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# Opening the Public Space: Hijab and Education in Iran and Turkey

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# Opening the Public Space: Hijab and Education in Iran and Turkey

Kaitlin Kelly-Thompson

The Islamic Republic of Iran's (IRI) treatment of women since its establishment in 1979 has been used both to critique and support the regime. Debates concerning the rights of women in Iran often focus on the oppressive nature of the regime vis-à-vis women, due to policies that enforce Islamic morality such as the requirement of hijab and the segregation of the sexes. However, within these debates some argue that while the hijab has had a controversial impact on women's lives and position in society, under the IRI the public space may have opened to women from conservative backgrounds. Essentially, those who argue for this positive affect of the state's Islamist ideology assert that conservative families are more likely to allow their daughters involvement in the pursuit of higher education and involvement in the public space with the 'protection' of the veil. This raises the question of whether or not conservative women have become more active in the public space since the creation of the Islamic Republic.

Before the establishment of the IRI, the state's treatment of women's dress more closely resembled Turkey, where western dress is required for university students, lawyers, journalists, teachers and state employees. After the establishment of the IRI in 1979 these two states' policies concerning veiling diverged; in Iran veiling became compulsory while in Turkey the headscarf ban was strictly enforced after the 1980 Military Coup (Afary 1996; Carkoglu 2010; Bahramitash 2003; Hoodfar 1993; Ramazani 1993; Shahidian 1993; Zahedi 2007). The historic similarities and the divergence in policy after 1979 make Iran and Turkey an ideal natural experiment when addressing how differences in state ideology can affect women's public participation. However, these differing policies do not necessarily translate to substantive differences in women's position within society. In fact the most recent Global Gender Gap Report ranked Turkey 124 and Iran 127 (Hausmann, Tyson, Zahidi 2012). When analyzing the

data on women's involvement in the economy, education, and politics in Iran and Turkey, the Global Gender Gap Report found relatively similar levels of inequality in both states with the largest differences existing in labor force participation, enrolment in secondary education, political empowerment, the number of women in parliament and the number of women in ministerial positions (Hausmann, Tyson, Zahidi 2012).<sup>1</sup> The similarities in women's position in both states, despite differences between the secular and religious ideology, indicate that Turkey is a natural control case when compared to the IRI allowing for the use of a natural experiment to test how women have been affected by the religious-oriented policies of the IRI.

In order to understand the importance of regime ideology as a part of women's experience in the public sphere in Iran and Turkey, it is necessary to recognize the historic and the contemporary experience of veiling in both of these states. In particular it is important to address how the veil became a politicized symbol of modern and traditional values in the Middle East, as well as the complex meanings attached to the practice. In order to understand the context of the veil, I will first address the current literature concerning the relationship between the veil and women's experience in both Iran and Turkey. Through my analysis of the literature I will focus on the issue of veiling, women as symbolic representations of state ideology and how this affects women's participation in the public space. I will trace the connection between veiling and state ideology by addressing the experience of unveiling under Ataturk and Muhammed Reza Shah and the present day issues of compulsory veiling in Iran and the headscarf ban in Turkey.

My review of the current literature will be followed by a quantitative analysis comparing the effects of religiosity on women's educational achievement in Iran and Turkey. This statistical model will compare the effect of measures of religiosity, age, socio-economic position, and

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<sup>1</sup> See index Table 1

patriarchal views on the educational achievement of women in both Iran and Turkey. For my model I will use the World Values Survey Data from the 2005 wave of data collection. Using this model and the information on levels of religiosity and educational achievement I will assess whether or not young conservative women (women with high indicators of religiosity born after the foundation of the IRI) in Iran have better access to education than young conservative women in Turkey. I believe that by addressing this matter we will be able to gain insight into the effects of secular and religious policy on conservative women's experience in Iran and Turkey, as well as the opportunities for the improvement of women's position in both states.

### **The Practice of Veiling**

In order to understand the connection between state ideology and the regulation of women's action it is necessary to address how women's dress is politicized and used as a symbol of the state in both a secular and religious context (White 2003). Historically in both Iran and Turkey, the veil and policies towards veiling have displayed the importance of women as symbols for the nation. While the issue of veiling is directly linked to Islamic practice, there are only two Quranic verses tied to veiling (Hoodfar 1993). The first verse states that women must cover their bosoms, necks and jewels while the second states that the wives of Muhammed should wrap their cloaks around themselves when they exit the home in order to distinguish themselves from the rest of society (Hoodfar 1993). Furthermore, veiling has not always been an integral part of Islamic practice, particularly in Iran where veiling did not become a part of mainstream religious practice until the Safavid era (Ahmad 2006; Hoodfar 1993; Zahedi 2007).

In practice the veil has many different meanings beyond its religious implications. Homa Hoodfar notes in her analysis of women's use of the veil in Iran and Canada, that in practice women use the veil to demonstrate piety, respect, identity as well as differences between the

public and private sphere (Hoodfar 1993). These implications of the veil in the political sphere and the different meanings it has accrued overtime are critical when understanding how there could be a case for compulsory veiling as a way to open the public sphere for conservative women.

