

The headscarf ban in the Turkish university:

Educational and cultural experiences of part-time unveilers

Introduction

The place of religion in public institutions has become a fervently conversed topic in secular Turkey. Even though Turkey may define and exercise secularism differently from other secular nation-states in Europe, there seems to be a consensus about the preservation of the secular mission of public institutions to create an environment that welcomes people from different religions. Like all secular public institutions in Europe, Turkish secular public institutions are organized and regulated in such a way that secularism paves the way for their members to live together without oppressing one another (“Avrupa’da turban yasagi”, Retrieved 2006). However, the general concern for Turkey with its substantial Muslim population is that exposure of overt religious symbols may threaten the secular nature of public institutions, and one overt religious symbol of constituents from one religion may lead to oppression of constituents from other religions. In order to avoid this problem, Turkey, like some other European secular countries, has taken actions that might limit their citizens’ rights and freedom to expose, in public institutions, symbols of the religion to which they belong in order to equalize and thus become beneficial to the members of those organizations (“Avrupa’da turban yasagi”, Retrieved 2006). The problem is such policies have not been analyzed in depth as to whether or not (and the extent to which) such actions might lead to consequences that could in fact benefit or harm stakeholders in different ways.

Such policies of Turkey are evident in various arenas from healthcare to law to education and further. Each sector has regulated procedures for its public institutions in order to avoid the exposure of overt religious symbols. One such sector is higher education.

Statement of the Research Problem

In Turkey, higher education is centralized and regulated by a state-controlled higher education council. This institution is responsible for decision making in the realm of higher education. The nature of council control of institutions is an important issue and raises critical questions, such as institutional control of budgets, curriculum, and the faculty tenure system. The council formulates national policies to meet the needs of Turkish higher education stakeholders, to address issues of concern, and to further improve the quality of higher education in Turkey. Even though these policies are formulated for the public good, at times their outcomes might become troublesome. One such policy is the higher education headscarf ban policy.

The headscarf ban policy was introduced by the higher education council as a response to “a perceived threat posed by the encroachment of Islam” (Human Rights Watch, Retrieved 2005) into higher education in the 1980s. The ban does not allow Muslim women who cover their hair into Turkish university campuses. Muslim female students who choose to cover their hair need to remove the headscarf to gain access to higher education institutions. The policy was formulated to eradicate the religious threat and ensure the stability of the Turkish higher education and preservation of its secular mission. In addition, the policy explains why there are no women who wear a headscarf in higher education institutions even though it is possible to come across many women who are covered in the streets of all major metropolitan areas and rural areas in Turkey.

Different from a private university, a Turkish public university is tightly controlled and regulated by the higher education council and thus responsible for strictly following national educational laws and so enacting the headscarf ban policy to conserve its secular nature. To achieve this goal, it is obliged to ask students to uncover their hair to grant them access to its campus. A Turkish public university has also an obligation to ensure that students have positive educational and cultural experiences to help them succeed in their studies. By positive experience, I mean a campus life that is inclusive and supportive, where everybody feels welcome and comfortable, cherished with opportunities to construct or

reconstruct individual character habits of mind and become intellectually engaged to gain development, learning and success. However, forcing students, who cover their hair in their private lives, to take their headscarves off and act against their cultural values and religious beliefs to receive a higher education may create difficult educational and cultural experiences for these covered students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the educational and cultural experiences of “part-time” unweilers during their degree programs in public institutions in Turkey. A part-time unweiler is a woman who covers her hair in her private life in line with the tenets of Islam, but who removes the veil while on a Turkish university as a result of the higher education headscarf ban policy. Although not all Turkish women wear a headscarf, those who do remove it often against their wishes, if they wish to study or teach in postsecondary institutions. The subset of the part-time unweiler I will study is undergraduate students.

Research Questions

The proposed research question is:

What is the impact of the headscarf ban policy on the educational and cultural experiences of “part-time unweilers” during their undergraduate programs in public higher education institutions in Turkey?

The sub-questions related to the research question are:

- (a) How do part-time unweilers understand the headscarf ban policy?
- (b) How do part-time unweilers decide to comply with the policy?
- (c) What opportunities does unveiling bring to part-time unweilers on campus?
- (d) What challenges are part time unweilers faced with on campus and in their lives as a result of unveiling?,
- (e) How do part-time unweilers deal with these challenges?
- (f) How do these challenges affect their educational progress?

