<u>Paradigms in Tension:</u>

<u>Islamic feminism as an alternative development dialectic in Turkey</u>

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Abstract

Paradigms in Tension:
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Abstract: This thesis examines one outcome of the intersection of mainstream gender and development paradigms with paradigms of gender and development in an Islamic context. It explores the concept of Islamic feminism, as operationalized by one group of women in Turkey, analyzing the similarities and differences of this paradigm with other gender and development paradigms. Furthermore, it considers the implications and applicability of Islamic feminism, as a gender and development paradigm, for women in Less Developed Countries.

April 28, 2006.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction to the Thematic:

In the fall of 2004, the *New York Times* published the story of Fern Holland. The account was of a 33-year-old American human rights lawyer who, in the spring of that same year, became one of the first American civilian employees of the American-led Coalition Provisional Authority to be killed in Iraq.

Holland went to Iraq to start women's centres and to advocate for the rights of Iraqi women. She defined it as her mission, according to the article, to promote democracy education and to see the liberation of Iraqi women. In a setting of traditionally male-headed-households and strict Shi'a communities, Holland set up a number of women's centres; complete not only with sewing machines, and kitchens, but also with computers, and internet access, a gym, and an auditorium where she held democracy lectures for the local women. The news story goes on to describe that, while the "new computers and fancy goods" were being unloaded, for "the sole benefit" of the Iraqi women, across the street many of the local men, most of whom could not find employment, looked on from outside of the police station where the police were no longer being paid.

In March of 2004, Holland was murdered. To those who knew of the situation where Holland was working, the local men were the obvious suspects. According to Adly Hassanein, an Egyptian human rights adviser also working in the region, Holland was murdered because "she had crossed the line. She went deep into the land of male

superiority. She was trying to bring with her a very Westernized women's emancipation program, and she hit a wall" (Rubin, 2004).

The story of Holland, from a gender and development perspective, is disturbing for a number of reasons, the first being the use of religion as a justification for patriarchal actions. Inversely, the 'big-sister' attitude Ms. Holland appeared to have regarding women's needs in developing countries is also troubling. Once again the stereotype of the veiled, oppressed, Muslim woman desperately in need of liberation, an image so pervasive in Western culture, invaded gender and development practice. While the story of Ms. Holland is an extreme example of the intersection of gender and development paradigms with those of religion, tradition, and culture, the importance of these intersections should not be underestimated nor overlooked if religious women are to be a part of development.

Objective:

Despite women's allotted subordinate positioning in many societies, it is recognized, often by the very structures which cause women to have and hold these secondary positions, that women are important to the success of the development project, the family, and the nation. There is little contestation on this point considering that, throughout the world, the care of the family belongs mainly to women and that women are often responsible for the production of food to feed their families, for the care and education of their children, as well as for the support of elderly members of the family. Parikh and Inter Pares (1995) describe women as the principal agents of development because of the essential roles they fulfill in the complete health and well-being of the family; hence when women benefit from development, the entire family benefits.

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Understanding and emphasizing the importance of women's participation in development, many large organizations focus solely on issues of gender and development, while most international development agencies and organizations require a gender component in every proposed development initiative. These organizations, agencies, and gender components aim not only to include women's participation in development but also to increase the benefits which women gain from development. But, in recognizing that women are essential to development, it is necessary to examine different paradigms regarding the perspectives and goals for meeting women's needs through development. Each paradigm is based upon a particular set of values which affect development goals as well as the assessment of the needs of women. Variations on how women should participate in development and the benefits which women need to gain from development therefore may differ, contradict, or perhaps value differently various means to reaching their objectives.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine one result of the intersection of mainstream gender and development paradigms with paradigms of gender and development in an Islamic context. It explores the concept of the 'Islamic feminist' as a form of dynamic dialectic between secular feminism as understood in mainstream development literature and various conceptions of the place of women in Islam. Furthermore, it examines the implications and applicability of this paradigm for women in Less Developed Countries (LDCs).

Definitions:

Throughout this thesis, the reader will observe a struggle with terminology. Terms such as *the West, Islam, secular Muslim,* and *feminist,* among others, are labels which defy concrete definitions. They are broad generalizations that are often too broad but they

also serve an important purpose in attempting to analyse. Within this thesis, I have done my best to define these problematic terms recognizing that they are indeed complex. In the following chapter, I discuss and define my use of the term *development.*

The term *paradigm,* as used in this thesis, refers to an underlying understanding meant to inform practices and actions. *Dialectic* is understood as a dynamic interrelationship and dialogue between what have been conceived to be opposing views. While some feminists have rigid frames for what constitutes *a feminist,* Cooke (2000) applies the word more loosely. She writes regarding feminism,

> *It is above all an attitude, a frame of mind that highlights the role of gender in understanding the organization of society. Feminism provides the analytical tools for assessing how expectations for men's and women's behaviour have led to unjust situations.... Feminism can be many changing states of consciousness, each reflecting women's understandings of themselves and their situations as related to their social and biological conditions, then it is not bound to one culture. It is no more Arab than it is American, no more Mediterranean than it is Northern European. Feminism seeks justice where it can find it. (p. 92)*

Given the diversity in women's movements and feminist organizations, Cooke's definition is useful in understanding feminism. The use of the term *feminism* in this paper therefore is also applied in the same way which Cooke applies the term.

In referring to *Western feminism,* I am making a distinction between academic scholars who are feminists and Western feminism as represented in international development organizations. It is this second representation which I am referring to as this thesis is clearly interested in understanding international gender and development

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paradigms as practiced. In using *the West*, I am referring to the developed world of North America and Europe.

While Cooke provides a clear definition of feminism, to differentiate between the terms *Muslim*, *Islamic*, and *Islamist* are more problematic. Each writer who uses these terms has his or her own understandings of what these terms mean. According to Badran (2001), *Islamism* should be defined as "a broad project of the political mobilization of Islam" (p. 47). While some identity cards require a religious identity and, to be born a *Muslim* means that this term fills the required space on an identity card, to be called a Muslim does not necessarily mean that one is practicing their religion (Cooke, 2000). While secular Muslims themselves claim that such an identity exists, more religious Muslims claim that there cannot be such an identity. Cooke uses the term *Islamic* to be the bridge between Islamism and Muslim. Cooke defines this as "a particular kind of self-positioning that will then inform the speech, or the action, or the writing, or way of life adopted by someone who is committed to questioning Islamic epistemology *as an expansion of their faith position and not a rejection of it*" (author's emphasis, p. 94). I realize that differentiating between Muslim and Islamic is problematic as most practicing Muslims would identify themselves as exactly that: Muslim. However, in this paper, I am differentiating between the terms *Muslim* and *Islamic* in my discussion of Islamic feminism as both an acknowledgement that there are secular Muslims as well as feminists whose religious identity cards read "Muslim" but do not hold the same values nor agendas as Islamic feminists.

Rationale:

This thesis attempts to add to an on-going North-South dialogue among mostly feminist post-modern development writers and researchers in two ways. First, although it

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explores paradigms which attempt to influence women towards particular development goals, this thesis focuses on women as agents making choices not simply as recipients of influence. In examining the paradigm of Islamic feminism, it seeks to understand how Muslim women are choosing their own versions of liberation, and the applicability and suitability of Islamic feminism within Muslim women's own realities and within the more mainstream gender and development agenda.

Second, this research will attempt to add to the body of research and literature in its specific focus on Muslim women and their own development goals. To focus on the relationship between religious women and development, and in this case, specifically on Muslim women and development, is critical as religion is an intimate, important aspect of personal identity. In focusing on Muslim women's development goals though, this thesis does not intend to promote a development ideology of particularism or cultural relativism rather it challenges the essentialist ideology that religion can only be considered as a responsible party for women's repression and a justification for the patriarchal society.

The Problematic:

Most mainstream international development organizations consider gender inequality to be one of the major contributors to the perpetuation of poverty. According to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA, 1999), "Gender inequalities intensify poverty, perpetuate it from one generation to the next and weaken women's and girl's capability to avoid or limit deprivation" (p. 11). Inequalities based on gender, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2002), are the "source of endemic poverty, of inequitable and low economic growth, of high HIV prevalence, and of inadequate governance. Any form of gender discrimination is a denial of human rights, an obstacle to development" (p. 4).

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Foundational to mainstream development organizations is the recognition that the achievement of women's equality is an issue of human rights, necessary for social justice, and of primary importance to development. According to the UNDP (n.d.), "Discrimination based on sex, religion, race, ethnicity, class and age remains at the core of social exclusion, poverty and human misery. Women are poorer than men because they are often denied equal rights and opportunities" (para. 1). These development agency directives advocate gender equality as a strategy necessary for achieving development. The mandates of most mainstream development agencies reflect this goal in their requirement that all development projects and programmes have a gender component meant to include women in ways which promote gender equality. For example, according to CIDA (1995), gender equality "must be considered as an integral part of all CIDA policies, programs and projects" (p. 5). According to the agency, gender equality is a key component to sound development practices, both economic and social, as well as substantially contributing to the well-being of women, men, girls, and boys.

In contrast to these mainstream international development agencies' focus on gender equality, in Islam, many consider equality between the sexes an irrelevant concept. Of more significance, many practitioners argue, are the terms 'cooperation' and 'complementarity' (Smith, 1987). Meant by the use of these terms, is the specificity and difference between women's and men's roles and the completeness which is achieved through the partnership of men and women. The allocation of specific roles to women and different roles to men is meant to create relations in which men and women work together for the same goals.

While many point to the patriarchal nature of Islamic teaching, recognition of the relative freedoms which women receive as followers of Islam must also be recognized.

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For example, one of the most important roles in Islam is that of motherhood. Because motherhood is revered, women retain a certain amount of influence and respect as the bearers of children as well as over their children and over the wives of their sons. Smith (1987) considers these as, "certain checks and balances on the obvious authority invested by the Qur'an in men" (p. 245). Most importantly, Kandiyoti (1996) points out, Muslim "women do not merely submit to the strictures of religious fundamentalism as interpreted by men but are active participants with their own versions of the ways in which Islam might further their gender interests" (p. 18).

Failing to consider aspects such as religion or worse, disregarding the influence of religion, the goals of international development organizations neglect important and influential aspects of women's identities. Jacoby (1999) points out that in the Middle East for example, Muslim women's ambitions "do not necessarily coincide with the interests of feminist projects in Western states and women's movements" (p. 513). As will be discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, mainstream international development organizations rely heavily on Western feminist principles in their gender and development programming thereby creating development paradigms which may be inadequate for meeting the needs of women who are outside of this environment. Religious women, usually regarded by Western feminism as under the patriarchal control of religion, are one such example of women who fall outside of this milieu.

The conflicting interests of mainstream gender and development paradigms with those of Islamic gender paradigms call into question the effectiveness of mainstream paradigms in an Islamic context. Referring to development aid packages, Kandiyoti (1991) argues that there is a "blatant balancing act between the conflicting gender ideologies" in which mainstream international development organizations encourage

women's equal participation in the labour force, in schools and in the public sphere, while money from Muslim agencies, and richer Muslim countries goes towards strengthening *madrassas* (religious schools) and towards religious political parties advocating for stricter adherence to Islamic principles and stricter controls on women (p. 16). Referring to mainstream gender and development policies, Khan (1998) observes, "Muslim women find themselves inserted into predetermined discourses and practices that shape their agency and determine their strategies of resistance" (p. 463).

While both Khan and Kandiyoti, among others, point to the conflicting paradigms of development in Muslim regions, it is necessary to delve further into the intersection of these paradigms and consider their outcomes. Exploring these paradigms allows for consideration, not only of the consequences of the intersection of gender and development paradigms within an Islamic context, but also of the implications of this intersection for development and for women in LDCs. By exploring the actualization of the paradigm of Islamic feminism, contextually, this thesis looks to build an understanding as to how some women are circumventing the problem of the intersection of incongruous paradigms and writing their own new gender and development paradigm.

Methodology: Case Study

Turkey provides an excellent forum to investigate the intersection of mainstream gender and development paradigms with those of Islamic reform and development. Turkey is currently undergoing talks with the European Union, attempting to overcome recurrent economic crises together with the help of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in addition to having a laic government presiding over a population which is 99% Muslim. Hence, there are many opportunities to explore the intersection of

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mainstream development paradigms with those of Islam particularly regarding those of gender and development paradigms.

In my exploration of this intersection between mainstream gender and development paradigms with those of Islam and specifically the paradigm of Islamic feminism, I attended a conference entitled, "Turkey at the Crossroads: Women, Women's Studies and the State" in Istanbul and Bodrum, Turkey sponsored by Towson University Institute for Teaching and Research on Women, Towson, Maryland and the Middle Eastern Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. The conference included many experts, both Turkish and foreign, who had themselves researched issues related to Turkish women. From this conference, I was able to make several contacts and, through a series of contacts, able to interview a number of Turkish activist women who were participants in either religious or non-religious feminist development groups. These interviews took the form of both private and group interviews. My research is also based on presentations made, questions and debates, and personal conversations which took place with both Turkish and non-Turkish academics during the conference.

While it was not my intention to focus on the headscarf debate in my research, for Muslim women in Turkey, this has become an issue which they consider a major constraint on their liberation and achievement of equality. The government's prohibition on headscarves in public institutions has created serious educational blockades for women as well as overt discrimination against women who wear the headscarf. Muslim women want to talk about this: how it is an important part of their identity, how they are working to overcome this problem, and what the effect of being able to choose to wear the headscarf would mean to their further emancipation.

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It is also important to note that this thesis focuses on Islamic feminism as alternative paradigm and does not attempt to consider the role of fundamentalism in Islam primarily labelled *Islamism* as opposed to *Islamic* or *Muslim*. Kesin-Kozat (2003) defines Islamism as a form of Islamic religious practice which is "a politicized and fundamentalist form of Islam that entails the 'distortion' of religious sources" while the term *Islamic* is usually used to denote devotion and piety (p. 184). Although this thesis will briefly discuss the role of Islamism in gender and development, a distinction between it and Islam is clearly intended.

Structure of Thesis:

This chapter has served as an introduction to the thesis subject so that the reader may understand the purpose and rationale for the research undertaken. Chapter Two is a review of the literature concerning women, development and Islam. In this chapter, I introduce the definition of development from which this paper is based and I consider both the common mainstream development paradigms as well as paradigms of development and change under Islam. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss the concept of Islamic feminism and briefly look at the issue of the headscarf so as to enable the reader to understand the issues which the dialectic of Islamic feminism attempts to address.

Chapter Three begins by providing a basic background on Turkey, the region of my case study. Turkey has traditionally been understood as a nation of confluence. The strong Western-influenced mainstream gender and development policies and approaches taken within the country, the conservative Islamic influences, and the rise of women's groups exemplify a convergence of ideas. Women's groups which are religious but call for changes to systems which oppress them both as women and as Muslims add to these.

In this chapter, I will specifically describe the work of the *Başkent Kadyn Platformu* (Capital City Women's Platform), a religious feminist non-government organization (NGO) based in Turkey. This chapter will explain their goals as a group, what they consider the needs of women in Turkey to be, and their interactions with gender and development groups in Turkey.

In Chapter Four, the Turkish case study will be discussed and analysed. It is within this chapter that I discuss the work of the *Başkent Kadyn Platformu* as an Islamic feminist paradigm of gender and development in Turkey. In this discussion, I return to the definition of development as determined by this paper and compare this definition to the mandate of the *Başkent Kadyn Platformu*. I also compare Islamic feminism, as demonstrated by the *Başkent Kadyn Platformu*, to current mainstream gender and development paradigms while examining the implications and applicability of Islamic feminism as a paradigm for gender and development. Finally, this chapter will also consider the conclusions which can be drawn from the Turkish case study and discuss the greater implications of Islamic feminism for women in Less Developed Countries.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction:

This chapter begins by defining the meaning of development on which this thesis is based. Following the definition, the relationship and importance of studying development and religion will be discussed primarily centred on the issue of mainstream development in an Islamic context. This chapter will also establish a foundational understanding of the different paradigms of development and reform in Islam particularly focusing on paradigms of gender and development. In doing so, an understanding of the differences between mainstream gender and development paradigms and Islamic paradigms regarding gender and development will be built. Proceeding from this point, the term 'Islamic feminism' will be discussed including the meaning of this term in this thesis. Lastly, the controversy concerning the headscarf will be briefly looked at in order to introduce the reader to issues which Islamic feminists in Turkey attempt to address thereby creating the dialectic which will be described in Chapter Three.

Definitions of development:

A general meaning of development is defined by Young (1997) as,

> *...a complex process involving the social, economic, political and cultural betterment of individuals and of society itself. Betterment in this sense means the ability of the society and its members to meet the physical, emotional and creative needs of the population at a historically acceptable level. (p. 53)*

While Young's definition provides a broad overview of the purpose of the development process, to use this definition would be to overlook the multiple, interrelated aspects which the term 'development' encompasses. According to Longewe (1991), "Development is also about meeting the needs of those that are most in need, and about

increased participation and equality. Development is therefore also concerned with enabling people to take charge of their own lives and escape from poverty" (p. 2). After the Second World War, strategies for meeting people's needs were focused on increased economic productivity, defining development in terms of economics, as "a process whereby the real per capita income of a country increases over a long period of time while simultaneously poverty is reduced and the inequality in society is generally diminished" (Meier, 1989 in Martinussen, 2003, p. 37). Modernization theory defines development as a "structural change process whereby the traditional and backward Third World countries develop towards a greater similarity with the Western, or rather the North-Western world" (Pye, 1966 and Apter, 1965 as quoted in Martinussen, 2003, p. 38). In the 1990s, with the release of the first *Human Development Report*, the definitions of development became more specific, defining *human* development as being "a process of enlarging people's choices" (Martinussen, 2003, p. 38).