### **The Veil and Westernization**

Addressing western biases and their impact on the modernization process in both states is important when conceptualizing the question of the relationship between the veil and state ideology. Western interest in the veil began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as the Ottoman Empire began to decline in comparison to the West (Ahmad 2006; Hoodfar 1993). During this period western writers link the image of the veiled women, women's oppression and the backwardness of the region (Hoodfar 1993). This view of the veil encouraged the westernized elite's promotion of unveiling as a part of the modernizing process and politicized the veil (Hoodfar 1993, Zahedi 2007). Policies promoting unveiling polarized society between secular and religious forces, and the religious opposition criticized the secular elite for being too western and lacking roots in their native culture (Ahmad 2006). The westernized elite's acceptance of the biased view against the veil turned the regulation of the practice of veiling into an important issue in both Turkish and Iranian politics.

Within the scholarship, there is a discussion on the issue of the veil and contemporary western bias when interpreting veiling that must be taken into account. According to Hoodfar, in the west the veil is still viewed as a symbol of oppression or as a symbol of a passive womanhood in the contemporary period (1993). In fact, Hoodfar finds that in Canada active and feminist women wearing veils are treated either as contradictions or their white feminist counterparts are unable to accept their contributions to the struggle for women's equality

(Hoodfar 1993). This biased view of the veil makes it hard to conceptualize the veil as anything other than a symbol of conservative religiosity that is opposed to women's rights and freedom. Therefore, it is important to address this bias and look beyond the image of passive veiled woman by addressing women's actual experience. Furthermore, in Iran and Turkey the role of the veil and conservative women in politics complicates this perception of veiled women in the west.

### **Women's Bodies and the State**

In the 1930's the association between de-veiling, modernization, and state ideology led to concrete policies in Iran and Turkey. In both states veiling was outlawed in order to present the image of a modern woman and modern nation in line with western norms (Afary 1996; Etoz 2003; Hoodfar 1993; Zahedi 2007). In both states outlawing the veil associated women's clothing choices with the competition between secular and religious forces for control of the national discourse (Afary 1996; Hoodfar 1993). Through these debates, the veiled woman became a symbol of backwardness and tradition while the unveiled woman became the symbol of modernity (Zahedi 2007). This turned women into symbols of the state instead of citizens of the state, limiting their roles as actors in the political sphere (Hoodfar 1993). Zeliha Etoz goes so far as to argue that the image of the unveiled modern woman is key to the understanding the modernization process in Turkey under Kemal Ataturk in the 1920's and 1930's (2003). This connection between women's dress and the presentation of the national image is key for understanding how state ideology can be linked to the treatment of women in both Iran and Turkey.

The connection between state ideology and the regulation of women's bodies continues in the contemporary period. For Ashraf Zahedi, the role of women's clothing choice as a

symbolic representation of the state was not limited to the Pahlavi period but has also played an important role in the presentation of the ideal image of the state under the Islamic Republic of Iran (2007). Similarly, in present Turkey, Ayse Guveli finds that the headscarf ban aims to present an image of the model Turkish woman as unveiled, modern, and secular (2011). However, it is important to note that both forced veiling and unveiling present women as symbols of the state, and the presentation of women as liberated has not been historically linked to substantive changes in women's position within society (Afary 1996; Bahramitash 2003; Etoz 2003; Shahidian 1991). Therefore, despite the differences in state ideology it is clear that in both states women's dress continues to be an important symbol of the state, indicating that differences in state ideology can and do effect women on a daily basis.

Most importantly in both Turkey and Iran the presentation of the veil as a symbol of modernization politicized the veil and opened debates concerning the correct role of the veil in public life. The importance of the veil in connection to national identity can be seen in the split that occurs between Turkish and Iranian national ideology and policy concerning the veil in the 1980's. Before the Iranian Revolution both states were based on secular national identities and had softened their positions on the veil. However with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the 1980 Military Coup in Turkey, ideology and policy in each state took divergent paths. In Iran the new Islamist regime required the veil while in Turkey the military began to enforce the headscarf ban in universities and for certain professions more vigilantly (Afary 1996; Carkoglu 2010; Bahramitash 2003; Hoodfar 1993; Ramazani 1993; Shahidian 1993; Zahedi 2007). However, despite these differences in the regulation of women's dress both states have similar levels of women's equality in terms of employment levels, political participation, and women's health (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi 2012). Therefore when addressing the affects of



Islamist policy on women in Iran, Turkey is an ideal control case due to the similar experience of the imposition of secular ideology in the 1930's, the strengthening of Turkey's secular identity in the early 1980's, and the similar position of women in both states in the contemporary period.