(g) How does complying with the policy affect their plural self-identities (e.g. identities as Turkish citizens, Muslims and females)?

Significance of the Study

Since it was implemented, the policy has resulted in the exclusion of thousands of Muslim women from Turkey's system of higher education. Numerous faculty members have been suspended or expelled because of the ban (Human Rights Watch, Retrieved 2005). The ban has also forced veiled female students to make a choice about their religious convictions and subsequent education. They either take their veils off and continue their education or insist on wearing the headscarf and terminate their education. Faced with this dilemma, some veiled female students have refused to uncover their hair claiming that they wear the scarf to follow the tenets of Islam (Human Rights Watch, Retrieved 2005).

Of these non-compliers, those who can afford it go abroad to continue their education, but those who do not have this option lose their chance of receiving a university degree. On the other hand, there have been some others who have complied with the policy. These compliers uncover their hair by either taking their veils off or wearing wigs or hats¹ to gain access to Turkish higher education.

Of these two groups of female students, compliers and non-compliers with the policy, the media and researchers have focused on the hurdles of veiled undergraduate women who have been denied access to postsecondary education as a result of their resistance to the policy. However, few studies examine the educational and cultural experiences of Muslim female students who comply with the ban during their undergraduate studies. The proposed study intends to fill this gap. I contend that a systematic investigation of these students' experiences will reveal ways in which the policy has impacted these students' academic involvement and multiple identities as Turkish Muslim women. In addition, the analysis could help student affairs professionals, faculty, and policymakers understand the needs of this special group and assist in adjusting the headscarf ban policy to accommodate veiled

¹ As an alternative solution to the headscarf ban, instead of exposing their hair, some students wear a wig or hat in a way that completely covers the headscarf and/or their hair. This way they look unveiled to the outside world when they in fact keep their real hair and/or headscarf unexposed underneath the wig or hat.

Muslim students without harming the unveiled and others by designing individual, group, and institutional approaches to their academic and personal development.

Political Context of Turkey

Modern Turkey emerged out of the Ottoman Empire that was ruled by Islamic law. After the collapse of the empire, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded the Republic of Turkey in 1923. After defeating the Western armies, Atatürk launched a series of reforms that led to the creation of a modern Turkey (Cherry, 2003). One of these reforms was the secularization process. Traditionally, secularism has meant the separation of church and state, with the state playing no role in religious affairs. The Turkish model of secularism has a separation of state and religion to the extent that religion has no role in the affairs of state (Erdogan, 1999; Ayoob, 2004); however, the model differs on one important dimension: in Turkish secularism the state dominates and controls religion at every level (Fuller, 2004). One example of this domination and control of religion is that the state decides what mosques would be built and who would head them.

Secularism was implemented to help the nation modernize (Fuller, 2004), and thus Turkey underwent numerous societal reforms that led to the adoption of Western laws and lifestyle. In addition, founding secularists were guided “by the ideas of the European Enlightenment” (Ayoob, 2004, p. 454) and emphasized that “nationalism based on territory and ethnicity rather than religious affinity” (Ayoob, 2004, p. 454) would be the milestone in the progression of Turkey. The aim was to create a Turkish identity that has a common language, race, and shared background with a new Western life style. But it took quite some time for large parts of Turkey to have links with the West and to enjoy the opportunities with which their country provides (Fuller, 2004). These groups stayed marginalized. Meanwhile, their identity was shaped around both religion, taking pride in their Ottoman background, and secularism, being very loyal to the newly born system (Fuller, 2004). Ayoob (2004) and Gulalp (2003) explain that this happened as such because the Turkish ethnic identity cannot be separated from its Islamic identity, since a “non-Muslim can be a Turkish citizen but not a Turk” (Ayoob, 2004, p.455). Fuller (2004)

explains that the fact of Islam being part of Turkish identity manifested itself in 2002 when an Islam-oriented party won the elections. In addition, Fuller (2004) and Ayoob (2004) suggest that the majority of the Turkish population does not view being a Muslim and a secularist as contrasting but complementing one another of the same Turkish identity.