Despite numerous other definitions of development and although the *Human Development Report* does consider development to be about "enlarging people choices," Salinger (2004) points out that "rarely is religion (as a practical and social institution) associated with development as a positive factor in the implementation process of practice or strategies, and even less often is it referred to with regard to helping to construct development theory" (p. 526). While development has multiple meanings and foci, the exclusion of religion from consideration within these meanings, argues Adamu (1999), makes the very definition of development centered in both a theoretical and practical Western orientation. Charleton (2002) supports Adamu, adding that there is a "pervasiveness of the West in the conceptualization and implementation of development projects" therefore definitions of development mirror Western cultural norms based in

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Western scientific thought (p. 9). Adamu, herself a practitioner of Islam, argues that Islam "is a total way of life, and we aspire to conduct our lives according to its teachings" (p. 58) thus the very exclusion of religion from consideration in development is contrary to Islamic principles. Likewise, Ryan (1995) writes that in his research he "was constantly reminded that a 'secular' society is a construct of convenience in Western society and is still largely unknown" outside of this setting (p. 15).

In attempting to define a development which does recognize religion, Tyndale (2003) describes the movement, Hindu *Swadhyaya* (discovery of self), in India. According to Tyndale, this movement is founded upon the conviction that "what human beings need is dignity and recognition, which can only come from genuine mutuality and caring, not just from some political programmes of social justice" (p. 23). While this idyllic notion of development may be hard to operationalize, it does point to the particular concept of respect. As Adamu pointed out, Islam is a complete way of life for many of its practitioners, yet development theory largely fails to consider this aspect of peoples' lives therefore failing to respect the people who it is attempting to help. Ryan (1995), in his research on the connection between spirituality and development, believes that human development can only be healthy if it includes the values imparted by cultural environment which, in most developing countries, is heavily influenced by the religious.

The definition of development from which this thesis begins is one which follows Longwe's (1991) definition: that development is "about meeting the needs of those that are most in need" and is "concerned with enabling people to take charge of their own lives and escape from poverty" (p. 2). In doing so, development should enlarge peoples' choices not narrow them (Martinussen, 2003). Therefore, this thesis argues that development requires a consideration of the influence of Islam in the process of

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facilitating women's participation in development within an Islamic context. The contention is that this will help to facilitate the process whereby Muslim women are able to meet their needs and enlarge their choices and not have to choose between meeting their physical requirements and fulfilling their spiritual needs.

Development and Religion:

Salinger, using Haynes's definitions of religion, points to two different senses of the term 'religion'. Religion, in one sense, is used to connote aspects of the spiritual. Religion in this sense refers to concerns with "transcendence, sacredness and ultimacy" (Haynes in Salinger, 2004, p. 529). But Salinger (2004) emphasizes a second sense of the term 'religion' which refers to movements and groups – socially, politically, or community-based - which are defined and unified by a particular religion or religious belief (p. 530). Balchin (2003) differentiates between these two understandings of the term by referring to one as "faith", which is the private, and the other as "religion", which is the collective and individual understanding of an identity (p. 40). It is within this second sense, Salinger argues, that religion becomes an important consideration for development theory and practice as it acknowledges the larger social impact of religion beyond the personal and spiritual.

While Harcourt (2003) agrees with Haynes's definitions of religion and with Salinger's assessment of the importance of the social, collective impact of religion, she does not pass over the importance of the personal, spiritual impact of religion, acknowledging that "even so-called secular societies" are informed by individual belief in what is right and in "the pursuit of human good" (p. 4). Harcourt asserts that while modern development claims to be secular, denying any connection to religion, and

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"driven by a social conscience," it is actually significantly influenced by the values, often unconsciously embedded in religion (p. 3).

Indeed many scholars support the theory that what is now considered 'modern' and 'secular' have risen out of capitalist development inspired by religious, largely Protestant, ethics. Sahoun, pointing to Weber's thesis, argues that "the paradigms of capitalist development were largely inspired by the religious values and ethical behaviour [which] heralded in the dawn of the era of 'Reform'" (in Ryan, 1996, p. 39). Like Sahoun, Li (2002) points to Weber's thesis on Protestantism as an agent in the development of capitalist Europe. Summarizing Weber, Li explains, "profit making was turned into an ethos, a moral crusade...this gave birth to a capitalist system which began to function independently of religion" (p. 407). In this new "deformed" system where the freedom of the individual is prioritized or, as Li calls it, "expressive individualism – the glorification neither of God nor of country but of self" became the new primary influence independent from religion (p. 409). Although the glorification of self may have become the new focal point, it is impossible to deny the religious influences which continue within Western culture.

While the relationship between religion and development is not often considered as an important aspect of development, Polyani points out that the economy, which is most often the focus of development, is embedded within a greater arena of the political, the social and the religious (in Salinger, 2004). According to Salinger (2004), modernization theory has consistently situated religion in the realm of the private and personal thereby excluding religion from development discourse and analysis. However, it is necessary to consider the impact of value systems, created by religious identity, both because these systems can be a force behind the economic and social realities of

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development and because of the influence that the historical roots of religious systems have on current systems whether religious or not (Inglehart, 2000; Salinger, 2004).

Sardar-Ali (2002) argues that religion must be considered in the process of development as it can be an important part of individual and group identity. The influence of religion on identity is particularly important in considering the effect of gender and development paradigms on development (which will be discussed later). These seek to challenge the disadvantaged positions of women thereby changing their roles and identities both within the family and within society. While the links between religion, identity and conflict due to different religious beliefs may cause development organizations to be hesitant to consider the influence of religion on development, Tyndale (2003) argues that it is more likely that development organizations avoid religion because religious groups may have different understandings of what constitutes development than those of the mainly Western, mainstream development organizations. It is more likely, he says, that an imposition of foreign agendas in development, as opposed to the acknowledgement of local religious values, is a greater contributor to resistance and even to conflict.

After researching the connection between religion and development for the International Development Research Council (IDRC) in 1995, Ryan makes three recommendations regarding the importance of recognizing religion and its role in development. These are:

1) Local people should be listened to and trusted more.

2) Local religious and ethical paradigms should be considered integral elements in designing development research projects.

3) The global ethic for human development should emerge from the beliefs and

experience of people as lived, not as rationally deduced (p. 39).

These recommendations highlight the important influence that religion has on development. Following these recommendations, according to Ryan, will enhance the success of development initiatives.

Religion and Development: Islam and the West

In his famous essay, "The Clash of Civilizations?", Huntington's (1993) argues that the ending of the Cold War has signaled a change in conflicts. While Huntington's hypothesis has been discounted, reformulated, and debated continuously since, it nonetheless continues to be returned to and referred to in theory, practice and popular culture. Huntington argues that the threat of conflict is no longer between Western countries, rather a new type of conflict has now become a greater threat: the conflict between civilizations. Considering six major points in his argument, Huntington divides the world into a number of civilizations based on their culture. At the heart of these differences he argues, is the issue of identity.

The first point Huntington makes is that, unlike political or economic differences, civilizations are defined by their "basic" nature (p. 25). This nature, while inclusive of such characteristics as language, history, and custom, is particularly influenced by religion as "the people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy" (p. 25).

Secondly, Huntington points out that the world is shrinking thereby increasing the contact between different groups and the fundamental values of others. The third point of

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his thesis is that, with the increased interaction between states, there follows a decrease in the importance and power of the nation thereby creating stronger ties between shared religious beliefs and values. The increased importance of religion creates greater ties not only between same country citizens but also between other nations which share that religion.

Fourthly, Huntington points out that the power of the West creates a space for those not a part of the West to feel 'othered'. The attitude of the West, considered the 'us', creates a space for 'other' civilizations to unite, becoming more powerful against what they see as the common enemy – those that are different from them, the West. According to Huntington, religion further emphasizes and exaggerates these differences as it requires that its followers are exclusive. In the words of Huntington, "a person can be half-French and half-Arab and simultaneously even a citizen of two countries. It is more difficult to be half-Catholic and half-Muslim" (p. 27).

Lastly, observes Huntington, that while international trade continues to increase, it appears to be the greatest and most successful between those who share a civilization. Theorizing that increased economic relations both reinforce and consciously acknowledge the similarities which exist between nations, they simultaneously reinforce the differences between others. This last point is highly problematic as it infers that the Most Developed Countries (MDCs), which according to Huntington's theory, share common civilizational characteristics with those of other MDCs, will continually increase their economic ties between each other thereby further consolidating the wealth within the wealthiest nations.

Li's (2002) thesis centres on the similar dichotomy between the West and Islam as Huntington, but Li argues that the basis of Huntington's civilization paradigm is false as the clash really occurs not between civilizations but between differing state politics.

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According to Li, the clash between groups is a result of the policies of the West and their disagreement with Islamic principles. Li contends that the current global politics have fuelled "inequality, poverty, dislocation, disintegration, caused by the growth-driven, consumption-driven, technology-driven, debt-driven, speculation-driven globalisation of market capitalism," a result of the:

> *...marketisation, commercialisation and urbanization [which] in particular serve to remove people from their traditional homes, land and roots, transporting them to an unfamiliar and even dangerous place where none of the usual rules seem to apply... the reaction to the negative impact of globalization of capitalism is also much stronger in Islamic societies than in the rest of the Third World. (p. 415)*

Li attributes this negative reaction to the breakdown of strong cultural and social values in Islamic communities brought about by global politics.

While Huntington's thesis adds support to Ryan's and others' arguments that religion is a necessary consideration in development, Huntington and Li both build their theories on Orientalist assumptions of an 'us' and 'them'. Said (2000), for example, asserts that Huntington's article contains a number of assumptions and generalized statements which hide truth and construct false understandings of the differences between the so-called 'West' and 'Islam'.

In his introduction to "Orientalism," Said (1979) explains that Orientalism is "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" (p. 1). It is this experience by the West and their attempt to understand the "Orient" which defines the Orientalism not the reality of the Orient which gives it meaning (1979, p. 7). Of particular importance to this discourse is the acknowledgement of power dynamics and "that no production of knowledge in the

human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances" (1979, p. 11). It is this influence that so readily enables a comparison between what is known to the researcher/author and what is unknown or not understood. This concept forms the basis of Orientalism such that Orientalism does not necessarily actually reflect the truth rather it is a reflection of all that the author sees as different from him or her self. Difference becomes the mode of understanding and comprehension but not essentially the truth.

According to Said (1979, 1981, 2000), the notion of 'Islam' and 'the West' are themselves, constructions of 'the West' in order to attempt to formulate understanding. The use of 'Islam', for example, oversimplifies the diversities that exist between its practitioners, ignoring such obvious influences as location, class, and culture. With a growth rate of 2.9 percent per year, Islam outpaces the global annual population growth rate (about 2.3 percent), counting approximately 22 percent of the world's population as believers (Li, 2002). Practitioners of Islam are located throughout five different continents. They speak different languages, have experienced different histories, and have different cultures (Said, 2000). Huntington's and Li's use of the term 'Islam' to create a strong dichotomy between 'the West' and 'Islam' obscures the diversity and complexity of the practitioners of this religion.

According to Said (2000), Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis fails on a number of accounts. For example, the broad generalizations which create the dichotomy of Islam versus the West fail to recognize differences which exist among practitioners of Islam. While the use of the term Islam serves to identify the believer, Said (1981) points out that this term:

...seems to engulf all aspects of the diverse Muslim world, reducing them all to a

special malevolent and unthinking essence. Instead of analysis and understanding as

a result, there can be for the most part only the crudest form of us-versus-them...

hence the frequent caricatures of Muslims as oil suppliers, as terrorists, and more

recently, as bloodthirsty mobs. (p. 8, 6)

Said (1981) points out, Islam as a simple stable reality is "part fiction, part ideological

label, part minimal designation of religion...In no really significant way is there a direct

correspondence between the 'Islam' in common Western usage and the enormously

varied life that goes on with the world of Islam" (p. x). Said (1981) goes on to explain

that because the concept of 'Islam' is neither part of the European world nor part of the

industrialized 'developed' world such as Japan, it is considered in need of modernization.

Discussing the perspective of a dichotomous construction of global interactions,

Said explains that what emerges is an "us-versus- them" line of reasoning where what is

accepted is what is known by "us" and what lies outside of this knowledge belongs to the

unknown and to "them". But according to Said (2000) there is no more an "us" then there

is a "them" as cultural representations which are necessary to create a "us" and "them"

require "compression, reduction, and exaggeration" of reality (p. 577). What exists then,

in reality is not 'us' and 'them', rather, what exists is a dialectic constantly shifting and

creating both tension and compromise between each so-called opposite. What emerges is

not 'us' and 'them' but a compromise where both differences and similarities are

recognized rather than positioned as opposites where a 'clash' occurs. Said argues that

Huntington's emphasis on difference is an oversimplification of both Islam and the West

which promotes the ideology of a 'clash' because of its focus on difference.

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Islam and Development:

Considering that religion is often ignored within development theory, the theoretical understanding of the relationship between development and Islam is even less. Yet, as Adamu and Sardar-Ali, point out, Islamic paradigms have significant influence over women's roles in society and thus over their participation in development. It is therefore important to consider how some Islamic paradigms approach the reforms of development.

According to Corrigan, Denny, Jaffee, & Eire (1998), "Muslims have traditionally held that no separation should exist between religion, [and] the state, that Islam is a complete way of life that leaves no independent secular sphere in its midst. In reality Muslims have been obliged to sustain their existence in a wide variety of arrangements" (p. 195). While Stowasser (1998) delineates these arrangements of Islamic practice and approaches to reform into that of the traditionalist, the rationalist or a combination of the two, Esposito (1991), in his book _Islam: The Straight Path_, defines the attitudes towards Islamic reforms according to four categories. While he recognizes that these are not definitive categories but subject to overlap and intermingling by practitioners, the four approaches are: the secularist, the conservative, the neo-traditionalist or neo-fundamentalist, and the reformist or neo-modernist.

Secularists, according to Esposito, are defined by their advocacy for the restriction of religion to the private sphere. The conservative perspective holds that Islam, in its classical formulation, is the completed word of God. From this perspective, the law of Islam is not subject to change rather it is the people that must conform to the law. Respecting the classical formulations of Islamic law, neo-traditionalists argue that Islamic laws have come to incorporate many practices which are not truly Islamic. They therefore

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argue for *ijtihad* or reinterpretation of the primary sources of Islam. The purposes of *ijtihad* are numerous but, for the neo-traditionalist, the main use of *ijtihad* is to reinterpret Islamic law so that it can be applied to contemporary circumstances and needs. According to Esposito, this perspective endeavours not to modernize but to Islamize thus attempting to subordinate everything to Islamic values. Esposito goes on to explain that the reformist position also advocates for *ijtihad* but it is with different objectives. While the neo-traditionalist attempts to Islamize modernization, the reformist attempts to modernize Islam. Arguing that the Islamic period was a normative ideal from which society has moved on, reformists argue that it is necessary for Islam to change so as to remain relevant today.

These four categories are useful for analyzing issues concerning women and development in Islam. Including Stowasser's (1998) traditionalist and rationalist or reformist attitudes, and those which fall between these two categories, as well as including and defining the secularist paradigms with regard to Islam, Esposito's framework aids in the analysis of gender and development paradigms in an Islamic context as it allows for greater nuance. Esposito's inclusion of a secular paradigm is necessary for understanding paradigms in society regarding women and development as well as providing a space for consideration of the mainstream development paradigms which are present in Islamic countries. The use of four paradigms or categories also confronts and challenges the construction of an Orientalist perspective which, as it has been argued above, does not consider the dialectic.

Development and Women in an Islamic context:

Islam is not homogeneous. The common bond of Islam, and the holy text of the Qur'an, does not inhibit the diversities which exist between populations of Muslims.

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These diversities are not only cultural, social, and political but also exist in the actual practice of Islamic theology. Local culture and tradition, politics and economics, in addition to the multiple different practices of Islam, affect ideologies particularly regarding issues of gender. Despite these differences, many scholars argue that there are certain social constructions of gender, based on Islamic principles and the assumption of an "Islamic culture" which affect gender issues (Al-Ali, 2003, p. 218). While different trajectories have occurred within Islamic regions and cultures, gender politics have "assumed a paramount position in discourse and practices of states and national and social movements" and "the 'woman question' [has been] a central problem tackled by all key players" (Berkovitch & Moghadam, 1999, p. 274). Adamu (1999) points out that "few attempt to underplay the centrality of Islam in determining the position of women in Muslim societies, and its impact on the everyday lives of women...ideas about gender relations are derived from interpretations of Islam, and these ideas are enacted either through legislation or public opinion" (p. 56-57).