### **The Veil and Women's Public Life in Iran**

When discussing the effects of state ideology through the veil in public life, it is important to address both the experiences of Iranian women with forced de-veiling and compulsory veiling. Before the Pahlavi era an Iranian women's autonomy within the family was exercised by running errands, creating social networks outside of the family at the baths, and seeking employment, primarily in the textile industry (Hoodfar 1993). These methods of autonomous action were affected by de-veiling. In 1936 Reza Shah outlawed the use of the veil in order to promote the modernization of Iran (Afary 1996; Hoodfar 1993; Zahedi 2007). Under Reza Shah, the police strictly enforced this law by removing women's veils in public. This enforcement practice was problematic and created anxiety for women who viewed the removal of the veil as nakedness (Zahedi 2007).

As a result of this anxiety, women who viewed wearing the veil as essential for public life were unable to perform their normal tasks outside of the home (Hoodfar 1993, Zahedi 2007). Therefore, by forcing de-veiling the Shah did not empower Iranian women. Instead the Shah's policies reinforced gender inequality by giving men more power over women because they had to depend on men for their basic needs, from normal household errands to being able to go to the baths (Hoodfar 1993). Furthermore, de-veiling created limitations on traditional women's ability to pursue education and women were forced to find creative ways to adhere to religious codes for modesty without wearing a veil, such as wearing a wig or hat (Hoodfar 1993; Zahedi 2007). Clearly this policy of forced de-veiling did not necessarily open the public sphere to women, and

instead may have removed some of the autonomy traditional women already enjoyed in Iranian society.

Moreover, secular ideology and modernization did not necessarily translate into the liberation of women under the Pahlavi regime and women's interaction with the public sphere remained limited. In fact, Reza Shah and Muhammed Reza Shah were in favor of the traditional division of labor between the sexes and repressed female activists (Afary 1996; Bahramitash 2003; Shahidian 1991). Particularly the Pahlavi's education policy, like their policy towards the veil, was meant to symbolize modernization and did not increase women's autonomy (Afary 1996; Shaditalab 2005; Shahidian 1991; Shavarini 2006; Zahedi 2007). In addition, while many of the upper and middle class women enjoyed increased educational opportunities, this was not necessarily the case for lower class women (Afary 1996). In fact, the modernization program created a gap between the educational achievements of rural and urban women (Afary 1996; Shaditalab 2005; Shahidian 1991; Shavarini 2006; Zahedi 2007). This is reflected in the issues with women's employment, as there were vast differences in the role of urban women and rural women in the work force (Bahramitash 2003, Shaditalab 2005). This indicates that these actions were symbolic; instead of addressing the lack of education for all women the policies helped a visible minority while maintaining traditional values among the majority. Therefore, it is clear that a secular ideology under the Pahlavi's was not synonymous with a support for women's issues despite its interest in displaying Iranian women as symbols of the state's modernity.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's treatment of women reflects the IRI's explicit opposition to the legacy and ideology of the Pahlavi regime. When establishing the new regime the IRI attempted to create a new ideal Iranian woman who adhered to traditional values creating an opportunity for the return of traditional Iranian women to the public sphere (Afary 1996; Mehran

1999; Ramazani 1993; Shaditalab 2005; Zahedi 2007). The creation of this ideal led to the rolling back of many of the rights women gained under Pahlavi regime, such as the Family Protection Law, and the creation of new restrictions on women such as the segregation of the sexes in public, limitations on the subjects women could study at university, and compulsory hijab (Afary 1996; Bahramitash 2003; Hoodfar 1993; Ramazani 1993; Shahidian 1993; Zahedi 2007). Additionally, women have been limited in the arts, their ability to present inventions, as well as their pursuit of academic careers due to limitations on their ability to travel and study abroad (Shahidian 1991). These actions to reassert traditional gender norms create the perception that the IRI is decidedly regressive in its view of women's roles within society.

The importance of symbols within this reassertion of gender norms can be seen through the treatment of the veil. Within the debate concerning women's position and role in society, the veil has become both a representation of women's virtue as well as a visible way for women to challenge the regime (Ramazani 1993, Shahidian 1991, Zahedi 2007). For the regime this means that, particularly in the field of education, there is a focus on the need to enforce the dress code to ensure morality at universities (Shahidian 1991). Overall, the restrictions of women's action and the need to ensure public morality display the continued the importance of women as symbols of state ideology.

However, the IRI's effect on women's issues is more varied than is oftentimes acknowledged. Particularly with respect to the issue of veiling and women's involvement in the public sphere there is debate on whether or not there are positives to the IRI's rule. In terms of women's interaction with the public space and veiling there has been substantial focus in the literature on the affects of the veil on employment. According to Hoodfar, women who refused to wear the veil were fired or left Iran, and women from different backgrounds replaced these

women, not men (1993). This change indicates that after the revolution new groups of women had access to employment opportunities (Hoodfar 1993). On the other hand, Shaditalab argues that women's participation in the job market decreased in the initial aftermath of the revolution despite an increasing market for jobs created by the Iran-Iraq war effort (Shaditalab 2005). However, many scholars argue that over the long run there have been increases in women's formal employment and in their university attendance (Bahramitash 2003; Hoodfar 1993; Shaditalab 2005). Furthermore, despite the limitations on women's dress and societal roles there were calls by Khomeini for women to get involved in volunteer work to support the war effort against Iraq and the creation of a functioning welfare state (Bahramitash 2003). Despite the regime's goal of creating traditional women, and the contradicting evidence concerning women's employment, women have not necessarily retreated from the public sphere. It is clear that in some ways the state has encouraged women to interact with the public sphere indicating a possibility that the IRI's conservative state ideology has opened the public to traditional women.