During the secularization of the country, the ruling elite marginalized Islam, and religiosity became associated with backwardness (Fuller, 2004). The development process resulted in a polarized society, riven along secular and Islamic lines (Gole, 1997; White, 2002; Sunar & Toprak, 2004; Sunar & Sayari, 2004). Secularists consider themselves liberal, progressive, and individualistic and are strongly tied to the idea of modernity, “characterized by an emphasis on the superiority of individualistic, goal-seeking behavior over deference to ‘traditional’ forms of family and communal authority—especially when the latter converged with Islamic doctrine about the place of women in the home, in relations within the family, and vis-à-vis men ” (White, 2002, p.20). Islamists are “Muslims who, rather than accept an inherited [religious] Muslim tradition, have developed their own self-conscious vision of Islam, which is then brought to bear on social and political events” (White, 2002, p.23) in Turkey. Secularists² view them as “conservative, patriarchal, religiously extremist and collectivists” (White, 2002, p.31).

Since the foundation of the republic, the ruling elite has been made up of secularists. Their mission is to protect Turkish secularism and “its guarantees of free choice of lifestyle, particularly for women, but limited choice in the realms of religion and ethnicity” (White, 2002, p.29). Thus, secular elites have determined the direction of the country through the state, law, and education. Secularists played key roles in promulgating the headscarf ban.

Turkish Higher Education

Two of the many primary aims of higher education are to educate students so that they will be loyal to Ataturk and preserve his reforms and principles and to understand cultural values and develop a

² Secularists categorize both devout Muslims who practice Islam as a way of life and Muslims who use Islam as a political ideology as Islamists.

sense of national unity (T.C. Yuksekogretim Kurulu, Retrieved 2005 a). Turkish higher education also considers “equality” as one of its core values in its operations (T.C. Yuksekogretim Kurulu, Retrieved 2005 b). In addition, society believes higher education is a vehicle to a better life and career, so at least one step upward in the social class ladder (Metz, 1995). The accomplishment of these aims is intended to be through the delivery of the Turkish college curriculum.

The undergraduate program usually takes four years (full-time) to complete. There are no liberal arts or general education requirements. There are very few, if any, electives offered. Certain courses are compulsory for all the curricula across institutions for a minimum of two semesters (T.C. Yuksekogretim Kurulu, Retrieved 2005 b). These are the Turkish language, a foreign language course, Ataturk’s principles and the history of the Turkish reforms where the concept of Turkish secularism is part of the syllabus. These courses were either added to the curriculum or started being offered differently as a result of secularists’ demands in higher education after 1980.

Turkish higher education has many characteristics. Within the context of this proposal, I will focus on features that are closely related to the headscarf ban policy. These are secularization of Turkish higher education, the Higher Education Council (HEC), higher education policymaking, and the higher education headscarf ban policy.

a. Modernization Policies

Secularism brought about the creation of the modern education system in Turkey (Berkes, 1998; “Higher Education”, 1990). Before the foundation of the Turkish Republic, there were both religious and secular schools. Religious education was abolished in 1924, which then unified and centralized Turkey’s educational system. This was followed by various reforms that drastically impacted the higher education sector in the country. With the closure of medreses³ and the opening of secular post-secondary institutions, teaching and learning of theology as central to college education came to an end.

³ Medrese is derived from the Arabic word *Madrasah* and is a college where teaching and learning revolve around Muslim religious laws and scholastic theology.

Theological curriculum was replaced by secular curriculum that consisted of the teaching and learning of various subjects to educate Turkish citizens in different disciplines (Berkes, 1998). The instruction of Arabic and Persian was eliminated from primary and secondary schools. These languages became part of the curriculum of special departments, such as Middle Eastern Studies, and started being taught as foreign languages. With the launch of the Latin alphabet in 1928, higher education institutions started using it as their medium of written and oral delivery (Berkes, 1998).

In the late 1940's, there was a public request for the re-establishment of religious education as part of the school curriculum (Metz, 1995). In the early 1950's, a course on religious education began as optional and in 1982 became compulsory for all primary and secondary schools. This raised some questions about the place of religion in higher education. Secular elites believed that the best way to teach Islam would be through religious leaders trained in universities controlled by the state. Thus, departments of divinity with its curriculum central to religious teaching and learning were established in order to train future preachers and imams (Metz, 1995).