The secularist:

International gender and development paradigms, used throughout the developing world, including in areas which are primarily Muslim, are generally formulated from a Western, secular, feminist perspective. While it must be acknowledged that, Western feminism has been the primary force for drawing attention to the importance of women in development, Minces argues that the use of this perspective is then premised on the ideology that "the demands of Western feminists seem...to represent the greatest advances towards emancipation of women as a whole" (Minces in Afshar, 1993, p. 6). Although Esposito (1991) explains that the secularist is a proponent of the restriction of religion to the private sphere, Western feminism clearly sees Islam, as it does all major

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world religions, as patriarchal and therefore an obstacle to women's equality and emancipation (Young, 1986). It therefore follows that, if Western feminism sees Islam as an obstacle to women's equality, then mainstream gender and development paradigms, which are based in Western feminism, also largely view Islam as an obstacle to women's participation in development.[1]

Western feminism has largely been responsible for successfully calling attention to the fundamental role of women in development such that now, in the field of development, few dispute the fundamental role of women in the development project. Although enabling women to participate in development is mobilizing half of the population towards development goals, women also play fundamental roles, greatly impacting both the household and the larger society (Barriteau, 2000). Globally, women are often responsible for feeding their families, whether through cooking daily meals, growing food in the garden or by purchasing groceries from their income in paid employment. Women are also largely responsible for the care and education of their children and for the support of elderly members of the family. According to Parikh and Inter Pares (1995), women are principal agents of development because of the essential roles they fulfill in the complete health and well-being of the family.

Recognizing the necessity of women's participation in development, three major paradigms of gender and development have emerged, each of which is based primarily on the Western feminist perspectives from which the realization of women's fundamental role in development came. These are: Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD). Although each paradigm attempts to ensure women's participation in development by focusing on different aspects for their inclusion, the understood end goal of women's participation is to achieve

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women's equality with men because 1) equality is a human right, 2) inequality is oppressive, and 3) equality enables women to participate and benefit equally in development and is an enabling force for development.

Women in Development (WID), rooted in the theory of modernisation, focuses primarily on integrating women into economic development so as to enable women to meet their own practical needs (Tinker, 1997). Evolving out of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the United States' women's movement, and initially articulated by Ester Boserup's (1970) foundational book *Women's Role in Economic Development*, WID was the first development approach to consider women specifically. Focusing on the problems of women's exclusion from the development process, WID has promoted strategies of equality before the law, employment, education, and empowerment so as to promote women's equal and fair stake in the economy (Tinker, 1997). Women's integration into existing development programmes has been intended to help development be both efficient and effective, theorized to occur via the provision of income earning opportunities for women. These opportunities would enable women to be economically productive members of society while facilitating their abilities to provide for their families and to achieve greater equality through women's increased self-sufficiency (Connelly, et al., 2000; Tinker, 1997).

Criticized for a number of reasons, WID has been called the 'add-women-and-stir' approach to development, as it attempted to simply insert women into existing development projects (Tinker, 1997). WID is also accused of attempting to create 'women' as a universal category (Tinker, 1997). Tinker and Lerner (1986) both point out that the WID paradigm fails to consider the factors which have created women's

exclusion and subordinate position. Finally, Beneria and Sen (1997) criticize WID's foundational assumption that modernization is and will be beneficial.

Women and Development (WAD), a Marxist feminist approach, emerged in the 1970s, rooted in dependency theories of development (Visvanathan, 1997). Arguing that women have always been a part of development, WAD has emphasised women's relationship to the processes of development and the sexual division of labour intensified under the capitalist system (Beneria and Sen, 1997). The primary objective of WAD calls for "the elimination of class and sex hierarchies through a radical transformation of society" (Beneria and Sen, 1997, p. 50).

Hijazi (in Haddad, 1998) documents the relevance of WAD in his analysis of gender segregation and subordination variations between classes in the Middle East. According to Hijazi, in the working class, there are sharp distinctions between feminine and masculine roles, while in the middle class there are greater flexibilities in the gendered roles and expectations between women and men. In the Middle Eastern upper-class, women tend to take on greater subjugated roles in deference to their husbands' right to rule the family.

Although Hijazi's evidence supports the use of a WAD paradigm, Rathgeber (1989) points out that WAD class analysis of women's subjugation fails to consider other aspects of women's lives such as their reproduction. Consideration for, and analysis of structures which initiate women's exclusion from development programmes and from the benefits of development, as well as the almost exclusive focus on women's income production as opposed to other issues of high relevance to women, are some of the main arguments against WID and WAD paradigms by proponents of the Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm (Rathgeber, 1989).

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While WAD does focus on structures which create women's subordinate position, GAD, coming into practice in the 1980s, has attempted to have a more holistic focus; considering welfare, anti-poverty, and equity approaches all necessary aspects to include women in development and facilitate equality between the sexes (Young, 1997). According to Moffat (1991), the GAD paradigm makes it possible to acknowledge the social, economic, and political influences as well as considering the relationships between women and men as factors which shape society and affect women's ability to participate and benefit from development.

While the GAD paradigm theoretically attempts to address the causes of women's inequality, Tinker (1997) criticizes both WAD and GAD as being highly idealistic and not practical. De Groot and Maynard (in Kandiyoti, 1996) point out that the GAD focus on 'gender' as opposed to 'women' has a "depolicizing tendency" with the possibility of moving women back to the margins as men gain more attention from their inclusion in the term 'gender' (p. 7).

The whole 'women and development' project or what is now commonly referred to as 'gender and development,' largely based on WID, WAD and GAD paradigms, is widely criticised by women outside of these Western feminist paradigms of development. Mohanty (1997), critiques the feminist theory, from which WID, WAD and GAD are derived, as being not only universalist but also imperialist in their ideology of a "global sisterhood" which assumes that Western women are liberated and in control of their own lives (p. 85). Mohanty (in Hirshmann, 1995) argues that the notion of a "global sisterhood" is an attempt to "colonize and domesticate the multifarious realities of 'being women' in non-Western societies" (p. 47). Afshar (1993) points out that inequality is

"multi-causal" preventing the distinction of 'woman' and her struggles for liberation from the oppression caused by these inequities (p. 4).

Adamu (1999) explains that in her "experience, few women or men in Muslim communities disagree with the content of GAD programmes which address women's practical needs and interests or even the reform of gender relations aiming for a fairer society" but she points out that, that these paradigms emphasize the rights of the individual, disregarding Islamic responsibilities and community thus rendering the paradigms incompatible with some Islamic values – "especially regarding inheritance law, moral values, and the practice, role and nature of the family" (p. 57). Adamu goes on to argue that, "many question GAD programmes on principle, viewing them as illegitimate because they are 'Western'" (p. 60). It is significant to note that these principles are illegitimate simply because they are Western.

WID, WAD and GAD all rely heavily on the assumptions of the necessity for women's equality, and women's rights as human rights, with a universal ideology of what women's rights should be and what equality looks like yet others, such as Rathgeber (1995), assert that there is "no single women's situation" (p. 207). Both Taraki (1995) and Smith (1987) criticize the feminist philosophies embodied in international development policies as representing the most insidious form of cultural imperialism. Coomaraswamy (1996), points out that the discourse of women's rights as human rights embodied in a number of United Nations declarations, conventions and agreements is severely criticized by many scholars in the developing world as a discourse produced by the Enlightenment, not one which is universal.

In practice, international gender and development paradigms are embodied in international mechanisms such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These

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policies are promoted as being of primary importance to women and to development agendas. While acknowledging that these international agreements are important steps towards including and facilitating women's empowerment, and to halting the discrimination and barriers which women face because they are women, it must, however, also be acknowledged that these policies are based in Western feminism and they emphasize the role of the state in "promoting women's emancipation" to bring about equality (Young, 1997, p. 53). Although these policies are heavily criticised by people who live outside of these paradigms for being Western-centred, others also dismiss these legal reforms and changes, such as the ones promoted by gender and development paradigms, as failing to make any substantive change. According to Lerner (1986), policies may be seen as necessary to the process of women's emancipation, but they do not basically change nor even challenge the patriarchy which causes inequality and oppression. Lerner argues, "…such reforms need to be integrated within a vast cultural revolution in order to transform patriarchy and thus abolish it" (p. 217). The issue of formal equality versus substantive equality is a major problem in Turkey, and will be further discussed in the case study in Chapter Three.

The reliance on the term 'equality' itself produces two problems. The first is that of context. Sardar-Ali (2002) poses the important question as to what extent concepts which are based almost exclusively on a Western feminist discourse of equality and human rights, as outlined in documents such as CEDAW, are applicable outside of the Western context. She also points out that these agendas assume that the "underdevelopment and gender inequality in the Third World are caused by traditional values and social structures" (p. 64). Furthermore, she argues, the promotion of international agendas focused on gender equality prioritizes it above other freedoms such

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as freedom of religion thus creating a "hierarchy of rights" (Sardar-Ali, 2002, p. 70).

Islamic identity, for example, is an important aspect of self but Islam does not necessarily teach equality between the sexes as known and understood by the international development agendas promoting gender equality. Islam is therefore seen as an obstacle to women's equality and Islamic principles are seen as contradictory to the mainstream gender and development paradigms. It is necessary to return to this issue and examine it further later.

Secondly, it is also necessary to consider the different meanings of 'gender equality' as there are varying definitions of what it means and therefore how it is addressed. Gender equality, according to the World Bank (2001), is defined as equality of opportunity, equality of voice and equality under the law. The World Bank does not consider gender equality to be an equality of outcomes. Others complain that gender equality is defined as "being like a man" which may be a true understanding of equality if only the productive realm is considered. Failing to address gender inequalities in areas such as women's reproductive roles or other inequalities in the private sphere, does essentially define gender equality as woman being "like a man" (Sardar-Ali, 2002, p. 73). Sardar-Ali argues that consideration of a definition and a plan to achieve equality must go beyond the current definitions to also consider and address other influential aspects of women's lives such as the rights located in the social and cultural spheres.

The current emphasis of gender and development paradigms on equality is operationalized through rights-based approaches which focus mainly on the public aspects of gender inequalities such as rights under the law. According to Moffat (1991), gender equality must be considered in terms of the relations between women and men; meaning that equality must also be considered beyond legal reforms. A rights-based

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approach may ensure that women are equal in a public arena but it is unclear how this is applied within the private sphere (Kandiyoti, 1994). Legal rights which govern the public sphere may become less relevant within the private, particularly within an Islamic context where rights and laws under the state are sometimes quite different from those under Islam. Practitioners may follow the laws under Islam, such as the Sharia law, within their home and private lives thereby obeying what they consider a higher order of law. The value of formal equality is also questionable as many of the women who would most benefit from such reforms do not have access to these formal rights either through lack of knowledge or access to the systems which enforce their rights.

The rooting of gender and development paradigms in the West and its association with Westernization raises a number of problems particularly in regards to the tensions between the constructed dichotomy of the West and Islam. The association of gender and development paradigms with the West subjects local activists to accusations of importing Western ideologies and betraying their own culture. The tensions between the West and Islam in terms of the secular and the religious make the accusation of importing Western ideology serious. Al-Ali (2003) explains that "the denunciation of playing up to Western expectations and being alienated from their own culture is a very powerful weapon" (p. 221). Adamu (1999) points out that "GAD is viewed with suspicion by some Muslim scholars as offering a means of the West to wipe out the values and beliefs of Muslim societies" (p. 57).

While Western paradigms of women's participation in society and development are viewed with suspicion in an Islamic context, Balchin (2003) points out that these gender and development paradigms likewise see religion, particularly with regards to the subject of Muslim women, as an obstacle to development. Basing the gender and

development focus on equality between the sexes subjects Islamic texts, such as the Qur'an, to criticisms justified through the literal interpretation of many verses in the sacred text. For example, Sura 2:228 of the Qur'an, says, "Men are considered a step above women" and Sura 4:34 says "Men are in charge of women because God has given preference of one over the other and because men provide support for women" (Smith, 1987, p. 240, 247). Clearly, the literal readings of such sections of the Qur'an are contrary to gender and development paradigms based on women's equality therefore demonstrating why these paradigms see Islam as an impediment to development.

Shaheed (1998) argues against such thinking. According to her, approaches which "focus on religion as an obstacle to women's development are discordant with aspects of women's own experience of religion where it can provide women a space which is absolutely their own and a means of...social participation" (p. 431). Although mainstream gender and development paradigms focus on equality between the sexes, the significance of religion to women cannot be ignored. Adamu (1999) points out that, there remains a "muted relationship between 'gender and development' and religion" and that "any attempt to reform gender relations that excludes religion is likely to fail" (p. 56).

While the secularist perspective provides a space for women's participation in development, this perspective is firmly rooted in Western, feminist, gender and development paradigms which ignore the importance of religion within the lives of women, and which see religion as an obstacle to development. Shahidian (in Moghadam 2002) makes the common argument of many secular feminists that, "given the strength of conservative, orthodox, traditional, and fundamentalist interpretations, laws, and institutions" to attempt to work within Islam as an Islamic feminist is "futile" and "an oxymoron" (p. 1149). As it will be shown in the following section, the religiosity of both

the traditionalist and the neo-traditionalist paradigms are also unviable alternatives to current Western gender and development paradigms as these essentially leave women's disadvantaged position in both the public and private spheres unaddressed. But, while the concept of Islamic feminism may be considered an oxymoron theoretically, to expect the acceptance of secular, Western paradigms of gender and development in regions which are largely Muslim, seems improbable. These secular paradigms disregard the importance of religion to women's identity, and to the identity of the community as a whole.

Religious Perspectives:

In Turkey and the Middle East region, there is little contestation of the ideology that the West and modernization are intimately linked (Kandiyoti, 1991). Largely rising out of colonialism, the association between the West and modernization exists not only in terms of the economic realm but is also carried over into the cultural (Kandiyoti, 1991). This creates a forum where anything that is viewed as modern also has the potential to be seen as a carry-over of the West, imperialist and, as such, a possible threat to cultural identity. Historically, both Christian missionaries and colonial administrators were culturally imperialist in their attempts to 'civilize', and 'liberate' the perceived oppressed Muslim woman (Kandiyoti, 1991, p. 7). Unfortunately, the 'civilizing' and 'liberating' discourse of missionaries and colonialism also happens to be similar to the discourses of feminism and its rhetoric of emancipation and liberation thereby linking the two in the most apparent ways[2].

Although some of the controversial passages regarding women in the Qur'an have been mentioned above, it is necessary to consider one of the most influential and controversial passages, Sura 4:34:

Men are in charge of [are guardians of/are superior to/have authority over] women

(al-rijalu quawwamuna 'ala l-nisa') because God has endowed one with more

[because God has preferred some of them over others] (bi-ma faddala Allahu

ba'dahum 'ala ba'din) and because they spend of their means (wa-bi-ma 'anfaqu min

amwalihim). Therefore the righteous women are obedient, guarding in secret that

which God has guarded. As to those from whom you fear rebellion, admonish them

and banish them to separate beds, and beat them. Then if they obey you, seek not a

way against them. For God is Exalted, Great. (as quoted in Stowasser, 1998, p. 33)

From a Western gender and development perspective, this passage appears to be

promoting men's patriarchal status over women but Corrigan et al. (1998), argues that:

...the Qur'an teaches equality of the sexes with respect to human worth and duties to

God. But equality of worth does not mean identity of roles. Women's and men's

different natural makeups [sic] have been ordained by God for the benefit of

humankind. Both sexes are meant to complement each other. (p. 476)

It is therefore being argued that equality between the sexes is not necessarily a relevant

point. Of more significance, many practitioners of Islam contend, are the terms

'cooperation' and 'complementarity' (Smith, 1987). Meant by the use of these terms, is

the specificity and differences between women's and men's roles and the completeness

achieved through the partnering of the roles of men and women. The allocation of

specific roles to women and men is meant to create relations in which the sexes work

together for the same goals. Esposito (1991) argues that the complementarity of the

familial relations reflects the differing abilities and characteristics of men and women.

Lerner (1986), in her book *The Creation of Patriarchy*, disagrees with ideology of

a cooperant relationship. According to her, the political, social and economic systems are

responsible for creating and nurturing the subordination of women into beings which can function within patriarchal systems and those improvements which are seen, such as the ideology of a cooperant relationship are only relative to the positions which they held before. Pointing to this relativity, Lerner concludes this "freedom" is "illusory and unwarranted" and does not change the essential nature of the patriarchy (p. 217).

To discuss Islamic gender and development paradigms further it is first necessary to return to Esposito's framework of different Islamic reform paradigms: that of the conservative, the neo-traditionalist, and the reformist. While in each paradigm the interpretation of 'complementarity' differs, a second central contention, closely connected to the understanding of complementarity, also exists regarding the relationship between Islam and women in Islamic paradigms of reform. This controversy is between those that follow the classical traditions of the past (*taqlid*), and those that advocate for reformation and reinterpretation of tradition (*ijtihad*) (Esposito, 1991). These debates link intimately to the question of whether Islam can become egalitarian or is essentially enduringly patriarchal.

The contradictions and tensions between Islamic paradigms regarding women's role in society and development become more apparent when using Esposito's framework to examine differing principles such as that of *ijtihad* and the controversial topic of women's place. In making generalizations, regarding each of these positions, it must be remembered that these are generalizations and the described characteristics of these paradigms do overlap or, at times, highly resemble each other.