Despite the regime's regressive policies towards women's issues, one way the regime supports women's activity in the public sphere is education. For the IRI education, particularly the Islamization of education has been a top priority since the establishment of the republic (Shahidian 1991). As part of the Islamization process, women have not been discouraged from education and women's education has been encouraged to prepare women for their roles as mother's and homemakers (Kurzman 2008; Mehran 1999; Shaditalab 2005; Shahidian 1991; Shavarini 2006). This educational agenda led to the creation of sex-segregated schooling at the pre-university level, and limited technical training for women beyond how to run a household (Shahidian 1991). These intentions fit well within the desire to create a more traditional woman,

however, women's use of education has not been limited to improving their fulfillment of traditional roles.

Within the intended role of women's education, women have been able to improve their circumstances. In fact, women have increased their involvement in higher education at the university level under the IRI (Bahramitash 2003; Shaditalab 2005; Shavarini 2006).

Additionally, women are the primary consumers of literacy programs in Iran (Mehran 1999).

The success of these literacy programs is partially due to the promotion of the programs as a religious duty ensuring that male family members do not limit women's participation in these programs (Bahramitash 2003; Mehran 1999). As with formal education literacy programs are used to promote traditional gender roles (Mehran 1999). However, women's experience of these programs is more complex. Women's involvement in these programs raises their gender-consciousness but these programs do not contribute to empowerment or the pursuance of women's equality (Mehran 1999). Therefore, for the IRI women's education is accepted as an important tool in promoting the republic's ideals and may have the potential to elevate women's consciousness.

While women's education has been linked to the promotion of the Islamist ideology, women's education has linkages to potential employment. The regime itself is not necessarily against women's employment and under the Rafsanjani government women were encouraged to gain an education and enter the workforce (Bahramitash 2003; Ramazani 1993). However, due to limited employment opportunities oftentimes women's education is considered a luxury at the university level that improves her marriage prospects (Kurzman 2008; Shahidian 1991; Shavarini 2006). According to Ramazani, the primary pressures keeping women out of the workplace are deeply entrenched cultural norms against women's employment, not necessarily legal limitations

(Ramazani 1993). The regimes willingness to educate women and acceptance of women's employment demonstrates the possibility that the regime's ideology is not opposed to women's action in the public sphere as long as their involvement is informed by traditional values.

Furthermore, Iranian women actively challenge the state on women's issues. Iranian women do not passively accept the regime's stance on women's rights, and continue to fight for a better position in society (Afary 1996; Bahramitash 2003; Hoodfar 1993; Shaditalab 2005; Zahedi 2007). In particular, women have used their active support of the Iran-Iraq war, performance of religious duties and adherence to hijab to challenge the state to uphold its claims concerning Islamic government's role in promoting equality (Bahramitash 2003; Ramazani 1993). Alternatively, women have used the practice of mal-veiling as a political symbol of empowerment when resisting the regime (Zahedi 2007). These actions are supported by women's increasing consciousness of their position in society through their involvement in education, volunteer work, and the work force, which raises their demands (Bahramitash 2003; Kurzman 2008; Shavarini 2006). In particular, educated women are frustrated by the societal preference for men, and the role they are expected to take once married (Kurzman 2008; Shaditalab 2005; Shavarini 2006). While women's struggle for rights in Iran has been slow, they have used the regime's rhetoric that Islam promotes equality to demand for equal treatment and create change (Ramazani 1993). In fact, women have gained more comprehensive rights than allowed under the shah's code through continued negotiations with the regime (Bahramitash 2003; Hoodfar 1993; Ramazani 1993; Shaditalab 2005). This supports the position that women's participation in the public sphere and the regimes toleration of this action has the potential to lead to change in the regime's policy when addressing women's issues.

Overall it appears that while the regime's actions towards women can be viewed as repressive in many ways, women have been able to take advantage of the opportunities available through education as well as the regime's claim to represent an ideal Islamic society to engage in the public sphere. These actions seem contradictory, particularly because western biases would indicate that the secular Pahlavi regime not theocratic Islamic Republic should be better prepared to encourage women's active participation in the public sphere and improve women's position.