These modernization policies have helped higher education establish secularism in the university. Religion was taught as a separate subject on campuses. Universities kept a strict secular nature without intervening into the private lives of students until the 1980s. The 1980s was a new era for the Turkish university and brought about many changes. One such change was the centralization of the higher education system and the introduction of a new higher education law. These changes led to the introduction of the headscarf ban policy.

b. Higher Education Council and Policymaking in the Turkish university

Turkish universities had academic and institutional autonomy thanks to the university law made in 1946 (Metz, 1995) and remained until the military coup in 1980. Sunar & Sayari (2004) and Sunar (2004) explain that this coup was an attempt to stabilize the country that was struggling both politically and economically. This resulted in a revised constitution in order to keep anti-secular groups on a tight leash. The constitution also aimed to depoliticize the society. This had a major effect in the arena of

postsecondary education in the country. The secularists in power thought that the campuses became arenas for the cultivation of political ideologies not compatible with secularism, making the long-term security of the country problematic (Metz, 1995). Thus the government made provisions that would keep these institutions from becoming politicized, hence posing less of a threat to Turkish political stability. The higher education law in 1981 and new provisions in 1982 brought about the development of The Higher Education Council (HEC), which regulates universities in the country (T.C. Yuksekogretim Kurulu, Retrieved 2005 c). Duties of the HEC include planning, coordination, and supervision of higher education. State universities are under total control of the HEC, which also regulates private universities by special provisions. This drastically affected the campus lives of administrators, faculty, and students.

The new higher education law banned all students and teachers from having ties with a political party. The curriculum became standardized (Metz, 1995). This means that in higher education institutions “where education is given in the same fields or branches of a discipline, the Council of Higher Education, upon the recommendations of the Inter-university Board, regulates the education, methods, scope, teaching duration, and the principles of evaluation within each academic year in order to establish a uniformity of expected standards and degrees granted as well as of rights and privileges” (T.C. Yuksekogretim Kurulu, Retrieved 2005 d, p.1).

The HEC is a state-controlled institution and consists of “members appointed by the President of the Republic from among candidates who are nominated by the Council of Ministry, the Chief of the General Staff, and the Interuniversity Board in accordance with the numbers of posts to be filled” (“Higher Education in Turkey”, 1990, p.15). There are 24 members in the HEC in total. The head of the council is selected and appointed by the President of Turkey for a period of four years (“Higher Education in Turkey”, 1990). The council consists mostly of members with secular roots (Altintas, 2002). The HEC is the centralizing body of the higher education system. Demirer and Ozbudun (1999) explain that this institution intends to create one type of university, one type of faculty, and one type of student, and pacify ‘the different’ by generating a homogenous university youth. The HEC has become

an institution in conflict with many other institutions and thus has been in the agenda of political parties for its reformation (Altintas, 2002).

The HEC is the policy-making mechanism for the higher education system (Higher Education in Turkey, 1990). Thus, Turkish higher education policies are determined by the choices of small clusters of the leading individuals who share similar worldviews (Edmonson, 2005). In other words, higher education policies are in the hands of the ruling elite in the HEC. The headscarf policy therefore, is a product of the HEC and dates back to 1980s.

This policy has created tensions within the educational and political context of Turkey. On the one hand, policy makers explain that the scarf is a symbol of extreme political Islam that threatens the secular nature of Turkey, and covered students are trying to make a political statement. On the other hand, female students with veils claim that they wear the scarf because of their religious beliefs. Students who refuse to comply with the ban report that because their access to higher education has been denied, their hopes for a future career have been terminated. Those who can afford go abroad, but not all have this option. What about students who choose to comply with the policy? How does the policy affect students who uncover their hair, the part-time unveilers, both on campuses and in their private lives? What kind of educational experiences do they go through on campuses? How does the act of uncovering affect their educational progress and identity as Turkish Muslim women? This study intends to shed light on these questions.

Conceptual Framework

In order to explore the educational and cultural experiences of part-time unveilers, I will utilize variations and parts of the following studies:

- 1) the policy analysis framework (Downey 1988),
- 2) the campus climate for diversity framework (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999);
- 3) the student involvement theory for higher education (Astin, 1984);

4) the model of multiple dimensions of identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

These frameworks are specifically designed for use in education environments in the United States. Considering cultural differences I believe some part of these frameworks may be irrelevant in another country. I have only chosen the factors that are general and broad, since they would be most relevant for Turkish-Islamic student development. In addition, I will conduct a pilot study where I am going to test the relevance of the parts of the frameworks. I will eliminate factors that appear irrelevant as a result of the pilot study.