The conservative:

The conservative perspective is based on the classical formulation of Islam as developed by schools of law in the early Islamic centuries (Esposito, 1991). The

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conservative approach to Islam believes in the complete, literal and ageless character of the Qur'an and the revelations contained in it (Stowasser, 1998). The historicity of the Qur'an is not considered of necessary importance in this paradigm, emerging from the "fear that such reflection might wrongly suggest that revelations were 'determined' by historical necessity, that is, that *asbab al-nuzul* [occasions of revelation] be misconstrued as 'occasions *for* (not *of)*' revelation" (emphasis by Stowasser, 1998, p. 31).

Hammer (2000) argues that because of the unchanging nature of this perspective, it is appealing to many; offering stability within a rapidly changing social and economic climate where traditional values are losing their place. The consequence of this 'unchanging nature' though necessitates the acceptance of the continuation of women's subjugation towards men as the Qur'an literally decrees.

The medieval teachings of Tabari (d. 923) and Baydawi (d. 1286) are foundational to this perspective. The exegesis of these two leaders towards Sura 4:34, for example, emphasize complementarity. The relationship, according to these Qur'anic authorities, between men and women is equitable based on the logic that obligations, such as the monetary responsibilities of a husband for his wife's dower, and to provide financially for both his wife and for their children, equal out with the separate responsibilities of a wife. Women are, for example, obligated to be obedient to their husbands and to be good household managers, among other things (Stowasser, 1998). According to the Qur'an, women and men are completely equal in the eyes of God but women are subject to men as the Qur'an also states that men are a step above women (Smith, 1987).

The conservative paradigm emphasizes consideration for what is beneficial to the greater community both "spiritually and morally," defining these as based on the concept of genuineness derived from the theology which has been accepted through the consensus

of Islamic leaders (Stowasser, 1998, p. 32). Women's traditional roles in the family and in the community therefore must be upheld and continued as part of the complementarity promoted in the Qur'an.

Modernization, which is highly focused on individual rights, is argued by conservatives, to increase the pressures on women (Haddad, 1998). According to Haddad, modernization, in an Islamic context, "has served to sharpen the conflict between traditional expectations of women, their roles, and the real demands of daily life in a developing society" (p. 6); this conflict is born out in such ways as a higher dowry for women who are educated. The conservative paradigm therefore believes that women who work outside of their home are going against their basic nature (Haddad, 1998).

According to both Burgat (2003) and Smith (1987), many women do not perceive Islam as an attack on their freedom rather they see Western practices and the breakdown of the family unit in the West as unacceptable and as a consequence of modernization. Kandiyoti (1996) explains that there are continuous tensions between "the modernist trends in nationalism, which favour an expansion of women's citizenship rights and social equality, and the organicist, anti-modernist strands which are concerned about the dilution and contamination of cultural values and identity in a post-colonial context" (p. 8-9).

The conservative paradigm is extremely problematic to the progress of gender and development, as women usually have secondary and subordinate positions to men, as these have historically been deemed their 'proper' roles within Islam. While the secular paradigm of gender and development does not permit space for religion, the conservative paradigm does not provide a space for an alternative to the secular without insisting on the established roles of women located in the home and in family.

The traditional roles of women, under the conservative Islamic paradigm, result in the refusal of a space where women are not bound by the traditional, literal readings of the Qur'an and other sacred texts. Traditional roles restrict women's access to resources and to the benefits of development because these are designated as part of the male realm. The conservative Islamic development paradigm sees women purely in their roles as mothers and wives therefore this type of development, when focusing on women's issues, focuses on their roles as wives and mothers. Participation in development or to receive direct benefits of development beyond these realms is limited to husbands and women receive these benefits only via their husbands. This causes a 'trickling down' of development's benefits where women only receive what their husbands receive and what their husbands choose to give them. This assumes and reinforces firstly, the ideology of a male head of household. Secondly, it assumes that when men benefit from development, the whole family also benefits. Unfortunately, this is not true. Unlike the fact that, when women receive access to developmental benefits the entire family usually also benefits, when men gain from development initiatives, the family does not necessarily benefit at all.

The neo-traditionalist and the reformist:

Both the neo-traditionalist and the reformist perspective are based largely on Egyptian theologian and jurist Muhammad Abduh's (d. 1905) teaching of the compatibility of modernity and Islam. This teaching is based on contextualizing the literal teachings of the Qur'an so as to give these teachings new meanings and understandings. From this, came the principles of *ibadat* (laws on religious duties) and *muamalat* (laws on social transactions) based on the Qur'an as the central emphasised text for Islamic life. By delineating between *ibadat* and *muamalat,* Abduh opened the way for each generation to

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interpret parts of the Qur'an according to the wider context of time in which it is being practiced (Stowasser, 1998). While some doctrines, beliefs, and rituals must be maintained because they are defined as fundamental (the *ibadat*), according to those who advocate for *ijtihad* or reinterpretation of the *muamalat,* issues which are political, cultural, social, economic or educational in nature, can and should change with each generation (Haddad, 1998).

It is important to note that although Abduh's *ijtihad* did provide a forum so as to possibly benefit women, it was not done as a means to achieve women's equality or liberation. Rather, Abduh advocated for a "re-Islamization" of the family premised on the link of women's status to the moral decay or well-being of the overall society (Stowasser, 1998, p. 35). While Abduh did promote renewal and reform of the social structures which were traditional, his proposals were based on the greater concern for the community. Thus issues of women's education were promoted but for the greater good of the family and the community, the responsibilities which were accorded to her through Islam (Stowasser, 1998).

The neo-traditionalist:

The neo-traditionalist claims the right to go back to the fundamental sources of Islam to reinterpret (*ijtihad*) and reapply them to contemporary needs and conditions; rejecting anything that is 'Western' or subjugating it to Islam much like Abduh advocated in his support of *ijtihad* and 're-Islamization' (Esposito, 1991; Stowasser, 1998). This perspective does not, in general, dispute traditional theological interpretations of the Qur'an rather it focuses more on the economic, cultural, societal, and political ethical issues which Abduh would distinguish as part of the *muamalat*. Stowasser (1998) explains that this perspective has been established in the fear of losing the "authentic"

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tradition therefore placing emphasis on defending against "alienating innovation" (p. 33). This position, in the West, is often labeled as *Islamism* as everything, including the political, is subject to the application of the sacred texts and their interpretations in order to Islamize modernity.

The neo-traditionalist paradigm promotes the maximization of women's potential so as to benefit women's 'proper' roles and responsibilities (Smith, 1997). Included in this may be aspects such as women's education so as to benefit the family and the community. While some aspects, such as the promotion of women's education to make them better mothers, do not seem necessarily wrong, they are highly problematic. Depending on the interpretation, attempting to 'Islamize' modernity may also include aspects such as forbidding women to leave their homes without covering their heads, faces or entire bodies, or insisting that women do not leave the home without a 'male protector'. Smith (1987) points out that the most problematical aspect of this type of reinterpretation is its reliance on the authority of men for religious interpretation of the *muamalat*.

The neo-traditionalist paradigm challenges the current understanding of development and what it means to be modern, as the paradigm views anything which is not Islamic to be an 'alienating innovation'. Most understandings of both development and definitions of modern are constructed on the model of the West and largely assumed to be epitomized by the standards of living and freedoms in the West. This is particularly true concerning issues of gender, as demonstrated by the secular gender and development paradigms founded in Western feminism.

Advocating for reinterpreting the sacred texts, the neo-traditionalist paradigm has the potential for women to have greater freedoms but is highly problematic. As neo-

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traditionalism does not allow women to reinterpret the texts, patriarchy and gender inequalities can persist as men maintain firm control over religious interpretation. Saadallah (2001) writes that, "interpretation (which has been historically restricted to males) has contributed greatly in solidifying the patriarchal status quo in Muslim societies rather than dismantling it" (p. 118). Retaining such control, allows men to dictate to women what their feminine roles should be. Control, as such, becomes an opportunity for the distortion of Muslim women's roles and rights. Past examples of such distortion and, many Muslims would argue, presently continue to occur to the detriment of women, society, and development. The neo-traditionalist paradigm of development and reform provides little hope or guarantee of forwarding women's participation in or benefits from development because religion is clearly directed by men.

According to Paidar (in Moghadam, 2002), who sometimes writes under the name Nahid Yeganeh, it is necessary that Muslim women are themselves situated in the mainstream of the debates and dialogues particularly regarding religious interpretation. She argues, "...in making our alliances and voicing our oppositions, we cannot rely on pre-conceived ideas about ideologies such as Islam" (p. 1143). Thus as Kandiyoti (1996) argued for an indigenous feminism, it is necessary to consider what the meaning of Islamic feminism is and how this meaning can provide an alternative paradigm to development and women in LDCs. As Kandiyoti (1996) points out, women in Islam need to be supported in a position where they "do not merely submit to the strictures of religious fundamentalism as interpreted by men but are active participants with their own versions of the ways in which Islam might further their gender interests" (p. 18). It is this aspect of women's participation that can potentially provide a space for religious women to both participate in and benefit from gender and development paradigms.

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The reformist:

While the neo-traditionalist paradigm attempts to subjugate modernity to Islam, thereby limiting the scope of what is permitted into and under Islam, the reformist paradigm attempts to apply modernity to Islam. It is through the application of modernity to Islam that a space seems to appear for a new gender and development paradigm which enables women to both participate in and benefit from development without compromising their religious identities. Reformists attempt to distinguish between the immutable principles and laws and those that are relative to the historical and societal time period (Esposito, 1991). *Ijtihad* or reinterpretation of the *muamalat* provides a key to the reformist perspective in understanding women's participation in society. Given that reformists attempt to modernize Islam and what defines 'modern' is often based on the developed world, women's equality is therefore often considered to be a part of what is considered modern and promoted within the reformist paradigm of Islam.

In the reformist paradigm, complementarity is generally defined much like equality, exemplified through such practices as women's inclusion in *ijtihad* and their criticisms of their male Islamic counterparts for misinterpreting the teachings of Islam (Al-Ali, 2003). While the reformist paradigm may resemble the secular feminist perspective, it must be born in mind that the reformist perspective is still rooted firmly in the *ibadat,* the fundamental principles of Islam. While the secularist rejects Islam, the reformist embraces it.

Secular feminism criticizes reformists for constructing divisions among women according to their religion thus ignoring the heterogeneity which exists among them (Mojab, 2001). On the other hand, conservatives and neo-traditionalists consider the reformist perspective of women to be Westernized and therefore not legitimately Islamic

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(Balchin, 2003). Although she considers it a laudable goal, Arat (1995) dismisses the reformist paradigm as too difficult considering all of the inequalities in Islamic law regarding women.

Islamic Feminism: an Islamic alternative for development?

> *Muslim feminists have found themselves in the middle of a conflict between Islam and the 'West,' facing a double-edged sword [sic]. The importance and relevance of women's participation in the Islamic movement, the emergence of Islamic women's movements in the Muslim world, have been interpreted by some as 'an ambiguous political struggle', where women are on the one hand 'fighting actively against their inequality, but on the other [are] accepting or supporting their own subordination'.*
> *(Duval in Adamu, 1999, p. 57)*

Despite criticisms leveled at reformists from each of the other three paradigms, a new gender and development paradigm has emerged from the reformist paradigm. It has become known as *Islamic feminism;* an alternative, largely indigenous gender and development paradigm which attempts to help women participate in and benefit from development without sacrificing or attacking their religious identities. The use of Esposito's analytical framework to consider paradigms of women in Islam demonstrates that there are differing and contradictory positions regarding women's participation in Islamic societies. Tensions between the secularist paradigm and religious paradigms lead to discourses which either deem Islamic practices as essentially oppressive to women or to the assertion that practices are essentially not Islamic. The Islamic feminist paradigm positions itself in the middle of this debate; between those who desire to follow the practices of Islam and those who oppose it.

There is an assumption by many feminists, that secular trends are most beneficial for all women regardless of their religiosity. Moghadam (2002) argues that Islamic feminism "consciously or unwittingly delegitimizes secular trends and social force" (p. 1142). Yet many women are working from outside of secular gender and development paradigms to better the lives of women. Kandiyoti (1996), a Turkish woman, speaking specifically with regard to women and Islam, argues for the need of an articulation of an "indigenous feminism" which is not founded on Western sources (p. 9). An 'indigenous' feminism in an Islamic context cannot exist though in the categories of *the secularist, the conservative,* nor in the *neo-traditionalist,* as these do not legitimate women who attempt to reconcile religion and feminism.

It is important to note that Islamic feminists always argue for women's rights and for balance between the sexes, framed within the parameters of the value system of Islam. Moghadam (2002) explains that Islamic feminists "argue for period-based interpretations of the Qur'an… most seek to highlight the egalitarian tendencies within it as a way to frame contemporary legislation. None so far has suggested the fallibility of the Qur'an" (p. 1160). According to Abou-Bakr (2001), each one of a group of 19th and early 20th century Muslim activist writers has "explicitly measured contemporary social and cultural norms up against authentic Islamic moral standards and ideals" (section 1, para. 2).

A feminist perspective argues for equality between males and females which is, according to Arat (1995), at odds with any Islamic ideology. Arat argues that "it is difficult to reconcile Islamic ideology with a feminist perspective" (p. 68). She asserts that even the most modern understandings of Islam, are not actually practiced in Muslim societies, nor are they consistent in their arguments for equality between the sexes. But Afshar (1993) disagrees, arguing that "the assumption has been that the ideology of Islam

is, *per se*, the cause of subjugation or liberation" (p. 9). She points out that extensive study of Islam has occurred particularly with attention to the veil, to marriage, and to the familial obligations of women, with consideration for both the constraining and empowering characteristics of these responsibilities. Afshar (1993) goes on further to argue that:

> *...to engage in a political or intellectual discussion, we must first hear the arguments offered by the women who have chosen the Islamic path. The supporters of Islam have emphasised the extensive rights and independent status that Islam accords to women. They have a separate and independent legal, religious and economic identity, and inalienable right of inheritance and to negotiate marriage contract. More importantly Islam is, they argue, one of the rare religions that does not single out women as the cause of all evil. (p. 9)*

Khan (1998) also argues for the legitimacy of Islamic feminism as it provides a forum for Muslim women to join together to enter the "political space" and insist on the need to address problems such as poverty, violence, and lack of employment and education (p. 463). Currently, according to Khan, when Muslim women enter the space of the political, "they are confronted by the regulating discourses of Islam and Orientalism (among others)... [which] both reduce *Muslim* to a religious category" (p. 463).

Kandiyoti (quoted from a lecture in Abou-Bakr, 2001) and Afshar (1993) both make valid points which must be remembered when considering Islamic feminism in development. According to Kandiyoti, the debate between women and the textual interpretation of Islam is "theoretical and textual" which is different from "living Islam" (section 4, para. 1), while Afshar writes that,

...what is required now is to disentangle the notion that Islam per se forms a

practical barrier against the penetration of the development process into the female

and domestic sphere. It is time to denounce the passive acceptance that Muslim

women are ideologically barred from participating in the development process and

must be confined to their separate spheres in the home. (p. 7)

The point that both writers make is that debate as to whether Islam and feminism are

compatible is very theoretical and will likely continue on between those who are

practitioners of Islam and between those who are feminist. For development, the point is

not necessarily to decide if the theoretical arguments are valid under Islam or within

feminism. The point for development rather, is to assess what Islamic feminists argue for

and whether these arguments help women's position within the development project.

Development must assess whether Islamic feminism is relevant to the women that

development hopes to serve and, lastly, if so, to consider how this paradigm can be

utilized in an Islamic context.

As it has been shown, throughout the literature on development and religion,

particularly regarding Islam, it is necessary to consider a development paradigm for

women's participation in development which is not centred in a secular Western feminist

gender and development paradigm. The current gender and development paradigms fail to

recognize the validity of religion in women's lives thereby ignoring a major influence in

successfully including women in development.

Defining Islamic Feminism:

As many writers have pointed out, the term 'Islamic feminist' is highly

problematic. The association of the word 'feminist' to 'Islam' is considered an affront to

many of the people who belong solely to either group. Cooke (2000) writes that "most

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Muslim women would reject the term *feminist* as Western and neo-imperialist....Western

feminists, on the other hand, will reject outright the possibility of women working

subversively within a deeply patriarchal institution" (p. 91). While Cooke points out that

the use of this term implies a "double commitment" to the identities of both a feminist

and a Muslim woman, few women that might be identified as an Islamic feminist would

accept such a label thereby acknowledging such a "double commitment" (p. 93). Abou-

Bakr (2001) points out that the term 'Islamic feminist' must be considered suspiciously as

it may constitute "a term created by Western or non-Muslim scholars to categorize, label,

and name Muslim women" (section 1, para. 2). She goes on to say "there is the

unavoidable suspicion that this constitutes a hegemonic naming of the 'other,'

contributing further to the problematic pose of expert versus object of study" (section 1,

para. 2). Indeed, Abou-Bakr's point is validated in the refusal of the label 'feminist' by

some Muslim women despite the resemblance of their political activism to feminist

activism (also in Badran, 2001). But Abou-Bakr rejects the argument against the utility of

'naming,' instead arguing that the use of the term 'feminist' denotes an agenda which

women have regarding their rights. The use of the term 'feminist,' argues Abou-Bakr,

should not be considered an insult to Islam rather a useful term to better understand

women's activism.