However the literature challenges this by presenting how the secular Pahlavi regime may have had a negative impact on women's participation in the public sphere while promoting women's issues to assert a modern secular national identity. Most importantly, there is an indication that the ban of the veil by Reza Shah may have limited the participation of many lower class or traditional women in the public sphere while benefitting a small secular elite. The literature further complicates this by presenting a case for the positive effect of the IRI's ideology on the opportunities available for traditional and lower class women in Iran. With compulsory veiling under the Islamic Republic and the regime's encouragement of participation in education, it is possible that the policies of the Islamic Republic may have opened the public sphere to a larger portion of the female population of Iran. This potential and the natural experiment available due to the similar experience of Turkey before 1980 create an ideal opportunity to test whether or not the literature is correct in assessing women's participation in the public sphere in the IRI.

### **The Secular Alternative: The Headscarf Ban in Turkey**

While in Iran, the establishment of the Islamic Republic led to break with Pahlavi policy and the establishment of compulsory veiling, in Turkey the state's policy towards the veil became more restrictive in 1980 with the establishment of the "Dress and Appearance" law,

which explicitly outlawed the use of the veil in many public spaces (Rankin and Isik 2008). However, the regulation of veiling is not new in Turkey. Unveiling has its roots in the modernization efforts of republican elites after the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic and was intended to open the public sphere to women (White 2003). In the contemporary period the connection between unveiling, modernity and the public space, has led to the continuation of the headscarf ban for university students and public servants (Carkoglu 2010; Guveli 2011; Rankin and Isik 2008, White 2003). In this environment, as in Iran, the headscarf can reflect a number of different preferences and political opinions from protest against the secular republic to a reflection of piety (Guveli 2011). The role of the headscarf in politics intensified due to the attempt to close the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi - AKP) in 2008 by secular opposition (Carkoglu 2010). Furthermore, while other secular restrictions, such as restrictions on men's dress, have been relaxed overtime the regulation of veiling has intensified since the 1980's (Carkoglu 2010; Guveli 2011). This continued importance of secular ideology and the headscarf ban since the 1980's, make Turkey a good comparison to Iran after the establishment of the Islamic Republic when testing the influence of state ideology on women's participation in the public sphere.

In Turkey the current debates on the veil display a distance between the government and the majority of Turks. According to Ali Carkoglu's research on attitudes towards the veil, two thirds of the Turkish population is against the implementation of the ban (Carkoglu 2010). Furthermore, despite the ban, 61 percent of Turkish women cover themselves in public but have to unveil if they want to be involved in education or politics (Guveli 2011). Despite the lack of public support, on the official level the ban has been strengthened by court cases. In 1989 Constitutional Court prohibited women from participating in paid or unpaid public work if



wearing the veil while more recently in 2004 the European Court of Human Rights upheld the ban when a medical student Leyla Sahin challenged it (Guveli 2011). The maintenance of the headscarf ban despite the lack of public approval for the ban supports the position that the issue of the headscarf is not necessarily an issue of personal choice in dress, and is instead a political symbol.

Enforcement of the headscarf ban is further complicated by the affects of the ban on Turkish women. Despite the goal of increasing women's participation in the public sphere through unveiling, this has not necessarily occurred (White 2003). Despite some gains in women's involvement in education, and professions such as engineering these improvements have generally been limited to the urban upper and middle classes, with limited participation by women from traditional backgrounds (Etoz 2003; Guveli 2011; Kandiyoti 1987; White 2003). Furthermore, the issue of unveiling has become linked to party politics and elite power. Guveli demonstrates how the ban is more likely to be enforced where the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP) and Social Democratic People's Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halk Partisi SHP), two parties traditionally linked to the secular elite in Turkey, while it is less likely to be enforced by the AKP (Guveli 2011). Additionally, Carkoglu finds that the secular elites are use the headscarf issue to ensure their position in Turkish politics (Carkoglu 2010). Therefore there is evidence that headscarf issue is a tool to ensure the secular elite's control of the national identity and political system in Turkey, not for women's empowerment.

In this struggle the secular elite are concerned with maintaining the hegemonic discourse of secularism and Kemalism, but they feel threatened by the increasing presence of Islamic practice and symbols in the public sphere (Carkoglu 2010; Etoz 2003). These anxieties fuel both the backlash against the AKP and the perception that the use of the headscarf is on the rise

(Carkoglu 2010). Both Carkoglu and Guveli's analysis of the headscarf as a part of a larger power struggle fit well with Zeliha Etoz's argument that struggles over educational policy, in particular the headscarf ban, are integral to political power struggles (Etoz 2003). For Etoz these struggles are prominent because the educational system is where culture is replicated (Etoz 2003). Therefore, the secular center has an interest in keeping women who wear headscarves out of universities because these women present an alternative discourse on what it means to be Turkish (Etoz 2003).

