which is different than most of the literature on body image. It was done
in many public settings which was different than many studies produced here in the
Arabian Gulf region. It utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve the aims of the study. It covered all seven emirates which is different than many other studies in the United Arab Emirates which focus only on one city or emirate.

Many obesity interventions think simply educating the public is the key to weight maintenance. Someone can lead a horse to water, but that person cannot make him drink. Similarly, the intervention organizers can give the information to the population about healthy eating and exercise, but that alone may not be enough to achieve the health outcomes. This is why both structure and agency combined were chosen as the theoretical framework. This dissertation sought to understand the subjects themselves and how they think and feel about their bodies. With this new knowledge about their attitudes, I contend that these interventions possess a better chance of appealing to the young, Emirati male population. Emirati men have a rich cultural and religious heritage. I hope that they will also attain a better health status in the future.
Bibliography


Appendix 1 – Glossary

Attitude

The operational definition of body image in this dissertation is purposefully a neutral definition (meaning that there is neither assumed negativity nor positivity). Some people may have a “poor” body image meaning that they are not happy with their current body. These thoughts and feelings could be labeled as positive or negative depending on the context. If researchers find the source of the thoughts and feelings, then they can develop interventions that will intercept at the nexus of influence and thoughts and feelings. Using the word, “attitude” helps to distinguish body image from previous studies as a new concept that is explored in this dissertation. Attitude takes into account that the target population has thoughts and opinions about subjects that in and of themselves are not directly related to the body but could potentially have an impact on body image.

Behavior

This dissertation applies the operational definition of behavior as the following. It encompasses the practices that the target population does themselves and also observes being done related to the body. An example that is listed on the survey questionnaire is “Do you eat fast food?” This is clearly an action that the participant either does or does not do.

Body Image

This work uses the operational definition of body image, which is the “way that people think and feel about their body and the bodies of other people.”
**Body Mass Index**

Within the metric system, the body mass index is calculated by dividing the weight in kilograms by the squared height in meters. Thus, \( \text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight (kg)}}{\text{[height(m)]}^2} \). If someone has a BMI below 18.5, s/he is considered underweight. If someone has a BMI between 18.6 and 24.9, s/he is considered normal weight. If someone has a BMI between 25.0 and 29.9, then s/he is considered overweight. Any BMI of 30 or above is considered obese. (Centers for Disease Control 2014: 1).

**Obesity**

This dissertation uses the definition of obese as a person who has a body mass index score of 30 or above, as described in the definition of body mass index.
Appendix 2 – Questions

Focus Group Questions

1. Do you and your friends discuss body issues in general? If so, what are some of the topics discussed?

2. Do you and your family discuss weight issues in general? If so, what are some of the topics discussed?

3. When I say “body image,” what does that mean to you?

4. Based on your definition, what things influence body image in UAE society?

5. Is family an influence on body image?

6. Are friends an influence on body image?

7. Is the media an influence on body image?

8. Is fashion an influence on body image?

9. Is marital status an influence on body image?

10. Are there any other influences that you can think of on body image?
Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ-3)

Please read each of the following items carefully and indicate the number that best reflects your agreement with the statement.

- **Definitely Disagree = 1**
- **Mostly Disagree = 2**
- **Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3**
- **Mostly Agree = 4**
- **Definitely Agree = 5**