Although the term 'Islamic feminist' is highly problematic not only to those

belonging to one group or the other but also to women who might be considered Islamic

feminists, the utility of the term to distinguish between other groups is such that I too will

also use it. I feel therefore that it is necessary to define my use of the term 'Islamic

feminist'.

According to Masood (2004), Islamic feminism can be basically understood in two different manifestations. The most well known and understood are those who advocate for a feminist exegesis of the sacred Islamic texts, particularly the Qur'an. The new reinterpretation of these texts attempts to address the patriarchal readings which currently prevail in Islam. Female participation in reinterpreting the texts, gives women equality in how the texts are interpreted as well as equality within the leadership, guidance and understanding of Islam, a sphere traditionally held by men. Masood defines this type of Islamic feminism as a fight against the pressures "stemming from the internal patriarchal system of scripture and law" (p. 2). The second type of Islamic feminism, according to Masood, is one which battles against the pressures which stem from "external societal forces threatening national, religious and cultural boundaries" (p. 2). Ultimately, both types of feminisms are made up of "women who are maintaining their religious beliefs while trying to promote equalitarian ethics of Islam in both theory and practice...both groups of women profess similar ideals, motives and beliefs – namely freedom of choice and a full exercise of identity" (Masood, 2004, p. 2).

Women like Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud have become well known for their reinterpretations of the sacred texts.[3] They, in addition to others, are working to create new readings of texts, traditionally a role only given to men and therefore interpreted in such ways which are culturally and patriarchally understood. Wadud (in Masood, 2004), for example, argues that the full context of much of the Qur'an has been ignored by the patriarchal order which has historically dominated Islam; instead particular portions of scripture have been emphasized sometimes to the detriment of women. Wadud and Barlas, among others, are attempting to understand the essence of Islamic sacred texts, the

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relevancy of these texts within today's context, and advocating for the continual reinterpretation of these texts by each new generation.

The second type of Islamic feminist is one who, as Masood (2004) defined, is struggling against the external pressures of society which impinge on her religious rights. Turkish Islamic feminists are one example of this type of Islamic feminism as they are struggling against the State for the right to wear the headscarf. The headscarf is a visible symbol of these women's identity and may represent deeper issues of identity which they feel are being challenged. The headscarf in Turkey, an issue expanded upon below, is banned from all government buildings including offices, schools and universities.

Before continuing on to discuss the variety of meanings of the headscarf, it is important to note that both types of Islamic feminists – those who struggle against internal pressures and those who struggle against external pressures – do not necessarily equate identical treatment between the sexes as being equality nor differential treatment of women and men as being inequality (Masood, 2004). Complementarity between men and women is emphasized. Complementary roles, defined by Islamic feminists though, are not necessarily assigned roles based on gender. Rather, Islamic feminists argue that women have the right to choose their roles in a fluid but complementary relationship with men.

The Headscarf:

One of the most polarized and symbolic issues surrounding Islamic feminism, is centred on the headscarf. In 2003, French President Jacques Chirac received a letter regarding the issue of the headscarf from a large group of well-known and respected French women. In the letter, the women argued that "the Islamic veil sends us all – Muslim and non-Muslim – back to a discrimination against women that is intolerable"

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(Kavakci, 2004, p. 67). This understanding of the headscarf, one largely centred in the West, is that women who wear a headscarf do so because they are forced to cover themselves; that the headscarf is not a choice but something imposed upon them. Reactions to veiled women, by Westerners, range from curiosity in the 'exotic' to confirmation that Islam is backward and oppressive to women (Delaney, 1994). While these misconceptions, constructed on examples of cruel regimes such as the Taliban or the forbidding of women to drive in Saudi Arabia, may be true in some cases, it is not necessarily true for the majority of women who wear the headscarf. In Turkey, for example, the headscarf has become a major issue in which religious women have joined together to speak out in an attempt to overturn legislation that forbids them to wear the headscarf. In such a case, being unable to choose to wear the headscarf is a major oppressive force for religious women. Chapter Three and Four will further discuss this issue in Turkey.

Cooke points out that there are various meanings to the headscarf. While for an outsider it is often seen as a symbol of oppression, for those who practice Islam, it represents many other things. For some, it is part of tradition and culture. While to others, it is a new fashionable means of dressing. The headscarf, to the wearer, may mean a dedication and submission to God while signalling her piety to those who see her.

The headscarf can also be a political statement. It is this last meaning that has become attached to Turkish women's wearing of the headscarf. While most Turkish women who argue for the right to wear the headscarf base their argument on their right to obey God, the political aspects of Turkish women's demands to wear the veil cannot and should not be overlooked. These public demands for the right to choose to wear the

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headscarf are a form of empowerment as women exercise the right to have their voices heard (Cooke, 2000; Pervizat, 2004).

Few deny the political meaning of the demands to wear the headscarf in government buildings but some consider the political message to stem from Islamist fundamentalism. Some secularists argue that Islamism is attempting to overtake the secular state and bring back the use of the Shari'a to Turkey. But Pervizat (2004) argues that the desire to wear the headscarf is construed if interpreted as a political statement against the state. According to her, the demand to be able to wear the headscarf is a political statement because, "any time anywhere a woman asserts her choice over her body, sexuality and her life...the act of choice is political" (p. 3). Smucker (1998) agrees, writing that, "instead of a symbol of subservience to men, many Islamic feminists view the scarf or the veil as a guard against the eyes of men and as a sign that their first allegiance is to God – not to their husbands or fathers" (p. 31). Masood (2004) writes that:

> ...what some critics fail to notice is that veiling in the Turkish case is not simply an act of religious zeal but firmly rooted in liberal concepts.... The Turkish women's defence of the veil is based on values related to personal and moral dignity, professional ambitions and an urge to reach emancipation from patriarchal, social, and institutional pressures, all of which are a blend of traditional/modern/secular principles. (p. 5)

Masood, like Pervizat, asserts that Turkish women's demands to be able to wear the headscarf are empowering for women through the assertion of their rights and in the demand for the right to move about in public however they choose.

Kavakci (2004) points out two noteworthy problems with arguments opposing the headscarf. The first is the entrenched confusion between religious duties under Islam and

cultural traditions. Kavakci argues that, it is tradition which causes gender inequalities, not religion. She bases her argument on the fact that during the life of the Prophet Mohammed, Muslim women were considered important participants in public life and society and that it was not until later, over time that women began to be cloistered into the home and into performing household roles. Kavakci's second point against those who criticise the wearing of the headscarf is that it demeans the religious value of the headscarf to those who wear it. She writes,

> *Mainstream Islamic tradition considers the headscarf an obligation for Muslim women because it conceals their physical allure. By covering themselves, Muslim women can be recognized not only for their religious beliefs but for the contributions to society as well; they can be judged for their intellect and not just their appearance.... For women to choose it, the headscarf is an indispensable part of their personal identity, one that should not be compromised. If Western feminists and other critics want to advance women's rights, they are better off honouring a women's right to choose rather than trying to impose their prejudices on Muslims. (p. 67)*

Cooke (2000) supports Kavakci, highlighting how the headscarf liberates women as it gives them access to both professional and educational activities while still maintaining their moral and honourable status. The wearing of the headscarf symbolizes, for those who see it, that the wearer is religious.

Cooke also points out that while the veil liberates, it also imprisons. She tells the story of a Cairene woman who must work if her family is to maintain their lower-middle-class status. In an environment hostile to women working outside of their homes, the headscarf symbolizes the piety of the woman and allows her to retain her honourable status as well as to stop the harassment that may occur on the street and in the workplace.

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The liberating aspects of the veil are the outward mobility which she receives from wearing it but it is the greater social sphere which helps enforce the wearing of it. By wearing the headscarf, the woman is assenting to harassment that may happen to women who do not wear the headscarf thereby reinforcing oppression by encouraging women to wear the headscarf to avoid harassment. But it must be emphasized, it is not Islam that is causing the harassment of the Cairene woman or women who choose not to wear the headscarf rather it is the local culture and traditions which threaten women when they do not cover their heads.

A common point made by most Muslims regarding the headscarf is that it is part of their identity. The headscarf symbolizes that the wearer is a religious woman. It is an outward symbol, to those who see the woman, of her religious beliefs. It is also a meaningful symbol for the woman herself, of her obedience to her religious belief in the wearing of the headscarf. Whether the scarf is worn for political reasons or as a screen from the outside world, the headscarf also provides elements of empowerment for Muslim women, allowing them to express either their political or their religious opinions.

Chapter Two conclusions:

Based on review of the literature, regarding paradigms of gender and development and those of Islamic reform and development, a number of conclusions can be made. Exploring these paradigms in terms of their perspectives of the position of religious women in development has allowed for the consideration of both the consequences of the intersection of gender and development paradigms within an Islamic context, as well as for consideration for some of the possible implications of this meeting for development and for women in LDCs.

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What the literature reveals is that the secular paradigm of gender and development situates religious women in a precarious position where they must choose between the secular paradigm of development or their religion. The potential consequence of this paradigm, for women in LDCs, offers one of two possible outcomes. That is, either development projects lacking the participation of women or women are forced to sacrifice their religious beliefs so as to participate freely in gender and development projects.

While both the conservative and the neo-traditionalist paradigms do provide a space for women to maintain their religious beliefs, it is with the possible consequence of women's continued inequality and submission to religious patriarchy. It therefore, can be concluded, based on this analysis that these paradigms do not sufficiently provide a space which forward women's participation in, and benefits from development.

In the following chapter, Chapter Three, an example of the reformist paradigm, as operationalized by one Islamic feminist organization will be explored.

Chapter Three: Islamic Feminist Development in Turkey

Introduction:

This thesis has thus far, focused on four overlapping paradigms of development and change in an Islamic context: the secular, the conservative, the neo-traditionalist, and the reformist. Although these four paradigms are significant, it is the aim of this thesis to consider paradigms of gender and development which forward women's participation and benefits from development. As discussed above, paradigms which are secular neglect the religious identity of women while religious paradigms, which are conservative or neo-traditionalist, do not sanction a space for women to fully participate in development. While it is necessary, in an Islamic context, to consider and include women's religious values in development paradigms in order to increase the applicability of development for women in Islamic contexts, in examining these four paradigms, it has been shown that the reformist paradigm offers the greatest potential to enable women to both participate in and benefit from development without compromising their religious identities. In operation, one example of this paradigm of development is practiced by Islamic feminists. It is therefore the reformist perspective of Islam, gender and development, operationalized as the paradigm of Islamic feminism, which was the focus of research as described in this chapter.

This chapter will begin with a brief introduction to Turkey, historically and economically as a developing state, and then will proceed to discuss the current situation of women in Turkey. The remainder of the chapter will focus on describing the work, beliefs, and goals of one Islamic feminist group, as the members implement their own paradigm of gender and development in Turkey. The following chapter, Chapter Four,

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will analyze and further discuss this description of Turkish Islamic feminism within the context of international development.

Introduction to the case:

History:

Turkey is historically known as the meeting point of East and West, North and South. Famous as a crossroads for trade, Turkey continues to be a strategic bridge between nations of different political and religious beliefs (Ayoob, 2004). Divided geographically between Europe and Asia, much of its population is both ethnically and culturally Asian yet at the same time Turkey's economy is tightly tied to the West through its export/import markets as well as through its large expatriate communities in the West (Cooper, 2002).

In 1923 the sultan of the Ottoman Empire was brought down. In his place, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk became president, taking control of the newly proclaimed Republic of Turkey. Under Atatürk, a reformation of Turkey began socially, politically, linguistically and economically. Westernization became the overarching goal and the underlying current to every reform; each of which focused on principles of nationalism, secularism, and modernization, as the foundation of the Turkey's reformation (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002). This development agenda has become known as Kemalism: a programme of modernization which was defined by what was and is European and North American – the 'West'.

While many states claim to be secular, Atatürk in fact instituted a laic state, requiring religion to be submitted to the control and regulation of the state. The distinction between secular and laic is small but significant. Secularism refers to a conception of reality as non-religious while laicism means state control of religion. In

Turkey, this means that religion is often deliberately excluded from the public arena under strict regulation by the state. Despite the reforms of Atatürk, and the submission of religion to state control, the religious nature of Turkey has persisted. Turkey continues to have a majority Muslim population and the actual observance of the religion of Islam, in Turkey, is much higher than religious observance in the West (Cooper, 2002).

Kemalism is an extremely important and influential concept in Turkey as this was Atatürk's understanding of how to modernize Turkey. Using the West as a model for what was considered modern, Kemalist doctrine has become a type of political dogma among many, mostly wealthy and well-educated Turks, for the development of Turkey. Key concepts for Kemalism include democracy and secularism neither of which Turkey truly had under Atatürk's leadership nor truly has today.[4]

The secularist doctrine of Kemalism brought vast changes to Turkey as Atatürk attempted to root out Islamic religiosity. The reformation in the appearance of Turks was a particular goal of Atatürk's. To make the people of the Republic appear Westernized, according to Atatürk, would be an important step towards portraying Turkey as a more modern nation. Historic changes were made including, the Attire Reform Law, and a change in the official written language from the Arabic alphabet to the Roman alphabet. Atatürk's successful implementation of the new alphabet effectively cut many Turkish ties to the Middle East as well as of many to Islam by interfering in the Turkish ability to read the Qur'an. While some changes, such as the change in alphabet, were accepted remarkably quickly, as demonstrated by the inability of most Turks now to read Arabic – a change which occurred within a period of only 80 years – other changes have continued to be considered as unacceptable, particularly to those who are religious.

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The Attire Reform law was first introduced in 1923 as part of Atatürk's modernization plan. This law continues to be troublesome for many, particularly for religious Muslim women, in Turkey. Atatürk promoted women's emancipation as an important aspect of change towards the modernization of Turkey, to the extent that the liberation of women has become an important measurement of Turkish modernization levels (Muftuler-Bac, 1999).[5] The Attire Reform law was part of this modernization plan, and was particularly significant as it transformed a visually theocratic society into one which looked Westernized, the underlying assumption being that what was Western was equal to being enlightened (Alptekin-Oguzertem, 2003).

The Attire Reform law originally stated that no religious clothing which covered the head was permitted in government institutions. This included women's headscarves in any state institutions, offices, and schools with the exclusion of universities. In 1988, the law was amended to allow for scarves covering the head due to religious requirements but again in 1990 was reverted back to forbid any clothing to be worn which was associated with religion. In 1997-1998 the law was again changed and for the first time included universities. At this time it also began to be strictly enforced in all schools and government institutions. Women and girls were, and continue to be, required to remove their headscarves if they want to enter a school, university, or any other public building.

The headscarf issue was further compounded in 1998 when the government passed a law making education compulsory for eight years. The extension of compulsory education meant that girls would legally have to continue attending school past the age when they reached puberty; the age at which the headscarf usually starts to be worn (Alptekin-Oguzertem, 2003). Many rural and urban lower middle-class families, already reluctant to send their female children to school, became more uncertain as to whether to

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send their girls to school at all. The prohibition of the headscarf, coupled with the lengthened educational requirements, have resulted in situations where parents are now not registering their girl children at birth so as to avoid having to send them to school with their heads uncovered past the age of puberty. Of course, this results in the girl children not receiving any education (Muftuler-Bac, 1999).

Turkey as a developing state:

Recurrent economic problems have plagued Turkey, particularly in the past two decades as the country has struggled to develop. At the beginning of the 1980s, in an attempt to emerge from the financial crises of previous import-substitution policies, Turkey became a "test case" for the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for market liberalization policies (Demir, 2004, p. 852). Demir (2004) writes that the installation of these policies in 1980 resulted in a major crisis in August 1989 and three major subsequent crises in the 1990s. Throughout the 1990s, Turkey underwent a number of reforms, each of which failed, while the Turkish economic situation continued to deteriorate. With a new IMF programme in place at the start of the new millennium, in November 2000 another serious financial crisis again hit Turkey resulting in a short-term capital flight of over six billion USD, soaring interest rates, and a severe shortage of liquidity (Independent Social Scientists Alliance, 2005). High inflation and repeated fiscal and monetary crises have been ongoing since (Cooper, 2002). Turkey's current economic plan, still under the direction of the IMF, is now striving towards three goals:

(1) fiscal austerity that targets achieving a 6.5 percent surplus for the public sector as a ratio to the gross domestic product;

(2) contractionary monetary policy (through an independent central bank) that exclusively aims at price stability (via eventually inflation targeting); and

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(3) structural reforms consisting of many of the customary IMF demands:

privatization, large scale layoffs in public enterprises, and abolition of any form of

subsidies. (Independent Social Scientists Alliance, 2005, p. 3)

While absolute poverty does not affect a large number of people in Turkey, there

is grave concern for the high levels of relative poverty and economic vulnerability which

affects much of the population. Adding to the complexity of these levels of poverty is the

issue of regional disparity. For example, within rural areas, absolute poverty is three times

higher than that of urban areas (UNDP, 2004). According to the WB 2000 report on

Turkey (2004), education and labour market status have the highest correlation to poverty

in Turkey; furthermore, differentiation in disparities are exacerbated both by regional and

gender differences, clearly delineated by unequal opportunities for education. The WB's

research and statistics point out that disparities experienced between regions are actually

growing, attributed to the widening in disparities in wages brought about through

educational achievement (UNDP, 2001). Furthermore, adding to these problems is the

unemployment rate which rapidly increased between 2000 and 2001 but has since

remained relatively unchanged at about 10 percent, rising from 6.5 percent in 2000. More

disturbingly, the unemployment rate among the young labour force located in urban

regions has reached 26 percent and, despite some economic growth after the 2001 crisis,

the growth performance in the Turkish economy has only resulted in what is known as

"jobless-growth" (Independent Social Scientists Alliance, 2005, p. 5). Coupled with these

economic problems, it is also important to note that the tax burden within Turkey

disproportionately rests on the lowest income groups (Demir, 2004).