One issue with unveiling in Turkey is that despite the emphasis on unveiling to include women in the public sphere and present a modern image this has not led to a break with traditional patriarchal norms (White 2003). Therefore, like in Iran, women's roles are primarily in the home and despite western dress codes women must still maintain modest dress (Kandiyoti 1987; White 2003). The combination of patriarchy and western dress in Turkey indicate that there is potential for a complex relationship between the veil and feminism. This is supported by Turkish women's active participation in the debate on the veil. One example of this is the anti-ban demonstrations outside of Turkish universities, and in particular Istanbul University (Etoz 2003). While Carkoglu, Etoz, and Guveli find the actions of veiled women to be indicative of the battleground between the traditional periphery and the secular elites in Turkey, White believes that the unveiling did create an opportunity for even traditional women to enter the public space (Carkoglu 2010; Etoz 2003; Guveli 2011; White 2003). Despite these differing interpretations of women's actions, these political debates and the demonstrations by women indicate that the headscarf ban as a representation of secular ideology does influence women's participation in the public space, particularly through access to higher education and state employment.

Unlike Iran, due to the highly political nature of the issue of the veil in Turkey there have been studies on its impact on women's public participation, particularly in terms of education and employment. Above all, Guveli's study of the impact of the ban on employment and Rankin and Isik's analysis of the impact of the ban on education using 1988 data (Guveli 2011; Rankin and Isik 2008). In both studies the empirical evidence showed that women who wore headscarves or whose families preferred they wore headscarves were more likely to have limited access to education (Guveli 2011; Rankin and Isik 2008). However, in Rankin and Isik's analysis they found that there was not a strong correlation between religiosity and limiting a daughter's education and instead there was a stronger relationship between patriarchal values and educational gender gap (2008). These two studies indicate that while the ban has limited the participation of traditional women in education in Turkey, this is not necessarily due to Islamic values and instead could be due to the ban itself.

### **Question**

Despite the historic evidence that the experience of unveiling may have limited traditional women's participation in the public sphere under Reza Shah and the discussion of the impact of the Islamic Republic on women's participation in education and employment, there are not studies addressing the impact of compulsory veiling on women's participation in the public sphere. Instead, the literature is limited to claims that the Islamic Republic has opened the public sphere to lower class and traditional women, and decreased the gaps between the elite and traditional women (Bahramitash 2003; Shaditalab 2005). The most interesting trends appear in women's education, under the IRI traditional families want to send their daughters to university, even if university attendance increases their desire for independence and encourages them to challenge or question traditional female roles (Kurzman 2008; Shavarini 2006). This contrasts

with Turkey where traditional women's participation in higher education is potentially limited by the headscarf ban (Carkoglu 2010; Etoz 2003; Guveli 2011; Rankin and Isik 2008). Therefore, I ask; when comparing Turkey and Iran, has government ideology, through veiling policy, affected women's involvement in the public sphere?

### **Methodology**

In order to compare the influence of veiling on women's participation in the public sphere I will compare women from Turkey and Iran. I will use World Value's Survey (WVS) data to compare these two states. Iran and Turkey were both involved in the WVS2005 wave of data collection. The data for each country is based on face-to-face interviews collected in each states respective dominant language, Persian in Iran and Turkish in Turkey. Mansoor Moaddel collected the Iranian data for the survey between June and August 2005 and Yilmaz Esmer collected the Turkish data between January and March 2007. The data includes both men and women above the age of 16, however I am only using the data concerning women. Therefore, out of the total 2667 Iranian cases I will be looking at 1316 cases and of the 1346 Turkish cases I will be using 670 cases.

Within the limitations of this data set I plan to perform a cohort analysis focusing on the generation known as the 'children of the revolution' born after 1979 in Iran and the equivalent generation in Turkey. Through this analysis I will attempt to answer the question, how has the Islamic Revolution's ideology affected the role of women in the public sphere? While I believe that the differences in state ideology mean that women from conservative backgrounds are more likely to be involved in the public sphere in Iran than in Turkey, in order to answer this question I will test the null hypothesis that despite different state ideologies there is not necessarily a

difference between conservative young women's involvement in the public sphere in Iran and Turkey.

In order to address the relationship or lack of relationship between conservative upbringing and participation in the public sphere I will use proxy variables. Both conservative upbringing and participation in the public sphere can be quantified in a variety of ways, however I have chosen to quantify them as religiosity and education level. I have chosen education level to represent the public sphere for three reasons. The first is that historically religiosity has influenced women's education in both states. In Iran women's education was a hotly debated issue between religious and secular authorities when first introduced (Afary 1996). While in Turkey, the headscarf ban has become a part of public debates concerning education. The second reason is a state's education system influences the cultural preferences of citizens and this inherently influences how citizens view the greater political system (Etoz 2003; Guveli 2011). The third reason is a woman's ability to obtain an education influences her potential to engage in the public sphere in the future. In Turkey this manifests in the limited horizons of a woman who veils, while in Iran higher education is one way for women to experience life outside of the private sphere of the family (Shavarini 2006; Guveli 2011). Therefore, while there are many variables that can, and possibly should be used to address women's involvement in the public sphere such as employment and political participation, I will be using educational achievement as my dependent variable.