First, Downey (1988) developed his policy analysis framework to analyze policies in the context of education. This is a comprehensive model that includes all the stages of policy analysis beginning with the initiation through the termination stage of a policy. In order to understand how part-time unweilers understand the policy, I will employ one stage of Downey's framework: interpretation.

Interpretation explores how part-time unweilers perceive the headscarf policy. Following is the question that unfolds their perceptions: "What does the policy mean?" Here, I intend to illuminate understandings of part-time unweilers regarding what the headscarf ban policy means to them. This component of the framework will lead me to ask the following sub-questions of my research question: (a) How do part-time unweilers understand the headscarf ban policy? and (b) How do part-time unweilers decide to comply with the policy?

Second, Hurtado et al. (1999) offer a framework to examine different elements of campus climate that might impact educational experiences of diverse students. In addition, Astin (1984) proposes basic elements of a student involvement theory based on the premise that the student who spends more time on studying, devotes more time to campus activities, and interacts frequently with faculty and other peers is a student who is intensely involved leading to more positive educational experiences and success. In my study, I am interested in opportunities and challenges of part-time unweilers. Using parts of Hurtado et al. (1999) and Astin (1984)'s frameworks, I will particularly probe

the following components as I explore the opportunities and challenges of part-time unveilers as a result of unveiling.

- (1) Faculty-student interaction
- (2) Administrator-student interaction
- (3) Involvement in extra-curricular activities
- (4) Motivation for studying
- (5) Activities on campus
- (6) Interaction with peers
- (7) Discrimination/prejudice against part-time unveilers in classrooms and/or on campus
- (8) Overall success during undergraduate studies⁴

These probes will guide me when I seek answers to the following set of sub-questions of my research questions: (c) What opportunities does unveiling bring to part-time unveilers on campus?; (d) What challenges are part time unveilers faced with on campus and in their lives as a result of unveiling?; (e) How do part-time unveilers deal with these challenges?; and (f) How do these challenges affect their educational progress?

Both in the Hurtado et al (1999) and Astin (1984) frameworks, these elements are used as a guide to understand how these dimensions of a campus life contribute to the educational progress of students. Using the above components as probes will help me explore the opportunities and challenges of part-time unveilers as a result of unveiling, including how unveiling serves as a service or disservice to their education. In addition to the educational experiences of part-time unveilers, the study will be sensitive to the fact that the research and theory on which I am relying was developed in the USA, a different cultural context.

⁴ I realize that there are several topics. The reason why I want to use them all for the time being is because I am not sure how many of these probes are most pertinent to the study. During the pilot study I will eliminate the ones that appear irrelevant or less pertinent to the study.

Third, Jones and McEwen (2000) propose a conceptual model of identity. They explain that each individual is composed of plural identities, such as class, religion, and race with personal identity at the core. Of these multiple dimensions of identity, I will utilize certain parts of the theory to explore how complying with the headscarf ban affects the following multiple identities of part-time unveilers. These are:

- (1) Citizenship identity as Turkish citizens
- (2) Religious identity as Muslims
- (3) Female identity

Exploring these identities will help me answer the following sub-question of my research question: (h) How does complying with the policy affect their plural self-identities (e.g., identities as Turkish citizens, Muslims, and females)?

Methods and Procedures

This is an exploratory qualitative research. It is exploratory not in terms of the method, but because there is limited empirical research on the educational and cultural experiences of part-time unveilers. I will use a socially constructed knowledge approach in which I argue that “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Thus as a researcher, I am interested in the perceptions of the participants concerning the headscarf ban policy.

I will use open-ended interview questions based on the research questions to give the participants the opportunity to express their opinions. I will also use more specific probe questions based on the components of my conceptual framework as appropriate; that is, when the open ended questions are brief and general, I will use specific probe questions to give the participants an opportunity to talk about their experiences in a more specific way. In addition, since part-time unveilers generate their worldview based on the social context in which they live, I will seek to understand their setting through visits to the

specific contexts with which they interact and collect information personally. The research process will be mainly inductive, and meaning will be generated from the data collected to develop a pattern of meaning (Crotty, 1998). Since I acknowledge that my background will shape interpretation of the findings, I will position myself as an unveiled woman during the research process. Since I am a woman who does not cover her hair, in the eyes of part-time unveilers I may be associated with the headscarf ban policy. With this acknowledgment and positioning myself as a researcher, I will then interpret the meanings part-time unveilers have about the “world.”