While there is much speculation as to the direction the Turkish economy will take,

a short synopsis of the current Turkish economy and the economic development of

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Turkey cannot be complete without a brief discussion of Turkey's relationship and bid to join the European Union (EU).[6] From an economic stance, "the relationship with the EU is of paramount importance…. With the EU accounting for just over 50 per cent of trade in both directions, Turkey really cannot afford exclusion…. Turkish-EU relations, however have been bedevilled by the intrusion of the human rights issue into the discussion" (Cooper, 2002, p. 125). While the EU uses human rights violations against Turkish inclusion, there are also a number of other concerns regarding the inclusion of Turkey into the Union.

One concern, by many members of the EU, expressly Germany, is Turkey's jobless rate. As has already been discussed, the unemployment level, particularly among Turkish youth, is very high. If admitted to the EU, there are fears that there will be an inundation, into other parts of Europe, of a Turkish labour force thereby taking away jobs from other Western European citizens (Ayoob, 2004). As Germany has the largest Turkish expatriate community in the world, it will become a primary destination for many Turks in search of jobs.

Although there are other, perhaps legitimate reasons, for the EU's exclusion of Turkey, one which is rarely voiced in political circles but talked about everywhere else in Europe, with a large amount of opposition, is based on the apprehension regarding the religious divide between Europe and Turkey. Ayoob (2004) writes that there is an "ongoing European debate about how integral Christianity and Christian values are to the EU and how these values should be enshrined in the EU's Constitution" which is "driven by the spectre of Muslim Turkey's admission to the EU" (p. 453).

Women's position in Turkey:

> *The official discourse has been that the problem of the status of women has been*
>
> *solved and that Turkish women should consider themselves "lucky" because they*
>
> *were granted specific rights before their European counterparts. Unfortunately, this*
>
> *discourse has been internalised by many women who were able to benefit from the*
>
> *new possibilities of the young republic, such as professional women living in big*
>
> *cities or women of the bureaucratic elite. As a result, most of the women's groups and*
>
> *associations formed during the post-republican era have concentrated on 'helping'*
>
> *women living in villages, instead of questioning the role that the Republic had*
>
> *determined for them. Moreover, the dichotomy they perceived between themselves*
>
> *and the rural women hindered their understanding of the problems and potential of*
>
> *these women, whom they were supposedly trying to 'help'. (Ilkkaracan, 1997, p. 6)*

As Ilkkaracan explains, historically Turkish women have had many legal rights, some

before women in the West. In 1923, as part of Turkey's modernization process, women

were given the right to vote. In the early twentieth century, Turkey was the only country,

with a majority Muslim population, which had granted women social, political, and legal

rights. Dr. Berin Ergin, a prominent lawyer and professor at the University of Istanbul

law school, in her keynote address at the conference "Turkey at the Crossroads: Women,

Women's Studies and the State", summarized women's legal rights in Turkey, concluding

that in Turkey, legally, there is "no discrimination" against women (lecture, May, 2005).

Although some activists, such as Ilkkaracan, who has recently completed work on

the Turkish Penal Code, differ with Ergin, the major inequalities suffered by women in

Turkey are largely not due to formal inequalities in the law rather they are of a

substantive nature. Muftuler-Bac (1999) describes the situation of Turkish women as

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being "emancipated but unliberated" (p. 303). For example, in 1934, Turkish women were given the right to participate in government but in 2005, women only held 4.4 percent of the lower house seats while they had no seats in the upper house or senate (Human Development Report, 2005). Even more revealing, the 1995 Report on Domestic Violence reported that 64 percent of all men require their wives to ask for permission to do such things as leave the house or wear clothing which reveals some of her arm (Muftuler-Bac, 1999). ·

Muftuler-Bac (1999) argues that:

Turkish women face various forms of oppression and subordination in their daily lives. These can be categorized under tangible and intangible forms of oppression. The intangible ones include legal discrimination, economic inequality, and social inequality. The tangible ones comprise of sexual harassment, assault, insult, battering, rape, virginity tests, torture, and murder at the most extreme. (p. 305)

Muftuler-Bac goes on to explain that "the image of urban, middle-class, Turkish women is pretty similar to 'Western standards' in their dress code, living standards, and political rights" but she points out that "the proportion of Westernized Turkish women is pretty small" and that, "all Turkish women are bound by the same gender roles dominant in Turkish culture" (p. 305). In her analysis of the primary influences allowing the continuation of patriarchy in Turkey, she points to: "the Mediterranean culture, Islam, and Kemalism – the official state ideology" (p. 305).

Atatürk's modernization plan for the Republic was defined by what he considered the model of modernity, that of the West. One of the clear differences between models of modernity based on the West and modernity according to Kemalism though is found in the laic nature of Kemalism, under which, religion is subordinated to the State.[7] Kemalists

tend to identify themselves as such, as opposed to 'Westernised', as both nationalism and allegiance to Atatürk are important sources of pride for Turks. Muftuler-Bac (1999) argues that Kemalism is as much a perpetuator of patriarchy in Turkey as that of Islam, in that neither recognizes the underlying structures which cause the continuation of patriarchy in Turkey.

It should not be surprising that the actualization of gender and development paradigms in Turkey is much more complex than literature on gender and development paradigms would lead one to believe. The majority of the large and visible organizations working on gender and development in Turkey are Turkish-led; holding perspectives which could be described as both Western and Kemalist. These groups are generally characterized as secular and feminist, and are often comprised of women with high levels of education but representative of only a fraction of Turkish society.

Ilkkaracan's (1997) description, which is quoted above, of gender and development organizations in Turkey serves to expand upon Muftuler-Bac's analysis. Ilkkaracan explains that the women, who mostly comprise the mainstream gender and development organizational membership, tend to understand the situation of 'other' Turkish women as a dichotomy between modern and traditional, between the West/Kemalism and, often Islam, between themselves and those who need "helping". Ilkkaracan argues that these perceived dichotomies disable the opportunities to probe the problems that have been created for women as a result of the history, the cultural and religious ideologies of Turkey, and the creation of the Turkish Republic based on Kemalist ideologies.

The visibility of 'modern' Turkey is such that, of the many people who visit Turkey, few realize that it is a developing country. The modernity of Istanbul and Ankara

hide realities. Actual Turkish life becomes more apparent in the smaller towns, and in the poorer, non-touristic areas. It is within these areas that it becomes difficult to overlook the reality of Turkey. For example, in these areas' the public spaces are almost completely comprised of Turkish men; very few Turkish women are seen in the public sphere.

In meeting people at the University of Istanbul and the Middle East Technical University (METU), I initially found it difficult to believe that few women are employed outside of the home. It seemed that there were many women attending and working at the universities. But according to Kabasakal and Bodur (2002), "the percentage of Turkish women in highly prestigious professions, like doctors or university professors – is far above the percentages in many industrialized countries…The women in these professions, however mainly come from families with high socio-economic status" (p. 49). Beyond these professions, the percentage of women working outside of the home is shockingly low. In 2000, there were 52 women for every 100 men working in scientific, technical, professional and other related fields. In sectors, such as service work, commercial and sales work, or even administrative work there were only between 9 and 16 female workers for every 100 males in the same fields (UNICEF, 2003). It is only in the agricultural sector where greater numbers of women workers emerge. In decision-making professions such as the business sector, there are only on average, 3 women for every 100 men at the executive level (Muftuler-Bac, 1999). In Turkey, in 2000, 68.8 percent of women were unpaid family workers, compared to only 13.8 percent of males (UNICEF, 2003).

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<u>Case Study: Islamic Feminism in Turkey</u>

I first read about the work of a so-called Turkish Islamic feminist group through an article in *The Economist* (September, 2004). The woman described in the article was one of the founding members of the Başkent Kadyn Platformu (Capital City Women's Platform, henceforth, the BKP). The visibility and nature of the work of the BKP caught my attention, raising questions as to what *Islamic feminist development* could offer to mainstream international gender and development. The following data was collected in personal interviews with the women of the group unless otherwise noted.

While most literature in the West classifies Islamic reformist women's organizations as a form of Islamic feminism, the women of the BKP do not particularly appreciate the label. They feel it alienates them from their communities; instead associating them both with the West, and with the particular negative image that the word 'feminist' invokes for many people in Turkey. Founded in 1995, the BKP has grown significantly, particularly once enforcement of the banned headscarf began to occur. In the summer of 2005, they had 120 registered members with upwards of 140 women who regularly participated in the activities of the group. Based in Ankara, BKP membership mainly consists of women from Ankara but also has active members located throughout Turkey.

Development:

The mandate of the BKP is to understand and address the problems of religious women. They express it as working specifically against:

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...the negative discrimination which happens to women in the society...the inequality

of the woman....the problem that women cannot be decision-makers and are not

being involved in the process.

They are also completely transparent about their stance on female subordination. In a

group interview, the members agreed that,

We are definitely against the issue of obeying the husband, obeying the father,

obeying the family, obeying the teachers – political or religious.

With this mandate and understanding of religious women's problems and issues,

their work is multi-levelled. Employing strategies focused on making structural change,

the group works to address legal issues for religious women in Turkey. Secondly, the

group challenges discriminations faced by religious women through a bottom-up

approach, reaching religious women at the grassroots level through gender and

development programming. Lastly, the group is working to create networks between

themselves and other women's organizations.

Currently, the group is working on issues of education, legal rights, violence

against women, religious interpretation and, most significant for the women of BKP, the

headscarf issue. Although recognizing that women in Turkey face many difficulties, the

issue of the headscarf for religious women in Turkey is currently, according to this group

of women, the largest barrier to women's participation in society and in development in

Turkey. According to one activist,

...the scarf is not our problem; it is a problem of Turkey.

Islamic feminist development:

Considering the religiosity of Turkey, it is difficult to dispute such claims

regarding the importance of the headscarf to women in Turkey. While the percentage of

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women who wear the headscarf is unknown, Turkey has a Muslim population of close to 99.9 percent. Only 12.4 percent of Turks consider themselves marginally religious but double that, 25 percent of the total population consider themselves highly religious. Other indicators which demonstrate the piety of Turks include: 46 percent of the population pray the required five times a day; 84 percent of males attend Friday noon services at the mosque; and 91 percent fast during Ramadan, the Islamic holy month. According to this survey, 60 percent practice *zekat*, the giving of alms; and 71 percent would like to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca, with about 7 percent of these having actually done so (Carkoglu and Topak, 2000 in White, 2002, p. 57). It appears then, that with such high numbers of devoutly religious people, Turkey's prohibition of the headscarf in government buildings and educational facilities poses a problem for many women.

One does not have to look far to find women who have been affected by the ban. On the streets of Istanbul, I met a group of former university students who were no longer attending classes because of the headscarf ban. One young woman related stories to me of choosing her classes solely based on which professor was teaching and what that professor's inclinations were regarding the headscarf ban. She recalled carefully choosing which entrances and exits to use each day in order to avoid the university security guards. The ban is strictly enforced now such that it is impossible for her or her friends to attend university without removing their head coverings. In this particular group of women, none of the women or their friends were attending university any longer because of the ban.

The evidence of the ban is everywhere. Walking around a number of universities in Turkey, I noticed that some girls are obviously wearing wigs to cover their hair. This has become one means by which they attempt to avoid betraying their religious beliefs

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and still attend university. Refusing to uncover their heads, almost 600 women became

unemployed as a result of the enforced legislation (Alptekin-Oguzertem, 2003). Within

the BKP, there were a number of women who were forced to quit their jobs due to the

headscarf ban. One woman taught math for over 19 years, a job which she loved and felt

she was good at but is no longer able to do without giving up her headscarf.

The BKP has attempted to address the legal issue of the headscarf in a number of

ways. First, they challenged the Turkish law banning headscarves. Failing in their

challenge, they are now planning to file a complaint with the European Human Rights

Committee. Basing their argument on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), they also sent a representative to New York to

present their case against the banned headscarf to the Committee on the Elimination of

Discrimination against Women at the United Nations. The group argued to the Committee

that the ban on the scarf is a major barrier to women's education. The Committee has

since approached the Turkish government to inquire as to whether the ban does inhibit

female education. A response from the government has yet to occur.

Although some women in developing countries argue that CEDAW is rooted in

Western feminism and therefore not relevant to women in developing countries, the BKP

is active in ensuring the implementation of CEDAW in Turkey as well as educating

Turkish women about their rights under it. Becoming a signatory to CEDAW in 1985,

Turkey, along with all others who have ratified the Convention, is now required to submit

a national report at least every four years regarding the steps that have been taken to fulfil

their commitment to the treaty. In 1997, it was reported that:

> *Turkey is a country with a young female population. It is thought that when adequate*
>
> *education opportunities are provided and when sexist barriers that obstruct the right*

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for a better life are lifted, women will have greater control over their own lives and

will then demonstrate their creative potential towards an equally shared life

(CEDAW Report, 1997, p. 9)

In April of 2003, over 450 representatives from approximately 250 women's NGOs in Turkey gathered together to prepare the shadow report for the coming CEDAW report in January 2004. Representatives from the BKP attended and participated in the forum. One particular workshop at the conference considered the educational aspect of the report and a discussion was held as to where these sexist barriers lay and how discrimination was experienced by women within the education system in Turkey. A list of areas of discriminations was generated among the different NGOs in attendance at this workshop. The suggested barriers were very similar among NGOs except on one issue: that of the headscarf.

Considering that the conference included women with headscarves and those without, the issue of the headscarf became a major topic of discussion, one which was very polarized (Alptekin-Oguzertem, 2003). Representatives from groups which covered their heads argued that many of the sexist barriers which were listed by all of the women in the workshop were exacerbated by the headscarf ban. The facilitator of the discussion noted that women from groups outside of the major centres of Ankara and Istanbul shared many examples of parents who refused to send their girls to school because of the ban (Alptekin-Oguzertem, 2003).

The 2003 report on Turkey produced by UNICEF, documented that there were 7.8 percent more males than females enrolled in primary school with a net attendance of 73 percent by males compared to 70 percent by females (p. 6).[8] In secondary school, the gender gap widens resulting in a difference of 17.1 percent greater male enrolment

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(UNICEF, 2003, p. 7).[9] UNICEF (2003) estimates that up to 30.8 percent of rural women can neither read nor write. In urban areas, 16.6 percent of women are illiterate compared to 9 percent of rural men and 3.9 percent of urban men (p. 24). Failure to enrol girls, low school attendance, high-drop out rates for girls, withdrawal from school of post-puberty girls by their families, and traditional and religious beliefs, are listed as areas which prevent girls from attending school (UNICEF, 2003). These are also each considered, by UNICEF, as areas necessitating some type of intervention in order to address the gender disparities in education. The same report also called special attention to the contributing factor that religion and culture have in the prevention of girls from attending school, post-puberty being especially problematic (UNICEF, 2003). As education is considered a key to development, ensuring female participation is essential. Failure to recognize the importance of the headscarf to Muslim families to ensure the safety and honour to the family and the girl prevents many from attending school.

The BKP not only fights for women's rights to attend school wearing the headscarf, they also attempt to provide educational access to women. They meet regularly with women in Ankara, teaching some how to read and write in Turkish. For the past four years, they have held free weekly English and Arabic language courses. Considering that as many as 16.6 percent of women in urban areas and an estimated 30.8 percent of women in rural areas are illiterate, these are important steps towards development.

There is a particular significance to learning Arabic for Turkish Muslim women beyond that of literacy. As few Turks know or understand Arabic, religious texts are almost completely inaccessible to women. Turks in general must rely on lessons, sermons, Turkish-language books and religious leaders for translation and interpretation of sacred texts from Arabic to Turkish in order to understand and to learn about Islam

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(White, 2002). Inevitably, these are all sources controlled by men. By providing women with the means to read the texts themselves, in the original language, women gain the opportunity to interpret the texts as they choose, not in the way that men have traditionally interpreted them.

The BKP's focus on women's equality within Islam reaches beyond helping women to access the Qur'an and other religious texts. Their work is also firmly purposed to educate women on the alternative reinterpretations of Islamic religious texts.

While most BKP activities take place in Ankara, the association has workshops a number of times each year throughout Turkey in Batman, Afyon, Antalya, and Istanbul among other places. Each workshop has a specific topic, largely focused on issues of human rights and religion. These workshops have ranged in topics from panel discussions, with a number of experts on different interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadiths, to workshops which educate women on their human rights and rights under the Turkish law. The BKP's first set of nation-wide meetings focused on the discussion of religious women's relationship to feminism, how religious women could be involved in activities which combat the discriminations and inequalities faced particularly by religious women but also those faced by all women, what changes religious women wanted and needed, and how to go about making these changes. From these meetings there was a realization, by BKP members and other attendees that, although most religious women do not call themselves feminists, the struggles of religious women are largely the same challenges which feminist organizations are trying to surmount.