1. TV programs are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." ______
2. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to lose weight. ______
3. I do not care if my body looks like the body of people who are on TV. ______
4. I compare my body to the bodies of people who are on TV. ______
5. TV commercials are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." ______
6. I do not feel pressure from TV or magazines to look pretty. ______
7. I would like my body to look like the models who appear in magazines. ______
8. I compare my appearance to the appearance of TV and movie stars. ______
9. Music videos on TV are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." ______
10. I've felt pressure from TV and magazines to be thin. ______
11. I would like my body to look like the people who are in movies. ______
12. I do not compare my body to the bodies of people who appear in magazines. ______
13. Magazine articles are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." ______
14. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to have a perfect body. ______
15. I wish I looked like the models in music videos. ______
16. I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in magazines. ______
17. Magazine advertisements are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." ______
18. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to diet. ______
19. I do not wish to look as athletic as the people in magazines.
20. I compare my body to that of people in "good shape."
21. Pictures in magazines are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive."
22. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to exercise.
23. I wish I looked as athletic as sports stars.
24. I compare my body to that of people who are athletic.
25. Movies are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive."
26. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to change my appearance.
27. I do not try to look like the people on TV.
28. Movie stars are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive."
29. Famous people are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive."
30. I try to look like sports athletes.
My Survey Questions

1. Background Information

1. Which emirate are you from? (Please check one)
   - Abu Dhabi
   - Dubai
   - Sharjah
   - Ajman
   - Ras Al Khaimah
   - Fujairah
   - Umm Al Quwain

2. Are you from a rural or urban area? (Please check one)
   - Rural
   - Urban

3. What is your age? (Please check one)
   - 18
   - 19
   - 20
   - 21
   - 22
   - 23
   - 24
   - 25
   - 26
   - 27
   - 28
   - 29

4. What is your height? ________ centimeters

5. What is your weight? ________ kilograms

6. Are you a student now? (Please check one)
   - Yes
   - No

7. If yes, are you on scholarship? (Please check one)
8. What is the highest level of education you have finished? (Please check one)
   - Primary school
   - High school
   - College
   - Masters
   - PhD

9. Are you working now? (Please check one)
   - Yes
   - No

10. If yes, what is your job?

11. What is your salary? (Please check one)
    - 10,000 dirhams or less per month
    - 10,001 – 19,999 dirhams per month
    - 20,000 – 39,999 dirhams per month
    - 40,000 – 49,999 dirhams per month
    - 50,000 dirhams or more per month

12. What is your marital status? (Please check one)
    - Single/Never Married
    - Married
    - Divorced
    - Widowed

13. What is the highest level of education your father has finished? (Please check one)
    - None
    - Primary school
    - High School
    - College
    - Masters
    - PhD

14. What is the highest level of education your mother has finished? (Please check one)
    - None
    - Primary school
High School
College
Masters
PhD

15. What is your *family* income? (Please check one)
- 10,000 dirhams or less per month
- 10,001 – 19,999 dirhams per month
- 20,000 – 39,999 dirhams per month
- 40,000 – 49,999 dirhams per month
- 50,000 dirhams or more per month

16. What is your *mother’s* employment status? (Please check one)
- Self-employed
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Housewife

17. What is your *father’s* employment status? (Please check one)
- Self-employed
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Retired
2. **Attitudes**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Religion**
1. I focus on my appearance during the Holy Month of Ramadan more than any other time of the year
2. My religion encourages me to have a good physical appearance.
3. I believe it is pleasing to Allah to look good.

**Occupation**
4. I believe overweight or obese people have a harder time finding employment.
5. I need to have a good physical appearance for my job.
6. My occupation requires me to maintain a certain body weight/size.
7. I will be more successful in my career if I am physically attractive.

**Regional**
8. The young, Emirati men with the best bodies live in Dubai.
9. I compare my appearance to the appearance of young Emirati men in other cities in the UAE.
10. Coastal people and land-based people in UAE think differently about their bodies.

**Friends**
11. I compare my appearance to the appearance of my friends.
12. My friends take good care of their bodies.
13. My friends and I talk about physical appearance frequently.

**Technology**
14. I think surgery is a good way to lose weight.
15. I like to put my body on display in Blackberry Messenger (BBM), Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and/or some other form of social media.