Sampling and Design

a. Design

This is an exploratory and qualitative interview study. It is exploratory in the sense that, to my knowledge, the group of participants, part-time unveilers, has not been used previously as research subjects before. Thus, my unit of analysis is the Muslim female woman, on the Turkish campus, who complies with the policy and chooses to uncover her hair during her studies in higher education. I will interpret and analyze the perceptions and understandings of these women with regard to their educational and cultural experiences as a result of unveiling.

b. Sample

Criteria for selection of the sites

The site for the study will be Istanbul, Turkey, selected because Istanbul is the most cosmopolitan city in Turkey. As a center of education and business, it attracts people from both urban and rural areas, so there are hybrid identities and different dynamics in the population of this city. Furthermore, Istanbul has the highest number of public institutions.

The research will be conducted with part-time unveilers who continue their undergraduate studies in public institutions. Since public institutions are under the total control of the Higher Education Council, these institutions are the ones that implement the headscarf ban policy in the strictest way possible. Public institutions are the oldest and largest higher education institutions in the country, and

state university students and faculty have always been on the front line of political movements.

Compared to private universities, public universities have been the sites of many student movements, including resistance strikes against the headscarf ban.

State universities include four-year schools, offering bachelor's level programs with a vocational emphasis, and two-year vocational schools offering pre-bachelor's level programs of a strictly vocational nature. Compared to private universities, they charge very low tuition fees. To compete with the private universities and overcome underfunding, since 1998, they have been given autonomy to raise funding through the partnerships with the industry and corporate world ("Turkey", Retrieved 2006).

I will recruit students from Istanbul University and Istanbul Technical University. The reason why I chose these universities is because they have high number of female students and they are also known for hosting many Islamist students in various disciplines. In addition, these are the universities where I have professional contacts that can help me find participants for my study.

Istanbul University (IU) and Istanbul Technical University (ITU) are two of the most prestigious public universities in Istanbul. They both attract quality students from all over the country. IU as well as ITU has a lot of campuses across Istanbul. IU offers higher education in all disciplines whereas ITU provides mainly technical and architectural education. In ITU, 30 % of all the undergraduate classes students take are taught in English. That is why students who do not have enough mastery of the English language to attend the classes in English take language preparatory classes before they start their degree program. In IU, some degrees are offered in English and some are in Turkish. IU has been the center of student strikes when the headscarf ban policy was issued. ITU is the first university to come up with creative solutions with regard to the headscarf ban policy. The university set up a "fitting room" at the front door of its main campus for students to wear their wigs or hats before they enter the campus and to wear their headscarves back after they leave the campus (Labi, 2006).

Criteria for selection of the participants

The participants who will take part in this research are part-time unveilers who cover their hair in their private lives but must unveil it on campus as a result of the headscarf ban policy. These are participants who expose their hair, use wigs, or wear hats in order to look unveiled on campus. Inclusion of these categories will allow me to explore similarities and differences in their experiences.

Participants will be chosen who are in their second, third and fourth years of their studies, as the study will be conducted at the beginning of the academic year. First year students have no experience. Second, third and fourth year students are more familiar with their institutions and have more experiences to share with better grounded opinions.

Based on these criteria, I will interview twenty to twenty-five part-time unveilers from two public institutions who attend public institutions, are in their second, third or fourth years of their undergraduate program and employ different types of unveiling. These will be the main criteria I will use to recruit my participants. In terms of age range, since there may be adult learners or returning students, I will limit the age group from 18 to 22, since this age group represents the majority of the second, third and fourth year of higher education students on campuses.

c. Specific data collection methods

The data collection method will include interviews (Johnson, 2002; Seidman, 1998), and two (2) 60 to 90-minute interviews (with a possible third interview as a follow up should there be a need) will be conducted with part-time unveilers. If the researcher feels there is a need and if the participants have time, there is a possibility that a third interview be conducted as a follow-up. As a researcher who is unveiled, in the eyes of the part-time unveilers, I may belong to a group that is different from them. This may create a challenge in terms of how they view me as a researcher, and they may be initially reluctant to answer the questions openly and honestly. To give the participants an opportunity to become comfortable with me, trust me, and share their experiences more honestly and openly, I will meet them in person and explain my research and procedures (including the purpose and significance of the study with relation to public policy). In addition, I will interview them twice (with a possible third interview as

a follow up) so that if there are certain points they have left out, the second (and/or the third) interview will allow them to come back to these points and refine them.