The latest topic for the BKP meetings has been the European Union (EU); an important subject for Turkish women as Turkey undergoes a number of changes in attempt to join the EU and will experience even more changes if accepted as a member.

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In this meeting, a specialist on the EU explained the Union and its relationship to Turkey, as well as the implications of Turkish membership. The BKP members then asked questions and discussed as a group issues and implications of Turkey's EU membership for religious Turkish women.

The BKP nation-wide meetings provide a forum for religious women to meet together. One member described the previous situation of religious women as isolated due to the physical distance between women and women's groups as well as the distance between women based on class and education and, most significantly, the lack of organization for religious women who hold beliefs which resemble feminism. This member described the time before the formation of the BKP as a time when:

...there was a lot of distance between religious background women...but with the meetings it makes us come closer and be more close to each other and our problems.

Thus the benefits for women who attend these meetings reach beyond the knowledge gained as to the issues which potentially affect them. Another member describes the benefits of the meetings:

You gain a lot of things from these meetings such as you start to have this perspective to look to the world as a woman and look for your rights so you start to be aware of all [these things] as a result of these meetings.

While some of the women in BKP have university level education, others do not. The group would like to see BKP reach women further outside of Ankara, an urban centre which has much greater wealth and higher standards of living than many other parts of Turkey. Unfortunately, the group does not have the financial capacity to do such work. Currently, through the sale of handicrafts and food, the BKP financially assists about 40 women to participate in workshops and meetings. They point out though, that charity, in

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terms of supplying basic needs, is an important part of Islamic teaching therefore they do not see this as a necessary aspect of their organization but an aspect of their everyday religious lives. One member describes this obligation:

> *For people who belong to Islam religion [sic]...we are sure that every family, every individual has someone that they help.*

So while the group does see women's issues as important, they are largely focused not on aid but on giving women tools to overcome the barriers of poverty; the tools to overcome gender inequalities.

Networking with organizations is another key component to achieving the BKP mandate. According to the group, one of their major purposes is to:

> *...put a bridge between the secular feminists and the religious.*

They feel that in the last few years, progress has been made on this front. At least, their invitations to join mainstream feminist organizing have increased.

One example of their work with other feminist groups is the recent work on the Turkish Penal Code. Although the campaign to change the code was originally led by Women for Women's Human Rights, the BKP participated along with more than 25 other women's groups to lobby for changes to the code. One of the major issues being addressed in the campaign to change the code was the issue of virginity testing. The BKP's involvement and support of the purposed changes is particularly interesting as they consider virginity testing an issue not necessarily applicable to them. This is because, on a personal level, they do not agree with premarital sex. The women of the BKP make the distinctions though between what is not right for them and what may be okay for other women. According to one member:

We were all virgins when we got married so we don't support the idea of having the sexual freedom in our daily life...but we also support women who doesn't[sic] feel like us, who think that they have the freedom of sexuality, we also think this is their right because they live in a democratic country.

The BKP's support for feminist issues such as women's sexual freedom, a right which they choose not to exercise, is in stark contrast to the support which they receive from feminist groups regarding issues which are particularly religious. This will later be described further below.

The group also came together with a number of organizations to protest the war in Iraq. One woman explained the success of the protest:

This is a first in the history of the Turkish Republic... the leftish [sic] and the feminists... it wasn't that difficult for them to come together but for religious background organizations it was difficult but it happened...so we all came together with the Alevis, with the transsexuals, with the left-handies [sic]...lesbians and Turks... we learned a lot and gained a lot. The barriers which were between us were removed.

Building on the ties made through this protest, the BKP has seen bridges being made which they hope will continue.

Our strategy is, whatever the problem is, whatever the issue is, we can come together with anybody for this issue, for this problem. So this is our strategy.

Opposition:

Although the members of the BKP became excited as they explained their work, particularly in describing their successes in bridging the gap between themselves and secular feminist groups, they also had many stories of the opposition and attitudes which

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they faced as religious women and as feminists. The opposition can be clearly divided into two categories: opposition from secular feminist organizations, and opposition from the religious community and general public.

Islamic feminist development and the West/Kemalism:

The headscarf is one of the most obvious areas where secular feminists and the BKP oppose each other. When I asked the women in the BKP about the type of support they received in dealing with the issue of the headscarf ban, one woman replied that no one supported them

> *...because we are the people who have difficulties with this.*

Another woman explained that,

> *...we can discuss [with] other organizations about any problem which women face now...but we cannot discuss our scarf problem.*

When asked why they think that secular feminists do not see the headscarf as an important issue, the women agreed that feminists see the headscarf as something which men want women to do. One woman answered,

> *First of all, they don't have much relation to it and second of all, they think that women cover their hair because men want them to do it. It is not their choice. They [feminists] don't accept that they [religious women] are doing it...The Prime Ministers in Turkey have the Western [perspective] and that's why, when it comes to religion, they put the barrier because they just don't understand it.*

According to another woman in the group,

> *...the West has this point of view too, you know, about the scarved woman. To them [the West], it means that we [religious women] don't have education, we don't have much [sic] choices, so this is also the influences that the Western world has towards*

the scarf...So people have this stereotype and this kind of curiosity and they're afraid of the lifestyle of women in here [referring to the women in the room]. They assume that we are not allowed to drive...like in Saudi Arabia, they aren't allowed to drive.... [In] Kuwait they just got the chance to vote...all of these issues. So we are trying to point out the difference between the culture and the religion. Like now, most of the difficulties that women face is [sic] not because of the religion; it is because of the culture.

Despite the interference that the headscarf law creates to women's education, secular women's development agencies do not see this as an issue in which they can support Muslim women. Largely this is due to the secular feminist arguments discussed in the previous chapter. In one interview, with a secular Turkish feminist professor, women who advocated for the headscarf were negatively derided. She considered them "stupid," "crazy," and that their manner of dress was "ridiculous." She also expressed fear that the headscarf would be something forced upon her if it were legalized. In another interview with a prominent secular women's human rights organization, I was told that the headscarf ban "is a terrible problem...but there are so many other problems," demonstrating her lack of interest or concern for the issue. While there may be many terrible issues for women in Turkey, education is fundamental to development and an important issue but made inaccessible to many women and girls in Turkey because of the ban on religious attire. It is important to consider what another activist from an education foundation in Ankara, pointed out, "How capable of raising children is an illiterate mother?" (Alptekin-Oguzertem, 2003, p.10). When I asked the women's human rights activist what she thought a solution would be to the headscarf issue, she thought that

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women should be allowed to wear the headscarf as long as they are not in any type of leadership roles.

The religious community, the Turkish public and Islamic feminist development:

While women in the BKP face opposition from secular feminists, they also face a great deal of criticism from their families, religious communities, and general Turkish public. The majority of the criticism though comes not because of their promotion of women in religion and the rereading and reinterpretation of Islamic texts but because they are visibly protesting the inequality of women in Turkey and even more particularly because of their visibility in the public sphere. This public visibility of religious women goes against Turkish understandings of good women particularly when it is remembered that 64 percent of men require their wives to ask their permission to go out of the home (Muftuler-Bac, 1999). Breaking this taboo of visibility, not only as women but as religious women, generates criticisms from the public that women in the BKP are examples of bad women. Religious women who are not a part of the BKP will say to their husbands, "look I am not like those women" thereby inferring that they, themselves, are better women. Although this story was related to me by a woman in the BKP, when I was discussing the BKP with some other Muslim Turkish women who did not belong to the BKP, I heard them say similar things about the women in the BKP. This attitude in Turkey amongst Muslim women is described by one woman in BKP as:

> *...this ideal of being a 'lady'; of being a good wife; of being a good woman. So we are treated like this. Everywhere the good housewives, the good woman would not do that...there is this thing that good girls are in paradise and bad girls are everywhere so we are going everywhere so we are bad girls and bad women for that.*

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Of the BKP's participation in the protests against the Iraq war, a woman in the BKP related to me that one journalist wrote,

A good woman will not come together with everybody. They have to limit between the good and bad people.

Another BKP member related that in 2002, a number of papers reported that:

...these women cannot even do a jam [sic]. They are not even really well qualified to their house work.

To women in Turkey, making jam is a source of pride, something which every woman should and can do. Considered not being able to "do a jam" is a serious insult to Turkish womanhood.

The women in the group told me that their families also had a difficult time understanding their work:

Even my father tells me that if I was your husband I couldn't handle all this...but he supports me because I am not his wife.

This is the common response from many of the men which women in the BKP talked about:

This is the summary of the men's perspective on us: "we would not like our wives to be like you but yes we would love our daughters to be like you"...this is the contrast: they respect us. They look for our answers but when it comes to another perspective, they don't accept what we are doing.

Chapter Three conclusions:

This chapter has attempted to allow the women of the Başkent Kadyn Platformu (BKP) to speak; to describe their work. It is clear, from the discussion with this Islamic

feminist group, that their perspective is different than the perspectives of the secular gender and development paradigms but is also vastly different from the conservative and the neo-traditionalist paradigms for women and development. While, as has been discussed thus far in this thesis, the secular, Western, or in the case of Turkey what is referred to as the Kemalist perspective, firmly sees religion as an obstacle to development, the conservative perspective leaves little room for women to independently participate or benefit from development because of their traditional roles. Traditional roles, as has already been discussed, restrict women's access to resources and to the benefits of development as these consider women only in their roles as mothers and wives. The neo-traditionalist perspective, which was discussed in Chapter Two, also poses particular problems to encapsulating women's full participation and benefits from development as it is firmly dependent on the male interpretation of religious texts and anything which is not Islamic is considered to be an intrusion upon Islam.

In the next chapter, the work of the BKP will be discussed and analysed in relation to these other three paradigms. It is through the exploration of the work of the BKP that it is hoped that insight can be given into this Islamic feminist paradigm and its applicability for women in Less Developed Countries and for development.

Chapter Four: Analysis, discussion and conclusions

Introduction:

In the previous chapter, the work of the women's group Başkent Kadyn Platformu (BKP) was described. In this chapter, a closer investigation of this group, as an example of Islamic feminism, will be discussed and analysed. Included in this analysis is a reflection on the differences and similarities between the BKP and mainstream gender and development paradigms as well as a discussion as to how the BKP attempts to break away from the conservative and neo- traditionalist Islamic paradigms of women and development. This chapter seeks to derive understanding of the implications and of the applicability of Islamic feminism for women in Turkey as well as for women in Less Developed Countries (LDCs) based on the example of the BKP. The research in this thesis only provides an overview of the work of the BKP, and is in no way indicative of all Islamic feminist groups. Although the knowledge gained through research is not necessarily generalizable, it provides a basis for further research into Islamic feminism as an alternative paradigm for gender and development in an Islamic context, as well as a challenge for mainstream gender and development paradigms to reconsider current understandings of religion in gender and development practices.

The BKP:

Definitions of development:

This thesis began by defining development as a process focused on "meeting the needs of those that are most in need" (Longwe, 1991, p. 2) and "concerned with enabling people to take charge of their own lives and escape from poverty" thereby enlarging their choices and decision-making abilities (Martinussen, 2003, p. 38). Therefore, this thesis has argued that development needs to consider the influence of Islam in the process of

facilitating women's participation in development within an Islamic context in order to facilitate the process whereby Muslim women are able to meet their needs and enlarge their choices. Mainstream gender and development paradigms do attempt to help women take charge of their lives, to help them escape from poverty, and to enlarge their choices but these paradigms often fail to address the important role that Islam plays in the lives of many Muslim women.

In contrast, the work of the BKP considers Islam in all of their development goals thereby helping women to overcome problems which they encounter not only as women but particularly as religious women. The mandate of the BKP is to overcome the discrimination and inequalities from which women suffer and to engage women in the process as decision-makers. The BKP, as an example of Islamic feminism, goes beyond current gender and development paradigms, attempting to specifically address the discrimination against women found in Islam.

As the members of the BKP are themselves practicing Muslim women, their focus on Islam as a source of discrimination against women necessitates that they take an approach to overcoming discrimination within the religious system without attempting to overturn or challenge the fundamental beliefs of the system. While this positioning of the BKP, between the traditional patriarchal beliefs in Islam and the feminist approach to patriarchy, can be described as a "blatant balancing act between the conflicting gender ideologies" (Kandiyoti, 1991, p. 16) perhaps a more accurate depiction of the BKP positioning is as a synthesis derived from a dialectic between different groups (Said, 2000). Although a "balancing act" between women's organizations has been shown to be an effective strategy to uniting different opinions and groups in a common struggle, it infers an attempt to placate opposing groups or that differences are set aside in favour of

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struggling for a common cause.[10] To consider the BKP as a dialectical better depicts the ongoing conversation of give-and-take between groups which is synthesizing new answers to differences as opposed to setting those differences aside. The paradigm of Islamic feminism, as demonstrated by the BKP, challenges both the conservative/neo-traditionalist religious paradigms and secular paradigms simultaneously thereby also challenging depictions of a dichotomy between the West and Islam as portrayed in Huntington's theory on the clash of civilizations. The synthesis achieved, by the BKP, reaches for a compromise where women are not forced to choose between their physical needs and their religious identity.

The principal method of the BKP, to continue the dialogue between feminist gender and development paradigms and those of Islam, is education. For example, teaching Arabic gives women access to the Qur'an in its original form. Arabic language education has a two-fold application. First, enabling women to read the religious texts for themselves allows them to take greater control of their religious practice. Second, access to religious texts in the original language enables women to make their own interpretations and conclusions of the texts. The workshops held by the BKP are another example of creating a forum for dialogue between religion and feminism.

Providing a space to consider the dialectic between feminism and religion, the workshops also seek to empower women in their decision-making capabilities. For example, the workshop on different interpretations of religious texts provided women with different perspectives on religious texts and a forum for discussion of these interpretations. Both language education and workshops are examples of approaches which attempt to overcome the inequalities found in the religious practices of Islam

through giving women access to information so that they can make their own informed decisions.

It is more difficult for mainstream gender and development paradigms to take these unique approaches to development since mainstream paradigms understand Islamic teaching to be contradictory to the development agenda, generally considering Islam an obstacle to development. White (2002), for example, shows this approach to be ineffectual.

In her research on Islamist mobilization in Turkey, White, an anthropologist, observed a Turkish secular feminist group attempting to run educational and economic programs via a women's centre in a working-class/poor neighbourhood of Istanbul. The centre, when it first opened, initially experienced high interest and attendance. The initial participation levels in the centre rapidly declined and eventually the centre had to close because of lack of attendance. White's investigation into the failure of this centre found that the lack of success of this secular group was due largely to a disconnection between the secular feminist organizational goals which disregarded the importance of the Muslim identities of the majority of women to be involved in the centre. In her book, White notes that the secular activist group lacked applicability for the religious women of the community because the message regarding gender inequality and discrimination was overtly secular. White goes on to describe that, even though these activists came from and lived in the neighbourhood in which they were working, they "were unwilling to situate their message within local cultural norms" which necessitated considering the realities of religious women (p. 242). She goes on to explain that the secular women's group "did not popularize their message, nor did they translate their ideas…into a form that fit with local normative values," those of Islam (p. 258).

The BKP are clearly a religious group. However, their mandate is similar to secular gender and development paradigms. The goals of the BKP, to surmount discrimination and inequalities, are more closely situated within the local normative values of the Muslim population thereby increasing the likelihood of success in affecting change regarding discrimination and inequality. At the same time, it is important to realize that they are not diluting their feminist messages so as to conform to conservative or neo-traditionalist paradigms either. They are clearly attempting to promote women on equal grounds with men.

The beginning of this thesis pointed to the consensus throughout the international development community that the inequalities between women and men in terms of both rights and opportunities directly result in women being poorer than men. With particular consideration of the influence that women have over the family, who are the future of development, it is important that these inequities be addressed by an approach that encourages women to be decision-makers and to have more choice. This means that women need to have religious freedom and have equal rights. The BKP encourages women to be decision-makers through their educational programs, giving women access to alternative possibilities of understanding religious texts and allowing women to ultimately make their own decisions regarding their understandings of these texts.

However, in describing the mandate of the BKP, it is necessary to analyse their definitions of 'discrimination' and 'inequality' as these definitions may vary depending on the perspective from which they are derived. For example, in Chapter Two, the conservative Muslim perspective of complementarity between the sexes was discussed. Stowasser (1998) pointed out that, according to many Qur'anic authorities, men and women are equal as they have complementary roles designated according to sex. The

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tasks of each sex-role are not the same, but the complementary nature of the two roles confers equality. For example, men are financially obligated to provide for their families while women are required to manage their households and obey their husbands. These complementary roles do not fall inline with Western feminist perceptions of equality found in mainstream gender and development paradigms. These types of paradigms principally define equality to be in terms of opportunity and under the law; focusing on right-based approaches.