16. I think protein supplements are a good way to improve the way men's bodies look.

17. I think hormones/steroids are a good way to improve the way men's bodies look.

**Gyms**

18. I think the gyms in UAE mostly focus on the health of bodies.

19. The gym is an important source of information about being attractive.

20. The trainers in gyms *only* teach how to have a muscular body.

**Fashion**

21. I wish I looked like the models in advertisements.

22. I enjoy wearing clothes that show off my body.

23. I look better in loose-fitting clothing.

**Family**

24. I compare my appearance to the appearance of my family members.

25. My family members take good care of their bodies.

26. My parent(s) think I should lose weight.

**Marital**

27. I think it is more important to take care of one's physical appearance before marriage.

28. I think physical attractiveness is necessary in romantic relationships.

29. Most people start gaining weight after they marry.

**Media**

30. I would like my body to look like the actors in action movies.

31. Advertising is an important source of information about fashion and being attractive.
32. I compare my body to the bodies of Arabic singers.

Practices

1. Do you eat fast food? (Please check one)
   - Yes
   - No

2. If yes, how often? (Please check one)
   - Every day
   - Several times per week
   - 1-2 times per week
   - Few times per month

3. Do you often eat past 10 pm at night? (Please check one)
   - Yes
   - No

4. How often do you wear the traditional ـارتداد/dishdasha? (Please check one)
   - Every day
   - Several times per week
   - 1-2 times per week
   - Few times per month
   - Never

5. Most of the time do you wear....? (Please check one)
   - Tight-fitting clothes
   - Loose-fitting clothes

6. How physically active are you? (Please check one)
   - I rarely or never do any physical activities
   - Light, e.g., walking, nonstrenuous bicycling, or gardening approximately once per week
   - Moderate: regular activity at least once per week, e.g., walking, bicycling, gardening, or walking to work 10-30 minutes per day
   - Heavy: regular activities more than once per week, e.g., intense walking, bicycling, or sports

7. Do you go to a gym? (Please check one)
   - Yes
8. If yes, how often? (Please check one)
   □ Every day
   □ Several times per week
   □ 1-2 times per week
   □ Few times per month

9. Do you go to the beach? (Please check one)
   □ Yes
   □ No

10. If yes, do you wear a swimsuit? (Please check one)
    □ Yes
    □ No

11. Are you satisfied with your body? (Please check one)
    □ Yes
    □ No
Interview Questions

Introductory

1. What’s your age?
2. What do/did you study in school?
3. Are you working? If so, in what field are you working?
4. How do you spend your time when you’re not working?
5. Are you married? If so, how long? Do you have any children? If so, how many?

Body Image

1. What does body image mean to you?
2. How important is appearance to you?
3. Are you happy with your current weight? Why or why not?
4. How do you compare your body with other bodies?

Religion

According to the survey, religion was the category with the strongest influence on body image.

1. How does your religion influence the way look at your body image?
2. What does Islam say about the body?
3. How does Islam encourage you and others like you to have a good body?

Marriage

According to the survey, a close second for strongest influence on body image was marriage.

1. How did/do you prepare yourself for marriage?
2. Do you think body image is important to marriage? Why or why not?

Occupation

According to the survey, the third strongest influence on body image was occupation.
1. How important do you think appearance is in employment?

2. Do you think some young Emirati men are discriminated against in getting a job because of their body weight?

3. How do or how can employers encourage having a good body?

**Other Factors**

1. How does family influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

2. How do friends influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

3. How does which emirate you are from influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

4. How does technology and social media influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

5. How does media influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

6. How does society influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

7. How does fashion influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

8. How does age influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

9. How does family income influence whether a young Emirati male has a healthy weight or not?

**Obesity interventions**

1. Do you think obesity is a problem in the UAE?

2. How do you think body image is related to obesity?

3. What do you think can be done to improve the health of young Emirati men?
Appendix 3 – Consent Forms

Consent Form for Focus Groups

United Arab Emirates University

Researcher(s): Rick Hoffman, MPA, under the guidance of advisory committee, Dr. El-Sayed El-Aswad (Chair), Dr. Aqil Kazim, and Dr. Fatma Al Meskari

Study Title: A Sociological Analysis of the Body Image Attitudes of Young Emirati Men

1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?
This form is called a Consent Form. This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate and any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. I encourage you to take some time to think this over and ask questions now and at any other time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy for your records.