I believe religiosity is an appropriate measure of conservative upbringing because the difference between state ideologies in Iran and Turkey is between theocracy and secularism. Therefore, I am most interested in religiously conservative women's experience. In order to quantify religiosity I have combined four variables from the WVS data, the personal importance

of religion, attendance of religious services, personal importance of God, and the importance of public officials belief in God.<sup>2</sup> I hypothesize that Iranian women with high levels of religiosity born after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 will be more likely to pursue education. I have added a dummy variable to indicate those women born after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979 and the heightening of the headscarf issue in Turkey. I then created an interaction variable that combines religiosity and cohort. It is important to note that when attempting to explain education levels it is essential to control for socioeconomic status, because socioeconomic status has an affect on education levels (Rankin and Isik 2008). Therefore, I have included potential indicators of socioeconomic status such as, social class, scale of incomes, number of children, and marital status within my model to control for their possible affect when addressing the relationship between religiosity and educational achievement.

### **Analysis**

In order to analyze the relationship between religiosity and education, while controlling for other factors such as age and socioeconomic status I have performed a linear Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. This regression takes into account the state, age, socioeconomic status, and level of religiosity in order to determine the affects of each on a woman's educational achievement.

**Table 2: The Effect of Religiosity on Women's Educational Achievement in Iran and**

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<sup>2</sup> The questions as worded in the World Values Survey follow for each variable. For Importance of Religion the question is phrased: Indicate how important it is in your life: Religion? Rated on a scale from 1 to 4 with 1 as not at all important and 4 as very important. For religious attendance the question is phrased: Apart from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services these days? For the importance of God the question is phrased: How important is God in your life? Please use this scale to indicate 10 means "very important" and 1 means "not at all important". For the importance of politicians believing in God the question is phrased; how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office Rated from 1 to 5 with 1 as disagree strongly and 5 as agree strongly.

Turkey		
Variables	Regression Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients
Y Intercept	3.790 (2.128)	
Marriage is an outdated institution	.587 (.354)	.054
Interaction of generation and religiosity	.079 (.080)	.212
University is more important for a boy than for a girl	.200 (.088)*	.075
Are you the chief wage earner in your house	.683 (.255)*	.093
Religiosity	-.015 (.027)	-.018
State (Iran or Turkey) <sup>3</sup>	1.486 (.238)**	.254
Log (Number of Children)	-2.433 (.354)**	-.241
Married (dummy)	-2.155 (1.899)	-.230
Generation	-2.143 (1.634)	-.279
Dummy variable Divorced /Separated/Widowed	-2.791 (1.913)	-.295
Woman as single parent (okay)	.403 (.201)*	.065
Log(income scale)	2.869 (.316)**	.354
Log (recoded country specific income)	.850 (.209)**	.129
Justifiable for a man to beat his wife	-.120 (.067)	-.060
Social Class (subjective)	.157 (.096)	.057
N	482	
Adjusted R square	.551	

*p*-value .05 \* *p*-value .001 \*\*

Through this linear regression model, when predicting women's education levels the significant variables are income scale, country specific income, number of children, views on whether a woman can be a single parent, views on whether university education is more appropriate for a boy or a girl, state, and if a woman is the chief wage earner in the household. The adjusted r-squared value indicates that the model explains 55.1% of the variation in women's education levels in Iran and Turkey during the collection of data, 2005 and 2007 respectively. This relatively large r-squared value indicates that the model does explain the

<sup>3</sup> Iran is coded as 1, and Turkey is coded as 0

variation in women's educational achievement well. When addressing the proposed hypothesis it is important to note that the measures of religiosity, generation, and the interaction of generation and religiosity are all insignificant. Therefore, while I did find a significant difference in women's educational levels in Iran and Turkey this difference is not explained by my hypothesis that religiosity could explain the difference in young women's education in Iran and Turkey.

In order to gain a better understanding of what explains the significant difference between Iran and Turkey it is necessary to address how the significant variables interact in the model. First I will address the effect of state, controlling for all other factors if a woman lives in Iran her educational level will increase by 1.486 compared to Turkey This is an entire step in education level from incomplete technical or vocational secondary education to complete technical or vocational secondary education. Therefore, not only is this difference significant the effect is also positive and appears to be rather large. The only other significant variables with effects larger than state are number of children and income scale. As the log of income scale increases by one unit, a woman's educational level increases by 2.869 bringing a woman from incomplete technical or vocational secondary education to completed pre-university secondary education. This effect of socioeconomic variables is to be expected as Rankin and Isik find that socioeconomic variables are the most important variables when modeling education levels (2008).

In order to find alternative explanations to the difference in women's education in Iran and Turkey the effect of the number of children is more interesting than socioeconomic variables. When controlling for all other factors increasing the log of the number of children a woman has by 1 decreases her education level by 2.433, essentially decreasing her education from incomplete technical or vocational secondary school to incomplete elementary education.



This is interesting because the effect of this variable raises two questions. The first is the question of endogeneity, does higher number of children influence education, or do lower educated women have more children. Common sense would indicate that education level influences the number of children a woman has, not the other way around. In fact, this relationship supports Kurzman's finding that young educated Iranian are more likely to postpone the birth of their first child (2008). The second question is if there is an unknown variable that affects both the number of children and education level. This alternative variable could be patriarchal values, as Rankin and Isik indicate in their research, adherence to patriarchal values can be a more powerful as a limit on women's education than religiosity (2008).