Al-Ali (2003) defines complementarity in the reformist paradigm as similar to equality in the secular feminist paradigms. The BKP exemplifies Al-Ali's definition of complementarity and equality. The women in the BKP explicitly articulated their belief that women were not beholden to their husbands, fathers or any other male. Their activities also demonstrate definitions of equality and discrimination aligned with international perspectives. Their activities include: ensuring the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Turkey, the use of the Convention in attempt to secure their rights as religious women, and educating Turkish women, particularly Muslim women, as to their rights under the Convention.

While it may initially appear that the BKP lean more heavily towards the feminist paradigm, the dialectical tension they attempt to maintain between secular feminism and traditional Islamic perspectives is observed in their maintenance of differences between the sexes. The BKP clearly does not define equality as "being like a man" rather they struggle for the right to choose the continuation of some religiously made discriminations between men and women. One example is their agitation for the right to wear the headscarf thereby differentiating Muslim women who choose to wear the headscarf from

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men as well as distinguishing religious women from women who are less religious or nonreligious.

The BKP's struggle for the right to be visibly differentiated from others via the wearing of the headscarf must be understood in terms of what the BKP is actually advocating. Their struggle should not be understood as a struggle to wear the headscarf rather it should be understood as a struggle for the right to choose to wear the headscarf. This right to choose is an important element of the BKP's principles and continually re-emerges, particularly in relation to religious issues concerning discrimination and differentiations between women and men. The BKP advocates that women have a right to control all areas of their lives, including the religious, such that if they choose a position where they are clearly differentiated from men, such as wearing the headscarf, this is a woman's individual choice.

The headscarf issue, one of the most important issues to the BKP is, as has been discussed throughout this thesis, a very polarized issue. The BKP see their right to choose to wear the headscarf in public, as a fundamental right. Examination of Turkish women's demands to be able to wear the headscarf largely reveal that their struggle for this right has been an important means by which Turkish women are standing up for their rights to choose. The issue of the headscarf is highly complex, however, as it is not only symbolic on many levels, as was discussed in Chapter Two, but women wear the headscarf for many other reasons as well.

To return to Esposito's (1991) framework of different paradigms of change in Islam, the reformist paradigm of Islamic reform comes under fire from both conservative and neo-traditionalist groups for being a so-called Westernized perspective of women's roles (Balchin, 2003). Conversely, secular feminist groups criticize reformists for

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constructing divisions between women according to religion thus ignoring the heterogeneity which exists between women (Mojab, 2001). The BKP clearly feels these pressures and tensions from the conservative and neo-traditionalist Muslims, and from secular feminists. Accusations about not being able to make jam and being bad women are some of the charges from the religious sides. From the feminist side, the BKP does not receive support from non-religious feminists against discriminations which specifically affect religious women.

The dialectic of Islamic feminism, between mainstream gender paradigms and those of Islam, results in a synthesis of future prospects of equality between religious women and men particularly in Turkey. The women involved in the BKP commented a number of times how men would like their daughters to be like the women in BKP but not their wives. Obviously this type of comment is discriminatory but it also hints at an underlying acceptance of what the women in the BKP are working towards. Leila Ahmed (2003), in her article *Border Passage*, tells her story of growing up in a Muslim household; describing:

> *What it was to be Muslim was passed on not, of course, wordlessly but without elaborate sets of injunctions or threats or decrees or dictates as to what we should do and be and believe. What was passed on, besides the very general basic beliefs and moral ethos of Islam....was a way of being in the world....all of these ways of passing on attitudes, morals, beliefs, knowledge through touch and the body and in words spoken in the living moment – are by their very nature subtle and evanescent. They profoundly shape the next generation. (p. 2)*

Returning to the knowledge that women have profound responsibilities and influence in the families, Ahmed's story reveals that the Islam as lived by women shapes the next

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generation. If men assent to their daughters being brought up with these beliefs, their sons are also being brought up with these beliefs – either through the subtle means of observing their sisters or through more overt means. Although this generation of women may not experience substantive equality, the potential of daughters and sons being raised to experience substantive equality rises as exposure to Islamic feminism increases and children are taught new perspectives on their religion.

Islamic Feminism as an alternative development paradigm:

Implications, applicability and conclusions:

Islamic feminism in an Islamic development context has a distinct, two-fold advantage over the mainstream gender and development paradigms. First, the common tie of religion gives this type of development paradigm the likelihood of much greater acceptability within the community. Islamic feminists know and understand the religious barriers to gender and development issues.

Secondly, and related to the first advantage, Islamic feminists better understand the barriers which need to be addressed in gender and development programs so that women can come closer to benefiting from development. For example, the BKP personally understand the importance of wearing the headscarf and the barrier that the Turkish law is to women who wish to wear it and so they are fighting to have the law changed. At the same time, the group understands the power of conservative and neo-traditionalist Islamic institutions, as run by men over women so they are working to change the institutions.

While the intersection of mainstream gender and development paradigms with paradigms of Islamic reform and development creates areas of tensions, two things become apparent in discussing these issues. The first is that they do not agree on

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priorities. Second, these paradigms do not agree on women's place in society. While secularists believe women should be completely equal with men, they overlook or disregard women's rights to religious freedom. Inversely, neo-traditionalists and conservatives, who fight for women's religious beliefs, clearly display their underlying assumptions as to women's inferior place in society.

While it is not uncommon to have different groups with different goals, as development researchers, practitioners and policy-makers, it is necessary to question whether our priorities should be considered above those whom we are trying to 'help'. In the case of Turkey, women who wear the headscarf see the inability to choose to wear the headscarf and the discrimination from which they suffer if they do wear a headscarf as one of the main inhibitors to their participation in development. This manifests itself both in the prohibition of the headscarf from schools to the discrimination they face when they apply for jobs. Yet secular organizations, also working towards women and development goals, fail to support religious women in their struggle. They see the headscarf as an insignificant issue or as something oppressive to women.

This thesis is premised on the understanding that women are the principal agents of development because of the essential roles they fulfill in the complete health and well-being of the family. Understanding the importance of women's participation in development necessitates a constant analysis of current gender and development paradigms in order to achieve the most effective means of securing women's participation in, and benefits from development. While barriers to women are broadly characterized as 'discrimination' and 'inequality', the actualization of these terms appear in different manners throughout the world. Culture, religion, and numerous other issues factor into understandings of discrimination and inequality, depending on where these

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discriminations are being enacted. Different perspectives on discrimination against women carry different values resulting in different expressions of gender and development goals and how to achieve these goals, thereby, overcoming discrimination. Mainstream gender and development paradigms are largely premised on Western feminist perspectives of discrimination against women whereas understandings of discrimination for many women in other cultures and religions do not necessarily coincide with this understanding of discrimination.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine one result of the intersection of mainstream gender and development paradigms with paradigms of gender and development in an Islamic context and to consider the paradigm of Islamic feminism as an alternative gender and development paradigm. In studying the intersection of mainstream gender and development paradigms with the paradigms of Islamic reform and development, it has been shown that Islamic feminism, as demonstrated by the BKP, is a position which rises out of the tensions between the other paradigms; it is therefore a dialectic creating a space where new alternatives for religious women can advocate for equality without betraying their religious beliefs and values.

Said (2000) points out that the construction of 'us' and 'them' is not reality but rather a "compression, reduction, and exaggeration" of the truth (p. 577). The Turkish case study on Islamic feminism, as employed by the BKP, demonstrates an attempt to create a space for Islam and feminism to converse, to tear down the false dichotomy, the "compression, reduction, and exaggeration" which exists between Islam and feminism. While secular feminists criticize Islamic feminists for constructing divisions among groups of women, the case study on the BKP has shown this to be false. Rather, the BKP

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has shown that building connections between women – both religious women and secular feminists – is a major priority for Islamic feminists.

Within Turkey, there is an explicit ideology of what constitutes 'modern'. Women are the primary signifiers of modernity in Turkey, as is the case in many countries. This imposition of one understanding of modernity is most obviously manifested in the outlawing and stigmatization of the headscarf. The actuality of this perceived freedom from not wearing the headscarf is a 'forced freedom', oppressing many women in Turkey. If we consider that the outlawing of the headscarf removes the decision-making capabilities from women then such instances clearly disempower women contrary to the intended goals of gender and development. Recognizing that these 'forced freedoms' exist requires the questioning of development theory as to what changes need to happen to stop discrimination against women and question who is choosing these changes.

The implications and applicability of Islamic feminism are both positive and negative, numerous and somewhat treacherous. First, consider the positive. Islamic feminism, as demonstrated by the BKP, provides a new paradigm for women's inclusion in development. It specifically addresses the needs of Turkish Muslim women, attempting to empower them in ways which are highly applicable to their situation. Secondly, the position which the BKP hold as reformists, allows for a dialectic space between two perceived opposites - that of Islam and secular development. This positioning is more nuanced and closer to women's reality as opposed to the Orientalist ideology of 'us' and 'them'. The Islamic feminist paradigm of development provides a space for dialogue.

The Islamic feminist paradigm of development is also significant in a much larger context. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, religion is an important part of identity and a highly influential force on development. The importance of gender politics,

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and women's positions and participation in society has also been discussed. When religious beliefs, particularly those surrounding women and religion, are neglected and pushed to the shadows in favour of a Westernized form of modernity, there is risk of backlash and a regression into closure. An example of this has been witnessed in the case of Iran, which set out on a course of Westernization and modernization, including the outlawing of the veil, under the control of the Shah. These reforms and ties to the West were viewed by many, particularly the religious in Iran, as leading the nation towards a state of immorality, eventually resulting in a backlash and the Revolution of 1979.[11] The dialectical positioning of Islamic feminism provides a space for women to strive for both equality and the continuation of their religious beliefs.

Islamic feminism, as demonstrated by the BKP, must also be examined for the negative implications of such a paradigm. The BKP attempts to maintain a tension between religion and feminism, a difficult task. As discussed in Chapter Two, the promotion of international agendas focused on gender equality prioritize gender equality above other freedoms such as freedom of religion thus creating a "hierarchy of rights" (Sardar-Ali, 2002, p. 70). Therefore, it is important that the tension be maintained thereby resisting the creation of a hierarchy of rights. But as a development paradigm, it is important that gender equality not become subordinated to the freedom of religion. Throughout this thesis it has been maintained that women are principal agents of development (Parikh and Inter Pares, 1995) and inequalities based on gender are a "source of endemic poverty…an obstacle to development" (UNDP, 2002, p. 4). Therefore, it is important that gender equality still be maintained as a priority in development.

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It is necessary then, that international development organizations and agencies carefully understand what an organization is really promoting and the careful maintenance of a dialectic continue as opposed to a prioritization of religion. In the time that I spent talking with women in Turkey, not one woman accepted the term 'Islamist' in self-reference although some clearly demonstrated the qualities of an Islamist, as defined in Chapter One. Similarly, few Muslim women accepted the term 'feminist' when clearly they were. Difficulty therefore lies in discerning what these groups are actually promoting. While the BKP claimed it did not promote the wearing of the headscarf rather they only lobbied for the choice to wear it, it is difficult to understand exactly what underlying structures and pressures exist within this group and in other groups which appear to be following similar courses.

With both positive and negative implications of Islamic feminism, the question remains, what is the applicability of Islamic feminism for international development and for women in Less Developed Countries? Islamic feminism offers a potential for the inclusion of Muslim women in the development project in a more relevant and meaningful way than previous. The Islamic feminist paradigm is a space in which Muslim women can dialogue about their faith and religion but also about equality and discrimination.

The objective of this thesis was to add to an on-going North-South dialogue regarding gender and development. First, in focusing on women as agents making choices not simply as recipients of influence, it was learned that mainstream gender and development paradigms can become themselves an obstacle to those they are attempting to help. Islamic feminists see it as part of their mandate to bridge the differences between themselves as religious women and those who see themselves as secular feminists.

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Islamic feminism, as demonstrated by the BKP, also provides insight into how Muslim women are choosing their own versions of liberation. For Turkish Muslim women, liberation includes the right to choose to wear the headscarf.

The second objective of this thesis was to add to the body of research and literature on Muslim women and their own development goals. By focusing on the relationship between religious women and development, and in this case, specifically on Muslim women and development, perspectives on what types of discriminations and inequalities are the highest priority for women and how to surmount these issues were discussed. The example of the inability to choose to wear the headscarf is, for religious Turkish women, one of the largest issues of discrimination for them.

Recommendations:

Although this thesis may initially appear to be arguing for relativism based on religion, it does not intend to do so. Instead it argues for a dialectical positioning of development. Clearly, Islamic feminist development strategies, as demonstrated by the BKP, and the development strategies of mainstream international gender and development paradigms are different. Ultimately though, the end goal of both groups is equality and nondiscrimination. Therefore, this thesis does not advocate for a relativist stance regarding Muslim women's objectives in development, rather this thesis recommends that international development become more sensitive to the identities of Muslim women and work towards solidarity with these women's organizations. These organizations better understand the realities needed to achieve women's participation in development and the applicability of development to the everyday lives of Muslim women.

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[1] Included in this analysis are both traditional conceptions of 'the development project' as well as organizations which focus particularly on issues of inequality and discrimination against women in order to ameliorate women's disadvantaged positions. While the traditional conception of 'the development project' uses feminist principles foundationally in the design of gender and development components in the project, organizations which focus particularly on women often have even stronger feminist tenets. Although these organizations may fall outside of the scope of traditional understandings of 'the development project', they are, no doubt, an important part of development as they are forwarding women's equality and enabling women to participate in development to perhaps a greater extent than the traditionally conceived development project. However, it is important to note two things about these organizations. First, they are often heavily rooted in Western feminism. Secondly, they are largely responsible for the focus of development on the important role of women in development and for bringing to light the problems which inhibit women from participating in and benefiting from development. In this thesis, although it may appear that I am being unduly harsh on feminism, it has, and continues to, play a very important role in development. It is in the understanding of the importance of this role that improvements to their impact are sought.

[2] For examples of the rhetoric of Christian missionaries see Keezhangatt, T. J.,(2006). Evangelisation as Liberation: A Paradigm for the Active Participation of the Laity in the Pastoral Service of the Church in India, Retrieved April 12, 2006, from http://www.theo.kuleuven.be/page/doctoraltheses/266/. For analysis of feminist rhetoric see Shapiro, F. (1985). Historical notes on the vocabulary of the women's movement. *American Speech 60.1, 3-16.*

[3] For an example and an explanation of the Qur'an as an equalitarian and anti-patriarchal text see Asma Barlas, (2002) *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an,* Texas: University of Texas Press. Also see Amina Wadud, (1999). *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective,* New York: Oxford University Press.

[4] Religion continues to vie for a position in the State which, the State in turn, sees as a threat to its Kemalist doctrine. Therefore, the State continues to be a laic state as opposed to a secular state as it attempts to subordinate religion to state control. It is also this element of the strong state, and strong military presence, in Turkey, which stop it from truly becoming a democratic state. A number of coup d'etats and the removal of political parties which show too strong of a religious penchant are but a few examples of this.

[5] Women are commonly used as signifiers of modernization or of cultural authenticity in many places. In the Turkish case, acceptance to the European Union is particularly contingent upon Turkey's ability to rectify some of its human rights violations. Close scrutiny of women's rights in Turkey is therefore occurring. While this scrutiny is positive, it is also perpetuating the use of women as signifiers of the State and of 'modernity'.

[6] There is some speculation that Turkey is the next Argentina. For discussion of this see Erinc Yeldan and Mark Weisbrot. (4-5 December 2004). "Is Turkey the Next Argentina?" *International Herald Tribune,* in Independent Social Scientists Alliance, (2000) and "Turkey in 2005 and Beyond: Macroeconomic policy, patterns of growth and persistent fragilities." *Global Policy Network.* Retrieved December 5, 2005 from http://www.gpn.org.

[7] The laic nature of Kemalism is similar to the laic state of France. In the case of Turkey, laicism has been combined with other state policies implemented by Kemal Atatürk and become known as Kemalism.

[8] Based on statistics at the start of the 2001-2002 academic year, State Institute of Statistics 2001.

[9] Based on MoNE RPC 2003 figures of enrolment for the 2002-2003 academic year.

[10] For an example of this see Bunch, C. and N. Reilly. (1994). *Demanding Accountability: the global campaign and Vienna tribunal for women's human rights.* New Jersey: Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers, which describes the movement to combat violence against women. In this movement,

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a vast number of different women's groups came together, setting aside their differences and united in the common fight against violence against women.

[11] Although there were many factors which are believed to have lead to the Iranian revolution, ultimately it was religious fundamentalism which rose up to oppose the Shah's regime.

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Saint Mary's University

Certificate of Ethical Acceptability
of
Research Involving Human Subjects

This is to certify that the Research Ethics Board has examined the research proposal or other type of study submitted by:

Principal Investigator: Wendy Fehr

Name of Research Project: Paradigms in Tension: Gender and Development in an Islamic Context

REB File Number: 05-037

and concludes that in all respects the proposed project meets appropriate standards of ethical acceptability and is in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Conduct of Research Involving Humans.

Please note that for "ongoing research", approval is only effective for one year from the date approved. If your research project takes longer than one year to complete, submit Form #3 (Annual Report) to the REB at the end of the year and request an extension. You are also required to submit Form #5 (Completion of Research) upon completion of your research.

Date: 22 April 2005

Signature of REB Chair: _____

Dr. John Young