2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?
Subjects are limited to male citizens of the United Arab Emirates between the ages of 18 to 29 who are current students at the United Arab Emirates University.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The purpose of this study is to determine what attitudes young Emirati men have about body image.

4. WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?
The study will take place in the United Arab Emirates for a period of 3-4 months. The focus group session will last between 1 to 1.5 hours.

5. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?
If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to take part in a focus group. The focus group will consist of a series of questions from the researcher. The participants will be expected to discuss and debate the questions amongst themselves. The researcher will only intervene if the discussion becomes too irrelevant or if someone says something offensive to other participants.
6. WHAT ARE MY BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?
You may not directly benefit from this research; however, it is the researcher's sincere hope that your participation in the study may advance knowledge about this topic.

7. WHAT ARE MY RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?
There are no known risks associated with this research study; however, a possible inconvenience may be the time it takes to complete the study.

8. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?
Please be advised that although the researcher will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

9. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
The researcher is happy to answer any question(s) you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem after the focus group session, you may contact the researcher, Rick Hoffman, at 971-55-660-2652 or rhoffman@uae.ac.ae

10. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?
You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

11. WHAT IF I AM INJURED?
The United Arab Emirates University does not have a program for compensating subjects for injury or complications related to human subject research, but the study personnel will assist you in getting treatment.

12. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT
When signing this form I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I use and understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed Informed Consent Form has been given to me.
☐ I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the focus group session.

☐ If you cannot agree to the above stipulation please see the researcher(s) as you may be ineligible to participate in this study.

Participant Signature:  Print Name:  Date:

By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  Print Name:  Date:
Participant Information Sheet for Survey

Study Title: Obesity: A Sociological Analysis of the Body Image Attitudes of Young Emirati Men

Researcher:
Mr. Rick Hoffman

Dear Participant,

The purpose of this study is to determine what attitudes young Emirati men have about body image. By participating in this study you are helping to advance knowledge about this topic.

I confirm that participation in this study is optional and voluntary. If you choose not to participate, please be assured that your decision will not affect anything, and I maintain your right to withdraw from the study at any point in time. If you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire either on an iPad or on paper. The questionnaire consists of questions related to your background, your attitudes, and your practices. The questionnaire will last approximately 10-15 minutes.

For further information, please contact:

Rick Hoffman (055 6602652 or rhoffman@uaeu.ac.ae)
Consent Form for Survey

Study Title: Obesity: A Sociological Analysis of the Body Image Attitudes of Young Emirati Men

Researcher: Rick Hoffman

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

3. I understand that if I withdraw from the study it will not adversely affect me.

4. I understand that my data will be kept confidential and in a safe place.

5. I agree I will take part in the above study.

| Name of participant | Date | Signature |
Participant Information Sheet for Interviews

Study Title: Obesity: A Sociological Analysis of the Body Image Attitudes of Young Emirati Men

Researcher: Mr. Rick Hoffman

Dear Participant,

The purpose of this study is to determine how young Emirati men’s attitudes about body image affect their behavior. By participating in this study you are helping to advance knowledge about this topic.

I confirm that participation in this study is optional and voluntary. If you choose not to participate, please be assured that your decision will not affect anything, and I maintain your right to withdraw from the study at any point in time. If you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an in depth interview. The interview consists of questions and discussion related to your background, your attitudes, and your practices. The interview will last approximately one hour to one hour and a half.

For further information, please contact:

Rick Hoffman (055 6602652 or rhoffman@uae.ac.ae)
Consent Form for Interviews

Study Title: Obesity: A Sociological Analysis of the Body Image Attitudes of Young Emirati Men

Researcher: Rick Hoffman

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Name of participant  Date  Signature