In order to address the second possibility we can look at potential indicators of a woman's adherence to patriarchal or feminist values. Within this model the variables addressing these differences are a woman's views on if it is okay for a woman to be a single parent, and whether a university education is more important for a boy or a girl. These two indicators are significant, but they have much smaller effects than the previous variables discussed. If a woman believes that mothers as single parents are acceptable there is only a positive .403 effect on her educational level, and when controlling for all other variables this barely moves her from having incomplete technical or vocational secondary education to having completed technical or vocational secondary school. The effect is even smaller when looking at whether a woman believes that university education is more important for a boy than a girl. In this case the effect of .200 cannot increase the value for educational achievement outside of a value that indicates the same level of education. Therefore, when looking at indicators of feminist or anti-feminist views we see that feminist views may have a positive effect on women's educational achievement but a small effect.

While these indicators based on views do not have large effects on women's educational achievement, it is possible feminist oriented action may influence educational achievement as seen by the influence of being the chief wage earner in the household. As discussed earlier, particularly in Iran, women's employment is problematic. Therefore, it would seem that a woman being the chief wage earner for her household could be a large break with traditional patriarchal norms and possibly an indicator of more deeply held feminist values. When a woman is the chief wage earner in her household she will on average increase her education level by .683 raising her from incomplete technical or vocational secondary education to complete technical or vocational education. However, here it is important to note that the issue of endogeneity is also at play, as it is possible that highly educated women are more likely to pursue a career instead of accepting a role as a homemaker. Therefore, while there may be an effect of strong feminist values on women's educational achievement in Iran and Turkey, we cannot make an assertion that this is the case with complete certainty.

While I have discussed some of these potential indicators of feminist values and views it is important to note that none of this discussion adequately addresses the issue of endogeneity. Particularly, when it comes to the issue of women's feminist views and education, Kurzman has already found that women are more likely to hold feminist views with higher levels of education (2008). Whether or not there is a relationship between women's educational achievement and the significant differences between Iran and Turkey is related to stronger feminist values remains to be discussed and it is not in the scope of this paper to address this issue fully. By presenting these findings I hope to open more discussion and promote further research.

## **Conclusion**

The current literature appears to support the view that the IRI's actions towards women can be viewed as repressive in many ways, but women have taken advantage of the opportunities available through education as well as the regime's claim to represent an ideal Islamic society to engage in the public sphere. Most importantly, there is some indication that imposed secular identity through the ban of the veil by Reza Shah may have limited the participation of many lower class or traditional women in the public sphere. Therefore, under the Islamic Republic it is possible that the imposition of an Islamic national identity through the practice of compulsory veiling may have opened the public sphere to these women. Additionally, Turkish women's experience with imposed secular identity through the contemporary period supports questioning the role of headscarf bans and women's ability to participate in the public sphere. Due to the similarities in history before 1980 as well as the similarities in women's position within society, comparing Iran and Turkey is an appropriate way to test the relationship between religiosity, generation, and educational achievement and allowing for a deeper understanding of how women experience the public sphere in both states.

Despite the evidence in the literature, my analysis of the data challenges the view that the public sphere is significantly more open to religious young women in the Islamic Republic of Iran when compared to Turkey. However, there is still a significant positive effect on a woman's education level if she lives in Iran instead of Turkey, when controlling for all other variables. Furthermore, the data indicates that there may be other, more powerful explanations for addressing women's relationship with the public sphere in both states. Most importantly, there is an indication that despite differences in state ideology towards religiosity, religiosity is not significant when attempting to understand women's interaction with the public sphere in Iran and Turkey. This finding challenges both western biases against theological governance as inherently

anti-women as well as the claim that the IRI was able to open the public sphere to a religious and traditional women due to the differences in state ideology. The similarities between the IRI and the Turkish government despite the differences in ideology would support addressing the relationship between patriarchal values as well as religiosity's relationship with women's participation with the public sphere. Therefore, while my hypothesis was not supported by the data, this analysis has highlighted potential areas of future research for addressing women's position in society both in Iran and Turkey.

### Index<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1**

Comparison of Iran and Turkey on Global Gender Gap Report Measures Scale .000 = inequality, 1.00= equality		
	Iran	Turkey
Equality-Inequality Scale	0.593	.601
Economic Participation and Opportunity	.412	.414
Labor Force Participation	.44	.35
Wage equality for similar work	.63	.63
Professional and technical workers	.50	.54
Educational Attainment	.953	.930
Literacy rate	.90	.89
Enrolment in primary education	1.00	.98
Enrolment in secondary education	.87	.93
Enrolment in tertiary education	1.00	.79
Health and Survival	.971	.976
Political Empowerment	.035	.087
Women in Parliament	.03	.17
Women in ministerial positions	.10	.04

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