In broad terms, interviews will focus on their understanding of the policy, the reason why they have chosen to comply with the headscarf ban, how the ban is implemented in their institution, and the opportunities, barriers, and problems that unveiling brings to this group of students on the campus and in their private lives. The interviews will also explore how these challenges affect their educational progress. In addition, these interviews will explore the ways in which part-time unveilers welcome the opportunities and deal with the challenges. Participants will explain how unveiling affects their Turkish, Muslim, and female identity. At the beginning of the each interview, participants will be asked if there are things they would like to add from the previous interview. This will give them an opportunity to revise or make additions to what they said previously and is a chance for follow-up and clarification. Interviews will take place on a one-to-one basis. I believe they will share their experiences more openly and comfortably when they are alone with me.

Proposed Analytical Strategy

The analysis of the data will employ practices associated with the constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998; Strauss, 1987) to identify recurring themes across respondents. I will code the data and use the Atlas qualitative method analysis program. The findings will be aggregated to incorporate a thematic approach. The process will allow important themes and categories to emerge inductively from the data across respondents. Comparisons and contrasts regarding university experiences of participants will be employed using the variables⁵: type of unveiling, Istanbul University/Istanbul Technical University, and year of study. Each emerging theme will be reported and discussed using the similarities and differences in university experiences according to the variables.

Pilot study

⁵ During the data collection, if I have more variables such as SES etc. I will then evaluate the usefulness of these variables for my data analysis and either eliminate irrelevant variables or add pertinent factors as needed.

I intend to conduct a pilot study with two or three women at the beginning of the project. Based on the findings of the pilot study, I will make modest changes or adjustments to the interview protocol as necessary. Thus the pilot study will determine the questions and probes I need to keep, eliminate or modify.

Human Subjects

Before I go into the field, I have submitted this piece of research to be approved by the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at Michigan State University according to established criteria for protection of human subjects. I will seek the informed consent from each participant, the informed consent form will be available both in English and Turkish.. The consent will specifically mention how confidentiality will be maintained. The identity of the participants will be kept confidential, including in any reports or publications. Tape recording will only be used should the respondents give permission. While participation to the research will require some time from the participants, they will have an opportunity to reflect on their educational experiences. Thus any drawbacks will be outweighed by the likely benefits to the participants.

Utilization of existing research facilities at Michigan State University and other institutions

I will use the library and computer laboratory facilities at Michigan State University. In addition, I will collaborate with faculty and administrators of Istanbul University and Istanbul Technical University. I will also use the library and archives of Higher Education Council to collect information on an in-depth historical background of the headscarf ban.

Plans for write-up and dissemination of research results

The write-up will be executed under the mentorship of my advisor and committee members. Research results will be disseminated through presentations at the conferences of *Association for Study of Higher Education* and *Comparative International Education Society*. Articles to the journals of *New Perspectives on Turkey* and *the Muslim World* will be submitted for publication. In addition, the dissertation will be turned into a book both in English and Turkish.

Significance of the expected results and its public policy implications

The results will shed light on the opportunities and challenges that the headscarf ban policy presents for part-time unveilers. These experiences will allow the researcher to make recommendations for changes or revisions in the higher education policies with specific reference to the headscarf ban.

In addition, these results can inform not only Turkish higher education policy makers but also policy makers in countries such as France where students are asked to uncover their hair before entering public institutions.

Furthermore, the findings will help understand (re)formulation of Turkish national and female identity including the identity of veiled Muslim women. Another significance of the expected findings is to demonstrate how secularism, democracy and Islam may or may not be in tension on higher education campuses in Turkey. I believe this would help the Muslim world (re)think how to reconcile secularism, democracy and Islam in their public institutions in the most effective and efficient way. Turkish scholars and policy makers will have access to the findings of the research via conferences and publications in English and Turkish.

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